



Shropshire Hills Discovery
Centre Advisory Board
25 November 2010
10.00am

Item / Paper
2
Public

NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2010

10:00 am – 11.30am

Responsible Officer Tim Ward

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PRESENT:

Members

Shropshire Council	Mrs C Motley (Chair) Mrs H Kidd
South Shropshire Tourism Ltd.	Mr L Chapman
Secret Hills Network	Mr N Stephens

Officers

Shropshire Council	Ms Z Griffin (Centre Manager - Secret Hills)
	Mr A Lee (Arts Manager)
	Mr T King (Tourism Officer)
	Mr T Ward (Committee Officer)
	Mr A Williams (Strategic Library Service Manager (South))

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Charmley (SC), Cllr D Evans (SC), Mr D Gibbon (SHAONB/CACC) and Cllr Miss J Hoskins (CATC)

Note of Previous Meeting

2. The note of the meeting held on 3 December 2009, as circulated, was confirmed as a correct record.
3. The Chair asked what progress had been made regarding a stand alone website. The Centre Manager apologised that no progress had been made. Discussion followed regarding the way forward and it was agreed that a letter be sent from the Board to Kevin Malone regarding this matter. The Chair also offered to attend a meeting with the Head of IT if it proved necessary

Action: ZG to draft letter

Performance and Developments at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the Period April 2009 to December 2009

4. A report outlining performance and developments at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the period April to December 2009 had been circulated
5. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that use of the library continued to increase with overall book loans up 12%. She went on to say that the library continued to support four local reading groups and the Rhyme Time Sessions for under fives which continued to be well attended. She added that there were two classes from Stokesay School which attended weekly rhyme time sessions. The Centre Manager advised members that the results of the national public library audit had not been received yet but that positive feedback had been received from a mystery shopper exercise which had been carried out by librarians from other authorities as part of the library service's benchmarking scheme. The Chair asked where the majority of library users came from. The Library Service Manager advised her that the majority of users came from the Craven Arms area but that the opportunity to exchange books at any library lead to a certain amount of "passing" users.
6. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that levels of users and receipts remained on a par with previous years and that following analysis the onsite feedback cards had shown that satisfaction with the centre remained high and that satisfaction levels were lowest with the Meadows and that she was hoping to address this in the future. Mr Stephens asked whether there was still a problem with dog fouling. The Centre Manager advised him that the issue cropped up periodically but there were always bags available.
7. The Centre Manager advised the meeting that the review and implementation of the revised catering prices had gone well, and that there had been no complaints regarding the increased charges. Mr Stephens commented that he felt that some of the prices were too high, especially for things like baked potatoes. The Centre Manager informed him that the decision was made to have all the main meals the same price but that it may be needed to reassess this.
8. The Centre Manager reminded the meeting that a grant had been received from AONB's Sustainable Development Fund in the autumn and that part of this had been used for the purchase of a free standing grill which is used at the Farmers' Markets to retail hot sandwiches made solely with produce you can buy at the market and that this had been well received., she went on to say that the funding would also be used to:
 - Create three panels which promote the Buy Local ethos of the café
 - Purchase an A board to promote the café immediately outside the building
 - Develop and print a new quiz trail for visitors to do around the building and the meadows on the theme of sustainability

The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Wednesday work parties in the Meadows continued but had been disrupted by the weather which had leads to several sessions being cancelled. She went on to say that the monthly Forest School for Dads & Kids continued to be popular and that rebranded Toddle Time had started in January and had been better attended than the Meadow Fun Sessions. She added that with better weather she hoped that the popularity of these sessions would grow.

9. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the marketing plan was being implemented and included
 - A full page feature in the Shropshire Hills Events brochure.
 - A continued development of the Centre's presence on Facebook.

- More use of free listing on key websites for events
- Visitors to Acton Scott being offered a discount to visit the Secret Hills exhibition.
- Collection of more email addresses from customers to improve the mailing list and allow us to keep them updated in a cheaper and greener way than traditional mail shots.

Mr Chapman commented that the use of free listings and email alerts was very useful.

Mr Chapman asked how the leaflets would be distributed. The Centre Manager advised him that a leaflet distribution company was used and that she would mail out leaflets to all local bed and breakfast establishments. Mr Chapman then asked whether the Centre had access to the National Trust Visitor Profile for Cardingmill Valley as it may be useful in targeting distribution. The Centre Manager agreed to speak to Pete Carty about this

Action: ZG to speak to Pete Carty

10. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the 2010 programme was now complete and that the regular sessions of the Reading Group, Rhyme Time, Toddle Time, the Forest School, the local History talks and drop in sessions, the Farmers Markets and the RSPB talks programme would all continue and that the programme of family activities would be: -

- February half term – Digging for Dinosaurs
- Mid March – National Science week workshop
- Easter – Scrambled Eggs
- May half term – Pond Dipping
- Summer – Orienteering Antic, Three Little Pigs, Minibeast Safari
- September – Heritage Open Days and ArtWalk
- October half term – Paper Making

The Centre Manager advised the meeting that due to the good attendance at last years family activities it was proposed to offer two sessions per day at the activities which would be held over the May half term and the summer holidays.

11. The Centre Manager reminded the meeting of the many voluntary groups and activities which used the Centre. She informed members that the Coordinator and the Gardener for the Grow Cook Share project had started work in early January and would be launching the project on 18 February with a drop in session and other activities. The Centre Manager reminded the meeting that agreement had been reached for £50,000 of funding to improve play facilities in the town and that she was working with the Community Centre and other organisations in the town to develop this. She added that it was hoped that this funding could be used to lever some additional funding to pay for further improvements to the Meadows.
12. The Chair thanked the Centre Manager for her report and for all the work she and her staff had done.

Other Business

13. Mr King congratulated Mr Chapman on his being elected Chair of South Shropshire Tourism Ltd.

Date of Next Meeting

14. After discussion it was agreed that the Board should meet twice a year.

The Committee Officer advised that provisional dates were Thursday 25 November and Thursday 10 February 2011. It was felt that the February meeting should be moved to take place after the Spring Half term. The Clerk agreed to look at alternative dates and to advise the Committee accordingly.

It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 25 November 2010 at 10am

Action: TW to look at suitable dates

CHAIR.....

DATE