

Place Select Committee

A meeting of Place Select Committee was held on Monday, 30th October, 2017.

Present: Cllr Derrick Brown (Chairman), Cllr Evaline Cunningham (Vice Chairman (sub Vice Chairman for Cllr Sonia Bailey), Cllr Ken Dixon, Cllr Lynn Hall (sub for Cllr Maurice Perry), Cllr Bill Woodhead MBE

Officers: Reuben Kench (CL&E), (Steven Hume (CHS), Gary Knight (EG&D), Gary Woods, Annette Sotheby (DCE)

Also in attendance: Cllr Steve Nelson (Cabinet Member), Suzanne Fletcher MBE (Tees Valley of Sanctuary), James Holgate (Sound2Av)

Apologies: Cllr Mrs Sylvia Walmsley, Cllr Sonia Bailey (Vice Chairman), Cllr Maurice Perry, Martin Gray

PLA 32/17 Evacuation Procedure

The evacuation procedure was noted.

PLA 33/17 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Cunningham declared a personal non-prejudicial interest as the Marsh House Avenue site used by Billingham International Folklore Festival is within her ward.

PLA 34/17 Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th May 2017 - For Approval (to follow)

The minutes of the meeting held on 15th May 2017 were approved by Members and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

PLA 35/17 Scrutiny Review of Asylum Seeker Services

An overview was given by the Housing Stream Convenor from Tees Valley of Sanctuary who provided additional information for the Committee to consider:-

- That an independent body should conduct property checks when dealing with complaints, not the accommodation providers.
- That the council be informed in advance of arrivals to assist in planning, and allow schools to be better prepared.
- That children in school should not to be moved within school term unless under exceptional circumstances, as this was disruptive to both children and schools.
- That a clear protocol be established for Early Years children, as some asylum seekers felt discriminated against.
- That room sharing amongst unrelated adults be kept to a minimum.
- That more outlets be made available for the purchase of food and clothing, as these were currently limited.
- That maps and leaflets be updated for new arrivals.

Discussion on the above issues took place, and the Chairman advised that much consideration had already been given to these issues in previous meetings where representation had been made from Justice First, North East Migration Partnership (NEMP) and as part of the consultation around the revised contract. It was noted that the Home Office had acknowledged the

representations already made and the lack of provision of support and welfare, and would shortly be releasing tendering details for new contract provision.

Members discussed a possible additional recommendation for funding for an allotment, for example, to assist asylum seekers in an occupation whilst waiting for an asylum decision and unable to seek employment. It was noted that an allotment would not fit the criteria for migration funding. However, this could be looked at again in the future.

AGREED - that the final report be accepted and forwarded to Executive Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet for approval.

PLA 36/17 Scrutiny Review of Billingham Event Infrastructure/Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF)

An overview of CIOFF guidelines was given as part of the review of Billingham Event Infrastructure/Billingham International Folklore Festival (BIFF) to enable the Committee to consider the nature of the technical and infrastructure requirements of the event.

A statement from Onsite Building Trust was provided for Members following the recent asset transfer of the former Campus School sports block at Marsh House Avenue, Billingham. Onsite stated they could not accommodate the interruption in normal service for the five to six weeks that BIFF required exclusive use of the sports block, and that this was agreed as a pre-requisite of the transfer by Onsite's Governing Board.

An overview was given by Sound2Av (BIFF 2017 Infrastructure Contractor) reflecting on their recent involvement in the festival, with key points as follows :-

- Use of an insulated marquee was considered the most cost-effective solution, heated by warm air, with wooden floor and carpet, shower units, Portaloos etc. This could be sub-divided to accommodate eating, sleeping and rehearsal space. Further details would be forwarded to the Committee.
- Shipping containers, although cheap to hire at £24/week each, incurred an additional cost of £250 to transport to site. These were not insulated or heated and usually used for site office purposes.
- Difficulty was now experienced using school venues, as most now carry out maintenance or have events in the summer holidays.
- 200-300 people needed to be accommodated for 3 weeks, during which time health and safety was crucial. It was felt that a more professional level of support was required, with a nominated site manager to undertake this responsibility.
- Alternative potential sites could be explored, and the Council's Land & Property team had been asked to look for sites within a reasonable radius of Billingham Town Centre so that transport costs could be kept to a minimum.

Members discussed the above information and made the following comments:-

- Visits had been undertaken in the past to look at festival accommodation, and it was felt this had not been of a good standard and needed improvement.
- Other sites could be explored including village halls and council buildings for accommodation, although it was recognised that transport costs would need to be kept to a minimum, and this would influence the site location.
- Billingham Town Council contribution - Members of BTC had agreed to come to Committee to discuss these issues.
- The reliance on volunteers and the input from the Festival Director and Artistic Director was recognised, which greatly contributed to the success of the festival.
- Concern was expressed around the recent low attendance compared to that of previous years. Members were reminded that the task of this Scrutiny Review was to consider the infrastructure requirements, not the popularity of the event.

Arts Council England had been approached as part of this review to provide input around past and future grants to BIFF. A recent response stated that any grant application was assessed on its merit and they could not comment on the potential for the organisation to succeed in grant applications in the future, or provide details of why previous grant applications had been successful. The Arts Council England response would be circulated to Members following this meeting.

AGREED – that the information be noted.

PLA 37/17 Work Programme 2017-2018

AGREED – that the Work Programme be noted.

PLA 38/17 Chair's Update

The Council Plan had previously been circulated after being discussed in detail at Executive Scrutiny Committee. Members were asked to forward any comments to the Scrutiny Officer, particularly in relation to either the 'Economic Regeneration and Transport', 'Environment and Housing' or 'Community Safety' sections.