

Culture & Leisure Committee meeting 26 April 2011

One of the more interesting parts of the council in our view, The Culture & Leisure Committee, meets at 10am at the City Chambers on 26 April 2011

The Agenda is below but here are some of the notable items on it.

The Edinburgh Makar, Ron Butlin, has recently requested an extension to his time in office, and the Council seem minded to grant the request, for which the poet receives an honorarium of £2,500 per annum.

The £37.18m project to renovate the Royal Commonwealth Pool is ongoing, and according to the report will result in the pool reopening in Spring 2012 in time for the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014. The project encountered some unexpected asbestos removal which increased both the time and the cost of the project. Edinburgh will host the diving events here in the capital. Part of the cost is being met by the sale of City Park and Leith Waterworld.

Library provision in The South Neighbourhood Office which according to the report is a great success. "The newly integrated reception is staffed by Services for Communities (SfC) and provides a one stop shop reception service for Council and other locally based services including SfC, Children and Families, Health and Social Care, Criminal Justice, Revenues and Benefits, CHAI (Community Help & Advice Initiative), and Working for Families."

Libraries feature elsewhere on the agenda for a review of performance. It seems from the report that 8% of all library visits in Scotland take place here in Edinburgh. "Taking account of the total figures for physical and online visits

there is an overall increase of 9% in visits to the service since 2008/9. Library usage therefore is not declining but changing as online usage has increased dramatically.” The Tales of One City blog from the City Libraries is a great way to keep up with what is going on in Edinburgh libraries, and it was The City of Edinburgh Council, Libraries and Information Service who provided funding for the first round of [EdinBuzz](#) Social Media Surgeries. (wonder if they are holding any more...?)

There is information for the committee about the restoration of the Old Observatory House on Calton Hill and its lease to the Vivat Trust. This property was renovated recently and is leased to the Vivat Trust for £1 a year on a month-by-month basis. The property is let for holiday rentals for anything between £800 or so and £1900 per week. If one takes the mean figure of £1,000 per week, then the annual income which the Vivat Trust is making could be estimated at £50,000. Not all of this will be profit of course, as there will be some cleaning and other maintenance involved. It is not yet possible to let the property for longer until court approval is given. So the council expects 50% of the rental profit to be paid to it, estimated at £12,500 this year and rising to around £16,000 in a couple of years from now. The rental monies are to be ring-fenced by the council for use in maintaining the property, and will have to be held separately until the court decision is made known. If it is not possible for a longer lease to be granted to Vivat then the cost of the renovation (£50,000) will have to be reimbursed to them. And we should say that we were chuffed to note that the council had noticed our coverage of the renovation on 4 March!

Three new inscriptions are required in Makars' Court and this is what is proposed:-

James Boswell (1740 – 1795)

*I rattled down the High Street in high elevation of spirits.
[from Journal, 15 November 1762] Sponsored by the Boswell*

Museum and Mausoleum Trust

Lachlan Mor MacMhuirich (c1370 – 1438)

*A Chlanna Cuinn cuimhnichibh Cruas an a`m na h-iorghaile
(Translation: O Children of Conn, remember Hardihood in time
of battle.)*

*[from the first verse of his poem the “Harlaw Brosnachadh”
(Incitement to Battle) written in Scots Gaelic, 1411]*

Sponsored by the Clan Currie Society, Inc.

*Sir David Lyndsay (c. 1486 – 1555) Lat us haif the bukis
necessare*

To commoun weill

*(Translation: Let us have the books necessary To our common
good)*

*[from “Ane Dialog betuix Experience and Ane Courteour”, lines
678-79, first printed 1554]*

Sponsored by The Sir David Lyndsay Society

The report explains that “At its meeting on 10 March 1997 the Recreation Committee established that the method of selecting writers for commemoration would involve the Writers’ Museum forwarding sponsorship or commemoration requests to the Saltire Society, who would in turn make a recommendation to the Council.”

The Usher Hall Spring Programme is also on the agenda, presumably to prove to the councillors that the newly refurbished venue, once home to two concerts by The Rolling Stones, is being used properly. The report explains what is on there and in particular:-“A wide range of rock and popular artists will be visiting the Hall in the period, including Madeleine Peyroux on 1 May, Michael Ball on 27 May, Don McLean on 22 June and Gregg Allman on 6 July.”

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