

Minutes of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

**21st September, 2017 at 5.00pm
at Sandwell Council House, Oldbury**

Present: Councillor Edis (Chair);
Councillor Hevican (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Ashman, Underhill and White.

Apologies: Councillors Goult, Hadley, Phillips and R Price.

In Attendance: A Caddick (Director – Housing and Communities).

4/17 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July, 2017 be approved as a correct record.

5/17 Review of Income Generation Opportunities for the Council's Leisure and Culture Facilities

The Board undertook a review of income generation opportunities for the Council's leisure and culture facilities. This had been identified as a potential topic for review during the Scrutiny Management Board's consideration of the Budget Outturns 2016/17.

The Director – Housing and Communities attended the meeting with officers to provide a brief overview of recent developments that would impact on the review. Members felt that the direction of the review needed to be revised to instead focus on "Maximising the Use of the Council's Culture and Leisure Facilities" which would help ensure the future sustainability of such services.

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From the comments and questions by members of the Board, the following responses were made and issues highlighted:-

- a project, sponsored by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Communities, was looking at how to maximise the use of various types of facilities including libraries and community centres. It was hoped that the work of the review would complement this project;
- most community centres in Sandwell were now managed independently, some by pre-existing third sector organisations and others by organisations formed from the former Council management committees;
- management committees needed to have a breadth of experience to ensure they were effective;
- through their own experiences, members identified Thimblemill Library, Smethwick as a particularly strong example of where a local community library was used for a wide range of activities;
- the Sandwell Library Service provided modern, vibrant and community-minded places offering varied services including lending libraries, computer access, events, homework clubs and more. Movable bookshelves meant that libraries could be used to hold many different types of event including performances and workshops;
- the mobile library was still in operation in Sandwell. Members requested further information on this service. It was suggested that due to their location away from libraries, the possibility of the mobile library service working with The Priory and Tameside Primary Schools should be investigated;
- computer equipment at libraries, while well used by the local community, was aging.
- members noted that some libraries had Facebook pages which they used to keep local residents informed and to promote events. It was suggested that this should be considered for all Sandwell libraries.

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Once officers had collated a wide range of information, this would help inform further work to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Board.

The Board thanked the Director and officers for attending the meeting.

Resolved:-

- (1) that the scrutiny review of Income Generation Opportunities for the Council's Leisure and Culture Facilities be refocussed on "Maximising the Use of the Council's Culture and Leisure Facilities";
- (2) that the Director – Housing and Communities:-
 - (a) provide further information on the Mobile Library Service to councillors;
 - (b) provide information on how the Mobile Library Service is advertised to Scrutiny;
 - (c) investigate the possibility of using the Mobile Library Service to work with The Priory and Tameside Primary Schools;
 - (d) consider using Facebook pages for all libraries as a way of communicating with residents;
- (3) that the officer group work supporting the Review of Maximising the Use of the Council's Culture and Leisure Facilities collate a wide range of information for the Board to assist with more detailed consideration of the review.

(Meeting ended at 5.47pm)

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