

# Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 15th June, 2011.

**Present:** Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell (Chairman), Cllr Mark Chatburn, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Gillian Corr, Cllr Terry Laing (vice Cllr Mick Womphrey), Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ray McCall.

**Officers:** Graham Clingan, Sue Daniels, Paul Diggins, Reuben Kench, Matthew Kirk, Jayne Robins, Iain Robinson (DNS); Fiona McKie, Peter Mennear (LD).

**Also in attendance:** Mike Marshall, Neil Harvey (British Waterways), Tony Campbell (Upstream Sailing Association/River Users Group)

**Apologies:** were submitted on behalf of Cllr Eileen Johnson and Cllr Mick Womphrey.

## 1 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Cooke declared a personal/non prejudicial interest further to being the Director of the Tees Music Alliance.

## 2 Approved minutes from the meeting of the 16th March 2011

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2011.

AGREED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2011 be noted.

## 3 Overview of Arts, Leisure and Cultural Services

Members were provided with an overview of the Arts, Leisure and Cultural Service areas. Reuben Kench, Head of Culture and Leisure provided information on the redevelopment of Preston Hall Museum. The Hall itself would temporarily close to the public in September. The new development would include a ground floor toilet, lift and tea shop. The Museum collection was currently being rationalised as it currently held 60,000 - 70,000 items many of which were surplus to the Museum's needs.

The Heritage Strategy was currently being rolled out. The Heritage website would be launched in due course which would contain multi faceted access to historic data.

In relation to the display of art works, it was anticipated that some of the more significant works of art would be re-displayed at Preston Hall Museum, including the Dice Players. It was also hoped to display art in public areas of the new Central Stockton Library.

It was stated that the Capital Programme was a real challenge facing all Service areas. Funding had been slow in coming through for Preston Hall Museum and Park therefore taking longer than anticipated to complete the works. The Kitchen Garden had also been a challenge due to the company tendered to carry out the works going into liquidation. Not all the funding bid for to help with the Park re-development had been secured.

An overview of Sports Development was provided detailing all of the events that were due to take place such as the Rat Race, Triathlon etc. The Service had a strong connection with the Public Health agenda.

Billingham Forum had now re-opened following extensive redevelopment. Thornaby Pavillion had been updated and work carried out to the White Water Course to include a rapid block system which would ensure that the Course was of international standard. Work around the 2012 Olympics to stimulate activity would be carried out and local athletes would be fully supported if they were identified as having potential for high performance.

The Arts Team would be organising the 24th Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF). Other events were also being organised with the assistance of third sector organisations such as Stockton Weekender.

Discussion was held on the Library Service. Discussion was held on the increased footfall into the libraries. Children were encouraged to use the library by events such as the summer six book challenge and Stockton Children's Book of the Year. Of particular note was the 27% increase in the number of children withdrawing non-fiction books. It was noted that library buildings would form part of the Building Asset Review, and that the Museums and Libraries Service had been merged following the Museums (EIT) review.

Graham Clingan, Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager provided a presentation on the responsibilities for countryside, parks and greenspaces. Key achievements included the development of the Stockton on Tees Green Infrastructure Strategy and the creation of an inter-agency steering group to oversee its delivery. Also the delivery of the Parks Regeneration and Spaces for Play programmes (specific projects included the new Wynyard Woodland Park play area, improvements of Newham Grange Park; partnership working to develop Tees Heritage Park and River Routes Projects; and the generation of high levels of external project funding (£587,000 Stockton Council funding matched with £2,899,000 external funding between 2008 and 2011).

Six Sites had received Green Flag status, Ropner Park, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park, Wynyard Woodland Park, Billingham Beck Valley Country Park, Charltons Pond and Thornaby Cemetery. The Borough had also received the Gold Standard in the 2010 Entente Florale competition. Also 38% of Local Wildlife Sites across the Borough now in positive management.

Emerging issues were highlighted such as reduced levels of capital funding in some areas, pressures on revenue funding for green infrastructure projects, and the need to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of green infrastructure. Also the changes in the way the council was delivering tree and woodland management services, and the aspiration to promote even greater levels of community participation in relation to parks and greenspaces.

AGREED that the Overview of Arts, Leisure and Cultural Services be noted.

#### **4 Quarterly Progress Updates on Previously Agreed Recommendations**

Members were asked to consider the assessments of progress contained within the Progress Updates on the implementation of previously agreed recommendations. There were outstanding recommendations from the scrutiny reviews of Tees Active and River Based Leisure, the EIT gateway reviews of Adult Operations, Highways, Lighting and Network Management, and Property and Facilities Management, EIT Review of Sport Leisure & Recreation, and the EIT Task and Finish Review of Finance.

On the Progress update for the Review of Tees Active it was requested by Members that Recommendation 6 be signed off as complete, and that recommendation 5 be signed off as Members agreed that it was no longer necessary.

Discussion was held on the opening of the White Water course and where responsibility for the maintenance of the riverside car parks. Tees Active would be moving from the Castlegate Quay and consolidating water activities to one site at the Barrage. A lease boundary had been agreed that Tees Active would be responsible for, but some areas would still be the responsibility of British Waterways. It was hoped that an increased staff presence in the area would improve the situation in relation to litter.

AGREED that the quarterly progress updates on previously agreed recommendations be agreed subject to the amendments above.

#### **5 Efficiency, Improvement, & Transformation (EIT) Officer Lead Gateway Review of Registration & Bereavement Services**

Members were provided with the scope for the EIT Officer Lead Gateway Review of Registration and Bereavement Services.

AGREED that the Scope be noted.

#### **6 British Waterways**

Neil Harvey and Mike Marshall from British Waterways were in attendance to provide Members with an update.

It was reported that the White Water Course would be open in July/August. There had been some contractual and design problems that had delayed the opening.

Members requested an update on the Fish Past Study which had commenced in March 2008 and which was a 3 year study. The study had been suspended last year and had been delayed until the white water course with its new fish pass had re-opened. It was anticipated that the final year of the study would commence in September.

Discussion was held on the collection of debris along the river. It was stated that there could be some difficulties encouraging landowners to remove debris such as trees etc. from their land before they fell into the river. It was reported that action was due to be taken the following week in order to survey and remove some of this debris in conjunction with partner agencies and voluntary groups.

Members raised the issue of silting in the river and it was stated that a further survey would need to be carried out to enable the situation to be compared with historical data.

A volunteer was sought by the Chair for a Member to attend the River Users Group. Cllr Ray McCall requested that he attend and this was supported by Members.

AGREED that the update be noted and that Cllr Ray McCall attend the River Users Group.

**7**

**Work Programme  
- to consider programme for forthcoming meetings**

The next meeting would be to receive the baselining information for the EIT Review of Registration and Bereavement Services.

AGREED that the Work Programme be noted.