

Environment Select Committee

A meeting of Environment Select Committee was held on Monday, 28th July, 2014.

Present: Cllr Nigel Cooke(Chairman), Cllr David Wilburn(Vice-Chairman), Cllr Derrick Brown, Cllr Ray McCall, Cllr Mrs Maureen Rigg, Cllr Mick Womphrey, Cllr Bill Woodhead

Officers: Craig Willows(CFYA), Johanne Parker(Counsultation Officer), Graham Birtle, Jenna McDonald(LDS)

Also in attendance:

Apologies: Cllr Jean Kirby

1 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation Procedure was noted.

2 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Maureen Rigg declared an interest as a Member of:

- Friends of Tees Heritage Park
- Friends of Preston Park
- Eaglescliffe/Egglescliffe Council

AGREED that the information be noted.

3 Minutes for signature - 12th May 2014

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2014 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

AGREED that the minutes were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4 Draft minutes - 23rd June 2014

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2014.

AGREED that the minutes be approved.

5 Review of Tree Preservation Orders

Members were provided with the final report on the Review of Tree Preservation Order's(TPO).

AGREED that the Final report be approved by the Committee.

6 Review of Countryside Sites

The Committee received a presentation which provided information on the summary results of Viewpoint 36 from the Consultation Officer in attendance of the meeting. Key points were highlighted as follows:

- A survey was circulated early 2014, the results of which were statistically weighted to ensure that results proportionally represented the borough's population in terms of age, gender, profile and location
- In the last 12 months, most respondents had never visited any of the places listed in the questionnaire
- A key barrier to people not visiting local parks and green spaces was a lack of awareness of the locations
- 9 in 10 people would have liked to have seen more signposted trails or leaflets describing routes

Members also received a presentation on The Future of Countryside Sites from the Care For Your Area(CFYA) Service Manager. Key points were highlighted to the Committee as follows:

- Countryside Service staff numbers had reduced from 18 to 3 staff, this reduction created more pressure on other service provision such as grounds maintenance and inspections
- Stockton Borough increasingly relied on volunteers to work in countryside sites/parks, it was highlighted that keeping volunteers focussed was a challenge
- The budget for 2014/2015 was £149k which was a large decrease from £850,000
- The badger and the woodpecker topiary had been removed from Wynyard Woodland Park as part of the 2014 EIT savings.
- Due to a deduction in resources it was important to maintain what already existed in the countryside sites/parks.
- Managing expectations was a challenge to deliver services as previously
- Preston Park was a visitor attraction for many people travelling into the borough
- The CFYA Service Manager attended a presentation for the Association of Public Service Excellence(APSE) and highlighted that Stockton Borough continued provide a service which had been removed elsewhere in the country as a result of local authority budgetary pressures

The following points were raised by the Committee:

- The Committee agreed that the presentations provided were extremely useful and detailed
- It was highlighted that members of the public often notice when a feature is removed
- Members asked questions regarding the insurance cover for volunteers and heard that all volunteers were covered by SBC's insurance. Risk assessments

and CRB checks were carried out on volunteers where appropriate

- It was highlighted that it may be beneficial to have a volunteer activity coordinator within the Council

- The Committee discussed friends' groups in countryside sites/parks and their relationships with the Council

- Children's play areas in parks across the borough were becoming more challenging to maintain. It was considered to be a good idea to make the most of countryside sites/parks by providing children's birthdays parties where appropriate

AGREED that the information be noted.

7 Work Programme

The Committee was provided with a work programme for 2014-15.

AGREED that the work programme be noted subject to minor amendments/confirmation

8 Chair's Update

The Chair provided no update.