

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 13th November, 2017.

Present: Cllr Derrick Brown (Chair), Cllr Sonia Bailey (Vice-Chair), Cllr Evaline Cunningham, Cllr Chris Barlow, Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE, Cllr Maurice Perry

Officers: Reuben Kench (CL&E), Julie Harkin, Kieran Meighan, Derek Macdonald (F&BS), Gary Woods, Annette Sotheby (DCE)

Also in attendance: Cllr Ann McCoy, Cllr Barry Woodhouse (Billingham Central Ward), Cllr Jean O'Donnell, Joe Maloney, Olga Maloney (BIFF), Sheila Smart, Dianne Rickaby (Billingham Town Council)

Apologies: Cllr Paul Rowling, Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley

PLA 39/17 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

PLA 40/17 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Derrick Brown declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in agenda item 5 as he was a Director of Tees Active, and handed over the chair to Cllr Sonia Bailey (Vice-Chair) to avoid any conflict of interests.

Cllrs Evaline Cunningham, Barry Woodhouse and Ann McCoy declared personal non-prejudicial interests in item 5 as some of the festival sites were in their ward.

PLA 41/17 Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th June 2017 - For Approval/Signature

Consideration was given to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 12th June 2017.

AGREED that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

PLA 42/17 Scrutiny Review of Billingham Event Infrastructure / Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF)

Scrutiny Review of Billingham Event Infrastructure/Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF)

A presentation was given to Members by Joe and Olga Maloney, Directors of BIFF, the key points as follows:-

- The festival is the largest traditional dance and music festival in the UK.
- In 1999 it became a limited company and a registered charity, and is organised and run solely by volunteers.
- In 1970 it became one of the 8 founder members of worldwide organisation CIOFF which includes 100 countries of the world.
- Approximately 300 performers from different countries and cultures are accommodated, and this has been provided by Stockton Council for the last four years at the Marsh House Avenue Sports Centre (former Campus School).

- Festival funding and support was outlined, and a breakdown of festival costs was given.
- New accommodation was now required from 2018, and details of an alternative performance structure (Evolution Dome) costing £15,000 for 10 days hire were shown.
- It was noted that 15,000 people (42% of the total audience) from the Stockton area attended the festival in 2016. Of those attending, 4% of the audience were from outside North East England and 3% were international visitors.
- Approximately £2,000 per festival is lost due to adverse weather conditions, showing the vulnerability of the event being held outdoors. It was felt that if performances took place indoors it would encourage more footfall and ticket purchases, bringing more people to the town. Evidence of the impact of BIFF on Town Centre footfall had been requested from St Modwen's (Town Centre landowners), however nothing had been forthcoming.
- It was noted that St Modwen's had provided sponsorship for festival t-shirts and have previously allowed rehearsals to be carried out in the empty shops in the town centre.

Members comments on the presentation were summarised as follows:-

- An insight into the size, operation and logistics of the festival accommodation had been gained from volunteers and behind the scenes during a visit to the Marsh House Avenue site in summer.
- The importance of the festival to Billingham was understood, in particular the international recognition, and the impact on children learning about different cultures.
- Success in securing funding in the past from the Arts Council showed the value of the festival.
- Members asked if market research could be carried out. It was noted that this would incur cost and a commitment over a period of years.
- The hard work of the volunteers was highlighted, without whom the festival could not take place.

The Local Authority site options for BIFF accommodation were presented, key points as follows:-

- Suitable alternative accommodation in council buildings had been investigated, however none were deemed suitable.
- 5 Council owned sites within Billingham were shown:
 - Hardstanding at sports block at Marsh House Avenue (land only, not the building)
 - John Whitehead Park
 - Sidlaw Road (former college site)
 - Corner of Rievaulx and Marsh House Avenue
 - Bedford Terrace

There were some issues acknowledged in respect of the above, including flooding, draining problems, a need for ground surveys, temporary loss of public amenities, public space consultation and access suitability with the sites.

Officers noted that the hardstanding area (land only, not the building) at the sports block was not considered a permanent solution as:

- o Insufficient hardstanding to accommodate BIFF's requirements;
- o Part of the hardstanding is within Onsite Building Trust's exclusive leased area; and
- o Remaining part of hardstanding and adjoining land is earmarked for future development.

Members queried whether it was worth asking Onsite if, as a short-term measure, the hardstanding area could be used for BIFF 2018. Whilst Officers stated that this could be investigated, the Committee was reminded that Onsite need the use of their exclusively leased area all year round, and that this was a pre-requisite of the agreement of the asset transfer. Members questioned why the remaining part of the hardstanding and adjoining land couldn't be utilised – Officers noted that future plans for this area were still at the consultation stage, and that the Local Plan includes a number of houses on this site in the future.

Members asked if sports/football matches would be compromised during August on the corner of Rievaulx and Marsh House Avenue playing fields, and were informed that this would have an impact on football matches. Bedford Terrace was also considered not suitable as there is insufficient access for heavy vehicles.

Other sites, including schools, were discussed and Members noted the reluctance to use teaching/learning/classroom areas for bedroom accommodation as this was deemed inappropriate and unsafe.

Members asked if accommodation funding could be sourced elsewhere, for example the Combined Authority. It was noted that support from Arts and Culture was more likely to be given to art rather than infrastructure.

It was noted that information on associated costs would be provided to the Committee including inflatable dome structure, marquees, steel cabin structures, site security, etc.

Members of Billingham Town Council highlighted points as follows:

- The hope that the festival would be retained in the centre of Billingham.
- That accommodation be secured for the future of the festival.
- The suggested involvement of young people from colleges for the festival catering, and other groups who have expressed interest in being involved but have not been asked.
- The increased footfall in the town centre during the festival fortnight.
- The aspiration for an amphitheatre in John Whitehead Park in the future if funding could be obtained.
- Although minimal festival funding had been given by BTC in the past, this would be looked at more closely in preparation for future years.

Members were given an overview of the associated health and safety observations by the Health and Safety Manager, key points as follows:-

- Responsible for the safety of performers and visitors.
- Provide advice and guidance with regard to fire risk management.

- Support focussed on shared areas, sleeping accommodation, access/egress, fire safety etc.
- Different and more stringent safety controls are required for sleeping, therefore educational establishments do not make good sleeping accommodation as they do not have adequate alarms or other fire containment and emergency exit features required for safe use for this purpose.
- Smoke kills as well as fire.
- Health and Safety law advises the wider legal responsibility to the public, who should not be exposed to the risk of harm.
- If temporary accommodation is used there is a need to demonstrate the necessary skills for safe running of the site.
- Health and Safety law advises that the client must appoint designated persons (principal designer/contractor) or otherwise assume the responsibility themselves.
- Reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that those appointed have the necessary skills and experience to work in a way that ensures health and safety.

AGREED that the information be noted.

PLA 43/17 Work Programme 2017-2018

The Chair advised Members that the final report on Asylum Seeker Services would be forwarded for consideration by Cabinet on 16th November 2017.

The next meeting to be held on 11th December 2017

AGREED - that the Work Programme be noted.

PLA 44/17 Chair's Update

The Chair had nothing further to report.