

Leisure, Culture and the Third Sector Scrutiny Board

26 September, 2016

Summary of Matters Considered at the Board

Report of the Chair, Councillor Ahmed

The Scrutiny Board met on 26 September, 2016 and the following items were considered. For more detail, a copy of the minutes is available on the Committee Management Information System (CMIS) via the Council's website at <http://cmis.sandwell.gov.uk/cmis5/>

Tracking and Monitoring: Scrutiny Review of Allotments 2012

Further to the Scrutiny Review of Allotments carried out in 2012, the Board is pleased to note that significant progress has been made in implementing the recommendations set out in the review report and that the report has informed the Council's approach to the management of allotments in the borough.

Board members are surprised to note the number of currently vacant plots, given that there are waiting lists in existence. It was reported that there are difficulties with bringing vacant plots back into use due to the investment required to clear overgrowth, which is often off-putting to potential renters. In addition, the location of the plots is also a factor. The Board feels that voluntary sector organisations should be approached to ascertain how they can assist in this task. The Board also feels that some of the Healthy Towns funding should be directed towards this.

Improvements to Lightwoods Park and West Smethwick Park

The Board welcomed a detailed presentation on the restoration works currently in progress at Lightwoods Park, and the proposed works to West Smethwick Park which are due to commence in 2017, both of which are funded by Heritage Lottery.

Members are pleased to hear that the public has had an input into the detail of the works at both of the parks.

Members expressed concern however that smaller parks in Sandwell could be left behind as large funding bids focuss on the large parks. The Board was advised that smaller parks qualify for Heritage Lottery funding at a regional level but community support is required to drive such projects. In light of this, the Board feels that there is a role for members in engaging with their constituents to seek their views on areas and facilities of concern, to enable the Council to support the initiation of projects that can be led by the voluntary sector.

Events Programme

The Director – Neighbourhoods and the Cabinet Member for Leisure reported that they will be seeking input from the Board on a review of the Council's events programme. It is anticipated that a report will be presented to the Board in October.

Councillor Ahmed

Chair of the Leisure, Culture and the Third Sector Scrutiny Board