

Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Monday, 18th December, 2006.

Present: Cllr J A Fletcher (Chairman), Cllr M Cherrett, Cllr K Dixon, Cllr M Frankland, Cllr Miss B Inman, Cllr T Laing, Cllr J M Lynch, Cllr M Perry, Cllr M Smith, Cllr M E Womphrey; Mr A Maxwell (Diocesan Representative)

Officers: C Watson (DNS), R Kench (CESC), Miss S Connolly and Mrs T Harrison

Also in attendance: No other persons were present

Apologies: Cllr K Faulks, Cllr Mrs A Norton, Cllr R Rix; Ms S Burgess

873 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 4 - Review of Major Festivals (SIRF & BIFF), due to being a member of the Friends of Billingham International Folklore Festival.

874 Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2006

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2006.

CONCLUDED that the minutes were agreed as a correct record and would be forwarded onto the next Council meeting.

875 Review of Major Festivals (SIRF & BIFF)

Mr Watson (Markets Manager) advised the Committee that:

- BIFF did not interfere with the Billingham Market.
- Stockton Market was the only one that experienced problems due to the displacement of market stalls during SIRF.
- Agreement had been reached at Markets Forum that the best solution would be for the Market Traders to be given a day off with no charge thus preventing Traders losing business and enabling SIRF to be held without any complications and it could be as big as it wished. However, the Corporate Management Team had decided that it would not be in the best interest of the town and therefore refused the recommendation.
- The questionnaire that was to be done and taken to all Market Traders individually in January by the members of Adults Leisure and Culture Select Committee, as agreed during the tripartite meeting between Ms Burgess (Town Centre Manager), the Scrutiny Officer, Chairman and Vice Chair of Adults Leisure and Culture Select Committee, was seen as an effective way to gain Traders opinions on SIRF and their displacement.

Mr Watson provided responses to the following questions:

Question 1 and 2: To what extent were you able to plan ahead for the festival (in terms of time and did you receive adequate information on the extent of displacement and disruption to be caused by SIRF?)

In previous years it had only been a few weeks before the festival; however

discussions usually took place in February. Discussions detailing the predominantly final plans of 2006 SIRF took place in March 2006. Receiving information in February/March time was adequate so long as the plans did not deviate.

Question 3 Did you have an account of the extent to which

- Market Traders said they suffered?
- Market Traders DID suffer?
- Any opinions or evidence on the effect of trade in general?

Mr Watson advised that it was usually the same traders who were affected.

It was only in 2006 that they had asked for proof of loss of earnings so for 2006 there was insufficient documentation.

Did he have any views on the way in which SIRF/BIFF could be integrated into the promotion of the town centres generally?

Mr Watson advised that in relation to SIRF it would either be one or the other. The time of SIRF was the best time of the year for Market Traders but there was not enough space to accommodate the full market and SIRF.

Member's queries which areas were the affected areas for Traders? and how many Traders were affected?

Mr Watson advised that it was the area north of the Town Hall and that 35 separate Traders were affected which equalled 45 stall spaces. The Traders paid £18.50 a day per stall which resulted in some Traders paying £64.00 for a total of 4 stall spaces, which the Council would lose if Traders did not stand and the Traders would lose income if they did not stand which would be a significant loss to the Council and Traders.

Affected Traders could not be easily moved as there was insufficient space. The only space would be along the outside of the Castlegate Centre but the Council discouraged them from using the space owing to obstructions to pedestrians at bus stops.

Members considered the best day to take the questionnaires to the Traders and ask them the questions individually.

Mr Kench queried what the demographic of users were of the Traders. He believed that the demographic of SIRF was different so would not contend with the Market users. By knowing the socio demographic make up of the market users it would enable Mr Kench to use SIRF to benefit the Market however it was suspected that people going to the festival would not wish to carry bags of shopping around for long periods.

Mr Watson advised that those that attended the Wednesday Market were that same that attended the Saturday Market. They had undertaken a survey some years ago but it had not identified the area they came from.

Mr Kench was interested to learn which social and economical groups frequented the Market.

The Scrutiny Officer advised that she would find out if any information from MORI polls and would report her findings to the Committee.

It was observed that when people went abroad they visited the Markets in those countries; therefore it would probably be the same with Stockton Market so people would visit the Market as well as SIRF.

Members observed that they wanted SIRF to be the best at the best value for money but also needed to consider the Market Traders as some people frequently came from miles around to buy items from Stockton Market and they customers would not be happy to find that the stall was not there during SIRF. It was important to do and get the best for both sides.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Members would be asked to volunteer to take the questionnaire to each Market Trader and ask them the questions on a yet to be chosen Saturday in January. The Scrutiny Officer to contact the Committee in January 2007.
2. The Scrutiny Officer would provide any information from MORI polls related to Stockton Market and SIRF.
3. That written questions would be forwarded to Sue Burgess for comment.

876 SIRF Report to CMT (October 2006)

Mr Kench outlined the main points in the report including issues related to the Market, utilisation of various locations and issues relating to Management and delivery structures. Mr Kench re-iterated his support for displacement of the market stalls and echoes CMT's decision to abandon the market holiday due to the experiential loss for visitors to the town.

Issues relating to the size of the market and hidden costs were raised. Mr Kench responded by advising that there were always hidden and absorbed costs, but the direct costs presented to Committee included recharges for Legal, Property Services and Public Relations. Many of the services were sub contracted out and were therefore shown as a direct cost. Mr Kench also advised Committee that Stockton Borough Council paid the Police £1000 for additional support but it did not cover the full costs of service provision, including the planning stages. Committee noted that arrestable offences were reduced during the festival.

Issues related to the contract of the Artistic Director were discussed, particularly regarding value for money and whether it was a matter for the legal department. Committee also requested further information relating to links with Beijing in the run up to the 2008 Olympics, which was provided by Mr Kench. The Chair asked Committee to consider the moral issues leading from any 'partnerships' with Beijing, to be discussed further at a future Committee meeting.

CONCLUDED that Committee meetings in January would address issues relating to Direct Services, Property Management, Transport accounting, consultation and strategic direction of arts and festival provision.

877 Future Work Programmes

Members considered future work programmes.

In response to Members' questions regarding the implementation of their recommendations on Preston Hall and Park and the Museum Service, Mr Kench advised that the Preston Park action plan was almost ready.

The Chairman reported on a discussion with the Director of Children Education and Social Care and her colleagues regarding possible scrutiny topics for 2007-08 on 'Adults', together with brief details of possible work on the employment of adults with disabilities.

He would be discussing further the future programme at Executive Scrutiny Committee the following day and Scrutiny Liaison Forum on 12th January 2007.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Preston Park Action Plan to be considered by Committee in January.
2. Committee to scope and project plan the first review of 2007/08 before the end of the Municipal Year.