

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Tuesday, 4 June 2019

7.30 pm

Present:

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox (Chair)
Cllr Tony Rana (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: Christina Rolles
 Peter Scollard
 Aaron Elliott
 Baljit Hayre
 Jordan Meade
 Ejaz Aslam
 Harold Craske
 Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Adrian Hickmott	Leisure & Resilience Manager
Liz Read	Operational Manager (The Gr@nd)
Anita Tysoe	Service Manager (Theatre & Customer Services)
Virginie Whittaker	Tourism & Town Twinning Manager
Lauren Wallis	Committee Services Office (minutes)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Gurjit Bains. Cllr Frank Wardle attended as her substitute.

2. Introduction from the Chair

The Chair introduced the Committee explaining that he would prefer Members to save the theatre for Council and that Cabinet Committees were run on a more collegiate process during which ideas and concerns could be discussed.

3. Minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Cabinet Committee held on 5 March 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Community Services Cabinet Committee held on Tuesday, 5 March 2019 were signed by the Chair.

4. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Scollard declared an other interest as he was currently working with The Gr@nd.

The Chair noted the many members of the Committee were also the Council's representatives on outside organisations and declared an other interest as and when these appeared.

5. To consider whether any items in Part A of the agenda should be considered in private or those (if any) in Part B in public.

None.

6. Overview of Service Areas within Community & Leisure

The Assistant Director (Communities) introduced the report which gave an overview of the service areas which fell within the remit of the Committee and its terms of reference. He highlighted that the Committee was outward looking, diverse and community based. The contact details of key officers had been included in the report together with hyperlinks to previous reports over the last year that gave more details on subjects Members might be interested in.

The slide presentation shown during discussion on this item can be accessed via the link set out below:

<http://democracy.gravesham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=441&MId=3225&Ver=4>

Sports Development

The Leisure & Resilience Manager advised that the team comprised of Danielle Lock – Recreation Officer, Amit Hayer – Leisure Events Officer and himself. The team was responsible for a range of leisure facilities, some directly controlled by the Council and some contracted out, as well as a range of different activities.

Members' attention was drawn to a 2017/18 survey undertaken by Sport England Active Lives which showed that Gravesham was one of the lowest performing areas in Kent. The team was working to decrease the number of residents doing no exercise and to increase the percentage doing some exercise. It was noted that this survey did not include children and it was acknowledged that there were high levels of obesity amongst school age children in the Borough. The Leisure & Resilience Manager agreed to make the children's survey available to Members.

It was confirmed that the activities included in the Sport England survey included water based activities such as swimming, sailing and kayaking.

The Woodville

The Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) advised that the theatre focussed on a number of areas including theatre shows, private hire, the areas in the theatre available for use and work ensuring the theatre was family friendly, used by the community, the development of education and outreach initiatives and the volunteer programme.

The following points were raised during discussion on this item:

- Staff were commended on the variety of shows at The Woodville and a tribute was paid to the hard work of the volunteers who were an asset to the theatre.
- The Community Rate Scheme meant any community group could apply for a 50% discount on normal hire prices for events held on Sundays to Wednesdays. The Gifted Young Gravesham event fee was currently under discussion in relation to fees for this year's event taking into account a change in their need for technical support.
- The possibility of private hire for weddings held on Sundays was raised and the officer explained that there had previously been a long term hire by a church on a Sunday which had restricted the hire for weddings. However, the church had now moved to its own premises and The Woodville was now available for private hire on Sundays. A question was raised in relation to the gap in funding caused by the loss of the long term hire on Sundays and the Committee was advised that this had caused a significant loss. However, The Woodville had experienced a good development curve in the last few years and the direct loss had been reduced from £90k to £60k with additional work this year further negating all impact.
- Members were advised that a wide range of comparison exercises were constantly being undertaken with other theatres in Kent and neighbouring areas. This was not only to ensure that fees remained competitive but also to ensure that the Woodville offering complimented nearby theatres. It was also an excellent way to share experience and best practice.
- Members noted that the commercial rate for the hire of The Woodville was approximately £1,800 per day but was dependent on the requirements of the hirer which might include staff, technical support, use of the kitchen (an additional £500).

Community Engagement

The Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) explained that the area focussed on community cohesion and supporting and developing communities. The challenges included developing the confidence and skills of community groups and individuals to organise events. A good example was the Great British Spring Clean which had seen groups being set up to meet perhaps once a month to carry on the work in their own locale. Officers were constantly reviewing the changes in

communities and how to engage with them. Members were advised that local knowledge of their ward areas would be welcomed by officers.

The following points were raised during discussion on this item:

- Events on Community Square were highlighted as being very important as they promoted cohesion and diversity and Members were encouraged to attend.
- Members were advised that there was a budget available to give some support and there was an annual discussion with the appropriate Portfolio Holder as to how this funding should be allocated. Support with regard to health and safety, risk assessments, planning and insurance could also be given.
- It was noted the events on Remembrance Sunday were managed by the Leisure team. The Leisure & Resilience Manager agreed to provide all Members with a calendar of events for the coming year. The officer noted that Eid was listed as being on 28 but was actually on 29 June 2019.
- Members noted that litter picks tended to be arranged as and when required. A suggestion was made that common dates could be set when communities could be encouraged to take part.

The Gr@nd

The Operational Manager explained that the Gr@nd was a healthy living centre and ran the Gifted Young Generation programme and advised that events at the Gr@nd were included in the Members' Bulletin. The young people at The Gr@nd had created a podcast and the latest episode had interviewed young people from across the country. Recordings of the podcasts would be to the Royal Opera House Bridge for their annual conference, which the young people would be presenting on 28 June 2019. Another current project was creation of a framework of a life size sculpture of Benny the Beluga to raise awareness of the environment and single use plastics. The sculpture would be visiting the Fusion, Riverside and Fringe festivals and people would be invited to take part in the cladding of the sculpture. The Gr@nd was also working with the Police Crime Commissioner on the Aloud to Laugh events, of which there were three in the coming year including one in December, The events were free to those who wanted to attend and it was intended to have a maximum of 400 people at the next event. An anti-bullying policy written by the Youth Council would be launched in November 2019. The Operational Manager concluded by highlighting a Meet and Greet event for Councillors on 17 June 2019 but invited Members to pop in any time they wanted to.

The Chair advised the Committee that he intended to issue a standing invitation to members of the Youth Council to attend and take part in all meetings of the Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee.

Arts & Heritage

The Assistant Director (Communities) drew Members' attention to a Participation in Arts Survey which placed Gravesham in the bottom quartile for the percentage of adults in the local authority area which have either attended an arts event or participated in an arts activity at least three times in the past 12 months (2009/2010 – figures from Arts Council England). It was noted that more work needed to be done locally to encourage participation and there were many factors that would affect these statistics including access, ability to pay etc. There were a number of initiatives and the Arts Council was keen to fund new ones. The Government had committed to funding the Thames Estuary Production Corridor as a best practice exemplar which included exhibition spaces, skills training, an Estuary Festival in 2020 and other creative spaces. A People and Places funding bid had been submitted by Ebbsfleet Development Corporation on behalf of a local consortium and a decision was expected to be received in a couple of months.

Following a question from a Member, the Committee was advised of the Gravesham Arts Salon network which could be contacted via Mandy Hare – General Manager (The Woodville) who would share information of any opportunities in the pipeline.

Tourism and Town Twinning

The Tourism & Town Twinning Manager introduced research (Cambridge Model) published in January 2019 by Visit Kent which measured the value and volume of tourism to boroughs in Kent. It was noted that Gravesham was at the bottom of the list. Members were informed that the Borough had seen growth in the last 5 years including an 8% growth in overnight stays and a rise in the number of day trips which all increased the number of jobs and the value to the area. However, progress would be slow due to the lack of accommodation and commercial attractions.

The Committee was advised that the Tourism & Town Twinning Manager was the liaison officer with the towns twinned with Gravesham which included Cambrai (France), Neumünster (Germany), Chesterfield County (Virginia, USA) and Jalandhar (India). There was a programme of visits to or from the twinned 'towns' every three to five years which were generally linked to either town twinning anniversaries or other special events such as the 400th anniversary of Pocahontas. It was noted the schools took part in virtual conversations with schools in twinned areas. Chesterfield County and Gravesham Borough Council officers had also introduced Skype discussions around specific topic areas, sharing ideas and best practice.

The following points were raised during discussion on this item:

- The officer agreed to check if the figures in the table included the number of visitors to the Sikh Gurdwara as it was currently receiving too many visitors including those from as far away as Glasgow and this also included school trips, older person groups etc. It was noted that the Gurdwara was considered to be a local attraction and the Tourism & Town Twinning Manager encouraged the completion of visitor figures each month.

- The Committee was advised that a visit to Cambrai usually took between 2 to 3 days, a trip to Neumünster would be for 3 to 4 days, one to Chesterfield County or Jalandhar would be a week. These visits would usually include the Mayor.
- Members noted that anyone in the Borough could become a member of the Town Twinning Association who also ran independent visits.
- In 1984/85 the Chair of the Young Enterprise Group had won a visit to Neumünster and it was suggested that this person might be included in the 40th anniversary visit to the town.
- It was noted that one of the challenges with regard to tourism was that most of the attractions were seasonal and the area lacked a commercial attraction that was open for most of the week.
- Following a suggestion that a tour of the Borough similar to the recent induction tour provided for Members by the Assistant Director (Communities) be offered for tourists, Members were informed that two years ago 12 people were trained to be accredited tour guides and the number of group tours had recently increased, including growing interest from cruise ship companies.
- The Committee was advised that the Princess Pocahontas (boat trips) had ceased trading. In addition the Balmoral and the Waverley boat trips had been suspended as both vessels needed to undergo repairs. The Topsail barge trips continued to use the Pontoon together with the Jet Stream boat company trips between Gravesham and Medway.
- It was intended to use the history of Gravesham and the Borough Market as part of the global event programme and also as part of the Big Kent Day Out which would also link in with national branding events.

Gravesend Borough Market

The Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) reported that the market had undergone a major refurbishment and had re-opened in December 2016. Significant work needed to be undertaken on the shopping needs and trends of today and in the future. The market had a number of permanent units which were perfect for start-up businesses. There were also pop-up stalls on certain days of the week and a food offer. Events and activities also took place some of which were part of an Interreg funding project to assist in increasing footfall.

The following points were raised during discussion on this item:

- The cost of a permanent unit which was a secure shuttered space was £300 per month with metered electricity which was approximately £10 per quarter.
- It was noted that the food court had proved to be very popular.
- The market had hosted a number of events which were particularly successful. However, it was suggested that perhaps these events could be better publicised.
- A consultation questionnaire was being designed which would include an electronic and a face-to-face format together with the use of group conversations.

- It was suggested that a Member Working Group be set up to assist with this work as trends had changed. It was suggested that the market offering needed to include entertainment, food and an events area etc.
- Following a question about opening hours, Members noted that the market was not open on a Monday which had been changed from a Sunday as the market attracted more foot-fall at the weekend. It was noted that the High Street was quieter when the market was closed.

The Chair asked that once the consultation had been completed, officers set up a Member Working Group to analyse the response. This approach was agreed.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

7. Town Centre Events Programming

The Assistant Director (Communities) introduced the report which sought the views of the Committee on the programming of events in the Town Centre. He advised that officers were focussing on events which supported the town centre given the challenges being faced by high streets and the recognition of the role of events in encouraging an increase in footfall. It was also hoped that events would help to re-introduce people to their town centre. A number of opportunities were being considered in an effort to differentiate Gravesend from other competing centres such as Bluewater, Stratford etc. New residential developments were coming forward in the area and new residents needed to be encouraged to use the town centre. The evening economy was mentioned which had more of a food offer rather than a night club offer. Members were advised that events were constrained by budgets and the number of staff who volunteered to support such events. There was a calendar of events which included those led by other organisations such as Hope & Glory, Cohesion Plus, Vaisakhi and the Waterfront Weekend.

The following points were raised during discussion on this item:

- With regard to the oncoming Charles Dickens anniversary, it was suggested that the Tourism & Town Twinning Manager meet with Visit Kent with a view of having a special event at Gads Hill.
- The Christmas world record attempt might this year include people dressed up as snowmen/women or alternatively, a themed fun event.
- A suggestion was made to have pop-up events/parades whenever an individual or team won a trophy or medal. Members were advised that this had been proposed in the past but had not always been taken up.
- Food orientated events were also suggested as were dressing up, WWII memorial events, tea dances etc and also to include local businesses and the Borough market.
- The Service Manager (Customer & Theatre Services) advised that monies from the Controlling Migration Fund would be soon be utilised to hold international food and music events using the market as the focal point. This

would also take in community cohesion and working against hate crime and would include local businesses and groups.

- A suggestion was made to set up another Member working group to work towards enhancing foot-fall, utilising the frontage of empty shops on a particular day of the week and drawing upon ideas for events and activities that had been well received in other towns.
- The Chair asked officers to consider the need to use consistent dates for annual events so visitors and residents could easily remember when the event takes place.

The Assistant Director (Communities) welcomed all thoughts and ideas and recognised the need for intent and good planning to make things happen.

The Chair supported the idea of Members feeding in ideas to officers and encouraged a constant dialogue. He preferred this approach to that of the suggested working group at this time. He asked that Members recognise that the Council was constrained by budget and the availability of staff.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9.07 pm