

Community & Leisure Cabinet Committee

Thursday, 11 November 2021

7.30 pm

Present:

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

Councillors: Helen Ashenden
Derek Ashenden
Ejaz Aslam
Harold Craske
Aaron Elliott
Christina Rolles
Emma Morley
Peter Scollard

Simon Hookway	Assistant Director (Communities)
Anita Tysoe	Service Manager (Town Centre & Cultural Services)
Kirsty Gaunt	Community Involvement Officer
Adrian Hickmott	Leisure & Resilience Manager
Danielle Lock	Sport & Recreation Officer
Jackie Denton	Customer Services Manager (Minutes)

15. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Cllr Gurjit Kaur Bains and Cllr Derek Ashenden attended as her substitute.

The Chair asked that thanks be recorded to Danielle Lock together with Gravesham Youth Council, The Grand and Gifted Young Generation for organising the Youth Climate Change Conference held in the Kent Room yesterday. Discussions were held around the global climate threat and the young people were given an opportunity to shape GBC's Net Zero strategy. It is hoped that conversations will continue and their questions will be answered. Cllr Dakota Dibben attended and was very welcome. It was a wonderful event and the energy and enthusiasm in the room was infectious.

16. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 14 September 2021 were signed by the Chair.

17. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Shane Mochrie-Cox declared an interest in agenda item 9. Corporate Performance Report: Quarter Two 2021-22 as he is a council appointee on Gravesham Community Leisure Limited (GCLL) and The Grand CIC.

18. Outdoor and Town Centre Events Programme

The Assistant Director (Communities) presented this report to provide an overview of the council's major outdoor and town centre events programme during 2021.

It has been a year like no other and the report shows the changes we have had to make due to restrictions.

Last Friday the fireworks event returned and it was a huge success with 17000 spectators. Questions were asked about Police attendance at the event and the Committee was informed that they were aware of the event via the Safety Advisory Group.

Members made the following comments:

- The firework event was extremely well run but there was concern with the number of people as it was very crowded. There were no problems but there could have been
- It should have been classed as a special event for the emergency services so they are on special notice in the event of an incident and the mobile phone networks are notified that there is a large number of people in that particular vicinity. This was noted for next year

Today we had the Remembrance Service on the Community Square, with Remembrance Sunday events planned for 14 November. On 21 January 2022 we will have the annual General Gordon Memorial Service in Gordon Gardens. There will also be a number of celebrations in June 2022 to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

19. Summer Fun Programme 2021

The Sport & Recreation Officer presented this report to update on the outcome of the Summer Fun Programme.

It was good to be out delivering events in the community again this summer and officers were feeling rejuvenated. They had to follow ever-changing Covid restrictions so delivered a smaller scale programme between July and September 2021. Fewer activities were provided at each site but the number of sites across the borough were increased. Attendance at Woodlands Park and Camer Park were lower than previous years with Woodlands Park and Wombwell Park activities being affected by inclement weather.

An event has never taken place before at Rosherville Open Space but it was very well attended and it is hoped it can be replicated in future years. Worked closely with Big Local around Northfleet Primal Roots.

Numbers were down on the usual programme but that is to be expected with Covid restrictions but people from all the sites were saying how pleased they were that something had been organised for the children.

The Chair thanked the team for the diversity of activities and for spreading them out across the borough and coping with restrictions at the time. It has allowed us to tap into different markets and have some localised events which are beneficial.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

20. Community Engagement Events & Activities 2021

The Community Involvement Officer gave an overview of the community engagement events and activities during 2021.

At the beginning of the year we were deep in lockdown and so recognised a number of occasions by flying the relevant flag and sharing on social media such as the Trust flag on Holocaust Memorial Day in January; The Pride flag was raised for LGBTQI History month in February; the Commonwealth flag in March; the Roma flag for International Roma day in April; the Vaisakhi flag in April; the Eid flag in May, the Pride flag for Pride month in June; the Armed Forces Day flag in June and the Roma flag for Roma Holocaust in August.

There has been a large increase in volunteer litter pickers since the pandemic began and 16 group litter picks took place as part of the Great British Spring Clean.

Heading into summer we delivered the Windrush Day Project by having a range of events at St. Andrew's Quayside and Art Centre and in the market. It was the first outdoor event held this summer and people were excited to have music and live entertainment. Gravesham Pride CIC ran their first ever Pride event in Fort Gardens to a maximum audience and had good weather.

The Mayor's Boundary Walk was able to take place again this year in October and raised a significant amount of money for charity.

Inter-Faith Week runs from 13 to 17 November and the North Kent Interfaith Network have organised a walk.

The Chair advised that he had received a number of positive comments about Gravesham Pride in that Gravesham feels like a safe place for some people for the first time. They have asked for a parade next year to show solidarity and celebrate the diversity of the town.

Following questions from the Committee, the Community Involvement Officer responded:

- With regard to litter picking, it is very much part of my role to work closely with the Street Champions and this has grown over the last year and we are looking to develop the role of volunteers
- Looking to recognise the work of the Street Champions during National Volunteer Week in the spring

Members have seen a determination from officers to get things going again and making a good job of doing that and we look forward to the Christmas events. Officers should be congratulated on bringing us back to normal

Members noted the information contained within the report.

21. Christmas Programme 2021

The Assistant Director (Communities) provided an overview of the Christmas programme planned for the town centre in 2021.

The Christmas programme begins a week tomorrow with the light switch-on. Lots of Christmas events are taking place in the market to increase footfall. There will be workshops, a number of Christmas markets and a pop-up cinema showing Home Alone and Elf. On Saturday, 11 December we will have Nativity Live. The camels will appear on the Community Square at 11am and the parade will start at mid-day. Working with village locations, Meopham Vineyard and Gravesham Churches Together to produce a film of the nativity story but also taking the opportunity to include attractions from around the borough. There will be a Santa trail and a Santa Selfie Experience. The panto is taking bookings for Robin Hood from 3 December to 3 January 2022.

The Service Manager (Town Centre & Cultural Services) is leading on the winter lights project and there will be a number of creative lighting schemes around the town including lighting up historic buildings and sculptures.

The Christmas programme is publicised in the winter edition of Your Borough, the Visit Gravesham website and local media.

The Chair asked that thanks be passed to the Communications Team as the winter edition of Your Borough is one of the best we have seen for a very long time, especially the fully comprehensive list of events.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

22. Corporate Performance Update: Quarter Two 2021-22

The Committee were provided with an update against the Performance Management Framework, as introduced within the council's Corporate Plan for Quarter Two 2021-22 (July to September 2021).

The Assistant Director (Communities) guided Members through the report and gave a brief overview of Policy Commitment.

PI 1 Total number of reported crime offences – These are still lower than they were prior to the pandemic. Numbers are coming down on ASB as well. There was an operation around the sale of illegal cigarettes and tobaccos in shops in the town centre and some positive results were achieved. This was a strong focus on joint working between the CSU, Kent Police, HMRC and Trading Standards.

PI 13 Total number of environmental enforcement actions taken – There has been a focus on fly-tipping and there is a headline on the front page of the Kent Messenger around a significant fine of £1500 for fly-tipping in Hog Lane which is notorious for fly-tipping. Despite vacancies in the team during Q2, a high level of investigatory reports are being undertaken which is a significant amount of work and a number are moving towards conviction.

PI 37 Total number of leisure centre attendees – Leisure Centres are beginning to recover post pandemic. Discussion took place around the competition from the number of private gyms in the borough and particularly in the town centre and with a gym only offer can achieve lower membership and open 24/7. The feeling is that if the Leisure Trust introduced a gym only membership it would reduce income. The benefit of the location of the council Leisure Centres is they have free parking. An updated report on Leisure Centres by GCLL will be brought to the February Committee.

PI 41 Community events – We mentioned at the last Committee how during the last year we saw an increase in events even though they may have been smaller but additional activity is now taking place.

PI 42 Woodville – Ticket sales were impacted because of closure. We are looking forward to the important Christmas period to see how numbers increase in the next quarter.

PI 43 Borough Market footfall – Footfall appeared to dip this quarter but there was an error with the footfall counters and so the correct figure may not have been captured.

PI 44 Visitors to Heritage sites – This is an annual indicator. The “Make It” events which are free help to drive footfall. The Hope and Glory event in the Fort Gardens didn’t run last year but this year was held in September and recorded good visitor numbers, helped by the good weather.

The new St. George’s Arts Centre will officially open on 11 December and Members of the Committee will receive a personal invite shortly.

Members noted the information contained within the report.

Close of meeting

The meeting ended at 8.16 pm