

Regeneration and Transport Select Committee

Update to Executive Scrutiny Committee – 16 November 2010

EIT Review of Events, Arts and Tourism

Update on Progress (including issues/problems/successes)

The Committee received feedback from SIRD and the Fringe at its last meeting.

- 2010 was the 23rd Stockton International Riverside Festival and 20th Stockton Riverside Fringe and another extremely successful year.
- SIRD presented the largest programme for many years with over 200 performances by 32 companies from 7 European countries.
- 1,351 participants and 62 groups participated in the Community Carnival, with every ward in the borough represented.
- 26 new community groups were involved.
- SIRD and Fringe combined presented more than 300 performances to estimated audiences of over 160,000 people.
- SIRD gained a lot of regional and national press and media coverage.
- SIRD advertised on the Castlegate screen for the first time.
- There was more TV and radio coverage than in recent years.
- 98% of visitors think that SIRD is a good thing for Stockton Borough.
- 93% of visitors think SIRD is good for promoting Stockton Borough as a place to visit
- 92% of visitors think that supporting SIRD is a good use of Stockton Borough Council's resources.
- A quarter of businesses experienced a 50% or greater increase in turnover during the Festival
- SIRD and Fringe generated £1.9m of income for the Borough
- 81% of visitors to SIRD came to Stockton especially to attend SIRD
- 85% of visitors had previously attended SIRD and 13% of visitors had attended 19-20 times.
- SIRD operated within very tight financial controls and will be delivered within budget. Final figures are not yet available but it is anticipated that spend will be around £460,000 with £279,000 coming from the Council, £175,000 coming from Arts Council and £7,500 from UK Trade and Investment.

The Committee also received the feedback from focus group discussions. The following is a summary of the comments

- The arts and events in Stockton Borough are held in very high regard with little cost to residents. Specific reference was made to the commitment of Stockton Council to the arts and events it is involved with helping to improve the quality of life for residents.
- The limited venue/facilities within the borough are well used and any additional venues would only strengthen the wide and varied programme.
- Not enough is made of Stockton's High Street especially considering its size. This could become more of a focal point within the borough for events.
- Both adult focus groups made reference to the lack of utilising the railway heritage in the borough.

- All groups would like consideration to be given to the location of events with better use made of Billingham, Thornaby, Ingleby Barwick, and Yarm as well as the numerous parks in the borough.
- The signature events were readily known and enjoyed but the number and variety of the 'smaller' events surprised each of the focus groups. The groups all felt that this should be addressed by better advertising to raise the profile and participation levels.
- The youth focus group was asked specifically about the use of new technology to better inform them about events. Care needs to be taken to use the most popular forms which currently include facebook and mobile phone texting.
- The timing of events and the transport issues to and from events need to have greater consideration as this might impact on the demographic profile of attendees at events.
- Stockton Council can not rest on its laurels as good as the events programme is. A regular refresh of the programme should be considered to continue to maintain the satisfaction levels currently enjoyed.
- Payment to see events is generally accepted so long as the price is commensurate with the event.
- Recognition is given to the difficult financial state facing the Council and events are likely to be affected but should, wherever possible, be retained to continue the enhancement of the borough especially for residents.

The Committee will be discussing the communication and publicity of events and the arts with Abi Kelly, Head of Communications at its next meeting.

Monitoring

The Committee received the initial progress report for the Review of Commissioning and Provision of Public and Community Transport at its meeting on 8th November. Progress updates were also given for outstanding recommendations from the reviews of Highway Network Management; Pavement Parking; Street Lighting; and Sustainable School Transport.