

Magna Vitae Legacy Project

Magna Vitae Trust for Leisure and Culture was established in January 2016, taking responsibility for leisure, culture and health services that had previously been provided by East Lindsey District Council. The establishment of Magna Vitae was to safeguard these important services for the communities of East Lindsey.

In previous years the Council had prioritised and invested heavily into culture, leisure and health and the long-term aspiration of all involved was to continue to offer a high level of provision to local residents. However, as non-essential services, East Lindsey District Council could see the potential for problems in their ability to fund these projects moving forwards. Therefore, in order to future-proof them against the possibility of changing government priorities and budgets, the decision was made to extricate these services from council control and place them under an external organisation.

As the separation posed a major operational development for the area, it was important to invite breadth of inquiry and perspective to the process. Therefore, a twin track approach to decision making was established. This involved the Council's formal decision process, which comprised of members of the executive board at East Lindsey District Council, and a separate Scrutiny Committee made up of councillors and officers with an active interest in the developments to ensure the continuation of provision to local residents. The Scrutiny Committee examined proposals and reported to the executive board and council upon their recommendations, providing wider input and ascent. Legal consultants were also appointed to provide support and guarantee the rigidity of the whole process.

The separation took place over 3 key steps:

Firstly, the alternative delivery arrangements were assessed for their strengths and challenges. It was deemed that the new company would be best positioned to fulfil the needs of the local community, maximise the strengths of those involved and provide the most likelihood for longevity and growth if established as a Charitable Trust. Having considered the options, the Council agreed upon this approach.

The next stage was to draft and approve the Governing documents, Heads of Terms and Constitution. The company was formally registered with Companies House in June 2014.

Finally, working with the appointed legal team, a contract was drawn up to formalise the contract, the transfer, a 3 year business plan and future funding arrangements. This was put to the Council, agreement sought and approval received.

The new company are in an unusual position due to the breadth of facilities they provide to the local community, having acquired leisure, health and culture services in the transfer. The facilities comprise of 7 leisure facilities; including 3 swimming pools, 2 Multi-use games areas, 4 fitness suites, a pavilion and a recreation ground, and a 1068 capacity theatre in the heart of one of the country's leading seaside resorts.

On top of the facilities, the Trust also manages the district's culture and leisure events portfolio. This includes, amongst other things, managing and developing local, national and international sports programmes; including bowls, cricket and volleyball, bringing cultural events to rural communities; such as Wolds Words Festival, SO Festival and Mablethorpe Illuminations. The development and running of the Community Health Improvement programme also falls under the company's remit. This currently focuses on long-term health issues such as dementia and diabetes.

Magna Vitae's name was conceived by the directors, returning from site visits to other trusts' facilities. Inspired by the day's events, and their previous experience, they established a set of criteria that the new name should meet in order to offer the breadth of opportunity that may present itself in the coming years.

To provide longevity to the brand, names considered had to be representative of the 3 services to be operated by the new company, and what they potentially meant to different members of the community. The new name also

had to be unrestricted by geographical boundaries, being as relevant to the population of East Lindsey, as it would be to people in Cornwall, Newcastle or even further afield. Finally, the new name had to evoke the perception of high-status to represent the levels of service provision that were to be offered.

A shortlist of names was drawn up that met these qualities, and were translated into Latin to provide the desired status. The possible names were circulated to the team for feedback, and final approval given to “Magna Vitae” by East Lindsey District Council.

Community Trustees were advertised for and applications taken. An interview process followed, with members of the Council, the initial Magna Vitae team, and representatives from Arts Council England on the panel. Half of the trustees were appointed through this process.

As key drivers in the success of the new business, and the company’s “face” to the public, it was seen as vitally important to give employees a voice in the decisions made at board level. An employee trustee was appointed to the board, giving representation to the company’s staff and bringing their perception and experiences to the board’s strategic decision making.

When deciding the staff structure, it was decided that to provide continuous provision throughout this time of change, disruption to staffing should be kept to a minimum. Magna Vitae’s immediate requirements were reviewed, and a limited number of changes to the management structure were made, to aid in the operation of the company. Over the first year, the staffing structure has continued to evolve to better meet the needs of the company in delivering on its objectives.

The first year has been a very exciting one for all involved with Magna Vitae, with local and national recognition being received by events in all areas of the organisation.

In the early phases, it was important to strike a balance between taking enough risks to make headway, but not jeopardise relationships with funding bodies. Now, as a more established organisation, opportunities to drive growth are becoming more readily available, and Magna Vitae is in a stronger position to act upon any that show high potential.

We are all very proud of Magna Vitae’s achievements. Its unique position of bringing health, culture and leisure into one Trust is leading the way in its field, and is making clear gains, both in the business community and in providing valued services to improve the lives of local residents.

This rural Trust has been noted in a Government whitepaper, had events listed in TripAdvisor’s top 15 things to do, and brought Clubbercise to 100s of women – amongst many other accolades – showing that in this short time, Magna Vitae really are helping local residents to “Live a Great Life”.