

Meeting of the Culture and Visitor Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Tuesday, 15 September 2020,
10.00 am

Meeting held virtually, via Skype

Committee Members present

Councillor Mrs Pam Bosworth
Councillor Paul Fellows
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Judy Stevens (Chairman)
Councillor Hilary Westropp (Vice-
Chairman)

Other Members present

Councillor Jacky Smith

Cabinet Members

Councillor Kelham Cooke (The Leader of the Council)
Councillor Rosemary Trollope-Bellew (Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor
Economy)
Councillor Barry Dobson (Cabinet Member for Commercial and Operations)

Officers

Paul Stokes (Corporate Operations Lead)
Paul Thomas (Strategic Director Growth)
Karen Whitfield (Head of Leisure)
Michael Cross (Head of Arts)
Mary Powell (Interim Lead, Visitor Economy, InvestSK Ltd)
Zena West (Scrutiny Officer)
Shelley Thirkell (Democratic Officer)

49. Comments from Members of the Public

None received.

50. Register of attendance, membership and apologies for absence

None received.

51. Disclosure of Interests

None received.

52. Action Notes from the meeting held on 16 June 2020

The Action Notes from the meeting held on 16 June 2020, were agreed as a correct record.

53. Updates from the previous meeting

The Chairman noted that there were no updates on Markets at this meeting, but feedback had been that despite Covid-19, the markets within South Kesteven had been thriving.

54. Deepings Literary Festival

The Chairman of the Committee and the Head of Arts at SKDC provided a verbal update on the Deepings Literary Festival.

Work had already started on the 2021 Deepings Literary Festival. Despite the restrictions Covid-19 had put in place it had also created opportunities to widen the audience for next year's festival. Many more people were using digital platforms to interact with others and enjoy activities, there could potentially be a greater uptake of what was provided.

A launch event had been planned and some venues had been secured, the Festival would have various events such as; Q&As, readings, talks, guest writers and competitions.

It was hoped that Bourne Book Shop would be a partner of the Festival, the owners were being approached to discuss the matter.

The website for 2021 was currently being updated, it would include details of events, what the competitions were and authors who had agreed to participate. Members agreed that it would be beneficial to approach authors who had produced literature on the local area, it would hopefully attract more local participation.

The Committee were thrilled to hear of the progress being made and how positive those involved were.

55. Tourism Action Plan

The Cabinet Member for Culture and Visitor Economy was invited by the Chairman to introduce the Tourism Action Plan.

The face of tourism had changed drastically due to Covid-19, with nationally over 80% of all businesses relating to tourism closing. The effects were similar to having three consecutive winters, economically it was going to be hard to survive.

The Interim Lead, Visitor Economy had been seconded from Lincolnshire County Council for 1 day a week to help South Kesteven with future planning. She had wide-ranging experience, which included the Lincoln Castle restoration project and working on the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership.

The Interim Lead, Visitor Economy noted that funding was a large part of being able to achieve what the area wanted. Applying for funding was an intricate process but the area was strategically placed, both in the national and regional picture. This would hopefully increase opportunities for funding to improve the visitor economy.

Nationally the Government had set up a 'sector deal' for Tourism, it was very well thought through, looking at the big picture and the small details. The Tourism Teams had been discussing how to get Lincolnshire to work towards that deal.

There was also the opportunity to apply to be a Tourism Zone, which would mean additional funding. Greater Lincolnshire and Rutland were well placed to be able to take on that opportunity, the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) were very encouraging and had provided advice to assist with the application.

To ensure that the area was in the right position for application, the Tourism Action Plan was being developed, which would form the main basis for the bid. It needed to look at the problems and issues with Tourism in the area and what could be done about them. It was very important to be honest about the issues and challenges, funding was there to be able to support improvements.

Development and consultation events had been set up throughout Lincolnshire, but unfortunately due to Covid-19, South Kesteven's event had to be cancelled. The South Kesteven Tourism Forum had been established, with the first meeting held in July 2020. It looked at any issues that needed to be resolved and what the good things were about the area. The outcomes of the forum would look at how the area fit in both the national and regional picture.

A key theme that had come through was outdoor Lincolnshire; walking, cycling and horse-riding were strengths in the area. With Covid-19 outdoor activities were increasingly more important. When applying for funds it was important to say where these activities could be improved, for instance cycle paths needed improvement and expansion.

The Chairman noted that South Kesteven was a beautiful place to live and travel to, there were so many activities and places to visit, that really needed to be advertised more.

The Tourism Action Plan was out for consultation, with the first draft being available at the end of September 2020. Members were invited to view that draft and feed into its content.

ACTION

That the Tourism Action Plan be circulated to members of the Committee for consultation.

Members thanked the Officer and Tourism Team for their support and invited them to visit the different areas of the District.

56. Digital Arts Update

The Committee were provided with an update on Digital Arts and received a presentation from the Head of Arts at SKDC on Embracing Digital Technology During and After Lockdown.

There was an online Arts Programme 2020, operating as an ongoing link between patrons and the regular arts programme. Venues had closed at the start of lockdown in March 2020 and the first online event took place in April 2020.

The Autumn programme was due to start in September 2020. Different platforms were being used for the Programme:

- Zoom – used for workshops, discussion groups and live poetry readings;
- Facebook – used for filmed ‘live premieres’, and publicising events;
- Instagram – also used for publicising events; and
- YouTube – use for access to events by those who don’t use social media and access to events at a later date.

An e-newsletter had been sent to in excess of 14,000 recipients, with six editions to date, initially published fortnightly, but would be issued monthly from September.

The Programme included participatory events, poetry, film discussions and artist led workshops. Several commissioned pieces had already been delivered as part of the Programme, with more planned. The Engagement statistics were shared with the Committee, which were encouraging. It was hoped that as more events were posted on-line; engagement would increase further.

It was appreciated that the changes may be long term and positive for inclusivity and accessibility that the digital programme could potentially feature on a permanent basis, alongside in-person events as they returned.

The Committee agreed that it was positive to see that a cultural programme was still delivered to audiences. Isolation due to Covid-19 was a serious issue and to be able to have ongoing digital access to social and cultural events was positive.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and their Team for the great work that had been undertaken to provide a cultural and events programme, during a difficult time. It was agreed that work should continue to develop an online programme in conjunction with a more traditional one, once venues were open and Covid-19 safe measures could be put in place.

57. 2020/21 Work Programme

The Scrutiny Officer requested that members consider the Work Programme and the current Cabinet Forward Plan.

ACTION

Any items members wished to consider at future meetings, were to be passed to the Democratic Services Team and the Scrutiny Officer.

58. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances decides is urgent

There were none.

59. Exclusion of the Press and Public

It was agreed to exclude the press and public from the meeting during the discussion of the following item of business due to the likelihood that information that was exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) because it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

60. Leisure Objectives

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Leisure which outlined the options for the Council's Leisure Objectives and made comments and suggestions on the proposed options to be fed back to Cabinet.

61. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 11:24 am.