

## **REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**25 FEBRUARY 2009**

### **MEMBER'S ITEM – VISITS TO BEIJING FOR OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS**

Report from: Robin Cooper, Director of Regeneration, Community and Culture

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#### **Summary**

This report is in response to a request from Councillor Godwin and provides information on recent visits to the Olympics and Paralympics in Beijing, China in 2008.

#### **1. Budget and Policy Framework**

- 1.1 Under Medway Constitution Overview and Scrutiny rules (Chapter 4, Part 5, Paragraph 9.1) Councillor Godwin has requested that an item on this matter is included on the agenda for this meeting.
- 1.2 The Medway 2012 Manager leads on the delivery of National Indicator 8, increasing the percentage of adults participating in sport and active lifestyles a minimum of three times per week.
- 1.3 In addition, the work of the 2012 and sports development teams assists in the delivery of NI56, reducing the prevalence of childhood obesity.

#### **2. Member's item request**

- 2.1 Councillor Godwin requested that this item is placed on the agenda in order to ask officers to explain the value for money demonstrated in sending a member of staff to Beijing for both Olympics and Paralympics.

### **3 Director's comments**

- 3.1 Medway has a stated ambition to maximise the benefits arising from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, dating back to London's successful bid in July 2005.
- 3.2 This led to the establishment in 2006 of the Medway 2012 team, which works with internal and external partners to further Medway's ambitions and to deliver a long-lasting, sustainable legacy to the community.
- 3.3 Key components of this objective are to establish Medway as a recognised venue for sporting competition and participation, helping to address recognised needs to increase adult participation in healthy active lifestyle, reduce the incidence of childhood obesity and to broaden Medway's appeal as a tourist destination.
- 3.4 A range of initiatives have been implemented to help realise Medway's ambitions, including the establishment of the 'Our Medway 2012' primary school curriculum currently being undertaken by more than 50 schools, the Medway Sporting Academy – the first talent identification and development project of its kind in the country, the Elite Athlete Support Programme run in conjunction with national funding charity SportsAid and the £11million transformation of the Black Lion leisure centre into the Medway Park regional centre of sporting excellence.
- 3.5 Earlier this month Medway won a national award for its work related to 2012. The authority won the LGC and HSJ Sustainable Community Award for 'Creating A Lasting Legacy'.
- 3.6 The development of Medway Park is due for completion in January 2010 and is already bringing significant benefits to Medway, from staging world sporting competitions to attracting national teams to base themselves there and providing state-of-the-art facilities for local clubs and the community.
- 3.7 As part of the promotion and development of Medway Park, the council had a stated ambition for the facilities to be used as a Pre-Games training camp for Olympic and Paralympic athletes in the build-up to the 2012 Games. It was felt staging such a camp would forge overseas links with potential economic, tourism and cultural – as well as sporting – benefits, while also providing inspiration to Medway's community and acting as a catalyst to long-term local sports participation.
- 3.8 To achieve this objective, Medway Park required official approval from the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games. Medway was successful in achieving this objective, when it was officially approved as a Pre-Games training camp for 13 Olympic and 8 Paralympic sports. This makes it the seventh largest multi-sport facility for Olympic sports in the whole of the United Kingdom.

- 3.9 Having received official approval, the recognised difficulty for Medway in attracting an overseas Olympic/Paralympic team was two-fold. Medway has no international sporting history on which to attract countries and the Medway Park facility was not complete.
- 3.10 Therefore, if Medway is to stand out to overseas teams faced with a choice of hundreds of competing facilities, it was felt to be insufficient to just contact by e-mail, post or telephone. The council could have wasted considerable time, effort and money without making contact with the appropriate decision makers.
- 3.11 Therefore an agreed budget was set aside for 2008/09 to visit overseas countries to promote Medway as a Pre-Games training camp.
- 3.12 With each visit likely to cost several hundred pounds, the 2012 team was targeted with identifying the most cost-effective way to meet overseas countries and the correct official (ie. each country's Olympic/Paralympic secretary-general.)
- 3.13 Having looked at the options, the most cost-effective method was deemed to be the official Olympic and Paralympic visits arranged by the British Olympic Association and Visit Britain. Procedurally, these visits were authorised by the Director and Cabinet Portfolio Holder.
- 3.14 These visits had a nationally agreed price set by the British Olympic Association and Visit Britain, and applied to all officials from authorities throughout the United Kingdom. Medway was a member of the official South-East regional delegation which also included Kent, Milton Keynes, Tourism South-East, SEEDA and Stoke Mandeville.
- 3.15 During the course of the visits, Medway and the South-East team made contact with representatives from more than 100 Olympic and Paralympic Committees from across the world; officers were able to attend the official reception launching the Pre-Games Training Camps brochure; were able to see the GB team in its Pre-Games Training Camp to assess at first hand what is required to hold such a camp; made contacts with the British Olympic Association, British Paralympic Association, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games, and sport National Governing Bodies; developed links with established leading UK sports facilities who are now assisting Medway both in the development of Medway Park and in developing its major sports event profile.
- 3.16 In addition to sporting benefits, Medway was represented at the Chinese travel trade event where Medway and the South-East region was promoted as a tourist destination both for the Games and more generally.
- 3.17 The total cost of the two visits was £17,550 and was met from existing budget provision.

- 3.18 Since returning, a number of benefits have accrued as a direct result of these visits. Medway is currently continuing discussions with a number of countries interested in bringing their Olympic and Paralympic teams here; officers are working with a number of National Governing Bodies to bring national and international competitions to Medway alongside providing development opportunities for local residents and have engaged with national disability sports organisations to implement opportunities for fully accessible sporting development.
- 3.19 In addition, so successful was Medway's involvement with the Beijing visits that the South East England Development Agency has now asked Medway to second our Deputy 2012 Manager for a period of six months.
- 3.20 Such a secondment will have significant benefits to Medway. It will not only assist Medway in attracting Pre-Games Training Camps, it will also raise our profile within SEEDA and allow officers to assist in the development of wider economic, cultural and social benefits for Medway and the South-East region.
- 3.21 Full costs of the secondment will be met by SEEDA. The commensurate saving to the Medway 2012 budget in 2009/10 will offset the costs of the visits to Beijing.

#### **4. Financial and legal implications**

- 4.1 The costs of the two visits to Beijing was £17,500. This was met from the 2008/2009 existing agreed budget for Pre-Games Training Camps.
- 4.2 The secondment to SEEDA of the Medway Deputy 2012 Manager will offset the costs of the visits to Beijing.
- 4.3 This will be demonstrated through a commensurate saving in the Medway 2012 budget for 2009/2010.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 That Members consider the report.

#### **Lead officer contact**

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