



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
JOINT MEETING OF THE HERITAGE, LEISURE AND SPORT SCRUTINY
COMMISSION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CULTURE AND TOURISM
SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: WEDNESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2012 at 5.30pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Dr Barton (Chair)
Councillor Bhatti (Vice Chair)

Councillor Naylor

Councillor Bhavsar
Councillor Chaplin
Councillor Grant
Councillor Kamal

Councillor Cassidy
Councillor Fonseca
Councillor Joshi
Councillor Newcombe

I N A T T E N D A N C E

Sir Peter Soulsby - The City Mayor
Councillor Clair – Assistant City Mayor, Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport

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1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED:

that Councillor Barton be elected as Chair for the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Waddington and Shelton, who

were elsewhere on Council business.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Joshi declared that he was a member of the Leicester Council of Faiths.

The City Mayor declared that his daughter had a business in the Cultural Quarter and was also Chair of the Cultural Quarter Business Association and he had therefore not been involved in discussions relating to the St George's celebrations in that area or the Comedy Festival, as his daughter's bar had been a venue for Comedy Festival events.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Members of the Commission were asked to agree the minutes of the previous Joint meeting of the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission and the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission held on 31 October 2012.

A view was expressed that the minutes on the whole were not a fair reflection of the meeting. After some discussion, Members came to the view that the minutes were in general a fair reflection of the meeting subject to the following amendments:

Humberstone Park Bonfire:

'If the Humberstone Bonfire event did not take place, there might be problems with illegal bonfires in the Ward and in addition, many people would not be able to afford the bus fares or taxi fares to travel to and from Abbey Park'.

Amended minute to read:

If the Humberstone Bonfire event did not take place, there might be problems with illegal bonfires in the Ward and surrounding Wards, and in addition, many people would not be able to afford the bus fares, taxi fares to travel to and from Abbey Park and the entrance fees.

'Questions were raised as to whether the Police and Fire Authority had been consulted. Officers responded that the issue of bonfires had been discussed with the Police in general although there had not been specific consultation on this proposal'.

Amended minute to read:

Questions were raised as to whether the Police and Fire Authority had been consulted. Officers responded that the issue of bonfires had been discussed with the Police in general although there had not been specific consultation on this proposal. Officers were unsure as to whether the Fire Authority had been consulted.

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Joint Meeting of the Heritage, Leisure and Sport Scrutiny Commission and the Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Scrutiny Commission, subject to the above amendments, be confirmed as a correct record.

5. FESTIVAL AND EVENTS REVIEW PROPOSALS

The City Mayor presented the report of the Festival and Events Review proposals. He explained that consultations on the Festival and Events Review had taken place during the Spring and Summer in 2012. Events which received funding of less than £5,000 had not been scoped into the Review.

Dave's Comedy Festival

Members raised queries concerning the business case submitted by Dave's Comedy Festival for additional funding. The festival organisers had requested £15,000 and £5,000 had been approved. The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that discussions had been held with the Big Difference Company in relation to Dave's Comedy Festival around their financial sustainability and future growth. Having some additional funding to enable them to seek further sponsorship was important to them. The additional funding was agreed after consideration was given to the investment that the Comedy Festival brought to the city.

There was some discussion relating to the Gujarati Comedy Festival. Concern was expressed that this festival did not receive any financial support, although it had been running for several years and was very popular. The Director of Neighbourhood Services responded that she thought that the festival did run as part of Dave's Leicester Comedy Festival, but like other events in the festival, this did not mean it would receive direct financial support. The Member Support Officer to the Scrutiny Commission advised that the Gujarati Comedy Festival had been allocated funding in the past from the Belgrave and Latimer Community Meeting budget. In response to questions raised, The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that £18,000 had been allocated to Dave's Comedy Festival compared to the overall cost of the festival of £140,000.

A comment was raised that it would have been helpful for Councillors to have fuller details and a rationale for decisions that were made. Any commercially sensitive information could be considered during private session.

Members also commented that they needed to be informed if other organisations had requested additional funding and had been turned down. They also needed to be assured that the festivals in question were being treated fairly and equally. Comments from Members were also received that Dave's Comedy Festival had received an extra £5,000, whilst it also brought in £2m into the city.

Belgrave Mela

Concerns were raised that the Belgrave Mela might lose its identity if it was incorporated into part of a wider festival. If the Mela was moved to the August Bank Holiday weekend, it might overshadow another, quieter festival also being held at the same time. The number of visitors to the festival might also be affected because of financial and time constraints. Concerns were also expressed that the stall holders who currently attended the Belgrave Mela, might not be able to attend the event if it was staged at a different time of year. The City Mayor advised that these issues could be given further consideration.

Leicester International Music Festival

Members noted that it was proposed to enter into a one year funding contract with the Leicester International Music Festival and the reason for this was queried. The Cultural Quarter Project Director explained that generally there was a one year funding contract for those festivals which received under £10,000 as the contractual requirements associated with this level of funding were appropriate to the size of the grant.

Cultural Quarter and Christmas Lights

Members referred to the Cultural Quarter and explained that a request had been received from Curve to extend the Christmas lights to that area. There was support from Members for this idea and comments were made that the Cultural Quarter had a state of the art theatre, but only one tree with Christmas lights. A suggestion was made that a celebrity be invited to switch on the Christmas lights in the Town Hall Square. The City Mayor advised that the presence of a celebrity may not significantly add to the value of the event as the Christmas lights switch on was already very popular. It was however suggested that a local celebrity with links to the city, such as one of the city's Olympic medal winners, might be a popular attraction, and they may also be willing to attend free of charge.

Carnival

The City Mayor explained that the Leicester Carnival was a very expensive event to deliver compared to carnivals held elsewhere. It was acknowledged that the organisers would not find it easy to deliver the festival with reduced funding, but officers felt that it was manageable and the organisers believed that it would be achievable. It was hoped that the carnival organisers would reduce costs and increase sponsorship for the event.

A query was raised as to whether officers could offer more support to groups such as this to enable them to become self-financing. The City Mayor responded that the council would be able to offer support to the Carnival organisers.

Concerns were raised that at the 2012 carnival, a large fence had been erected across the park which did not give a family friendly ambience to the event. The

City Mayor explained that the fencing had been erected as a health and safety measure to prevent unauthorised vehicles from accessing the park. A suggestion was made that perhaps in future, subject to costs, the fencing could be utilised in some way or have signs placed on it to explain why it was there.

Castle Park Festival

The City Mayor explained that whilst the Castle Park festival was a pleasant event, he thought that it would be more successful if it was delivered as part of a bigger festival. It was proposed to develop a new weekend heritage and arts festival with a focus on the old town area. Members commented that the city should celebrate the old town area but also that some people liked the current format of the Castle Park Festival, as a quieter calmer festival event prior to children returning to school after the summer holidays. The City Mayor added that he would be pleased to return to both of the scrutiny commissions at a future date to expand on proposals for this new festival.

Black History Month

It was noted that the proposed funding for Black History Month was £5,000 per annum for two years. Members were concerned that this created an anomaly, as they had been advised earlier in the meeting, that the Leicester International Music Festival only had a proposed funding contract for one year because the funding was less than £10,000. The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services explained that the reason for this was that the Black History Month would be tendered out and therefore a longer period of contract was offered to make it a more viable proposition.

Humberstone Park Bonfire

The City Mayor explained that an anomaly had been created in respect of the Humberstone Park Bonfire, as other bonfires across the city did not receive festival and events funding. He suggested that the surrounding wards might help to fund this event through their community meeting budgets and advice could be given from officers to make sure that the event was delivered safely. A query was raised as to whether there was sufficient officer capacity to be able to provide the necessary support to do this.

A strong concern was raised that local constituents were not supportive of this idea as the firework event at Abbey Park was not free. Local residents in the Charnwood Ward would not be able to afford taxi fares, bus fares or entrance fees into the park and they felt that funding for the Humberstone Park Bonfire should come from the central budget rather than from the community meeting budget. The City Mayor responded that he appreciated there would be people who could not afford to attend the Abbey Park Bonfire, but that issue was not unique to the Charnwood Ward. It was however important that there was consistency across the city and also important that there was the capacity to help communities deliver such events themselves. In response to a question, the meeting was advised that it was not possible to charge an entrance fee for the Humberstone Park Bonfire as the park could not be secured.

A comment was raised that the Humberstone Park Bonfire was a fantastic event enjoyed by people from five neighbouring wards. It was suggested that if those five wards supported the event through their community meeting budget and the council agreed to 'top up' the funding, the event could still be delivered. The City Mayor responded that if the Councillors from the five Wards took these proposals back to the Ward Community Meeting and received an endorsement to support the bonfire event, then it would be possible to approach him for funding for the event to be 'topped up' by approximately £4,000. In response to a query, the City Mayor added that this 'top up' money would not be taken from the funding set aside for new festivals, as that would be needed to support other events.

Members were generally of the view that this presented a suitable compromise and they indicated that they supported this proposal.

Navratri, Dasher and Diwali Festivals

The City Mayor explained that these festivals were extremely important, they brought many people into the city and were enjoyed by people of different faiths.

Members of the Commission commented that the proposal to reduce the funding for these festivals was disappointing. It was acknowledged that O2 currently provided generous sponsorship to the Diwali festivals and a query was raised as to whether some of the companies who advertised in the Diwali booklet might also be interested in sponsoring the event.

A suggestion was made that if funding for these three events were combined, there could be some flexibility as to how funding was allocated to each of the three festivals. Concerns were raised that Dasher had strong cultural as well as religious elements and funding for this event should continue.

Concerns were raised generally over the proposed funding cut for Dasher on the grounds that it was a religious event. Members commented that Christ in the Centre was a religious event yet continued to receive funding. The City Mayor explained that Christ in the Centre was organised independently and received only modest support from the Council. Dasher had a very strong religious element to the event and was delivered by the Festivals and Events Team.

Concerns were raised that more consultation over the proposals was needed and the Assistant City Mayor, Culture, Heritage, Leisure and Sport explained that there would be a special meeting with the Leicester Hindu Council on 19 December. Members also commented that issues relating to the funding of religious events had been raised at the previous meeting, and clarity was still needed regarding this.

Festivals and Events Networking Group, Review of Marketing and the Development and Delivery of new Festivals

Members commented favourably on the proposals to establish a networking group or forum, stating that it was important for the different groups to work together. It was hoped that there would be template to help groups to plan when organising an event and that there would be input from officers as well. The Director of Culture and Neighbourhood Services responded that there was an events pack to help people plan and that the Festival and Events team would offer advice. It was intended that the council's festivals and events team would facilitate the forum.

Members commented that investment into new festivals and events was extremely important and it was hoped that this might help the smaller festivals towards becoming self- financing.

The City Mayor referred to an event in Gallowtree Gate which had been organised by Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL). There had been approximately 80 stalls with many potential volunteers. He added that the views of the Joint Scrutiny Commission towards informing the future plans for a new City Festival were also very helpful.

RESOLVED:

that it be agreed:

- 1) that the Joint Scrutiny Commission (the Commission) supports the objectives of the review, particularly the need to reshape the existing programme and also to develop new programmes and events;
- 2) that the consultation process in the review is considered to be important and it is recognised that many festivals can have a city-wide impact. It is accepted that the consultation on the new proposals will have taken place on a city-wide basis; consultation at ward meetings may be considered to be a further, more local, level of consultation which could in future be deployed more widely;
- 3) that the Commission has concerns about the level of financial information provided to the commission. The business case by the council for providing funds, should be available, if appropriate, to the Commission as part of a transparent consultation process;
- 4) that the Commission recognises that the possible moving of the Belgrave MELA to the Bank Holiday weekend is a matter of negotiation with the organisers, but is concerned that any move of this event should not be to the detriment of either the MELA or other events which might be overshadowed by it;
- 5) that the Commission recommends that when considering the sustainability of an event or festival, the council should:

- a) consider the extent to which organisers can raise funds for and from a festival or event; and
 - b) assess the sustainability of the organisation and the event and how capacity will be built into both the organisation and the event.
- 6) that the Commission notes consideration by the City Mayor regarding the sustainability of the Humberstone Park Bonfire event, including the potential for top-up funding or support from local ward community meetings if a community led proposal comes forward;
- 7) that the Commission welcomes the approach by the City Mayor to have talks with the Leicester Hindu Festival Council about the totality of future funding of the three festivals – Navratri, Diwali and Dashera – with the objective that the Dashera festival is able to continue;
- 8) the Commission re-iterates its support for the creation of a festivals and events forum, and ask that recommendations from this meeting be referred to that forum;
- 9) that the Commission support the idea of a better and more co-ordinated marketing of festivals and events; and
- 10) that the Commission is of the view that the Council needs to clarify its policy in relation to the supporting of the events which are considered to be wholly religious and how this term is defined.

6. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 9.08pm.