

**REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR TOURISM AND
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT (INCLUDING PUBLIC REALM)
TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
ON WEDNESDAY, 22 FEBRUARY 2017**

Councillor Whittle reported that since assuming his Executive responsibilities he has been familiarising himself with his portfolio which includes the council's involvement in Visit Isle of Wight (VIOW), the Island's destination management organisation. He also noted that he has had also had several meetings with senior officers. He would like to take the opportunity to thank Councillor Shirley Smart, the previous portfolio holder for her hard work in the role and her dedication as a member of the board of VIOW over the last few years.

Councillor Whittle has also reported that he attended a helpful and productive meeting with Visit Isle of Wight and council officers which provided opportunity to better understand the current position with regards to the tourism levy that has been introduced to support growth and prosperity for Island businesses and the role of the council as the collection agent. It was noted that whilst a significant proportion of businesses have paid their levy, there remains a small number who are yet to pay, which has unfortunately resulted in the need to determine liability to pay through the magistrates court to enable debt recovery to take place. It is clear that there are significant benefits that can be gained from paying the levy but not all businesses may fully understand what those benefits are. As a result Visit Isle of Wight will be providing a series of workshops for businesses, which if attended and payment made, will result in any court costs incurred being waived for the first year.

Councillor Whittle has also met with the head of Commercial Services within the council and together they have been preparing the report for the Newport Harbour Revision Order which will go before the Executive Committee on 9 March 2017.

He has also been keen to understand the pricing structure for commercial services and how these ensure that the council continues to provide good value facilities for residents in the most cost effective way.

He has advised that a snapshot of activities from our leisure centres indicates:

- Fitness classes
In January 12,321 attendances at fitness classes at 1Leisure.
- Memberships – new sign-ups
854 people signed up to memberships in January.
- Memberships – yearly growth
Year on year a 14.52 per cent growth in membership from January 2016 to 2017. In numbers this was 5,393 to 6,176.
If gold memberships alone are considered, the growth was even more pronounced, totalling 19.90 per cent from 4,141 to 4,965.

- **Swimming lessons**
There are currently a total of 1,092 children in swimming lessons. The Heights has 496 and Medina has 596. (These totals are only four each away from being far more noteworthy and, as soon as we reach that, a press release will be written.)
- **Activ8**
Today there are 64 eight to 13 year olds booked in at Leisure Medina for the Activ8 half term activity programme. Indicatively this will lead to 300 attendances over the half term period.

In terms of the current sale of 20 beach huts in Colwell Bay, Councillor Whittle reports that there were 64 expressions of interest resulting in 59 follow up calls, of that six are currently proceeding with the purchase, 25 are in discussion and 28 have withdrawn. There will be a further round of marketing shortly.

The council has recently tendered and awarded a contract to replace all piles and pontoons at the Folly Reach, Whippingham. This will include the removal and disposal of all existing piles and pontoons that are at the end of their serviceable life. In accordance with industry best practice the new pontoons will also be fitted with new life saving apparatus and access. The total cost of the works is £573,000.

The works will create new modern mooring facilities and will see a move from individual pontoons to continuous pontoons which will increase capacity for the benefit of both residents and visitors and ultimately protect and enhance a valuable income stream.

Councillor Whittle noted that he has also recently met with representatives from Cowes Town Council to understand their views on Cowes Week and the future of Cowes Week.

Councillor Wayne Whittle
Executive Member for Tourism and Business Development (including Public Realm)