

SCRUTINY BOARD (CULTURE AND LEISURE)

MONDAY, 11TH FEBRUARY, 2008

PRESENT: Councillor T Hanley in the Chair

Councillors B Atha, A Barker, B Gettings,
B Jennings, G Kirkland and G Wilkinson

75 Declarations of interest

Councillor Gettings declared a personal interest in Item 9, Current Governance Arrangements for the Leeds Grand Theatre and City Varieties due to his position on the Leeds Grand Theatre Board.

Councillor Atha declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 10, Middleton Park Equestrian Centre – Update due to his position as a trustee of the Middleton Park Equestrian Centre.

76 Apologies

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hussain, Morgan, Mulherin and Rhodes-Clayton.

77 Minutes

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

78 Matters arising from the minutes

Minute No. 70 – Wharfemeadows Inquiry – Draft Report

The Chair reported that the Board's report following the Wharfemeadows Inquiry had been presented to the Executive Board. The report had been well received and debated at length. All the Board's recommendations with the exception of Recommendation 2, which related to access to legal advice, had been agreed. A further report would be brought regarding the unresolved recommendation. It was felt that this Board should be consulted regarding any further developments on the Council's Water Policy/Strategy and it was reported that this would be an ongoing matter.

Minute No.71 – Major Projects Update

It was reported that the decision to cancel the Leeds Half Marathon had been reviewed and subsequently reversed.

79 Quarter 3 Performance Report 2007/08

The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement submitted a report which highlighted key performance issues considered to be of corporate significance for the Board.

The Chair welcomed Catherine Blanshard, Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer to the meeting.

It was reported that there were no areas of concern and that previous concerns expressed had shown an improvement in relation to the increased figures in attendance at museums and galleries and of school visits. This had been due to the filling of vacancies in the Education Team. The next published figures would show the impact.

In brief summary, Members discussed the following issues:

- School visits and issues associated with the cost of transport
- Swimming across the City. It was reported that attendance at the new Aquatics Centre had been higher than anticipated. Members requested information on the impact of developing the new Aquatics Centre specifically on those schools that had previously accessed Leeds International Pool.
- It was reported that the Board would receive a report on the new Leaf Leisure Centres at the next meeting.

RESOLVED – That the Quarter 3 information be noted.

80 Current Governance Arrangements for the Leeds Grand Theatre and City Varieties

The Chief Libraries, Arts and Heritage Officer submitted a report which outlined the current governance arrangements for the Leeds Grand Theatre, City Varieties and Hyde Park Picture House which are led and managed by the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Ltd. The report referred to the study of the governance arrangements commissioned by the Executive Board and provided Members with a copy of the report submitted to Executive Board in September 2006 and a copy of the draft Grand Theatre Board Manual.

Catherine Blanshard addressed the meeting. It was reported that the Executive Board had resolved to have 5 Elected Members on the Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera House Ltd Board and that there were positions for four independent members.

In response to Members questions and comments, the following issues were discussed:

- The independent members would have the same voting rights as Elected Members. Interviews were due to be held to fill the remaining vacancies for independent members.
- The purchase of the Swan Public house adjacent to the City Varieties.

- Members of the Board had been subject to an exercise matching their skills and experience to a matrix to ensure that the Board had the necessary expertise.
- The decline in financial performance across the venues. In response, it was reported that this had been affected by various issues including the closure of the Grand Theatre for refurbishment works. It was also reported that while the City Variety figures were reasonable, the recent pantomime had not been as successful as envisaged. Significant improvements had been recorded at the Hyde Park Picture House.
- Major building projects at the Grand Theatre and City Varieties.
- Recruitment and retention of staff with the necessary experience, including theatre management and other technical areas.
- Issues associated with technical equipment at the venues, contractor support and obligations and staff training in the use of equipment.
- The current management structure and the suggestion that each venue should have its own management board. It was reported that there would be a sub-group of the main board for each venue.
- The Board was assured that there would not be an appointment of a Chief Executive until a further report had been submitted regarding the management arrangements.

RESOLVED – That Scrutiny Board (Culture and Leisure) accept the Executive Board decision that, for a variety of reasons, the Grand Theatre and Opera House Board Ltd is the appropriate vehicle to lead and manage the three venues and that the Board is strengthened by independent members to help it have more independence in decision making.

(Councillor Hanley requested that it be formally recorded that he did not support the view of the Board in this regard).

81 Outdoor Bowls Provision

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report following the Board's request for information on Outdoor Bowls Provision across the City. A report from the Acting Chief Recreation Officer was appended which outlined bowls provision across the city and main issues.

The Chair welcomed Sean Flesher, Principal Area Manager (West), Parks and Countryside to the meeting.

It was reported that Leeds City Council was responsible for 53 sites across the City and the cost of grounds maintenance for each green was approximately £7,500. The Council's overall subsidy to Bowls was in the region of £556,770 per annum which approximately equated to £167 per player.

In response to Members questions and comments, the following issues were discussed:

- Other costs above and beyond those accounted for such as costs for utilities at pavilions and associated structural maintenance.
- Majority of costs for the Bowling Greens involved labour, chemicals and top dressing. There were also costs for machinery. Costs could vary depending on the time of the year.
- Promotion of and encouragement of Bowls – it was reported that local clubs did actively seek new Members
- It was felt that the level of subsidy needed to be reduced if numbers of participants could not be increased.
- It was reported that the presence of people using Bowling Greens could act as a deterrent to anti social behaviour in public parks. Other benefits included the promotion of physical activity and community engagement.
- It was reported that a Bowls Strategy was proposed to address issues that had been identified.
- Members also requested information on comparisons with other authorities in relation to costs and subsidies.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that the Board be kept updated on the development of a Bowls Strategy.

82 Middleton Park Equestrian Centre - Update

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which updated the Board on progress regarding the inquiry into the Middleton Park Equestrian Centre.

The Board was advised that a further meeting was to be held between the Centre's Trustees and Council Officers and it was felt that the item should be deferred until this meeting had taken place.

RESOLVED – That the item be deferred to a future meeting of the Board

83 Work Programme

The Head of Scrutiny and Member Development submitted a report which detailed the Board's current work programme. Also attached to the report was an extract from the Forward Plan of Key Decisions which highlighted decisions that fell within the Board's remit.

Issues discussed in relation the Board's future work programming included the Roundhay Mansion (and the Park Café), the Sports Trust Update and the New Leaf Leisure Centres.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

84 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 10th March at 10.00 a.m. (Pre-meeting for all Members at 09.30 a.m.).

Minutes approved at the meeting
held on Monday, 10th March, 2008

