

A Better Crewkerne and District (ABCD)

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Purpose of the Report

To update members on the work of ABCD a small charity based in Crewkerne that develops projects and initiatives that help make improvements in the town.

Public Interest

This report provides a regular update on the activities and projects carried out by the registered charity ABCD, which is a community regeneration group based in Crewkerne.

Recommendation

That members note the report and continue to support the work of ABCD.

Background

ABCD is a charity with the aim of helping to make Crewkerne a better place to live. In 2004 the group was awarded funding from the then Market & Coastal Towns Initiative which allowed them to carry out extensive consultation with residents and organisations in and around Crewkerne. The results of that consultation were used to produce a Community Plan for the town which was published in 2005. Since that date ABCD has been actively involved with a variety of partner organisations in progressing and delivering a number of projects that were identified through the community planning process. Those projects include:

- George Reynolds Centre a new purpose build sports and youth facility for Crewkerne
- New pedestrian link behind the M&Co store
- Various walks & promotional leaflets
- Business Showcase
- Three Volunteer Fairs

Projects & Activities

Over the past 18 months ABCD has been very busy working on a number of projects as outlined below:

Theatre in Shops

A significant number of residents in Crewkerne have long expressed a desire for more arts related activities in the town, with many requesting a dedicated arts centre. ABCD saw an opportunity to bring the arts to the High Street and commissioned Bristol based theatre company Show of Strength to deliver their innovative project 'Trading Local', where locally written plays are performed in shops. The main aims of the project were to:

- Increase footfall in to Crewkerne town centre on performance day
- Raise awareness of the range of independent shops there are in Crewkerne amongst people who do not regularly spend time in the town centre.

- Connect with the Crewkerne residents who have an interest in the arts.

The project started in February 2014 with 6 free writing workshops which were held in a variety of locations in and around Crewkerne town centre. The workshops were drop-in so anyone with an interest in writing could just turn up to as many or as few as they wanted to without having to book in advance. Workshops were led by Shelia Hannon, the Executive Producer of Show of Strength, who taught participants how to write a 5 minute monologue, with tips on developing a character and devising an interesting storyline. By the end of March 2014 the participating writers had sent their scripts to Shelia Hannon, who then chose the 12 best plays to be performed in Crewkerne on Saturday May 31st 2014.

On the day each play was performed 4 times, with 6 professional actors each playing 2 parts. The first performances started at 10am and the last ones finished at 4.15pm, this gave people plenty of time to watch plays, stop for a coffee, watch more plays and do some shopping. The day was considered a success, with lots of positive feedback from residents, shoppers and retailers.

South Somerset Market Towns App

ABCD has been actively involved in promoting the South Somerset Market Towns App to both the businesses in the town and to residents.

Community Pounds

ABCD worked in partnership with Somerset County Council and South Somerset District Council to deliver this project aimed at helping people lose weight. Somerset County Council provided ABCD with some funding to put on a programme of activities that encouraged people to take up exercise, adopt a healthy lifestyle and lose weight. Participants registered to take part in the programme and regularly had their weight monitored throughout the 3 months. A range of activities such as yoga, kettle balls and swimming were available for participants to attend. As an added incentive, for every pound in weight each participant lost, ABCD received £1. Around £1000 has been ring-fenced to be used on future health related projects in the town.

Promoting Crewkerne

This is an ongoing project aimed at increasing the profile of Crewkerne and attracting more visitors into the town. A grant from SSDC has given ABCD the opportunity to produce:

- A new leaflet for the town which has been distributed to a wide variety of tourist businesses and Tourist Information Centres.
- New tear off A4 tourist map pads
- New postcards

New Community Plan for Crewkerne

Community Plan looks at the town as a whole, taking into account issues such as health, work, education, culture, getting about and leisure activities. As such a Community Plan sets out the vision for how a town or parish wants to develop and identifies the actions and projects needed to achieve that vision.

Community Plans are developed through wide spread consultation to ensure that the vision and the activities that originate from the plan have been identified by the town's residents. The process of producing a community plan is very much community led, although they are developed in conjunction with a town or parish council, they are generally led by a group of people made up of representatives from various organisations in the area e.g. local government, schools, church, businesses and voluntary groups. Within Crewkerne it is

ABCD that takes the lead on developing both the Community Plan and the projects that originate from it.

Crewkerne's first Community Plan was published 10 years ago and a wide variety of projects have since been successfully delivered from it. To ensure that ABCD continues to deliver projects and improvements that meet the needs identified by Crewkerne's residents, work has been taking place to produce a new Community Plan. In the past few months ABCD has designed a new household survey, which will soon be delivered to every home in the town. The results of that survey will be used to write the next Community Plan and establish an action plan of new projects for ABCD to work on in future years. The evidence collected as part of the Community Planning process will be used to influence decision makers and convince funders to provide grants for new projects in the town.

Financial Implications

Although there are no financial implications relating to this report it should be noted that the Area West Committee has supported ABCD projects that have emerged from the current Community Plan. The updated Community Plan will identify new projects to meet the needs of Crewkerne's residents, so there may be requests for funding contributions towards those in the future.

Council Plan Implications

Working in partnership with ABCD helps address Focus Four of the SSDC Council Plan:
To ensure South Somerset has healthy and self-reliant communities where people are willing to help each other.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity Implications

A variety of methods are used to ensure that the views of as many people as possible are gained from the residents of Crewkerne. The evidence gathered will be used by a number of voluntary and public sector organisations to develop their projects and services which will benefit a wide range of people from all sectors of the community.

Background Papers

- Update report on the work of ABCD – December 2013.
 - AWC report on the progress of the Crewkerne Community Plan – September 2010.
 - Progress Report on the priority projects of 'A Better Crewkerne & District' Community Plan - Area West Committee January 2008
 - Progress Report on A Better Crewkerne & District 17th October 2007.
 - Progress Report on the Community Projects of A Better Crewkerne & District 18th July 2007.
 - Progress Report on 'A Better Crewkerne & District' and the Community Plan Projects 17th January 2007
 - Progress of the Crewkerne & District Community Plan and associated projects 18th October 2006
 - The launch of Crewkerne & District Community Plan 19th July 2006
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