

**At a meeting of the CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on TUESDAY, 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2006 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor J.B. Scott in the Chair

Councillors Ambrose, P. Gibson, Grey, P. Walker, Wares and B. Williams.

**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, Sidaway and L. Walton.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2006 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest (Including Whipping Declarations)**

Item 5 – Reference from Cabinet : Comprehensive Performance Assessment  
– Value for Money Self-Assessment

Councillor Grey declared a personal interest in the item as a Council appointed Member of Washington Housing Group.

**Improving the Usage of Public Libraries – Evidence Gathering**

The City Solicitor submitted a report (copy circulated) which informed Members that Ms. Penny Wilkinson, Chief Executive, Museums, Libraries and Arts Council (MLA) North East, 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)

Ms. Wilkinson gave a verbal report to the Committee which covered her thoughts and experiences of barriers to greater usage of libraries and ideas and proposals on how to address these in Sunderland and throughout the region.

Ms. Wilkinson's presentation to the Committee covered a number of barriers to usage, which included:-

- the modern day definition of a library;
- uses other than book lending in libraries;
- difficulties in recording and monitoring usage in a relevant way;
- marketing libraries to hard to reach groups;
- different age ranges using different library services;
- institutional barriers including opening hours, stock availability;
- public perception i.e. 'not for us' attitude; and
- competing against other leisure and recreational activities.

Ms. Wilkinson went on to inform the Committee of potential projects to attract current, lapsed or non users of the service, including:-

- improving the library environment;
- offering an even wider range of services;
- a modern marketing plan;
- consulting residents to understand the needs of the community;
- addressing hard to reach groups and increasing involvement e.g. 'Welcome to your Library' project;
- homework clubs, 'Investing in Children' Standard; and
- developing a 'books on prescription' programme at the Bunny Hill Centre.

In closing, Ms. Wilkinson advised that the barriers faced by Sunderland were not uncommon and were being recognised nationally but that she felt Sunderland were doing a lot to widen public participation using new and innovative projects.

In response to a query from Councillor Gibson, regarding the figures used to monitor usage, Ms. Wilkinson informed Members that book issues had always been used to monitor library usage but that due to the changing of facilities these were being reviewed. She advised that work was ongoing to measure the impact of libraries in the community and that the Public Library Standards were also being reviewed, with no conclusion having been reached at this time.

Ms. Wilkinson advised the Committee that the Museums, Libraries and Art Councils North East were looking to launch a project which focussed more on personal outcomes of schemes such as generic learning undertaken in a library which helped improve residents' quality of life to provide a more meaningful statistic than book loans alone.

Having given full consideration to the report, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted for the purpose of the Committee's policy review.

### **Reference from Cabinet : Comprehensive Performance Assessment – Value for Money Self Assessment**

The City Solicitor and City Treasurer submitted a joint report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with an opportunity to comment on the Council's Value for Money Statement report, which had been submitted to Cabinet on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Ms Alison O'Neill, Assistant Head of Community Services advised the Committee that value for money was being achieved in the areas within the terms of reference including libraries, sports and tourism and that the level of spending reflected the high priority allocated to these services and the additional investment made by the Council.

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that the report be received and it be noted that a synopsis of the Review Committee's issues raised above would be prepared for Cabinet by the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

### **Resorts Service – End of Season Report**

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised Members of the Resorts Service provided at Roker and Seaburn during the Summer Season 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Mr. Peter Mooney, Resorts Development Manager, took Members through the report advising of staff numbers, training, recorded incidents and event attendances.

Councillor Walker asked if there was any consistency in the seasonal staff employed from year to year and was advised that most of the staff were university students so it was common to have the same people applying every year, over a period of three to four years.

Councillor Gibson queried how many seasonal staff had been employed for the summer season 2005 and was informed that the numbers would be similar, if not the same, as 2006 as the same provision was given.

In future reports, Councillor Gibson asked if the previous year's figures for staff and attendances could be included to provide a comparison.

Councillor Gibson requested that a letter of congratulations be sent to the service from the Committee for their taking part in the North East Beach Lifeguard Competition.

Having considered the content of the report, it was:-

4. RESOLVED that:-
  - (i) the report be received and noted; and
  - (ii) that comparative data be provided within future Resorts Service end of year reports.

### **Audit Commission Review : Public Sport and Recreation Facilities**

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which advised the Committee of the outcomes of a recent study undertaken by the Audit Commission which examined how local authorities in England were managing their approach to provide public sports and recreation facilities and their attempts to improve access and value for money. The report also set out the approach being taken by Sunderland Council on these issues.

(For copy report – see original minutes)

5. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

## **Culture and Sport Performance Improvement Agenda**

The Director of Community and Cultural Services submitted a report (copy circulated) which updated Members on the Directorate's performance improvement agenda and its impact on the Council's forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

(For copy report – see original minutes)

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

6. 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.