

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS IN SUNDERLAND

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update regarding events activity that took place within the city for the period 1 September 2007 - 31 March 2008.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The wide ranging Festivals and Events programme in Sunderland has always provided high quality, well attended product which has attracted substantial media interest and significant economic spend.
- 2.2 A report was submitted to Cabinet on 16 February 2005 and Members approved an allocation of £1,000,000 to develop a series of events in the city over a 3-year period in order to increase the city's profile nationally.
- 2.3 A report to Executive Management Team (EMT) was submitted on 6 February 2007, which outlined the new mechanisms and model, which have been developed to enable Culture and Tourism to identify eight key strands of activity throughout the year. This will ensure appropriate and effective distribution of financial and human resources.

3.0 SUNDERLAND: SWITCHED ON FESTIVALS AND EVENTS

3.1 HOUGHTON FEAST

- 3.1.1 The traditional 10 day festival provides a unique mix of community, voluntary and professionally staged events. The Opening Ceremony took the form of a Grand Illumination Ball with the Broadway festooned with flowers, flags and chandeliers awaiting the arrival of some 'enlightened' guests to the ball. Over 300 people took part in the lantern parade, which provided opportunities for a wide section of the community to engage in creative and cultured activities.
- 3.1.2 The outreach programme included family days, community group sessions and training days and workshops in local primary and secondary schools. Highlights of Houghton Feast included a Carnival Parade, which was held on an unusually sunny day and very well supported by the public.
- 3.1.3 The Roasting of the Ox, Houghton Feast Horticultural Show and a photo and video exhibition looking back over the past 40 years of Houghton Feast all took place during the festival.

3.2 REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND

- 3.2.1 The Remembrance Weekend programme consisted of two key elements, the Concert of Remembrance held at the Seaburn Centre on Friday 10 November and the Remembrance Parade and Service held in the City Centre on Sunday 11 November.
- 3.2.2 The Concert of Remembrance programme featured the Band of the RAF Regiment, St. Robert's of Newminster School Choir (winners of City Sings), The Borneo Band and Bugles, Shiney Row Male Voice Choir and Soprano Sarah Busfield.
- 3.2.3 The Remembrance Parade was made up of representatives of HM Forces led by crew from HMS Ocean and were joined by veterans from past conflicts, cadets and representatives of the emergency services.
- 3.2.4 The Parade began from the rear of the Civic Centre to the War Memorial located on Burdon Road where the service took place. The salute was taken at the steps to the museum on Borough Road by the Mayor and Lieutenant-General Hew Pike. A number of guests and participants were invited to lunch at the Civic Centre following the Parade.

3.3 CHRISTMAS

- 3.3.1 The Winter Festival consisted of five main elements: the Illuminations Switch On, the Outdoor Synthetic Ice Rink, Christmas Markets, 'SHINE' an arts programme of new light installations and firework displays in Mowbray Park.
- 3.3.2 The Illuminations Switch On event was held on Thursday 22 November 2007 with an estimated audience of 7,000. The Mayor of Sunderland assisted by celebrity guest, Mickey Rooney, carried out the ceremony. The programme consisted of a Sun FM road show and performances from Sunderland's No 1 and winners of City Sings, St Robert's of Newminster RC School, ending with a spectacular firework display.
- 3.3.3 The outdoor synthetic Ice Rink was situated in a new location of the Old Fire Station, High Street West and operated from Thursday 29 November until Sunday 6 January attracting 3,500 skaters. The launch was carried out by the Mayor and Mayoress of Sunderland assisted by stars from the pantomime at the Empire Theatre, Michelle Heaton and Andy Scott Lee. Children from East Herrington Primary School were also invited to the launch. A total of 450 school children from across the City of Sunderland welcomed the opportunity of visiting the ice rink as part of a package developed to encourage primary schools to visit.

- 3.3.4 The Christmas Markets were held in Market Square and operated for four days each, commencing on Thursday 29 November with a further two on Thursday 13 December and Thursday 20 December. The Continental Markets were organised and managed by three individual companies and each market offered a wide variety of goods including German delicatessen, fresh baked bread, Dutch pancakes, Belgian chocolates, leather handbags and jewellery.
- 3.3.5 Four firework displays were held in Mowbray Park on Thursday 29 November, Thursday 6 December, Thursday 13 December and Thursday 20 December and together attracted approximately 2,500 visitors and were very well received. A programme of carol singing and music was performed from the terrace alongside a Victorian carousel and traditional candyfloss unit.
- 3.3.6 Shine 2007 took place between Friday 7 December and Thursday 20 December and a well-attended Shine Event took place on Thursday 13 December which included a guided tour. The following artists were selected and commissioned to install new artwork in spaces and on buildings across Sunderland City Centre: Cath Campbell and Miles Thurlow created 'Motto' for the Independent Bar, Holmeside; Noval created 'Shine Your Design' in the Fawcett Street/Market Square walkway; Falling Cat created 'Minsterllation' in the grounds of the Sunderland Minster and Enigma FX created 'Monolith4' at the Town Park.
- 3.3.7 Christmas trees were decorated and installed in various locations across the city which included locations in Easington Lane, Houghton and Hetton.
- 3.3.8 To complement the Christmas programme street theatre entertainment was scheduled every Saturday afternoon in December throughout the City Centre. Houghton Brass Band and Hetton Silver Band performed in the City Centre on Saturday 6 and Sunday 7 December.

3.4 PENSRAW BOWL

- 3.4.1 Penshaw Bowl traditionally takes place on Maundy Thursday which in previous years has fallen within the Easter holidays. However, this year the event fell within term time and a letter of invitation was sent to each Primary School within the city to join in the fun with 10 schools accepting the invitation. Unfortunately due to high winds and the forecast of heavy showers the event was cancelled on the day.

3.5 CITY SINGS AT THE MOVIES 2008

- 3.5.1 The City Sings is an annual schools choral competition which is now in its fifth year. Young people from Sunderland schools had been singing throughout the Autumn Term in the hope of winning through to the Final. The preliminary stages reached their exciting climax and twelve choirs appeared in the Grand Final of The City Sings at the Movies 2008 held at the Empire Theatre on Sunday 30 March 2008. As explained in the title this year's theme was songs from the movies. The final schools in the Primary Category were (in alphabetical order): Castletown Primary School, Dame Dorothy Primary School, Diamond Hall Junior School, Hylton Castle Primary School, Our Lady Queen of Peace RC Voluntary Aided Primary School, Seaburn Dene and St Cuthbert's RC Voluntary Aided Primary School. The five secondary and community choirs joining them were: Farrington School, Highfield Community School, Oxclose Community School, St Robert's of Newminster RC School and Thornhill School.
- 3.5.2 The Competition is a joint collaboration between the Community and Cultural Service Directorate and the Children's Service Directorate. This year the Competition was divided into two categories, Primary and Open, the winners of each category received a cash award with the overall winner receiving the Dr Gilbert Trophy which was presented by the Mayor of Sunderland. The winning school also received tickets to see a show at the Sunderland Empire Theatre.
- 3.5.3 Dr Frank Gilbert was a local benefactor and music lover who provided the trophy and funds to encourage the appreciation of music by young people in Sunderland. The Judging Panel included the Mayor of Sunderland, a representative from the Empire Theatre Trust and invited professional musicians, with celebrity judge Jeff Brown from BBC Look North.
- 3.5.4 This is always a very popular event with the theatre being full to capacity with the families and friends of the choirs.

4.0 THE WAY FORWARD

- 4.1 Determined efforts are being made to seek and secure key music events for the city, which will substantially enhance the reputation of the city as a major outdoor venue for music events, particularly at Herrington Country Park. The Council has secured funding from One North East of £700,000 with a Council contribution of £300,000 to develop the park to support this strategy.
- 4.2 SEE (Share, Experience, Enjoy) Sunderland is the new identity for the Sunderland Festival and Events Programme. The branding is in line with Sunderland City Council's brand guidelines and values, and enhances the vision of Sunderland to become the most liveable city in the United Kingdom.

5.0 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

- 5.1 Further funding streams continue to be sought to support events activity across the city, including sponsorship, grant aid and relevant bids through the Strategic Initiative Budget.

6.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Cabinet Report – Capital Programme 2005/2006 including Prudential Indications and Treasury Management Strategy – 16 February 2005
- Policy and Co ordination Review Committee Agenda – 24 March Item 10 – Event Funding – Oral Report of the Chairman
- Policy and Co ordination Review Committee Capital Programme 2005/2006 – Inward Investment – Events Link to Work Programme; Member Items
- Portfolio Holders – 20 September 2005, 17 October 2006, 12 February 2007, 10 September 2007 Report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services Events in the City of Sunderland
- Draft Events Strategy – KKP, September 2006