



Shropshire Hills Discovery
Centre Advisory Board

8 March 2011

10.00am

Item / Paper

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Public

NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2010

10:00 am – 11.25am

Responsible Officer Tim Ward

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PRESENT:

Members

Shropshire Council

Mrs C Motley (Chair)
Mr D Evans
Mrs H Kidd (to 10.45am)

Craven Arms Town Council

Miss J Hoskins

Shropshire Hills AONB/ Craven
Arms Community Centre

Mr D Gibbon

Secret Hills Network

Mr N Stephens

Officers

Shropshire Council

Ms A Stangar (Centre Manager - Secret Hills)
Mr A Lee (Arts Manager)
Mr T Ward (Committee Officer)

The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting

The Centre Manager informed members that Zoe Griffin had given birth to twins, a boy and a girl, on 16 October. The Chair asked that the Boards congratulations be passed to her.

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr S Charmley (Shropshire Council) and Mr L Chapman (South Shropshire Tourism Ltd.)

Mrs Kidd apologised that she would have to leave early as she had another engagement.

Note of Previous Meeting

2. The note of the meeting held on 4 February 2010, as circulated, was confirmed as a correct record.

Performance and Developments at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the Period January 2010 to October 2010

3. A report outlining performance and developments at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the period January to October 2010 had been circulated. Further performance figures and the results of the Library survey were tabled.
4. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the use of the library had levelled off during the last few months. She reported that the results of the national public library adult user survey have been received and that 87% rated the Library as a very good / good place to visit, 60% rated the selection of books available in the Library as very good / good, 91% rated the standard of books available in the Library as very good / good, 83 % rated the computer facilities available at the Library as very good / good, 85% rated the information provision at the Library as very good / good and 87% rated the Library provision as very good / good. Members agreed that these results were very good.
5. The Chair referred to the performance figures which showed that total centre users had gone down by 2% and that admissions income had reduced but 8%. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that a change in marketing policy had meant that the focus of advertising had changed and that no advertising was done for the October half term which had had an adverse effect on visitor numbers.
6. The Chair asked why the volunteer hours had reduced by 22%. The Centre Manager explained that a work experience placement had been converted to a modern apprenticeship contract but unfortunately due to the current recruitment freeze she had been unable to extend the contract. Mrs Kidd commented that there was currently funding available for the employment of Modern Apprentices. The Centre Manager stated that she would look into this. Members then had a general discussion around the subject of the levels of volunteering. The Centre Manager commented that levels of volunteering were at the maximum that could be coped with from a management point of view and any further volunteers would have managerial and financial implications.
7. Members congratulated Centre Staff on the large increase in the number of school groups catered for. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Learning Communicator had developed a successful programme of activities which she delivered to primary school children at their own schools as part of the extended schools programme and that she was fully booked for the autumn and spring periods. She went on to say that the number of schools visits had also risen with a lot of repeat visits and a number of new schools using the facilities as a result of presentations made to school staff earlier in the year.
8. Mr Stevens commented that he was pleased that the review and implementation of the café prices had been carried out as some people had commented to him that they felt the café was expensive. The Centre Manager commented that she could reduce prices but that this would mean moving away from the emphasis on using local producers and suppliers which she did not want to do. She went on to say that she had recently done some promotional material to place on the café tables outlining the local provenance of the food and giving short biographies of the suppliers used.
9. Miss Hoskins commented that local people missed the opportunity to sit outside the café and asked what it would cost to create a seating area adjacent to the fire doors. The Centre Manager agreed to obtain costings for such an area. Mrs Kidd commented that a "Friends of the Discovery Centre" group could be used to lever external funding for such projects.

ACTION: Centre Manager to obtain costings

10. The Centre Manager informed members that 2 new benches had been installed in the meadow and that other work had been carried out. She went on to say that work was being done to develop a sculpture trail within the Meadows, the emphasis being on natural sculptures, this work being done in conjunction with the Craven Arms ArtWalk team. Mr Gibbon commented that there was need for an all weather path through the Meadows. The Centre Manager agreed but commented that it would be expensive to install. Mr Gibbon commented that Attingham Park had used innovative ways to install all weather paths. The Centre Manager said that she would contact them to find out how they had done this.

ACTION: Centre Manager to obtain details from Attingham

11. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that the Marketing Plan for the rest of the year had been combined with the 2011/12 plan and that there were significant challenges due to the savings that needed to be made, and that she was looking to do all the press advertising as one complete marketing campaign which should allow the advertising to be more innovative, targeted and cost effective. She went on to say that she would be approaching design companies with a brief in the forthcoming weeks. Discussion followed on ways of using digital and social media to promote the Centre. The Centre Manager reminded members that the Centre had a page in Facebook which was fairly popular. She went on to say that the Centre itself was not permitted to use Twitter under Council policy but that events were put on the Virtual Shropshire website who then tweeted them.
12. The Centre Manager informed the meeting that she had originally thought that the exhibition entry cost would need to rise in line with the increase in charges being made across the County but that her thought was that the charge should remain the same or be reduced. She went on to say that she was also going to introduce a goody bag for all users of the exhibition and was currently looking at ways of refreshing the exhibition to encourage repeat visits and length of stay in the exhibition. Members were full in support of this proposal. Discussion followed on ways to update the exhibition. Members asked whether it would be possible to update the film shown. The Centre Manager commented that with the new technology which only required 1 projector it may be possible to show different films.
13. The Centre Manager commented that the Farmers Markets continued to be very well supported. Mr Gibbon commented that there was a good core of regular stallholders who supported the market. Miss Hoskins commented that there was a problem with parking during the markets and that this was putting some visitors off as they could not park she added that this was a problem at other times as well. The Centre Manager reminded her that the school was used for overflow parking during the markets both for stallholders and visitors and this was signposted from the Centre. Mr Evans commented that it may be possible to use the old Farmore yard as overflow parking at other times. The Centre Manager agreed to investigate this.
14. The Centre Manager advised the Committee that the scheme to improve play opportunities within the town had been delayed as the funding had been withdrawn but that other sources of funding were being investigated. She went on to say that she was currently looking at the possibility of creating a landscaped area in the fields at the bottom of the meadow which could be used as a BMX track. Mr Evans commented that he knew of a man with a digger who may be able to carry out the work.
15. The Chair thanked the Centre Manager for her report and for all the work she and her staff had done.

Other Business

16. Miss Hoskins commented that she had been asked to pass on to staff the thanks of partially sighted users of the Centre for all their help and assistance.

Date of Next Meeting

17. It was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 8 March 2011 at 10am

CHAIR.....

DATE