

## **REGENERATION AND LEISURE SCRUTINY SUB-COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of the Regeneration and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 6 December 2011 at 7.00 pm at Ground Floor Meeting Room G02C - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH

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**PRESENT:** Councillor David Noakes (Chair)  
Councillor Renata Hamvas  
Councillor Darren Merrill  
Councillor Lisa Rajan  
Councillor Martin Seaton

**OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Veronica Ward

**OFFICER SUPPORT:**

### **1. APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Colombo Blango and Claire Hickson

### **2. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT**

2.1

### **3. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS**

3.1 There were no disclosures of interests or dispensations.

### **4. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2011 were agreed as a true and accurate record

## 5. VIOU

### **Scrutiny interview: Councillor Veronica Ward, cabinet member for culture, leisure, sport and the Olympics**

#### **Events Programme**

Councillor Rajan asked if the cabinet member would consider devolving the events programme to community councils. The cabinet member explained since the budget was reduced, the department decided to develop a new programme in which groups could collaborate, and potentially involve more groups than previously. They had decided on events in the north, middle and south of the borough as a way of being equitable, bearing in mind that the team also provides support to more than 100 events that are not funded by the council. The north event was the Bermondsey Carnival and was well supported. The centre, the Elephant and the Nun, was set in a variety of venues. The event for the south had been discussed with some schools and Friends of Dulwich park – but had not had the range of stakeholder discussions as in the other two cases

She agreed that the process for considering events could be put under review but would need to be decided fairly quickly for 2012 so the programme can be set and logistical and security arrangements made. Ward councillors and other stakeholders would be consulted as soon as possible. Councillor Glover questioned the practicality of devolving this work when there are only three events, and the cabinet member agreed that this would be a difficult way of working.

The chair asked the cabinet member to explain her involvement and role in the original planning of the Colour Thief. She explained it had been an exploration of designing an event that suited the season and would also be appropriate for Dulwich Park, taking into account the park's heritage, and residents' and others' sensitivities, and would have included fireworks. It had been discussed with Friends of Dulwich Park and some schools but the consultation with stakeholders did not take place in time.

She explained that the events team are still supporting 98 events around the borough – assisting organisers with permissions, security etc – and they want to get the consultation arrangements right for the south of the borough. Cllr Noakes asked the cabinet member if she could confirm that an event will take place in the south of the borough in 2012. The cabinet member responded that there will be consultation as discussed and this will determine the outcome.

Councillor Hamvas asked if there had been a safety issue, and whether Peckham Rye Park had been considered. The cabinet member said that the issue was not about safety, and that the objection to event in the south was member led. The leader had asked if people wanted it or not and did not get a clear steer.

Councillor Glover asked about the impact of the budget cuts, and the cabinet member responded that it had forced a rethink of how to approach the whole events programme.

Councillor Rajan asked about the role of the deputy cabinet member and whether he was

involved in developing events. The cabinet member explained that his role was cross-cutting and he was not purely deputy to her portfolio, but that he had concentrated on black history month. Councillor Noakes asked how the council monitor the success of events such as black history month. Councillor Ward explained that evaluation data is collected and the team would be looking to see if the concept of hub events aiming to bring in the involvement of a wider range of organisations had been successful. Councillor Noakes asked how much the council spends on black and LGBT history months? The strategic director Gill Davies agreed to check the figures for the committee but believed they were £30K and £5K respectively. She pointed out that many of the events in black history month are not run by the council – the events team put the programme together and support the committee that runs it

## **LIBRARIES**

Councillor Hamvas asked how the new Canada Water library had finally performed against its budget targets. The cabinet member responded that the final capital sum was nearly £14M. There had been a strong focus across the whole library service to restructure and reduce revenue costs and to increase income, and this work was built into the Canada Water library's budget. Visitor numbers were very good – 15,000 people had visited in the library's first week of opening. Councillor Seaton requested data on the number and purpose of visits. Councillor Ward reminded the committee that there is also a coffee shop in the building and the Albany has been appointed to manage the cultural space.

Councillor Hamvas asked about the timescale for moving Camberwell and Grove Vale libraries to new premises. The cabinet member said that Camberwell had completed its consultation phase – and was now going into the planning process. Grove Vale depends on a developer making progress on a scheme, and this is being negotiated with the planning department at the moment. The strategic director Gill Davies added that revenue and capital bids have been submitted to supplement the S106 contribution - the main risk to the project is if the development does not proceed for any reason

Councillor Noakes asked for a progress report on the use of volunteers in libraries. The cabinet member responded that it was a very positive picture - an officer has been allocated to work part time managing the volunteer programme, overseeing criminal records bureau checks etc. Gill Davies said the service now has enough volunteers to achieve the budget requirements. Volunteers will be mixed around and the department has not worked out the detail of where they will go.

Councillor Rajan asked what will happen to Rotherhithe library now that Canada Water is open. Gill Davies explained that the disposal process is in hand and a report would be going to December's cabinet meeting.

## **OLYMPICS**

Councillor Rajan asked the cabinet member what she thought of the council's idea that had been put forward for Greenland Dock, and hadn't she been concerned about the loss of sailing amenity. Cllr Ward said that it was an application from an external company and had been designed to add to the general spirit of the Olympics by welcoming more sailing boats into the marina. She understood the layout was planned so Tideway's existing sailing activities could still take place. Councillor Hamvas asked whether Tideway contributes to the council for use of the marina area? The Strategic Director said they pay

a small rent to Fusion for the use of a storage room for boats, and have free use of the yard

Councillor Rajan asked whether Southwark has received any Olympic tickets. The cabinet member said there are some tickets, and no decision has been made as to how to use them. They will not go to staff or councillors. The Olympic delivery board would probably be the group who decided how to allocate the tickets. Councillor Rajan requested that the board consider allocating some of the tickets to looked after Children. The cabinet member and strategic director agreed to consider this suggestion.

Councillor Noakes asked the cabinet member whether she believed that the Olympic Legacy Fund projects were evenly distributed across the borough. Councillor Ward said there had been 40 applications - 9 came from schools and these were unsuccessful as the facilities would not be open to general public access. Beyond that, there had 8 from the north and 17 from the rest of borough. The key 2<sup>nd</sup> stage criteria were that the projects could be completed and delivered in time, and would create a lasting legacy for the whole community. She believed the whole process was independent and rigorous

Councillor Noakes asked about targets and monitoring arrangements for the projects, and the strategic director reminded the committee that she had provided a briefing note following the previous committee meeting

Councillor Rajan asked for an update on the Southwark Park athletics track. The strategic director responded that the department was still working on the blocks of necessary funding – one has been received and two others are still to be submitted. If all 3 bids are successful, the project would commence in 2013-14 and would take about 18 months to complete.

Councillor Noakes asked whether the council had had to pay to be an Olympics host borough. Gill Davies responded that it was free, but the council was required to comply with strict rules about use of the Olympics logo and branding. She agreed to supply further information on this.

## **LEISURE CENTRES**

Councillor Glover asked the cabinet member to update the committee on current user rates and how they compare with previous years. Councillor Ward responded that Camberwell, Dulwich, Surrey Docks are all showing an upturn in visitor numbers – all 3 have received more visits in the first 6 months of 2011-12 than in whole of 2009-10. As revenue rises, the need for subsidy to Fusion reduces, and the department is expecting to achieve £1M saving over 3 years as a result of the investment that has been made.

Councillor Hamvas asked whether the leisure centres are still offering free swimming. The strategic director responded that the free swimming programme had ended but Fusion has restored the subsidised rate of 60p swims and the intention is for that to remain. Councillor Seaton asked if there is any targeting going on around combating obesity. Councillor Ward said there is work in place to improve relationships between Fusion and the youth service. Gill Davies added that the Fusion contract contains targets for both overall use and target groups and they are monitored on it – she believed the service is exceeding the targets. She agreed to provide information about the length of the Fusion contract.

Councillor Seaton asked for an update on the Elephant and Castle leisure centre. The cabinet member responded that it is in the planning stage now – to be built next year and will include a pool and sports hall.. It had not been possible to factor in squash courts. Councillor Rajan asked if it is now final that there will be no squash at Elephant and Castle. Gill Davies said the department was still pursuing a discussion with London South Bank University about the redevelopment of their sports centre and this included the question of public access for squash. This was still an ongoing discussion. Councillor Noakes asked if there was any possibility of squash at Seven Islands. Gill Davies said no detail had been worked up yet and this would be looked at.

Councillor Noakes referred to the council plan target of reducing cost of visits to leisure centres and asked whether this would be feasible. The strategic director responded that this was being delivered through increased revenue at Fusion as previously discussed

Councillor Rajan asked about the plans and timescale for refurbishing Seven Islands Leisure Centre, and whether it might include bringing the family pool back into use. The cabinet member said that there is an allocation of £8M in the capital programme for 2014-15 for Seven Island – she was not certain if this would include the small pool. Gill Davies confirmed that this sum was to cover the refurbishment of the whole centre, and the project would take 18-24 months

Councillor Rajan asked whether it is the case that Fusion offer their service user committee members free gym memberships. Gill Davies agreed to find out and let the committee know

## **MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES**

Councillor Noakes asked for a progress report on the Livesey children's museum. Councillor Ward said that the department had started process of requesting expressions of interest from bidders based on cultural use. These bids were being assessed at the moment and there would be a cabinet decision in January.

Councillor Glover asked how the council is interacting with the White Cube Bermondsey - do we have a relationship with it? Councillor Ward said she didn't know if schools are visiting but agree it is an asset we should make use of

## **6. LIBRARY REVIEW REPORT AND RESPONSE FROM CABINET**

Councillor Noakes reported back on the cabinet's response to the sub-committee's recommendations on libraries

**CHAIR:**

**DATED:**

**[EXEC ONLY]**

**DEADLINE FOR NOTIFICATION OF CALL-IN UNDER SECTION 18 OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES IS MIDNIGHT, [DATE].**

**THE ABOVE DECISIONS WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTABLE UNTIL AFTER THAT DATE. SHOULD A DECISION OF THE EXECUTIVE BE CALLED-IN FOR SCRUTINY, THEN THE RELEVANT DECISION WILL BE HELD IN ABEYANCE PENDING THE OUTCOME OF SCRUTINY CONSIDERATION.**