

CULTURE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Gerry Clark (Chairman), Carwyn Cox (Vice-Chairman), Judith Diment, Julian Sharpe, Shamsul Shelim, Claire Stretton and Mohammed Ilyas

Also in attendance: Cllr E Wilson and Cllr S Rayner

Officers: Andy Jeffs, David Scott, David Cook, Suzie Parr and Angela Gallacher

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Luxton, Cllr Ilyas attended as a substitute.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declaration of interest received.

MINUTES

Resolved unanimously: that the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 were approved as a true and correct record.

With regards to the actions arising Cllr Stretton reported that the Director and Lead Member had contacted her that day providing updates. Details of the Braywick Leisure Centre were still outstanding and she would be meeting with the Lead Member and Director to discuss Norden Farm's SLA.

WINDSOR LEISURE CENTRE

The Panel were addressed by a Windsor Leisure Centre (WLC) member. Mrs Driver informed that the WLC was always a positive and friendly establishment and one of the good things done was when the gym upstairs was extended and a spin studio that provided views over the river.

Four years ago Legacy Leisure were awarded the contract to run the borough leisure centres and although many had reservations she did not as it was expected that there would be investment. She was disappointed that she was wrong. They undertook many bad plans without consultation in an attempt to improve the WLC including moving the spin centre from room to room.

Mrs Driver reported that over the years she was aware that there had been many complaints and Facebook comments about the WLC. Local councillors had been informed yet the centre continued to decline. Mrs Driver had circulated by email many examples of complaints to Panel Members prior to the meeting.

Mrs Driver informed that reports that the issues contained within her email had been resolved were not true and that the problems continued. She said that Legacy were letting the council down, they were not delivering and adhering to their mission statement. The WLC reputation was at stake and fees were increasing whilst running costs were being reduced. She asked that the Panel took action to prevent continued failings.

The Head of Communities, Enforcement and Partnerships informed the Panel that he was aware of the concerns raised by Mrs Driver and that she was in contact with WLC manager.

The contract to run the Royal Borough Leisure Centres had been awarded on performance of outcomes rather than service specifications. The WLC had an excellent mix of facilities and had recently received additional capital investment.

The Panel were informed that the total number of users across all leisure centres had increased, however partially because Furze Platt school had been added to the provision. That said usage was up and the number of complaints had decreased. He was aware of comments made on social media, as highlighted by Mrs Driver, but they could only count complaints made to the Council.

He was aware that Mrs Driver had made complaints to the WLC manager and members of staff and appropriate responses had been made. The Project Lead responsible for leisure centres also had an overview of the performance of all centres within the borough and often made unannounced visits to all centres. The WLC was also a popular centre having users coming from outside the borough. He was happy to consider the points raised and welcomed Panel Member visiting the centre prior to considering any further action.

The Chairman said that there were a number of issues to be looked at; the contractual obligations, the offer being made, those issues which were management obligations for the centre and any issues raised via the council's complaints system. As a commissioning authority the Panel needed to be assured that contractual obligations were being monitored and met. The Panel would also wish to seek assurance that complaints made outside the Council's complaints system (those directed directly to the WLC) were being addressed appropriately.

Cllr Cox said that the Panel had been presented with information from one side of the argument but would need to hear from WLC and also have their contractual obligations available for consideration. It was also important to look at what monitoring had taken place. It was proposed that the Panel's April meeting be held at WLC and at that meeting the Panel could look at operational vs. management issues. The Panel needed to look at what Mrs Driver had presented and other complaints with what the WLC have to say in response to get a balanced view.

Cllr Stretton reported that she had previously raised concerns about the WLC and had been aware of issue back in 2015 when she was Lead Member. She was pleased that at last the issues were being looked at but felt Panel members should take un-announced visits to the centre rather than waiting for an announced visit in April 2019.

The Chairman said that he had asked for the WLC visit to be added to the Panel's work programme due to concerns raised and that he had asked for any concerns from ward members. At the time of adding this to the work programme there had been no concerns presented to him from users.

Cllr Shelim informed that as a ward member and had raised an issue about the centre last year but this had been addressed by the WLC. There should be focus on the long term strategy as the centre was very busy and one off repairs on equipment due to usage was expected.

Cllr E Wilson said that he did not usually receive complaints about the WLC until Mrs Driver had sent her information. Any complaints he received were usually about car parking for the centre. He said the question for the Panel if they wished to undertake further investigation should be around the contract and not management issues. He recommended that Panel Members should visit other centres and not just the WLC to see if there were wider issues across the contract. The Panel needed to consider what they wished to achieve from any review and to consider their role to review the strategic direction. It was important to look at the performance of the current contract before any further contracts were awarded.

Cllr Sharpe said it was important to look at the contract and deliverables before any future decisions were made.

The Lead Member thanked Mrs Driver for addressing the Panel and requested that her complaints be forwarded to her. The Council were spending £36 million on the Braywick LC and thus it was important to consider any concerns about contractual performance. There had been significant investment in the WLC including improved changing rooms and new flumes.

The Chairman thanked those for attending and presenting their concerns and that the leisure centre would be added to the work programme.

SPORTSABLE

The Panel were informed that unfortunately SportsAble were not able to attend the meeting and that they would present at the next appropriate panel.

REVIEWED & UPDATED LIBRARY POLICIES

The Panel reviewed updated library policies that included:

- Customer Care Standards
- Child Safety
- Displays and Exhibitions
- Access Policy
- Enquiries Standards
- Physical Presentation and Appearance Standards
- Public Computer WIFI and Internet Access Policy

The Library and Resident Contact Lead informed the Panel that the policies were reviewed every three years. The Libraries within the Royal Borough were well used with over 1million visits and over 68% of residents having library cards. The largest user group were residents aged between 16 to 24 years of age. There had been a full merger with customer services and cross training was provided.

Cllr Stretton mentioned that she had received concern from residents that since customer services had moved into libraries there was embarrassment when waiting to have private issue to be dealt with. The Panel were informed that there were private interview rooms and that when a customer was called all that should be heard is their name and not the issue being discussed. Training was in place and there had not been any complaints about this for some time.

Cllr Shelim praised the libraries and informed that his family were regular users, he asked about any concern with young users mixing with adults. The Panel were informed that safeguarding was taken very seriously and that it was important to have a safe place for all. Staff received safeguarding training that was regularly refreshed. Libraries also had users who may have mental health conditions and staff were trained to help them and deal with any issues that may arise. Libraries are a shared space and users should have consideration for others. There are areas for children that are kept safe places to be.

The Chairman mentioned that they were excellent policies but there could be better clarification around issues such as parental responsibilities to help protect staff and users. It should also be clear that with any safeguarding issues that they will be reported to the appropriate bodies. Cllr Cox agreed that the policies should try and avoid staff having a duty of care and thus being liable for users who should have parental supervision.

The Panel were informed that there had been incidents where a child had been left in a library whilst the parent went into town. Libraries were not day care centres and social services would be contacted if required.

The Panel noted the updated policies.

THE OLD COURT-ONE YEAR ON

Martin Deny, Director The Old Court, attended the meeting to provide an update on the Old Court Windsor as it had been a year since the service level agreement had been agreed.

The Panel were informed that The Old Court was an historical building in Windsor that was opened as a performing art space in March 2018. The aim was to create a programme that was:

- Well reputed of high quality.
- Allow people of all ages from across the community access to inspiring, quality Arts programmes and practitioners.
- Inspired by and builds upon the unique history of The Old Court via meaningful arts participation for all ages.
- Include a wide range of creative arts including music, dance, photography, cinematography, theatre craft, design, literature etc.
- Make TOC Arts Centre the recognised community arts HUB in Windsor, Slough, Maidenhead and the wider area.
- Based upon lasting partnerships and relationships across the community that make the community more cohesive and bring about positive change.
- Utilising the facility and staff broad range of skills set to further develop.

The Panel were informed that 6 months after opening an external SWOT analysis was undertaken to identify strengths and opportunities as well as areas to develop to realise their education ambitions.

Part of the SWOT analysis informed that there had not been a cinema in Windsor for 35 years and so a partnership was undertaken with ND Cinema Ltd and Windsor and Eton Brewery. This provided a cinema and bar who both paid 20% of gross takings to support The Old Court community interest company. Other achievements in 2018 were:

- Refurbished building to a high standard, providing an Arts Centre which could serve the community professionally and to a high standard of performance of all kinds.
- 100 live events.
- Work with Armed Forces veterans and with the Homeless.
- Unique experiences such as Living Advent Calendar and Snowman with live orchestra.

Between March 2018 to February 2019 there had been 33640 attendees, a range of health and wellbeing classes with 17 classes per week and 1305 attendees per month. The facilities could also be hired with 24 community hires, 100 events marketed by the venue and 6 corporate hires.

The Panel were informed that for 2019 there were plans to increase the audience by better presentation of events, better marketing, developing its brochure and better use of social media. There would also be further development of its community and education programme and live cinema screenings such as the Royal Opera House.

Looking ahead the Panel were informed that there would be continued development of its school education plan and school engagement. There would also be work to target senior citizens as potential audiences and volunteers. The Panel were also shown a list of 19 existing community organisations that they had working relationships with. There was a list of

community programme ideas across all ages to help focus on youth, young and older adults. The future strategy included:

- Evening activity for young adults.
- Skill development and learning opportunity for all ages.
- Daytime / socialising opportunity for elderly.
- Activity pertinent to venue and local events and history.
- Activity which cross fertilises other parts of the programme e.g. volunteer training.
- Delivery through partnerships to reduce strain on staff.

The Panel were shown projected targets for the next two years for children, community projects and training.

Cllr Stretton asked how many staff the Old Court had and was informed that there were three in the office and a part time technical site manager. There was also a box office employee per show and that the cinema and brewery provided their own staff. With regards to volunteers these were currently used on a ad hoc basis for specific events.

Cllr E Wilson reported that over two years ago there had been the possibility that the centre would close, now they had been shown a comprehensive list of events. Residents had reported that they were elated about the cinema. Cllr Wilson asked about funding from the council and was informed that the annual grant was fundamental to the existence of the building. Grants remained crucial as they could not operate on income alone. The Council had invested about £500k with the £70k service level agreement. Cllr Wilson recommended that the Panel request that Cabinet continue to support The Old Court and that events in The Old Court and Norden's Farm be advertised in Around the Royal Borough.

Cllr S Rayner, as Lead Member, reported that she had been delighted with the work Martin Deny and his team had done. The Council's Capital investment had made a huge difference and there was continued support from grants.

The Panel noted the annual update.

WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted the work programme to include Windsor LC, Braywick and Oaks LC. It was agreed that prior to a site visit to the Windsor LC the Panel would like to consult with the Lead Member, officers and Cllr E Wilson.

The meeting, which began at 6.30 pm, finished at 8.30 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....