

AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was held on 28 July 2008.

PRESENT: Councillor Brunton (Chair), Councillors Dunne, Elder, J A Walker and Williams.

OFFICIALS: P Clark, J Croft, J Farrar, S Harker, L Marron, I Parker

**** PRESENT BY INVITATION:** Councillor T Mawston.

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVERS:** Councillors Davison and Sanderson and N Walker.

**** APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were submitted on behalf of Councillors C Hobson and Majid.

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made at this point of the meeting.

APPOINTMENT – VICE CHAIR – AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

The Chair sought nominations for Vice-Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel for the Municipal Year 2008/2009.

ORDERED that Councillor J A Walker be appointed as Vice-Chair of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel for the Municipal Year 2008/2009.

CLEVELAND SHOW – INTRODUCTION

In a report of the Scrutiny Support Officer the Panel was advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Board at its meeting held on 3 June 2008 had agreed that the first topic of scrutiny investigation for the Panel would be the Cleveland Show.

In view of the compatibility and links with some of the areas it was agreed that information also be sought on the Middlesbrough Mela.

Members of the Panel were recommended to determine the terms of reference and procedure for the scrutiny into the agreed subject area.

CLEVELAND SHOW – OVERVIEW

By way of introduction to the scrutiny topic on the Cleveland Show the Director of Environment submitted a report which provided a brief overview of the Cleveland Show which was one of a number of agricultural shows that took place across the UK over the summer months.

The Cleveland Show had taken place in Stewart Park since 1963 with the exception of 2007 when the show had been cancelled because of fears of damage to the park following wet weather.

Although the Council supported the show in a number of ways it was completely independent and run by a Management Committee serviced by Show Secretary. The Executive had agreed to support the Cleveland Show for the current year.

The support provided by the Council included the following: -

- a) Stewart Park was made available for the event but service costs associated with the show, as well as repairs to any damage caused, was the responsibility of the Show Management Committee;
- b) provision of a finance officer role for the Show Committee for a fee of £1500 per annum;

- c) underwriting any losses caused by exceptional circumstances as in 2007;
- d) paying for and servicing a Council Marquee as part of the show exhibition;
- e) in previous years the Council had paid a rent in accordance with that paid by trade exhibitors at approximately £800 but the Executive had recently agreed that as the Park was owned by the Council this fee would not be payable;
- f) provision of office space for the Show Secretary at Stewart Park when needed throughout the year at a reduced rate of £150 per annum.

An indication was given of the current situation relating to the Show. Although attendance was heavily influenced by the weather conditions the Show had seen a general decline in numbers. It was noted that although the Show provided opportunities for a number of community interest groups the number of trade exhibitors was reduced in respect of this year's Show held on 26 July 2008. It was thought this situation might impact on the financial uncertainty of the Show and as such the Council had agreed to take an underwriting role.

The Finance Officer explained that a balanced budget was set prior to the Show and some of the costs, for example reinstatement of the park, were calculated after the event. The Show's previous reserve fund of £17,000 had been reduced to approximately £6,000 following the cancellation of last year's event. The running costs of the Show amounted to around £50,000 and it was noted that a lot of the work associated with the Show was carried out by volunteers. The Director of Environment confirmed that the Show's reserve balance was not taken into account when the event was underwritten by the Council. However, it had been noted that there was a need to clarify the underwriting arrangements between the Council and the Show Committee following the cancellation of last year's Show.

The Management Committee for the Cleveland Show was a non-profit making organisation and not a registered charity. The Committee was currently looking at options for registering as a private company with limited liability. The Committee had its own insurance for the Show which had been negotiated with private insurers with assistance from the Council. The Committee was not VAT registered at the current time as a feasibility study had shown that this would not be profitable.

With reference to the show held on 26 July 2008 the Director of Environment stated that the weather had been excellent. The Council marquee had been very busy with a range of people engaging and discussing aspects of the Council's work. As Middlesbrough was not a huge farming area there were items in the Show that Middlesbrough residents might not normally see, including show jumping and cattle. Every aspect of the Show and its organisation seemed to have worked well and the Park was full of people enjoying themselves. The number of tickets sold was approximately 8000, which was 2,500 more than last year. It was estimated that there were around 10,000 at the Show, including the exhibitors and competitors. It was the best year in terms of attendance for the past eight years. It was generally agreed that the Cleveland Show would benefit from some refreshing and it was suggested that more young people should be involved via the Youth Service.

It was highlighted that the event had not been particularly well publicised locally although the Show Secretary had been interviewed for the Evening Gazette and an item had appeared in the newspaper. Although the marketing budget for the Cleveland Show was limited the Committee did publicise the event in the local press and trade journals and the Show also had its own web-site.

In response to a query as to whether a new venue should be considered for the Cleveland Show, the Director of Environment highlighted that Stewart Park was a very different venue to those usually used for similar agricultural shows. People who came into the Park for the Cleveland Show would often make repeat visits. The range and variety of events taking place at the Cleveland Show would be difficult to accommodate on one site elsewhere in Middlesbrough. It was confirmed that refurbishment work taking place at Stewart Park funded by a £5million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund would not affect next year's Show.

The Entertainments and Events Manager gave a verbal presentation regarding the Middlesbrough Mela. The Mela started as an initiative between the community and the Arts Development Team in 1991. A Steering Group was formed and the first Mela took place in Central Gardens. In 1996 the Mela moved to Albert Park as a bigger venue was needed. Albert Park was at the heart of the BME community in Middlesbrough. The Mela had recently celebrated its eighteenth year, taking place over two days on the 19th and 20th July 2008.

The Mela included a main stage with music and performances, approximately 100 trade stalls, arts and crafts, fairground rides, representatives from the armed forces and children's rides. The Sports Mela had been introduced in 2004 and was organised by Middlesbrough's Sports Development Team. Unfortunately due to adverse weather the Sports Mela had only attracted around 3000 visitors rather than the expected 5000 this year.

The Steering Group had developed into a constituted committee with twelve members including two members of the Cultural Services Events Team. The Group had its own bank account so that it could access outside sources of funding. The events main funding was through the Council events budget. Middlesbrough Events Team supported the Group with programming, attracting stalls, fund raising and publicity.

The 2007 Mela had cost £87,000. £20,000 was contributed by the Arts Council to try and recruit someone from the BME community to develop the Mela. This funding was in place for two years but had been reduced to £15,000 this year and was likely to reduce further. £20,000 was funded by Middlesbrough Council. Holding the Mela over two days in the current year had meant additional fund raising. An unsuccessful bid for funding had been made to the Arts Council and Connecting Communities for £12,000. Originally stallholders were not charged but to enable the Mela to develop stallholders were now charged approximately £800 for the two days.

Attendance at this year's Mela had been 33,000 in total, with 3,000 attending on Saturday and 30,000 on Sunday. The previous year's total was 18,000, however the weather had not been very good. The event promoted community cohesion and there had not been any trouble at all. A survey had indicated that 90% of attendees were satisfied with the event, 40% rated it excellent, 38% good and 12% satisfactory.

The Development Manager Cultural Services stated that there were a number of factors which were critical to the success of the Mela. The Management Committee needed to be more responsible for the running of the event and more independent of the Council. Other events throughout the year needed to be developed in addition to the Mela to support the community. Succession planning for the Management Committee was vital and a lot of work had been undertaken by the Events Team to empower the Committee.

Attendance at the Mela was much higher than at the Cleveland Show, however the Mela was a free event. In addition, the main Mela was held on a Sunday whereas the Cleveland Show was on a Saturday. It was noted that perhaps more people worked on a Saturday but not on a Sunday.

AGREED as follows that: -

1. The information provided be noted.
2. The following issues would be included within the Draft Terms of Reference for the scrutiny review into the Cleveland Show and submitted to the next meeting of the Panel for approval:-
 - (i) venue
 - (ii) funding
 - (iii) support provided by the Council
 - (iv) succession planning

- (v) activities
 - (vi) publicity and marketing.
3. The recently retired Cleveland Show Secretary, Margaret Dale be invited to the next Panel meeting.
 4. The next meeting of the Panel would be held on Monday 18 August 2008 at 10.00 am.