

At a meeting of the CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 21ST APRIL, 2009 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J.B. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Errington, Foster, G. Hall, T. Martin, Mordey and Wake.

Also in Attendance:-

Councillor Tate – Chairman of Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee

Councillor Tye.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the Committee on behalf of Councillors Ellis, P. Gibson, Howe, Symonds and Wares.

Minutes of the last Meeting

1 RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17th March 2009 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 7 – Performance Report – April to December 2008

Councillor T. Martin declared personal interests as a Member of the Raich Carter Sports Centre Management Board and as a Governor of Southmoor School.

Sport in the Community – Sunderland University

The City Solicitor submitted a report and Powerpoint presentation (copies circulated) informing Members of the current initiatives by Sunderland University to provide access to sporting opportunities in communities across the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Matthew Dossett from Sunderland University presented the report advising Members that the Sport for All project aimed to remove barriers to

involvement in sporting activities and allow communities in Sunderland access to a range and variety of sporting activity.

Mr. Dossett gave a brief overview of the work the project was doing and hopes for the future.

In response to Councillor Mordey's query, Mr. Dossett advised that the 264 coaching sessions that had taken place in Sunderland Schools were two hour sessions.

Councillor G. Hall enquired on the rationale behind closing the University swimming pool at Chester Road, which was used by the schools.

Mr. Dossett advised that consideration had been given to keeping the swimming pool while closing the sports hall attached, but this was found not to be an option. The University was trying to link in with partners for alternative options and there would also be the two new swimming pools at Silksworth and Hetton for students to use.

Councillor G. Hall commented that the facilities in the Penshaw area were of high standard but only used by structured groups and believed the facilities should be opened up and extended to others.

Councillor T. Martin commented that there were many youth projects, social worker outreach programmes, etc. in the City which might be of interest to the University to liaise with in getting young people engaged in activities.

Councillor Tye, also in attendance, commented that he had several links to the voluntary sector and youth groups in the South Sunderland area and agreed with Councillor T. Martin that the project offered a fantastic opportunity to get youths off the streets. Councillor Tye commented that he was most interested in getting involved with the programme.

2. RESOLVED that the presentation and report be received and noted.

Music for All

The City Solicitor submitted a report and Powerpoint presentation (copies circulated) informing Members of the progress of the Music for All initiative and the future developments for the project.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Rupert Hanson, Musical Director and Project Manager, presented the item and informed the Committee that Music for All was a charity set up in 2004 helping people overcome depression and substance misuse, using music as a prevention for the younger members, and helped in breaking down barriers of elitism.

The Group had performed concerts in the Minster, Empire Theatre and were due to perform at the Govan Old Church in Glasgow.

Mr. Hanson also advised of a new outreach centre established in New Herrington, an area where there had been little opportunity to become involved in music.

The Group perform 20-30 concerts per year, not just in the Minster or Empire Theatre, but also in settings such as care homes.

Mr. Hanson commented that he would love to see more interaction between the rock, pop, classical genres, but needed support and did not know how to proceed. The Group had been supported by the Community Chest over the years which Mr. Hanson was very appreciative of.

Mr. Hanson also commented that he believed the City needed a concert hall, a 500-600 seater venue with a focus on music that would attract people, something similar to the Sage in Gateshead.

Councillor Foster commented that he had seen Mr. Hanson's ensemble many times and they were a fantastic success story who had not received the publicity he felt they deserved.

Councillor G. Hall enquired if the Music for All group would perform to celebrate St. George's Day.

Mr. Hanson advised that it was too late to arrange a concert for this year but he was planning for next year.

In response to Mr. Hanson's comments on the need for a concert hall, Councillor G. Hall agreed and commented that with the current financial situation it was unlikely. At present the only venue suitable would be the Stadium of Light, but the acoustics are not up to the standard.

Mr. Hanson responded that they had performed at the Stadium of Light in the past and this had been a success musically, but not financially. It was a good venue for summer events, but costly.

Councillor T. Martin commented that he had been to many of the Music for All concerts which were well attended and requested that Members give thought to possible venues suitable for them.

Councillor Martin also advised on the possibility of applying for funding from the Strategic Initiatives Budget.

3. RESOLVED that the information be received and noted.

Study into the use of Public Libraries

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to further update Members on the issues raised from the February 2008 report in response to the study into the 'current levels of usage of public libraries in Sunderland' during 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Alison Clarke, Principal Librarian, Library Operations, presented the report and was on hand to answer Members' queries.

Councillor G. Hall raised concerns at a proposed price increase due to be initiated on 1st May for the use of computers and services at the libraries, such as 100% increase in charges for photocopying and volunteer groups to be charged £25 for room hire.

Councillor Hall felt that such charges were not helpful in getting people back into employment and questioned the process for setting these charges, which had been implemented without Members' knowledge.

Ms. Clarke agreed to take the comments back to the directorate and commented that she understood that the community groups would not be charged for room hire.

Councillor G. Hall advised that one group had negotiated a lesser charge for room hire.

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted with further updates to be received as appropriate.

Performance Report – April to December 2008

The Chief Executive and Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to provide the Committee with a position statement in relation to the first nine months of the Local Area Agreement (LAA), implementation of the new National Indicator set during 2008/09 and also the Council's plans to address findings from the annual MORI survey and provisional results of the biennial Place Survey.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Gillian Robinson, Corporate Performance Monitoring Manager, presented the report referring to the MORI survey as included in Appendix 2 of the report which had provided positive results with the only issue to concern the Culture and Leisure Review Committee being the facilities for young people.

Councillor Errington commented that the development of play provision at St. Matthew's field should help improve the figures on facilities for young people.

In relation to the free swimming for under 16's and over 60's, Councillor T. Martin commented that the scheme has had a telling effect with queues outside the Raich Carter Centre and was pleased to see it working successfully.

Councillor T. Martin also requested that Belford House sports field be looked at as it was an ideal cricket pitch but was in need of repair and maintenance.

Councillor Wake informed the Committee of a complaint he had received in relation to the lack of information given to a customer of the Aquatic Centre via the reception/switchboard and expressed concerns that the complainant used Temple Park as a consequence.

Alison O'Neil, Assistant Head of Community Services (Sport and Leisure) agreed to liaise with Councillor Wake outside of the meeting to review the complaint.

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Tate, who was also in attendance, commented on the lack of facilities for toddlers at the Aquatic Centre.

Ms. O'Neil advised that the Aquatic Centre did offer facilities for toddlers and offered to supply Councillor Tate with information on the programmes.

Councillor Mordey advised that the Raich Carter Centre provides facilities for toddlers also.

Councillor G. Hall commented that the Committee had previously agreed to consider a report on Aquatic Centre issues and requested it be included in the early part of next year's work programme.

Councillor Errington advised that a proposed meeting at the Aquatic Centre to discuss outstanding issues had been cancelled due to the unavailability of the Centre Manager, it was hoped that this would be rearranged shortly.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Pavilion Site Visits

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with information relating to the recent site visit to football pavilions across the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor T. Martin commented that he was impressed with the pavilions and the low cost of these facilities.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted, with Members to be kept informed on the progress and development of the Football Investment Strategy.

Policy Development and Review 2008/09: Draft Final Report

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with the final draft report from the evidence gathered in relation to this year's policy review on music venues.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Nigel Cummings, Review Co-ordinator, presented the report and advised Members of an addition made to the report by the City Treasurer, including financial implications (copies circulated).

Councillor Mordey enquired as to the next steps for monitoring the recommendations.

Mr. Cummings advised that the report would be passed to Cabinet for approval and also to all those who had been involved in the process, with progress reports given at regular intervals.

Ms. Zoe Channing, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism Arts Creative Development, advised that she hoped to incorporate the recommendations of the report in the development of the Music Strategy.

7. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be taken to the meeting of the Cabinet for approval;
- (ii) the report be received and noted.

End of Year Report 2008/2009

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) for Members' approval to report to Council on the operation of the Culture and Leisure Review Committee in 2008/09.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor G. Hall advised the Committee that from the 1st April, 2009 the RNLI would provide the Seasonal Lifeguard Service.

Councillor T. Martin expressed his concerns over the lack of safety provision at Hendon Beach and he believed the issue should be looked at by the Committee.

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Variation in Order of Business

At this junction the Chairman proposed that the Committee vary the order of business to hear an additional item of which copies had been circulated to Members.

Water Quality – Roker and Seaburn Beaches

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with detailed information from the recent focus group held with the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water following a request for this to be included on the Committee's work programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor G. Hall commented that he had found the information reassuring, and could not argue with the improvements contained within the report, but that Northumbrian Water still had an accountability to the public and that there was still work to be done, despite the progress made.

Councillor T. Martin commented that he had witnessed much sewage at Hendon Beach during storm weather.

The Chairman enquired if the relevant Committee would prefer an update sooner in the year.

Councillor G. Hall suggested an update be received in September/October so all information could be collated for the coming year.

9. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted, with the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water to provide an update to the relevant Committee in September/October 2009.

Work Programme 2008/09

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide for Members' information the current Work Programme for the Committees' work during the 2008/09 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor G. Hall requested the outstanding visit of the seafront toilets be arranged as he would like the information for his Steering Group.

10. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

(Signed) J.B. SCOTT,
Chairman