

LEISURE CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Tuesday, 4 December 2001 at 2.00pm

PRESENT –

Councillor Bloxham (Chairman) (Health and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder);
 Councillor Stevenson (Finance and Resources Portfolio Holder);
 Councillor Dodd;
 Councillor E Mallinson;
 Councillor J Prest;
 E Cartwright (Director of Leisure and Community Development);
 M Horne (Recreation Manager, The Sands Centre);
 P Armstrong (Operation and Premises Manager, The Pools)
 J Shires (Labour Group Political Assistant);
 A Pateman (Liberal Democrat/Independent Group Political Assistant);
 S Halstead (Senior Committee Clerk).

LCG.1/01 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor McMillan.

LCG.2/01 LEISURETIME COMPETITIVE PROCESS – KEY ISSUES AND INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCUMENTATION

The Director of Leisure and Community Development submitted Report LCD.92/01 summarising the current position with the Leisuretime Competitive process and outlining the key issues which are dealt with in the documentation. The matter had been referred by the Executive to this Group and also the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee for comment. Any observations would be submitted to the Executive in due course. The Director indicated that there would be one further meeting of this Group which would consider the full documentation.

The Group went on to give detailed consideration to the Director's report and the following issues arose:-

(a) Property issues – The contractor would be responsible for the internal maintenance of property and the Council responsible for external and structural maintenance. There was an issue as to whether this would apply in respect of any new buildings erected during the course of the contract. Ownership of new buildings would revert to the Council at the end of the contract period.

(b) Customer satisfaction measurements – The Action Plan objective to continue QUEST registration with an improving score of 2% on each re-assessment was seen as being ultimately very difficult to achieve. QUEST regarded 75% as excellence and the Council's services currently scored 63 – 65%. QUEST only covered The Sands and The Pools and not outdoor leisure services. It was suggested that this objective be altered to achieving a 75%

score on QUEST and thereafter maintaining this score. Alternatively, reaching the top per centile of benchmarks for other Centres in the UK could be used as a measurement.

(c) Core fixed issues –

- (1) Leisure access cards – the current concessions ranged from 50% to 75%. It may be easier to administer and for the customer to understand if the reduction was equal across the board.
- (2) Core opening times – it was suggested that the second sentence of Paragraph 2.2.11 of Report LCD.92/01 could be deleted as unnecessary.
- (3) Club contracts – Paragraph 2.2.14 was very prescriptive. The sentence “The provision needs to be at least the same as at present.” could be deleted. The last sentence could be amended to read “Variations will only be permissible following consultation by the contractor with the club and the agreement of the Council.”
- (4) Schools provision – The last sentence of Paragraph 2.2.15 should be amended to read “Variations will only be permissible following consultation by the contractor with the school/LEA and the agreement of the Council.”
- (5) Sports/entertainment split – Paragraph 2.2.16 detailed the current sports/entertainment split. It was recognised that, at present, management exercised a degree of flexibility to cater for one off events in respect of artists offering to come to Carlisle on a specific date which was normally a sports use day. The Group considered that, as written, a contractor may not feel able to exercise this flexibility as it would breach the terms of the contract specification. The Director was asked to look at this issue and report to the next meeting on an option to include a % split on sport/entertainment use for The Sands to be achieved over the course of a full year.
- (6) Orchestral subscription series – the current subsidy was expensive and public support waned each year. The quality threshold of the concerts was, however, high. There was a need to effectively market the subscription series to attract younger people. It was difficult to see this being done by the Council with existing staffing resources. The Director indicated that he would look at this issue and provide options for the future to the next meeting.

(d) Capital Improvement Objectives and Targets

- (1) Sands Events – It was questioned whether a 5% increase in ticket sales was achievable as a result of providing new seating.
- (2) Car Park for Pools Users – It was understood that discussions were taking place with the railway authorities over land behind The Pools which was currently used by railway staff as a parking area. It may be that this land was, in fact, owned by the Council. If so, the possibility of this land becoming a dedicated parking area for Pools users could be investigated.

- (e) Staff – TUPE Transfer – It was considered that tenderers should be asked for a statement of intent over their arrangements for the transfer of staff under TUPE and their proposals for the pay and

conditions of employees appointed after the contract was awarded and who would not be protected by TUPE.

(f) Property/Equipment – Issues relating to ownership, transfer and replacement of equipment needed to be addressed. The Director indicated that all loose equipment would transfer to the contractor at the outset. At the end of the contract, equipment would transfer back to the Council that would enable the delivery of the standard of service relevant at that time. A renewal fund for the purchase of replacement equipment would remain with the Council.

(g) Monitoring the Contract – The Director was preparing a framework to ensure contract compliance which would be submitted to the next meeting.

(h) Best Value – The possibility of a 15 year contract term was not compatible with Government requirements to carry out Best Value reviews every 5 years. Guidance from the Best Value Inspectorate was being sought.

LCG.3/01 CAR PARKING AT THE SANDS

Reference was made to car parking at The Sands, indicating that this was a fundamental issue for users of the centre. Customers were finding it increasingly difficult to park on The Sands car park during the day and potential contractors should be made aware of this.

The Chairman indicated that the Executive had agreed to allocate 24 spaces currently used by staff for Centre users with staff relocating to the Swifts Bank car park. The Director indicated that these arrangements are to be formalised with the successful contractor.

The Chairman indicated that these revised arrangements would need to be monitored.

(The meeting ended at 3.45pm)