

Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 12th July, 2006.

Present: Councillor Fletcher (Chairman), Councillors Cherrett, Dixon, Faulks, Miss Inman, Laing, Lynch, Rix, Mrs Robinson (Vice Councillor Mrs Norton); Smith and Womphrey.

Officers: Mrs G Balzi, B Brown, B Campbell, Mrs A Metcalf and C Ridley, Mrs P Stewart (DNS); Mrs J Hubbard (CESC); Miss S Connolly, Mrs T Harrison, P Mennear and Mrs J Trainer (LD).

Also in attendance:

Apologies: were submitted on behalf of Councillors Frankland, Mrs Norton, Perry; Mr T Maxwell (Diocesan Representative); Mr P Beach and Ms S Moloney (Parent Governor Representatives).

436 Draft minutes of meeting held on 7th June 2006

Members considered the draft minutes of the meeting held 7th June 2006.

CONCLUDED that the minutes be approved for submission to Council with the following amendments:

In the Performance Review item all wording to be deleted and substituted with Members considered whether there were any performance issues to discuss. CONCLUDED that there were no performance review issues to discuss.

Replace 'Mr. Ropner' with 'Sir John Ropner'.

437 Review of Performance Information

Review of Performance Information

Members considered whether there were any performance issues to discuss.

CONCLUDED that there were no performance review issues to discuss.

438 Update Project Plan for Scrutiny Review of Preston

Updated Project Plan for scrutiny review of Preston

Members discussed the project plan and were advised that the Chair had been unable to speak to Mari Rose regarding vulnerable adults.

Members identified the need to have an officer address the committee regarding Highways issues included in the Preston Park review.

An Egglecliffe Parish Council Representative had been invited to attend a future meeting.

Members had expressed a desire to carry out a site visit to a similar museum/park. Mrs J Hubbard (Museums manager) recommended that Members visited the Dorman Museum. The Scrutiny Officer advised that they had not heard from Leeds museum.

Concluded that the report be noted.

**439 Review of Preston Park and Hall (Briefing paper to follow)
Receiving evidence from the following witnesses:
Gina Balzi – Parks and Countryside officer
Bob Campbell & Bob Brown – Countryside Rangers
Pam Stewart – Animal Keeper**

Review of Preston Park and Hall

Members were provided with evidence from Animal Keepers, Parks and Countryside Officers and Rangers.

The following topics were discussed:-

- The role of the countryside service in Preston Park – including services offered, staffing information, type of programmes delivered, area managed and future plans.
- Legislative requirements – zoo licence and compliance to the Wildlife and Countryside Act.
- Budgetary Information – The service was delivered with limited resources. Annual budgets were supplemented by income generated through one or two additional activities in the park and through woodland grant and countryside stewardship schemes.

Budget allocation for 2006/07:

Preston Park	£3,184
Animal Facilities	£3,204
River Tees Project Area	£3,735
Total	£10,123

Issues regarding budget were the majority of money generated through large-scale events were used to fund new events. Income generated through Museums Services was fed back into the Museum. Income generated through activities organised by the countryside team were fed back into countryside budgets for park improvements. A co-ordinated approach was required.

- Aviary and animal pens – The aviary was currently used to house rabbits, ducks, harvest mice, ferrets, rats and golden pheasants. The duck pond and animal pens provided accommodation for various species of waterbird including peafowl and ducks.

Issues were also discussed including, Avian influenza, Lack of resources, Strategy for the park and the proposed zoo licence application.

- Quarry Wood local nature reserve and Hall Wood – Two areas of ancient semi-natural woodland dominated by a variety of deciduous species and a ground flora which included ramsons, bluebells and giant bellflower.

The site had significant geological and archaeological interest, Mountain bike activity, both woodlands suffered from invasive, non-native snowberry and would benefit from a programme of removal and giant hogweed had almost been eradicated but needed continual annual maintenance.

- Tree Nursery – The ex-tree nursery was now an area of regenerating broadleaved woodland contiguous with a registered site of ancient semi-natural woodland, which was a scarce and valuable resource. It is an important wildlife resource and its value was further enhanced by its location which meant that disturbance from the general public and dogs were minimal.

The Parks and Countryside team therefore opposed the proposal that the “Creation Centre” be built on the site. Representatives of McAuley – McGee Associates confirmed that the site was in accordance with the Cassella report. It was hoped that a meeting between Council departments would resolve their differences on the site. The Chairman reported that the planning application had been withdrawn pending further consultation with English Nature. Officers would seek guidance from the Director of Law and Democracy over the position (in making any recommendations on this) of those Members of this Committee who were also on Planning Committee.

There were requirements for thinning operations, possible Forestry Commission grants and consideration for existing natural resources.

- Butterfly Garden – There was a well-developed wildlife garden located behind Butterfly World for native species of butterfly for public interest and information which was a work in progress.

- Office Accommodation – The Rangers had recently moved offices from inside the Museum to one of the workshops in the period street; however there was an issue regarding the lack of public access.

- Riverside walks, fish haven and open parkland – It was an attractive landscaped park with manicured grassland, wildlife meadows, woodland and water features which required maintenance.

- Stockton – Darlington Railway – The original track-bed of the railway ran through the front of the park and was of significant archaeological interest.

Issues relating to the railway were the maintenance of the woodland, Interpretation and development limitations.

- The River Tees Heritage Park Proposal – The Countryside Service was developing a proposal for a River Tees Heritage Park in partnership with the Council for the Protection of Rural England, The Tees Forest and The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust.

Identified issues were: Funding, Responsibility for project delivery, access and interpretation and access improvements.

Concluded that the presentations be noted.

