

At a meeting of the Culture and Leisure Review Committee held in the Civic Centre on Tuesday, 20th June, 2006 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor J.B. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Ambrose, P. Gibson and L. Walton

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Bohill, Foster, Grey, Mann and Wares.

Minutes of the last Meeting

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 26th April, 2006 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest (Including Whipping Declarations)

There were no declarations of interest.

Priorities and Key Issues for the Year Ahead

The City Solicitor and Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an outline of the key issues and priorities for the year ahead for services contained within the remit of the Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Alison O'Neill, Assistant Head of Community Services (Sport and Leisure); Chris Alexander, Head of Culture and Tourism; and Peter High, Head of Environmental Services, gave a presentation to Members each covering their respective service areas.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

In response to a question from Councillor P. Gibson, Ms. O'Neill, Assistant Head of Community Services (Sport and Leisure) advised that funding had become available to target higher risk groups, such as those with chronic heart disease and Type Two Diabetes in partnership with the TPCT. Ms. O'Neill emphasised the importance of reducing health inequalities and the necessity to train Health Trainers in order to build capacity.

In response to a question from Councillor Ambrose regarding Hard to Reach Groups, Ms. O'Neill advised that joint working with the TPCT would enable the City Council to identify individuals who came under this category, who did not otherwise present themselves.

Councillor Ambrose enquired as to whether a programme of refurbishing existing leisure facilities existed in addition to new developments. Ms. O'Neill advised that Cabinet had agreed that when Stadium Park opened, Newcastle Road Swimming Baths would close. In respect of Seaburn and Crowtree Leisure Centres, feasibility studies were being undertaken by the City Council and the Sunderland ARC was considering the Crowtree site as part of a wider review. However, existing facilities would not close unless alternative facilities were going to be offered in their place.

Councillor P. Gibson commented that he was enthusiastic about World Heritage Site Status and as St. Peter's Church had been excavated in the past enquired as to whether some kind of visitor site could be developed, as at present the main sources of interest were inside the church itself. Mr. Alexander, Head of Culture and Tourism, agreed that a significant gap currently existed at the site and whilst the county archaeologist had advised that future excavation was not permissible, it was hoped that ground level developments could take place at the site.

In response to a question from Councillor Ambrose, Mr. Alexander advised that the Cultural Partnership included, amongst others, representatives from the City Council, the Sunderland Partnership and the cultural sector.

In respect of the landmark art feature, Councillor Ambrose enquired whether the nature of the artwork had been determined. Mr. Alexander advised that a competitive process was currently underway. Three artists had been short-listed and they were in the process of visiting Sunderland. The decision on which piece to commission would be taken by a working group which included Councillor Speding, the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure, the Strategic Arts Manager and representatives from the Arts Council and the University of Sunderland.

In response to a question from Councillor Ambrose, Mr. Alexander advised that partnership work was undertaken with North and South Tyneside around coastline issues.

Councillor Ambrose enquired as to plans for the Christmas Ice Rink as the rink last year in Mowbray Park had proved controversial. Mr. Alexander advised that he appreciated that the ice rink in Mowbray Park had attracted some negative comment and that alternatives would be considered, however visitor numbers at Mowbray Park had been high.

The Chairman commented that he felt St. Peter's Church had not been pushed to its full potential. He drew attention to the question of accommodation for tourists visiting the City. Mr. Alexander advised that it was necessary to ensure that sufficient visitor attractions existed to encourage developers to build hotels. Three sites identified by the ARC could lead to potential development.

In response to a question from Councillor Ambrose regarding park rangers and attendants, Mr. High, Head of Environmental Services, advised that wardens were based in a number of parks at the moment and that the context of Single Status and efforts to assist staff to move out of pay protection could lead to staff undertaking a wider range of duties.

2. RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

Policy Development and Review 2006/07 : Topics for Consideration

The Director of Community and Cultural Services and the City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) setting out a number of possible topics for policy development and review as part of the Committee's work programme.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Councillor P. Gibson commented that it would be useful to receive a presentation on Planning for 2012, particularly in relation to Sunderland's role in this. He highlighted the importance of public libraries, especially as many children still struggle with reading.

3. RESOLVED: -

- (i) that Improving Usage of Public Libraries be selected as the policy development review topic for the Municipal Year 2006/07; and
- (ii) the Review Committee receive a presentation on Planning for 2012.

Draft Annual Work Programme 2006/07

The City Solicitor and the Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) for the Review Committee to consider and agree a work programme for the Municipal Year 2006/07.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

4. RESOLVED that the Work Programme for 2006/07 be approved and submitted to the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

Overview and Scrutiny in Sunderland – Draft Handbook 2006/07

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) to seek Members' endorsement for publication of a revised and updated version of the Council's Handbook for Overview and Scrutiny.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

5. RESOLVED that: the Review Committee-

- (i) support the 2006/07 Scrutiny Handbook; and
- (ii) support the use of all six Review Committee's budgets – in equal portion – to publish the Handbook for circulation.

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

(Signed) J.B. SCOTT,
Chairman.