

AT A MEETING of the CULTURE, COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS  
SELECT COMMITTEE of the COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle,  
Winchester on Tuesday, 17 May 2011.

**PRESENT**

Chairman:  
p Councillor Elaine Still

Vice-Chairman:  
p Councillor Alan Rice, TD

Councillors:

p Alan Broadhurst	p Peter Mason
p Peter Chegwyn	p Alexis McEvoy
p Peter Edgar	p Frank Pearce
p Michael Geddes	p Jenny Radley
p Ron Hussey	p Thomas Thacker
p Roger Kimber	

Also in attendance: Councillor Keith Chapman, Executive Member for Culture and Recreation, and Councillor Ray Ellis, Executive Member for Economic Development and Rural Affairs.

63. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr Alexis McEvoy who arrived late due to attendance at another meeting (arrived for Item 6), and Cllr Alan Rice who also arrived late due to attendance at another meeting (arrived for Item 7).

64. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally at the time of the debate declare their interest, and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

65. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Culture, Communities & Rural Affairs Select Committee Meeting held on 28 January 2011

were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

66. **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman reported that she had visited the site of the new Hampshire Outdoor Activity and Adventure centre, Runways End, on 28 March 2011, along with the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation. The Chairman indicated that the project had received lottery funding, and was on schedule to open it's doors to school and youth groups from September 2011. This was welcomed as good news in these difficult times. It was noted that further information about Runways End would be provided later in the meeting as an update on the project was one of the item's on the agenda.

67. **RURAL OUTREACH THEATRE COMPANIES**

Representatives from the Proteus Theatre Company and Forest Forge Theatre Company each gave a presentation regarding the work of their organisation (see Item 5 in the Minute Book). Both organisations are supported by grants approved by the Executive Member for Culture and Recreation.

It was reported that Proteus theatre company provided 'theatre for people who don't do theatre'; bringing theatre to communities that don't tend to engage with mainstream theatre. This was achieved by keeping ticket prices low, using local venues like community halls and schools, and engaging with communities to put on content that was relevant to them. It was also noted that Proteus used theatre to address issues such as domestic violence. Proteus also worked with potentially marginalised groups such as people with disabilities and the gypsy and traveller community.

Members asked questions to explore further the work Proteus undertake. It was noted that other than the County Council, Proteus received core funding from Basingstoke and Dean Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council. Proteus also raised funds from trusts, foundations, the Arts Council and businesses for specific projects. It was reported that Proteus used a flexible business model, having only two full time staff, and taking on free lance staff when needed for particular projects. Proteus did not have a building and only paid minimal rent for the small office space they needed. This enabled them to adapt depending on the funding available.

Forest Forge described undertaking similar work, based in the New Forest and touring in the south and west of the County, including work aimed at bringing together different generations. It was noted that Forest Forge have a building as a base that was funded from lottery money that they own outright. This building was used by the company and also a range of community and youth groups as part of the company's participation programme. Forest Forge also work in partnership with the Police, engaging teenagers to create shows dealing with issues such as alcohol, teenage pregnancy and knife crime, that are toured around local schools. Forest Forge reported undertaking work with socially excluded groups such as young people on the verge of exclusion and the Traveller Community.

Members asked questions to find out more about the work of Forest Forge. It was reported that the organisation had received core funding from the Arts Council that would now be discontinued. However, it was noted that funding would be available from the Arts Council under a different funding stream, and Forest Forge were looking at collaborating with other organisations where appropriate to bid for this funding to support their work in future.

Members were impressed with the passion and commitment of the representatives from both groups. The Committee were satisfied that the work of both Proteus and Forest Forge supported the aims and objectives of the County Council, particularly in terms of working with vulnerable groups, and using the arts to address social issues.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee thanks the representatives for their time and supports their work.

68. **UPDATE: CULTURE COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESS SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

The Director of Culture, Communities and Business Services gave a presentation (see Item 6 in the Minute Book) to update the committee on the merger of the former Culture Communities and Rural Affairs Department with the former Property Business Regulatory and IT Services Department. It was reported that the new department had achieved the 8% savings target for 2010/11 as a result of the merger, and was on course to deliver a further 8% savings by the end of the 2011/12 financial year by further consolidation.

A number of benefits were described as arising from the merger of the functions that had previously been managed separately, for example asset management now including the 'green estate' alongside the built estate. It was also reported that a number of efficiencies had been made in relation to support functions, where business services provided under each of the previous departments had been brought together.

It was also reported that following the communications review undertaken corporately, the marketing function within the Culture Communities and Business Services Department would provide this service corporately across the Council. It was also reported that some tough decisions had been taken, including that the Business Unit 'Audiences South' would be wound up, as it continued to have a significant gap between its cost and income.

Members asked questions to explore the arrangements under the new department. Some Members expressed the view that Museums had greater synergies with Libraries than the Arts, and were surprised that these sat under different sections in the new department. It was reported that this had partly been done to enable the different sections within the department to be of manageable size, however Members were reassured that the management team were working closely together across all sections.

Members also commented that the sign workshop was an asset that the County Council could make more of, and the Director agreed.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee supports the direction of travel being taken with the Culture Communities and Business Services Department.

69. **UPDATE: RUNWAYS END ACTIVITY CENTRE**

The Director of Culture Communities and Business Services gave a presentation updating Members on progress with the Runways End Outdoor Activity centre (see Item 7 in the Minute Book). It was reported that the capital costs of the project had been paid for by the national co-location fund as a result of a successful funding bid, and that the centre was due to be completed on time, ready for the first school group booked to use the site on 5 September 2011.

It was noted that the centre, while having a rural feel,

was located in the heart of the local community, and would be used for community groups in the evenings. The project was a collaboration with Rushmoor Borough Council and the Scouts, and it was expected that school groups would use the site in term time, with the scouts using the site at weekends and during school holidays.

Members congratulated the Department on the successful development of the site. It was noted that an official opening was planned for October.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the Officer be thanked for the update.
- b) That a visit be arranged for Members of the Select Committee to Runways End.

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70. **BASINGSTOKE CANAL**

The Director of Culture Communities and Business Services gave a presentation updating Members on work in relation to the Basingstoke Canal (see Item 8 in the Minute Book). It was reported that a term contractor had been appointed to undertake a range of maintenance works on the canal, including the placement of 'stop' gates, so that if there were a breach of the canal, the affected section could be isolated.

It was noted that funding for the maintenance of the canal was provided by a range of partners, and that economic pressures were causing partners to consider if current funding levels were sustainable. It was noted that funding had not yet been withdrawn, but that the long term funding situation was an area of concern.

Members heard that reductions had been made in the number of rangers working on the canal, in order to re-direct funding to qualified engineers who were required to undertake the complex maintenance works. It was noted that the volunteer base was being developed to provide support for other functions relating to visitors to the canal. It was reported that a business plan was under development to focus on areas where the canal could generate further income.

With regard to the future, it was indicated that consideration was being given to the canal being managed through a Trust eventually. It was acknowledged that the County Council would remain ultimately responsible for the flood risk due to the County Council's overall stewardship of the land concerned.

RESOLVED:

That the officer be thanked for the update, and Members be kept informed regarding developments in relation to the canal.

71. **ANNUAL REPORT OF ACTIVITY – CULTURE COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AFFAIRS SELECT COMMITTEE**

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the accuracy of the summary provided (see Item 9 in the Minute Book) regarding the activity of the Select Committee over the past year.

RECOMMENDED:

That the summary of the activity of the Culture Communities and Rural Affairs Select Committee be approved for submission to County Council as part of the annual report of scrutiny.

The summary of the CCRA SC be submitted to P&R SC for inclusion in the scrutiny annual report

72. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman invited Members to comment on the Committee's Work Programme (Item 10 in the Minute Book). Members requested that consideration be given to the most appropriate method by which this committee could be engaged in developing ideas for how the services within the remit of the committee might improve their income generation potential.

That options be developed for involving the committee in proposals for income generation

In addition it was requested that the committee continue to monitor the Mobile Library Service, to consider the impact of the changes that were due to be implemented in July.

That an update on the mobile library service be added to the work programme

RESOLVED:

That the Committee's Work Programme be approved, subject to the issues raised at this meeting.