

PARTNERSHIPS PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 7th February 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Hugh Hunter (Chair), Siobhian Brown, Ian Cavana, Ian Davis and Arthur Spurling.

Apology: Councillor Chris Cullen.

Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; J. Cronin, Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure; W. Carlaw, Democratic and Governance Manager; J. Johnstone, Economic Development Manager; and E. Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

Also

Attending: Ayr Gaiety Theatre representation:- Jeremy Wyatt, Chief Executive; Vince Hope, Artistic Director; and Suzanne McLellan, Marketing and Audience Development Manager.

1. Declarations of Interest.

In terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillor Brown declared an interest in item 5 of this Minute entitled 'Ayr Gaiety Partnership Performance Report' as she was a Director of the Ayr Gaiety Partnership Board and advised that, as she did not perceive there was a conflict of interest, she would not leave the room when this item was being considered and would take part in discussions on this matter.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes of 22nd November 2017 ([issued](#)) were submitted and approved.

3. Action Plan and Work Programme.

There was submitted an Action Log and Work Programme ([issued](#)) for this Panel.

Various questions were raised by Members of the Panel in relation to the status and dates of some of the actions within the log. It was noted that Actions 1 and 3 would be incorporated within the report by Police Scotland to the next meeting of the Panel on 18th April 2018. Also, arrangements would be made for the outstanding Panel visit to the Sex Offenders team (Action 2). In terms of Action 5, a note was being prepared for circulation. Additionally, Action 6 would be covered during discussion of Item 5 on this Agenda.

The Panel, following discussion

Decided: to note the Action Log and Work Programme.

4. **South Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 26th January 2018 by the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure providing an update on the activity being undertaken by the Council in conjunction with VisitScotland.

The Economic Development Manager gave a presentation in relation to South Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland (VS) and commented on the role of VS and what was provided via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with South Ayrshire Council amounting to £30,000 for 2016/17 and 2017/18.

In relation to Action 6 of the Panel's log and work programme relating to lady golfers, he advised that this category was not specifically targeted as not many tour operators offered lady only golf tours. However, officers had been targeting an emerging German golf market which focused on golfing couples. The Economic Development Manager advised that he would be able to circulate this information to members as previously stated within the log.

Following questions, the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure and the Economic Development Manager advised

- (1) of Scottish Airshow profits and that a meeting with organisers would be taking place in due course to discuss this year's event;
- (2) on flights from Glasgow Prestwick Airport to other destinations and that the Airport constantly discussed routes with potential operators. In terms of potential flights from Prestwick to London again, there were concerns over capacity on routes to London since Edinburgh and Glasgow flights to London had recently been reinstated by Ryanair;
- (3) that, on the aims to increase:- visitor numbers; spend; and related employment, one way to maximise these aims would be, for example, promoting short breaks or day activities;
- (4) that South Ayrshire Council contributed more to VS as part of the SLA compared to East and North Ayrshire Councils primarily as a result of the greater proportion of visitors to this area. Officers added that they were satisfied with the outcomes as part of this Agreement. In relation to how £30,000 input compared to inputs from other councils Scotland wide, the Economic Development Manager would obtain and circulate an answer to Members of the Panel;
- (5) that, in terms of the advertising of South Ayrshire at the Air Show, advertising had been a Pan-Ayrshire activity but officers in South Ayrshire were looking at addressing South Ayrshire collateral for this year's event;
- (6) that, in relation to online booking for local accommodation, a campaign had previously been undertaken by the Scottish Government via Digital Scotland, however, there appeared to be reluctance from some tourist accommodation providers to embrace the digital approach;
- (7) that, in relation to the partnership campaign with P&O Ferries and whether there was scope for a partnership campaign with other ferry operators, the Economic Development Manager would look into this and provide information to Members of the Panel. The Economic Development Manager indicated that, although the 2016 joint working with P&O appeared successful in relation to the Golf Open, generally it was difficult to get tourists to stop off in South Ayrshire if they had a pre-planned route to follow;

- (8) of, in recognition of the difficulties with attracting stop offs and whether it would be better to promote South Ayrshire as a stop-over destination, the current work being developed to promote South Ayrshire as a walking and cycling destination. However, the Economic Development Manager indicated that potential visitors would again need to be targeted at the outset so that South Ayrshire became part of their planned stop-over destination route;
- (9) of the work being undertaken to tap into the tourism potential around the National Bowls event held at Northfield Bowling Club, recognised as a Centre of Excellence and how this product can be further marketed;
- (10) that, in terms of the potential for attracting the business tourism market, generally hotels used for this purpose needed to be of a certain size with facilities to hold conferences and events;
- (11) that, in relation to the discussion around the use of Vloggers and their potential impact and positive influences depending on their status within the social media arena, the Economic Development Manager would look at the number of vlogging "hits" and investigate ways in which this tool could be used to engage with a different / wider audience throughout the year as well as incorporating Burns activity as a modern approach to tourism;
- (12) that, in relation to the closure of the tourist information visitor centre in Ayr, there was a programme of closures across Scotland by VS in light of more people accessing information digitally. In terms of the Ayr centre, it was one of the least used by tourists and was primarily used by local residents. The Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure added that Council funding of £10,000 from the general tourism budget which had been used by VS for the office was now being utilised for digital work; and
- (13) that, in terms of the SLA outcomes outlined within the report, these had been met.

Having heard the Chair comment that it would have been beneficial for a representative from VS to be in attendance at this meeting for scrutiny purposes, the Economic Development Manager advised that unfortunately the Regional Director for Ayrshire and Arran, VS had been unable to attend this meeting but was happy to attend another at the invite of the Panel.

The Panel, following scrutiny of the activities undertaken

Decided: to note the contribution towards the delivery of the Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy 2012 - 2017.

5. Ayr Gaiety Partnership Performance Report.

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 22nd January 2018 by the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure inviting scrutiny of the performance of the Ayr Gaiety Partnership.

The Chair introduced and welcomed representatives from Ayr Gaiety Theatre to the meeting.

Thereon, the Gaiety Chief Executive gave a presentation outlining the range of activities which were being delivered by the Partnership as part of the agreement for Council funding and highlighted the key achievements for 2017/18.

The Chief Executive also referred to the recent announcement by Creative Scotland to cut funding from a number of organisations including Ayr Gaiety Theatre and outlined the impact of this decision for the Theatre such as the programme would be cut by 25% and there would be less of a development resource. Although this decision was being challenged and discussions were ongoing with Creative Scotland, the Chief Executive advised that, as an organisation, the Theatre would take an interim step back and deliver a reduced programme as well as continue to develop future plans.

A question was asked by a Member of the Panel in relation to whether the appraisal process undertaken by Creative Scotland as part of its decision-making on funding applications was known. The Chief Executive advised that this was not available at the moment although some feedback and assessment of the application had been provided. A further question was asked if Creative Scotland and the Theatre had a different interpretation of expected outcomes for the use of any funding and the Chief Executive responded and reported that for the sizeable audience that it attracted, the Theatre was one of the least funded organisations. Also, although the funding application for April 2017 was successful, the Theatre had been closed for most of that year for refurbishment.

In relation to how the Theatre could survive without this funding, the Chief Executive indicated that adjustments would be made to the programme in a bid to reduce expenditure and that officers would be working on funding applications to various bodies however there would not be time to develop new activities. The Theatre would also make use of the secured loan from the Council.

In terms of marketing initiatives, the Marketing and Audience Development Manager reported that she was raising the profile of the Theatre at the national level and was receiving support from the media with further work required to obtain support from policy-makers.

A suggestion was made as to whether the Theatre could live stream performances from London Theatres and it was noted that this had previously been considered as part of the original refurbishment plans but had not been pursued due to a proposal to develop a cinema complex in the Kyle Centre, Ayr. This proposal was abandoned, however, a recent announcement highlighted that there was a renewed interest to build a cinema complex at that location and, if successful, there would be an opportunity for a wider cultural approach to be adopted and to consider ideas such as this.

In relation to whether there was scope to take advantage of cruise ship passengers and attract them to the Theatre and also promoting Burns, the Chief Executive advised that he would explore this idea further. He also commented on some ongoing work with Ayr Renaissance which was looking at Burns themed activities.

The Panel, having scrutinised the performance of Ayr Gaiety Partnership

Decided: to note

- (1) the range of activities delivered as part of the agreement for Council funding; and
- (2) the current position and ongoing discussions with Creative Scotland relating to any funding options.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.