

## **Report to Neighbourhoods & Communities Select Committee**

**Date of meeting: November 2015**

**Subject:** Community Services Summer Activities 2015

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**Committee Secretary:** A. Hendry (01992 564246)

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### **Recommendations:**

**That the Committee notes the success of the Community Services Summer Activities 2015 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, almost 2000 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 "Little Red Riding Hood & Friends", "My Monster and Me" and "Flyaway Katie" productions, along with "How to...Draw", "How to Colour in" and "Animation in a Day" workshops. Museum family-days and sessions such as; "Make a Mini Museum" 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 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 2015 brochure is attached for ease of reference.)

This year saw the launch of an on-line booking portal, accessed via the Council's website, and this went live one month in advance of the opening of the traditional telephone line booking system. The on-line service enabled parents and carers to browse through the brochure online and pre-book their chosen activities at a time convenient to them. Approximately 250 people utilised this service.

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

## **1. Playschemes – now branded as ‘Activity Camps’ for 5 – 11 year olds**

Playschemes, which have been running successfully for almost 20 years, have been re-branded as ‘Activity Camps’ to give them a fresh appeal. A team of Play Workers are recruited to operate and manage the camps and they receive a plethora of important training including, paediatric first aid, health and safety, positive behaviour management and safeguarding prior to the summer holidays. Play Workers are predominately young people recruited from Epping Forest District, many of whom go on to pursue careers in teaching or the care sector. Many see their time as Council Play Workers are invaluable in terms of gaining early skills and experience in their chosen professions. Activity Camps are operated in the most strategic locations within the District in terms of ease of access and suitability of the venue and this summer they took place at Town Mead in Waltham Abbey and Chigwell Hall (previously known as Metropolitan Police Club), Chigwell. Running for four weeks from 8.45 – 3.30pm each day, the Activity Camps included a wide variety of sports, arts, dance, drama and health improvement activities. Over the last few years, a number of places have been booked by the Local Delivery Groups (LDG’s) which support local primary schools in the area and 85 places were booked during the summer for families that are unable to pay for the sessions themselves. This provides a valued service for families who may live chaotic lives and for whom the summer holidays can be an incredibly challenging time.

## **2. Play in the Park & Forest**

The Play in the Park sessions were increasingly popular again this year, with up to 100 people taking part at each venue. 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. Organised in collaboration with the Council’s Countrycare Team, Play in the Forest is designed to introduce local families to our wonderful green space and encourage increased activity out in the fresh air. A charge of £2.50 is made for these sessions to cover the cost of equipment and wider resources.

## **3. Inclusion Programme**

The Inclusion Programme, which is funded through Essex County Council, was extremely successful over the summer this year with around 40 x local families taking part. Activities included a variety of sports and leisure pursuits, all designed for children and young people with additional needs, for example, trampolining, yoga, horse riding, family theatre shows, family forest days at Suntrap Centre and multi sports days. Although parents and carers frequently elect to attend sessions with their children, a special fully supervised camping break was organised this year to give parents a break and enable the children to stay without their families if they wanted to. This proved to be hugely successful and received excellent feedback. The programme of activities provided through the Essex County Council 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 Inclusion Project has been invaluable to us as a family. It has meant Abigail has been able to attend really enjoyable sessions and take part in activities that regular kids get to do. She has been able to go trampolining, to the theatre, have access to the forest and go horse riding. These sessions have meant her siblings can often join in too or if Abigail attends on her own it has enabled me to do something with my other children which are never normally possible due to the fact we have two non-mobile children. This summer this project provided the only opportunities for Abigail to attend fun activities in the whole of West Essex - Accuro did not have any spaces and there is no other charity. It has truly been a lifeline for us as a family since we first heard about this project and every holiday have booked sessions. So great is the need in West Essex we found some sessions were fully booked proving how valuable this project is to families like ourselves. As a parent it has been great meeting other parents of children with special needs and you feel less alone and learn so much from each other.*

*As a working mother, the Suntrap Days in the school holidays are literally a God send – they are the only childcare that I can get for my daughter with Autism and her sister that does not involve close family coming to stay with us and looking after them”*

#### **4. Art and Craft Activities**

Community Services continue to run an ever popular programme of drop-in family art and craft activities on Tuesday afternoons during the summer holidays. These took place in Waltham Abbey Library while the Epping Forest District Museum is undergoing refurbishment. These sessions attracted an average of 30 young people plus their families at every session. They were a great opportunity to maintain contacts with the Museum’s regular family audience and update people on the progress of the project.

The Museum Family Fun Day took place at Lowewood Museum this year and attracted over 200 people to enjoy puppet shows and willow weaving. One visitor remarked after the day;

*“A real hidden treasure, lots for children and families to do and explore,” “We all had a fun time making masks and playing with the animals.”*

Lowewood also ran family drop in art and craft activities on Thursday afternoons – these were also very popular attracting an average of 48 young people along with their families each afternoon.

This year’s summer family arts programme successfully reached 650 people attending events ranging from theatre and puppet shows to dance and painting workshops. This year’s highlights were; “How to Paint”, a series of artist led sessions in using oils, inks, watercolours and acrylic paints for children aged 7 plus, teaching colour theory and medium techniques, “My Pet Monster and Me” was performed by the Blunderbuss Theatre Company and provided a delightful interpretation of a popular children’s book. Another extremely successful activity was “Hip Hop Groves”, a street dance workshop for children aged 4-9 years old led by a professional dancer from the popular Hip Hop Pop dance company.

Audience comments:

*How to Paint:*

'I *triple* enjoyed it'

'Best week ever!'

*My Pet Monster and Me:*

"Brilliant performance! Kids really enjoyed it and it was fun to get the adults involved too! WE LOVED IT!"

"Monstertastic!"

"A great show! My daughter was very shy to begin with but joining in with all the fun by the end! Looking forward to the next production!"

## **5. Museum Passport Project**

With external funding, staff have led on a Museum Passport Project for museums across Beds, Herts and Essex. This helped attract new families to our museums, and was very well received by people. Families were very enthusiastic about the passport project, one family said:

*"We found out about Lowewood Museum via the passport project and came from Bedfordshire to join in your summer activities and get our passport stamped."*

The pilot will be repeated next year with more museums involved.

## **6. Arts Award**

This year we also offered Arts Council England's Arts Award programme as an add-on to its summer programme. Young people who signed up to this scheme received a log book to record their arts activities over the summer, and 5 young people successfully achieved Discover Level.

### **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 2015



Summer Activities  
brochure 26-5.pdf

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

Key Decision reference: (if required)  
N/A