

COUNCIL MEETING - 14th OCTOBER 2003

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL

COUNCILLOR BRADLEY – LEISURE, ART & CULTURE

1. Visual Arts and Crafts Improvements in Taunton Deane 2003

Terence O'Rourke are currently working on a draft Masterplan for the Tangier and Firepool development sites in Taunton Town Centre. This includes a cultural quarter with stakeholders and key players being drawn into the process. With the creative industries being one of the few expanding sectors of the economy, the arts in their multitude of forms are now recognised as powerful regenerative tools. The Vision for Taunton identified the need to maintain a strong sense of place and identified Castle Green as a landmark public square, providing a focus for a lively Cultural Quarter.

The consultants also identified Hunts Court as a landmark building in a significant location. A regional visual arts centre could create a significant flagship for creating an attractive cultural quarter around Castle Green. This is reflected in the policies contained in the Taunton Deane Arts Plan 2003-2005, the Partnership Agreement 2003/04 between Arts Council England, South West and the Somerset Local Authorities, the SCC Strategy to address property issues in Culture and Heritage adopted in 2003 and the Boyden Report to the SCC.

The meeting of the Health & Leisure Review Panel on 2nd October was attended by key stakeholders from the Somerset Art Gallery Trust, SCAT, the County Council, the Somerset Natural History and Archaeological Society and the joint Working Party on the Future of the County Museum, the Archives and Record office and an Art Gallery for Somerset who all made contributions. In recognition that the way forward is through partnership working with political backing it is RECOMMENDED that:

The Council in exercise of its responsibility for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the Deane, support a step-by-step approach to a cultural quarter around Castle Green starting with Hunts Court; such support to include the formation of a Consortium or Working Party to steer the development.

Councillor Mrs. Dilly Bradley

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REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. BRADLEY - LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

Wellsprings Update

Cllr David Gill and I have been making regular site visits and work is progressing well. The Centre Manager James Curry is now taking bookings for the new year.

Sports Development

This team makes a huge contribution to our corporate priorities not just in health improvement but also in reducing crime and disorder and the social inclusion agenda. The project undertaken in Lyngford over the Summer really helped divert some of the more challenging youngsters which has impressed the Police with whom we work

Wellington Sports Centre and Blackbrook both received excellent results in the Camps Ofsted assessments; the Blackbrook Afterschool club achieved accreditation by the Somerset County Council and there was a 25% increase on camp places for children with individual needs.

Health development projects included walks; flexercise, sickness referral programme, the Active Retirement programme, Target tennis and G.P. referral sessions. The Cardiac Rehab. Programme is now awaiting referrals from Musgrove Park Hospital.

There were also the Western Counties Youth Games and the first Duathlon held at Queens College and that is not all.

Wellington

The ski slope has now been landscaped and the surplus soil used for a BMX track. This has involved the young in its construction and I would like to thank Cllr Govier for all his support and input over this project. I would also like to congratulate Cllr Bone for the efficiency with which he dealt with the skate boarding equipment which is now in use in Wiveliscombe.

Work is at last starting on the Rockwell Green Pavilion. My only regret is that the previous administration did not get to grips with pulling down additional funds but chose instead to reduce the specification for the building.

Wellington in Bloom are to be congratulated too on their excellent results. I also attended a most powerful and moving production of "Oh What a Lovely War".

Parks

The Flower Show in Vivary Park was as professional as ever but suffered from the extreme heat. Vivary Park was also the venue for the Big Green Fun Day in August. This was well attended and gave the children of Taunton Deane the chance to learn about wildlife and

environmental issues in an engaging and enjoyable way. Topics covered included food production, energy conservation, green transport, waste recycling and much more. Art in the Park; a series of children's arts activity sessions in parks across the Deane will now develop into a Saturday Art Club in Victoria Park.

Playing Pitch Strategy

This has been reported to Members showing a need for more pitches for mini football played by primary aged children., Further refinement for Taunton and Wellington is needed to ascertain the scale of localised over/under provision.

Green Spaces Strategy

The Council is developing a strategy on its greens paces that will be completed before Christmas. It is broadly structured as follows:
Purpose and benefits of parks in the policy context of national regional and local policies impacting on parks.

An audit of local provision - quantity and quality

Consultation on local provision and use, all resulting eventually in an action plan (another one!)

The Arts

The Somerset Arts Conference took place on 13th September and the first Deane Arts Form on 16th September. The latter was attended by 30 representatives of local voluntary and professional arts organisation. The agenda covered visual and performing arts and will be the start of a regular dialogue with the arts community, providing net-working and consultation opportunities for the council with the arts community. I also got to one of the 10 Parishes Art Exhibitions in Milverton which attracted a steady stream of visitors on a Sunday afternoon.

The first consultation meeting held by Terence O'Rourke with stakeholders about a cultural quarter around the Castle Green was very positive. We are still pursuing options with the Somerset Arts Gallery Trust to transform Hunts Court into a contemporary visual arts centre (if it can be secured). In particular I would like to voice my appreciation for the immense amount of energy and hard work that our Arts Officer Caroline Corfe has put into this matter along with all her other work.

The Future

In all our strategies and projects our biggest task is communicating what we are trying to achieve and whatever it may be that it can only be done in partnership with the residents of the Deane, other organisations and funding bodies.

Councillor Mrs. Dilly Bradley