

Reports from Members on Outside Organisations – Chard Museum

Purpose of the Report

To introduce reports from members appointed to outside organisations in Area West.

Public Interest

Each year Area West Committee appoints local Councillors to serve on outside bodies (local organisations) in Area West. During the year Councillors make a report on the achievements of those organisations and other relevant issues.

Recommendations

That the reports are noted.

Background

To replace “Reports from members on outside organisations” as a generic standing agenda item it was agreed at the August 2012 meeting to include specific reports about each organisation in the Committee’s forward plan.

Members were appointed to serve on outside bodies at the June 2019 meeting.

Reports

Reports can be verbal or written. There is no standard format, but if possible they include an explanation of the organisations aims, their recent activities, achievements and any issues of concern.

This month the member reports are:

Chard & District Museum – Councillor Jenny Kenton

Financial Implications

None

Background Papers

None



Chard Museum

SSDC appointed representative: Cllr Jenny Kenton

Although this last year has been difficult for the Museum as far as allowing visitors through the doors it has given officers and volunteers a chance to take a look at the future of it. With the help of a grant from SW museums development they have changed their status to a charity with an incorporated CIO, this means less personal responsibility for individual trustees. It is also more able to access support and funding through trust funds and other such funding. They have also secured a grant to help the trustees to understand the financial implications of taking over the building from SSDC in the future and how to make the building work as a thriving community hub rather than just a display of artefacts.

I did meet with the chairman in the summer socially distanced in the courtyard of the museum, more recently this has been done by zoom. While there I did notice that the museum had taken delivery of a rather large bell which had literally been sawn off and dumped in the yard. I thought it would be pertinent to bring this to the committee's attention as this was actually the bell from the former Brecknell Willis site which now houses the new Lidl's building. I was very keen to preserve this part of Chard's industrial heritage having lived quite close to the factory for many years. It would seem that the answer was to take a saw to it, reducing the piece of history to little more than a few splinters of wood and a bell with no current use and it is difficult to see what the museum can now use it for. It struck me that we should consider the implications of what we wish for or plan better what is to happen to these things.

They were able to access the leisure and hospitality grant from the Government at the beginning of last April which enabled them to upgrade their online presence, (bookings for visits can now be made online) as well as a new website, virtual museum and online shop. You are now able to access stories and snippets of Chard history online at their website. There have been many events which have been postponed during the last year including a Christmas tree festival and a community play entitled Canalmania, hopefully in the not so distant future the museum will be able to bring these plans to fruition. Although they have upped their game in the digital world they do still have a core group of supporters (my mother is one) who are probably elderly who have no online presence and they are focussing on how to engage with these 42 members without breaking the bank in postage.

Between August and lockdown last year the museum was one of the few locally that managed to reopen for a short period, bookings only, and in groups of 6 at the maximum, 16 guided tours of the museum took place in August last year and feedback from those tours was that the visitors really enjoyed being shown around the museum by the volunteers and benefitted from their vast experience. It is currently closed but hopes to reopen in June.



South Somerset
District Council

In summing up it would seem that although Chard museum hasn't been able to open to many customers in this last year it has used the time wisely to modernise and digitalise its exhibits in order to weather the future storms that may come.
