

Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate, Adult Services & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 15th July, 2008.

Present: Cllr Mrs Lynne Apedaile (Vice Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roy Rix and Mrs C Clark (Parent Governor Representative)

Officers: N Gibb (DNS), R Kench, Mrs R Hill (CESC), Mrs T Harrison and N Hart (LD)

Also in attendance: None

Apologies: Cllr Aidan Cockerill, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mick Womphrey and Mrs Tracy Fraser (Parent Governor Representative)

1 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Mrs Cains declared a personal non prejudicial interest due to being Chair of the Stockton Home Safety Association, which was mentioned in the minutes of the 3rd June 2008, the content of which was discussed at the meeting.

Councillor Mrs Fletcher declared a personal non prejudicial interest due to being involved with Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) which was mentioned in relation to the Progress update on the previously agreed recommendations - Review of Theatre Subsidy.

2 Draft minutes of the meetings held on 21st May and 3rd June 2008.

Members considered the minutes of the 21st May and 3rd June 2008.

Reference was made to the Workwise Scheme and it was requested that the Head of Human Resources give a presentation on the scheme to the Committee at a future date.

With regard to paragraph 3 - Meeting Venues, Members requested the change from - scrutiny review would be, to 'scrutiny review could be'.

It was also requested that the minutes be amended to show 'HandyVan service' instead of Handyman service.

Details of the service had been provided to the committee for Members referral to constituents. It was suggested that clarification should also be provided to Members of eligibility for use of the service, recently considered by Stockton Home Safety Association.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Minutes of the 21st May 2008 be forwarded to Council for consideration.
2. Minutes of the 3rd June 2008 be forwarded to Council for consideration subject to the suggested amendments.
3. The Head of Human Resources be requested to give a future presentation on

the 'Work Wise' scheme.

3 Access to High Street-Permit Scheme

Further to the last meeting and reported continuing difficulties experienced by people with mobility problems gaining vehicular access to the High Street, in particular to the Town Hall; a report was provided by the Car Park Manager which outlined the current access restrictions on the High Street and proposals to amend the existing Traffic Regulation Order to include a permit scheme that would extend vehicular access to the High Street for Hackney carriage vehicles that had been adapted to better assist passengers with mobility difficulties.

Members discussed the proposed permit scheme which was intended to be a 'virtual' non paper format stored solely on a database and monitored via CCTV. Members suggested that some means of identifying vehicles with the permits was necessary, i.e. sticker format to be issued to all authorised hackney carriages in conjunction with the database, which could provide on street validation and thus avoid misuse and misunderstandings from the public.

Permit holders could travel northbound 6am - 6pm in addition to the already available 6pm - 6am times; however CCTV was to be used to monitor the use of the permit as permit holders were not to use the High Street as a short cut.

Permit holders were to be encouraged to assist passengers with poor mobility or poor sight to exit and enter the taxi as well exit and enter the Town Hall. Therefore, the driver was allowed to wait for a fare but was not to take advantage of the situation. It was felt that taxi firms could be encouraged to put their drivers through training to ensure the safety and well being of passengers and drivers when helping the individuals enter and exit the vehicle.

The issue of permits could begin in August 2008

Members suggested that appropriate publicity should be undertaken to inform people which hackney carriage firms held permits and had the necessary adaptations in their taxi's.

Members also discussed bus shelters in relation to their lack of suitability for older, infirm or blind people. If using the seating provided in the shelter, people were then often last to board the bus and consequently had less time to find an available seat and be seated. It was observed the buses did not always pull up to the raised curb which caused further difficulty for people with poor mobility and sight.

It was suggested that these concerns be referred by the Car Park Manager to the Council's Public Transport Manager for consideration by the Bus Users Forum and the Council's Urban Design Section.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The Car Parking Manager notes this Committees comments in respect of the proposed scheme.

3. The Car Park Manager contact the Public Transport Manager to discuss concerns regarding lack of suitability of bus shelters for the older, infirm or blind people and bus drivers not pulling up at the raised curb disadvantaging people with poor mobility and sight, with a view to the matter being considered by the BUS Users FORUM and the Council's Urban Design Section.

4 Progress Update on Previously Agreed Recommendations-Review of Theatre Subsidy

Members were updated on the actions taken as a result of the recommendations from the scrutiny review of Theatre subsidy.

The Refurbishment of the theatre had been agreed and would facilitate the drawing up of a new contract with the existing or a new service provider.

Stockton Borough Council had sought interest from other operators in taking over the operation of the theatre, however the three other interested parties were not deemed to be suitable due to lack of experience or suitable programmes. Upon investigation, the methods of the existing operator became more understood.

Stockton Borough Council still retained the right to put the operation of the theatre out to tender as it was felt that more could be done to improve the programmes, range of audiences and broaden its approach.

The Council were considering various contract options such as: 5 year contract, with or without conditions or a 10 year contract with break clauses.

Due to practical and legal reasons Members were advised that the last of the recommendations had not been achieved; however the Head of Culture and Leisure had been in discussions with schools in relation to educational productions to school audiences. Members expressed support for joint working within the Tees Valley as a means of providing a viable alternative to the Darlington Civic Theatre.

Members mentioned school trips to the Globe in London where the children dressed up in the costumes from the play, took part in workshops and then watched the play. It was suggested that Billingham Forum could carry out the same activities for school groups. The Head of Culture and Leisure advised that more educational activities could be provided, however not all touring groups were able to provide such activities and it would be expensive to run. It was also observed that part of the appeal of the 'trip' was that the students were going to London.

Members raised queries regarding:

- Lack of disabled facilities in the theatre
- A possible role for the voluntary sector working with the Council in relation to various aspects of the theatre

Members were advised that the Council should seek to influence the programme and it was hoped that a 'Friends of the Theatre' link could be organised to work with the organisers and feed back issues raised by residents.

The Head of Culture and Leisure would look into provisions and facilities for disabled people.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The Head of Culture and Leisure consider the comments raised by the Committee and submit a further progress report in six months.

5 Scrutiny Review of Older People's Strategy

Members were advised that Culture and Leisure's contribution to work with older people was significant and multifaceted and details were provided which illustrated the many programmes which touched upon the needs and aspirations of older people.

The range of activities and facilities available to older people fell under the following headings:

- Arts Development
- Museums
- Libraries
- Leisure & Sports

Members raised the following questions/concerns:

- What was the definition of older people?
- To what extent were activities publicised so that people, particularly the over 50's, found out about them?
- What had been done to ensure that costs of activities had not prohibited people attending?
- Had BME been included in the activities?
- How was Leisure influencing residential homes to take up the activities available?

The Head of Culture and Leisure advised that the definition of older people was considered to be over 50; however people did not like to be defined by age, and therefore the Culture and Leisure Department advertised a diverse range of activities for people to become involved with regardless of any age definition.

It was noted that there was a very high take up for the activities. Information of all the activities was available at every Library or people could speak to any of the Librarians who could inform them individually. It was hoped that touch screen interactive equipment could be introduced to places like Libraries that would make the information about activities even more accessible.

Members were informed that the services which made a charge were:-

- Active Health Exercise Referral Scheme
- Chair Based Exercise Class
- Lite 4 Life Weight Management Referral Scheme

- Fit 4 Life
- Pulmonary Plus
- Heart Failure
- Training (OCN Level 3 Weight Management Course)

However, no charges were made for the following services:-

- Art & Soul
- Trinity Green Interpretations
- Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF)
- SIRF Community Carnival
- Their Past Your Future Nov 2005 (Outreach prior to Museum on the Move)
- Newtown Community Centre 2006/7/8 Museum on the move
- Museum of my Life 2007
- Slavery - A Tees Valley wide project led by Stockton Museum
- Youth Space
- Music Hall show
- Aspen garden & Hardwick Partnership
- Housebound Service
- Bookbus Service
- Reminiscence Therapy
- Mobile Library Service
- Hospital Service - Book Trolley
- Books and Banter (Stockton Library)
- Monthly Health Clubs and Scrabble Club (Norton Library)
- Stepping Out in Stockton, Health Walks
- Prambles
- Stockton Well @ Work
- Cardiac Rehab
- Falls Prevention, Offer 6

The Head of Culture and Leisure observed that the availability of resources to promote, publicise and deliver activities was a factor to be considered against the extent to which the numbers of older people were expected to rise.

A number of activities had targeted BME, i.e. a fitness programme which had been designed with BME in mind. However, it was considered unrealistic to create activities that catered solely for certain very small demographics.

Officers went into residential homes to enquire what activities took place in the home and what activities the residents were interested in, and in particular, those provided by the Council. As part of the contract compliance process for a number of schemes including Supporting People and the nursing and residential care sector, service users were questioned on the range of activities available and how these were rated by users.

Members queried the extent to which Cultural and Leisure activities were promoted with the University of the Third Age (a self-help organisation for people no longer in full time employment providing educational, creative and leisure opportunities in a friendly environment) and aged person groups. The Head of Culture and Leisure advised that he would support the need for further work in this area should sufficient resources be provided to allow it.

Access to appropriate, relevant information was integral to the Putting People

First Agenda and a key consideration was how to harness together all of the available information; and to be aware of other activities were delivered by the Voluntary and Community Sector. It was noted that a Golden Guide of services was being developed; which could contain details of cultural and leisure activities.

Members requested figures for number of attendees to all the activities mentioned in the report and a breakdown of the demographic of the attendees.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The report be noted.
2. The Head of Culture and Leisure to provide Members of the Committee with a breakdown of the figures of attendees of the activities shown in the report and a breakdown of the demographics.

6 Work Programme

Members considered the work programme, scope and project plan.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The work programme, scope and project plan be noted.
2. The next meeting would be 30th July 2008.