

Community Services Cabinet Committee

Monday, 26 November 2018

7:30pm

Present:

Cllr Sandra Garside (Chair)

Cllrs: Rob Halpin
Gary Harding (Sub)
Jordan Meade
Shane Mochrie-Cox
Brian Sangha
Peter Scollard

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Adrian Hickmott	Leisure & Resilience Manager
Kirsty Gaunt	Community Involvement Officer
Ben Clarke	Committee & Scrutiny Assistant (Minutes)

48. Apologies

An apology of absence was received from Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Greta Goatley (Vice-Chair). Cllr Gary Harding subbed for Cllr Gurjit Bains.

49. Minutes

Under officer attendance on Page 3 of the minutes, it was noted that there was a typo; it should be 'Woodville' instead of 'Woodwille'.

The minutes of the meeting on 27 September 2018 were signed by the Chair.

50. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were disclosed.

51. Corporate Performance Update – Quarter Two 2018-19 (July – September 2018)

Further to minute 46 (27/09/2018), Members were provided with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as set out within the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-19, for Quarter Two 2018-19 (July – September 2018). Appendix two to the report provided Members with an overview of the council's performance during that time period.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised the Committee that it was a standard report that is brought to the Committee every quarter to update them on the performance of the work carried out within the Portfolio. He gave a brief overview of the layout and what the performance measures and performance indicators were, advising the Committee that they would go through the report page by page.

Deliver an improved leisure offer; activities and facilities that increase sporting participation rates and address local health inequalities

Following a question on why the Boditrax unit is free to use, the Leisure & Resilience Manager advised that the machines were brought in by GCLL approximately twelve months ago; originally they made the first time use of it free and then charged thereafter. However, it was not fully utilised by the public due to the charging aspect so it was made inclusive of the membership price. It is seen as an additional tool to help members for example to lose weight and achieve their goals.

With regard to the large drop in numbers for PI 12 'Number of Active Gravesham Attendees'; there was a multitude of reasons such as, the loss of Danielle Lock to adoption leave right at a pivotal time in the year. She would help to organise and deliver many events and her leaving did impact the team's performance and size of overall programme. Another reason was that many of the activities were run by partner agencies that didn't hold as many sessions as originally intended. Due to those reasons the summer programme was condensed so that it could be delivered effectively however next year it should be able to be brought back to its full potential.

Establish a programme of targeted community events and engagement opportunities to develop a more cohesive community

Praise was given to the Community Involvement Officer on the organisations of the Community Litter Picks in the Borough as it encouraged residents to take pride in their areas and added value to the Community. It was asked if the information could be fed out more often and bit earlier in the year to encourage more residents to hold schemes in their wards.

The Community Involvement Officer advised that it was too cold and dark at the moment for many residents to take part in litter picks however the 'Great British Clean' occurs annually in March. Typically Spring time is the best time to start the litter picks and Gravesham would start to encourage Members and the public to hold them again during that time period.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that the Alzheimer's and Dementia Conference was held in conjunction with local Alzheimer's and Dementia support groups and future plans would be steered by their new initiatives. The Assistant Director (Communities) agreed to ask the Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) if another conference was due to be held next year and circulate the answer to the Committee.

Increased access to The Woodville for local community groups

It was questioned by a Member if, following the success of Gifted Young Gravesham, any discussion had taken place to look into incorporating the group into the Woodville's youth engagement plan to enable them to have a discount and greater access to the Woodville Halls itself.

The Assistant Director (Communities) stated that he would take that question back to the Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) and update the Committee.

A Young and Older Person's budget for supporting community groups

Members asked the Chair what the Council spent from the Young Persons Budget for 2017/18 questioning how the resources are allocated and if a Councillor could request part of the funds for youth projects.

The Chair explained to the Committee that the budget is an ongoing fund and some additional monies from that budget had been spent that aren't currently listed in the report. The final report of the financial year 2017/18 will reflect all works that have been funded by the budget. With regard to allocation, all requests go through the Chair of the Committee and then are passed onto the relevant officers to undergo checks to see if it meets the criteria for approval. The high level of scrutiny given to the requests ensures that the money isn't wasted and goes to charitable causes or worthy youth projects that benefit the Community.

The Assistant Director (Communities) reported that, in the past, requests for funds have been granted in conjunction with match funding by other organisations. That has allowed for bigger projects to be approved in the Borough. A reminder can be sent out to Members to advise them how groups can request money from the budget through the Chair.

Quality frontline services delivered on time and to the right people

One of the Members of the Committee reported that he was constantly receiving phone calls, directed from the call centre, from the public looking to speak to people at Brookvale regarding rubbish collection or housing benefits. The Assistant Director (Communities) explained that the system may not be recognising the names of officers properly or there is a glitch with a similar number. The Leisure & Resilience Manager asked that the Councillor give them his personal mobile number after the meeting and they will check it with Customer Services to prevent any further misdirection of public calls.

Another typo was noticed by a Member; page 21 'Customer Services update', line 2, it should be 'instant' not 'instance'.

Concern was raised by a Member that the number of telephone calls was increasing and the number of self-service transactions was decreasing showing that the public wanted to actually talk to real officers rather than be redirected through automated systems. Gravesham mustn't devolve to a faceless organisation that customers find hard to talk to officers and are constantly bounced from one caller to another without getting their questions answered. He found the report to be unsatisfactory in the explanations given over high phone usage and the way the public were being directed through to an automated system instead of officers. The point was raised that an item could potentially be brought to the Committee in the future about how the Council deals with customer engagement to produce maximum customer satisfaction.

The comments were echoed around the Committee with a push for less self-help systems and more one to one interactions between officers and the public.

The Chair advised that she would pass on the comments to the Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services). The Committee was happy to receive a written update in response to the question.

52. Corporate Register of Partnerships 2018-19

The Committee was informed of the Council's involvement in partnerships that were within the remit of the Committee.

The Council is increasingly working in partnership with local organisations, groups, other public, private and 'third sector' bodies to achieve both its objectives for the local community and contribute to the achievement of the Council's strategic objectives.

The Assistant Director (Communities) stated that the current partnerships that directly relate to the work of the Community Services Committee were as follows:

- GO TRADE
- Gravesham Arts Council
- Gravesham Gateway
- Thames Defence Heritage

GO TRADE and Gravesham Gateway were marked as significant; the definition in the report said that a significant partnership was: *a partnership for which there is a council resource provision of £10,000 or greater or one that is fundamental to the delivery of a strategic objective within the council's Corporate Plan. Without this effective partnership therefore, the delivery of Gravesham Borough Council's key corporate goals would not occur.*"

Concern was raised by a Member that the report was not a true reflection of the Council's partnerships as he felt that the Committee had many more which were not listed such as Cohesion Plus and Elizabeth Huggins Charity. It was felt that the definition of partnership should be amended so that more organisations were accepted as Partners within the portfolio in order to recognise the benefits that the organisations not listed bring to the Council in achieving their core objectives. Outside Bodies were also appointed to by Members at Annual Council so the Bodies within the portfolios remit should also be included such as the Regatta Committee.

The Assistant Director (Communities) explained that there is a longer list of partnerships within the Register, however they are all split by Portfolio and there are a number which fall under the Leader's Portfolio thus why they do not appear in this report, e.g. Cohesion Plus.

The Assistant Director (Communities) did assure the Committee that a review on the Partnerships Register has begun and that he would pass on the Committee's comments about Outside Bodies on which Members are representing the Council. The Assistant Director (Communities) asked that Members email the team if they have any other organisations (that aren't Outside Bodies) which they think should be included within the Partnership review. The Committee requested the item come back to the Committee before Purdah begins next year.

Following on from those points, a Member requested that the organisations, as they are in receipt of public funds, attend the Committee every two years to discuss with the Committee their achievement's, the work they have been doing and how they have benefited the wider Community. It would give them the opportunity to receive help from Councillors as well and advise the Council on what has been successful and what hasn't been as successful.

Concern was raised over the Gateway Strategic Partnership as KCC, in the near future, could possibly slash their funds and stop contributing to the partnership; Members stated that it delivered real value to the Council and provided a safe place for people to come with their inquiries and real issues such as domestic abuse and financial unrest.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that the same issue of risk to the partnership agreement was raised last year and KCC have not pulled out of the agreement, although he would ask the Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) to circulate a response to the Committee on the current status of the Partnership.

53. Annual Report on Events, Summer Fun and Community Cohesion Events

Members were provided with an overview of the events programme organised by the Leisure Team and Community Involvement Team in 2018 including major outdoor events, the Summer Fun programme and the community events.

The Committee was shown two brief videos created by Gravesham Borough Council showcasing the Remembrance Day service and the Riverside Festival in Gravesend.

Members were very appreciative of the fact that the Council decided to cancel the fireworks in light of 'Benny the Beluga' residing in the River Thames where the barge would be located, however they did question whether or not another suitable venue could have been found.

The Chair advised that she had a meeting with the Director (Communities) to discuss the possibility of a different venue. The Leisure & Resilience Manager further explained that the PLA (Port of London Authority) informed the Council two weeks before the event that they couldn't give permission for the fireworks to be fired from the river due to 'Benny'. They also advised against anywhere in near proximity to the river such as the promenade because the Council could be liable if anything was to happen to the whale.

Cascades was originally used to host the fireworks many years ago, but due to the increasing amount of people that attend the display (between 12000-15000), the area is not suitable for the amount of traffic that would ensue. Additionally there were concerns over that amount of people trampling the football pitches and causing disturbances to the houses opposite Cascades. Gravesend Rugby Club and Gravesend Grammar School both potentially offered their respective fields but it was concluded that the same issues would apply there as with Cascades. The Leisure & Resilience Manager added that the public recognised the prom as the regular venue and the event would also require road closures, funfair placements and food vans, so anywhere but the promenade would be a logistically difficult

Following a question, the Leisure & Resilience Manager explained that as far as he was aware the donation from Swale Heating to fund the Fireworks display had been designated for future use due to the cancellation.

The Committee heaped praise upon the two videos shown, especially the very poignant Remembrance Day Service and wanted it noted that Members were very grateful for all the hard work officers had put in over the course of the year. The sheer amount of voluntary work that had been given to the events for the year was very commendable and the Committee recognised all of the effort that was put in to make Gravesham have the best event programme in Kent. One Member also praised the work that had been done to accommodate people of all disabilities at the events stating it was very good to hear all the positive feedback from disabled members of the public. The Committee asked that the two lead officers pass their thanks to the teams for a job well done and also suggested a reward be considered for the officers involved such as an extra days leave.

In response to a Members concern on lower attendance figures for sporting events as part of the Summer Fun programme, especially cricket, the Leisure & Resilience Manager explained that the majority of the sporting events/courses were carried out in partnership with local clubs. With regard to Cricket, August is possibly too late in the season to start playing as an introduction to cricket. Some of the clubs also may not have advertised as much as they had done previously.

The Community Involvement Officer advised the Committee that the interfaith week did also invite secular/humanist groups to attend and a Gravesham Pagan Group did take part during the event.

Following a short discussion on the possible invitation of the organisation 'Porchlight' to the next Committee meeting, the Assistant Director (Communities) advised that he would see if that organisation falls within the remit of the Committee. If they do not, then it may be appropriate to organise a briefing for all Members to attend on a separate date.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8:45pm.