

PARTNERSHIPS PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 6 February 2019 at 10.00 a.m.

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

Attending: D. Gillies, Director – Place; W. Carlaw, Service Lead - Democratic Governance; C. Monaghan, Service Lead – Community Services and Facilities; K. Carr, Executive Manager – Place; J. Johnstone, Service Lead – Economic Development; and E. Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

Also

Attending: Jeremy Wyatt, Chief Executive, and Robbie Gordon, Creative Learning Co-ordinator, Ayr Gaiety Theatre; and Gordon Smith, Regional Director, Ayrshire and Arran, Visit Scotland.

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 4 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 21 November 2018 ([issued](#)) were submitted and approved.

3. Action Log and Work Programme.

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

The Panel noted that an update in relation to Action 12/09/18-2 – Hydro Scheme on the River Ayr had recently been circulated with this action now completed. Also, the Chair reminded members of a briefing taking place this afternoon on the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements and encouraged members to attend as this briefing would incorporate information regarding the Sex Offenders Team as outlined in Action 27/06/17-1 and, therefore, could be marked as complete.

The Director – Place commented on the work programme and indicated that this would be populated as the year went on.

Decided: to note the action log and work programme.

4. **Ayr Gaiety Performance Report.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 31 January 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director – People inviting members to scrutinise the performance of the Ayr Gaiety Partnership as part of the agreement for council funding in delivering the activities required. The Service Lead – Community Services and Facilities introduced the report and outlined the financial support provided by the Council.

Thereon, the Chair introduced and welcomed Jeremy Wyatt, Gaiety Chief Executive and Robbie Gordon, Creative Learning Co-ordinator from Ayr Gaiety Theatre to the meeting. The Gaiety Chief Executive then proceeded to give a presentation outlining the range of activities which were being delivered by the Partnership as part of the agreement for Council funding. He also highlighted key achievements for 2018/19 and ongoing challenges such as the costs associated with the running of the building, future planning and forthcoming events.

Various questions were asked by Members of the Panel and responses provided as follows:-

- (1) in relation to students volunteering at the Gaiety and whether the UWS / Ayrshire College provided any financial assistance for this, the Gaiety Chief Executive advised that, initially, the Partnership arrangement regarded the volunteering approach as an opportunity to support volunteers in gaining qualifications. Subsequently, this arrangement has led to increased ticket sales and additional volunteering as well as the free use of equipment from the University and College with the intention of this partnership arrangement being about supporting young people into work rather than financial support being provided;
- (2) in respect of the plans for 2019/20 and securing an increase in audiences of around 5% for commercial programmes, it was noted that shows and events were programmed that would ensure seat sales and, therefore, raise income;
- (3) in terms of assistance from the Council to seek and secure funding opportunities, it was noted that the Gaiety Partnership worked closely with relevant teams within the Council for this purpose and the Gaiety Chief Executive also highlighted the work being undertaken to align Partnership objectives with that of the Council;
- (4) a question was asked as to whether there was any evidence to suggest that the Young Theatre group touring outwith South Ayrshire was in turn bringing people into Ayr and the Creative Learning Co-ordinator advised of a number of reciprocal visits being made to the Gaiety as a result of these tours. He also commented on the previous year's National Festival of Youth Theatre which had been attended by over 200 young people from all over Scotland. This year's weekend event would be bigger involving up to 300 young people aged between 14-25 which, not only generated footfall and spending within Ayr, it also provided an opportunity to put Ayr onto the national and international map. It was noted that details of this forthcoming summer event would be circulated to members;
- (5) in terms of the breakeven position of 300 seats per performance, the Gaiety Chief Executive advised that this can vary depending on the performance but that it is an estimate;
- (6) in relation to the rural touring programme, it was noted that any fees raised were either used for administrative costs or sometimes given to the relevant community group;

- (7) in terms of advertising, it was noted that brochures were produced or people could refer to the website for information;
- (8) in relation to the estimated economic impact for the Town of around £1.8m, a question was asked on how this was measured and evidenced. The Gaiety Chief Executive gave a brief outline of the calculation and said that he would supply further detail for circulation to members;
- (9) in respect of the comment made by the Gaiety Chief Executive to increase the value of the economic impact, it was noted that work was ongoing and, in conjunction with the Council, to increase this value;
- (10) a question was asked relating to the secure loan arrangement and it was noted that monies were being raised each year to pay back this loan which had been used for refurbishment costs; and
- (11) in terms of the reduction in Council funding within the three year funding package, the Gaiety Chief Executive explained ways in which this funding gap would be closed. It was noted that the current financial position showed a modest surplus.

A discussion took place in relation to the proposals for hosting the first in-house pantomime this year. In answer to questions, the Gaiety Chief Executive advised that school seats were already being booked and that by bringing the pantomime in-house a different and more beneficial booking approach with schools could be undertaken.

The Panel, having scrutinised the performance of Ayr Gaiety Partnership

Decided: to note the range of activities delivered as part of the agreement for Council funding.

5. **South Ayrshire Council and Visit Scotland.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 31 January 2019 by the Director – Place providing an update on the activity undertaken by the Council with Visit Scotland.

The Service Lead – Economic Development introduced the report and outlined that tourism was very much a partnership approach alongside Visit Scotland.

Thereon, the Chair introduced and welcomed Gordon Smith, Regional Director, Ayrshire and Arran, Visit Scotland to the meeting. The Regional Director then proceeded to give a presentation on the national and local context of Visit Scotland and outlined the following activity:-

- stimulate new and sustainable growth in the visitor economy and the power of this economy;
- marketing partnership activity involving the three Ayrshire Authorities, what this consisted of and the use of digital technology;
- campaign results and other marketing opportunities such as golf and film and TV tourism;
- engagement with South Ayrshire and events' support; and
- planning for 2020's themed year around coasts and waters.

Various questions were asked by Members of the Panel and responses provided as follows:-

- (1) in relation to visitor numbers in South Ayrshire at table 4.6 of the report compared to the joint Ayrshire figures contained within table 4.5 of the report, it appeared that South Ayrshire had triple the visitors with less economic impact. On this basis, a member asked how the other two authorities had achieved a much bigger economic impact. It was noted that the Service Lead – Economic Development would provide further information and evidence to members on this position;
- (2) a similar question was asked about the full time equivalent tourism employment level relating to South Ayrshire which was higher than the other two areas and Service Lead – Economic Development would provide further information and evidence to members on this position;
- (3) a question was asked about the position with Prestwick Airport and it was noted that Visit Scotland worked with international airlines, carriers and airports. The Regional Director further commented that Visit Scotland was part of a consultative group and that he would look at this further although airlines had a choice in terms of their operation;
- (4) in terms of the presentation and the 41% of Ayrshire accommodation businesses that were not online bookable, it was noted that a forthcoming event would try and address this position. It was also something that needed to be addressed nationally;
- (5) it was noted that booking accommodation via AirBnb was a relatively new feature within the tourism landscape and that this approach was being embraced. Visit Scotland was now in conversation with the organisation;
- (6) in relation to the activity for direct mail drops, the Regional Director explained the role of the database to decide on the focus and the promotion. He said that he would look at the process for highlighting events on google since a member pointed out that some of these were not particularly appealing and a 'top ten' approach might be more suitable;
- (7) a question was asked in relation to physical visits rather than virtual landings on a website and the Regional Director advised that he did not have the specifics as this approach was about promoting the area but he could ascertain if there was an increase in the number of visitors to the region;
- (8) a question was asked in relation to how many business missions that South Ayrshire had participated in and the Regional Director thought that this was around ten. It was noted that the Service Lead – Economic Development would confirm the number of business missions and also provide information on outcomes to be circulated to members;
- (9) in relation to how would local groups contact Visit Scotland to promote local events, the Regional Director commented on partnership working arrangements and also that Visit Scotland were in the process of employing a person to make local connections. It was noted that the events platform was a free resource and documents were available on the Events Scotland website; and

- (10) a question was asked in relation to the proposals around the tourist tax and staff car parking charges and subsequent impacts and the Regional Director advised that Visit Scotland report to the Scottish Government and was also a stakeholder. He added that the consultation closed on 25 January 2019 and the evidence gathered would inform the next stage. The Service Lead – Economic Development advised that, at the moment, there was no analysis or detail available and it would be for the Council to decide its course of action, as and when required.

Having heard the Chair comment that it would be helpful if future reports could provide greater detail on the economic impact for Ayr, 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.

The meeting ended at 11.15 a.m.