

BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

COMMONWEALTH GAMES, CULTURE & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

O&S COMMITTEE – PUBLIC MEETING

1400 hours on Wednesday, 5 April 2023

Committee Rooms 3 & 4, Council House

Minutes

Present:

Councillor Jack Deakin (Chair)

Councillors: Gurdial Singh Atwal, Deborah Harries, Darius Sandhu and Rinkal Shergill

Also Present:

Cllr. Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage & Tourism (on-line)

Symon Easton, Head of Cultural Development and Tourism

Amanda Simcox, Scrutiny Officer

Amelia Wiltshire, Overview and Scrutiny Manager

1. NOTICE OF RECORDING/WEBCAST

The Chair advised that this meeting would be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's meeting You Tube site:

(www.youtube.com/channel/UCT2kT7ZRPFCXq6_5dnVnYlw) and that members of the press/public may record and take photographs except where there are confidential or exempt items.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were given on behalf of Cllrs. Marcus Bernasconi and Ron Storer.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Members were reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting.

Cllr. Darius Sandhu declared a registerable interest due to him having been appointed by the City Council to two organisations that receive external funding: The Committee of Friends of the Birmingham Museum Trust, and he was a trustee of the CBSO. It was agreed that Cllr. Darius Sandhu would leave the committee room for items 6 and 12, as he had not been granted a dispensation, and he would discuss this with the Monitoring Officer.

4. ACTION NOTES

(See document No. 1)

RESOLVED:

That the action notes of the formal meeting held on 1st February 2023 were agreed.

5. ACTION TRACKER

(See document No. 2)

The Chair advised that Sports England's previous guidance that residents should live within 20 minutes' drive time of leisure facilities such as swimming pools needed further work and could be picked up in the next municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the action tracker was noted.

6. BIRMINGHAM CULTURE SECTOR CHALLENGES / FUNDED ORGANISATIONS UPDATE

(See document No. 3)

Cllr. Darius Sandhu left the committee room.

The Chair welcomed Cllr. Jayne Francis, Cabinet Member for Digital, Culture, Heritage & Tourism (on-line), and Symon Easton, Head of Cultural Development and Tourism, to the meeting. He stated that there was provision to go into private session at the end of the public committee meeting if the Committee wished to discuss Exempt Appendix 1.

Symon Easton highlighted information from the report, which included:

Local, National, and International

- This was a national issue, with the culture sector being more fragile nationally than their counterparts in Europe. This was because generally in Europe they were State funded in the main and there was less reliance on earned income.

The Funded Organisations

- The Cabinet Member and officers met regularly with the funded organisations and Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT).
- Most have been successful in securing Arts Council England funding for 2022-26, but at a standstill with no inflation on the funding.
- Covid recovery funding was no longer available.

- The feedback regarding the similar challenges facing their organisations this year was summarised in paragraph 3.3 in the report and included:
 - Reduced trading income for the next two years.
 - Increase cost of utilities.
 - Increase of staffing costs and challenges in recruiting temporary staff.
 - Suppliers charging more.
- UK tourism was recovering slowly.

BMT and Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery (BMAG)

- BMT was successful in receiving c.£3m+ over three years from Arts Council England, but this was a standstill budget with no inflation.
- There was a potential in-year deficit for 2023-24 and they now have a clearer picture for the end of year position and future projections which will be discussed under the private report.
- BMAG was currently closed for the electrical works to be undertaken and further works, subject to approval, may be undertaken which would further delay re-opening.

B:Music (Town Hall & Symphony Hall)

- The Council was the primary funder, and on the 21st March 2023 Cabinet agreed funding for the next three years, which gives them some stability, and matches the Arts Council England funding period.
- Symphony Hall costs were increasing; this was a complicated issue and officers continue to review the current lease arrangements held with the NEC Group.

General Support and Mitigation

- Officers continue to work with Culture Central (the region's cultural sector membership organisation) to work on initiatives to support the culture sector such as The Birmingham Cultural Compact and establishing a new Philanthropic Network for Culture.
- Officers were also working on submissions for other potential funding streams, such as the Commonwealth Games (CWG's) Legacy Funding bid for a two-year cultural engagement programme with residents.
- The legacy CWG culture festival this year will be led by the Hippodrome, and it was hoped this becomes an annual festival from 2024.

Announcements

- Since publication of the report, the Government has announced they have extended the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and the Cultural Relief Rate, which will aid the CBSO etc.
- The Royal Courts of Justice has ruled that museums should pay less rateable value.

During the discussion and in response to queries raised by Members, the main points included:

- Due to extended works the BMAG would likely re-open in 2025, and the intention will be to open as per their previous timetable. However, this will need to be looked at in light of their financial position.
- The Chair would encourage work to be undertaken to explore ways to attract future generations, and the hiring of the buildings for private functions, etc.
- There was a [Visitor Destination Plan](#) and they were trying to increase visitors into the city.
- The model BMT has been operating was questioned in relation to the heritage sites opening times and the periods they were not open, due to the costs, and them being reliant on earned income. It was felt that they needed to be more creative to encourage people to use the heritage sites.
- The volunteering programme and support were queried, and it was thought that learning from the CWG, and the formal process volunteers went through, could be used to assist with this. It was highlighted that the Council does not manage these organisations, and the roles and responsibilities of volunteers and paid employees were different. However, there was scope to look at volunteering in this challenging time for the culture sector and a further appraisal from cultural organisations on this issue would be undertaken.
- The cost of the cultural festival was £2m funded by the Council.
- Whether representatives from the historic sites should attend a future committee meeting(s) was queried and it was agreed that this would be explored.

RESOLVED:

That:

- The update was noted.
- A further appraisal from cultural organisations on volunteering would be undertaken and shared with the Committee.
- The Chair together with Officers to explore whether representatives from the historic sites should attend a future committee meeting.

7. WORK PROGRAMME

(See document No. 4)

The Chair informed Members that the Committee needed to review the work programme completed during 2022/23 and recommend any issues that should be carried over or new issues to be included in the Scrutiny Work programme for 2023/24.

Cllr. Deborah Harries had raised the winter closures across the nine heritage sites before the Committee meeting and had received a comprehensive answer. However, she would like to explore this further.

RESOLVED:

- That the work programme was reviewed, and the Committee recommended the following issues should be included in the Scrutiny Work Programme for 2023/24:

- The items to be scheduled on page 32:
 - The Culture Strategy 2023-2033 including the External Review of Culture.
 - The Sport and Physical Activity Strategies.
 - Members of the Economy and Skills O&S to be invited to the CWG, Culture and Physical Activity O&S Committee for report on employment and skills legacy of CWG.
 - Enhancing Tennis Opportunities across the City.
- The winter and limited closures, and the affordability for heritage sites to be open, to be added.

8. REQUEST(S) FOR CALL IN/COUNCILLOR CALL FOR ACTION/PETITIONS RECEIVED (IF ANY)

None.

9. OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

None.

10. AUTHORITY TO CHAIR AND OFFICERS

RESOLVED:

In an urgent situation between meetings, the Chair jointly with the relevant Chief Officer has authority to act on behalf of the Committee.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee agreed to go into private session.

At 14.50 hours, the Committee moved into private session.