

SOCIAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2012 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Mrs. Cook (Chairman)

Ms. Lowe (Vice-Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Bosley, Brookbank, Butler, Eyre, Firth, Mrs. George, Horwood, Maskell, Raikes, Searles, Miss. Thornton and Towell

Apologies for absence: Ms. Chetram and Mrs. Purves

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley and Fittock were also present

1. Minutes

Cllr. Eyre noted that his name had been incorrectly spelt in minute item 48. This was corrected.

Community Safety Week had now passed but the Chairman hoped that the Committee could organise a visit linked to it in 2013.

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting of the Social Affairs Select Committee held on 27 March 2012, as amended, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

2. Declarations of interest

Cllr. Eyre declared a personal and prejudicial interest in minute item 5 as both a Councillor and the General Manager of the STAG Community Arts Centre. He clarified that he would be speaking on the item solely in his role as General Manager.

Cllr. Raikes declared a personal interest in minute item 5 as both a Councillor and the Chairman of the trustees of the STAG Community Arts Centre.

3. Formal Response from the Cabinet following matters referred by the Committee and/or requests from the Performance and Governance Committee (if any)

Except as discussed under minute item 4 no issues had been referred to the Cabinet.

4. Actions from previous meeting (attached)

The CXK Area Manager for Dartford, Gravesham and Sevenoaks had informed the Head of Community Development that there were no directly funded projects in the Sevenoaks District linked to youth offending.

Statistics relating to the demographics of the District would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting.

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The other completed action was noted.

5. Future Business, the Work Plan 2012/13 (attached) and the Forward Plan

In September the Committee would start considering the themes from the beginning of the Community Plan again and the first was "Help communities to feel safe and be safe". The Police and Fire Services would attend. The Environmental Health Enforcement Policy was also likely to be considered at that meeting.

The October meeting would consider the theme of "A better start for our children". Carers First and Spring House Family Support Service would be invited to the meeting and there would be an update from the Chairman and Vice-Chairman following their visits to local maternity services and their meeting with Mumsnet. The budget would also be considered.

The Future of the NHS in the District and Health Town Status would be moved to the meeting in January for the theme "Meeting the needs of an ageing population". The Chairman hoped that commissioning for older people could also be considered.

The Chairman proposed that the theme for March be "Improve the lives of young people in the District". The Committee could invite the STAG to comment on its work with young people, together with the Kenwood Trust. It could also consider mental health disorders in young people. Another Member suggested that youth groups in Seal, such as Play Place, did a lot of good work and could be invited also. It would be necessary to check the timescale for commissioning of youth services since the District Council would be involved in the commissioning process and this could cause a conflict.

As the meeting scheduled for 6 September 2012 would be at the same time as the Paralympic cycling event at Brands Hatch it was agreed that another date be considered. It was proposed that 11 or 17 September 2012 be the preferred dates.

6. Strong and Active Communities

Sencio Community Leisure

Mr. Mark Whyman, The Chief Executive of Sencio, was welcomed to the meeting and he gave a presentation about strong and active communities. He circulated to Members a series of graphs showing the performance of Sencio Community Leisure.

He compared the use of sporting facilities in 2008 with 2011 and was pleased that so much was still wetside based. Swimming had seen a national decline over the period as children were not keeping up the sport as they grew older. There had also been a small decline in the use of all-weather pitches but this may have been because the pitch at Edenbridge was out of use for part of 2011. The use of fitness facilities had grown each year despite the recession and, together with golf, was creating the most income.

Some of the fitness business was picked up from private competitors as customers traded down. Although Sencio could not compete with the quality of facilities of competitors they could focus on creating a high quality visit. Sencio hoped to build loyalty and so employees were measured on the number of interactions they made with customers. Mr. Whyman said that the organisation was committed to staff training and a good maintenance of buildings.

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The Chief Executive of Sencio made it clear that a strong interaction with the community, not just balancing the budget, was important to Sencio. There had been some significant improvements in the number of school visits to the facilities in Sevenoaks. However there was a small fall for the White Oak Centre as a private school had gone into receivership and Edenbridge had suffered as rural schools were finding the cost of travel too great. The Chairman felt it important that the difficulties with travel were highlighted.

Sencio had started a partnership with West Kent Extra. Sencio had also introduced a Youth Membership scheme which allowed the use of adult equipment at any time for a cost of £24 per month.

Two case studies were tabled showing examples of how Sencio facilities were used, as was an article about the golf academy. The academy currently had 90 participants and hoped soon to cater for blind children also.

Members asked how they got customers to try the facilities. Mr. Whyman considered every day to be an open day and considered Sencio an incredibly open organisation. Customers were talked to before they even came to a centre and all inductions took place on a one-to-one basis.

Sencio tried to work with other charities in the community and with the Sevenoaks District Sports Council. He worked very closely with the Community Development team on community and health initiatives. Members were invited to the annual golf charity day with the Parents Consortium, a charitable company which was open to, and provided services for, parents and carers who had a disabled child aged 19 or under in the Dartford, Gravesham or Swanleys areas. The charity day would take place on 7 September 2012 at Lullingstone Golf Course.

The meeting thanked Mr. Whyman for an interesting presentation. The Chairman hoped Members would remind others how excellent the facilities were.

The STAG

Cllr. Eyre spoke to the Committee as the General Manager of the STAG Community Arts Centre.

Volunteers had always been central to the success of the STAG because of their knowledge and effort. Some volunteers had come long distances and some had helped for many years. In some cases the opportunity to be a volunteer had given individuals the confidence to get paid employment and in others it provided useful experience. Feedback forms were used to ensure the views of volunteers were properly taken into account.

The STAG tried to provide services to the disparate elements of the community. A Mother and Baby Film Club had been set up to cater for a group which was excluded from some cinemas. The film would be played more quietly, with the lights left on and prams allowed in to the theatre. The Classic Film Club had initially been aimed at older age groups but, following comments, further showings were added on Tuesday evenings for those still in employment. Regrettably too few presently attended the Mother and Baby and the Classic Film Club but those who did enjoyed it greatly.

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Many other groups were worked with and the largest of these was the amateur dramatic community. The STAG took part in youth outreach together with groups such as the Hextable Performing Arts School and the Sevenoaks Youth Theatre. Taking part and performing in front of 450 people helped children to build confidence and develop. That evening the Hextable Performing Arts School had been performing with High Firs Primary School, Horton Kirby Primary School, Hextable Primary School, Hextable Performing Arts Secondary School, Dartford Boys Grammar School and Dartford Girls Grammar School taking part. As a result of a consultation the STAG hoped a confidential room would soon be added next to the Youth Café so that young people involved with the STAG could go there for advice.

All Members were invited to a performance of A Midsummer's Night Dream performed by the Sevenoaks Youth Theatre on 3 to 4 July 2012. The General Manager of the STAG commended the comedy nights which had been rated as the fourth best comedy centre in Britain by the Guardian newspaper.

The STAG found it difficult to target advertising as customers seldom provided their ages. Some individual events had attracted audiences from a wide geographical area but he believed that by remaining competitive in price the STAG could draw larger crowds and resist the competition faced by larger and better known venues.

The Committee thanked the General Manager for his presentation and answering questions.

District Council Input

The Head of Community Development summarised some of the ways Sevenoaks District Council promoted and supported strong and active communities. Among others this included direct grants made annually and through the Big Community Fund as well as those made indirectly through the Sevenoaks District Sports Council or the Sevenoaks District Arts Council. The Council was also involved in Partnerships and Communities Together (PACTs), which enabled local people to identify and prioritise action on local community safety issues. Environmental visual audits enabled local people to identify improvements to their community. Speed Watch enabled local people to work together to reduce speed through their villages. Health Walks involved trained local people leading walks in their community, Up and Running was a mental health initiative for local people. The Council also involved local people through Community Consultation days, Parish Plans, Family Fun Days (now run by the parish councils) and business volunteering. The Chairman commended the amount which was achieved with a relatively small budget.

7. Verbal Update on Olympic Arrangements

The Head of Community Development informed the meeting that the Paralympic Games road cycling would be held at Brands Hatch between 5 and 8 September with training held on 3 and 4 September 2012. The first practice on the Paralympic track had been held earlier in the week. 225 paralympians would be competing at Brands Hatch for 32 gold medals. Brands Hatch was selected 18 months ago as the site for its undulations and camber which made it more challenging than the alternatives. 4km of the course were on the track and 4km on the road.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) had intended that all visitors to Brands Hatch travel by train. Those who travelled to

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Sevenoaks railway station would be taken by shuttle bus to the venue. Parking had only been provided for those with a ticket for the event. The Council with Kent County Council had therefore hired a field at Wrotham Hill to provide greater capacity for spectator parking, with the intention of reducing pressure on local communities.

The responsibilities of the District Council for the Paralympic event were listed. It would be responsible for crowd safety outside Brands Hatch and nearly 200 volunteers had been recruited, with half already trained. Each volunteer had been offered a ticket to the Paralympic training event earlier in the week. A crowd management company had also been hired and was to provide additional staff. The Council had been asked to clean the roads of the course, and would be paid additional monies for that part of the course which was inside Brands Hatch. A standing Safety Advisory Group had been established to consider every agency's emergency plan for the event. The Community Development team was involved in producing the Event Plan, recruiting and training volunteer stewards, ensuring crowd management and safety, and communications with the local community. The Health and Leisure Manager had engaged and strengthened links with local stakeholders, especially community groups, by giving presentations to them. Finally the Council would also be responsible for toilets and first aid outside of the venue.

Estimates put the economic benefit to the District at £1.36 million but the Head of Community Development advised caution with this figure.

The tagline of the legacy was to "Be Inspired, Be Active". One aim was to encourage cycling in the District by creating new cycling routes and promoting Sky Rides, which were community-led bike rides. It also included proposals for an outdoor gymnasium at West Kingsdown, greater disabled access to local tourist venues and the History of Olympia school workshop which was provided by the STAG Theatre.

The Olympic torch relay was due to go through the District on 20 July 2012 and would take 1 hour and 20 minutes. It would be transported by convoy until Seal from where each runner would travel approximately 300m with the torch. Most of the torch runners came from outside the District. Officers were aware that so far, elsewhere in the country, attendance at the torch relay had been much greater than expected. Leaflets had been circulated to all parishes abutting the route. Barriers would be put up in selected parts of the route at 4a.m. on the day and traffic would be stopped on one side of the road. Each shopkeeper on the route had been visited, given a leaflet and directed to the website so that the most could be made of the event.

The Committee thanked the Officers and volunteers for their hard work. The Head of Community Development reminded the meeting that it was a corporate effort and many different Teams had been involved at one stage in the process. It was also noted that the Parish Councils had organised events for the torch relay and local churches had offered their facilities too, such as their toilets and their halls.

8. Feedback from Members' Visits (if any)

There were no updates from Members' visits.

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9. Programme of Visitors to Future Meetings of the Committee (including a list of voluntary organisations)

The Head of Community Development agreed to arrange visits to a fire station and also a police station, for those unable to visit one in 2011. It was hoped that the police station in the District Council's offices in Argyle Road, Sevenoaks would be opened by the time of the next meeting.

A Member of the Committee, who was the local Member for Seal and Weald, commented that a fire appliance had recently been delayed by 20 minutes because of a lack of local knowledge. The Chief Executive of Sencio added that the emergency services had stopped responding to automatic alarms between 9am and 6pm and from 2013 they would also stop responding to these alarms at night time. It was agreed both these matters would be raised at the next meeting.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 9.05 pm

Chairman