

**Notes of the meeting of the DOVER TOWN Neighbourhood Forum held on 7 April 2009 at the St. Mary's Parish Centre, Dover at 6.30pm**

Attending: 4 representatives of Town, District and County and 14 members of public.

1. Chairman's welcome

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, KCC Cllr Bill Newman welcomed those attending and referred to the increasing prominence of Dover, the new high-speed rail link, and the Sea Sports Centre. The regeneration of Dover provides an opportunity for the public to feed in their ideas for the future of the town.

2. Notes of previous meeting

Were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

3. Provision of Sports Facilities & Participation in Sport by Young People

Sarah Philpott, DDC Sports Development Officer gave a presentation on sporting facilities in the Dover Area and reminded the meeting that sport was for all ages, not just young people. The existing facilities include Dover Leisure Centre, Tides Leisure Pool and Tennis Centre, both run by Vista Leisure, the John Myers Sports Hall at Walmer College, which was also open to the public, Walmer Paddling Pool, Sandwich Leisure Centre, Fowlmead Country Park, White Cliffs Countryside Project, Deal Pier, Castle Community College ATP, skate parks, play areas, MUGAs, tennis courts, Sea Sports Centre and Aylesham Leisure Project. Sandwich was making a bid for an ATP.

Sarah was not aware of any bids made for BMX facilities and the BMX track at Buckland was an informal one but would be added to the list for future presentations. A member of the public stated that public seats were needed in Fowlmead Park and it was agreed that more facilities were required in the Country Park. When asked if free swimming for over 60s would be available in Dover, Sarah advised that she was not aware of any government funding for this kind of free exercise class.

The Active Dover scheme was explained and details handed out. The scheme relied upon local funding being provided to provide awards and recognition for local achievers. All town and parish councils has been asked to contribute, as had KCC. The London 2012 Olympics would prove a source of inspiration for all ages and abilities and the organisers were advertising Deal Gym Club facilities and the Fowlmead Country Park. Kent has the highest number of training camps for the Olympics and approaches were being made to have the Olympic Torch taken through Dover.

A member of the public stated her opinion that Dover was an embarrassment; despite the publicity nothing was happening and the situation had been the same for 25 years. Dover Harbour Board took passengers by bus to Canterbury; business rates in Dover were too high; the town was shabby and action was needed now rather than waiting for 2012. The Chairman explained the various measures which were being taken to try to secure investment in the town. The Cruise Terminal provided a magnificent

conference centre; tourists came to see the Town Hall in Dover and the Roman Painted House. Cllr Collor reported that cruise passengers arrived in the town early when no shops were open. Sarah Philpott explained that she understood the views expressed but was well aware of the time needed to achieve improvements and the large scale of funding required.

With regard to training camps, Sarah was asked if the Duke of York's School had been contacted and she advised that nothing had been achieved to date but discussions would continue with both Duke of York's and Dover College.

#### 4. DDC Strategic Play Areas

Emma-Jane Allen, DDC's Leisure Officer, gave a presentation on the nine strategic play areas within Dover District: Connaught Park, Elms Vale, Kearsney Abbey, Pencester Gardens, Russell Gardens, Markewood, North Deal, Victoria Park and The Butts. Pencester Gardens had been re-vamped, renovations at Elms Vale included a wheelchair-accessible round-about, and The Butts, Sandwich had been partially renovated. The play area at Connaught Park, Dover was now a priority; DDC had set aside £50,000 for renovations and had also applied to KCC for a further £50,000 from the Department of Children, Schools & Families Play Builder funding stream. An additional application had been made for funding in respect of Victoria Park, Deal.

Consultation was needed with children as well as parents and the discussion widened to include the need for a 'uniformed presence' around play areas to deter anti-social behaviour; the perception that old play equipment was left to rot; and the removal of the play space at Maxton. The Forum heard about the real cost of replacing play equipment, the £120,000 per year spent by DDC on maintaining existing equipment and the consultation exercise which had been undertaken before any decision was made about which play spaces to retain and which to remove. A member of the public supported the use of play spaces for children, stressed the importance of keeping grassed areas free of development, and asked why there was no funding to keep open places where older children could meet as providing youth clubs would be more cost effective than dealing with anti-social behaviour.

Following a reference to the successful "Teen Scheme" Sarah Philpott explained that she had created the scheme in 2000 when DDC had four or five sports officers; she was now the only one. The benefits of volunteering by young people and the work carried out under the 'Pay Back' scheme were mentioned and the Forum was advised that the skate board park in Deal had been designed by young skaters there. Similar input was being asked for in connection with Connaught Park but some of those attending the Forum had not heard about the consultation. More volunteers were needed in all of the voluntary sector and the CRB check was seen as an obstacle to recruiting more volunteers. However, the check was necessary to safeguard children and the main problem was the length of time it took for the check to be returned. DDC's Community Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager was being consulted about working with ex-offenders as these people could be some of the best community contributors.

Tuesday, 7 April 2009

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The Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and asked for specific topics for future Forum meetings. The regeneration of Dover as a whole was suggested.

The meeting ended at 8.10pm.