

MINUTES OF THE TOWN PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 29TH MARCH, 2016

Present: Councillor E Bell (Chair) and
Councillors R Arthur, Mrs J A Bell,
Mrs G Bleasdale, B Burn Snr, B Burn Jnr,
Mrs H J Cahill, S Cudlip, Mrs S Forster,
R Meir, Miss S Morrison, N R Page, I Paul,
C Snowball, B Taylor, R Whitehead,
K Younger.

Apologies: Councillor B Allen, Mrs B E Allen, K Shaw.

Prior to commencement of the meeting the Chair advised members of this Committee and members of the public that in line with the amendment to 'the public bodies (admission to meetings) act 1960', which came into force in August, 2014, parts of this meeting may be recorded by photographic, video and audio means.

1. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded prior to the start of the meeting of the need to disclose any interests, prejudicial or personal, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

2. PRESENTATION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Ms Nikki Locke, Head of East Durham Creates, who was in attendance to update Members on the current work of the initiative.

Ms Locke began by thanking the Town Council for the opportunity to attend and present to Members. She stated that East Durham Creates (EDC) had conducted a number of activities in Seaham in Autumn 2014 and that it is a three year programme, funded by Arts Council England, to increase arts participation in areas where it is deemed there isn't any. There are 21 projects across the whole of England all working in different geographical locations with varying sizes of populations and settlements. EDC is working across the whole of east Durham covering the former Easington district area.

The first activity was the launch festival in 2014, which involved trialling different events in different places, but this involved bringing in external artists instead of working with the local community to do what they wanted. Other large local settlements already have large cultural venues which we don't so we need to work out what we can provide and ultimately the aim is to make the initiative community led and sustainable and hopefully changing the three year vision to a 15 to 20 year vision.

EDC has worked on various initiatives in different areas and as part of the first festival in Seaham a variety of events were delivered and since then artists have approached EDC requesting places to work and Seaham has been suggested often. EDC has the remit to start relationships, which will then become sustainable, such as the current

Stolen Voices initiative in Seaham which is funded by the Arts Council and which aims to utilise ‘amateur espionage’ on the beach at 6am on Sunday 10th April to obtain local conversations. These will then be made into a music performance which will be performed on the 8th May at 4pm at Rhubarb and Custard café. This project will then be repeated up and down the country.

Groups can apply to the EDC commissioning scheme ‘Lets Create’ for up to £2,500 of support to make their ideas happen and such local organisations as East Durham Artists Network (EDAN) and Dawdon Youth & Community Centre have been successful on a number of occasions. There is to be another round for applications in the near future probably around July and the EDC mailing list can be joined via the website and this will then provide details of current and future events.

EDC operate an initiative called ‘Go and See’ where they take local groups to alternative locations to view what is happening there and to develop ideas for events in their own areas. Dawdon Youth & Community Centre visited Game 2.0, a computer gaming exhibition at the Centre for Life in Newcastle and really enjoyed it and they also took part in the recent Lumiere event. There are more ‘Go and See’ events visiting the Centre for Life for the ‘makerfaireuk’ on Sunday 24th April for crafters, coders, DIYers and robot makers and to the Bishop Auckland food festival on Saturday 23rd April.

EDC have an initiative called ‘Creative Social’ which enables and funds groups to develop art ideas for those not usually involved with arts and this is discussed and developed in a social context over food and refreshments.

EDC are also trying to encourage as many people as possible to visit differing events to obtain new ideas which will all go towards determining what arts in East Durham will look like in 10 to 15 years. The initial business plan for EDC was to work hard to encourage increased participation and the current program ends in December 2016 with final events in February 2017.

At this point comments and questions were invited and the following questions were asked:

- (i) *A Member highlighted that it appeared Dawdon had got to know about the various opportunities but the rest of the Town hasn't, and if the information had been via the Town Council then all Councillors throughout Seaham would have known about it. It was therefore wondered why the Town Council, as a statutory body, had not been included in any mailshots? For example, the Council has only just become aware of Stolen Voices and that is happening in the very near future*

Ms Locke stated that if the Council was signed up to the mailing list it would be notified of all activities and also that community panel members would cascade information to the organisations and the communities they represent. EDC covers such a large area and resources are limited. With regard to Stolen

Voices the Council were informed as soon as the funding was confirmed, as EDC policy is not to publicise events that are not definitely going to take place. They try their best to provide information as soon as possible to all interested parties but unfortunately the nature of Arts events often means that they are only confirmed at the last minute and they then take place soon after. EDC have definitely not been ignoring Seaham and that would be the last thing it would want anyone to think.

- (ii) *A Member queried whether each individual Councillor would need to sign up to the mailing list?*

It was confirmed that the Town Council would be signing up to the mailing list immediately and all relevant information would be distributed to Councillors.

- (iii) *A Member highlighted that what was suggested was that if the Town Council had received early notification, it would have been able to distribute information to the list of organisations and voluntary groups which is held for the whole of Seaham. If EDC are able to provide information on a regular basis this can then be distributed to all contacts. EDC are missing a trick if they are not asking for such assistance from every Town and Parish Council in East Durham to mail out. If it doesn't ask that, and provide the relevant information, then there will be a hodgepodge arrangement where the odd group gets to know and many others, who would have liked to have taken advantage, will be quite annoyed and very upset about it. EDC really needs to be pro-active in providing that information to Town and Parish Councils and certainly Seaham would be very helpful in helping to provide a better form of communication to all of the interest groups in Seaham.*

Ms Locke stated that during 2015 EDC had been working to sort out all of their mechanisms and that 2016 was the year of delivery for many projects. They now have an events calendar so performances such as the Little Shop of Horrors which is being staged at the Town Hall can be detailed and publicised on it. She reiterated that EDC was a test program with limited resources and so were doing the best they could but were always looking to improve and learn from suggestions and feedback. Ms Locke emphasised that additional members of the community panel are always welcome and that anyone interested just needs to apply to East Durham Trust.

- (iv) *The Chair highlighted that it had taken 18 months to get established and now only 11 months remained, until the end of the programme, to deliver a variety of projects, so good communication to interested parties was essential.*
- (v) *A Member queried who financed EDC.*

Ms Locke stated that EDC was financed by the Arts Council.

- (vi) *A Member highlighted that Stolen Voices had only become active in the very recent past and once aware of it the Town Council had been informed by their representative and a large amount of activities have occurred in Seaham so the Town hasn't been missed out.*

Ms Locke stated that the Council had been approached about the Town Hall becoming a cultural Hub and members had given that consideration but hadn't wished to waive the room hire fee.

- (vii) *A Member queried if EDC had contact with the other 20 pilot schemes and whether information was obtained how they are working and on what difficulties they are having.*

Ms Locke stated that she sits on the national steering group for 'Creative People and Places' and the other schemes are all experiencing the same problems and difficulties. New initiatives such as this are unfortunately met by some people with suspicion.

At this point the Chair thanked Ms Locke for her attendance and she then left the meeting.

In discussion Members felt that EDC needed to improve the way it communicated with communities, organisations and statutory bodies such as Town and Parish Councils as this would be a great help to achieving its aim. Any organisation working with East Durham Trust also seems to hear of the projects sooner via them.

Members also felt that it wasn't right to wait until funding was in place for a project or event before communicating. It would be a better way forward and prevent a last minute rush if people were informed well in advance, but made aware that events were still subject to funding. Organisations would prefer to know there was a possibility of an event as soon as possible to pre-plan even if it didn't then go ahead.

A Member highlighted that another local scheme of this nature was 'Cultural Spring' covering South Tyneside and North Sunderland and it appeared to be very well organised and had been very engaging with excellent communication to all those involved.

Clarification was requested with regard to the consultees listed on the EDC website.

RECOMMENDED:

- (i) The Council note the information.
- (ii) The Council sign up to the mailing list on the East Durham Creates website and the relevant information is distributed to Councillors.

- (iii) The Council to review the EDC website with regard to who the stated consultees are and that this be deferred for consideration to the next meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON, 2ND FEBRUARY, 2016

RECOMMENDED the Minutes of this meeting, a copy of which had been previously printed and circulated to each Member, be approved and signed as a correct record by the Chairman.

4. VISIT COUNTY DURHAM PUBLICATIONS

4.1 Wednesday Grapevine

RECOMMENDED the copies of the Wednesday Grapevines dated from 3rd & 17th February, 2016 and 2nd, 9th, 16th & 29th March, 2016, and which had been published by Visit County Durham, be accepted.

5. PRESS OPPORTUNITIES

RECOMMENDED the Council note that no press opportunities existed from this meeting.