



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HERITAGE, LEISURE AND SPORT SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 8 JANUARY 2013 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dr Barton (Chair)
Councillor Naylor (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Fonseca Councillor Grant
Councillor Newcombe

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Clair – Assistant City Mayor, Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport

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49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Fonseca declared an Other Disclosable Interest in that he was Chair of the Daman Community of Leicester (affiliated to Voluntary Action Leicester).

51. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

that it be agreed that the minutes of the Joint Heritage, Leisure and Sport and Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commissions held on 14 November 2012 and the minutes of the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission held on 4 December 2012 be confirmed as correct records.

52. PETITIONS

There were no petitions.

53. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

There were no questions, representations or statements of case.

54. THE ROLE AND PERFORMANCE OF SPORTS CENTRES ACROSS THE CITY

The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report relating to the role and performance of Sports Centres across the city.

Paul Edwards, Head of Sports, Mark Laywood, Sports Project Manager and Victoria Ball, Sports Regeneration Officer presented the report and responded to queries raised by Members.

Swimming

The Head of Sports referred Members to Appendix 1 of the report and there followed some discussion relating to participation rates in swimming. The Head of Sports explained that free swimming had been very popular but recently appeared to have decreased in popularity. The Commission heard that this was possibly because when free swimming was first introduced, it was a new initiative which had attracted a considerable amount of interest.

It was an Ofsted requirement that children learned to swim as part of the school curriculum, but the Sports Regeneration Officer had carried out a survey and found that only about 50% of city schools took their children for swimming lessons. Members asked the reasons for this, and heard that this was probably due to issues relating to organising transport to and from the swimming pool and also the time factor, as it took approximately 90 minutes out of the school day for a 20 minute swimming lesson. The Sports Regeneration Officer explained that they were looking at ways of organising the transport for the schools. This happened successfully in other local authorities and had resulted in 100% of schools participating in school swimming sessions.

It was noted that four swimming pools were offering free swimming at the weekends during term time and a query was raised as to whether there were plans for these free swimming sessions to be offered at other pools. The Head of Sports advised that this was dependent on whether any further funding would be received from the NHS.

Efforts had been made to encourage older people to swim, following concerns expressed by them that they could not afford the charges. In response to these concerns, gym charges had been increased and swimming fees reduced; this had resulted in an increase in the number of older people participating in swimming sessions.

Satisfaction Levels (Leisure Centres - Opinion meter survey)

Members were referred to Appendix 2 of the report. It was noted that 50% of customers who had responded in the latest survey wanted lower prices, compared to 28% who had responded in the previous survey two years ago. The Head of Sport explained that prices were measured against other private and public sector charges and they tried to offer value for money. There were also discount schemes and for £31 per month, a customer could participate in a whole range of activities including aerobics and rock climbing. There was also a reduced corporate discount; companies did not pay the Council for the corporate discount but the Council benefited anyway by increased membership as staff in companies involved were encouraged to join up because of the discounted price.

Concerns were raised that the survey had shown that there had been complaints against staff. Comments were made that these complaints were unfair because the centres' staff were very good. Another view was expressed however that the survey's findings should not be dismissed; no organisation had 100% perfect staff and if there were any problems with staff, they needed to be addressed.

Questions were raised relating to staff training and the Head of Sport responded that training was carried out very regularly on a whole range of issues such as customer services, data protection and evacuation procedures, and not just lifeguarding. Skills audits were also carried out to identify where more training might be needed and staff who did not attend training sessions had been disciplined in the past.

A question was raised relating to the demographics of the survey and a comment was made that some cultural groups tended to rate very low generally. In response to a request from the Member, officers agreed to forward the questionnaire and raw data (anonymised) to him and responded that they welcomed his comments in view of his experience in this field. A concern was also raised relating to people who were not included in the survey because they did not use the centre because of the cost of admission.

Football Development Strategy

The Sports Project Manager, who had been involved in the Football Development Strategy since its inception, referred members of the Commission to Appendix 3 of the report and explained that officers were confident that targets would be met.

A query was raised relating to an area on Martin Street where children had previously been able to play football, but could no longer do so because the area had been secured. Access to the ground was sought so that the children could play there once more. A Member commented that he was aware of the area in question and whilst he felt that it would be good to have football there

again, the ground had been used inappropriately and there had also been a lot of problems with dog fouling which had resulted in the area being locked up. The Head of Sport suggested that it would be best for the Sports Project Manager to speak to the community outreach officer and then to liaise with the Councillor who had raised the concern, in order to try to find a way forward.

A query was raised as to why there were no figures for some teams, such as for females with disabilities. Members heard that this was a new target which had been set by the Football Association. The 11th football site to be delivered across the city would be at the Riverside College site and it was anticipated that this would attract players with disabilities. It was understood that there were girls with disabilities at Ellesmere College who were very interested in playing football and were looking forward to the facilities opening.

Members heard that there was an excellent football site at New College which had attracted a great deal of community involvement. Some of the clubs there were taking on more responsibility; they had their own keys to the facilities and had also taken over the maintenance of the pitches from the college itself.

Sports Centre Usage Figures

The Head of Sports referred Members to Appendix 4 of the report, and explained that during 2011/2012 there had been over 2 million visits to community centres, and it was expected that the numbers would increase following the 2012 Olympics. It was also expected that there would be a decrease in the numbers using some sites such as golf courses, because of the very wet summer last year.

Members heard that the numbers of visitors to the Aylestone Leisure Centre were lower during 2011/2012 because the VIP Record Fairs were no longer trading. These record fairs had previously been held at the Aylestone Leisure Centre and had attracted a lot of visitors to the centre.

Members were also asked to note that the usage figures for St Margaret's Pastures appeared to be down, but the apparent drop in usage was a result of a different method of recording.

A query was raised relating to the usage figures for 2011/2012 for Braunstone Leisure Centre which appeared to be substantially down on previous years. The Head of Sports commented that this might be an error and he would check the figures.

A comment was made that usage was higher in the more modern centres and that there was a need to consider upgrading the older facilities at some point. The Head of Sport concurred; he explained that Evington Leisure Centre had been upgraded and the facilities improved; however it was not possible to make that sort of capital investment elsewhere at the moment because of the budget constraints.

Sports Centre Membership

The Head of Sports referred to Appendix 5, which detailed an analysis of the membership of Sports and Leisure Centres. It was noted that the highest category of users were the unemployed at 31% and the lowest levels of users were from the professional and middle management groups. The Head of Sports explained that people from the professional and middle management groups generally had a choice as to the type of gym they used as private gyms were very much more expensive.

Leicester Sports Partnership Trust (LSPT)

The Chair referred to membership of the Leicester Sports Partnership Board and expressed concern that the membership did not appear to be well balanced, as the voluntary sector had significant involvement in the Trust but were not represented on the Board. The Sports Regeneration Officer concurred and responded that this point had been raised with the Chair, Rory Underwood who was considering inviting someone from the voluntary sector onto the Board.

The Head of Sport explained that the Trust brought a range of partners together and provided an opportunity to work with elite sporting clubs. The current Action Plan (Appendix 7 of the report) would be closed off in March 2013, though he did not envisage that the priorities would be very different in the new Action Plan. The Action Plan was an important aid to applying for funding to address some of the current disadvantages in sport in Leicester and to access appropriate funding streams, from organisations such as Sport England.

Concerns were expressed that the Action Plan appeared to provide a list of what was already being offered in Leicester and a query was raised as to whether the next Action Plan would be more wide reaching. The Head of Sports responded that there was a commitment to working together and improvements would be made; however there was also a need to work smarter as to ways of accessing funding streams.

A suggestion was made that the Leicester Sports Partnership Board Action Plan should be brought to the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission on an annual basis. However, the Chair responded that this should really be a decision for any future Chairs of the Commission to take.

The Chair thanked officers for their hard work in gathering the information and compiling the report. A draft final report on the Commission's review into understanding sports participation rates of adults in Leicester would be brought to a future meeting of the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission in either February or March 2013.

55. REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE SPORTS PARTNERSHIP TRUST

The report on the work of the Sports Partnership Trust was considered by

Members in the previous agenda item as part of the discussion on the role and performance of the Sports Centres across the city.

56. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Chair announced that there would be a Special Meeting of the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission on Tuesday 15 January to consider the budget.

The next ordinary meeting of the Commission would be held on Tuesday 5 February 2013.

57. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.