

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Thursday, 26 September 2019

7:30pm

Present:

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

Cllrs: Christina Rolles
Peter Scollard
Aaron Elliott
Baljit Hayre
Ejaz Aslam
Harold Craske
Frank Wardle

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Simon Walsh	Service Manager (Communities)
Kath Donald	Strategic Manager (CSU)
Sean Steer	Community Safety Operations Manager (CSU)
Catherine Herbert	Deputy Director, Cement Fields (Whitstable Biennale)
Ben Clarke	Committee & Scrutiny Assistant (Minutes)

8. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Gurjit Bains and Cllr Jordan Meade. Cllr Bob Lane and Cllr Frank Wardle substituted respectively.

9. Minutes

The Assistant Director (Communities) updated Members on areas from the previous minutes:

- Youth Council, page 6 – A standing invite had been offered to the Youth Council to attend the Community & Leisure Cabinet Committees; the Youth Council lost a number of older Members recently as they went off to University. They are currently looking for new representation and they will be advised of the standing invitation.
- Gurdwara Visitors, page 7 – A meeting will be arranged to discuss the issue of visitor management at the Gurdwara, including collating visitor statistics.
- Cross Party Market Working Group, page 8 - A report on the Market will be submitted to the November meeting of Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee; a discussion can be held and action points created for the future.

The minutes of the meeting on Tuesday, 04 June 2019 were signed by the Chair.

10. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

11. Estuary 2020

The Deputy Director, Cement Fields (Whitstable Biennale) gave a presentation to the Committee on the project 'Estuary 2020' outlining the key objectives of the project, the work they carried out in the North Kent area and its planned outcomes (please see supplementary for further detail).

The Deputy Director, Cement Fields (Whitstable Biennale) stated that:

- The festival will take place during September-October 2020, with a focus in Gravesham and Medway on the southern side of the Thames, extending out to other areas in North Kent
- The DCMS Cultural Development Fund award has been made to *Creative Estuary* to deliver the ambitions for the *Thames Estuary Production Corridor*
- Cement Fields are working in partnership with Metal, an arts organisation based in Southend, Essex. Metal will be delivering in South Essex and Cement Fields will carry on delivering in North Kent

Following the presentation, the Committee asked that it be made available to all Members for further circulation.

The Chair stated that it was imperative that Gravesham's arts community was integrated with the Estuary 2020 festival to help showcase Gravesham's art scene to develop their work further. The Chair asked that thought be given to how the project could do that for the long term, identifying the benefits it could bring to Gravesham in the future.

The Committee echoed the Chair's comments and agreed that the Deputy Director, Cement Fields (Whitstable Biennale) was to be invited to attend the June 2020 meeting of the Committee to present and discuss the full programme of events for the Festival.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Director, Cement Fields (Whitstable Biennale) for an informative presentation.

12. Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme 2020

Members were asked to consider and comment on the:

- Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme 2020 which will run in conjunction with the Local Councillor Shadowing Award
- The proposed draft schedule attached at Appendix Two

The Service Manager (Communities) guided Members through pages 11-14 of the report informing them of the details of the award, the future of the scheme and its benefits to the Council and the young people taking part.

Following the explanation of the details of the award and the required Councillor participation, the Service Manager (Communities) informed Members that it would be ideal if all ten Members of the Committee could take part. The Committee & Scrutiny Assistant additionally implored Members to be a part of the Scheme and gave a brief overview of the planned activities; the full schedule could be seen attached at appendix two.

The Committee wholeheartedly agreed that the scheme was a very worthwhile programme that would provide many benefits to both the Councillors and the young people involved. Promoting youth engagement in the Borough and within local politics was very important and the award would allow for a bridge to be created between the youth and Gravesham Borough Council.

Although Members were happy with the scheme, some concern was raised about there being no requirement for any DBS checks. After a robust discussion, the Committee asked that it be looked into if DBS checks could be requested for all Councillors as they may come into contact with children throughout their four year term of office.

The Service Manager (Communities) further addressed Members concerns and advised that the proposed scheme was very different to the original shadowing award as the 2020 scheme was created to ensure that all Councillor's would be meeting the young people in groups within the Council Chamber.

Responding to a Members concern over the amount of places being offered and ensuring inclusivity, the Service Manager (Communities) explained that the matter of being fair and ensuring the whole of Gravesham was included was deliberated about in length. The eight schools and one college that will be approached were the main educational organisations in the Borough and had young people from all backgrounds and ethnicity going to them. The 'two places per school' approach was agreed due to group restrictions involving the Parliament tours and the Council Chamber size which ultimately dictated the best way forward. Additionally the application process will hopefully whittle down the applicants to those that really desire to take part in the scheme and will reap the most benefits from it as they have to be willing to complete the scheme in its entirety and attend the evening meetings.

The Committee expressed their appreciation to the Committee & Scrutiny Assistant for all his work in developing the scheme and for a very informative report. The Committee endorsed the Council's participation in the Gravesham Youth Democracy Scheme run in conjunction with the Local Councillor Shadowing Award.

13. Dickens 150

The plans to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Charles Dickens' death in 2020 were shared with the Committee.

Key information was shared with Members pertaining to Charles Dickens, his death at Gads Hill on 09 June 1870, his history with the Borough and other areas in the Country that would be commemorating the 150th anniversary. Specifically, Gravesham officers are aware that there will be a memorial service at Westminster Abbey as he was buried there; the Assistant Director (Communities) wanted to raise Gravesham's profile and make it more known that Charles Dickens spent his last fourteen years of his life living at Gad's Hill Place and died there.

The Assistant Director (Communities) added that Portsmouth apparently have the original piece of furniture that Charles Dickens died upon and the Gad's Hill Place Trust are enquiring about bringing it back to Gravesham.

The Assistant Director (Communities) advised that officers from Gravesham, Medway, Swale, Thanet and Visit Kent were working together to coordinate a programme of events across the County.

The Assistant Director (Communities) further briefed Members on the potential programme of events for 'Dickens 150' listed on pages 58-59 of the report:

- Dickens' Walks
- Theatre Performances
- Dickens' Quotes Projects
- A Dickens' Exhibition
- A Dickensian Cricket Match
- Art Workshops and Projects
- Gad's Hill Place

One Member praised the quote project as he felt it was a very good way of communicating Dickens' work; he noted that there would be a memorial service at Westminster Abbey to commemorate the 150th anniversary and asked if a small number of tickets could be made available to ensure Gravesham had a presence there. He also asked officers whether Higham Parish Council had been contacted as they would inevitably be making preparations to commemorate the anniversary.

The Assistant Director (Communities) assured the Committee that contacting Higham and Shorne Parish Council was a priority and the team wanted them to be involved in the commemorations. With regard to Westminster Abbey, it is understood that the ticketing will be run by the Dickens Fellowship UK and they will be contacted to inform them of the Council's interest in attending; perhaps The Mayor and a few other official Gravesham representatives could attend.

Several more suggestions were made by the Committee to promote Dickens 150, outlined below:

- The schools needed to become involved as Charles Dickens was a very important figure in Gravesham and the Country's history; primary and secondary schools to be contacted nearer the time to get them involved. Five-ten minute excerpts from his literature could be acted out in the Town Centre, for example
- Competitions in schools about Dickens' literature
- Raise awareness of local places in the Borough associated with Charles Dickens
- Add in any promotional advertisement to the Visit Gravesham website and the Gravesham visitor information point
- A Dickens' scarecrow competition, where schools make Dickens' characters as scarecrows, could be carried out again with the inclusion of famous Dickens quotes around the Town on the scarecrows and on signs, etc

The Chair thanked the officers for their informative report and asked them to incorporate the Committees ideas into the programme.

14. Community Safety Service Overview

The Committee were advised that at the previous Community and Leisure Cabinet Committee in June a report was presented to Committee Members that provided an overview of the different service areas included within the Committee's Portfolio. Community Safety has since been integrated into this Portfolio and therefore, the report had been updated to provide an overview of the work of the Community Safety Unit (CSU).

The Strategic Manager (CSU) guided Members through pages 63-65 of the report, fully briefing the Committee on the work of the Community Safety Unit and explained the key information and the current issues the team faced in the below service areas:

- Activity to improve public safety and protect people from harm
- Preventing and disrupting acquisitive crime
- Protecting and strengthening communities
- Meeting Partnership responsibilities
- Overseeing the delivery of the Council's CCTV Service

The Community Safety Operations Manager highlighted a series of high profile police raids that were carried out yesterday morning to disrupt county line drugs gangs in the area. Letters were also delivered to residents that were suspected of drug dealing and further engaging was made in attempts to prevent more people getting involved in the county line drug trade. Referrals were made for people seeking help with their drug addictions.

The Strategic Manager (CSU) and the Community Safety Operations Manager fielded questions from Members and explained that:

- Officers were aware of requests for additional CCTV, and confirmed that signage could only be erected when there were cameras installed in a location. However there only needed to be sufficient signage to make people aware such as in and out of a road, not for every camera that had been installed
- In the Hive, Northfleet there were already a number of cameras which were operated separately by the Council's housing services department in relation to their housing stock
- The Council would not endorse putting signage up without actually having cameras in the area; that would create a false sense of security for residents and if there was an incident then no CCTV would be able to be used to catch offenders
- Some cameras that have been installed in Gravesend have been repeatedly stolen or vandalised shortly after being installed which is why a feasibility study is carried out beforehand to make sure the location is appropriate
- Cameras were installed along the High Street and along Queen Street covering all major routes in and out of the Town. Even with numerous cameras, it was still difficult to capture clear enough pictures of drug dealing to pursue arrests as it relied on the operator spotting it in time and being able to zoom in to see faces/the drugs/number plates clearly enough to be used as evidence
- Councillors were encouraged to tell their constituents to inform the Police of any information they had that could be useful such as a partial number plate or description of an offender. If they wanted to report anonymously they could do it by contacting Crime Stoppers where their personal information would not be shared
- The community safety award given to local people was given out by the Crime Prevention Panel; at the next meeting the Community Safety Operations Manager

agreed to talk to them about bringing the award back to encourage residents to report issues

- The system GSAFE was used by shops and pubs around Town to warn staff of potentially dangerous people that shouldn't be allowed into their establishments; for example a pub that had kicked out a drunken patron for violent behaviour could warn other pubs nearby. The system was run completely independent of the Council with the work being coordinated externally; the GSAFE representative sits in the CSU
- The CSU carried out a whole range of different work to combat forms of violence including domestic violence including preventative work with boys and young men; the projects described in the report were just a few examples of the work the team dealt with. One of the reasons some of the work was focused solely on women and girls was that the funds were provided externally to support that work by the Home Office's 'Violence against Women and Girls Transformation' fund
- A mobile camera was previously stationed by the Skate Park as it tended to be a hotspot for crime; a permanent camera has now been placed in that area to cover Ordnance Road and the Skate Park however none could be placed in Fort Gardens due to it being a heritage area

In response to Members queries, the Assistant Director (Communities) clarified that the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the Partnership and all of Gravesham Partners work. Whereas, the Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee reviewed the Council's Community Safety responsibilities; there will be a degree of overlap between the two Committees. The Assistant Director (Communities) advised Members that he would take the terms of reference to the next Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee to make it clearer for Members; it will be circulated to the Community & Leisure Cabinet Members too.

The Chair expanded on the point informing Members that the Committee dealt with policy and the Council's role in community safety whereas the Crime & Disorder Scrutiny Committee dealt with the wider partnership role including the CSU, Kent Police and other neighbouring agencies.

Praise was given to the Safer Place Officers and their work in the Town Centre although it was asked whether or not their remit could be expanded to other areas of the Borough.

The Community Safety Operations Manager appreciated the positive feedback and explained that the team were in the middle of recruiting two additional Safer Place Officers who would be mobile and work throughout the Borough.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

15. Draft Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy

The report provided Members with a proposed new corporate approach to tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) contained within a draft ASB Strategy 2019-23. The Strategy had been developed to ensure that the Authority was as effective as possible in addressing the challenges presented by ASB which placed considerable demands on many of the different service department's resources. It provided a framework for dealing with ASB from preventative work through to enforcement in local neighbourhoods and the town centre as a means of achieving longer-term and sustainable improvements in quality of life.

The Strategic Manager (CSU) went through the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy attached at appendix two outlining all of the key information to the Committee and stated the core of the Strategy was the suggested new approach:

- Prevention and community involvement;
- Early identification;
- Supportive intervention;
- Enforcement; and,
- Communication and reassurance (cutting across each of the above)

The Committee thanked the Strategic Manager (CSU) for her detailed run through of the strategy and offered their comments:

- Children needed to know their responsibility in society; messages to schools should be included in the strategy to say that bullying and anti-social behaviour is not acceptable anywhere, at any age
- It was imperative to start preventative action while children were at school to empower them to be the voice of the future
- Members wanted all ward Councillors involved and cross party support in the wards that were most affected by anti-social behaviour; it was suggested faith leaders could be utilised to get the message across the Borough more effectively
- All of the information needed to be measurable with proper indicators and targets so that the information could be compared to see what worked the best

The rural Members reminded the Committee that many problems affected their areas and anti-social behaviour was not restricted to only the Town Centre. The Chair agreed with the statement and assured the Committee that the strategy was a Borough wide approach.

The Chair asked that thanks be minuted to the Strategic Manager (CSU) and the team for their hard work in finishing the strategy and getting it submitted to the Committee earlier than intended.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 9:19pm.