

CULTURE AND SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 March 2008 at the Town Hall, Royal Leamington Spa at 6.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Barrott, Mrs Blacklock, Mrs Gallagher, Mrs Higgins and Mrs Sawdon.

(Councillor Barrott substituted for Councillor Mrs McFarland)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Heath.

996. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

RESOLVED that Councillor Mrs Sawdon be appointed Chair for the meeting.

997. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

998. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 February 2008 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

999. STAGING OF MAJOR EVENTS – TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee considered a report from Cultural Services on the review of staging of major events in the District, which had been undertaken by a Working Group.

It was recognised that the cultural diversity of the district benefited from the wide range of major events held in the district. For the purpose of this review a “major event” had been defined as one “that attracts significant numbers of visitors from outside of the district with the potential for overnight stays in the district”.

Over many years the Council had been successful in attracting such events bringing significant numbers of visitors to the district (estimated total visitors to the district 2.9 million per year) who had taken advantage of the services and amenities, including those provided by the Council but also those provided by voluntary groups and of course retailers and the private sector. It was the intention that this should be continued in the coming years and developed further to support the economy of the area.

CULTURE & SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES (continued)

The economic impact of major events was often quoted as a reason to support this type of event, however it was notoriously difficult to quantify the actual economic impact on the district. Appendix A to the report, provided examples of the calculated impact of some events staged in the district in previous years, using data provided by Heart of England Tourism as part of an Economic Impact Assessment carried out for the District in 2007 (using 2004 data and based on the Cambridge Model). It was clear from these examples that the economic impact of such events was not insignificant and therefore had prompted the Working Group to support the continuation of such events which could demonstrate the potential for attracting such levels of visitors.

To assist in future analysis of events a revised application form was being developed to capture information at the initial stages of an application. A draft version of this form was attached at Appendix B to the report. It was proposed that this form would in future be available on line; at the same time a review of Cultural Services pages on the website would consider whether the current content was “user friendly” for organisations wishing to consider the district as an event venue.

The Working Group strongly believed that the close working relationship built up over many years with Bowls England (formally the English Womens Bowling Association) should be continued despite the recent staff changes in the Cultural Services Unit as a result of Building on Excellence. A contract had recently been signed with Bowls England that protected the relationship until 2012. It was considered essential that if the Council wished to retain our strong links with the sport of bowls beyond 2012, and place ourselves in a strong position to attract the headquarters of Bowls England to the district after 2012, we need to commit significant efforts in the next 4 years.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and submitted to the Executive, making the following recommendations:

- (1) the District Council continue to support major events throughout the district providing that a financial and/or cultural benefit can be clearly demonstrated;
- (2) a bid be supported within the 2009/10 Service Planning process to secure funding to allow research to be undertaken into the impact of staging major events in the district;
- (3) resources in the new Cultural Services Unit be allocated to allow support of Bowls England and the continuing negotiations leading up to decisions regarding the future of bowls in the district from 2012; and

CULTURE & SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES (continued)

- (4) discussions take place with Planning officers to ensure that consideration be given in the in the Local Development Framework to strengthen the policy regarding provision of visitor accommodation in the district. This would include protection of current visitor accommodation and encouraging new provision in appropriate locations.

1000. REVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS OF WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL CEMETERIES – TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Committee considered a report from Cultural Services on the review of the Cemeteries Regulations, which had been undertaken by a Task and Finish Group.

Warwick District Council (WDC) had four cemeteries within the District, Kenilworth Cemetery, Leamington/Whitnash Cemetery, Milverton Cemetery and Warwick Cemetery. These were all covered by a set of regulations, which was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

Following a complaint which Councillor Kirton had received with regard to the regulations governing WDC cemeteries, a report was submitted to Culture and Social Policy Committee in December 2007 asking for a Task and Finish Group to be established to review the regulations.

Considering the age of the regulations, the Committee considered it prudent to review them to ensure that they were up to date and meaningful and a Task and Finish Group consisting of Councillors Mrs Blacklock, Heath, Mrs Higgins was formed.

The Task and Finish Group met on two occasions and one of these meetings included a site visit Kenilworth Cemetery, Leamington/Whitnash Cemetery and Warwick Cemetery.

The group reviewed the current regulations, with the assistance of officers from Cultural, Legal and Members' Services and made amendments to them where necessary. The amended regulations were detailed in appendix 2 to the report.

The amended regulations, if adopted, also applied to the crematorium site and specific regulations were applied to the woodland burial site at Oakley Wood.

The review did not cover the seven closed church yards maintained by the district council as the regulations do not cover these.

CULTURE & SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES (continued)

RESOLVED that

- (1) the draft regulations, as detailed in appendix '2' to the report, be approved for submission to the Executive in June 2008, subject to consultation with undertakers and Town and Parish Councils in the District;
- (2) if any comments are received on the draft regulations, the Review of the Cemeteries Regulations Task and Finish Group be given delegated authority in consultation with the Chair of the Committee, to incorporate these into the regulations, if appropriate, and submit to the Executive in June 2008;
- (3) the regulations not be adopted as by-laws, but it be recommended to the Executive that they be enforced through the internal procedures Warwick District Council have as landlord of the cemeteries;
- (4) the Review of the Cemeteries Regulations Task and Finish Group continue to meet as necessary, to ensure a completed report is submitted to the Executive in June 2008;
- (5) the Review of the Cemeteries Regulations Task and Finish Group approve the Bereavement Brochure prior to its publication;
- (6) subject to advice from Legal Services, in consultation with the members of the Task and Finish Group, item 5 in the regulations be deleted, and the document be re-numbered; and
- (7) the contact details within the regulations, be amended to include the full address, telephone number and email address, where appropriate.

1001. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

The Committee considered a report on Choice Based Letting, which was be considered at the Executive on 25 March 2008.

The Council's Choice Based Letting Scheme HomeChoice became operational in November 2005, and it was agreed at the time of implementation to review the scheme after six months.

CULTURE & SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES (continued)

This report took forward the work previously carried out to review the scheme in August 2006 following the consultation with housing applicants and a range of social agencies within the District.

In addition to the Allocation of Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities published in January 2007 supplementary changes were necessary.

The main changes to the Scheme were outlined in the report.

This allowed the Council to meet the Government Legislation and Allocation of Accommodation Choice Based Lettings Code of Guidance for Local Housing Authorities to ensure that reasonable preference was given to those in most housing need.

The Scheme would include quotas for lettings to Bands 1, 2 and 3, which would enable a greater spread of available properties to each band, but ensuring there was sufficient properties for Band 1 for the Council to meet its statutory duties. 50% of the properties would be advertised for Band 1, 30% for Band 2 and 20% for Band 3.

Lettings would be monitored on a quarterly basis so that targets could be altered should there be any risk that the reasonable preference requirements would not be met.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the following comment be made to the Executive:

The Culture and Social Policy Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

1002. REVIEW OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY PLAN

The Committee considered a report on the review of the Equality and Diversity Plan, which was to be considered at the Executive on 25 March 2008.

The Council had a number of statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity relating to race, disability and gender and to remove discrimination. The responsibilities were set out in the:

Race Relations (Amendment) Act (RRAA) 2000;
Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 2005;
Sex Discrimination Act (SDA) 1975;
Equality Act (EA) 2006; and
Equal Pay Act 1970.

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The Council formally adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government in June 2003 as a means of delivering on its statutory duties and a fundamental requirement was to produce a Policy, Strategy and Action Plan. In addition the Council produced separate Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes.

The development of the new Equality and Diversity Scheme, Priorities and Action Plan enabled the Council to merge together the requirements of the Equality Standard and its statutory equality duties.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the following comment be made to the Executive:

The Culture and Social Policy Committee supported the recommendations in the report.

1003. REVIEW OF WORKPLAN

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services on the Committees' workplan.

The workplan was last considered at the meeting on 6 February 2008, and appendix A to the report incorporated the suggestions which were made.

The Chair highlighted items within the Forward Plan which came within the Committees' remit and could possibly be scrutinised in future.

RESOLVED that

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the following amendments be made to the proposed work plan for the municipal year 2007/2008:
 - (i) a report be submitted in June 2008, with a view to making a recommendation to the Executive to wind up the contract with Mystery Shoppers Limited;
 - (ii) a report be submitted in June 2008, on the management of the crematorium and parking at Oakley Wood; and

CULTURE & SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE MINUTES (continued)

- (iii) the following items be deleted;
 - (a) Staging of Major Events
 - (b) Choice Based Lettings
 - (c) Review of the Equality and Diversity Plan; and
 - (d) Cemeteries Regulations

1004. END OF TERM REPORT

The Committee considered a report from Members' Services' on the work which had been carried out by the Committee during 2007/2008.

Under Article 6 of the Council's Constitution, the Overview & Scrutiny Committees and Policy Committees were required to provide an end of term report to the Council on the work they had undertaken during the year, to make recommendations on future work programmes and to amend working methods if appropriate.

The matters considered during the year were attached at appendix A to the report. This would be updated again to include matters considered at this meeting before it was submitted to Council to consider.

The work programme for the next municipal year 2008/2009, would be the work programme considered and amended in the previous item.

If the Committee structure was changed by the Executive on 25 March 2008, and this Committee no longer existed in its current form, then the outstanding items would be fed into the new Overview and Scrutiny Committees' work plan.

RECOMMENDED that the list of matters considered by this Committee during the municipal year 2007/2008, as detailed in appendix A to the minutes, be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7:30pm)

Minute 1004**Items considered by the Culture and Social Policy Committee –
2007/2008**

Items	Status as at March 2008
Affordable Housing Working Party	On going
Customer Service Centre Mystery Shopping Exercise	On going
Warwickshire's Strategy on Quality of Life for an Ageing Population	On going
Houses in Multiple Occupation in Warwick District	On-going
Local Housing Allowance	On going
HRA Incentive Schemes	On going
Local Lettings and Section 106 Agreements	On going
Open Spaces	On going
Housing Repairs	On going
Assisted Travel Scheme update	On going
Oakley Wood – Management of parking and crematorium	On going
Corporate Strategy 2007-2011	Completed June 2007 – comments to the Executive
Citizens Panel	Completed September 2007
Nomination of Members to the Small Grants Panel	Completed September 2007
Arts Strategy	Completed October 2007
Budget Consultation	Completed December 2007 – comments to the Executive
Staging of Major Events Task and Finish Group	Completed in March 2008
Review of the regulations of Warwick District Council Cemeteries	Completed in March 2008
Choice Based Lettings	Completed in March 2008 – comments to the Executive
Review of the Equality and Diversity Plan	Completed in March 2008 – comments to the Executive