



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Held: THURSDAY, 30 JULY 2009 at 5.30pm

P.R.E.S.E.N.T.

Councillor Grant – Chair
Councillor Bhatti – Vice-Chair

Councillor Glover
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Hall
Councillor Newcombe
Councillor Potter

Also In Attendance

Councillor Connelly
Cabinet Member for Culture and
Leisure
Councillor Russell
Cabinet Member for Environment
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48. REPLACEMENT CITY GALLERY – NEW WALK

The Director of Cultural Services, submitted a report that briefed Members on the revised response and associated costings by Marsh Grochowski Architects and Focus Consultants UK Ltd, which were based on the architectural brief developed by Arts and Museums and approved by Cabinet on 1 September 2008.

A five-minute PowerPoint presentation was given to the Board as part of this item. The presentation gave detail of the layout and facilities provided by the proposed replacement gallery, and included several visual impressions of the gallery.

It was reported that although the revised scheme would be of a significantly increased cost, it provided a higher quality design, which responded fully to the brief. In addition, it would enable a higher quality of national and international collections to be exhibited and provided enhanced capacity for income generation. Members also heard that

the increase in the size and quality of the retail space would lead to a significant increase in revenue through sales.

A Member of the Board was of the view that the design of the gallery was not in keeping with the design of surrounding buildings and asked whether the design of the gallery was in accordance with planning guidelines.

Nick Gordon, Managing Curator, New Walk Museum commented that the design was bold but felt that it did complement and was sympathetic to the general character of the New Walk area.

A further question was asked around whether the proposed café within the new gallery would directly compete with the existing New Walk Museum café. Members heard that this was not anticipated as the café at the museum would continue to offer a general family friendly appeal whilst the new gallery would directly target the arts market. Officers explained that a decline in income at the New Walk Museum café was not predicted, and if anything, was likely to increase in light of an anticipated increase in the number of visitors to both buildings.

In terms of financing the replacement gallery, it was explained that £1.088m of the total sum would be funded through a successful claim to recover VAT declared on fees and charges in the Cultural Services Division. A Member of the Board asked how the gallery was deemed as the priority scheme for the rebate to be spent on. The Director of Cultural Services stated that it was a top divisional priority to replace the City Gallery with a facility to exhibit better quality exhibitions. Councillor Connelly, Cabinet Lead Member for Culture and Leisure saw this as an excellent opportunity to provide a facility that would significantly benefit the tourism industry in Leicester. He further stated that the location of the new gallery would draw more visitors to the New Walk Museum. The meeting heard that progressing this project would not have a negative effect on other divisional projects.

It was also noted that a significant amount of interest had been paid as part of the VAT rebate, and that this money had been placed in the corporate budget. The Board placed their thanks to Ian Harris from the Taxation Office for securing the rebate.

In response to additional comments from a Member of the Board, Councillor Connelly acknowledged that investment was needed within other areas of Cultural Services, such as De Montfort Hall, but reiterated that this was a fantastic opportunity to allow a contemporary art gallery to become a key cultural feature of Leicester. Furthermore, he explained that the new gallery would cater for international shows.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted, and that the above comments be passed to Cabinet.