

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL LOCAL BOARDS

Notes of a meeting of DARTFORD LOCAL BOARD

Date: Wednesday, 18 June 2008

Venue: Temple Hill Community Hall, Temple Hill Square, Littlebrook Manor Way, Dartford DA1 5HY

Present: Bertie Bassam (Chairman), Ann Allen, Christine Angell, Ivor Jones, DL, Tom Maddison and John Muckle

Apologies for absence: None

KCC Officers: Will Farmer

A1. Notes of Local Board meeting held on 20th March 2008 and progress on any actions agreed

The notes of the meeting held on 20th March 2008 were agreed.

A2. Kent County Council Youth Service representatives and Paul Marriot from the Thames Gateway YMCA and young people

Paul Marriot showed a short video produced by the YMCA of young people in the Temple Hill area giving their views on the provision of services for young people in the area. Paul outlined what the YMCA is also doing in the area with young people. Key issues for young people are provision of leisure opportunities, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime. They feel that just the minority of young people cause trouble. The majority are fearful of crime just as anyone else.

A3. Brenda Armstrong, Youth Officer, Kent County Council

Brenda Armstrong spoke on the provision of youth services by KCC in Dartford. Do a lot of very good work. Three Centre/Projects in total: Highfield, Swan Valley and Dartford Detached. However, they are in great demand and this is only a relatively small resource. Demand for youth workers to respond in the area is always pressing, but there are not the resources available.

Young people from Highfields Youth Centre spoke on their visit to Gambia. They spoke briefly about the great opportunity this gave to the young people to experience and help communities who had much less than people in UK. That this experience was something they wanted to pass on and tell their friends.

A4. Questions from the public to the presenter

Q. Temple Hill (TH) Youth Centre is under threat and the lease is in Dartford Borough council's hands. Detached youth workers do not build long term relationship with young people.

Feels that there are a lot of difficult young people in the area, not all good. The way that the youth centre is managed helps control this element.

A. KCC youth services covers 13-19 year olds. Temple Hill is covered by

detached youth workers from the YMCA. KCC Youth Service is always looking for ways to work in partnership. There is no Youth Service input to the area as it is covered by YMCA staff. The call for youth workers is always present so effective use of resources is always a factor when allocation focus work areas.

Q. What is being done to attract more youth workers?

A. Recruitment of staff is ongoing, but Dartford is often a difficult area to attract candidates – one reason being proximity to London. Some people do enter the service as volunteers and then become youth workers. The youth service does not have the budget to employ extra staff. Training is available for youth workers and volunteers.

Mr Ivor Jones

Feels that it was a fantastic opportunity for young people to go to Gambia to help other people more in need and realise that we have a lot in this Country in comparison. Important thing that they speak to their friends about the experience.

Mrs Christine Angell

Believes that it is scandalous that there is not enough money for this age group. She wants to work with a small group in the area to find out what can be done to help the situation

Mr John Muckle

Applauds the work of the young people in Gambia. Part of the problem for the temple hill youth centre is its quality. Money for the centre was pulled by KCC along time ago, when KCC gave the ownership of the centre over to Dartford Borough Council. JM is dealing with the issue of the centre with DBC. Believes also that most young people are good, not bad, and that the issues for young people remain similar from one generation to the next. Kent youth OFSTED report did say that the spending per head of 13-19 population is very low. KCC should be lobbied for more funding.

Q. Temple Hill youth centre was a KCC Youth Centre and cost KCC very little. What opportunity is there for getting it back within KCC?

A. The TH gym provides a service for young people and keeps the youth centre going.

A5. Frank Brown, Leisure Services Manager for Dartford Council

The notes from Frank Brown's presentation are attached the end of these notes.

A6. Questions from the public to the presenter

Q. Is Dartford Festival only running until 8pm again?

A. Yes, because of there is greater potential for trouble if it runs later. Whole event would be ruined by a single incident. Security costs a lot of money for the event. 40000 people attended last year and the potential for crime could be higher if it went into the evening.

Q. The summer sizzlers – it is no good for some parents who work.

Q. Used to be a children's university. What has happened to this?

A. Ann Allen – DBC were responsible for this but had problems.

Q. All leisure facilities are good in Dartford, but not aware of any youth discounts? How are these done and promoted?

A. Would like to create a leisure link discount in the future.

Q. Nothing about cycling in leisure plans?

A. Agree that DBC should be encouraging cycling more.

Q. Is a new pool being built to replace Fairfield?

A. Yes that is the plan.

Q. Is anyone looking at the pool because it is really run down?

A. Doesn't feel the company is spending enough money on the pool but this is being addressed with the company.

Q. Feel that Dartford needs something really special as a town to celebrate it.

A. Steam festival was a great success.

A7. Question Time – Your opportunity to ask questions about local public services

Q. One with Grace Centre (OWG) is facing closure and refused planning permission for new site. Provides opportunities for young people.

A. The planning matter is a DBC decision.

Q. What is the situation regarding the future of Highfield Youth centre

A. Currently being looked at by KCC with partners.

Q. Parents are being told that they can't get places for their children in Temple Hill Primary school because of falling rolls and they have to go to Stone. This is a long way and can't be walked. Stone is a good school but surely this increases traffic on the road and is difficult for parents.

A. Mr Maddison is looking into this as well because of a similar situation in his area (west Dartford).

Mr John Muckle feels that this is an absurd situation and all children on temple hill should have places in their local primary school. However, it is a very difficult situation to resolve. Parents need to take it up with the Government and Ombudsman.

There is a surplus of places in Dartford because of falling rolls and schools are told to reduce their places.

Q. However, local people feel that it is crazy to be told to go to St Mary's school when you live in Temple Hill.

Notes from presentation given by Frank Brown, Leisure Manager, Dartford Borough Council

Provision of Leisure Services in Dartford

As a Borough Council we have invested approx £12 million over the past couple of years in the award winning facilities of Princess Park Community Stadium and the Dartford Judo Club facility.

Our future plans, after successfully securing £200K funding from the Big Lottery for Play, plus £50K from Dartford Borough Council include:-

1. Three Teen Chill out zones associated with existing multi use games areas at the playgrounds in Hesketh Park, Wilmot Road and Attlee Drive – opening late summer 2008.
2. Enhancing the skate park in Central Park to provide “starter” facilities – opening autumn 2008.
3. A new Water Play facility in Central Park playground – opening spring 2009.

In addition there is the £100K secured for the Safe Routes to Schools, the answer is in the title getting young people to walk/cycle to their daily commute to and from school, on safe and appropriate routes. This shall be added to the £600K secured for the Sutrans Connect 2 project.

Projects I am dealing with include the extending of facilities at Princess Park Community Stadium to include two floodlit mini soccer pitches, meeting the need for facilities for under 10s football. DBC is working with the British Judo Association to provide a Judo Performance Institute which will be the home of the elite athletes who shall be competing at the 2012 London Olympic Games and beyond.

Funding has been secured from Sport England to recruit an Outreach Manager for Dartford Judo Club, to ensure growth and a legacy for the club into the future.

We have three facilities (Dartford Judo Club/Princess Park and Arrow Riding Centre) being included in the Pre Games Training Camp Brochure, which will be circulated to the visiting nations at the Beijing Games.

Brooklands Lakes – We have just completed installation of stone surfacing of many of the paths and seats around the lakes together with fishing pitches for disabled persons. It is planned that Central Park and Brooklands Lakes will be linked by a footpath under Princes Road by the end of the year; advanced work of paths and CCTV have already been undertaken.

Central Park – The Darent Valley Path has been upgraded through the town with new signage extending through the Park and including new seating.

The summer bedding displays will be planted with approx 32,000 plants in Central Park. The theme of the carpet bed this year is the centenary of Dartford Museum.

Dartford Heath – a £90K grant has been received from SITA (landfill tax grant) to restore some of the Heath to heather heath land. Following vegetation clearance, a thin depth of soil will be stripped and sown with heather seeds this autumn and this will also continue next year. Following grant aid from CLG new signs, seats and interpretative material have been supplied to the Heath. Volunteers are always welcome to the Tuesday volunteer day – contact out Country Parks Officer, Richard Pullman on 01322 285497.

Darenth Country Park – a new pond is being installed as a part of the A2/M25 widening works and new signs and interpretative material for the Orchard of historic fruit trees. Volunteers are always welcome on a Monday – contact out Country Parks Officer, Richard Pullman on 01322 285497.

Darenth Woods – The historic coppiced woodland which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is now more accessible following works carried out last winter. New paths have been created and old ones surfaced whilst the coppice regime has recommenced. Although to some this may initially look destructive, it is restoring the historic management and will improve the ecology of the woodland. Volunteers help maintain some of the wood and meet on Sundays every other month - – contact out Country Parks Officer, Richard Pullman on 01322 285497.

We are spending money to further aspirations and involvement rather than just to meet existing demand, so all of our new facilities incorporate ambition and achievement to increase the level of expectation for our residents.

We have also invested £1m plus on playgrounds and local facilities for young people and families and we have taken a forward step in ensuring the new development, such as that at the Bridge, Ebbsfleet Valley etc incorporate play and leisure facilities that offer challenges and interest.

Frank Brown
Leisure Services Manager
Dartford Borough Council
18 June 2008