

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

10th April 2017 at 5.30pm
at the Sandwell Council House, Oldbury

Present: Councillor Ahmed (Chair);
Councillor Hevican (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Frear, EM Giles and Hickey.

Apology: Councillor Philips.

Also present: Max Cookson (Waste and Transport Manager);
Chris Jones (Manager – Sport & Leisure Strategy
and Development).

6/17

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th February, 2017 be approved as a correct record.

7/17

Update on Black Patch Park, Smethwick

The Board received an update on Black Patch Park in Smethwick from the Council's Waste and Transport Manager.

The park had been subject to considerable amounts of fly-tipping and unauthorised encampments over a number of years. While the Council had installed fencing around part of the park's perimeter to address fly-tipping, the park was still a target for unauthorised encampments. These encampments caused extensive damage to the park which cost the Council considerable amounts to clean up and put right. This also prevented the local community from making proper use of the park and prevented the Council from developing longer-term plans for improvements to Black Patch Park.

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The Cabinet had agreed in March to construct a 'temporary transit site' within the borough. This would help reduce the number of unauthorised encampments as well as reducing the length of time and the impact of such encampments. Planning permission was to be sought for the site in May 2017.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- in addition to the fencing erected at the park, a number of other measures had been installed to deter unauthorised encampments, including concrete blocks;
- as the Black Patch area was highly industrialised, it was attractive to fly-tippers due to the low level of natural surveillance;
- it was acknowledged that the Black Patch area had a long-standing historic link to the local Roma community;
- due to the proximity of the park to the Sandwell-Birmingham border, it might be useful to talk to Birmingham City Council about any future improvements at the park;
- if Planning Committee approved the temporary transit site, the Parks Service would plan preparatory work at the park to grass and trees to support whatever future improvements agreed for the park;
- there was an active Friends of Black Patch Park group which should be engaged during the development of any proposals for improvements at the park.

The Board thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

Resolved that the Cabinet Members for Leisure and Regeneration and Economic Investment be requested to consider meeting with representatives of community groups in the Black Patch area of Smethwick to discuss proposals for that area and what they could mean for Black Patch Park.

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Evaluation of the Summer Activities Programme

The Board received a presentation on the evaluation of the 2016 Summer Activities Programme that was commissioned by the Council and delivered by a number of local organisations across the six towns.

A “one off” programme registration scheme was utilised, where participants could register online or on site by completing a paper registration form. Once a participant had registered, they could attend any session at any of the parks included in the programme. In total, 5985 participants registered to be able to attend sessions, an increase of 2211 from the 2015 programme.

The programme was delivered from sites in each of Sandwell’s six towns. In 2016, the sites were:-

Oldbury – Barnford Park;
Rowley Regis – Britannia Park;
Smethwick – Victoria Park;
Tipton – Jubilee Park;
Wednesbury – Brunswick Park;
West Bromwich – Sandwell Valley.

From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- wherever possible, organisations local to each town were commissioned. While this was not always possible, all providers were from Sandwell;
- multi-sports proved the most consistently popular activity. This included football, cricket, rounders, basketball and more. Such sessions were often tailored to participant group size and the preferences of the participants in attendance;
- 56% of participants were male, with most attendees being between 0 and 12 years of age. Participation amongst young people aged 13+ was considerably lower;
- most participants were from Sandwell (78%); the remainder came from Birmingham, Dudley, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

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- most of the attendees at each town's programme were from wards local to the park where activities were delivered. Sandwell Valley attracted participants from across Sandwell and the wider West Midlands. This was possibly due to the Valley's status as a regional visitor attraction – young people may have been attending the site with their family and then opted to join in with an activity being delivered by the programme;
- the Youth Parliament had been consulted on the types of activities to offer through the programme;
- discussions were ongoing about what activities programme might be operated this year.

The Board thanked the officer for attending the meeting.

(The meeting ended at 6.30pm)

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