

REPORT FROM CLLR PHIL JORDON – RTC REPRESENTATIVE TO ASPIRE

As a non voting representative on the Board of Trustees at Aspire - a role agreed by Full Council following a three year funding grant to Aspire from RTC - I have now attended my second Board meeting and from which a brief report on the current position insofar as RTC should be aware comes.

As you may be aware, Heath is stepping down from the CE role at Aspire for personal progression elsewhere and is set to leave at the end of December. From September Heath will be at Aspire for two days a week whilst the new CE, Trevor Nicholas, works a three month notice with current employment. Trevor will start as Aspire around mid October and Heath will continue on one day a week as support until the end of December when he will leave entirely.

There are ongoing reviews of staffing budgets and a tight financial management is clearly in place. A recent decision will see book keeping brought 'in house' and the 'Quicken' software used ensuring speed and accuracy going forward.

Recently, a soft play area was installed in the main building and that will see a phased start up usage after necessary checks and policies are implemented. In general terms, the upstairs of Aspire is used as social enterprise and downstairs as community support services.

Aspire continue to deliver great community success outcomes and sales of restored bikes have rocketed in six months to over £4,000 of income. The creative hub, including the music studio facility, are in constant use by a wide section of our community - sometimes being used constantly from 8am until 8pm at night.

Following the IWC decision to partner with the Salvation Army on homelessness, Aspire now refer people on Fellowship House and have donated all of their tents and sleeping bags to the Salvation Army for onward distribution.

Financially, Aspire continue to work within their income/outgoing parameters and deliver income producing activities with funding/grant applications to maintain community support activities.

For this year, the RTC proportion of the three year grant amounting to £15,000 has enabled Aspire to successfully match fund and attract an additional £24,940 towards building, environmental and play frame costs. This attracted match funding is likely to rise even further before the end of the financial year as grant applications make their way through the funding systems.

Aspire already working on substantial bids that are match funded from next year's £15,000 of RTC grant funding.

This delivers not only the successful matched funding grants - so around £10,000 extra income already this financial year with increases in the pipeline - but it releases, in principle, the original matched funding of £15,000 plus a further £15,000 which would have otherwise been needed and used for this purpose. When calculated as social impact value the figures are impressive and could approach £250,000 value during a whole year. A report calculating and indentifying such social value will be produced and included in Aspire annual accounts at the end of the 2019 financial year.

One recent set back, however, was a withdrawal of a pledge from the CCG to fund some mental health services for around £7,000. This came as a complete surprise to Aspire and they have had to cease those planned specific services for the time being.

The RTC precise grant spend (and after used as matched funding investment amount) has been utilised to pay £8,000 towards utilities, £1,000 towards energy reduction measures and £6,000 towards the play frame build costs.

Phil Jordan
Chair of Finance