

Corporate & Social Inclusion Select Committee

A meeting of Corporate & Social Inclusion Select Committee was held on Tuesday, 2nd October, 2007.

Present: Cllr David Coleman (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Ann Cains, Cllr Mick Eddy, Cllr Mrs Suzanne Fletcher, Cllr Andrew Larkin, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Roy Rix

Officers: R Kench (CESC); S Chaytor (Tees Active); J Trainer, M Jones, D. Ladd (LD)

Also in attendance: J Davey (Managing Director, Riverside Leisure Promotions); D Cooper (Theatre Manager)

Apologies: Cllr Aiden Cockerill, Cllr Mick Womphrey

CSI 11/07

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest declared at the meeting.

CSI 12/07

Minutes of the meeting held on 30th August 2007

The minutes of the meeting held on 30th August 2007 were agreed as a correct record.

CSI 13/07

Review of Theatre Subsidy

(1) To take evidence from:
John Davey - Managing Director, Riverside Leisure Promotions
Derek Cooper - Theatre Manager
(2) To formulate conclusions and recommendations

The Chair gave J. Davey and D. Cooper of Riverside Leisure Promotions an opportunity to respond to comments that were made in the Members Survey regarding car parking, maintenance and programming.

(1) Members received evidence from J. Davey and D. Cooper regarding the Forum Theatre's programming and marketing strategy.

John Davey and Derek Cooper commented that the Theatre attempted to provide a balanced programme with a wide variety to accommodate all tastes and ensured that they did not compete against themselves. The production companies diaries also had to be considered when programming. Week long programmes were booked first, and then the one/two night programmes were booked. The Theatre often used major production companies when they booked productions and tried to view productions were possible. If a show was likely to cause offence, a caution that the show was not suitable for children or those easily offended was added when it was advertised. The Theatre only decided not book a show if the law decided the content was illegal.

The Theatre had programmed productions that were on the school syllabus, and tried to target local schools, however there had been little success in selling the productions to schools.

It was noted that 70,000 full colour brochures were produced each year, at a

cost of £24,000, with 40,000 of these sent to the mailing list. When a week long production was being held 600/700 posters were also distributed. Every production was marketed in the local newspapers. Several production companies paid for a percentage of marketing costs for their production. The Theatre's website was also marketed and Riverside Leisure Promotions believed that they received a high number of hits. It was stated that the Theatre had up to 70% occupancy, was higher than other Theatres in the area. The Arc's email mailing list was discussed, with R. Kench noting that although a lot of time was spent managing the email database, the Arc found this to be cost effective. D. Cooper believed that in his experience hard copy brochures were more effective for the Forum Theatre, as the clientele were an older age range than Arc.

The targeting of minority groups was discussed. D. Cooper noted that the Theatre received bookings from disability and mental health groups for some productions. Such groups received a concession discount, and group booking discount. Members discussed the possibility of booking productions specifically intended for audiences with disabilities, and how schools could be encouraged to use the Theatre.

The impact of Billingham International Folk Festival on the Theatre (BIFF) was also discussed. It was explained that although BIFF provided productions and operated their own equipment, the Theatre provided staff on standby free of charge.

(2) The evidence received during the Review of Theatre Subsidy was discussed. During discussions Members of the Committee formulated some draft recommendations to be included in the final report for the review of Theatre Subsidy.

CONCLUDED that:

1. The Information be noted.
2. The Scrutiny Officer to draft the final report from the discussion and circulate for agreement at the next meeting.

**CSI
14/07**

Work Programme

It was noted that the Committee would need to confirm its next review topic.