

# Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 19th November, 2008.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chairman), Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mick Womphrey

**Officers:** N. Russell (CESC), P. Mennear, M. Jones (LD)

**Also in attendance:** S. Chaytor (TAL Managing Director), G. Bates (Chair of TAL Board)

**Apologies:** Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson

## 1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## 2 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 22nd October 2008

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2008.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2008 be agreed as a true record.

## 3 Review of Tees Active

Members were presented with Tees Active Ltd's (TAL) business plan for 2008 - 2011.

S. Chaytor, the Managing Director for TAL, explained that the business plan was broken down into six areas:

\* **Asset Management.** TAL were investing £9 million into their centres and this programme would include the redevelopment of Billingham Forum, the extension of Splash, refurbishment of Thornaby Pavilion, and the closure of Stockton Sports Centre. Therefore, TAL would not be running at full service provision until 2011 when all redevelopment was due to have taken place.

\* **Services Development.** TAL planned to developed many areas of services and were hoping to increase the amount of services commissioned by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT). The main focus on services would be within the Active8 scheme, swimming and ice skating facilities, which were TAL's most popular activities, expanding the Tees Active Academy, using Castlegate Quay as a base to expand the range of adventurous activities, with a particular emphasis on working worth local schools in this area, and promoting Bowls to older people.

\* **Workforce Development.** TAL would continue to work on ensuring their staff remain highly motivated, and are proud of the achievements and continuing self-development of their staff.

\* **Marketing & Promotions.** The marketing budget had seen a large increase

since 2004 and TAL planned to continue in their bold advertising campaigns.

- \* Finance & Performance.

- \* Business Development & Expansion. The first three years of TAL had concentrated on building up the company, and that had been achieved. The next three years would be looking at how to develop the company further: this would include internal development, potentially securing other local authority contracts, and local business expansion within Stockton Borough itself.

S. Chaytor summarised TAL objectives for the next three years being:

- \* To build on what had been achieved to date and ensure that performance does not deteriorate.

- \* To continue to deliver services during the disruption of updating facilities.

These aims were set against a backdrop of the need to tackle obesity, particularly through the improvement of children's health, and using the motivational opportunity presented by the 2012 London Olympics.

Members were given an opportunity to ask questions of S. Chaytor regarding the business plan.

The analysis of Income 2007 - 8 was discussed. The S. Chaytor explained that generally speaking TAL's facilities were not free to customers, but there were some specific schemes which funded the cost of the facilities, enabling the participants in such scheme to access them for free. He added that due to the continued growth of the company, the percentage of funding coming from the management fee was reducing, as compared to leisure income and catering, for example. S. Chaytor noted that public sector leisure had not been heavily affected by the credit crunch so far, and that TAL had actually benefited from their most profitable year in 2007-08. It was suggested that there may be several reasons for this, including the facilities being cheaper than the private sector, members of the public spending their money on activities at home rather than going on holiday, and greater awareness of health and fitness.

The issue of swimming pool provision in the Borough was raised by Members. A report was mentioned which it was claimed contained reference to capacity for another 25 metre swimming pool in Stockton South area. Members queried whether this could have been included in the Business Plan. S. Chaytor explained that although there were some documents, namely from consultants PMP and Sport England, that stated that there may be demand for another pool in the Borough as a whole, nothing had been included in the new Business Plan that would contradict current Stockton Council plans and strategies.

TAL as a company currently could not afford to build a swimming pool without any extra funding as it was investing in redeveloping and expanding their current facilities. It was queried how much it would cost a swimming pool and S. Chaytor stated that as a comparison, a basic four lane 25 metre swimming pool had recently been built in Yorkshire for approximately £1.5 million. However the running cost of a pool would also have to be taken into consideration. N. Russell noted that the most recent Sport England survey stated there was a sufficient number of swimming pools in Stockton Borough and that the with the exception

of Splash, the current public pools were not up to full demand. Private pools were also considered in this assessment but only a limited number, ie. those that were 20m or over in length.

The success of TAL to cut its staff sick leave was commented on. S. Chaytor noted that TAL had been diligent in its implementation of the systems in managing sick leave inherited from Stockton Borough Council, for example 'back to work' interviews and disciplinary action where necessary. He added that it could also be a reflection of the attempt to make TAL a good environment to work in.

It was queried how the government initiative to introduce free swimming to the over 60's, and later the under 16's would affect TAL. S. Chaytor explained that while the grant that would be received from the government would cover the income currently generated by the over-60s group, it would not for the under 16's group. There could also be an impact on TAL should customers opt for free swimming as opposed to paying admission charges associated with ice skating or the gym, for example. [Stockton Borough Council had offered to help cover this cost. – did they say this???] N. Russell added that by signing up to the initiatives, it allowed SBC and TAL to access additional funding for capital improvements to the swimming facilities at Splash and the Forum.

S. Chaytor discussed TAL's potential management of school facilities, and noted that they were working with Bede College on their new sporting facility. There were also opportunities for TAL to work with Thornaby Community School and, in the longer term, become involved in the opening up the school facilities to the community as part of BSF. It was also noted that TAL would rule nothing out in terms of other future opportunities, for instance, provision of fixed adventure sports facilities.

The working relationship with PCT and other agencies was raised. S. Chaytor explained that there had been issues with the consistency of funding, i.e. PCT not being in a position to commit to long term funding, and this would affect the provision of certain services. However the PCT had resolved these issues and had committed to three year funding block which would enable TAL to plan ahead for services.

G. Bates, Chair of TAL Board, discussed the Board. The Board was representative of the community and made up from Members of SBC, business members, sport sector representatives, user representatives and staff representatives. There was a vacancy for a member from the PCT, and this had been vacant for nine months. Regular Board meetings were held, and in addition to this there were working groups which looked at specific issues and made recommendations to the Board.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

#### 4 Work Programme

Members discussed the amended work programme for the remainder of the year. P. Mennear noted that the results of the TAL staff survey should be available for examination on 4th March 2009, and therefore the final report for

the review **could be submitted to** Cabinet in April 2009. Feedback from user groups such as schools **and clubs that use TAL facilities would also be sought and the results fed into the review.**

**The progress** report for the River Based Leisure Facilities review was due to be presented at the December meeting. The Preston Park and Festivals review progress reports were scheduled for January, as this **would allow them to take into account the result of the Heritage Lottery funding bid for Preston Park.**

CONCLUDED that the Work Programme **be agreed.**