

# **CULTURE, LEISURE AND TOURISM PORTFOLIO**

## **DECISION RECORD**

9 December 2008

The meeting commenced at 10.00 a.m. in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

### **Present:**

Councillor Victor Tumilty (Culture, Leisure and Tourism Portfolio Holder)

Officers: John Mennear, Assistant Director – Community Services  
Jo Wilson, Democratic Services Officer

### **17. Hartlepool-Built Ships, Crews and Community Project** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

#### **Type of decision**

Non key.

#### **Purpose of report**

To advise the Portfolio Holder of Hartlepool's participation in the Nautical Archaeology Society North-East's "Hartlepool-built: Ships, Crews and Community" project.

#### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report advised that the North-East Branch of the Nautical Archaeology Society had been awarded grant-funding of £36,000 from English Heritage for its "Hartlepool-built: Ships, Crews and Community" project. This would create a new unique community-driven maritime heritage resource documenting Hartlepool's long history and tradition of shipbuilding, allowing people to share the memories, stories and photographs of their involvement in this once-thriving industry with a world-wide audience via a dedicated website. Although the project would initially draw upon existing collections held by partner organisations (including Tees Archaeology, Teesside Archives, the Teesside Branch of the World Ship Society and the Council's Library Services and Museums and Heritage Service) the public would be encouraged to share their personal recollections through a series of roadshows.

## **Decision**

That participation in 'Hartlepool-built: Crews and Community' project be supported as it will provide Hartlepool with an internationally important and accessible resource featuring one of the town's most successful industries.

## **18. Beach Lifeguard Season 2008** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Portfolio Holder on the Beach Lifeguard season for 2008.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

Lifeguards for the 2008 season were recruited using a range of advertising with all posts filled. A full list of incident statistics for Seaton Carew and Headland beaches was included in the report. There was 1 reported aquatic incidents and 649 reported other incidents varying from minor first aid to giving general safety advice. Details were given of a number of major incidents dealt with by the Lifeguards.

The Assistant Director highlighted the increase in the number of dogs with owners in ban areas despite the proper signage being in place. However the advent of Dog Control Orders with accompanying on the spot fines should go some way to alleviating this problem. The Portfolio Holder asked if there were any plans in place to tag children playing on the beach, the Assistant Director would look into this.

There had also been a number of incidents at the Headland involving consumption of alcohol, anti-social behaviour and people jumping off the breakwaters. It was felt that these incidents were connected and the possibility of recruiting security staff to help with repeat offenders would be addressed.

The report also advised that Lifeguard cover had been provided at a theatrical event at Preston Park and the July Maritime Festival. In July a Rookie Lifeguard training/competition session had been held at Seaton Carew involving the town's Primary Schools. The success of this event had prompted officers to offer a further 5 day course in July 2009. It was also noted that hopefully in 2009 the Beach Safety Officer would become an RYA PWC (jet ski) Instructor, able to deliver training to the lifeguards. However this would depend upon the availability of the appropriate training course.

## **Decision**

That the report be noted.

## **19. National Free Swimming Initiative – Changes to Active Card Scheme and Current Swimming Initiatives** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To update the Portfolio Holder concerning the free swimming scheme and advise on the necessary alterations to the Active Card Scheme as well as other swimming incentives currently available at Mill House Leisure Centre.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

In order to adequately monitor the Government's free swimming initiative the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) agreed it would be appropriate to link this initiative to the Active Card Scheme. This would mean that all over 60s and under 16s wishing to swim free of charge from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009 onwards would need to be in possession of an Active Card. However DCMS had stipulated that there could be no charge for these Active Cards. This would mean no change for the over 60s however for the under 16s approximately £1,700 in fees per annum would be lost, creating a further budget pressure. The sale of new cards had only been offered on a pro-rata basis since November to run until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009. There was no intent to refund outstanding fees on other cards as the amounts involved would be negligible.

In addition Active Card holders had the added benefit of being able to purchase Swim Season Membership, providing unlimited swimming on either an annual or six-monthly basis. This would affect 53 individuals and would equate to 84 months in total (£556.08). As these amounts were substantial officers would be initiating a refund process. Refunds would also be offered to those currently saving for the next purchase of their Swim Season Membership via the Mill House savings stamp scheme. Sales of these stamps had been suspended and membership was being offered on a pro rata basis to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009.

The Assistant Director advised that there had been changes to the estimated financial shortfalls as a consequence of the free swimming initiative. These had dropped from £15,420 to £7,500 in 2009/10 and £17,962 to £9,500 in 2010/11. This was as a result of a smaller number of

local authorities choosing to take part in the free swimming initiative and there subsequently being more funding among fewer authorities. The Portfolio Holder thanked all those involved for all the work they had done.

### **Decision**

- I. That the implications of linking the free swimming initiative to the Active Card Scheme be noted
- II. That the resultant changes to the Active Card Scheme be noted
- III. That the action of officers in relation to the sale and refund of Swim Season Memberships and Mill House Savings Stamps be noted.
- IV. That the current discussions of officers with the PCT regarding available funding to offset the budgetary pressures identified be noted.

## **20. Tourist Information Centre – Regional Mystery Shopper Results 2008** *(Director of Adult and Community Services)*

### **Type of decision**

Non key.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform on the delivery and positive impact the Tourist Information Centre plays in providing information to visitors.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

One North East commissioned Customer Maze Ltd to carry out the annual mystery shopping exercise to assist the regions Tourist Information Centre's in improving their telephone, email, postal and customer service handling skills. The final scores were as follows:

Telephone – 76%

Email – 44%

Onsite – 81%

Postal – 73%

In all cases Hartlepool's score was higher than the regional average. Hartlepool Tourist Information Centre came joint 5<sup>th</sup> out of 36 Tourist Information Centres in the region with an overall score of 71%. They were also top in the Tees Valley sub region results.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the relatively low score in the case of email handling skills. The Assistant Director referred to the zero score for speed of response, advising that the qualifying response time was 6 hours. Face-to-face and telephone queries would always take priority and this could have an impact. The Portfolio Holder also commented that slow delivery times for emails could have an impact. In any case the email result had still been 25% higher than the regional average.

**Decision**

That the success of Hartlepool's Tourist Information Centre be noted

The meeting concluded at 10.30am

**PETER DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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