

SELECT COMMITTEE ON CULTURE AND RECREATION

Thursday, 15th September, 2005, at 6.00 p.m.
The Council House, Dudley

PRESENT:-

Councillor Southall (Chairman)
Councillor Simms (Vice Chairman)
Councillors Attwood, Crumpton, Mrs Jordan, Kettle, Mrs Pearce and Tyler

OFFICERS

Assistant Director of Law & Property (Corporate Estate Services – Lead Officer), Assistant Director of the Urban Environment and the Recreation Officer (Culture and Community Services), (Directorate of the Urban Environment), Senior Assistant Chief Finance Officer and the Finance Risk Manager, (Directorate of Finance) and Ms K Smith (Directorate of Law and Property).

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MINUTES

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23rd June 2005, be approved as a correct record and signed.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of Personal Interest, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, where made by the following Members for the reasons indicated:-

Councillor Southall, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy), in connection with his membership of the Friends of Wordsley Park.

Councillor Attwood, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy) in connection with his membership of the Friends of Mary Stevens Park.

Councillor Crumpton, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy) in connection with his membership of the Friends of Lye and Wollescote Park.

Councillor Tyler, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy) in connection with his membership of the Friends of Wordsley Park, Directorship of Dudley Zoo and Chair of Governors at Maidensbridge Primary School.

Councillor C Woodall, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy) in connection with his membership of Friends of Parks Group

Councillor Mrs Jordan, Agenda Item 6 (Capital Strategy) in connection with her school governorship of Pens Meadow School.

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APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor Kettle.

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COUNCIL'S CAPITAL STRATEGY

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on an update of the Council's Capital Strategy, which formed part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework, and could therefore be amended only by the full Council following consideration, by the Select Committees. It was also considered to be "Best Practice" and taken into account in Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scores.

Arising from the report given, Members asked questions with particular reference to:-

- Resources for maintaining and expanding Cemeteries and Crematoria especially at Gornal, Stourbridge and Lye.
- Improved security at the Cemetery at Queens Cross to limit the amount of vandalism occurring
- Assistance to help clear St Peters in Cradley
- The development of Skate/Wheeled Sports facilities within the Borough within each Area Committee area in accordance with the Council's approved strategy for provision.
- The addition of the Castle Hill Redevelopment as a major public sector/private sector joint venture project
- The migration of the Tourist Information Centre to the CATS centre, no longer being central to the Town Centre.
- Himley Hall and capital funding for the replacement of the boilers.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted and Members comments be noted and Committee support for capital works at Himley Hall be noted.

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LIABILITY INSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO
COMMUNITY GROUPS OR ASSOCIATIONS

A report of the Director of Finance was submitted on the feasibility of different insurance arrangements for community groups and associations using Council facilities.

Arising from the report, Members raised concerns over the lack of a suitable scheme whereby the Council facilitated, via its broker, insurance policies for associations. Further concerns were raised over the premiums charged to these community groups for the privilege of paying by instalments during a year causing them further financial hardship.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report and Members comments be noted, and that a report be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee on viable Council run alternatives for insurance.

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OPTIONS PLUS LEISURE CARD SCHEME IMPLEMENTATION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the progress to date with the Options Plus Leisure Card Scheme.

It was noted that usage had increased by 87% and income by 220% at Crystal Leisure Centre and that the proposal to extend the Options+ Scheme to non-residents and to include Pension Credit (Guarantee Element) as an additional eligibility category had been approved. Members also noted that a scheme was being looked at whereby local radio stations promoted the scheme over a four-week period.

Arising from the report, Members made the following suggestions for widening the publicity of the scheme:-

- Promotion of the scheme through the Job Centres and Post Offices
- Means of enabling applications to be made on-line
- Involvement of public and private sectors
- Promotion of the scheme in colleges during enrolment weeks

RESOLVED

That the contents of the report and Members comments be noted, and that a report on the progress to date of the Options + Scheme be brought back to the first meeting of the next municipal year.

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COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT, CULTURAL SERVICES INSPECTION

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the outcome of the Audit Commission Inspection of the Council's Cultural Service undertaken in March of this year.

The report detailing the inspectors judgement rated the service as being "Fair", and that significant progress had been made in a number of areas including important developments in both the profile of the service and in the services themselves.

However, there were still key areas for further improvement those being, the lack of a strategic framework and vision for culture in Dudley. In conclusion it was recommended that the Council:-

- work with the LSP and other partners to develop a clear vision for culture in the Borough and
- communicate a coherent and sustainable strategy as to how cultural services in Dudley will contribute to that vision.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the Audit Commission Inspection of the Council's Cultural Service undertaken in March of this year be noted.

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CULTURAL STRATEGY

A report of the Director of the Urban Environment was submitted on the current production of a Local cultural Strategy for the Borough.

RESOLVED

That the information contained in the report submitted on the Cultural Strategy be noted.

The meeting ended at 8. 20 pm

CHAIRMAN

SC&R/8