

At a meeting of the CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 17TH OCTOBER, 2006 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J.B. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Ambrose, Bohill, P. Gibson, Grey, P. Walker and Wares

Also Present:-

Councillor Speding – Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Foster, Mann and L. Walton.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 19th September, 2006 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (Including Whipping Declarations)

Item 6 – Community Spirit – Priority Issues Survey 2006

Councillor Wares declared a personal interest in the item as a Council appointed Member of South Sunderland Housing Group.

Item 8 – Heritage Update

Councillors Bohill, Gibson and Walker declared personal interests as Council appointed Members of the Sunderland Empire Theatre Trust.

Item 9 – Best Value Service Review 2002/03 – Making Sunderland a Greener Place

Councillor Bohill declared a personal interest as a user of a Council owned allotment.

Councillors Grey, Walker and Wares declared a personal interest as Council appointed Members on Boards of Sunderland Housing Group Companies.

Item 10 – Reference from Cabinet – 11th October, 2005 – Gambling Act 2005, Approval of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy

Councillors Bohill, Gibson, Grey and Scott declared personal interests as Members of the Licensing Committee.

Improving the Usage of Public Libraries – Evidence Gathering

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members that Mr. Tony Durcan, President Elect of the Society of Chief Librarians and Head of Culture, Libraries and Lifelong Learning at Newcastle City Council would attend the meeting, as part of the evidence gathering into the study into improving the usage of public libraries within the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Durcan gave a verbal report to the Committee which covered his thoughts and experiences of barriers to greater usage of libraries and ideas on how to address these.

Some of the potential barriers Mr. Durcan identified were:-

- Developments in library provision, such as internet use and reference material not being included in measured performance;
- Library usage being recorded through book issues only and not, for example, number of visitors to the library to make use of the wider resources now provided;
- membership processes which made it difficult for hard to reach groups and out of authority residents to join a library and access its services, here Mr Durcan commented on the possibility of offering memberships that worked across local authority boundaries; and
- Opening hours, and keeping open longer, later.

Mr. Durcan went on to inform the Committee of targeted actions the libraries had taken to address and try to remove some of the barriers including:-

- 'Welcome to the Library' project, to try and increase memberships;
- Summer reading challenge for junior children;
- Homework centres, working with schools;

- Specific topic projects such as the cartoon-based Manga Manga theme, intended to encourage children's participation; and
- Libraries delivering joint services with external agencies.

On a national context Mr. Durcan advised that the Government had prepared a white paper which was being held back until the Public Library Standards had been re-written to ensure they were both compliant, .These two documents were intended to work together to maximise the potential impact on the new provisions by Libraries.

In closing he advised that digital provision was becoming more necessary but that people would always need support and advice on how to use facilities, which the library could offer in community settings. He also assured the Committee that the range of issues that had been identified did not apply only in Sunderland, as dropping figures in library usage was a regional and national issue.

Councillor Gibson explained that during a recent tour of Sunderland Libraries, it had become apparent that primary age children used libraries but not secondary age and asked if there was any reason identified for this. Mr. Durcan advised that although the impression given may be that from secondary age children simply stop attending libraries, it may actually be that they attend for activities other than borrowing a book, such as internet use or music library. He agreed it was an issue though and advised that he felt that there was a need to ensure the involvement and employment of younger staff in libraries so teenagers had people they could identify with and relate to, to make the library a more inviting environment.

Councillor Bohill commended the staff of Sunderland Libraries, as on the tour, he had felt that these were one of the libraries' strongest assets. He welcomed the development and changes of provision in libraries.

Councillor Wares noted the idea of a 'Tyne and Wear Library' membership which Mr. Durcan had mentioned and felt it was an excellent idea which should be progressed.

In addition Councillor Wares made suggestions for community projects within libraries which could include Saturday morning kids clubs where they watched a movie and were then referred to the book it was adapted from or family history sessions, where each week a different set of family names could be explored and explained.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Durcan for his attendance and informative presentation, and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Regional 50 metre Pool – Progress Report

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an update on the progress being made in relation to the development of a 50m swimming pool at Stadium Park.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Paul Dobson, Director of Community and Cultural Services, and Mr. Mike Poulter, 50m Pool Project Manager, gave a presentation (copy circulated) which advised of the progress of the development and gave target milestones and photographs of the build on site.

(For copy presentation – see original minutes)

The Committee were advised that the build was on schedule and was expected to be complete and handed over in January 2008, for an opening in the Spring of 2008. While the project was currently ahead of schedule, milestones during the build were obviously dependent on weather conditions and contractor programming.

Councillor Speding, Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, informed Members that site visits were being arranged for January/February 2007, as it was important Members saw the construction in process and saw the build as it developed.

Mr. Poulter also advised that web-cams would soon be live on the site which would be linked direct to the Sunderland City Council website, for anyone who wished to view the development.

Councillor Gibson asked if having three Wellness Centres in the North area of Sunderland was sustainable and was informed by Mr. Dobson that when measured against the level of health and fitness in the City, the market was far from saturation and that he was confident the three centres would provide a health and fitness service appealing to different markets and continue to generate income.

In response to a query from Councillor Gibson regarding car parking conflicts on Sunderland Football Club match days, Mr. Dobson advised that initially joint programming would be carried out with SAFC to ensure events and swimming galas were not planned on match dates. He informed Members that dates could change during the season due to satellite TV scheduling but assured the Committee that even if an event did clash it would only add 1500 people at most, and the existing park and ride systems and public transport could accommodate this.

Councillor Bohill advised that Sunderland had recently taken on a training role for scuba diving courses, which used to be provided by South Tyneside, and

asked if the pool would have the facilities for these. Mr. Dobson informed Members that the 4 metre deep diving pool with the adjustable depth would be suitable for the training and was the only pool of its kind in the region.

In response to Councillor Ambrose's concerns over residents and parking in the area, Mr. Dobson informed her that there would be work undertaken in the next few months, as part of the LDP, which would cover such issues with a view to identifying ways to address them.

Having thanked Mr. Dobson and Mr. Poulter for their presentation, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Community Spirit – Priority Issues Survey 2006

The Head of Performance Improvement submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with the issues raised during the Community Spirit Priority Issues Survey 2006, in relation to investment in a major landmark development.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Sal Buckler, presented the report advising that 1524 Community Spirit Members were invited to submit a survey, with a response rate of 54%. The three key themes which were identified as priority issues, were:-

- Public Transport provision;
- Quality of Housing; and
- Investment in a major 'landmark' development.

Having discussed the issues raised in the report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Performance Report

The Director of Community and Cultural Services and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided an overview of the key findings from analysing key performance indicators across the Council for the period April 2005 to March 2006 and where relevant, issues arising from the first quarter of 2006/07.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Gillian Robinson presented the report and advised there were only three key indicators where performance had declined which related to stock, active

borrowers and visitor figures. She informed Members that the majority of spend takes place in quarter 2 and 3 during the year, which will in turn improve stock related performance indicators. Other performance indicators will be monitored closely as the year progresses.

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted

Heritage Update

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which gave Members an update on the Local Heritage Strategy Report and associated developments during 2005/06.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Jane Hall, Assistant Head of Culture and Tourism and Ms. Laura Sole, Project Liaison Officer – World Heritage Status, gave a presentation which advised of highlights during the year, future developments and the Wearmouth-Jarrow candidate for a World Heritage Site.

(For copy presentation – see original minutes)

Ms. Sole advised that the nomination file for Wearmouth-Jarrow must be complete and agreed with partners, DCMS and the public before September 2008, with an official submission to UNESCO by February 2009 and a decision being made at the annual World Heritage Committee meeting in the Summer of 2010.

Councillor Gibson stated that he felt that there was little on or around the St. Peter's site to show what works had been done or simply to offer points of information, like there was at the Jarrow site. He recalled that there had at one stage been more information on site about the excavation work that had been undertaken. Ms. Sole advised that this was a key part of the process, improving what was on offer at St. Peter's to increase interest and visitor levels. She advised archaeological works had been undertaken at the site in the 1960's/70's and that findings from this would be included as part of an historic display.

In response to a query from Councillor Wares regarding providing a book of the church's history, Ms. Sole advised that the excavation findings from the 1970's had been published at the beginning of 2006 and that they would form the basis for improvements on site.

Having thanked Ms. Hall and Ms. Sole for their attendance and presentation, and noted the plans for further development it was:-

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

Best Value Service Review 2002/03 – Making Sunderland a Greener Place

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided Members with an overview of progress made on the provision of services and implementations of the Improvement Plan following the Best Value Review of Parks, Open Spaces and Grounds Maintenance “Making Sunderland a Greener Place”.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, presented the report advising of the key achievements and issues contained within it, advising that the report had also been considered by the Environment and Planning Services and Review Committee at its meeting on the 16th October, 2006.

He went on to inform the Committee that subject to approval by the Committee it would be the last in a series of reports on the matter. Over the last four years the majority of actions had been implemented and positive impacts on outcomes made. It was therefore proposed that any future reports to the Committee be made on an exception basis should it not be possible to implement the small number of outstanding actions.

Councillor Bohill mentioned that the allotment site he used had seen an upsurge of young couples taking up allotments and asked if this was a trend throughout the City. Mr. High advised that there were a number of fallow sites in areas and that demand and the age of users was individual to each particular area.

Councillor Gibson thanked the department for the work and help officers had given in the Doxford Park Walled Garden project.

Having considered the report, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-
 - (i) the positive progress made in implementing the actions from the Best Value Review Improvement Plan be noted; and
 - (ii) any future reports to the Committee be submitted on an exception basis should it not be possible to implement the small number of outstanding actions.

**Reference from Cabinet – 11th October, 2006 – Gambling Act 2005,
Approval of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) appending a report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services and the City Solicitor, which had been considered by Cabinet on 11th October, 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms. Rhiannon Hood, Principal Lawyer, presented this report, advising Members of the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken on the draft policy.

Councillor Wares questioned the need for door supervisors at gaming premises, pointing out that the existing casino had operated for many years without the need for a door supervisor. Ms. Hood confirmed that this issue would be considered on each application submitted to a Licensing Sub-Committee, who would then decide on each case where door supervisors were deemed necessary and where they weren't.

Councillor Gibson confirmed that on a recent site visit to the current casino he had witnessed a strict membership scheme and entry system for members and guests and noted that there were no door supervisors required.

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

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

(Signed) J.B. SCOTT,
Chairman.