

COVERING REPORT

SUBJECT: **INFORMING THE FUTURE OF KEY LOCAL SERVICES – LEISURE, EVENTS, OUTDOORS, CULTURE & YOUTH**

MEETING: **Economy and Development Select**

DATE: **30th September 2015**

WARDS AFFECTED: **ALL**

A recent addition to Monmouthshire County Council's priorities is the desire to maintain locally accessible services aligning with our wider vision of creating sustainable and resilient communities. However with the current backdrop of austerity measures, there is a risk to the continued delivery of non-discretionary local services. This risk is particularly pertinent in the Tourism, Leisure and Culture and Youth Service areas where local services are operating in an environment where limited funding is available yet the community still wish to see the delivery of these local services maintained.

Historic operating data and a recent service area review commissioned with Amion Consulting at a cost of £30,000, has identified a need to rationalise the current working model and improve practices within the Culture Service area. The purpose of the review was to identify future delivery options and opportunities within the overall objective of maintaining, improving and developing services in order that they become more self-reliant and resilient.

However the wider austerity backdrop now defines that minor tweaking of services will not solve the significant budget deficit issue. There is therefore a need to look at the wider services of Tourism, Leisure and Youth Services with a view to developing an alternative service delivery model that will not only meet the Council's priority of maintaining locally accessible services but will also meet the needs of the community whilst supporting the ethos of inclusive public sector service delivery.

A requirement has been identified to undertake one detailed and comprehensive appraisal of the options relating to providing a sustainable, viable and vital future for Leisure, Events, Culture and Youth. This wider review will require a release of £50,000 worth of additional investment from the Invest to Re-design Fund in order to finance the supplementary work now identified and to create some of the capacity required internally to mobilise this significant piece of work.

The brief for the piece of work is currently in development and will be signed off by the Cabinet Member prior to release. The brief will specify that a business strategy emerges to include all aspects of financial planning, asset considerations, governance, structures and accountability along with a fully-costed business plan that is able to inform and shape medium-term delivery and apply itself to the stretching targets outlined in the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan. It is important that the review itself is not undertaken by an employee of the Council since the need for impartiality and a fundamentally new and sustainable model of operational delivery, is the key outcome. It is anticipated that this piece of work will be finalised in readiness for commencement of the first wave of activity in 2016/17 in order to meet the c£400k budget target.