

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 21st July, 2010.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Andrew Sherris(Vice-Chairman),Cllr Dick Cains(Vice Cllr Alex Cunningham) Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mick Womphrey

Officers: Martin Graham(CESC), Richard Bradley, Graham Clingan, Reuben Kench, Chris Renahan, Neil Russell(DNS), Sarah Whaley, Peter Mennear(L&D)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Alex Cunningham, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Mrs Nelson

1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

2 Minutes from the meetings held on 31st March 2010 and 19th May 2010 - for signature

Consideration was given to the above mentioned minutes to be signed as a correct record.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meetings held on 31st March 2010 and 19th May 2010 were signed as a correct record.

3 Progress Update on Previously Agreed Recommendations

Members were asked to consider the assessment of progress contained within the attached Progress Updates on the implementation of previously agreed recommendations for the Review of Tees Active Limited(TAL).

The Head of Culture and Leisure informed the committee that monitoring the progress of the implementation of the recommendations was being undertaken in the context of the relationship between the Council and TAL as an independent organisation.

The Head of Culture and Leisure highlighted the following points of the attached Progress Updates:

3b) issues surrounding the BME community and what could be done to increase usage amongst this group. The Head of Culture and Leisure informed Members that there were many fundamental issues which could prevent usage such as communal changing rooms. Steps were however being looked into, for example providing individual changing rooms. The Committee heard that Stockton Council were working closely with TAL to gain a better understanding of those who did not use the facilities provided with an aim to increase usage.

The Leisure and Sports Development Manager explained to the Committee that

a buddy system had been investigated with the view that if implemented Looked After Children would be able to utilise the service, however after looking into this it was found that this would not be good use of staff time as most of these children were accompanied by an adult/carer and it would be hard to pin point when these children would use the facilities. An approach would be implemented on an ad hoc basis.

3e) the Head of Culture and Leisure highlighted to the Committee that a survey was underway establishing the voluntary sector sports clubs (that use the leisure facilities) perceptions of TAL would be available soon and would bring the findings back to the Committee at a later date.

4) Members heard that TAL had already extended some free access to activities of the Academy to young aspiring performers who did not qualify for full academy status. It was also learned that Tees Valley Sport's 'Olympic & Paralympics Working Group' had developed their own Olympic plan which was fundamentally in line with Stockton's and would be rolled out from September 2010.

6) The Leisure and Sports Development Manager explained to Members that TAL were currently investigating the benefits of an online booking system and in addition to this Stockton Borough Council were hoping to add to this in the form of a booking system which encompassed all leisure facilities whether private or public giving the public much more flexibility when trying to book a facility across the Borough.

It was confirmed that the EIT review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation would examine the commissioning relationship between TAL and SBC, and that it would also set the parameters for savings that will be expected of TAL and further details will be brought to future meetings

CONCLUDED that:

the Progress Updates be agreed and further updates to be presented to future meetings of Arts Leisure and Culture.

4 Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation (EIT) Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation - Baseline Reports for countryside and greenspace services, and Play

The Committee were asked to consider and challenge the baseline information for Countryside and Greenspace, Parks and Countryside (CFYA), and Play Strategy.

The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager presented Members with the Baseline report for Countryside & Greenspace. The Committee heard a brief history of the team and learned that this service also had responsibility for the management of Council-owned trees and woodlands.

The following items of the Baseline report as detailed in the attached report at appendix 1, were highlighted by the Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager as follows:

DESCRIPTION OF THE CURRENT SERVICE

- 1) how the team helped to secure s106 contributions
- 2) how the team relied heavily on other services in the Council to support their work
- 3) the influences which impact on the service whether it be political, economic, environmental, social or technological.
- 4) limitations or barriers affecting the delivery of the service, one of these being a lack of resource.
- 5) could the service be provided through a different mechanism, Members queried whether the former Community Forest Partnership could be rejuvenated in this area as they learned it was no longer in existence although similar partnerships were still in existence in other areas of the country and could still possibly provide another potential delivery model. The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager confirmed that he would investigate this further, and other examples of joint working between councils.

CUSTOMER

- 1) how were service users consulted and how did their views shape delivery, Members requested that the GreenSTAT surveys be brought back to a future meeting which would highlight to the Committee how people felt about greenspaces etc.
- 2) the Committee heard that around 30% of local residents did not use parks or greenspaces and that large numbers of residents were not actively involved in projects being developed and delivered by the Countryside and Greenspace Strategy & Development Team, however this provided scope for increased community participation.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1) the Committee learned that there were no requirements for a statutory level of service required from the Countryside and Greenspace team however there were areas of service which were required by statute such as Occupiers liability Act, Highways Act and the Town & Country Planning Act. There was also legislation which covered the provision of allotments and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 where Councils must have regard for biodiversity in the delivery of all Council services and functions.
- 2) was the service needed, to which officers explained to members that without planning and managing Green infrastructure effectively it would fail in delivering the full range of social economic and environmental benefits
- 3) what would happen if the service was not provided, the committee discussed what the implications were as outlined in the report.

RELEVANCE/CONTEXT

1) what policies plans and strategies would impact on the service e.g. statutory, policy, function, other services

FINANCIAL/RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS

1) current cost of the service, Members asked whether or not the service could be offered to the public or private businesses however initial thoughts were it would be costly to embark on commercial work however it was agreed that this should not stop the service from investigating this area to generate future revenue.

2) third party expenditure

3) level of 3rd party expenditure, current contacts in place and Councils commitment to contracts

4) do external contracts offer value for money? - Members asked officers to investigate the North East Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and whether its work was of relevance to the services under review.

The CFYA Service Manager presented the Committee with the Parks and Countryside Management and Maintenance (CFYA) Baseline report.

Members were given a brief history of the service including how it was formed and why it existed. Members also learned how the service was currently provided with staff from Parks and Countryside and also that approximately 120 volunteers helped maintain these spaces and run services. The Committee heard that Stockton was considered a large Borough and therefore needed help to maintain these areas and was looking to increase volunteers where possible. Members questioned the general profile of current volunteers, to which officers informed them the majority were retired white males, although there were some younger helpers. Members also learned that in addition to volunteers Stockton did tap into the Community Payback scheme as a means of resource.

The Committee heard from Officers that staff from Leisure and Parks and Countryside could be crossed over and utilised in either areas where roles were similar, and therefore this was an option to be investigated. Members briefly discussed the impact on the borough if these services were stopped.

The Strategic Manager - Children and Young People presented the Committee with the Baseline report for the Play Strategy. Members were informed that this was not a team led service and alongside this role, the Strategic Manager - Children and Young People has a number of areas of responsibility.

The Committee learned that the current grant funding from the Big Lottery finishes in September 2011 and that to date these funds appear to be secure. The 3 year grant funding from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (now Department for Education) was to run to the end of March 2010, however for this final year, any projects / contracts which had not already been entered into are now less likely to be funded and monies are likely to be clawed back by the department as part of the national cuts. The current position appears to be that no contracts will be allocated now if they are not

already in an advanced position.

It was noted that a review of the Play Strategy was due to take place and needed to consider who should be involved in implementing the strategy and the future of the Play Partnership.

Finally Members requested that officers looked at working with neighbouring authorities and investigated the models they were using during their own efficiency reviews, producing a comparison report with the view that best practice could be shared and adopted where efficiency savings were increased.

CONCLUDED that

the baseline reports be noted and requested information to be brought back to future meetings as detailed above.

5 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer confirmed the next meeting of Arts Leisure and Culture Select Committee as the 18th October 2010, and that options would be brought to the meeting for Members' consideration.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.