

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

NORTHERN CHILDREN'S BOOK FESTIVAL

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Northern Children's Book Festival which was held from 5 – 17 November 2007 culminating in the Gala Day at Crowtree Leisure Centre on Saturday 17 November 2007.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Northern Children's Book Festival is an annual regional event held each November over two weeks to promote the love of reading and books to children as well as parents/carers and teachers who also gain new knowledge and enthusiasm.

2.2 Each year the festival brings to the area over 40 children's authors, poets and illustrators to talk to children in schools and libraries. Organised by library services of eleven of the North East Local Authorities the Festival culminates in a free entry Gala Day, held in a different authority each year.

3.0 WEEKDAY EVENTS

3.1 Twelve authors, illustrators and poets visited Sunderland schools and public libraries during the Festival.

3.2 The Coalfield Area timetable was as follows:

5 November	John Fardell	East Rainton Primary
7 November	Nick Toczek	Shiney Row Primary
7 November	Barlow & Skidmore	Hetton Library and Houghton Library
8 November	Rob Lewis	Our Lady Queen of Peace R C Primary (am)
8 November	Julie Hearn	Hetton School
9 November	Chris D'Lacey	St Michael's R C Primary

3.3 Thirty four sessions were held involving 2,441 pupils ranging in age from Reception to Year 9. 115 adults attended including class teachers, learning mentors, school librarians, parents and public library staff.

3.4 Authors talked about their work, provided poetry performances, drew pictures of characters and enthused children about reading and writing. They also signed their books and over £2,400 worth of books were sold in schools.

4.0 GALA DAY 2007

4.1 The Gala Day was held on Saturday 17 November 2007 at Crowtree Leisure Centre from 9.45am to 4.30pm.

- 4.2 Nine well-known children's authors, poets and illustrators talked to groups of children and parents about their work, performed poems and readings, drew characters, answered any questions and signed books. Over £5000 worth of books were sold during the day. Authors included Geraldine McCaughrean, Robert Crowther, Anthony Browne, Jan Fearnley and Andy Stanton. 1,900 tickets were issued to the public to attend author sessions.
- 4.3 Stalls were provided by each of the 11 Local Authorities with lots of crafts, quizzes, treasure hunts and book related activities for children of all ages based on a local heritage theme. Sunderland's activity was glass painting provided by professional glass artist Zoe Garner.
- 4.4 Activities and displays were also provided by other organisations connected to children's reading including Seven Stories – Centre for Children's Books who brought some of their archival materials and also provided storytimes. Bookstart and the BBC RaW campaign were also represented.
- 4.5 Leaflets and posters were distributed to all the Local Authorities throughout the region and every primary school pupil in Sunderland received a leaflet via their school.
- 4.6 Northern Children's Book Festival committee funded all the authors, publicity leaflets and posters. The publishers paid for the author travelling expenses and any overnight accommodation required. Community and Cultural Services provided the venue and staff to organise the event with input from the Northern Children's Book Festival committee.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The Northern Children's Book Festival is held up as one of the pre-eminent events in the children's book calendar and is an example of national best practice and increased the profile of children's reading in the city and the region.
- 5.2 Sunderland schools and families benefited from the chance to meet well-known authors, poets and illustrators in their city.
- 5.3 There was an opportunity to raise the profile of the city to visitors who have not visited before through the Gala Day.
- 5.4 The festival demonstrated co-operative and partnership working across the region as well as between directorates within the city.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are recommended to note the contents of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 There were no background papers relied upon to complete this report.