

AGENDA ITEM: 8

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

21st OCTOBER 2008

<p>AD HOC SCRUTINY PANEL</p> <p><u>CLEVELAND SHOW</u></p> <p>FINAL REPORT</p>

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 The purpose of this report is to present the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel's assessment and proposals on Cleveland Show in relation to the Panels agreed Terms of Reference.

OVERALL AIM OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

- 2 The overall aim of the Scrutiny Investigation was to assess the issues associated with Cleveland Show and make appropriate recommendations which address the issues outlined in the Terms of Reference.
- 3 To present the findings of the Scrutiny Investigation to the Executive for their consideration.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

4 The Following outlines the **Terms of Reference** for the Scrutiny examination into Cleveland Show which was determined following discussion by the Panel at their meeting of 28th July 2008.

- To consider the appropriateness of the location
- To assess the succession planning for the shows 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 Mela
- To examine the Publicity and Marketing intentions.

BACKGROUND

5 The issue of Cleveland Show was raised at the Executive meeting in April this year, emphasising concern that the show was looking tired and should have additional elements incorporated into the show which are generally associated with Fun Fairs and therefore considered would improve its attractiveness of the event.

6 The Councils Scrutiny structure was revised at the Annual meeting in May 2008 which included the addition of an Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panel. The Overview and Scrutiny Board determined that the Ad Hoc Panels work programmes would commence by addressing the concerns about the Cleveland Show raised at the Executive meeting and that the findings of the Panel be reported back to OSB for consideration.

7 The Panel was aware that the Cleveland Show has been held in Middlesbrough for many years and was managed by a committee independent of the Council. The Panel also recognise that the Council managed the Mela festival and this equally attracted a large public audience and therefore consideration should be given to how one event may compliment or harmonise with the other. From this background the Panel embarked on this Scrutiny with the intention to understand the operation of Cleveland Show and any benefits that may be gained for harmonising with the annual Mela event.

PANELS SCRUTINY EXAMINATION

8 The Panels first area of enquiry was to receive a “Setting the Scene” outline on the Cleveland Show from the Environment Department perspective and also detail regarding the Mela from the Regeneration Department (Cultural Services). The following briefly outlines the key issues.

9 CLEVELAND SHOW

Cleveland Show is an agricultural show, which has been held in Stewart Park since 1963, unless cancelled due to inclement weather as in 2007. The show is run by a non-profit making Management Committee, serviced by a show secretary and is not administered or funded by Middlesbrough Council. The Council does however support the Show in a number of ways, by providing use of the Park and access to a finance officer to maintain the accounts, provision of office space for the show secretary and so on. In addition to this the Council did underwrite the losses encountered due to the shows cancellation in 2007 (a limit of £10k was applied). The Panel was informed that, previous to the formation of Middlesbrough Council, the Show had been, on occasion, underwritten by Cleveland County Council although 2007 was actually the only occasion Middlesbrough Council has undertaken to underwrite this event. The Shows financial state prior to the cancellation in 2007 was that it held a financial reserve of around £17k, which subsequently dropped to around £6k in 2008.

10 The costs around £50k to provide each Show and while the greatest income is from public admissions all trade exhibitors do pay a rent to have a stand and display at the show. However Middlesbrough Council did not pay any rent in 2008 as the Council considered the provision of the Park for the use of the show was such that it negated the need for the Council to pay a rent as an exhibitor.

11 The Panel addressed the issue of Marketing and Publicity and was informed that approaches are made to local press however the publicity received is indeed very small. The main thrust of direct advertising was through trade journals which was primarily targeted to attract exhibitors

MELA

12 The Panel was informed that the Mela was first launched in 1991 and moved from Central Gardens to Albert Park in 1996, which is at the heart of the BME community in Middlesbrough. The Council manages the provision of this festival at an estimated cost of approximately £87k, which is built up from various providers with the Arts Council contribution of £20k, a Middlesbrough Council allocation of £20k and stall holders being charged £800. Although no admission charge is applied for entrance to the show which would assist with income. The attendance of 33000 people clearly illustrates the attractiveness of this event.

- 13 The Panel recognised that the Mela is essentially provided through the efforts of the Council and that this event has proven to be effective in delivering a valued event for the community. A lot of work has been undertaken regarding succession planning to ensure the Mela's sustainability. However, the Panel was informed that there were benefits if the Management committee was actually more independent from the Council, which would make the committee directly responsible for the event and more accountable.

ISSUES IN RELATION TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 14 The Panel addressed the Terms of Reference during their lines of enquiry and an outline of their findings are as follows: -

- To consider the appropriateness of the location

The Panel looked at the appropriateness of the location in relation to the size of the show, its purpose, ease of traders and public access and also alternative locations within Middlesbrough.

The Panel found that the range of activities displayed at the show are such that irrespective of whether Stewart Park is or is not a good venue it is really the only realistic option Middlesbrough has to offer which can accommodate the variety and volume of exhibitions and public attendance. The Panel does believe that the location is indeed good for this type of show as it brings an agricultural show into the urban environment. This is considered to be a positive move providing the opportunity to many people and children of Middlesbrough to see and hear directly a range of animals and machinery, which for many people may not otherwise get such an opportunity.

An additional benefit for the show being at Stewart Park is that it has ample public car parking and the potential to expand the area used by the show within the park should future needs require this.

- To assess the succession planning for the shows future

The Panel addressed the issue of succession planning in relation to the Shows future. Unfortunately the Panel did not find evidence to indicate this was on the Show Committees agenda and that there was strong reference that the show simply undertakes the process for organising next year's event as it did in previous years. The Panel found that a key focus on the future of the show was the availability of funding and that many of the actions of the committee are influenced if not driven with the purpose of providing the best show possible under difficult financial restraint.

The Panel has made reference to a number of issues illustrated within this report, which it considers will contribute to improving the sustainability of a good Cleveland Show within Middlesbrough.

- To assess the Funding required to provide the show

All Shows of this magnitude cost money and the three prime sources of income are entrance fees, exhibitor's fees and sponsorship. The charges for admission have hardly changed in over 20 years and understandably a key factor for the committee is to secure exhibitors who generally consider their display is a hobby and not shown as a commercial exercise. Therefore it was important that the show maintains a degree of equality with other shows in the Country and that charges do not jeopardise the willingness of exhibitors to attend the show. The Panels enquiry into admission charges revealed that charges for shows such as Harrogate are £10 per adult while Middlesbrough is £6 although this may be reflective of the area and there is a strong desire not to inhibit the people of Middlesbrough from attending the show due to financial reasons. Middlesbrough does offer a family ticket at a very reasonable £15, which is again targeted to encourage attendance. It was conveyed that shows like the Cleveland show are never self-financing by exhibitors and are very dependent upon gate sales. The Panel was informed that the 2008 show had been a great event and consequently the visitors entrance fees made a substantial contribution to cover the shows costs.

While the Panel found that the location of the show could demonstrate a range of benefits one aspect, which is not so good, relates to the income received from visitors. As Stewart Park is easily accessible through a number of gates and that every effort is made to deploy security to ensure all admission monies are received, however, it was obvious that income received at the gate is noticeably down compared to the number of people who actually visit the show.

The Panel is aware that in many respects, the show operates financially on a year by year approach and therefore the Panel has some concern of the Shows long-term financial security.

Whilst there are good relationships between the Show and the Council and that the Council undertook to cover the Shows financial shortfall in 2007 there was no evidence presented that the Council made any other financial contribution to this show.

Following the show there is frequently some damage to the Park; however, the show does pay the Council for all remedial work.

The panel also found that sponsorship was negligible and it was conveyed to the Panel that when the committee pursue sponsorship they encounter a frequent perception that the Council funds the show and hence a view that sponsorship is not a key factor for the show.

- To explore the potential for new activities

The Panel explored the issue of expanding into other areas of potential public interest to increase the attractiveness of the show, as they were informed the format of the show had basically not changed and has followed the traditional programme for an agricultural show. The show committee conveyed that they continue to look for new ideas but nothing obvious has materialised. The Panel considers that some new areas of activity would appeal to a wider audience and could also enhance the show's attractiveness to regular attendees. The Panel does appreciate that the Cleveland Show is an agricultural show and that it is not trying to be a Fun Fair and that any major transition from Agricultural to Fun could have a noticeable impact on the national agricultural calendar and may actually result in a reduction of exhibitors. Consequently the Panel considered that some sympathetic additions could enhance the attractiveness of the show and that approaching the Football club and agricultural manufacturers could generate new projects and potential sponsorship. The Panel also considered the involvement of classic, car clubs, and the display of very large agricultural machinery may enhance the show and should be an area for the committee's consideration.

The Panel was informed that anti social behaviour in the past had prevented displays such as sheep dog trails and that security should be improved if that type of display is to be re-visited. Again the enhancement of the show can be constrained by issues of funding and this must always be a key factor for the managing committee.

- To consider the options for harmonising the show with Mela

The Panel wanted to explore the issues of harmonisation between the Cleveland show and the Mela. From the evidence received the Panel is clear that there are significant differences between the two events in their purpose, audience and physical requirements.

The Panel is agreed that there are notable benefits in maintaining the individual identity of the two events making them distinct and unique. Also, that there are benefits in having a number of events during the year for the people of Middlesbrough to enjoy as opposed to trying to basket them all together for one event.

The Panel appreciated that the attendance figures between Cleveland show and Mela are substantially different, however it is not appropriate to make such comparisons as the events are on different days have different target audiences and while one is free the other is charged.

- To examine the Publicity and Marketing intentions.

The Panel was informed that the show has shown a decline in numbers of both exhibitors and also visitors over recent years. The Panel appreciated that the show may provide a number of attractions for a range of

community groups, however the show's attractiveness on the day can be substantially influenced by the weather.

The publicity and marketing of Cleveland show has two prime purposes. One is to attract exhibitors the other to attract attendance. Consequently the Panel found that while efforts have been made, albeit limited, that the general marketing of the show was low and that the reason for this was that finance was an inhibiting actor. The committees application towards marketing is through a core list of publications, which they approach to secure exhibitors yet the general circulation for public attendance is considered, could be improved substantially in both volume and style.

The Panel believes the Show needs branding and marketing in a positive way to both increase the awareness of Middlesbrough as a provider of the event but also to maximise the number of visitors. The Panel believe to achieve this, that direct involvement of the Council resource, which can provide a range of skills and expertise, would bring notable benefits and enhancement to the show.

The Panel also considers that the publicity should bring forth issues from an environmental, health and sustainable perspective, which would contribute, to broadening the attractiveness of the show to potential visitors.

CLEVELAND SHOW FINDINGS

- 15 Enquiries with the Executive Member who raised the issue with the Executive revealed that the reference was not intended to be critical of the show. However, the reference was that the show lacked excitement and required more fun things built into it as is generally found in Fun Fairs. The Panel clearly recognised that to change the show from an agricultural show to a fun fair was not simply enhancing the show but tantamount to closing one and creating something completely different. The Panel did however, appreciate that opening up this subject had brought forward some issues, which the Panel consider will improve and enhance the show.
- 16 The Panel believe that the Cleveland Show is one of the most prestigious shows in the North East and that it differed from many shows in that as an agricultural show it is held in an urban environment. The Panel did consider revising the name but believe that Cleveland Show is the most appropriate name and that Middlesbrough is fortunate to be the host area for this show. The Panel also looked at changing the day this show is held but the disruption to an established national calendar could be detrimental to this show in both attracting exhibitors and visitors.
- 17 The Panel looked at the operation of the Committee and found that 45 people sit on the committee, which includes four members from Middlesbrough Council. In practical terms the Panel found that there are a number of smaller groups, which take responsibility for special functions (Animals, Security, Set Up etc) and report back to the main committee. However, little evidence was

presented that there was any effort made to recruit new members to the committee. The Panel believes that greater involvement of the youth should be brought into the committee. In raising this there was an acceptance at the Panel meeting that this issue would be taken back to the Youth Council and that endeavours will be made to forge links with the Young Farmers club, as no links exist at present between the groups. Agreement was also achieved that the issue will be raised with the Northeast Youth Assembly with the aim of identifying new ideas to improve the attractiveness of the show, particularly from a youth perspective.

The Panel also considered that community interest groups such as Friends of the Park should be approached by the Committee, which may bring some new ideas. Panel recognised that one significant difference between the Management of the Cleveland show and that of the Mela is the direct involvement of the Council through the Culture and Arts service. The Panel believes that the show is an important event in Middlesbrough and that the expertise available within the Culture and Arts service should be brought to work with the committee in the development of this show. The direct involvement of the Councils leisure and arts service to provide assistance with grant funding and advice on marketing / publicity etc would make a substantial contribution to the enhancement and sustainability of this prestigious show.

- 18 Funding of the Show is a key factor and the Panel considers that when the Council gave an undertaking to underwrite the show in 2007 that the Executive should address this issue and have a clear Policy on the underwriting as opposed to addressing the issue or needs annually. There is a belief that the Show has some financial uncertainty and that greater involvement from the Council will benefit the show and therefore Middlesbrough generally. The Panel considers that the leisure and arts services should take an ownership of the show from the Councils perspective and be responsible for any displays that the Council and its services want to present. As referenced previously, the expertise in the Councils services to secure sponsorship and/or grant aid could facilitate improved marketing and thereby play a greater role in enhancing the show. Especially as it has indicated that a number of organisations already believe the show is presently run by the Council. It is the view of the Panel that Environmental Services should operate as a contractor being responsible for the Park and maintaining its attractiveness to facilitate this event
- 19 The Panel considers that there is potential for enhancing the show and that the younger element of visitors tended to be more attracted to the entertainment side of the show and not the exhibitions. The Panel would like the Committee to explore the options, which would generate interest, which is specifically targeted towards younger people. Also that school groups be invited to comment or indeed contribute to functions within the show, as traditionally it has been the older age group who are active in the shows delivery.
- 20 One area the Panel would encourage being pursued is the introduction of more large displays. Consequently the Panel would suggest the large agricultural manufacturers be approached for sponsorship and preferably

attendance. This would demonstrate to people of Middlesbrough what and how some of the heavy agricultural equipment operates, as it is believed many young people of Middlesbrough who may never have had the opportunity to see this type of equipment before could find it very interesting. The Panel understands this has been discouraged in the past as the show is located in an urban location and does not want large agricultural equipment moving into the park. However, the Panel considers ways of overcoming the traffic issues should be pursued.

- 21 The Panel also believes that further effort should be made to attract some of the vintage Car and Motorcycle clubs with specific areas within the show for display. The Panel believes this and other options such as military or indeed modern equipment can be of interest to young and old people alike.

CONCLUSION

- 22 In conclusion the Panel finds that the Cleveland agricultural show is a prestigious event held in the North East and that Middlesbrough is fortunate that this show is held within its boundaries. It must not be forgotten that this show does require some substantial organisation and that the attraction of thousands of people is an indication that it is performing well. The Panel believes the committee do a good job with such limited resources and funding and recognises it is an agricultural show and not a fun fair. That said the Panel does recognise that historically the committee has been inward looking and focuses on the delivery of a show, which reflects those of previous years. The Panel believes there are a number of additions, which will enhance the show and improve its attractiveness to a wide and diverse audience and these have been illustrated in the report.
- 23 The Panel also looked at any relationship the Cleveland Show may have to the Mela. The Panels conclusion in this respect is clear and that there is little similarity with the two events and that their independence enhances the provision of unique events to the community and ensuring there is a range of activities throughout the year maintains a flow of provision to the people of Middlesbrough. A key aspect the Panel did recognise was that there is Council expertise directed to the Mela and the event delivers good value for money. This is testimony to the funding secured by the council for this event and the Panel would like to see similar support provided to the committee of the Cleveland show.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 24 The Panel appreciates that the Council has little direct control over the introduction of many of the recommendations and that would be in the gift of the Show committee. However, there are a number of recommendations the Council has direct control over and the Panel would encourage the Executive to give this serious consideration.

- A That approaches be made to the large agricultural manufacturers for sponsorship and attendance at future shows.
- B That the vintage car and motorcycle clubs be approached and encouraged to attend future shows, where specific areas would be allocated for their displays.
- C That the committee consider greater youth involvement in the direction and arrangements when developing future shows and indeed has a representative from the youth council on its committee.
- D That the Councils services (Culture, Arts and Leisure) have an active role in developing the Show and that they have direct involvement in the methodology adopted for marketing and publicising the event.
- E That the Executive establish a Policy, which addresses the Councils stance on underwriting any loss incurred by the Show.
- F As the Cleveland Show is a major agricultural county show, the Council approach other Councils in the Tees Valley for financial support
- G That the Councils Grants Officer pursue sponsorship and grant funding to support the show in a similar way as achieved with the Mela
- H That the Councils Leisure and Culture service take greater responsibility for any displays at the show and that Environment Service be responsible for the Park and not the event held within it.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 25 The Panel is grateful to all those who have presented evidence during the course of our enquiry. We would like to place on record our appreciation for the co-operation we have received from the following: -

I Parker	Middlesbrough Council (Environment)
L Marron	Middlesbrough Council (Corporate Services)
J Farrar	Middlesbrough Council (Regeneration)
J Croft	Middlesbrough Council (Regeneration)
M Dale	Cleveland Show (Retiring Secretary)
V Thompson	Cleveland Show (Secretary)
J Moody	Middlesbrough Council (Parks Manager)
L Walker	(Youth Centre Manager)
T Bielby	Representing Youth Council
K Thompson	Representing Youth Council
R Lowes	Former Executive Member (Transport)

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 26 The following background papers were consulted or referenced to during this Scrutiny and in the compilation of this report:
- (a) Minutes of the Ad Hoc Scrutiny Panels of
28th July and 18th August 2008