



Shropshire Hills Discovery
Centre Advisory Board

21 November 2012

10.00am

Item / Paper

2

Public

NOTE OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2012

10:00 am – 11.00am

Responsible Officer Tim Ward
e-mail: Tim.ward@shropshire.gov.uk

Tel: (01743) 252739 Fax (01743) 252713

PRESENT:

Members

Shropshire Council	Mrs C Motley (Chair)
Craven Arms Town Council	Miss J Hoskins
Secret Hills Network	Mr N Stephens
South Shropshire Tourism Ltd	Mr L Chapman

Officers

Shropshire Council	Ms L Cross (Visitor Economy Manager)
	Ms K Rochelle (Centre Manager - Secret Hills)
	Mr M Turner (Southern Area Facilities Team Leader)
	Mr T Ward (Committee Officer)
	Mr N Willcox (Commissioning Manager; Places)

There were 2 members of the public present

In opening the meeting the Chair made reference to staff changes at the Centre and welcomed Michael Turner and Krissi Rochelle to their first meeting of the board.

The Chair also advised the Board that it was her intention to stand down as Chair of the Advisory Board as she felt that she did not have the necessary time to contribute to the position. She went on to say that she would continue to serve on the Board and to support the Centre in any way that she could.

It was proposed from the Chair that Mr Chapman be elected Chair of the Advisory Board and this was agreed.

Apologies for Absence

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D Evans, Cllr M Owen and Mr D Gibbon.

Apologies were also received from Tim King and Alison Patrick Tourism Officers

The Committee Officer advised the Board that he had received Mr Gibbons' resignation as the Community Centre representative on the Board. It was agreed that he should contact Jean Jarvis to seek a replacement member as it was important that all the vacancies were filled. The Committee Officer also advised the meeting that there was a vacancy for a representative from the AONB Partnership and that he had contacted the AONB Partnership Manager about this. Mr Chapman agreed to chase this up.

Note of Previous Meeting

2. The note of the meeting held on 6 February 2012, as circulated, was confirmed as a correct record.

Performance and Developments at Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the Period April to October 2011

3. A report outlining performance and developments at the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre for the period April to October 2011 had been circulated.
4. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader advised the board that following a management restructure in early summer 2012 he had assumed line manager responsibility for the manager of the Discovery Centre and had also taken on a strategic role in terms of the Centres ongoing development. He went on to say that following Andrea Stanger's decision to leave her position as Centre Manager he had assumed operational management for the centre and that Krissi Rochelle had been appointed Centre Manager on a secondment for elsewhere in the Council.
5. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader commented that it had been a challenging 6 months in terms of the weather and also the effect of the current economic climate. He went on to say that the Centre with its mix of outdoor and indoor activities was better placed than other venues to cope with this. He went on to say that receipts for the exhibition had been under target and staff were looking at ways of packaging the offers in an effort to encourage increased footfall. He added that performance for both the café and retail remained robust.
6. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader commented that there had been excellent take up of activities under the Xplore theme and that a number of smaller scale events and activities that had been offered throughout the spring and summer which had also been very successful. He went on to say that the sustainability sessions which had been requested by a number of schools were close to delivery. He also commented that there was potential to further develop the provision for youth but that this was dependant on funding. Mr Stephens commented that he had attended the AGM of the Craven Arms Youth Group and had been very impressed and suggested that it there was need to build on the enthusiasm within the group. Mrs Motley commented that one of the priorities of the Craven Arms and Rural Local Joint Committee was provision of youth activities and that this could be a source of extra funding.
7. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader commented that a programme of maintenance had been undertaken in the Meadows in spite of the challenges created by the poor weather, and that new facilities had been introduced to develop opportunities for additional activities and income growth. Mrs Motley commented that there may be opportunity to link in with the current "Health and Wellbeing" agenda with the creation of a green gym in the meadow. The Centre Manager commented that she was currently

working with the army regarding the installation of an obstacle course on the Meadows and that a green gym may develop out of this. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader commented that a number of cycling and walking groups used the centre as a base for their activities.

8. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader commented that a number of options for future activities and events had been proposed and that staff were currently working on these proposals. The Centre Manager advised the committee that she was currently working on the following: -
- Creation of a Red Kite feeding station, working with Lisa Bedford to try and secure funding for the initial set up costs
 - The extension of geocaching through putting on specific geocaching events. She advised members that she had spoken to local geocaching groups to get advice on this
 - Working with the Environment Agency with regard to putting on an event based around rivers.
 - Organising a wood fair
 - Working with the army regarding the installation of an assault course
 - Organising a "Dog Weekend" with various activities and workshops to tap in to the large numbers of dog owners that use the Meadows
 - Igloo

Mrs Motley commented that the Red Kite feeding station may conflict with the dog walking that took place on the Meadows. The Centre Manager commented that she hoped that the dog walkers could be accommodated but that there may be need to restrict access to some areas of the meadows for short periods. Mr Stephens welcomed the wide variety of events proposed.

9. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader advised the meeting that the Task and Finish Group set up by the board to look at the future of the Centre had met twice and had held consultation events with local business owners and centre users and that the report arising from these events was expected shortly.
10. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader advised the meeting that that a budget reduction of £40,000 had been agreed for the financial year 2013 – 14 and that he was currently working up an approach to manage this. The Centre Management paid tribute to the centre staff for the work they did and their commitment to the Centre in what were uncertain times. This was echoed by all present.
11. The Southern Area Facilities Team Leader advised the Board that a review of the Centres administrative systems had been carried out and some shortcomings had been identified. He went on to say that new systems had been adopted where necessary and that an independent review from within the Council had reported that progress on addressing the problems had been good. He added that he would be presenting a report on this matter to a meeting of the council's audit committee.

Other Business

12. Miss Hoskins commented that visitor facilities were often judged by the state of their toilets and that she felt that the Centre's toilets were in need of some refurbishment. The Centre Manager informed her that she was currently obtaining quotes for some works to the toilets.
13. Mr Chapman requested that the Centre reviewed its responsibilities as a riparian owner to ensure that water courses and ditches were maintained correctly to help prevent flooding elsewhere. The Centre Manager agreed to speak to the Ranger about this.

Date of Next Meeting

14. Members were reminded that the next scheduled meeting would be held on Thursday 7 February 2013

CHAIR.....

DATE