

LEISURE, CULTURE AND LIBRARIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

22 JANUARY 2014

PRESENT: Councillors Alan Mellins (Chairman), Claire Stretton (Vice-Chairman), James Evans, Marion Mills and John Penfold.

Non-members: Margaret Lenton, Councillors Malcolm Beer, Paul Brimacombe, Christian Harris, Geoff Hill, Richard Kellaway, John Lenton, Mrs Eileen Quick, M J Saunders, and Leo Walters.

Officers Alan Abrahamson, Robert Cowan, Michael Llewelyn, Kevin Mist, Helen Preedy and Mark Taylor.

PART I

44/13 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Clive Bullock and Peter Lawless. Councillor James Evans kindly substituted.

45/13 **DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Councillor Malcolm Beer declared a personal interest in Item 11 'Update from any TFG/Working Party' when discussing the 'Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Celebrations' as he was a member of the National Trust.

Councillor Alan Mellins declared a personal interest in Item 5 'Sculpture Parks'. It was noted that the item was the result of initial ideas he had suggested.

Councillor Claire Stretton declared a personal interest in item 4 'Desborough Suite Improvements' as she had brought the matter to the attention of the Panel.

46/13 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED: That the Part I Minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 19 November 2013 be confirmed.

47/13 **DESBOROUGH SUITE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Panel received a report from Councillor Eileen Quick which recommended to Cabinet that a £75,000 feasibility appraisal be carried out regarding making improvements to the Desborough Suite.

Councillor M J Saunders highlighted that the Desborough Suite improvements were part of a larger regeneration project which he was engineering in his role as Lead Member for Planning and Property. The improvements would provide entertainment and arts facilities for an expected larger population.

The Panel noted the comments made by public speakers on the issue. Jane

Corry, Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Norden Farm Centre, and Paul Rutherford, Chairman of the Board of Trustees at Norden Farm, both highlighted the detrimental effect the improvements of the Desborough Suite would have on Norden Farm. They also questioned the effect subsidising the Desborough Suite would have on competition. They urged Members to put safe guards in place to protect rather than compromise what was already in place.

Julian Fox, who represented the Maidenhead Theatre Council and Stage One Youth, spoke in favour of the project, highlighting the potential for expanded use for community groups. Mac Kenny, a local resident, welcomed the improvements however he felt the £75,000 which was being recommended for the feasibility appraisal would be better spent on improving the Desborough Suite directly, with the money used for rebranding and redecorating.

Members noted the need to support existing facilities such as Norden Farm, and it was stated that consultation would continue throughout the process to make sure their interests were not ignored.

Councillor Kathy Newbound could not attend the meeting however her concerns were read to the Panel by Councillor Alan Mellins, Chairman of the Panel. Councillor Newbound raised two concerns. First, she questioned whether there would be enough floor space to cater for larger events such as charities fairs or whether there would only be space for small events. Councillor Newbound questioned whether, if there would not be space available for larger events, were alternative locations in the Town Centre (for events that did not require seating) still being considered. Councillor Newbound's second point stated that it was essential to avoid competition between the Desborough Suite and Norden Farm and the Firestation as all had financial assistance from RBWM.

Councillor Paul Brimacombe suggested that additional facilities would not necessarily compete for the same customers, but that the number of customers would grow as a result and Maidenhead's reputation as a place of culture would be established.

Councillor Malcolm Beer urged caution when considering the amount of business the improved Desborough Suite was likely to create. Councillor Beer highlighted the fact that Norden Farm had experienced problems in the past and the Theatre Royal in Windsor had also experienced financial troubles.

Councillor M J Saunders highlighted the need to see the £75,000 cost of the feasibility appraisal in context. Though as an isolated amount it might appear a lot of money, it was appropriate when dealing with a development of that scale.

Councillor John Penfold was in favour of the project stating that there was a need to nurture the arts which generated £6 billion annually.

Councillor Claire Stretton stated that a survey should be undertaken to gauge what people want from their entertainment and arts facilities so the project was future proofed. Councillor Stretton understood the concerns of Norden Farm and stated her intention to fight their corner through the process to ensure they received fair treatment. It was also noted that consultation would be on-going so their voice remained heard.

It was agreed by Members that a feasibility report for £75,000 was required to make sure the Desborough Suite Improvements were fit for purpose. The Panel also added an additional recommendation to that in the report going to Cabinet that a survey be undertaken to find out what the public want in terms of entertainment and arts. It was also noted that the Desborough Suite improvements were part of a larger regeneration plan for Maidenhead.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Cabinet be advised that the Panel endorses the recommendations set out in the report subject to an additional recommendation be included that a survey of residents be carried out to establish what provisions people want from entertainment and arts facilities.

48/13

SCULPTURE PARKS

The Panel received a report from Kevin Mist, Head of Leisure, which outlined a proposed plan to establish a sculpture trail in the parks and islands owned by RBWM.

The Panel noted the comments made by Margaret Lenton, Deputy Mayoress, who stated her approval of the project.

Councillor Beer observed a need to first improve public access nearby which was currently a road safety hazard.

The Members agreed the Sculpture Park was a good development allowing artists to display their work. Also, it was noted that this should be seen together with other developments which were improving the area. Members agreed the paper should go forward to Cabinet and that the next steps to the project becoming a reality should be taken.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel approve the recommendations set out in the report.

49/13

FINANCE MONITORING

The Panel received a report entitled 'Integrated Performance Monitoring Reports' from Alan Abrahamson, Finance Partner for Adults and Communities, regarding finance monitoring.

Members of the Panel decided to use the 'Integrated Performance Monitoring Reports' for finance monitoring as the reports that had been received for previous meetings were mostly irrelevant. It was agreed that, as the IPMR was published quarterly the dates of the LCLOSP would need to be re-scheduled to coincide with the publication of IPMRs.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the dates of the LCLOSP meeting be rescheduled to coincide with the quarterly publication of the IPMR, to allow the LCLOSP to review the IPMR before Cabinet.

50/13 BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX

The Panel received a verbal update from Alan Abrahamson, Finance Partner for Adults and Communities, regarding the budget and council tax.

The Panel noted the report. It was agreed that comments would be circulated electronically.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the report be circulated electronically and comments be made via email.

51/13 REVIEW OF LIBRARIES SUNDAY OPENING TIME

The Panel received a report from Mark Taylor, Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage regarding the trial extended opening hours for libraries.

The library Sunday opening times were described as a success. The trial was taking place in four locations: Maidenhead, Windsor, Sunningdale and Cox Green. However it was noted that finding volunteers to work in the libraries on Sundays was proving difficult. Officers would be looking at different ways to recruit volunteers, such as working with Parish Councils and the Windsor Ambassador programme. Members were happy with the overall progress of the scheme.

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Panel noted the report.

52/13 FIT FOR LIFE: COMMUNITY SPORTS ACIVATION FUND PROJECT

The Panel received a presentation regarding the 'Fit for Life' project from Helen Preedy, Sports Development Officer.

Ms Preedy informed the Panel that the project was to focus on people aged 14 and older, and would seek to get them exercising for 30 minutes, once a week. The project had a cost of £233,424 and funding had been secured. £146,888 had been secured from the Community Sports Activation Fund and the rest from other sources. The next steps would be to prepare for launch, marketing the project and setting up a website.

Members thanked Ms Preedy for her presentation and congratulated her on successfully securing the required funding.

Councillor Evans stated his support for the project. He offered to help with the project moving forward, noting the importance of fitness.

Councillor Stretton suggested that Councillors should participate in the scheme.

Councillor Penfold noted that the project would help the NHS save money

Ms Preedy stated that the project would target specific groups and the long term goal was to have these groups empowered to take over running their group themselves.

Councillor Marion Mills believed the project could encourage mothers to walk their children to school.

53/13 PUBLICATION OF ITEMS AND SCHEMES

The Panel received a verbal update from Mark Taylor, Head of Libraries, Arts and Heritage regarding the construction of Boyn Hill library.

It was noted that due to the recent bad weather the library would take longer than planned to open. The hand over from the contractor was expected on 27 March 2014 and the library was expected to open to the public on 14 April 2014. Plans were in place to publicise the opening.

54/13 UPDATE FROM ANY TFG/WORKING PARTY

HERITAGE CHAMPION

The Panel received a briefing note from Gillian Butter, Senior Conservation Officer, regarding the potential appointment of a Heritage Champion.

The Panel recommended a Heritage Champion be appointed to raise the profile of heritage concerns when planning considerations were being made. Councillors who were interested were asked to make themselves known to Councillor Saunders, Lead Member for Planning and Property.

MAGNA CARTA 800TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

The Panel received an update on the preparations for the Magna Carta 800th Anniversary Celebrations from Deputy Mayoress Margaret Lenton.

It was noted that projects were in the process of being costed. It was noted that Windsor and Maidenhead were doing more than the other nearby areas in terms of organising celebrations. Plans regarding the river pageant, which was to carry artefacts in a relay along the River Thames were in the process of being developed. The jousting competition was also being prepared. Plans were in place to stage a historic re-enactment of the King meeting the Barons. Also, a chain ferry would be used to allow people to cross the river and watch the archery competition.

Councillor Beer suggested that the celebrations could be publicised in the National Trust' magazine. Councillor Beer declared that he had a personal interest as he was a member of the National Trust.

The Panel thanked the Deputy Mayoress for attending the meeting and providing an update on the project, requesting she attend the next meeting for a further update.

55/13 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme as detailed in the agenda with the addition of further items.

RESOLVED: That the following items be added to the work programme: Guildhall update, Magna Carta update, Desborough Suite update, Bright Ideas: Midnight Markets, IPMR

56/13

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 – EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the remainder of the meeting whilst discussion takes place on item 11 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.