

Trading Board

Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Attendees: Councillor Robert Davidson, Councillor Chris Pearson, Councillor Rosalind Scott, Councillor Lesley Scott-Boutell
Substitutes: Councillor Vic Flores (for Councillor Lewis Barber), Councillor Jackie Maclean (for Councillor Kevin Bentley)
Also Present: Councillors Davies, Feltham and Smith

174 Minutes of Previous Meeting

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

175 Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd Colchester Amphora Trading - Period 9

The Board considered a report from Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd Colchester Amphora Trading reporting on the activity within each of the trading services up to period 9 2017/118. Adrian Pritchard, Chief Executive Colchester Borough Council, and Fiona Duhamel, Assistant Director Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd, attended to present the report and assist the Board. The Board were informed that the Senior Commercial Manager had recently resigned.

In respect of the Sport and Leisure service, it was explained that the service was continuing to close the forecast budget gap. Whilst income remained below budget, there had been a significant increase in Lifestyles membership and a number of other areas, including the Leisure Pool, car parking and the catering were operating over budget. Costs were being monitored very closely, although there were a number of significant costs pressures including energy and pensions.

Performance in the last quarter had been particularly positive and income was significantly up on the same period in 2016. This had been boosted by a number of promotions, including a "No Joining Fee" promotion through December and a Groupon offer for new fitness classes. In addition, the service was working closely with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Colchester Hospital University Foundation Trust on the LEAP initiative, whereby patients who had recently suffered a serious health condition were referred to Leisure World for tailored fitness classes. This was particularly valuable as it generated an income stream at a time when facilities were not

heavily used. In addition the service was working with local employers on offers and promotions for their staff to encourage higher usage.

In discussion, it was explained that the Council was looking at requests for single use of the Leisure Pool and was considering the equality issues associated with such use. . In response to queries from members of the Board, reassurance was provided that the Sport and Leisure Service remained part of the Council. It remained committed to maintaining Leisure World and to ensuring that the facilities were refurbished regularly and kept in a good condition. In order to give the service a more commercial edge, it was managed through Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd.

In respect of Colchester Events Company, the Ice Slide had been well received. It had always been envisaged that it would be seen as a “place making” event designed to raise the profile of Colchester. However, there had been a number of additional costs incurred. These were being reviewed to see how they could be contained. The cost implications and quality of future events were also being reviewed. Two high profile concerts were booked for the Castle Park and the quality of acts being secured for Charter Hall was improving.

Members of the Board explored the ticketing arrangements used by the Events Company and how risks were managed. It was confirmed that at present ticketing was done by an outside company, but that these arrangements would be reviewed in the future. The Events Company maintained a risk register and this was being reviewed. The Company was working to reduce its risks and wherever possible was seeking to pass more of the risks for events onto the promoter. For example, the Company was no longer paying acts to perform at Charter Hall. Acts now either hired the venue or entered into a profit share agreement with the Events Company.

Concern was expressed by members of the Board that Charter Hall was not a fully accessible venue and attention was drawn to a recent legal case on the requirement to provide a sign language interpreter for events. Officers confirmed that they would look at these issues. It was also suggested that the Event Company needed to ensure that the acts that were booked reflected the public sector ethos.

Notwithstanding the shortfall in the budgeted surplus, Helpline was making a significant profit and was a successful business. Cost had stabilised, and as part of a management review new rotas had been revised in order to reduce the use of casual staff. It was reported that the pilot with the Ambulance Trust had not been as successful as anticipated. However there was considerable potential in working in partnership with the NHS across the region and a key element of the management review was to bring in a Business Development Manager, whose role would be to look for and develop commercial opportunities. Members of the Board stressed the importance of Helpline and the service it provided to vulnerable residents and that it needed to be seen as more than a business

It was reported that costs within the Monitoring Centre had also been stabilised and were subject to the same management and rota changes as Helpline. In response to queries from members it was confirmed that the CCTV was regularly reviewed and faulty cameras replaced. There were no plans to extend the CCTV network at the moment. Should the Colchester BID vote be successful, the current service would be included as part of the baseline services to town centre businesses, and it would be for the BID to consider whether it wanted to provide funding for a more extensive CCTV network.

In respect of Town Centre Digital it was reported that there had been some issues with the performance of the contractor, and they had now been set some clear marketing and sales priorities. Their performance would be closely monitored. It was anticipated that forthcoming government initiatives could make the installation and connections costs more affordable for interested businesses.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

176 Minutes - Part B

The Board resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOLVED that the not for publication extract of the minutes of the meeting on 15 November 2017 be confirmed as a correct record.

177 Colchester Commercial Holdings Ltd Period 9 2017-18

The Board resolved under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item as it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

This minute is not for publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

