

Report to Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: November 2016

Subject: Community Services Summer Activities 2016

Officer contact for further information: J Warwick (01992 564350)

Committee Secretary: A. Hendry (01992 564246)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee notes the success of the Community Services Summer Activities 2016 programme, which is delivered to children and young people throughout the Epping Forest District.

Report:

Background

The Council's Community Services Team organises and delivers a summer holiday activities programme each year, which provides a wide range of activities to engage children, young people and their families.

This year, over 2,500 people participated in the extensive range of activities on offer which included physical activities such as; Soccer Tots, Mountain Biking, Play in the Park and Play in the Forest sessions and dance programmes. Creative activities included; the "Discover Your Inner Artist", "Goldilocks and the Three Bears Plus" and "Frogs, Snails and Teddy Bear Tales" productions, along with "How to...Draw", "How to Paint", "Be an Animator" and "Be a Textile Artist" workshops. Museum family-days and sessions such as; "Make a Mini Museum", Toy Car Print making were also provided and there was a comprehensive inclusion programme on offer for children and young people with additional needs.

Each year, an appealing summer activities brochure is produced as the main source of advertising the programme and this is delivered to all schools, libraries and sports centres in the district. Additionally, fliers, posters, school visits, social media, a website presence, radio interviews and attendance at community events and town shows are all utilised to promote the summer programme. (A copy of the Summer Activities 2016 brochure is attached for ease of reference).

This year we encountered numerous issues and problems with the online booking portal, accessed via the Council's website. People faced difficulty accessing the online portal and completing bookings online. This meant the number of online bookings was less than last year. Administration staff was excellent in providing support over the telephone and helping people to complete bookings. A new corporate online booking system is currently being investigated and a feasibility and business case is being carried out to address the issues faced with online bookings. Fortunately these issues did not have too much of an affect upon overall participation numbers for the summer. The total participation saw an increase from previous years with over 2,500 people participating.

The following information provides an overview of the activities and events provided.

1. Multi-Sport Days and Multi-Sport and Football Camp for 6 – 14 year olds

A total of 325 participants attended the Multi-Sport Days and Multi-Sport and Football Camps over the summer. The Epping Forest Multi-Sport Days offer a chance for young people aged 6 -14 years to take part in fun filled activities including: Football, Netball, Tag Rugby, Athletics, Handball, Dodgeball, Boxercise, Tennis, Zumba and Street Dance. Epping Forest District Council worked in partnership with Colebrook Royals Football Club to deliver the Football and Multi-Sport Camp at Grange Farm in Chigwell. Positive feedback has been received from parents and participants about the Multi-Sport Days and Camps.

2. Play in the Park & Forest

The Play in the Park sessions were increasingly popular again this year, with 1,169 children attending throughout the summer. These two-hour open sessions are provided free of charge to children and families with a re-charge of £65 being covered by participating Parish and Town Councils across the district. For this contribution, 3 members of staff and a van full of sports and play equipment is taken to designated venues which included; Abridge, Buckhurst Hill, Epping, Loughton, North Weald, Ongar and Waltham Abbey this year.

Play in the Forest is a similar initiative, which facilitates activities such as; den building, nature trails and woodland arts and crafts across a range of unique forest sites in the district. Play in the Forest is designed to introduce local families to our wonderful green space and encourage increased activity out in the fresh air. These sessions took place at Ditches Rise, Theydon Bois, High Beach, Loughton and Warren Pond Road, opposite Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge with total of 115 participants. A charge of £3.00 is made for these sessions to cover the cost of equipment and wider resources.

3. Xplorer

Xplorer is a family friendly navigation challenge that is educational and fun gives children a sense of adventure as they explore the park to find the markers. It involves a healthy mix of physical activity and decision making that the whole family can enjoy together. At each marker children need to identify what is pictured and enjoy learning a fun fact to tell their friends. These sessions took place at Limes Farm, Chigwell, Roding Valley Recreation Ground, Loughton and Stonards Hill Recreation Ground, Epping.

4. Inclusion Programme

The Inclusion Programme, which is funded through Essex County Council's "Short Breaks" fund, ran its biggest Summer Programme to date, providing just over 100 hours of provision, offering 245 spaces throughout the summer. We had 86 unique participants, with many families using the service multiple times. Activities included a variety of sports and leisure pursuits, all designed for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEND), for example, trampolining, yoga, horse riding, swimming, family theatre shows, family forest days at the Suntrap Centre and multi sports days. The sessions delivered gives parents the choice as to whether they want to stay with their child or use the session as respite. We have notice an increase in the number of parents opting to use the sessions as respite. This year's programme proved to be hugely successful and received excellent feedback. The programme of activities provided through the Short Breaks funding also operates during term-time and is seen as an invaluable resource to local families. An example of the feedback received from this summer's programme is included below;

"The support received from Olivia and her team is great. At each event I've taken the children too - they've been well managed, the children have had great fun and it's all been safe and so child

focused. Olivia seems to be able to work with a team that not only understands our children and their complex needs but is able to get the best out of them too - the children adore Olivia, Fabrizio and Ezra (to name but a few of the staff whose names I remember). As a foster carer I am limited to who I feel comfortable leaving my children with - I have had no such problem leaving the children with the disability inclusion team. I have two children with additional and special needs, as a family we often have a change around of children or ask for children to be added at last minute - this is never met with any problem, and we are able to enjoy the clubs as a family and our family dynamics often change. My child with his additional needs could only talk about the camp - we had many things booked in the six weeks holidays, but the camp where he has independence from me for two nights is all that he could talk about, he had great fun from the moment I dropped him off until the minute I picked him up - it is well managed and there is so much going on. When observing the many different children in the groups, I wonder if we could somehow clone Olivia and her team - they keep the children occupied, safe and most of all keep them enjoying their selves and having the most fun they can have - each child is included and each 'need' is taken in to account - no one is left out - children are also taught so many different things while in these clubs - something that often their teachers at school cannot do - while its a small club at times, our children need everything that the disability inclusion group offers them - I for one don't think I'd be as comfortable letting my children attend anywhere else."

5. Museum, Heritage and Culture Activities

The newly refurbished Museum was buzzing with new and returning visitors this summer to join in on various activities including the drop-in family art and craft sessions and culture activities. The activities offer a range of options for families and young people to engage with and generate income for the service.

Drop-in art and craft activities for families took place on Tuesday afternoons at Epping Forest District Museum with an average of 47 children attending each week. Family activities also took place at Lowewood Museum in Hoddesdon on Thursday afternoons, with an average of 26 children attending each week.

Both museums held a Family Fun Day on Saturday 6 August. 200 people visited each museum to enjoy a range of activities; puppet shows and willow weaving in Waltham Abbey to African drumming and mask making at Lowewood.

The Passport Project returned this summer encouraging families to visit new museums, to take part in activities and get their passports stamped. This year even more museums from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex were involved in the project.

This year's summer culture programme successfully reached over 300 people attending events ranging from theatre shows to dance, drawing and painting workshops.

Highlights included new workshops; 'Discover your Inner Artist' in which participants tried their hands at many different art forms in one day to achieve a Discovery Arts Award. At 'Be an Animator' participants spent the day making their own clay models and stories to turn into a short animated film. A full workshop of 30 children worked very hard in 'Musical in a Day' to learn and perform three songs from hit West End musical Matilda as well as the choreography and two scenes. In 'Be a Textile Artist', held at Epping Forest District Museum, participants got to experiment with printing on to fabric, applique and designing their own patterns taking inspiration from the museum's collections.

Approximately 150 people came to watch the two theatre shows this year. Freehand Theatre returned with Frogs, Snails and Teddy Bear Tales. The audience brought along their teddy bears to enjoy the show too and were wowed by a season changing washing line and a monster picnic basket. More bears visited the district with Booster Cushion Theatre's wacky production of Goldilocks and the Three Bears Plus. All told through a giant book and physical humour, the show was a hit with all ages.

Audience comments:

“Our daughter attended the ‘Be an Animator’ and ‘Be a Textile Artist’ events. She had a fab time on both days. Really enjoyed herself. We also go along to most of the craft events held [at the museum] each Tuesday, they’re very good too.”

Frogs, Snails and Teddy Bear Tales

“Beautiful production. Wonderful story and the children were mesmerised”

“Most enjoyable and enchanting”

Big Goldilocks and the Three Bears Plus

“Great fun. My 3 year old giggled through it all as did my 7 year old and me!”

“Really wonderful show, very funny and the kids were really entertained.”

Musical in a Day

“Amazing! I can’t believe how good the performance was for such little practice time.”

“I loved it here. I want to come again. I liked everything.” – participant aged 6

“It was a fantastic day; I liked singing ‘When I Grow Up’. I want to do it again!” – participant aged 7

Be a Textile Artist

“I really loved when we went round the museum and got inspiration. I will definitely do it again.” –participant aged 12

“Today was so much fun! I think the leaders are very experienced and they came up with amazing things for us to do. I especially liked the sewing.” – participant aged 10

“Printing was the best!” – Participant aged 8

6. Lessons Learnt and Future Actions

Overall this year’s summer programme was once again successfully delivered and widely well received by those that participated. As a service that is continuously looking at ways to improve our services to residents, a few key areas for improvement have been identified. The main area for improvement relates to marketing of the programme in order to increase the number of people that participate throughout the summer. In order to improve upon this, local schools will be approached further in advance to arrange taster sessions, visits and presentations in school assemblies in order for us to promote the holiday programme and raise awareness.

All staff will increase the usage of social media in order to promote the holiday programme but also to celebrate the success of the programme in “real time” and retrospectively post event. Staff will utilise social media and EFDC’s website to highlight participant’s achievement and attendance during the summer programme in order to raise awareness.

We will continue to review and develop the design and content of what we deliver to ensure it is relevant and what people want to participate in, as well as monitor current trends that are relevant to children and young people. The training of staff will be refreshed and updated to ensure all staff are delivering services that are fun, enjoyable, engaging and safe.

Specifically in terms of Play in the Park we will continue our dialogue with Chigwell Parish Council to become part of Play in the Park provision. This would extend the provision of Play in the Park and enable more residents to participate in free play activities throughout the summer.

The partnership arrangement with Colebrook Royals will be further developed and further partnership opportunities will be explored to maximise resources. A more robust monitoring and evaluation process will be developed and implemented to ensure we keep our services relevant and what people want in order to maximise attendance.

Reason for decision:

This report serves as an information item for the Neighbourhoods and Community Services Select Committee.

Options considered and rejected:

N/A

Consultation undertaken:

Consultation is undertaken with participants, parents and staff delivering the activities as to their views on what was provided, what they would like to see provided in the future and on what can be improved. This consultation is done through informal feedback at the activities, as well as formal evaluation from the activities. Overall feedback on the Summer Activities Brochure was very positive and that it was easy to read and book activities. There was positive feedback and evaluation on what was the actual activities on offer, how well organised the activities were and complimentary comments about the staff delivering the activities.

Resource implications:

Personnel:

Staff from the Council's Community Services organise, manage and deliver the Summer Activities Programme.

Land:N/A

Community Plan/BVPP reference:

Corporate Plan Medium Term Aim 3 and 5

Relevant statutory powers:N/A

Background papers: Summer Activities Brochure 2016



13073 Summer
Activities 23-5-2.pdf

Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:N/A

Key Decision reference: (if required)

N/A