

North Somerset Council

Report to the Community and Corporate Organisation Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 4 March 2021

Subject of Report: Winter Gardens Community Board Update

Town or Parish: Weston Town Council

Officer/Member Presenting: Lorraine Bush, Policy and Partnerships Development Officer

Key Decision: No

Reason: Winter Gardens Community Board Annual update

Recommendations

- 1 That the panel considers and notes the approach taken by the Community Board to support community usage of the Winter Gardens once pandemic restrictions have been lifted.
2. That the panel considers and notes the Annual report of the Community Board published in the autumn of 2020 (appendix 1) and provides feedback as appropriate.

1. Summary of Report

1.1 This covering report seeks to update elected members on the continued work of the Winter Gardens Community Board which was established as a result of specific clauses in the Legal Transfer Agreement between North Somerset Council and Weston College in early 2016.

1.2 The annual report of the board was published in October 2020 and is attached for members consideration as appendix 1. This report was written in the context of the current pandemic demonstrating the impact on business as usual and the approach being considered to enable a sustainable future for the facility.

2. Policy

2.1 The Councils Corporate Plan 2020/24 has several priorities that apply to the Winter Gardens iconic status within Weston-super-Mare and the commitment of the Community Board to ensure community access and usage continues to flourish.

These include:

- A thriving and sustainable place
 - a great place for people to live, work and visit
 - an attractive place for business investment and sustainable growth
- An open and enabling organisation
 - engage with and empower our communities
 - collaborate with partners to deliver the best outcomes

2.2 In particular, the Winter Gardens Community Board contributes to the following actions within the Corporate Plan:

- Flourishing arts, culture and heritage sector supporting inclusive growth and placemaking and healthier communities.
- 'North Somerset recognised as a key part of the regional visitor economy with places to visit across the year and throughout the day.

3. Details

3.1 The Winter Gardens Community Board was established as a result of specific clauses within the legal transfer agreement agreed by the Council and Weston College. The purpose of the board is to 'oversee and assist with the effective use of the property for community purposes'.

3.2 The board which includes representatives from a range of community interests alongside the Weston Town Council, North Somerset Council and Weston College is chaired by a North Somerset resident who volunteers to support the involvement of the community in the development of the Winter Gardens.

3.3. Board meetings are scheduled quarterly with actions and work programmes developed between meetings as appropriate. The Terms of Reference that guide the boards work requires the Council to consider the Community Board's annual report each year. The Community and Corporate Organisation Scrutiny Panel may recall considering the 2018/19 Annual report in July 2019

3.4 Since July 2019 the Community Board continued to meet quarterly until the impact of the pandemic required the closure of the Winter Gardens in March 2020. The last event held at the Winter gardens was a high-profile BBC Question Time episode one week prior to the first lockdown.

3.5 Up until the point of closure the Community Board continued to work on exploring the establishment of a 'Friends of Weston Winter Gardens' Charity but this has now been put on hold as it became apparent that that the priority would be to rebuild community usage as we work towards recovering from the impact of Covid 19.

3.6 The Business community working group which had previously been very successful was also put on hold to enable it to align activity with a recovery position.

3.7 During this unsettled period the Winter Gardens continued to look at options for reopening when restrictions were eased but the unpredictability of pandemic has made this difficult. As with many venues of this kind, bookings have needed to be rescheduled or refunded as the impact of the Covid has emerged.

3.8 In the interim, the Ballroom has been used for the performing arts curriculum to allow social distancing. The room has also been used to enable exams to take place during November 2020.

3.9 The college worked closely with the Council to help us develop a lateral flow Covid testing facility at the Winter Gardens for our staff.

3.10 The Community Board held its AGM virtually in October 2020. This meeting signed off the annual report attached in Appendix 1 and agreed recommendations of how it would work together to support the reinstatement of the Winter Gardens as a prestigious sea-front location for the town that provides a range of community events post pandemic.

3.11 To support this recovery period Weston College have undertaken a review of its business operating model to help achieve a more sustainable position post pandemic. Experienced Consultants who have experience in the hospitality sector were engaged to help with this work and the findings of the review will be considered by the Community Board later this year.

4. Consultation

4.1 The Community board brings together a range of stakeholders to oversee and improve community access to the Winter Gardens.

4.2 Consultation with voluntary and community groups about best practice methods to improve community access is undertaken by board members when appropriate.

5. Financial Implications

None

Costs

Not applicable

Funding

There are no funding implications for the Council.

4. Legal Powers and Implications

Not applicable

5. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Not applicable

6. Risk Management

6.1 The risks to the sustainability of hospitality sector have been substantial during the Covid 19 crisis. Weston College have endeavoured to ensure that the space is used to best effect while closed to the public. They have also applied for government funding support where it has been applicable. Recovery plans are being developed and the Community Board will contribute to these by assisting with re-establishing confidence and the use of the Winter Gardens by the community.

Equality Implications

No – the purpose of the board is to work with partners and community representatives to ensure equal opportunities to access the Winter Gardens facilities

7. Corporate Implications

None

8. Options Considered

Not applicable

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Winter Gardens Community Advisory Board Report 2019 - 2020

Background Papers:

Decision of the Executive Member for Human Resources, Asset Management and Finance
with advice from the Section 151 Officer of the Council

<https://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/14-15-CSD-140.pdf>