

At a meeting of the CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER, 2008 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J.B. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Ellis, Errington, Foster, P. Gibson, G. Hall, Howe, T. Martin, Mordey, Symonds, Wake and Wares

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes of the last Meeting

Julie D. Gray, Head of Community Services, supplied Members with the following statistics, requested at the previous meeting held on 14th October, 2008:-

- (i) In relation to the percentage of primary schools using the pools, 51 out of 84 primary schools use the pools (which include Raich Carter, Washington Leisure Centre, George Washington School, Aquatic Centre, Sandhill Centre and Castle View Centre).

With the development of the pools at Silksworth and Hetton, the average distance they would have to travel is three miles, with 94% of primary schools within two miles of a pool.

- (ii) In response to the query of the Aquatic Centre attendance figures, during the period of April-September 2008, 128,000 people used the swimming pool and 35,000 used the fitness centre.

Ms Gray informed the Committee that the figures would be confirmed in writing and sent to Members.

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 14th October, 2008 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest

Item 5 – Wellness Centre Pricing Comparison

Councillors T. Martin and Mordey declared personal interests as members of the Raich Carter Sports Centre Management Board.

Councillor Errington declared a personal interest as an attendee of the Raich Carter Sports Centre.

Item 6 – Resorts – End of Season Report 2008

Councillor G. Hall declared a personal interest as Chairman of Sunderland Volunteer Life Brigade.

Item 7 – Heritage Update

Councillor G. Hall declared a personal interest as Chairman of Sunderland Volunteer Life Brigade.

Item 8 – Not Treading Water – Swimming Recommendations

Councillors T. Martin and Mordey declared personal interests as members of the Raich Carter Sports Centre Management Board.

A Place to Play – A Review of Music Venues in Sunderland

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress in relation to the policy review on music venues in Sunderland.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

As proposed at an earlier meeting, a variety of music performers had been invited to share their experiences of performing in Sunderland.

Folkband, the Cornshed Sisters, performed three songs for the Committee and were on hand to answer Members' queries.

After congratulating the band on their performance, Members asked the following questions:-

- What venues did they normally play at?

The Cornshed Sisters advised that they had played at the Head of Steam and the Cumberland Arms in Newcastle, The Independent and the White Room in Sunderland and the Davey Lamp in Washington.

- What type of venue would work in Sunderland?

The Cornshed Sisters advised that a venue similar to the Cluny in Newcastle could work as it is not only a music venue, but at times a gallery also. It has a variety of separate rooms, including for people who aren't interested in the music and is not just open on night times. It serves reasonably priced food and drink and attracts different age groups.

- How is Sunderland regarded within the music scene?

As residents of Sunderland, the Cornshed Sisters felt that the City had a long way to go, due to a lack of venues and a lack of audiences. Average ticket sales in Newcastle are also quite poor in relation to other areas so it is not just a problem in Sunderland, but more of a regional problem.

There are also problems in relation to travelling as people aren't as likely to pay for a concert when they have to leave early to catch the last Metro home.

- What area within the North East is best for music?

Ouseburn, Newcastle is where the Cluny is situated, but it is difficult for the Cornshed Sisters to comment on as they haven't had the experience of playing the larger arenas to make a comparison.

- Is there a folk scene within the region and what type of attendance figures do you attract?

The Cornshed Sisters advised there was not much of a folk scene and they would normally play in venues catering for the pop scene with attendance figures of 1-200 people, but that would have been on a mixed bill.

- If Sunderland were to build a venue, could audiences be attracted?

If the venue was able to change and adapt to different types of music and was a multi-purpose venue, then audiences could be attracted.

- How easy is it for music performers to get a gig and play in Sunderland?

The Cornshed Sisters informed Members that they had played four or five gigs in Sunderland, all through the same promoter, they have not heard of other promoters putting on any events.

When acts such as the Futureheads and Field Music played at both Sunderland and Newcastle, attendance figures were higher at the Newcastle venue as that event was promoted much more.

The Cornshed Sisters advised Members that they believe the "grass roots" of music needs to be developed within the Sunderland area with good quality smaller venues, such as multi purpose bars similar to the Cluny, to help get

up and coming bands established who can then move up a level before starting to look at large arenas.

Having thanked the Cornshed Sisters for their performance, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report, timetable and the Cornshed Sisters' comments be noted and that the evidence gathered used as part of the Committee's research for the policy review on Sunderland venues.

Wellness Centre Pricing Comparison

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an overview of Wellness Centre prices and a comparison of Sunderland's prices to some other regional local authorities.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Julie D. Gray, Head of Community Services, presented the report and advised Members that the Wellness Centre prices offered residents of Sunderland access to high quality affordable services and whilst Sunderland had higher adult prices, the concessionary prices are amongst the lowest.

Members raised the following issues:-

- In relation to the Life Card what arrangements have been made in getting them to children and what are the take-up figures?

Ms Gray advised that the Life Card was being marketed at schools and that she would find out the take up figures and provide this information to Members.

- Councillor G. Hall expressed concerns that the gym/swim was dearest in the area and believed it would be worthwhile to scrutinise the pricing structure year by year with a comprehensive consultation undertaken before changes take effect.
- Councillor G. Hall enquired over the corporate memberships in that they were not included in the new pricing structure, but he was aware of people still receiving corporate membership discounts.

Alison O'Neill, Assistant Head of Community Services (Sport and Leisure) advised that the Council had agreements with certain companies, Nissan, Hillary's Blinds and Police, for example, they had bought a number of twelve month memberships which the Council have honoured, but these will not be renewed under the new wellness pricing structure.

- Councillor G. Hall also informed the Committee he had received various complaints relating to the price increase of the Active8/Life Card.

- If the free swimming for under 16s and over 60s comes into effect, how would the pricing structure be affected?

Ms Gray advised that the free swimming for under 16s and over 60s had been considered at the last meeting of the Cabinet, and some financial support had been provided to progress with arrangements from 1st April, 2009 for two years. This will be monitored to see if it increases participation figures.

- Had there been consultation with young people with regards to the Life Card?

Ms Gray advised that officers recognised the importance of consultation with young people and that this had been completed when implementing the Life Card.

- Councillor Symonds congratulated the Directorate of Community and Cultural Services on trying to introduce a pricing structure for the people less able to afford the services and felt that the sacrificing of the corporate membership was necessary to enable that to be achieved.

Having fully considered the report and answered Members' questions, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted for information.

Resorts Service – End of Season Report 2008

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised Members of various details relating to the Resorts Service provided at Roker and Seaburn during the Summer Season 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Peter Mooney, Resorts Development Manager, presented the report and informed Members that the safety advice statistics included under the Beach Lifeguard Incident Summary were down due to weather conditions making this year a quieter season.

Members raised the following queries:-

- Who are ENCAMS?

Mr. Mooney advised that ENCAMS (Formerly Tidy North - Regional Committee of Keep Britain Tidy Group) were an independent body, part funded by the Government that also run a number of programmes through partners such as blue flag, quality coast award, eco-schools and cleaner safer greener network.

- Are lifeguards responsible for warning dog walkers on the beach and do they have the authority to remove them?

Mr. Mooney informed Members that the lifeguards would give advice to dog walkers. They do not have authority to remove them, but would liaise with Environmental Support Officers.

- As Roker and Seaburn resorts did not achieve the required guideline standard on water quality, should there have been signs erected warning bathers on the water quality?

Mr. Mooney advised that although the water quality failed to meet Blue Flag status standards, it did achieve the mandatory standard and is perfectly safe for bathers, so warning signs were not necessary.

- Councillor G. Hall suggested that, due to Northumbrian Water releasing consented discharges so soon before the samples were taken, the Authority could have done very little to change the outcome.
- Councillor T. Martin felt that Hendon Beach needed to be looked at in relation to improving its safety.
- Are there any plans for another Triathlon on the seafront?

Mr. Mooney advised that the popularity of the Triathlon had grown and that consideration was being given to putting the event on again, but there are time restrictions with the event having to be in the early morning.

- Is the programme of events fixed, or will it be the same next year?

Mr. Mooney informed Members that certain events such as the Airshow are fixed but hopes are that the programme will evolve and become more varied.

4. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Heritage Update

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to update Members of the work ongoing within Culture and Tourism with regard to the Heritage agenda across the city.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Vicki Medhurst, Principal Librarian – Library Development and Information, presented the report and informed Members that since the introduction of free access to Fulwell Windmill, the attendance figures had increased.

Members raised the following issues:-

- Will the Committee be able to view the drawings of the monastic buildings originally excavated at St. Peter's?

Ms. Medhurst agreed to find out and provide this information to Members.

- Members expressed their concerns about the condition of a number of listed buildings within the Sunderland area, namely the Lighthouse at Roker, the Orphanage Building within the Hendon Ward, Penshaw Monument, Hylton Castle and Bowes Railway.

Ms. Medhurst advised Members that the Development and Regeneration Directorate were responsible for the listed buildings within Sunderland, but met regularly with her service, and she would raise Members' concerns at their next meeting held on 16 December.

Ms. Medhurst informed Members that a feasibility study had been completed on Bowes Railway and that her colleagues are working with the Board to rectify certain issues that have risen from the study.

- Is there a list of listed buildings?

Ms. Medhurst advised that a list of listed buildings could be found on the Sunderland City Council website and that she would supply the Members with a copy.

- Was Tyne and Wear Fire Authority approached in relation to the Heritage Open Day?

Ms. Medhurst noted the suggestion and agreed to approach the Fire Authority for future events.

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted for information.

Not Treading Water – Swimming Recommendations

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the progress of the recommendations that were made following the Culture and Leisure Review of swimming in 2007-2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

- Councillor G. Hall raised concerns that local schools in Millfield and Pallion use the Sunderland University Pool for swimming lessons. As the pool is due to close, contingency plans would need to be looked at for the schools.

- Councillor G. Hall also expressed an interest in seeing a report on the Aquatic Centre at a future meeting of the Committee.

Julie Gray advised that a report on the Aquatic Centre would be brought before the Committee in February 2009.

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted with a report on the Aquatic Centre to be brought before the Committee in February 2009.

Work Programmes 2008/2009

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

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor T. Martin noted there was a lack of fishing facilities, not just in the Hendon area, but throughout the city.

Councillor Wake informed Members that he had sent various e-mails on the subject of fishing facilities and that he would bring information to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor G. Hall informed the Committee that he was in the process of speaking to officers within Community and Cultural Services regarding the proposal of a designated fishing area.

7. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted for information.

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

(Signed) J.B. SCOTT,
Chairman.