

CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

AGENDA

Meeting to be held in Committee Room 1, Civic Centre, Sunderland, on Tuesday, 14th November, 2006 at 5.30 p.m.

NB - Please bring the Cabinet Agenda, 8th November, 2006 along to the meeting for consideration under Item 5.

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If you require this, please telephone 0191 553 1059

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R.C. RAYNER,
City Solicitor.

Civic Centre,
SUNDERLAND.

3rd November, 2006.

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.

**CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE
2006**

14 NOVEMBER

**IMPROVING THE USAGE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES – EVIDENCE
GATHERING**

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME – POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT

Report of the City Solicitor

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To receive further evidence in relation to the Committees study into improving the usage of public libraries within the city.

2 Background

- 2.1 On 20th June 2006, the Review Committee agreed to undertake a study into improving the usage of libraries in the city. A summary of the remit and objectives of the study is attached as an appendix.
- 2.2 At the last meeting, the Committee received evidence on the national and local context shaping the usage of public libraries in the city. The Committee also visited a number of local libraries to view at first hand the service being provided.
- 2.3 As the next stage in the study, Ms Penny Wilkinson, Chief Executive Museums, Libraries and Arts Council (MLA) North East has been invited to the meeting to consider issues from a regional and national perspective.
- 2.4 Ms Wilkinson will address the following issues:-
- ☐ To consider the barriers to greater usage;
 - ☐ To consider potential means of improving usage among existing users;
 - ☐ To consider potential means of attracting current lapsed or non users of the service.

3 Recommendation

- 3.1 The Review Committee is asked to note the information.

4 Background Papers

Sunderland Strategy 2004/2007
Framework for the Future – Libraries, Learning and Information in the
Next Decade (DCMS)
Sunderland City Council – Spreading the Word - Annual Library Plan
2005/07

Building Better Library Services (Audit Commission) 2002

Contact Officer: Jim Diamond (0191 553 1396)
james.diamond@sunderland.gov.uk

Title of study	Study into the Usage of Public Libraries
Committee	Culture and Leisure Review Committee
Members undertaking study	Councillors Jim Scott (Chair), Ambrose (Vice Chair), N Bohill, T Foster, P Gibson, J Grey, L Mann, B Sidaway, P Walker, L Walton, R Wares, B Williams.
Officer support/ Contacts	Jim Diamond – Review Committee Administrator
Remit and Objectives of the study	To investigate the current levels of usage of public libraries in Sunderland and consider the barriers to future growth and potential options for improving usage in the future.
Key questions/ Evidence to be obtained	<p>During the study the Committee will need to fulfil the following key objectives:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> To obtain an overview of the national and local policy in relation to the library service <input type="checkbox"/> To consider the current levels of usage and the Council's progress in meeting the Public Library Service Standards (PLSS); <input type="checkbox"/> To consider the barriers to greater usage; <input type="checkbox"/> To consider potential means of improving usage among existing users; <input type="checkbox"/> To consider potential means of attracting current lapsed or non users of the service; <input type="checkbox"/> To make appropriate recommendations to the Cabinet based on the evidence received.
Method (Meetings, surveys, visits etc)	Options include inhouse and external bodies providing evidence to full committee, invitations for the submission of written evidence, member visits to examine examples of good practice within other local authorities, views of government bodies and agencies, open forums, surveys, direct consultation with community groups and members of the community.
Participants	<p>The Committee are likely to obtain evidence from representatives of:</p> <p>Service providers within the authority Partner organisations Museums, Libraries and Arts Council (MLA) Advice on good practice within other authorities Views of central government Academic Institutions Representatives of Service Users Views of Non service Users</p>
Timescale	<p>The Committee will formally approved the remit and scope of the study on 18 July 2006</p> <p>Familiarisation with issues in July 2006</p> <p>Evidence gathering is expected to take place from September/February 2006/07</p> <p>This followed by consideration of recommendations in March 2007 and approval of the final report by April 2007</p>

CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE
2006

13TH NOVEMBER,

**REFERENCE FROM CABINET: COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE
ASSESSMENT - VALUE FOR MONEY SELF ASSESSMENT**

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME: INFORMATION/AWARENESS RAISING

Joint Report of the City Solicitor and City Treasurer

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with an opportunity to comment on how the Council is seeking to provide value for money for local citizens.

2. Background

- 2.1 Members will see from papers to the 8th November, 2006 Cabinet a report on the Council's Value for Money Self - Assessment as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment - Use of Resources **[please bring your copy of the Cabinet agenda with you]**.
- 2.2 Given the keen interest of Members in assuring value for money for City residents the report is being circulated, for comment, by Cabinet to all six Review Committees this cycle. The Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee will compile a synopsis of the detailed comments made.
- 2.3 Members are asked to specifically address the paragraphs of the report that relate to this Committee's terms of reference.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 The Review Committee is asked to comment on how the Council is seeking to provide value for money for local citizens, noting that a synopsis will be prepared for Cabinet by the Policy and Co-ordination Review Committee.

Background Papers

Cabinet Agenda and Minutes, 8th November, 2006

R C Rayner,
City Solicitor

K Beardmore,
City Treasurer

Contact Officer: Sonia Tognarelli (0191 553 1851)

CULTURE & LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL SERVICES

14 NOVEMBER 2006

RESORTS SERVICE – END OF SEASON REPORT

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME – INFORMATION AND AWARENESS RAISING

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to appraise Members of the Resorts Service provided at Roker and Seaburn during the Summer Season 2006.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The summer season for 2006 began on Monday 22 May and ended on Sunday 17 September 2006. The following seasonal staff were employed during this period:
- 2 Senior Lifeguards
 - 15 Beach Lifeguards
 - 6 Beach Service Operatives
- 2.2 Staff are divided equally between Roker and Seaburn which effectively means two separate teams in operation.

3.0 TRAINING & STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 A full induction programme and staff training day took place at Sunderland Sea Scout Headquarters on the 20 and 22 May 2006 when the following key issues were addressed:
- Customer Care
 - Uniform / Appearance
 - Incident Management / Violence at Work
 - Byelaw Enforcement
 - Emergency Action Plan
 - Normal Operating Policy
 - Kinetic Lifting
- 3.2 All lifeguards not possessing the relevant qualification were trained to Beach Lifeguard qualification standard prior to the season commencing.

3.3 A full and ongoing training programme was then implemented throughout the season as follows:

- Water based rescue techniques including swim rescues, towing techniques, use of diving fins and surf skies.
- Communication Techniques – radios and hand signals
- First Aid and accident exercises
- Mock rescues and incidents
- Weekly physical fitness training

3.4 All training was in accordance with 'Safety on British Beaches Operational Guidelines' and 'Beach Life-guarding' produced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the Royal Life Saving Society UK, both of which are accepted as guidelines relating to good practice.

4.0 BEACH LIFEGUARD INCIDENT SUMMARY

4.1 During the course of the season all beach lifeguards are required to complete a daily log sheet indicating any contact with members of the public. The following is a summary of statistics for 2006 together with statistics from the previous season as a comparison.

TYPE OF INCIDENT	SEASON 2005	SEASON 2006	+ / -
Rescue	4	1	-3
Safety Advice	8838	8996	+158
First Aid	84	103	+19
Lost / Missing Persons	6	24	+18
Dog Byelaws	2465	2473	+8

The total number of incidents recorded by both lifeguard teams was **11,597**.

4.2 The figures for 2006 are consistent with those of the previous season and the overall increase reflects the warmer summer experienced this year.

5.0 EVENTS PROGRAMME

5.1 A comprehensive community events programme has been promoted at the Resorts as part of the operations during the summer season.

The following is a summary of those events held during May, June, July and August 2006.

MONTH	EVENT	LOCATION	APPROX ATTENDANCE
APRIL			
30	Pier to Pier Run	Resorts	1000
MAY			
28	Easington Colliery Brass Band	Roker Promenade	100
28	Model Boat Display	Roker Park	100
JUNE			
3	Promenade Games	Roker Promenade	50
11	Classic Car Show	Seaburn Rec Park	1000
11	Sunderland Mela Festival	Seaburn Cliffe Park	1000
18	'Auntie Eileen' Children's Ventriloquist	Seaburn Beach	100
25	Great Women's Run (including Junior Race)	Resorts	6500
JULY			
2	Line Dancing featuring 'Strangebrev'	Roker Park	200
9	Wizards Workshop	Roker Promenade	100
16	Punch and Judy Show	Seaburn Promenade	50
22	Promenade Games	Seaburn Promenade	100
23	COS Orchestra	Roker Promenade	100
23	Dunston Silver Band	Roker Park	150
AUGUST			
13	Junk Music Workshop	Roker Park	10 Moved indoors to Seaburn Centre
13	Broadway Melody	Seaburn Prom	Cancelled (rain)
20	Durham Ceilidh Band	Seaburn	50
SEPTEMBER			
3	North Tyneside Steel Band	Roker Park	200

During the four month period a total of 18 events were staged at the Resorts attracting a total of 10,810 people.

6.0 NORTH EAST BEACH LIFEGUARD COMPETITION

- 6.1 The annual North East Beach Lifeguard Competition was held on 9 August 2006 at North Tyneside. There was an extremely good representation from all the region's coastal authorities with teams present from as far North as Blyth down to Redcar in the South.
- 6.2 Teams competed in events such as beach flag races, rescue rope throw, unconscious casualty rescue and a run, swim, run event. Several hundred spectators were in attendance to watch a very hotly contested competition.
- 6.3 Of the nine teams taking part, Sunderland A finished third with Sunderland B in fifth place. It should be noted that only two points separated Sunderland A from the eventual winners Hartlepool.

7.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 The committee is recommended to note the content of this Report.

8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 The following documents were relied upon to compile this report.
 - i. Resorts Staff – Daily Log Sheets
 - ii. Events Attendance List

CULTURE AND LEISURE REVIEW COMMITTEE

14 NOVEMBER 2006

AUDIT COMMISSION REVIEW: PUBLIC SPORT & RECREATION FACILITIES

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to advise the Review Committee of the outcomes of a recent study undertaken by the Audit Commission (in association with Sport England) which examines how local authorities in England are managing their approach to providing public sports and recreation facilities and their attempts to improve access and value for money.
- 1.2 The report additionally provides information on how Community and Cultural Services are addressing (and in many cases have pre-empted) the issues raised in the Audit Commission's research.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This Study has involved a survey of all councils in England, detailed fieldwork in 30 councils and interviews and focus groups with consultants, relevant national organisations and government departments. It examined investment challenges and how councils have decided what the future shape of their sports and recreation facilities should be.
- 2.2 The Study focused on public indoor sports centres and swimming pools – generally excluding outdoor recreational facilities (parks, playgrounds, pitches and golf courses) community centres, privately managed facilities, voluntary run facilities and school facilities (unless dual use and managed as part of a council's leisure portfolio).

3.0 AUDIT COMMISSION FINDINGS

- 3.1 As a result of this Study, the Audit Commission calls for more assessment of local sporting needs; more partnership working to deliver better-planned and better value for money services and a greater coherence of funding streams and initiatives from government departments.
- 3.2 Their research evidences that nationally strategic planning of provision is underdeveloped with little robust assessment of the mix of current public and private provision, community needs and future demand. The view is that councils often focus on maintaining a historic in-house pattern of sports and recreation service provision and rarely form strategic partnerships with other councils, private leisure providers or other cross-sector partners such as health and education, to improve and develop facilities.

3.3 Strategic Planning

- 3.3.1 The research concluded that progress towards ensuring the appropriate management of public sector sports facilities has been slow and uncertain. Buildings are ageing and frequently fail to meet needs and customer expectations. Members may be aware of the significant work undertaken to date in Sunderland which will future proof provision.

This includes:

- Completion of a full, independent Performance and Management Review of leisure facilities, undertaken to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in leisure service design and delivery
- Taking an integrated, evidence based approach to planning through the production of Active City Sunderland, supported by Leisure Facilities Research, Sport and Physical Activity Strategy, PE and School Sports Strategy and the Play and Urban Games Strategy, all of which tackle the issues raised by the Audit Commission Study. We are currently delivering Year 2 of improvement / action plans and are therefore significantly ahead of the national position.

- 3.3.2 The Audit Commission finds that the strategic planning of local sport and recreation services is underdeveloped nationally with little robust assessment of current private and public leisure provision, community needs and future demand. Performance management is weak, and this restricts the ability of councils to assess the impact of services on local priorities. In Sunderland we have:

- A comprehensive facilities plan adopted by Cabinet, which takes into account all provision - public sector, private and voluntary sector led
- Performance management is monitored via a range of indicators and agencies including, CIPFA, APSE and LRQA. In addition there are innovative cross sector performance management initiatives taking place through the Sports Federation and Wellness agenda
- A strategic planning framework commended through Government's Beacon Scheme and the APSE Awards process.

- 3.3.3 The Audit Commission state that strategic partnerships between councils, with the private sector and with other external partners, including the voluntary sector, provide the potential to improve planning and develop facilities. However, they consider such partnerships are rare. This is not the case in Sunderland, as evidenced through:

- The partnership's in place to deliver citywide coverage of Wellness which includes, involvement and engagement with public, private and voluntary sector organisations
- The mixed economy of delivery arrangements in place – examples of which include Washington Millennium Centre and Raich Carter Sports Centre.

- 3.3.4 The Study finds a focus on maintaining and managing a historic pattern of local sports and recreation provision prevails nationally. Cross-boundary planning and rationalisation of sport and recreation facilities is limited. In Sunderland we have:

- Challenged and realigned our fitness operation to expand participation and to provide a new Wellness Service focused on improving the overall health of our residents
- Led the strategic planning and work plan of the sub-regional partnership (Tyne & Wear Sport) and we continue to be the host authority.

3.3.5 The Study states that successful strategic engagement between sports and recreation services and the health and education sectors is not common. Large and increasing investment in school sports facilities is not being used as effectively as it could be to provide fit-for-purpose community sports and recreation facilities. In Sunderland we have:

- Entered into partnership arrangements with Sunderland Teaching Primary Care Trust at both strategic (Public Health Forum) and operational (Wellness programme delivery) levels
- A track record of innovative work with Education colleagues in a variety of arenas including Extended Schools Programme, planning around BSF and project/intervention work
- Taken the lead in terms of school sport facility developments and promoting a whole school, city wide approach to promoting positive lifestyles and participation through support in developing access agreements.

3.4 Operational Management

3.4.1 The Study comments that the transfer of facilities to trust has assisted councils to avoid the payment of non-domestic rates. This has potentially released funds for much needed local investment. However, our independent research has found that the re-investment of significant levels of savings in developing sports and recreation provision is infrequent. The City Council has over time, led significant research into delivery models for it's Sport & Leisure Service. The findings from as research would suggest:

- A mixed economy of provision best meets the sophisticated needs of our communities
- Current in-house arrangements are fit for purpose when performance is benchmarked against alternative options
- The Council's approach to co-location of services with partners reaps greater community benefit and efficiency than could be anticipated through rate relief.

3.4.2 The Audit Commission finds that investment in sports and recreation facilities is increasing but not at a pace that will address the consequences of years of low spending on stock maintenance. The transfer of the management of the business to trusts and to private sector contractors provides an opportunity to secure necessary investment. There are few examples of new facilities or essential large-scale refurbishments. This is not the case in Sunderland, we have:

- An enviable record of facility development in the last six years:
 - Puma Tennis Centre extension 2000
 - Community North Sports Complex pavilion 2000
 - Lambton Street Fellowship Centre relocation 2001
 - Sandhill Centre 2001
 - Raich Carter Sports Centre 2001
 - 5 primary schools with new facilities (Space for Sport & Arts) 2002
 - Marine Activities Centre 2002
 - 6 Wellness Centres 2004-2006
 - 8 secondary schools with new facilities (NOF PE & Sport) 2005

Athletics Track refurbishment 2004
City Wheeled Sports Park plus 3 area parks 2004-2006
Football Foundation developments Ford Quarry, Hetton & Houghton Schools
2004-2006

- Ambitious but deliverable plans for the future:
 - New 50m swimming pool and Wellness Centre - funding secured
 - Replacement Coalfield Swimming pool - feasibility complete, fundraising commenced
 - Commercial football developments - at feasibility/procurement stage
 - Millennium Centre refurbishment - feasibility complete, funding secured
 - Opportunities for dry sport provision at Stadium Park - first stage feasibility complete.

3.5 Options Appraisals

3.5.1 The Audit Commission find that there has been a marked increase in the number of councils that review the management of their sports and recreation facilities. But these approaches have been inconsistent and limited. Where market testing had taken place, it was often poorly managed and focused on financial criteria rather than outcomes for the community. In Sunderland we have:

- A good track record in reviewing service provision and implementing innovative partnerships where appropriate, these include
 - Elemore Golf Course – outsourced to private sector
 - Raich Carter Sport Centre – Local Authority Controlled Company
 - Sandhill Centre – Community Development within PFI context
- Ensured that social as well as financial outputs are being considered to ensure sustainability and consistency with our key policy themes. These requirements are written into service level/management agreements, contracts and procurement arrangements
- Robustly reviewed our performance management arrangements across the Directorate as a whole. Our performance management arrangements have been expanded to include:
 - production of a CCS medium term financial strategy as part of our budget planning process
 - regular examination of service based performance against a range of indicators including those promoted by CIPFA.

3.5.2 The Study finds inconsistencies in options appraisal and weaknesses in market testing mean that many councils are missing both significant cost savings and efficiency opportunities. As a result they are failing to reconfigure current provision to be able to meet future participation targets and community needs, and are unable to demonstrate value for money for the community assets for which they are responsible. This is not the case in Sunderland we have:

- Commissioned independent research with industry experts - PMP - to examine our performance and research alternative methods for delivery. The research report is nearing completion however early findings are that:
 - the service benchmarks favourably in many areas of its performance
 - when examining performance the evidence tends to suggest that a move to wholesale trust status would realise little in efficiency terms
- Commenced soft market testing in relation to the provision of enhanced facilities in Washington.

4.0 WHAT COUNCILS SHOULD BE DOING

- 4.1 The Audit Commission have published a set of recommendations that outlines what local authorities should be doing to improve the strategic planning of sports and recreation. It is worth noting that in these areas for improvement (identified below), the City Council have been proactive in all cases and prior to the publication of the Audit Commission report in June 2006:

AUDIT COMMISSION - AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Assessing current and future sports and recreation needs locally and their relationship to regional and national needs.
We have completed this – as evidenced in 3.3.1 & 3.3.2
- Collaborating with the private, voluntary, health and education sectors and working across administration boundaries in the planning, procurement and delivery of services.
Evidence of pro-active collaboration identified in sections 3.3.3, 3.3.4, 3.3.5
- Appraising the options for delivering sports and recreation services systematically in an open and transparent way and testing the market to ensure that the best value option is identified.
Section 3.5.2 outlines our robust approach in this area
- Improving the collection, analysis and use of performance information in order to demonstrate value for money, for example by including financial performance and social outcomes in all contracts.
Sections 3.3.2 and 3.5.1 set out our approach and evidence in this respect

- 4.2 In addition to the recommendations outlined for local Councils, the Audit Commission have also made recommendations to Central Government; please refer to **Appendix 1**.

5.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 The Review Committee are requested to note the content of the report for information.

6.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report:
- Audit Commission Report June 2006: Public sports and recreation services

APPENDIX 1

Government should:

Through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), ensure greater coherence of funding streams and initiatives across government departments that directly or indirectly affect investment in sports and recreation facilities.

Through the Department for Education and Skills, working with partners and councils, ensure that schools seek specialist advice, at an early planning stage, on the design and management of school community sports facilities.

Develop concise guidance and advocate the use of standard contract documentation for the procurement of contracts, building on the Public Private Partnerships Programme (4ps) Leisure Procurement Pack.

Promote the opportunities for councils to work together in strategic partnerships to develop capital development proposals which will be eligible for private finance initiative (PFI) credits and provide the basis of better engagement with the private sector.

Use the Centres of Excellence and their partners as regional advocates of these procurement standards and guidance and for capacity building, advice and training.

The Audit Commission will:

When reviewing and reporting on councils' value for money arrangements, consider the extent to which councils, where appropriate, have appraised the options for delivering sport and recreation services.

Develop a planning guide to assist and assess councils' planning and procurement of sports and recreation services.

CULTURE AND SPORT: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AGENDA

LINK TO WORK PROGRAMME – PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Report of the Director of Community and Cultural Services

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Review Committee with regard to Community and Cultural Services performance improvement agenda and its impact on the Council's forthcoming Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). The report will also provide an overview of current and future reviews linked to Culture and Sport, and highlight key milestones in the performance improvement calendar.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 CPA is the performance management framework used by the Audit Commission and Central Government, to measure local authority performance and drive improvement in the sector.
- 2.2 Sport England has worked successfully with key partners to secure a culture block, which includes sport, in the new CPA framework for 2005 - 2008 for upper tier authorities. The culture block has an equal weighting alongside the housing and environment service blocks. This reflects a significant improvement on its previous position. Ensuring that the strengthened culture block is embedded within the CPA framework for upper tier authorities, will help to focus resources on sport and leisure. This will help us to achieve the national participation targets for sport set out in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Public Service Agreement (PSA) and the target reflected in the Framework for Sport in England (www.sportengland.org/national-framework-for-sport.pdf) and the nine Regional Plans for Sport.
- 2.3 Implementation of **CPA The "Harder Test"** identified a number of challenges for the Library Service in respect of the Direction of Travel of some of its PI's. Following an Audit inspection carried out in August 2005 a number of queries were raised concerning manual data collection within libraries and as a result a number of indicators were reserved. Improvements were carried out in particular relating to the installation of a new Library Management System (LMS) that enhanced the way in which data is collected. The Audit Commission has advised that with the implementation of the Library Management Systems Acquisitions Module and the procedures in place to handle new stock that it is reasonable to assume that for all stock purchases, the Council will from 1 April 2006 be able to provide a full audit trail and accurate figures - (PI C11b / C 11c).

3.0 OVERVIEW: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AGENDA

- 3.1 The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of ongoing, pending and future reviews that will influence Culture and Sport in the coming months and years.

- 3.2 A **Peer Review** is an effective way of evaluating, demonstrating and refocusing improvement effort. It can prove useful for councils that need to find a snapshot of progress since CPA 2002, or for those who are preparing for imminent CPA inspections. Sunderland's Peer Review took place in July 2006 and provided an independent picture of where we are prior to the CPA assessment in January 2007. The draft report has now been received, with initial indications being very positive. A draft action plan has been produced in response to the report with actions being incorporated into the Corporate Improvement Plan for 2007 - 2008. The outcomes from the final report will be cascaded via Corporate Communications and the Directorate will await any outcomes as far as Culture and Sport is concerned.
- 3.3 Over the next three years there will be a shift in emphasis away from inspection results towards **Performance Indicators** (PI's). Central Government has been working on a basket of robust PI's for the cultural basket of indicators, which will be introduced during 2006 and 2007. These indicators will be assessed as part of the CPA inspection in January 2007 and are shown in more detail further in this report.
- 3.4 In addition to the CPA inspection in January 2007, the City Council will also undergo a **Joint Area Review**. Joint Area Reviews will evaluate and report on the extent to which services within an area improve the well-being of children and young people. They will focus on the experience of children and young people within the local authority across the five 'Outcomes for Children' set out in 'Every Child Matters'. Whilst this review focuses on much of the work undertaken by Children Services, it will also examine the role that culture and sport adopts in the lives of the city's young people.
- 3.5 The modernised agenda will also see increasing emphasis on self-assessment and self-improvement. To assist with this, Sport England has worked with the sport and leisure sector to develop an appropriate model – **Towards an Excellent Service (TAES)** and a system of external validation. This is suitable for the assessment of a cultural service as a whole, or solely for sport and recreation. TAES is explained in more detail in Appendix 1.
- 3.6 DCMS and regional agencies are committed to strengthening the alignment of national regional and local objectives and priorities in the sector and to encouraging and supporting service improvement in Local Authority Cultural Services. **Regional Commentaries** are intended to be a means to achieve and are targeted towards single tier and County Councils. At present Regional Commentaries are optional, with Stockton Borough Council having been chosen as a regional pilot earlier in the year. It is anticipated that a Government White Paper will be released in autumn 2006, which will outline the future direction of Regional Commentaries. Regional Commentaries are explained in more detail in Appendix 2.
- 3.7 In view of the above, in the short term, the Directorate will be focusing on the importance of its performance indicators to contribute to the pending CPA inspection. However, as a longer term objective, TAES as a management tool will become increasingly important. The Directorate have been keen to be involved in the TAES model from an early stage, as it is likely that Improvement Plans and self-assessment will feature highly in the itinerary of future Regional Commentaries.

4.0 SPORT IN THE CULTURE BLOCK

- 4.1 Members will be aware that in recent years, there have been several sport and leisure strategies adopted to cover a number of service areas and priorities. In April 2004 Cabinet approved the adoption of a publication called, *ActiveCity Sunderland*. The purpose of this document was to clarify "the way ahead" and communicate the

Council's aspirations and intentions for the development of sport and leisure's programme and facilities.

- 4.2 *ActiveCity Sunderland* remains the umbrella document, presenting a clear picture for residents and partners, prioritising investment and showing how the City will create a step change in participation levels.
- 4.3 The Sport and Physical Activity Strategy (adopted by Cabinet in September 2005) defines the development of sport and physical activity into three main processes:
- **Increasing Participation** - in a wide range of pursuits, such as taking part in walking, watersports, skateboarding, cycling or angling, going to the gym or swimming, playing football, cricket or golf. It can also include playing in the local park or playground or even coaching and refereeing.
 - **Improving Facilities** - including leisure centres, playing pitches, play areas and our recreational water facilities.
 - **Developing New Facilities** to meet new challenges, such as a 50m swimming pool, wheeled sports parks and Wellness Centres throughout the City.
- 4.4 In order to monitor progress with regard to improving participation and improving fair access and cost efficiency, sport PI's have been developed in line with the DCMS national participation PSA targets, that are also reflected in the Framework for Sport and Regional Sports Plans.

The sport PI's within the Culture block that Sunderland will be measured on are:

Participation by Adults (PI 1)

The percentage of adults participating in at least 30 minutes moderate intensity sport and active recreation (including recreational walking) on three or more days a week. This will be measured by a Sport England Active People Survey. Interim survey results showed that the percentage of population engaged in activity is 20.7%. However, this figure has been recalculated with a higher weighting (25.84%) to reflect Sunderland's high deprivation statistics. For further information, visit the Active People Survey website www.activepeoplesurvey.com for more information on how the survey is being undertaken.

Volunteering (PI 2)

The percentage of population volunteering in sport and active recreation, for at least one hour per week. This will be measured by the Sport England Active People Survey detailed above. Interim survey results show that Sunderland is at a volunteering percentage of 2.7%, however with an increased weighting, due to Sunderland's deprivation demographics, this figure has risen to 5.1%.

Participation by Young People (PI 3)

The percentage of 5-16 year olds engaged in 2 hours a week minimum of high quality PE and school sport beyond the curriculum. This will be measured by the annual PESSCL Survey. Initial survey results show that Sunderland is performing above target at 86%, against an upper threshold of 80%.

Choice and Opportunity (PI 4)

The percentage of the population that is within 20 minutes travel time (urban areas by foot; rural areas by car) of a range of three different sports facility types of which one has achieved a quality assured standard. Therefore, it has been necessary to register Sunderland's ten sports facilities that are quality assured using one of the approved schemes: Quest; ISO 9001:2000; Green Flag; Charter Mark; Investors in Excellence (in Sunderland's case ISO 9001: 2000). Active Places Survey results

will not be available until December 2006. For further information, visit Sport England's Active Places website www.activeplaces.com that details all of Sunderland's local sports facilities.

Equity

- Representative facility use by people from the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups (D/E's) **(PI 5)**
- Representative facility use by young people aged 11-19 years **(PI 6)**
- Representative facility use by people from BME groups **(PI 7)**
- Representative facility use by people aged over 60 years **(PI 8)**
- Proportion of facility use by disabled people aged under 60 years **(PI 9)**

These indicators will not form part of the CPA inspection in January 2007, but will still need to be collected by the City Council. The indicators will be collected via a survey, programme and financial details, of at least two leisure centres or 25% of our leisure centres (which ever is the greater). The survey will be carried out by either the National Benchmarking Service or APSE Performance Networks.

Value for money

- Subsidy per visit **(PI 10)**
- Visits per square metre **(PI 11)**

These indicators will also be measured from the survey detailed above.

Other PI's detailed within the Corporate Improvement Plan

- Swimming Pools and Sports Centres - Number of swims and other visits per 1,000 population **(PI 11)**
- Swimming Pools and Sports Centres - Net cost per swim / visit **(PI 12)**
- Number of playgrounds / play areas, provided by the Council per 1000 children (under 12's) **(PI 13)**
- The % of playgrounds that conform to National Standards for Local Equipped Play Areas **(PI 14)**
- The % of playgrounds that conform to National Standards for larger, neighbourhood equipped areas **(PI 15)**

Other sport related indicators in the culture block:

- Percentage of total length of footpaths and other rights of way easy to use by members of the public
- Resident satisfaction with sport / leisure facilities (BVPI 118)
- Sport PI's that contribute to the delivery of the Cultural Strategy
- Sport PI's that contribute to the Children and Young People's Plan

For more information about these indicators and how they will be measured visit the Sport England website www.sportengland.org/cpa

5.0 CULTURAL INDICATORS

5.1 The City Council is aware of 14 indicators which will be used to judge performance for 2006/2007. It is anticipated that a further 4 will be announced by DCMS giving a total of 18 performance indicators.

5.2 Out of 14 indicators that are known, current performance is as follows:

- 3 indicators are at or below lower threshold
- 5 between the thresholds

- 6 at or above upper thresholds

5.3 In order to achieve a score of 3, there can be no more than 15% of indicators at or below the lower threshold. It is planned to target getting 3 of the Library PI's out of the lower threshold. These are as follows:

- a) C11b – Annual items added through purchase per 1,000 population
 - Current Position: lower threshold (mid) Reserved
 - Action Taken to Date: Migration to new LMS and Project underway to check quality of stock data. Funding issues currently being raised through EMT and MTFP
- b) C12b (revised for 2006) – Books available for issues per 1,000 population
 - Current Position: lower threshold
 - Action Taken to Date: There is a concern that following a Stock Audit there will be a discrepancy between the figures on the Library Management System and the actual figures. It is predicted that the thresholds will rise on an annual basis.
- c) C4 - Active borrowers as a percentage of the population
 - Current Position: lower
 - Action taken to date: 68,000 active borrowers needed to achieve mid threshold compared to 40,000 at present. 78,000 needed to achieve upper threshold. An active marketing campaign is currently being developed with proposals for additional investment if available to assist with this.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 In order to monitor the outcomes from the PI's indicated above, Corporate Services Performance Improvement Team have established a performance management framework, which includes the completion of Performance Workbooks that will monitor Cultural performance on a quarterly and annual basis.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 The background papers that were relied upon to compile this report are:

- Sport England publication 'CPA Sport in the culture block'
- ActiveCity Sunderland publication 2004

APPENDIX 1

1.0 TOWARDS AN EXCELLENT SERVICE (TAES)

- 1.1 In recent month's the Directorate have taken advantage of training provided by Sport England to develop a Service Improvement Plan and in the process assessed the service through the robust self-assessment model identified below.

The Excellence Framework for Sport and Recreation Services has been developed to achieve three objectives:

- To provide a basis for self-assessment that will enable Sport and Recreation providers to achieve continuous improvement for the users of our services.
- To provide a vehicle through which the national priorities for sport and physical activity outlined above could be achieved by all the organisations involved alongside local priorities in each community.
- To provide a basis for future inspection processes should these be developed in the future.

- 1.2 The Excellence Framework is primarily aimed at local government services and is equally applicable to County, District, Unitary and Metropolitan authorities. However the diversity in scale and structure of provision in these authorities means that it will be critical to ensure that the "scope" of the assessment is very clearly defined at the outset and guidance on this is given in a later section. ***Notwithstanding this the fundamental belief is that the principles of good management are the same in any organisation whatever its size or structure.***

- 1.3 The Excellence Framework is equally applicable to other organisations such as National Governing Bodies of sport, local Sport Partnerships and the national agencies. The format of the Framework can also be adapted to other Leisure and Cultural functions that have not yet developed their own frameworks or more generically to an integrated Leisure or Cultural Services department although separate evidence schedules would need to be developed.

- 1.4 The Excellence Framework has been developed using existing quality management models, inspection frameworks and accreditation systems supplemented by consultation with practitioners in the field. This has been supplemented by a piloting process with six local authorities.

- 1.5 Some of these existing frameworks such as IIP, the equality standard and Quest are recognisable building blocks in the process of seeking excellence, but are often narrow in their scope. The Excellence Framework has sought to incorporate the best of existing quality standards in its design, so organisations that are already using these tools will be well placed to achieve high ratings under the Framework.

- 1.6 From the analysis of these existing frameworks and the consultation it is clear that there are eight key factors that influence the quality of Sport and Recreation services delivered to our users. Through effective management in all these areas we can improve the services we deliver on a continuous basis. These factors have been developed around eight "themes".

Leadership
Policy and Strategy

Community Engagement
Partnership Working
Use of Resource
People Management
Standards of Service
Performance Measurement and Learning

- 1.7 Within each theme criteria have been identified which define the key aspects of a quality service, with “equality” and “service access” being effectively integrated into every theme. Within each criterion are a number of descriptors that further define the criteria against which the service can be measured using the evidence suggested in the schedule.
- 1.8 The organisation is ultimately assessed at one of four levels:

Poor:

A poor organisation is one where there is little, or no, evidence of the specific criteria, or no awareness or commitment to create or develop the criteria.

Fair:

A fair organisation will be one where there is evidence that the processes of planning and developing the criteria has commenced and is progressing.

Good:

A good organisation will be one where there is evidence that demonstrates the key criteria are in place.

Excellent:

An excellent organisation will be able to evidence all the aspects of a good organisation but will also be able to demonstrate that the key criteria have been in place long enough for it to evidence the impact of what it has achieved in terms of real outcomes. It will also be able to demonstrate how it has learned from review and evaluation to a degree that it can evidence continuous improvement and how it has had a promotional effect on the rest of the organisation or others outside the service.

APPENDIX 2

REGIONAL COMMENTARIES

- 2.1 Regional Commentaries will be developed across the whole cultural spectrum and have been developed in consultation with a wide range of partners including DCMS, regional agencies for Sport England, the Arts Council England, the Museums Libraries and Archives Council and Regional Cultural Consortia. Other regional bodies such as English Heritage and Regional Development Agencies will be invited to participate where and when appropriate.
- 2.2 There are four inter-related purposes linked to Regional Commentaries:
- A means to develop and improve working relationships between Local Authorities and Regional Agencies.
 - A contribution to a better understanding of the work of Local Authorities and Regional Agencies.
 - A focus for discussing how national, regional and local objectives are aligned and can be developed, to ensure that Cultural contributes to shared priorities and is incorporated in partnerships, local area agreements, regional strategies and corporate plans.
 - A basis to discuss service planning, delivery and improvement in Local Authorities and explore the capacity and potential of regional agencies to support improvement.
- 2.3 Commentaries form an important part of the emerging improvement strategy for Cultural Services, involving the main regional agencies in supporting service improvement and cultural planning, for example through LAA's. They are aligned with the emerging agenda around self improvement and allow regional agencies to support and be a 'critical friend' in areas of planning, service delivery and performance (for cultural opportunities).
- 2.4 Regional Commentaries will bring local agencies together and encourage closer cohesion and a joining up of cultural provision on the ground. Cultural opportunities and experiences have a practical part to play in creating attractive and vibrant places to live, which in turn contributes to economic, social and environmental well being of our City.
- A structured dialogue between the regional agencies and the Local Authority resulting in a shared improvement process and a means to clarify relationships and expectations.
 - An opportunity for Local Authorities to gauge their own position against the expectations of regional agencies and an incentive to adopt self-assessment and self-improvement.
 - An opportunity for cultural providers to raise the profile and importance of local government and its partners across and within stakeholder groups.

- Opportunities for regional agencies to better understand Local Authorities and local government's overall position in the region and for Local Authorities to inform and shape national and regional policy making in culture.
- A more rounded, locally driven, view of the cultural offering in a locality as an alternative to, or to complement, data based assessments.
- Improved cultural planning and delivery so that local people's cultural expectations are met and in the best cases, exceeded.
- Strengthening of the links to wider local and regional agendas through culture's contribution to health, regeneration and safer and stronger communities.

2.5 It is intended that Regional Commentaries are not inspections by 'the back door', nor are they a scored judgement in anyway. Commentaries will not be used in the CPA process, however they will be used to inform and guide.