

# Portfolio Holder Statements 2021-22

Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, Councillor Jane March

## Portfolio Responsibilities

### Service Areas:

- Culture, leisure and the arts
- Assembly Hall Theatre and the Ice Rink
- The Amelia Scott
- Parks and grounds maintenance
- Sports and leisure centres
- Community grants
- Customer access
- Cemetery and crematorium

### Priority Projects:

- The Amelia Scott
- Creating new sports facilities
- Leisure Management Contract
- Grounds Maintenance Contract

### Partnerships:

- Cultural and Learning Hub Board

### Plans and Strategies:

- Sports Facilities Strategy
- Cultural Strategy

## Additional Responsibilities

### Other posts held:

- Vice Chairman Investigation and Disciplinary Committee
- Amelia Scott Member Oversight Panel (ASMOP)
- Communities and Economic Development Cabinet Advisory Board
- Covid-19 Panel

## Significant changes in the portfolio or associated policies or projects over the past year

- The Covid pandemic has affected many of the services within my portfolio particularly the provision of Leisure Facilities, the Assembly Hall Theatre, the Ice Rink and the construction of the Amelia Scott. Whilst many of these venues have had to close for prolonged periods our services to customers at the Gateway and at the Crematorium & Cemetery have continued in a Covid safe way.
- During the year staff Gateway have worked exceedingly hard supporting vulnerable residents, our Leisure and Grounds maintenance teams have worked hard with our contractors to make sure facilities open safely within government guidance, and officers across the Council have ensured that despite some delays and cost increases the construction of the Amelia Scott has continued throughout this incredibly challenging period. They have done this on top of providing their normal services and I am especially grateful.

## **Progress on current ongoing projects or significant workstreams within the portfolio**

**The Amelia Scott** - Despite the challenges of Covid, the impact upon the supply chain and the availability of materials and the challenges of a complex site the contractor Willmott Dixon Interiors has worked extremely hard to complete the base build which we believe will be substantially complete by the 5th August and that any residual works should be manageable to allow the Fit-out contract to commence from 16th August achieving a completion of the capital works by the end of this year.

Following the completion of the Capital Works, there is a three months window to complete the collections and library redisplays together with all the other tasks required to get the Amelia ready for public use.

This Amelia is a unique project and a significant undertaking that has happened during one of the most challenging times the Country has faced (in peacetime?). The Amelia Scott building will preserve and enhance the listed buildings whilst providing new iconic spaces and galleries for all our residents and visitors to enjoy. The new education suite will help deliver quality learning outcomes alongside schools and colleges. The café space and courtyard will be a meeting place in the heart of the town. There will be new kilns and silver smithing facilities and new Gallery's to display the standing collection and a new exhibition space for visiting exhibitions. For me the icing on the cake will be seven new artists commissions that will integrate with the fabric of the building and be attractions in their own right.

Despite all the challenges I am confident that the new Amelia Scott building will be an exemplar of excellence and will herald the recovery of the Town and the Borough. I would like to thank all members for their support.

**Leisure & Grounds maintenance contracts** – work is underway to review these two important contracts. The pandemic has impacted upon both industries to varying degrees. Officers are currently reviewing short and longer term options for the provision of both services that will take into consideration service levels, cost, the current market and our commitment to net Carbon zero by 2030. A report on the Leisure contract has recently come to the Communities Cabinet and a report on grounds maintenance will come forward in September.

**Creating new sports facilities** - Work continues to progress along side the local plan to explore the provision of a sports hub at Hawkenbury.

## **Plans for future policy or projects**

It would not be prudent to consider any new projects during this year as the country, the borough and the Council seek to recover from Covid. The focus of the portfolio will be to open the Amelia Scott, protect the current services in the short term and plan for the longer-term strategic options for leisure and grounds maintenance being mindful of our aspiration to be net carbon neutral by 2030.

Councillor Jane March

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