



Leicester  
City Council

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

Held: TUESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2022 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Halford (Chair)

Councillor Dr Barton  
Councillor Dawood

Councillor March  
Councillor Master

In Attendance

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Clair – Culture, Leisure Sport and Regulatory Services

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**41. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed those present and led introductions.

The Chair announced that item 7 of the agenda on Heritage Action Zones had been withdrawn from this meeting and would be rescheduled in due course.

The Chair extended thanks to the Head of Arts & Museums and the Director for Tourism, Culture & Inward Investment for sharing the excellent news that the City council's museums service had been confirmed as a member of the Arts Councils National Portfolio of funded organisations for 2023-26 which meant the council would benefit from extra Arts Council England investment.

**42. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Shelton.

**43. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any interests they had in the business to be discussed.

There were no declarations of interest.

**44. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

AGREED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> September

2022 were an accurate record.

#### **45. PETITIONS**

The Monitoring Officer reported there were no petitions.

#### **46. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE**

The Monitoring Officer reported there were no questions, representations or statements of case.

#### **47. PROVISION OF SWIM LEICESTER FOR ADULTS IN LEICESTER**

The Director of Delivery, Communications and Political Governance submitted a report on the provision for swimming and swimming lessons in Leicester.

Deputy City Mayor Clair introduced the report advising members that this report had a particular focus on adults and reminded them of a previous update about the Learn to Swim programme for children.

It was noted that a Swim Leicester survey had been undertaken receiving approximately 500 responses that showed not all were being reached or engaged to participate in swimming programmes. It was acknowledged that Leicester was a multi-cultural city and there were barriers to further overcome to increase adult participation in swimming lessons.

The Chair invited Summaya Mughal a BBC presenter to address the commission to talk about her experience.

Summaya Mughal, BBC presenter addressed the commission about her recent swimming challenge “Brown Girl Can’t Swim” and talked about her experiences of being unable to swim and how she had taken up the challenge to learn to swim within 8 weeks, and how as part of that journey she also explored why South Asian women were less likely to swim and why cultural barriers stopped her from learning to swim during school years.

Summaya explained how, supported by Active Nottingham during the challenge, she had engaged with diverse communities and worked with the black swimming association to look at the lack of representation of black and Asian people in recreational and elite swimming and how she hoped to break down misconceptions and encourage more people to take up swimming.

Referring to some of the barriers that had been identified as part of “Brown Girl Can’t Swim”, Summaya explained that accessibility was very important; separate classes for men and women were good but did not remove the barriers for all, she suggested more thought was needed around swimming programmes to avoid key times/dates e.g., prayer times; school pick up/drop off times or having more times that suited people who worked all day. Another considerable issue was around modesty, e.g., the type of swimwear that could be worn. Changing rooms also presented issues and having changing rooms

that allowed people to exit straight into the pool rather than have a lengthy walk would be better.

Communication was suggested as another key factor that could be used to break down barriers, e.g., pool websites could be used to promote awareness of swimwear that could be worn and so remove swimwear as a barrier; simple signage at leisure centres could also be used to address that.

Members considered the report, the England Swims survey findings and statistical data provided. The ensuing discussion included the following points:

- Nationally 1 in 3 adults could not swim 25 metres. The England Swims survey data reflected the disparity of swimming abilities by ethnicity and gender differences, it was noticeable that 49% of people from ethnic communities could not swim more than 25 metres compared to 14% of people from a white background.
- Swimming was an important life skill that brought with it many health benefits and should therefore be better promoted and prioritised.
- Members felt swimming sessions should take place where there was demand and there should be more linkage with other providers, although budget pressures were recognised.
- Leicester had one of the most diverse communities in the country and although demand was high that was underrepresented in certain communities and needed the support of the local authority to prioritise swimming.
- It was suggested the council should look more creatively to get people to swim and use facilities, e.g., by reviewing times when provisions were open and engaging with groups or organisations that could use the facilities at other times.
- It was suggested that prior to Covid, Leicester had several grass roots groups doing their own sessions and activities but those had diminished and needed to be resumed.

Members talked about the barriers to swimming and steps that could be taken to address those. In relation to modesty, swimming facilities, design and layout were important factors, not just in terms of pool access from changing rooms but also in the fabric of buildings, i.e., open glass windows that looked aesthetically pleasing outside and allowed people to view in were very off putting to many who did not want passers-by to see them.

Another important consideration was around staffing too e.g., swim instructors and lifeguards that were representative of the community or same sex for swimming lessons/group sessions. Officers responded in relation to requests for female lifeguards, that such requests were made and where possible accommodated. The current workforce included a lot of instructors who were multi-lingual and from different areas that the service would continue to recruit from to meet diverse needs.

There was a brief discussion about ensuring suitable signage across facilities i.e., options of what to wear at every pool across Leicester and better communicating to break down barriers, market adult lessons and change

behaviours. It was recognised there was further work to do around communications as well as exploring finer details as referred to earlier and for example dealing with simple things like properly differentiating between swimming lessons and swimming sessions.

In terms of the school swimming offer, school swimming formed a large part of what the council offered, and this provision occurred during the school day. It was an Ofsted requirement that children should learn to swim 25 metres by end of year 6. At least a hundred schools were involved in the school swimming programme visiting pools regularly, however there were difficulties engaging with one or two schools, but aside from school usage pools were generally quiet during the day.

Regarding take up of swimming in schools for secondary school age, Swim England promoted opportunities with 14+ years and local colleges, and also through swimming clubs.

Members referred to the disparity figures and issues around equalities noting this was not a new issue. It was noted the report shifted from generally talking about BAME communities to being more specific about the Muslim community, and it was queried why that distinction was made.

Officers responded to some of the points made but were unable to answer why the report focused on the Muslim community and agreed to take that to Swim England to establish why there was that focus. It was noted there were different barriers to different communities and not all were the same which was why detail was important. The Swim England report provided an opportunity to take away information and learn, demand was growing, and more ethnic communities were taking up lessons although there were challenges around pool time and balancing availability as well as providing female guards/teachers.

As regards recruitment of swimming teachers, this was a challenge and as the swimming programme grew there was a perpetual cycle of turnover of teachers. It was expensive to gain accreditation and so a local initiative was put in place that involved paying for the qualification on basis they stay a length of time and that was working well.

As far as challenges around pool time and sessions available, the service was looking at more targeted courses such as female only cohorts or 50 plus groups rather than open courses with a mix of people and being able to do targeted courses may help address some of the barriers referred to during discussion.

Regarding capacity for adult swim provision there was room for growth, it was intended to expand that as more teachers became available and to work with centre managers to make better use of pools, pool timings or moving other programmes.

Members discussed the pool facilities available in the city, noting that 3 of the

most deprived wards in the city did not have any leisure facilities which presented a barrier as far as being accessible. Members also asked about the capital investment programmes predominantly around health and fitness and how those were being used to improve swimming take up. Members also queried the cost of providing the adult swim service, the revenue generated and whether it was running at a loss.

Members were informed that in terms of capital programme, some upgrades of changing rooms had been done, however many leisure centres were over 30 years old so there were limitations and a more innovative approach to changing spaces was difficult to deliver, but where there was scope to do it, the council had done so such as Leicester Leys which was using space more effectively. Cossington was another example where having changing facilities around the pool was better as people can change and get straight into pool.

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Clair commented that the council had so far invested in enhancing leisure facilities in terms of fitness equipment, gym equipment, dance studios but as far as swimming pools those layouts remained the same as pool spaces could not easily be reconfigured.

The Head of Sports commented that it was important to highlight the Leicester swim offer compared to other cities, Leicester enjoyed a great distribution of swimming pools across the city compared to other cities such as Derby that had lost some of those provisions. It was advised that where the service looked at securing investment that was to upgrade things like changing facilities, the vast majority of complaints were associated with changing facilities and so those have been upgraded. In relation to health and fitness facilities it was recognised there was a demand for that and progress/upgrades over the last 5 years had seen membership increase up to 12,000 people generating better income.

Members concluded the key aspects were a need to ensure equality of distribution of assets; to explore further the amount of downtime in pools and to engage with any organisations that would take up the space and pay for that.

The Chair enquired about provisions for disabled people learning to swim and noted that this was dependent on the level of need and could include group sessions or specific 1-1 learning. The service also worked with the charity Level Water who funded primary age children with physical, sight and hearing needs to learn to swim.

The Chair thanked Summaya for taking the time to address the commission and advised that the comments and information from the discussion of this item would be used to help inform the current task group review.

The Chair noted that a report would be brought to the next meeting to include detail of the impact of the economic and energy crisis on Leisure Centres and Swimming facilities.

**AGREED:**

1. That the contents of the report be noted.
2. That Officers provide members with financial details and data around revenue income and running costs for swimming provision and pools to Members of the Commission outside this meeting.
3. That a report on the impact of the economic and energy crisis on Leisure Centres and Swimming facilities be brought to the next meeting.

#### **48. HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

#### **49. CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN EVENTS**

The Director of Tourism, Culture and Inward Investment submitted a report on the upcoming Christmas Campaign Events in Leicester.

Deputy City Mayor Clair – Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services introduced the report noting that the events were intended to make Christmas an inclusive event for everyone to enjoy with an increased offer which had seen different themes and activities happening across the city.

Jackie Ledger, Place Marketing Manager gave a presentation of the key elements to the campaign which included the following:

- The place marketing, branding and active promotion of the events and activities for this Christmas around a theme of Christmas Cracker.
- Involvement of “Arch Creative” who had devised the campaign theme and concept of Christmas Cracker which naturally followed previous years’ campaigns.
- The event programme which contained new 3D images and retained an association with the “Make a date with Leicester” campaign to encourage wider use of retail, catering and bars in the city whilst visiting during the Christmas period.
- A promotional video created for social media and to go out to wider audiences.
- Details of the festive adventure trail and free activities to engage families including movie nights at Green Dragon Square.
- Renewed focus on the ice rink, at Jubilee Square which would also see the return of the Wheel of Light.
- The marketing campaign which will include “Toblerone towers” installed around the city, digital displays on the BT link screens across the city as well as distribution of leaflets and an A5 brochure which promoted shopping and local businesses and included a Christmas competition and information around opening hours, parking etc

The Chair welcomed the presentation and was pleased to see there were several free events included.

Members were advised that the annual Christmas Lights switch on event would also include several activities and 2 short films would be played at Green Dragon Square as fillers in between activity. Speakers had also been installed across the city centre so everyone could hear the count down for light switch on.

Members noted the wider business model and supported the free accessible universal events, however there was concern that some events were expensive and there might be a risk that costs were not recovered.

Members were informed that consideration of the current economic crisis was given to the overall, in terms of the Christmas Lights the council had invested in LED lighting several years ago so the impact of increasing energy costs was marginal and incidental in terms of the bigger picture.

In relation to costings and budgets Members were advised there had never been a specific budget allocated for Christmas activities save for the lights switch on so there was a challenge to cover off the cost of the rest of the event programme from money earned on Ice Rink ticket sales, Wheel of Light ticket sales and through sponsorship. Last year those costs were covered, and it was expected that if the same number of tickets were sold this year the costs would be covered this year too.

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Clair commented that in the Festival Budget there was a nominal amount of £15k set aside for the Christmas Lights switch on, and the investment into other costs were fully recovered and it had been evidenced that having the Christmas events brought people into the city increasing footfall and providing direct economic benefit to the city.

The Chair thanked staff and organisers involved in arranging the Christmas programme.

AGREED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

## **50. TASK GROUP UPDATE - WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORT**

7-10pm Cllr Dr Barton left the meeting.

The Chair gave a verbal update on the Task Group Review into Women's Participation in Sport and Physical Activity in Leicester.

Members noted that:

- The survey questionnaire deadline date was extended to the end of October and the results from that would be shared with task group members in due course as part of the review.
- The next online task group meeting was arranged for 29<sup>th</sup> November and invitations had been extended to Councillor Clair and Councillor Dempster to provide evidence on the links between Health & Wellbeing provision and Sports provision for women.

The Chair advised that the aim was to conclude the review by the end of the year and to present a draft report of findings and recommendations to the commission meeting in January 2023 before being fed into the council's new sports strategy work.

#### **51. DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME**

Members were invited to consider the current work programme and to suggest future items for inclusion.

Members noted that the council had been included in the Arts Council National Portfolio of Funded Organisations 2023-26 which would help with recognition of the city and its diverse offer.

The Chair confirmed that following the good news relating to the Arts Council funding, an item on this area of work would be included in the work programme for next year.

#### **52. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

None notified.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 19.15pm.