

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Wednesday, 4th March, 2009.

Present: Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell(Chairman), Cllr Andrew Sherris(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Dick Cains, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Mick Womphrey

Officers: N. Russell (CESC), P. Mennear, S. Whaley, C. Lunn (LD)

Also in attendance: Member of the Public

Apologies: Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Mrs Kath Nelson

ALC 36/08 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

ALC 37/08 Minutes of the meetings held on 22nd October 2008 and 19th November 2008

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meetings held on 22nd October 2008 and 19th November 2008 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

ALC 38/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2009

- For Approval

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2009 for approval.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st January 2009 were agreed as a correct record and be forwarded to Council.

ALC 39/08 Review of Tees Active - To review findings of the review and draft recommendations

The Committee heard details and received a supplementary handout from a member of the public detailing the increase in the Splash gym membership fees from November 2006 - January 2010 for senior citizens.

It was explained to Members that during 06/07, the yearly subscription charge related to gym-only membership; however, from 07/08 onwards, the subscription charge included use of both the gym and swimming pool facilities. As a senior citizen, concerns were raised over the percentage rise in these membership fees in comparison to a single person's pension allowance and the rise in pension over the comparable years. In addition, the Committee heard that because swimming pool facilities were not being utilised by the individual, fees were being paid for an unused service.

Members discussed the payment options offered by Tees Active, and the 'pay-as-you-go' payment option was highlighted.

Members also compared private gym membership fees, and the cost of similar

facilities offered by other Local Authorities. It was felt by most of the Committee that the facilities offered by Tees Active provided excellent value for money.

The member of the public enquired about the possible ramifications on membership fees following the introduction of free swimming for the over 60's on 1st April 2009, and also following the completion of extension and refurbishment work to various Tees Active sites.

Members discussed the possibility of a reduction in gym membership rates for senior citizens as a result of the introduction of the free swimming initiative, and also queried the notion of introducing a gym-only membership.

The Leisure and Sports Development Manager explained that price increases may also have reflected the rise in utility charges, and informed the Committee and the member of the public that he would approach Tees Active with the proposed questions and suggestions. It was noted that answers would be reported back to the Committee at a future meeting, and also to the member of the public.

The Scrutiny Officer presented the Committee with a Summary of the Tees Active review for their consideration. The following comments were made:-

- The Committee discussed the opening times of the Tees Active sites in relation to when the public are able to use them, and also to the services that they offer to foster parents and Looked After Children.

- Members queried the possibility of obtaining funding from organisations such as Sport England. The Leisure and Sports Development Manager informed the Committee that two bids were going forward at the present time - the first related to the refurbishment of the Billingham Forum, and the second to the free swimming initiative.

- Members discussed the wider aims of the Borough, for example: the issue of obesity and how the Council were tackling and monitoring progress of this.

- The Committee discussed the cost of the option 2 Leisure Card in comparison with other Local Authorities. The member of the public enquired if a leisure card fee was payable annually, the Scrutiny Officer informed that a leisure card fee would be payable on an annual basis.

- Members were informed that Tees Active had exceeded the national swim visit average of 2.1%, achieving 3.1% over three years. In addition, ice visits, total visitor numbers and Activ8 Gym visits had all increased.

- Members discussed the dissatisfaction levels recorded by disabled customers in the MORI survey, and wanted to make sure that these reasons were explored further.

- The Committee discussed the success of the Tees Active and Sports Development classes, particularly in respect of the GP-referral system. The Leisure and Sports Development Manager explained that the intention of the initiative was that classes be utilised for a limited time before individuals moved on to more advanced levels, as class numbers were becoming too large. Members were informed that this would be looked into.

- Members discussed the possibility of e-booking where members of the public could book classes/badminton courts, etc online and the possibility of looking into this further.

Members discussed a number of suggested draft recommendations and these included:-

1. Stockton Borough Council to implement more formal monitoring procedures of Tees Actives' performance.
2. Strengthening Consultation and Feedback mechanisms to ensure Tees Active are responding to the needs and aspirations of the Community.
3. Tees Active to strengthen their role as Stockton Borough Council's strategic leisure partner and offer greater support to a broader social agenda (for example community safety).
4. To demonstrate the quality of facilities through achievement of Quest accreditation.
5. Results of the Tees Active Leisure staff survey to be examined by the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

Members were informed that the TVL staff survey was almost complete.

6. Tees Active academy for young people who have achieved national level standards. In addition, a tier of support below this could be established to support those below national level but are still high performing.

The Committee discussed these recommendations, and agreed that they would be a positive route forward.

CONCLUDED that:-

1. The information be noted.
2. The draft recommendations be amended to reflect the discussion and be included in the draft report which would be forwarded to the next meeting for agreement.

**ALC
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Work Programme

- To prepare questions for witnesses attending the next meeting
- To review the project plan in respect of the current review
- To discuss ideas for future review topics

The Scrutiny Officer explained that the finalised Tees Active review and recommendations would be confirmed at the next Committee meeting on 20th March 2009; the review report would be presented to Cabinet on 16th April

2009.

CONCLUDED that the Work Programme be noted.