



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HERITAGE CULTURE LEISURE AND TOURISM SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: TUESDAY, 24 AUGUST 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Halford (Chair)

Councillor Ali (Vice Chair)

Councillor Dr Barton
Councillor Cole

Councillor Dawood
Councillor Shelton

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Solanki, Andrew Beddow, and Joanna Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Heritage, Culture, Leisure and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held 8 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Shelton noted that he had suggested a heritage project relating to Leicester's historical cinemas, potentially a display at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

4. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair noted her thanks to Council Officers for providing a program of activities during the summer.

5. PETITIONS

The Monitoring Officer reported that no petitions had been received.

6. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Monitoring Officer reported that no questions, representations, or statements of case had been received.

7. LEISURE CENTRES AND FACILITIES REOPENING UPDATE

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services, introduced the item. It was noted that this item was an update on the reopening of leisure centres and facilities in the city.

Victoria Ball, Sports and Active Recreation Development Manager, presented the item, it was noted that:

- All activities that the Service offered had now been reopened and were operating at a 70% capacity. The capacity would be reviewed in September.
- It was anticipated that the number of Active Leicester members would not exceed pre-Covid levels until March 2022.
- There was a national shortage of swimming teachers, explaining the slow recovery of Active Leicester swimming members.
- The number of Active Leicester members for golf had grown during the Covid-19 lockdowns.
- There had been a citywide reopening sales promotion.
- The refurbished Evington Leisure Centre had opened in June and had been well received by users.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- The shortage of swimming teachers had forced a scale-back of program delivery, there was a waiting list of 600 for the learn to swim program. The reason for the national shortage was uncertain. Training was being offered for lifeguard and instructor qualifications.
- The refurbishment of Evington Leisure Centre had brought in 800 new members to the facility, a breakdown of the numbers of those new members coming in from the county could be provided at the next meeting of the Commission as well as statistics on the retention of members after the expiration of the 50% membership discount.
- There was ongoing messaging to encourage confidence in young people to return to these Leisure Centres.
- Equipment removed from New Parks Leisure Centre had been sent to Leicester Leys Leisure Centre. It would be returned for the reopening of the Centre. It was hoped that the Centre would be reopened in mid-September, a recruitment drive was ongoing due to other staff at the Centre being redeployed to other services.

- A Capital Program was ongoing to refurbish Leisure Centres, a definitive date on the refurbishment of New Parks Leisure Centre couldn't be confirmed.
- Councillors were encouraged to spread the word among constituents that Leisure Centre facilities were safe to use.
- The Active Leicester Strategy would soon expire, work was ongoing to develop a new strategy in its place.

AGREED

1. That the Commission recommends that the Service and Councillors play their part in encouraging residents to use Leisure and Sports Activities.
2. That the Commission requests that an update on the next Sports Strategy be brought to a future Commission meeting.
3. That the Commission requests the numbers of Evington Leisure Centre members from outside of the city and the retention statistics from those joining with the 50% discount.
4. That the Commission requests an update on the Leisure Centre Refurbishment Capital Program.

8. SUMMER IN THE CITY PROGRAMME UPDATE

Councillor Clair, Deputy City Mayor for Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services, introduced the item. It was noted that this program of activities was funded by the Covid Recovery Fund.

Kellie Bugby, Senior Festival and Events Officer, presented the item. It was noted that:

- The 6-week program was funded by a grant of £115,000 from the Covid Recovery Fund.
- There were 52 days of programming with 36 individual activities and events.
- The Rocket Round Leicester Trail had done well in bringing people back to the city. Rockets would be auctioned off at the end of September.
- The main cost of the program was from staffing.

In response to questions from Councillors it was noted that:

- Advertising for the events had been done primarily through official Council social media accounts.
- There had been a positive bounce back in terms of footfall in the city.
- It was possible to make estimates of the financial impact on the city of the program. A full evaluation could be carried out at the program's conclusion.
- It would be a challenge to sustain such a program due to the funding coming from a temporary relief fund.
- The program was compensating for the cancellation of large city-wide events such as the Riverside Festival and Carnival.

- Events for holidays later in the year such as Diwali and Christmas, were currently being looked at.
- Marketing was carried out by an external company.

AGREED

1. That the Commission recommends that a similar program of events be explored as a possibility for Christmas time and other times of the year.
2. That the Commission recommends that the possibility of repeating certain events annually, such as the Beach in the City.

9. HAYMARKET THEATRE FUTURE USE UPDATE

The Chair noted that this item was being taken due to the press release on the soft marketing exercise relating to the Haymarket Theatre, and that a full item on the venue would be brought to a later meeting of the Commission.

Mike Dalzell, Director of Tourism, Culture, and Inward Investment, presented the item. It was noted that:

- At the Haymarket Theatre, work was currently ongoing to modernise the venue, including disposing of redundant equipment, working on the safety of the venue, and redecorating. There were also issues relating to accessibility in the building which would be difficult to address.
- A number of organisations had contacted the Council with regards to potential uses of the building.
- In a soft market testing exercise, an invitation was put out to parties who may be interested in using or operating the venue.
- Information on responses from this exercise had recently been received. There were 10 responses in total, of which 4 were interested in taking over the building. Most respondents stated they would be looking for financial support from the Council if using or operating the venue.
- These responses had not yet been subject to detailed discussion or action.

In response to Member's questions, it was noted that:

- There was still work to be done on the infrastructure of the venue to get it up to modern standards.
- It was hoped that the recent redevelopment of the area near the venue on Belgrave Gate would improve the area and that the eventual reopening of the venue would support that regeneration.
- The use of the building as a music venue could be a strong part of its offer.
- The Council had a long-term lease on the building, so was intent on reopening it, adding it to the city's offer, and making it profitable.

AGREED:

1. That the Commission recommends that a detailed item be brought to a future meeting on the future use of the Haymarket Theatre.

10. JEWRY WALL MUSEUM REDEVELOPMENT SITE VISIT FEEDBACK

The Chair presented the item. It was noted that Members of the Commission had recently attended a site visit to see the ongoing work to redevelop the Jewry Wall Museum. Commission Members were invited to comment on their thoughts and experiences of the site visit.

Members commented positively on the site visit, noting the scale of the project and space. It was hoped that the presence of journalists at the visit could help communicate to the public the wealth of the roman architecture on the site.

11. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair noted that any suggestions for future items for the Commission should be emailed to herself or the Scrutiny Policy Officer.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 6.57pm.

