



Leicester
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2013 at 5.30 pm

P R E S E N T :

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

Councillor Fonseca

Councillor Kamal

Councillor Newcombe

IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor Clair – Assistant City Mayor, Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport
Cllr Cassidy – Chair of the Overview Select Committee

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business on the agenda.

Councillor Naylor declared an “other disclosable interest” (ODI) in that he received free prescriptions.

Councillor Newcombe declared an “other disclosable interest” (ODI) in that he received free prescriptions.

3. PETITIONS

The meeting heard that no petitions had been received.

4. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

The meeting heard that no questions, representations or statements of case had been received.

5. 2013/2014 BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Assistant City Mayor, Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport presented the 2013/14 draft Budget Proposals relating to the Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport portfolio.

The Assistant City Mayor explained that it was predicted that the current period of financial difficulty would continue beyond 2013 / 14 and further substantial savings would be required up to 2017. In order to make the necessary savings, efforts had been made to identify the best areas to target for economies. The Assistant City Mayor elaborated on the following proposals for making savings:

- To remove the big screen in Humberstone Gate. If this was approved, the removal of the screen would incur some costs, but it was anticipated that the forecasted savings would be seen in 2014/ 15.
- To implement a charge for the over 60's of £1 per visit to leisure centres. It was however further proposed to introduce a leisure card at a cost of £5 per month, which would allow the over 60's admission to city leisure centres for that month. This would result in savings for people who were frequent users of the centres.

The Assistant City Mayor explained that he had attended the Forum for Older People where these proposals were discussed and the comments received from the Forum were positive.

- To develop a soil processing facility so that soil could be removed from parks and be reused. If the soil could be recycled, savings could be made by 2014/15. It would probably take an officer about one year to make the necessary arrangements.
- There were also proposals to identify further savings at DeMontfort Hall (DMH), Curve and Phoenix by greater sharing of management, staff and systems.

DeMontfort Hall (DMH), Curve and Phoenix

It was noted that the 2012 / 2013 budget for DMH, Curve and Phoenix was £2192,000 and a breakdown of this figure was requested. The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services responded that the approximate figures were as follows:

- a) DMH received £1m
- b) Curve received £790,000

c) Phoenix received £280,000

Of the three, DMH was the only venue which received 100% of its funding from Leicester City Council. Curve and Phoenix received funding from outside organisations (such as the Arts Council). Negotiations were already taking place with the venues to identify how savings could be made. Councillor Cassidy, who as Chair of the Overview Select Committee had been invited to the meeting explained that he understood that the venues were willing to work together and it was felt that the budget cuts should not affect their viability. The Chair added that she understood that the changes were also about providing a better service and not purely about making savings. The Director, Culture and Neighbourhood Services commented that it would be a challenge to make the required savings of £190,000 by 2014/15 but it was hoped that by working with the relevant Chairs and Chief Executive, these savings could be realised. Members requested that updates on those discussions with the Chairs and Chief Executive, and also on the impact on the venues, as a result of the reductions in funding, be brought to a future meeting of the commission.

Charges for the city residents age 60 plus to use leisure centres.

It was noted that an estimated £40,000 would be generated by charging city residents aged 60 plus, £1 per session to use facilities in leisure centres and the impact on this estimate, because of the implementation of the £5 leisure card was queried. The Head of Sports advised that whilst it is not possible to be exact, it was not expected that this would result in a reduction in that figure. A request was made for a report back to the committee on the impact of the proposals if implemented, on leisure centres.

There was some discussion relating to charges for people who had been referred for exercise programmes by the NHS, and the Head of Sports advised that funding was received from the NHS. There were on average 150 -180 referrals each month. Where people were under the age of 60 and were being referred for exercise, they would pay £2 per session. Members heard that approximately three quarters of all the people who were prescribed exercise were aged 60 plus and suggestions came from Members that they should be given free exercise sessions. A concern was raised however as to whether the granting of this concession to the over 60's and not to those people under 60 who were also on an exercise referral scheme could be justified.

Members were of the view that help was needed to support those people who were in receipt of free prescriptions and who had been 'prescribed' exercise. The Head of Sport commented that it was difficult to ascertain which leisure centre users were in receipt of free prescriptions and he suggested that it might be better to ask the NHS as to whether they were able to fund all exercise referrals.

The Head of Sport was asked if there would be a cumulative financial impact on the over 60's if they were asked to pay for admission to leisure centres as well as their bus fare. He explained that out of the twenty four '50 plus' sessions, only two sessions were held prior to 9.30am.

Removal of the big screen from Humberstone Gate

The Director, Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that the big screen had at times added an element of excitement to the big sporting occasions. There were issues with funding the costs of running big screens generally and in other cities there had been moves to set up consortiums to manage the big screens with a view to making these more financially viable. However there were concerns that there would be costs incurred in managing such a scheme, so the overall costs would not be eliminated. The Chair commented that she had not heard any favourable comments in support of the big screen although she felt that it had provided a useful backdrop when special events were being staged. She felt that it would be good to have a temporary screen so that on special occasions people could still enjoy the facility. A caution was expressed that the costs associated with such a temporary screen would need to be considered.

The Director, Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that there were also costs of policing events at the Big Screen, which could be as high as £10,000 to police a major football event. There was no budget for this and if the big screen was still in place there was concern that the council would come under pressure to show big sporting events without having the resources to do so.

RESOLVED:

that it be agreed:

- 1) that the commission welcomes the review of the proposals to charge over 60's for admission to leisure centres, and asks that this commission receives an update on the working of the scheme after it has been in operation for six months;
- 2) that the commission notes the further work which will be undertaken in respect of funding to major venues and requests that a report on the developing discussions with those venues, be brought to a future meeting of the commission;
- 3) that the commission receives a future report on the impact of the reduction in funding scheduled for 2014/15 on the three major venues; and
- 4) that the commission calls on the City Council to refer the issue of NHS exercise prescriptions to the Health Service with a view to obtaining financial support to provide free entry to health / leisure centres for those on free prescriptions.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 6.14 pm.

