

Leisure, Culture and the Third Sector Scrutiny Board

13 February 2017

Summary of Matters Considered at the Board

Report of the Chair, Councillor Ahmed

The Scrutiny Board met on 13 February 2017 and the following items were considered. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

Gifted and Talented Programme

The Board received a report and presentation on the Council's Gifted and Talented Programme. The Programme aims to support gifted and talented athletes to achieve their full potential. While Sandwell has many talented athletes the cost of further developing to the elite standard could be a barrier, the Programme alleviated this through making grant awards of up to £500.

A similar Programme had originally run between 2006 and 2011, with some athletes supported by that Programme successfully competing in the 2014 Commonwealth Games. In March 2016, the Cabinet approved a revised Programme, which has so far supported eight young athletes in a variety of sports. With the aid of the grant funding allocated through the Programme these young people have already achieved much within their sports such as representing England at Under 18s level and winning national and European championships.

The Board suggested that the Council could work with partners, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, to identify potential sponsorship opportunities from local businesses for gifted and talented young athletes and sportspeople.

Annual Events Programme

The Board received the Council's annual events programme which included events organised by the Council (such as fireworks events and Remembrance Sunday events), those held by the private sector (including fairgrounds and runs) and the third sector.

The third sector was increasingly involved with arranging and holding events, from high-profile events such as the Mela in Smethwick or Tipton Carnival to smaller events on a more local basis.

The Board stressed the importance of good health and safety practice at all events, especially at those that include fireworks and bonfires.

It was recognised that the Council had limited resources to maintain numbers of events in the long-term, so it was important to identify ways in which the third sector could be empowered to organise events for the local community. To help achieve this, the Board requested that the Cabinet, when considering the commissioning of capacity building in local communities, considers including specific elements such as events management and health and safety skills to allow communities to organise and support their own local events.

Protection of Parks and Green Spaces

The Board received an update on the work done to protect the borough's parks and green spaces from unauthorised vehicular access, including incursions by some members of the traveller community.

A risk assessment of parks, green spaces and open spaces in Sandwell has been carried out by a multi-service team. Based on this assessment a number of protection measures have been installed at sites across Sandwell. These include bollards and concrete blockers. This work is ongoing and the success of the measures will be monitored and reviewed periodically.

Members discussed the disruption that unauthorised encampments cause to local communities. The Board asked that existing communication campaigns in areas that experience such encampments be further strengthened to include targeted awareness raising of rogue traders and how to report them.

Councillor Ahmed

Chair of the Leisure, Culture and the Third Sector Scrutiny Board