

Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee

A meeting of Arts Leisure & Culture Select Committee was held on Monday, 18th October, 2010.

Present: Cllr Hilary Aggio, Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Alan Lewis, Cllr Mrs Jean O'Donnell, Cllr Andrew Sherris, Cllr Mick Womphrey

Officers: Vanessa Shiel(RES), Reuben Kench, Richard Bradley, Graham Clingan, Chris Renahan(DNS), Sarah Whaley, Peter Mennear (LD)

Also in attendance: Member of the Public

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

ALC 18/10 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Hilary Aggio declared a personal non prejudicial interest in relation to item 4 - EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation as she was a member of a group who attended classes run by Tees Active.

CONCLUDED that the information be noted.

ALC 19/10 Draft minutes of the meeting held on the 30th June 2010

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting for Arts Leisure and Culture which was held on the 30th June 2010.

CONCLUDED that the minutes be approved.

ALC 20/10 Draft minutes of the meeting held on the 21st July 2010

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting for Arts Leisure and Culture which was held on the 21st July 2010.

CONCLUDED that the minutes be approved.

ALC 21/10 EIT Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation – Options Papers

Members were asked to consider the information provided and consider draft recommendations, in order for these to be included in a draft final report.

The Head of Culture and Leisure introduced the report to Members by setting the scene by explaining to members that Stockton Borough Council(SBC), had a desire to bring current Efficiency, Improvement and Transformation(EIT) Reviews to report to Cabinet by December where possible. A report to Executive Scrutiny Committee on 19 October would seek to confirm this revised approach.

Members' attention was then drawn to information at Appendix 1, which had been requested at previous meetings in relation to Countryside and Greenspace survey results giving an insight into background analysis prior to discussing the recommended options for change. Members commented on the positive feedback which had come back from the survey and the large number of

residents that had participated. It was also requested by members that the statistics be broken down further to show which parks had received requests for further improvements and be distributed around the relevant ward Members. The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager agreed to do this.

Questions were also raised as to how Anti Social Behaviour (ABS) was being tackled around parks and Greenspaces, to which the Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager informed the Committee that they were working closely with community protection and police in and around areas where this was highlighted.

The Chair asked the Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager if there were any significant differences between the Parks & Greenspace consultation and the GreenSTAT survey to which the Head of Culture and Leisure confirmed that both surveys were fairly consistent regards points of view with minor differences.

The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager introduced Appendix 2, the Role of Groundworks. Members were given an overview of the background of this charitable organisation and learned that there was not one single model for how Groundwork operates. The Committee learned that Stockton engaged with Groundwork on a project by project basis. The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager then went on to highlight the Groundwork Feasibility Study 2004 which was detailed within the report. The study highlighted that, at the time, unlike neighbouring authorities, Groundwork working in the Stockton area may have resulted in the duplication of services and that the most effective use of Groundwork was where a Local Authority had large service gaps, which was not the case for Stockton Borough Council which had an 'Excellent' rating. Members agreed that paragraph 13 of Appendix 2 be recommended, to continue to work with Groundwork as a project partner, but to keep the situation under review.

The Care For Your Area (CFYA) Service Manager introduced Appendix 3a, Ranger Service, Countryside and Greenspace. The Committee heard the following options they had to consider in relation to the Ranger Service.

1) Option 1 as detailed within the report which would be to continue with the service as it was currently which would result in no saving but it would mean that the current Green Flag standard would be maintained.

2) Option 2 as detailed within the report giving potential efficiency savings of in excess of £61K, however Greenflag standards would be possible but unlikely to be met.

3) Option 3 as detailed within the report giving a potential efficiency saving of in excess of £122K, however community engagement and involvement would cease entirely and Green Flag status would not be met.

Members discussed the effect that option 2 and 3 would have on school visits as it would result in Council Members/Rangers not being able to supervise on such trips. Members and Officers discussed further that schools do and can visit supervised facilities from other organisations such as Tees Valley Wildlife Trust (TVWT) and The Royal Society of the Protection of Birds (RSPB) as well as

relying on their own resources from school. Members agreed to support Option 3.

It was discussed that there were further review options which could be considered such as the possibility of some of Stockton's sites being managed by TVWT, in particular Billingham Beck Country Park and Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park. As this suggestion was only at early discussion stage potential savings could not be calculated however if members were agreeable in principle officers would continue discussions and bring forward further information, including on levels of potential savings, to the next meeting of the Committee. This was agreed.

The Countryside & Greenspace Development Manager introduced Appendix 3b to the Committee which was based on Countryside & Greenspace - Strategy & Development Team. Members were informed of the following options as detailed below:

1) Option 1 as detailed in the report with a saving of £25k per annum on countryside and greenspace research.

2) Option 2 would realise a saving of approx. £15k per annum on the Environmental Development budget. There would however be a small budget of approx. £5k left to respond to some projects.

Members agreed to support option 1 and requested further information on the impact of option 2. The Committee and officers discussed the further review options for this area as detailed within the report focusing on the possibility of collaborative working in relation to tree and woodland management with all Tees Valley local authorities. An update on this work was requested at the next meeting.

The Head of Culture and Leisure introduced the Review of Sport, Leisure and Recreation to Members at Appendix 4 of the report. Members were given a potted history of how the structure in this Service area worked and how many staff made up the team. It was also highlighted that 13 members of staff were funded externally and it was not known at this stage if funding would be withdrawn. The proposal outlined plans to re-focus the service on development and commissioning work, if funding for delivery was not forthcoming. Members agreed to support this. Members asked if Stockton Borough Council and Tees Active shared staff to which the reply concluded that Stockton Borough Council's staff ran specific projects within Tees Active facilities.

The Committee's attention was drawn to savings that had been identified by Tees Active, and these were due to merging the Castlegate Quay Centre and Barrage operations, and Billingham Forum related staffing measures. It was estimated that a £200k saving was projected from April 2012 without a reduction of service due to these changes.

Further savings may be achieved through potential joint commissioning options for the future, further analysis of TAL finances once it was back in a steady state trading position, and also the impact of reducing concessions (through Option 3 subsidy) however it was also noted that this could have a major drop in the number of people using facilities where they are currently enjoying concessions.

Members requested that further information on these options be brought to a future meeting. It was noted that further savings could be achieved but only through increasingly difficult decisions.

Members noted the information on the status of the Play Strategy within the context of the review.

CONCLUDED that

1. draft recommendations be formulated based on the discussion at the meeting;
2. further information be brought to the next meeting on the issues noted above in order to complete the process of drafting recommendations at the next meeting.