

Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Adults, Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 30th January, 2007.

Present: Cllr J A Fletcher (Chairman), Cllr K Dixon, Cllr K Faulks, Cllr M Frankland, Cllr Miss B Inman, Cllr J M Lynch, Cllr M Perry, Cllr R Rix, Cllr A Sherris (Vice Cllr T Laing), Cllr M Smith, Cllr M E Womphrey.

Officers: R Kench (CESC), G Birtle, Mrs T Harrison and Miss S Johnson (LD).

Also in attendance: M Robinson (Arts Council North East).

Apologies: Cllr M Cherrett, Cllr T Laing, Cllr Mrs A Norton; Mr A Maxwell (Diocesan Representative), Mr P Beach and Mr Cash (Parent Governor Representative).

981 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Fletcher declared a personal/non prejudicial interest in relation to agenda item 5 Review of Major Festivals (SIRF & BIFF), due to being a member of the Friends of Billingham International Folklore Festival.

982 Minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2007

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held on 10th January 2007.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the 10th January 2007 were agreed as a correct record and would be forwarded on to the next Council meeting.

983 Preston Park Action Plan

Members were advised that the action plan put before Members was a condensed version of the full action plan. The condensed plan would better help Members clearly identify the points and actions to see that scrutiny was on track.

Members requested progress reports every six months to ensure that the plan was remaining on track.

Mr Kench suggested that Members could be provided with written updates on achievement of targets which would be submitted in line with key dates within the Preston Park and Hall work programme thus keeping Members informed whilst ensuring they were not bogged down with updates.

A Member queried what consultation was carried out with staff and was advised that staff and volunteers from all aspects of the Park and Hall were consulted.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The action plan be noted.
2. Written updates of achievements will be provided to the Select Committee in line with key dates within the work programme.
3. The Scrutiny Officer will schedule the Action Plan onto the Agenda for July

2007.

984 Review of Major Festivals (SIRF & BIFF)

The Chair advised that Councillor Nelson had been excused from attending as it was decided that Cabinet Members were not required to provide evidence under the new scrutiny arrangements.

Mr Robinson (Executive Director, Arts Council England (North East)) addressed the Committee providing evidence on the Stockton International Riverside Festival (SIRF) and Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF). Mr Robinson's evidence was mainly focused on SIRF.

Members were advised that festivals were a key part of the partnership and that SIRF was integral to their work. It was vital in the Tees Valley, and played a significant role regionally and nationally. The Arts Council invested significantly in SIRF and BIFF as a result.

Budgets were being reviewed but it was their intention to continue to support SIRF and BIFF. It was noted that Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council also invested in the festivals.

SIRF helped the Arts Council to:

- Increase numbers/participation in artistic events
- Develop creative economy
- Develop vibrant communities
- Internationalism
- Celebrate Cultural diversity
- Develop arts activity for children and young people

The Arts Council also supported the community carnival. Street art, which was still a relatively small aspect, had grown, for which SIRF had played a valued part. Policies were now being developed as a result.

It was their vision to have street art play a part in the 2012 Olympics and for there to be national focus rather than just centralised to London.

The Arts Council acknowledged that there was still work to be done but they wished to keep the momentum going.

Members queried how the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) links could be improved and were advised that festivals have always attracted diversity and someone had been appointed as a carnival office who could also assist in diversity. The officer would start in March 2007.

It was observed that there was a lot of hidden diversity at universities and a Member suggested that an assigned person contact Queen's Campus for the purpose of finding BME individuals, especially those who would be in the area at the time of the festivals, to inform them.

Mr Robinson observed that it was necessary to determine the value/worth of art work as it was relatively expensive and time-consuming to undertake international work and develop relationships with other countries. However, the

Arts Council had prioritised international work.

SIRF was a good example of international involvement and collaboration and benefited from being sustained, rooted, wanted and needed in the Borough.

Mr Kench enquired whether, if Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council were able to get funding relating to international development, the Arts Council would match the funding. Mr Robinson advised that he did not know but projects that were successful would get priority.

Mr Kench advised that SIRF had made a commitment to commission at least one performance per year which reflected the cultural heritage or interests of a resident minority ethnic community.

SIRF 2007 hoped to launch the first international festival league, in partnership with Beijing.

Members queried the balance of advancing the arts by commissioning work against providing more accessible work that people could already recognise.

Commissioning work involved artists by providing them with new and interesting work projects.

Festivals enabled people to sample something they might not usually consider. The Maze which featured at SIRF 2006 had been an example of art which challenged public perception but was enjoyed by many for the fun it provided.

The Arts Council also supported BIFF; they encouraged the development rather than the heritage of arts and therefore encouraged the support of new and emerging acts.

Members queried what input the Arts Council provide regarding disability. Mr Robinson advised that he was not aware of research about street art and disability; however it was something they would be looking into.

Mr Kench observed that there were some problems for the disabled in certain areas used by SIRF, some of which were impossible to avoid as SIRF was provided in an urban area where fixed objects such as kerbs and roads had to be negotiated. However other facilities had been included as a result of feedback received from SIRF attendee's. Fixed seating had been introduced which aided the disabled, even though fixed seating went against the purpose of street art. Where there were large areas of unmade surfaces, caterpillar roll was also used. Mr Kench advised that a wheelchair user had navigated all the areas used by SIRF enabling the team to provide the best aid they could to wheelchair users.

Mr Robinson was thanked for attending the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that he and Councillor Laing would form the small group to look at the accounts of the festivals. The small group which would look into the consultation results after SIRF 2006 would be Councillors Smith, Rix and Dixon. Members would consult with the Scrutiny Officer of a suitable date for their group to meet.

Members were provided with the questionnaire prepared by the Scrutiny Officer which Members would take to each of the Market Traders and consult with them on 10th February.

The Town Centre Manager had commented on the questionnaire. Members were advised that there were 70 Market Traders and the ideal time for Members to visit with Market Traders would be 11.00am - 3.00pm.

The Chair requested volunteers to visit with the Market Traders one on one. To avoid duplication, the Markets Manager would plan out a route for each of the Members. The Chair requested that all volunteers wore their ID badges. Members were requested not to hand out the questionnaires to the Market Traders but to ask them the questions and write down their responses. All responses would need to be given to the Scrutiny Officer quickly to enable compilation of the information in time for the Committee meeting on 14th February.

Members provided their input on the questionnaire which resulted in minor changes.

Members suggested that the questionnaire went to Markets Forum, however the Chair did not consider it to be an ideal platform and it was the Committee's intention to get every Market Trader's input and Markets Forum was not fully represented.

CONCLUDED that:

1. Scrutiny Officer to arrange a compatible date for the small group considering consultation results.
2. The Scrutiny Officer will amend the questionnaire as per Members' and Officers' request.
3. Members wishing to volunteer to visit with Market Traders on 10th February to contact the Chair or Scrutiny Officer.
4. Markets Manager to provide a route plan of the market for each volunteer to avoid duplication.
5. The agenda item 'Market Traders Questionnaire' for 14th February is to be marked to follow and the compiled information will be tabled at the meeting.

985 Future Work Programme

The Chairman informed Members that the Executive Scrutiny Committee had taken up the recommendations of Scrutiny Liaison Forum.

The first topic for the 2007/08 Adults Leisure and Culture Scrutiny review would be Leisure use of the river, subject to the agreement of the Members of the Select Committee after the Election.

CONCLUDED that the approval be noted from Executive Scrutiny and agreed

by the Select Committee that the first topic - Leisure use of the river - and the second topic - Transition from Children to Adults - be put forward as topics to be scrutinised by the Select Committee post election.