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**OVERVIEW OF LEISURE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

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1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work undertaken under the Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio :-

**Healthy Maternity Programme**

2. The Single Needs Assessment highlighted that maternal obesity is a particular problem in Darlington. In partnership with the NHS Foundation Trust Food and Health Team, Community Midwives, NHS physiotherapy services, and Groundwork West Durham and Darlington, the Sports Development team have been working on an outcomes framework with the aim of supporting pregnant women and new mothers to make healthier choices in terms of physical activity participation and nutrition. Building upon the brief interventions framework, key staff (midwives, health visitors, members of the NHS FT Food and Health team and physical activity professionals) will receive training to ensure that key messages regarding food and physical activity are communicated to women throughout their pregnancies and post-natal. A cohesive programme of community based activity will also be available, and will be signposted to, by the above professionals. The whole Healthy Maternity project is strongly aligned to the Change 4 Life campaign.

**Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do it! (MEND)**

3. A pilot of the MEND programme ran from May to August 2011 at the Dolphin Centre, funded through partnership with Durham County Council via the Big Lottery Fund.
4. MEND is a 10-week evidence-based behaviour change programme for families with children aged 7-13 years who are identified as being overweight for their height. Six families engaged in and completed the programme, which included swimming and activity sessions, nutritional guidance, motivational discussions, games, quizzes and a trip to Sainsbury's to learn about label reading. Funding has now been secured to offer a further MEND programme in Spring 2012.

**Cycle: In Darlington**

5. Sports Development has secured funding to organise and deliver a cycling project in the town and surrounding areas. The project will provide local cycle rides with qualified leaders that will aid people to get back into cycling. There will be a big launch in Spring 2012, working closely with the Local Motion team, colleges, schools and other providers.

## **Sportsmakers**

6. Whether it's planning the route, finding the pitch or encouraging people to take part – sport doesn't just happen, it needs people to make it happen. Darlington residents have the opportunity to become one of 40,000 Sport Makers nationwide, not only to get the skills, knowledge and opportunities needed to get more people playing sport, but also to become part of the official London 2012 Olympic and Paralympics' sports legacy. Becoming a Sport Maker is easy and the programme is open to everyone aged 16 and over ([www.sportmakers.co.uk](http://www.sportmakers.co.uk)).
7. A workshop will be held on 26 January 2012, and we have been in touch with college and university courses to look at times to go in to explain what the scheme is about and how it would benefit the students. This will happen throughout December 2011 and January 2012 and course tutors are also going to push the benefits of becoming a Sport Maker during their lessons. Further workshops will be set up if required, depending on numbers and feedback.

## **Exercise After Stroke**

8. Building upon the success of the current ARNI (Action for Rehabilitation Following Neurological Injury) programme, which takes place at Eastbourne Sports Complex, six staff have just completed their Exercise After Stroke qualification, which is comparable to BSc (Hons) Level 2. This will enable the staff to put into practice learning from the most up-to-date research relating to rehabilitation following a stroke or TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack - effectively a mini-stroke). Following best practice guidelines, an evidence based programme is in the process of being developed, and will be implemented by spring 2012.

## **Eastbourne Development (Activities for Disability Groups)**

9. Sports Development has funding through English Federation of Disability Sport (EFDS) to provide activities for disability groups and train disabled children in Sports Leaders Level 1 to assist in delivering the sessions. The three activities chosen are Netball, Football and Cycling. Sports Development have made contact with the Education Village to engage its pupils and teachers are keen to work together.
10. St Aidan's Academy has agreed to allow some sessions to take place in its hall and the team have established links with the Gateway Wheelers for the cycling sessions.

## **Family Initiative Supporting Children's Health (FISCH)**

11. The Autumn FISCH Programme has just finished in four schools: Gurney Pease Primary, Firth Moor Primary, Beaumont Hill Primary and Hurworth Primary. Engagement levels were high with 34% of pupils on the programme participating in the after school clubs.

## **Events**

### **The Reindeer Parade - Sunday 27 November 2011**

12. Working in partnership with The Cornmill Shopping Centre, Cultural Services Events Team organised the annual Reindeer Parade.

13. Six Reindeers provided by Cairngorm Reindeer Centre in Scotland pulled Santa's sleigh on a route through the town centre. The parade attracted a large family attendance and proved very popular with everyone.

### **The Christmas Lights Switch On - Thursday 1 December 2011**

14. The annual Christmas Lights Switch On event was held on 1 December 2011 between 5.30 pm and 6.30 pm. The switch on was funded by Town Centre traders, organised by Cultural Services Events Team and supported by TFM Radio, who hosted the event.
15. The switch on proved very popular attracting several thousand people to the Market Square. The event featured performances by Dance Wright, Rachel Coad's School of Dance, Claire Fawcett's Dance Academy, Whinfield Primary School Choir and Eli Prime, one of the Country's up and coming boy bands.
16. The switch of the Christmas Lights on was carried out by two local citizens who were nominated through a competition organised by TFM Radio.

### **Darlington Civic Theatre**

#### **Spring Season**

17. In early December, the Civic Theatre launched its spring season, which included some high profile touring shows; All the Fun of the Fair with David Essex, On Golden Pond with Hollywood star Stefanie Powers, a new production of Swallows and Amazons for young people and their families, Agatha Christie's Murder on the Nile, Shakespeare's Globe's Anne Boleyn and direct from the West End, Yes Prime Minister.

#### **Cinderella**

18. The Civic Theatre's Pantomime Cinderella, starring Ray Quinn, Deena Payne and Jimmy Cricket opened on 3 December 2011. Reviews received so far are very good with a great deal of positive feedback from audiences and sales are progressing well. It opened on ticket sales of just over £500,000. The pantomime was sponsored for the second year running by Bussey & Armstrong and as part of its sponsorship it also supported a competition for two young people to become Prince/Princess for the night.

### **Darlington Arts Centre**

#### **Arts Engagement**

19. Darlington Arts Team has been involved in the Tech Max project to provide looked after young people across the region with opportunities to attend cultural activities. As part of this project, a celebration event was held at the Arts Centre in October and two young people from the project have just recently gained Bronze Arts Awards.
20. The Arts Centre has recently been working with the CAHMS Team (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) at the Mulberry Centre at Darlington Memorial Hospital working with a children's poetry group to help them to gain their Arts Award qualifications.

21. Darlington Arts Centre took part in a national pilot for a new level of Arts Award for 7 to 11 year olds. The scheme was piloted at various arts organisations across the country and Darlington Arts Centre worked with Theatre Hullabaloo to provide two 'Arts Award Discovery Days' at the Arts Centre for two Darlington Primary Schools.
22. **Darlington for Culture (DfC)** – Arts Centre staff are continuing to work alongside Darlington for Culture to develop Monday/Tuesday evening programme at this venue. Volunteer support has been very welcome and helped deliver a Tea Dance, Quiz, Christmas Arts Fair and a weekly Film night which sold out for a Christmas showing of classic film 'It's a Wonderful Life'. It has been a steep learning curve for DfC as a fledgling organisation and Council Officers have provided advice and support to DfC during this period. There has been some operational problems with the flow of information from DfC and consistency of volunteer provision, however, systems are now in place to address this and a Spring programme is being developed.

## **Visual Arts**

### **Myles Meehan Gallery**

23. The Myles Meehan Gallery displayed the *Images 35* exhibition by the Association of Illustrators from 30 September to 26 November 2011. The exhibition was a great success attracting 6632 visitors and receiving excellent feedback. Ten artworks were also sold from the exhibition.
24. A series of workshops were held in the October half term as part of the Big Draw, a national initiative to encourage people to draw. The workshops were led by different artists each day focusing on a different element of drawing i.e. character design for children's books and the sessions took inspiration from the above exhibition. The workshops were very popular with high attendance during the week.

### **Lounge Gallery**

25. The Society of Arts held an exhibition of members' work in the Lounge Gallery from 4th October to Saturday 12th November 2011. The exhibition featured work with a variety of subject matter, mediums and styles and was well received.
26. The Openart Studio, a project part funded by NHS/PCT Darlington around positive mental health, based at Darlington Arts Centre, has created an exhibition of members' work for the Lounge Gallery and Craft Cabinet. The exhibition showcases the work of members and has received very positive feedback.

## **Public Art**

27. A new public artwork has been installed at a housing estate at Parkside. Sculptor John Neilson was commissioned to create an artwork for a grassed area on the entrance to the site. Following consultation with local residents, John has created a stone sculpture featuring five uprights and nine floor based pieces. The artwork features carved text relating to place names taken from a five mile radius of the site.

## **Head of Steam**

28. The Halloween Fun Day attracted 1760 people and 202 families were recruited into the Head of Steam annual membership. The Events programme for 2012 is now completed with an exciting programme of event days, temporary exhibitions, lectures, family activities and educational workshops.
29. The Ken Hoole Study Centre was fully booked throughout the autumn months by local, rail and family historians. The new 'North Road' exhibition is now up and running within the main museum area and complimented by the popular 'Tornado' exhibition which has attracted visitors from across the UK.

## **Libraries**

### **Christmas Scene for Market Trader**

30. The young people who attend the Saturday morning story club at Crown Street designed a Christmas mural for the front of the 'Market News' stall in the indoor market. News coverage of the unveiling appeared in The Northern Echo.

## **Reading Groups**

31. The library service supports or runs a flourishing network of 25 reading groups; from young people's groups in schools, where we supply teachers with the books, and at Cockerton library, through general reading groups held at the library or in people's homes, to the two long established and very popular groups for visually impaired readers who meet at Crown Street Library. Over the last few years the service has built an eclectic range of reading group collections (usually ten copies of a title), and a member of staff takes responsibility for each group, helping them choose the next titles they are going to read and organising the books for them to collect if the group is held elsewhere.

## **Music Scores**

32. Stock Services have been very busy lately supplying local choral groups with their score sets for Christmas concerts. These are sourced from all over the Country, on long loan, to allow for both rehearsal and performance time.

## **Bookstart**

33. Continuation funding for the 'Bookstart programme' has been agreed from the Department for Education. Last year saw the library service, working with it's partners at the PCT and in Early Years delivered Bookstart A Packs to 89% of target children, Bookstart + Packs to 84% of target children and Treasure Boxes to 100% of children in the age range 3 to 4 years. This is a project that shows real results for the children, lasting well past the life of the gifting programme.

## **Baby Rhyme Time**

34. The Baby Rhyme Time session run by our Bookstart Co-ordinator at Cockerton Library has grown in popularity considerably. It attracts parents, grandparents, childminders and other carers with, on average, 40 babies and young children. The two sessions on a Friday at

Crown Street Library are consistently full and have necessitated a further session being offered on a Tuesday morning specifically for babies. Additional sessions are offered to nursery schools on a booked basis.

### **Centre for Local Studies**

35. The Centre was this year awarded a Highly Commended Certificate in the Archive of the Year Awards run by the popular Your Family History Magazine.

### **Environmental Services**

#### **Grounds Maintenance**

36. The Summer season's grass cutting and weeding ended in November. All areas have been maintained to a satisfactory standard all summer, with the use of quad bikes for weed spraying being particularly effective. Staff are currently installing new sustainable planting schemes around the Borough following the reduction in budget for floral displays. Winter pruning of hedges and shrubs is ongoing and is on target to be completed Borough-wide for the end of the winter programme.
37. Members will recall that this past Autumn, leaves were not to be collected from soft scaped areas across the Borough as part of the ongoing efficiency programmes. Other than a few isolated incidents, this has been implemented with very few complaints.

#### **Winter Maintenance**

38. The current Winter maintenance season is ongoing with a very mild start, necessitating the need for treatment on only two or three occasions up until mid December. Staff are on standby 24/7 to ensure immediate response upon change in weather conditions.

#### **Refuse Collection Christmas Working**

39. Arrangements for Christmas refuse and recycling collections for this coming festive season have been changed from previous years due to the problem surrounding the supply of additional refuse collection vehicles last year. As a result, teams are to 'catch up' on three Saturdays this year with services returning to normal on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2012.

**Councillor Nick Wallis**  
**Cabinet Member with Leisure and Local Environment Portfolio**