

AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel was held on 18 August 2008.

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

OFFICIALS: M Braithwaite, P Clark, J Moody and L Walker

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

**** PRESENT AS AN OBSERVERS:** Councillors Lowes, T Bielby, K Robinson (Youth Council)

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

**** DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**** MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel held on 28 July 2008 were taken as read and approved as a correct record.

CLEVELAND SHOW – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to the previous meeting the Scrutiny Panel received a report of the Scrutiny Officer which identified the Panel's terms of reference and drew attention to the proposed lines of enquiry agreed by the Panel. The Panel had agreed to invite the views and comments of the retiring and new Cleveland Show secretaries and representatives from the Youth Council

Terms of Reference

- To consider the appropriateness of the location
- To assess the succession planning for the show's future
- To assess the funding required to provide the show
- To explore the potential for new activities
- To consider the options for harmonising the show with the Mela
- To examine the publicity and marketing intentions

At the previous meeting the Panel received an outline of the Show's history, its management and funding arrangements, levels of support provided by the Council and a briefing on the outline of the 2008 Show. In addition, in order to contrast the Show alongside arrangements for the Mela event held in Albert Park, the Panel received a presentation from the Council's Entertainment and Events Manager.

Margaret Dale, the retiring secretary to the Cleveland Show and Val Thomson the incoming secretary were welcomed to the meeting together with Thomas Bielby and Karl Thompson from the Youth Council Thomas and Karl had been invited to provide a young persons perspective of the Show. The Chair also welcomed Councillor Ron Lowes, as the former Executive Member for Transport, who initially raised the issue and concerns about the Show and Jim Moody, Parks Manager who attended to provide further details regarding the venue and the impact of the Show on Stewart Park.

Margaret Dale commented that the Show was one of the most prestigious in the North East area. The Show's venue differed from some other agricultural shows in that it was held in an urban rather than a rural area. Its setting was generally accessible even in wet weather, and was held in beautiful parkland rather than as was usual for similar events across the country, in a farmer's field. The Show generally was considered to be successful in terms of attendance and the number of exhibits shown but was financially vulnerable. She commented that she felt that probably 90% of people in the local area believed that the show was run and financed by Middlesbrough Council. As such, despite drawing attention to the fact that the show was self-

funding when trying to publicise the event, this was likely to be a contributory factor in the Show's inability to generate sponsorship.

Advertising for the show was provided in two separate stages: (1) in order to attract exhibits and (2) to encourage attendance. Publications used included the Evening Gazette, Herald and Post, Northern Echo, Durham Times, Darlington and Stockton Times, Horse and Hounds and other agricultural and horticultural magazines. This was in addition to web based advertising on the Council's and the Show's own websites. Advertising banners were also placed around the Park in the weeks prior to the event. It was felt that more publicity would be useful but this was constrained by budgets.

Attracting exhibitors was not felt to be a problem. However, unlike other shows that were generally held in smaller enclosed areas that could only be accessed via a gated entrance, the number of people attending the Show did not equate to the funding received through the official gate. This was due mainly to the size of the park and, despite the availability of security the inability to secure all entrances to the park.

In order to explore the funding aspects more fully a Member asked how it was ensured that entrance fees were competitive in comparison to other shows. Mrs Dale explained that she attended meetings of the Yorkshire Federation of Shows that established a catalogue of fees. The fee levels had not changed much over the last 20-25 years as most exhibitors who regarded their involvement as a hobby rather than a business opportunity and were unlikely to pay higher fees. It was felt that raising the level of fees independently could jeopardise the number of exhibitors. No individual section within the Show paid for itself, funding for fees and charges for marquees, judges, rosettes etc. relied upon income received from the gate.

Asked whether/how the Show balanced the level of competitive classes versus the entertainment elements of the show, Mrs Dale indicated that she was not sure whether it had ever been evaluated.

In response to a query regarding how dependent the Show was on Middlesbrough Council funding it was stated that with the exception of the availability of the Park, no additional funding was received. The Council paid for its own marquee as with other exhibitors, but did not pay ground rent.

Panel members asked whether the management committee had previously looked at the financial concerns from a future sustainability view point, Mrs Dale indicated that they had not gone into the concerns from that aspect as year on year there had always been sufficient funds to carry on.

The Parks Manager advised that the Council had agreed to underwrite, for this year only, the funding shortfall due to the cancellation of the previous year's show as a result of prolonged periods of bad weather. He indicated that good working relationships existed between the Council and the Show management. All the show secretaries worked well together albeit that they could perhaps concentrate on their own elements of the show and did not adopt an overall view.

Responding to questions regarding the involvement of young people who regularly participated in the show, particularly those in the under 25 years age group, Mrs Dale stated that two young people (Young Farmers) were involved in helping to set up the show. Other younger people who exhibit tended to do so because of the involvement of parents. The majority of people involved were from the older age groups. Younger visitors who did attend came to the fair, and to see the entertainment side of the event and did not tend to have much interest in the Show itself.

Following on from suggestions made to try and generate new ideas; encourage young people to participate in the show sections and to attract their attendance on the day, it was suggested that consideration could be given to involving schools groups. The recent DOTT 07 urban farming project was cited as an example of the type of involvement that could be expected.

The suggestion was made that a change of day from Saturday to Sunday may help with increasing attendance. However, due to the fact that the show was one of a programme of

events held around the country, it was unlikely that such a change would have the right impact and could mean that entries would be lost and attendance reduced.

As the show was primarily a County show in an urban area it was felt that some additional involvement from the Council's Leisure and Arts team could be of assistance.

Questions were asked whether consideration had been given to expanding into other completely different areas e.g. the Yorkshire Show Spring Flower Show, or whether sponsorship had been sought. In reply the Panel was informed that the format of the show had not changed. It operated on a traditional programme for an agricultural show. Panel members commented that in order to widen the appeal of the show and give it new impetus other areas would need to be explored and new partners or sponsors recruited, e.g. the football club, agricultural manufacturers. Making use of the experience gained contacts that could be generated from projects like the Dott 7 Urban Farming project and the forthcoming "Town Meal" were also considered to be useful avenues to explore.

Members were informed that contact had been made in the past with various organisations e.g. vintage car clubs, but after the initial contacts, club representatives failed to respond. Interest from farmers markets was poor as they mostly worked to a set programme through the year and were in the main held on Saturdays. Due to anti-social behaviour by youths, sheep dog trails had been abandoned several years previously. The main ring attraction changed each year to try to give extra interest to the event and, whilst efforts were made to draw in exhibitors this was constrained by funding.

Jim Moody indicated that if support could be gained from groups such as the vintage/mini clubs there was room for expansion of the site within the park utilising the Captain Cook Monument field. Car parking facilities within the park were good and use was made of land on the Prissick site.

Reference was made to the make up of the management committee and the input of council representatives on the committee. It was noted that two of the four representatives were very active in their involvement and supportive of the show. Other committee representatives were generally long standing members and their families whose initial involvement had been as exhibitors. No active steps were taken to recruit new membership.

Thomas Bielby agreed to take the matter back to the next Youth Council meeting. He also agreed to make contact and establish links with Young Farmers Clubs, the North East Regional Youth Assembly and other networking links with a view to asking for their ideas to help make the show more interesting for young people and for them to generate ideas for future consideration.

AGREED as follows:

1. That in terms of securing funding, sponsorship and or other assistance and support, consideration be given to following:
 - Marketing the show from an environmental perspective making contact with local businesses (Corus had been approached previously but no response was received);
 - focussing more on youth and diversity to help to bring in extra grants;
 - involve the council's environment, leisure services, education and finance services in planning for the event and to provide assistance with securing grant funding from other sources. It was acknowledged that whilst the show was primarily an agricultural show, not an entertainment event, the entertainment aspects would help to increase visitor numbers;
 - make contact with local schools to get them involved either on their own or as part of the Council's own stand;
 - consider whether the council should make a contribution to running costs, (this in addition to the existing contributions re: officer support and free use of the park) and clarify the position regarding future underwriting of the show;

- increase involvement of community interest groups e.g. representatives from the five Friends of the Parks groups.
2. That no change be made to the venue or name of the show.