

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 1st May, 2013.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Eileen Johnson, Cllr Carol Clark, Cllr Nigel Cooke, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mick Womphrey

Officers: Reuben Kench, Graham Clingan(DNS), Judith Trainer, Sarah Whaley(LD)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Gillian Corr

**ALC
1/13** **Evacuation Procedure**

The Evacuation Procedure was noted.

**ALC
2/13** **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**ALC
3/13** **Minutes from the meetings held on the 7th November 2012 and 30th January 2013 for signature.**

Consideration was given to the minutes from the meetings which were held on the 7th November 2012 and the 30th January 2013 for signature.

AGREED that the minutes be signed.

**ALC
4/13** **Draft Minutes from the meeting which was held on the 13th March 2013.**

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting which was held on the 13th March 2013 for approval.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

**ALC
5/13** **Arts, Leisure and Culture - Service Overview**

Consideration was given to the Scrutiny Overview of Arts Leisure and Culture from the previous twelve months which included:

- Culture and Leisure Services
- Parks, Countryside and Greenspace.

The Head of Culture and Leisure delivered a presentation to Members which highlighted the main achievements and challenges Culture and Leisure Services had achieved/faced over the last year.

The main issues discussed were as follows:

- Service Area Responsibilities
- Performance achievements of which a 40% increase had been seen in visitors

at the Community Carnival. This was the biggest attendance to date since its launch.

- 20% of Adults were members of a club where sports or recreational activity took place. 45% of these did at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity. Those results only included residents who engaged in three lots of 50 minutes activity a week, if the data included those who participated in shorter bursts of activity results would improve.

- Stockton International Riverside Festival(SIRF) generated £1.3m additional expenditure net of the amount which was spent on the festival.

- Stockton's Cycling Festival had been a great success with a dedicated womens race being introduced for 2013. The festival was the only event of its kind in the UK outside of the Camden Road Race and the Criterium.

- Preston Park Museum was on the short list for Museum of the Year 2013. The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead was also a finalist and had received media coverage from the BBC. The Head of Culture and Leisure expressed his disappointment that Preston Hall had not received the same coverage. The Head of Culture and Leisure highlighted to members that there was still difficulty attracting regional media to the Tees Valley which was something that needed to change in order to promote the area and what it had to offer.

- Although Stockton had seen many achievements within Culture and Leisure Services there were also many challenges and issues to overcome. The sourcing of events for SIRF was now done within a small team in house. The Stockton Library project was on going, however was proving to be complicated. The scheme was to enable children to have one membership card, borrow books from any library and return them to any library including their own school library.

- working in conjunction with other Local Authorities and organisations for the World War 1 Commemoration for August 2014.

- continuation of improving pathways and landscape in and around Preston Hall. Increasing the use of Preston Halls facilities for weddings and conferences, to raise enough income to eventually end the subsidy which was provided by Stockton Borough Council.

- extending digital access to as many people of the borough as possible.

Members made reference to the future of River Based Leisure facilities, in particular River taxi's. The Committee heard that there was further studies being carried out by Infinity Marine with regard to speed limits and competing interests on the river. It was highlighted that for river taxi's to be viable a minimum of 20 knots would be required. The ultimate decision of speed limits on the river would be down to British Waterways, Stockton Borough Council could only express their view. Members also raised concerns as to the lack of toilets within the vicinity of the Tees Barrage and the lack of cleanliness and untidiness. It was explained that the land which was being referred to was not Stockton Borough Council's land and that Stockton did not have the resources to deal with these

issues, however some improvement would be expected on completion of North Shore. Officers undertook to raise the issue at the River Users' Group.

The Committee raised issues as to the future of the Billingham International Folklore Festival(BIFF). The Head of Culture and Leisure explained that there were measures in place to reinvent the festival to increase attendance. The Chair asked that the committee be provided with the current economic value of BIFF.

The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager delivered a presentation to Members which highlighted the main achievements and challenges Countryside and Green spaces had achieved/faced over the last year.

In addition to the main issues covered by the presentation the following additional points were highlighted:

- Stockton Borough Council were continuing to work with a range of partners to deliver the Green Infrastructure Strategy, including the development, management and maintenance of urban parks, country parks, nature reserves and other greenspaces.
- partner organisations were providing support to private land owners to bring local wildlife/geological sites into positive management, by encouraging them to take advantage of available government grants.
- the Committee were shown the Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan which highlighted a wide range of possible projects. The plan was being used to help secure Section 106 contributions from developers where appropriate.
- the Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager emphasised the high percentage of external funding secured for capital projects during 2007 to 2013.

A number of emerging issues were highlighted in the presentation which included the need to further raise awareness and understanding of green infrastructure. A good example of this was illustrated by the example of flood risk management, which was partially addressed through the way in which the Authority designed and managed green infrastructure. The main aim was to achieve multi-functional spaces for residents.

- there was a need to extend collaborative working with partner organisations which included, community/friends groups, for example, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust who now manage Hardwick Dene.

The Committee went on to raise issues surrounding access and car parking at Wynyard Woodland park. Members were informed that there was now a field which could be used as an overflow car park if required. Visitor numbers had stabilised since its initial opening. Cycle access from Stockton had also been improved and alternative cycle routes were being looked into from Thorpe Thewles as there was an existing underpass which could accommodate cyclists.

Members were informed that consideration was being given to the possible establishment of a green space forum or network, to encourage dialogue and collaborative working between community groups, friends of local parks and

other organisations.

AGREED that the information be noted and additional information be provided as requested above.

**ALC
6/13**

Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer advised the committee that Executive Scrutiny Committee had allocated the Arts Leisure and Culture Select Committee with the review of Child Poverty and that the next meeting of this committee would be the 24th July 2013.

AGREED that the information be noted.

**ALC
7/13**

Chair's Update

There was no update.