

## **REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 20 DECEMBER 2018**

### **DELIVERING THE CULTURE & SPORT BUSINESS UNIT**

#### **1 Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 1.1 Agree that the business unit will be called Live Life Aberdeenshire (paragraphs 2.17 - 2.19);**
- 1.2 Consider the arrangements for ensuring effective liaison and collaboration between the Committee and Sub-committee (paragraphs 2.10 - 2.11);**
- 1.3 Consider the arrangements regarding the proposed focus on communication between the business unit and Area Committees (paragraph 2.13);**
- 1.4 Consider the arrangements for communication with employees, and the 'Fit for the Future' programme supporting staff development (paragraphs 2.15 – 2.16);**
- 1.5 Agree the pilot year begins in January 2019, with a report to Committee after three, six and nine months and a report to Full Council after 12 months (paragraphs 2.23 and 2.25);**
- 1.6 Agree the areas of development on which the Committee would expect the unit to focus in its initial year (paragraph 2.26);**
- 1.7 Agree the principles laid out in the Statement of Ambition for Change (Appendix One); and**
- 1.8 Agree the Statement of Ambition is announced as part of the launch of Live Life Aberdeenshire in January 2019.**

#### **2 Background / Discussion**

- 2.1** Aberdeenshire Council's priorities include a commitment to improving health and wellbeing outcomes for its residents, particularly in the areas of childhood obesity and mental health and wellbeing. It is widely accepted that culture and sport activities can greatly improve quality of life and health outcomes for people who take part, supporting longer, healthier and happier lives.
- 2.2** There is a recognition that the council's culture and sport services have a unique relationship with users, operating in a fiercely competitive environment where a host of other leisure, health and lifestyle providers compete for the attention, and sometimes finances, of residents and visitors. In that environment, services need the support and authority to take decisions quickly, close to customers, and to manage their 'business' as efficiently and effectively as their competitors. There is considerable evidence that approach to customers and the quality of service, particularly the physical and online environments, can have a significant effect on the capacity of the services to

retain current users, and, critically, to attract people who are positively inclined to physical activity or cultural participation but who haven't yet taken part.

- 2.3 In this context, and noting the increasing pressure on public finances, Full Council, at its meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018, agreed to pilot a new way of delivering these services, requesting creation of a "business unit" with the objective of creating a bespoke operating environment for the culture and sport services, designed to best enable them to contribute to the Council's priority. The one-year pilot period is designed to facilitate initial learning, allowing further consideration of the most effective delivery model. At the end of the year options will include reverting to the status quo, continuing the pilot or exploring further development.
- 2.4 At its meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 the Communities Committee agreed to establish a Culture & Sport Sub-committee which comprised four elected members and four external members, with the intention that, once in place, the sub-committee would provide new ways of offering leadership and scrutiny to the Culture & Sport business unit, with a range of new perspectives and experiences brought to bear to support the sustainability of the services, and increased positivity. The Communities Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee which clearly sets out the delegations and the responsibilities to the Sub-Committee from Communities Committee.
- 2.5 This report reviews the progress to date and outlines proposals for implementing the changes required to develop the business unit.

### **Live Life Aberdeenshire**

- 2.6 In the initial report to Full Council it was proposed within the narrative that the business unit would trade as Aberdeenshire Culture & Sport. After further consideration, it is proposed that the Committee agrees that the Business Unit is called '**Live Life Aberdeenshire**' – a positive statement that establishes from the outset the purpose of the service in supporting people to best develop their most positive lifestyle choices. The name emphasises the unity of purpose across the services, feels and sounds completely new, and lends itself practically to branding.
- 2.7 The proposed name has been developed over a number of weeks working with interested parties and agreed ultimately by all those consulted. A new logo has been developed.
- 2.8 Under the Council's Scheme of Delegation, section 3.2, the Head of Customer Communication and Improvement has the delegated authority to "Manage and protect the corporate brand and reputation and approval of any subsidiary identities." In this instance, recognising the importance of the decision, the Head of Service has decided to remit the decision to the relevant committee. Full Council delegated to Communities Committee authority relating to "all lifelong learning and leisure matters", which would include the name.
- 2.9 For simplicity the rest of this report uses the name 'Live Life Aberdeenshire' (LLA).

## **Sub-committee development**

- 2.10 Members of the sub-committee were appointed, and following an interview process, a chair and vice-chair were selected by the Communities Committee in June. Since the summer recess, a series of eight induction and development meetings have taken place, with contributions from business support colleagues and input from the chair of SPORTA and Chief Executive of HighLife Highland, and the chair and General Manager of MacBi. Induction included information sessions on topics prioritised by the members (including Finance, Property, Procurement, etc) and tours to service facilities, visiting in pairs a suite of three venues in a day, seeing all the larger venues and meeting staff locally.

## **Detailed design phase**

- 2.11 Since the Council and Committee decisions in April-June, the Head of Lifelong Learning & Leisure has been leading a detailed design phase – agreeing proposals for specific changes to approach, process and regulation required to give effect to that instruction. A cross-service workshop was held during the summer, leading to the establishment of a Project Board, chaired by the Director of Education & Children’s Services, with a remit to lead the organisational changes required to establish a bespoke, positive operational context. The Project Board directs a project team and project manager.
- 2.12 The development of LLA’s policies and approaches, the alignment and development of staff with the needs of the business unit and the new strategies, and the development of the business and marketing plan is led by the Head of Lifelong Learning & Leisure and service managers as part of the normal work of the service.

## **Governance**

- 2.13 Considerable energy during the detailed design phase is given over to how the new arrangements will work to leverage the maximum benefit to the project. The Council’s priority for supporting improved health and wellbeing has ensured there is a focus on the culture and sport services. The Communities Committee has been a key driver in establishing the shared understanding that these services have a considerable role to play in early intervention designed to support Aberdeenshire’s citizens living happier, healthier and independent lives. This has included early consideration of the potential for revenue and capital investment.
- 2.14 As parent committee the Communities Committee has a power to review the workings of the sub-committee. In addition to the formalities of governance, and the clear guidance of the Culture and Sport & Physical Activity Strategies agreed by Council in April 2018, it is anticipated that the Communities Committee would wish to indicate significant areas where it would anticipate a more pro-active role in discussions. These would include:

- Significant financial and policy developments
  - The estate portfolio
  - Proposals for significant Capital developments
- 2.15 The ambitious and unique nature of the project is such that there is continuing learning at all stages. The Chair and Vice-chair of the Committee and Sub-committee have agreed to meet on a monthly basis, facilitated by officers, to ensure good liaison and communication between the two bodies, and to reflect and act on any ongoing learning which might benefit the pilot.
- 2.16 The sub-committee has considered how best to work differently to most effectively take advantage of the unique skills and experiences of its members. It has been agreed to continue developmental sessions which give all members the forum for bringing their expertise and fresh perspectives to bear to support the services' development. Formal sessions would be used for consideration of reports and scrutiny of performance. In working differently a more engaged, creative and collaborative way of developing ideas and approaches between sub-committee members and officers is anticipated.
- 2.17 In setting a new tone for the services, it is recognised that people are most likely to be served best by local services which are at the heart of their communities, connected to and collaborating with partners who share similar objectives. In this context there is an important role for Area Committees and ward members, who have a wealth of experience and knowledge. It is proposed to explore with Area Committee chairs regular liaison meetings with LLA's local managers and central support staff, with the objective of developing open two-way communication, sharing data, testing ideas, sharing local intelligence and providing a collaborative forum to best benefit local communities.
- 2.18 LLA is an integral part of the Council, with the Chief Officer continuing to report to the Director of Education & Children's Services. As such it is anticipated that the "client function" would primarily be about the management of the client account within ECS Resources. Any specific discussions with business support colleagues would be most efficiently dealt with by dialogue between relevant heads of service, as they are now.
- 2.19 Discussions will be ongoing to ensure that LLA has the flexibility to secure the most cost-effective range of services over time, which best support its development. This will include the option to secure services from a range of providers where this is most efficient for LLA, and this will be kept under ongoing review.
- 2.20 It would be the intention to provide updates to Communities Committee, as the parent committee, on the progress of developing LLA, in particular against any assessment criteria agreed by committee separately, and that this would be quarterly in the lead up to Full Council's review of the pilot early in 2020.

## Supporting Staff

- 2.21 During any change process, it is important to maintain good communication with employees to help people understand the changes themselves, the reasons for them and the way in which they will be implemented. During the detailed design phase there has been an ongoing communication programme with LLA managers and staff teams, including weekly online huddles for managers, monthly webinars open to all staff, and printed bulletins. Within this context the trade unions have been involved and are represented on the project board, and supported by HR&OD. Service Managers and the Head of Service have been touring facilities and existing staff meetings providing opportunities for discussion and questions.
- 2.22 Alongside the procedural and administrative changes being considered, there is likely to be a need for change to the culture and approach of the services; and to some degree, in the skills sets needed to deliver the ambitions for better outcomes for local communities. The Business Development Service Manager is focusing on developing a programme of staff engagement and development, called 'Fit for the Future'. This will include:
- A certified 'training passport' for all staff capturing clearly employees' routine training successes
  - An 'upskilling' programme, committing significant resources to training for employees to take advantage of the new opportunities likely to arise and mapping the skills requirements of the new unit
  - A staff conference – inspiring all stakeholders about the potential for culture and sport to support people to make changes which will deliver happier, healthier, longer independent lives.

## Branding

- 2.23 It is recognized that a new brand can be developed to have positive value for the Council, albeit that value is developed over time. The logo will be rolled out proportionately, ensuring its presence is visible and customers, staff and colleagues recognize that change has happened, but being reasonable in terms of the initial financial outlay.
- Staff uniform replacement has been reduced to a minimum in the year to date, with replacements being commissioned with the new logo.
  - Posters and vinyl stickers will be used to add to existing signage on and within buildings.
  - Stationery and business cards are relatively cheap, and stocks have been run down which will be replaced with new branding
  - Online presence – a new website and social media presences is considered essential both to the sales, marketing & communications functions, but also to establish the brand
- 2.24 Brand guidance is being developed by the Customer Communications & Improvement team to ensure that the Council's current corporate branding is used in a complementary way by LLA.

## **Launching 'Live Life Aberdeenshire'**

- 2.25 Although the process of making changes to LLA's bespoke operational context will continue behind the scenes throughout the pilot period (and in particular through the last quarter of 2018/19, in preparation for the new financial year) it is proposed that the pilot year begins in January 2019. This will be the public facing change point – where staff and customers will be publicly aware of the introduction of Live Life Aberdeenshire. This would mean that the anticipated point for assessing the pilot will be in December 2019, which will facilitate timely consideration by members of the options for the services for 2020/21. A separate report will be tabled with this committee outlining assessment criteria for the pilot year.
- 2.26 It is proposed to have a press launch for Live Life Aberdeenshire in mid-January, sharing the new branding, website and social media presence. The launch would publicise firstly the new name and logo, and the Council's Statement Of Ambition for LLA.
- 2.27 The second element of the launch would be to kick off publicity for a weekend of taster sessions and showcase activities in local libraries, museums and sports centres, at the end of January. Facilities not open that weekend would have some similar activities in the following week. Events would be publicised locally. Elected members and members of the sub-committee will be invited to attend any events of interest, and to participate in launch activities.

## **First Year Focus**

- 2.28 Following discussions between officers and the chairs and vice-chairs of the committee and sub-committee, there is an agreement that during its first year Live Life Aberdeenshire will focus on:
- Developing LLA "brand values"
    - customer first (inclusive, consultative, focus on customer excellence)
    - local (empowered local decision making & communications, collaborative & joined up)
    - Safe, healthy and a great place to work
  - Improving marketing
  - Improving digital services
  - Raising new funds from non-council sources
  - Positive impacts on health and wellbeing outcomes

## **A Statement of Ambition**

- 2.29 Embedding genuine and bold change can be difficult in any large organisation, where ways of working have developed over many years and which are perceived to work well in general. To best support the idea of a unique and significantly different ethos and environment for LLA, it is proposed to agree a Statement of Ambition. The Ambition is for improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and the statement includes a set of commitments to different ways of working to deliver on that ambition.

- 2.30 The Statement of Ambition is attached as Appendix One to this report, designed to capture the approach of the discussion in Full Council, Communities Committee and with officers during the detailed design phase. It addresses accountability and autonomy, and innovation and risk appetite.
- 2.31 During the pilot year, more detailed administrative changes will be considered and effected at management level to further effect change, in line with members' aspirations, and on the basis of an agreed way forward amongst officers, whilst ensuring compliance with the Scheme of Governance. It is anticipated that these will be routinely reviewed to continue refining and improving the new operating environment for the unit.
- 2.32 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments have been incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

### **3 Scheme of Governance**

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item in terms of Section C.6 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to library and museum services, sports, culture and heritage.

### **4 Implications and Risk**

- 4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because no specific group will be affected by the administrative changes being agreed as a result of this report.
- 4.2 There are no staffing and financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.3 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: Failure to identify the most effective ways of delivering culture and sport services may reduce the impact of the services and impair the capacity to deliver on the Council priority "Encourage active lifestyles and promote well-being with a focus on obesity & mental health". It could also impair the capacity to achieve the priority of "A Future Fit ECS Estate", the priority of "Support(ing) inclusive, Vibrant and Healthy Communities", as detailed on page 24 of the Strategic Risk Register pertaining to Education and Children's Services.
- 4.4 There are no Town Centre First Principle implications arising directly from this report, however the principles will inform the development of specific policy areas.

**Laurence Findlay**  
**Director of Education & Children's Services**





## Appendix One – Live Life Aberdeenshire: A Statement of Ambition

Aberdeenshire Council has agreed a corporate priority to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes for residents, and has established **Live Life Aberdeenshire** to deliver services in new ways, more responsive to the needs of local people, clubs and communities.

As a Council we agree to support **Live Life Aberdeenshire** to be innovative, bold and ambitious in delivering services differently.

As a result of this, the Council expects to see even greater successes in supporting people to live healthier, happier lives, and at the same time to see greater financial benefits from more entrepreneurial ways of managing services and centres.

We agree to three key principles which will define the organizational culture which will support change:

- Live Life Aberdeenshire (LLA) is a key strategic priority for the Council
- The Council believes that innovation and creative leadership best flourishes where staff have the greatest autonomy & accountability
- The Council believes that Live Life Aberdeenshire will most effectively be at the heart of, and best serve, our communities when it works in an open and collaborative way, engaging with local people and partners

To give effect to these principles, the Council agrees these six commitments:

1. We recognise that culture and sport are key services in delivering on Council priorities, and therefore Live Life Aberdeenshire is a key Council initiative. We believe that investment in the unit will deliver net financial improvement over time. **Aberdeenshire Council commits to positively support the cultural and operational changes required to establish LLA successfully, prioritising corporate resources when appropriate, and ensuring that the support provided by existing services continues.**
2. We believe that communities will benefit most when local managers are empowered to be creative and innovative in managing services; and that managers have the confidence to innovate when they know what is expected, have the freedom to make informed decisions and know that they will be supported in trying new things out. We recognise that sometimes, innovation doesn't deliver as planned, but agree that is worth trying, and learning from what didn't work to improve future innovation. However, sometimes when new things are tried and don't quite succeed as planned, there is a risk this can generate negative headlines or social media comment. **Aberdeenshire Council commits to support our staff to innovate, to learn from well-motivated change, and to keep on trying new ways of delivering better outcomes for people.**
3. We want services to take decisions quickly and close to customers. **Aberdeenshire Council commits to ensure that the Chief Officer of Live Life Aberdeenshire has the greatest practicable level of autonomy within the Council framework, and to encourage appropriate operational autonomy for local managers, to develop services in line with local**

**needs. Local managers, service managers and the Chief Officer will continue to be held to high standards of accountability to balance this additional autonomy. The Chief Officer will continue to report to the Director of Education and Children's Services and will remain part of the Corporate Leadership Group of the Council.**

4. **Aberdeenshire Council commits to ensure that, for the duration of the pilot period, the council's reporting and scrutiny will be high level and proportionate, exploring the potential benefits and risk from higher degrees of accountability and autonomy for senior managers.**
5. We believe that fleet-footed change and innovation should be encouraged, with managers knowing the needs and aspirations of their customers and communities, as a result of open sharing of information and ideas, and genuinely listening to people. And when decisions are taken well, there is great benefit from open, quick and local communication. **Aberdeenshire Council commits to support LLA's greater autonomy as long as it balanced by a commitment to the highest aspirations for engagement, communication and collaboration with local people, clubs and partner organisations.**
6. In order to give effect to these aspirations for change, we need to trial ways of working together differently, to find the most effective bespoke operating environment for Live Life Aberdeenshire, which supports the maximum entrepreneurial creativity amongst staff and managers at all levels, supporting LLA to deliver improved financial performance and health and wellbeing outcomes. **Aberdeenshire Council is committed to review how support is provided most effectively to LLA from within the Council.**