

Portfolio Holder Update

for Corporate and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Panel
26th September 2024



Key actions since last Cabinet meeting

Accounts Closure 2023/24

The 2023/24 accounts were closed on the 24 June, as planned and are published on the councils website. External Audit have commenced their audit, expected to be completed by the end of the calendar year.

Current key actions and events

Budget performance for Quarter 1 of 2024/25; although this will be discussed later on tonight's agenda, it is fair to say that the administration has started the year off very favourably which is already enabling the council to tackle service challenges creatively.

Harborough Innovation Centre and Harborough Enterprise Centre; the occupancy rate for the HIC is now at 100% with the HEC having an occupancy rate of 88%; this is ahead of where expected.

Market Hall; Footfall in July was 7.7% above the same month in 2023. There have been some changes in units over the summer but by the beginning of September occupancy will be at 100% for the fixed units. Procurement is underway for the market hall lift modernisation and for essential roof works to the building.

Plowmans Yard; work is progressing well on the redevelopment of the three flats at the site.

War Memorial, the Square Market Harborough; discussions with respective contractors are ongoing to ensure sympathetic cleaning of the listed memorial and the introduction of an overlay slate plaque to the existing weathered inscription. Work expected to start mid-September.

Feasibility work; there are ongoing feasibility projects underway in respect of UKSPF grant applications for various buildings including Airfield Farm Community Facilities Building, land in Welland Park formerly used for bowls and improvement work to the first floor front elevation of 19/21 The Square (Tesco Stores).

Redevelopment of Market Harborough and Lutterworth Leisure Centres; at this time the capital budgets for the redevelopment are broadly on-budget, there is a slight overspend but it is within agreed limits.

Resignation of the Councils Deputy 151 Officer; Carolyn Bland has resigned from her position at Deputy 151 Officer, she has been a long standing leader of the finance team. I am

sure that Cabinet would like to join me and express our thanks to Carolyn for all her help over the past years and wish her every success in the future.

Key decisions coming forward for the future

2025/26 Budget Setting; services are now working to develop their service proposals, which will be discussed with the s.151 Officer and Deputy Chief Executive during mid-September in respect of finance and service planning propositions.

Sale of 4, Roman Way; sadly over the past few weeks all offers for the building have been withdrawn. The summer is a bad time for selling or buying property. Future sales options will be considered later into the Autumn.

Clarification sought on Harborough District Leisure Trust's use of funds

In his update at Cabinet on Monday 9 September 2024, Cllr Graves, Portfolio Holder for Finance called on Harborough District Leisure Trust to share with him, residents and the council the destination of £105,000 of public funds as at the end of 2019/20.

Cllr Graves said: "I have received multiple enquiries about the £105,000 remaining funds left over in the 'old' Harborough District Leisure Trust, after it stopped trading around 1 April 2019. This Trust was set up by Harborough District Council to manage the previous leisure contract with the external contractor and started operating from 2009/10.

"The £105,000 was built up gradually over a number of years during the initial contract. The source of the money is from the general public, who paid into the till, to gain access to leisure centre facilities in both Market Harborough and Lutterworth, and also the district council that paid into the Trust on a regular basis as part of the contract.

"The enquiries I have received from residents have ranged from curious interest and simple requests for reassurance, to one that has provided some concerning information. I have tried to verify such information through normal council processes over a very long period of time, but the Trust has refused to provide the details of the groups and organisations that have benefitted from their dispersal of the funds (and to what amount), and my patience has run out.

"Harborough District Council has written several, highly encouraging letters to the Leisure Trust seeking this information. In the last correspondence, the council said it wished to celebrate the success of any funding grants to local charities, groups or organisations, but this has again gone unanswered. I am now calling on the Trust to publicly declare where the Trust money has been spent. I am sure we would all like to know as I do not think it an unreasonable request."

