

Nottingham City Council

Companies Governance Executive Committee

Minutes of the meeting held at Loxley House, Nottingham on 21 December 2021
from 3.01 pm - 4.29 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor David Mellen (Chair)
Councillor Neghat Khan
Councillor Sam Webster
Councillor Linda Woodings

Absent

Councillor Sally Longford (Vice
Chair)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Ian Edward	- Strategic Advisor for Companies
Clive Heaphy	- Corporate Director for Finance and Resources
Martin Ingham	- Chief Executive, National Ice Centre
Marie Marshall	- Finance Director, National Ice Centre
Hugh White	- Corporate Director for COVID Response and Recovery
Phil Wye	- Governance Officer

Call-in

The agenda does not contain any decisions eligible for call-in.

43 Apologies for absence

Councillor Sally Longford – other Council business

44 Declarations of Interests

None.

45 Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

46 Work Plan

The Committee noted the work plan for 2021/22, and noted that items for April 2022 onwards will be agreed with the Chair prior to the next meeting.

47 Council owned company discussion - Nottingham Ice Centre

This item does not have any decisions that are eligible for call-in.

The Committee received a presentation by Martin Ingham, Chief Executive of Nottingham Ice Centre(NIC) Ltd, which highlighted the following:

- (a) the company's strategic objectives are to maximize the opportunities for people to achieve their potential in ice sports, to bring people together to enjoy live events and experiences that create lifelong memories, to inspire people of all backgrounds and abilities to maximize their potential and to deliver increasing economic benefits to the City and the region;
- (b) the NIC closed in March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The ice rinks reopened for a short period and then closed again, and reopened finally in May 2021. The Motorpoint Arena reopened in August 2021 after 75 weeks of closure. During the period of closure, the NIC had to reduce costs by making redundancies of over 100 staff and 1,194 casual staff. Financial support was provided by Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the City Council and Culture Recovery Fund;
- (c) in August 2021 over 750 new staff were required, who had to be trained, and a huge recruitment process was undertaken. New systems are in place for HR and finance, as well as a new ice sport management system. The complex building had developed a number of equipment failures, some of which could be repaired and others that needed replacement;
- (d) marketing and communications took place with arena ticket buyers and skaters, and ticket buying has been good. There have been problems of supply for some services, and opportunities for new suppliers have been sought. Some new commercial partnerships have been agreed, for example with Unilever and Lifebuoy Hand Sanitiser;
- (e) since reopening 32 arena shows have taken place, as well as 15 Nottingham Panthers ice hockey matches and the Women's Olympic Ice Hockey Qualifying Tournament. With 200,000 arena customers over 15 weeks this has been the busiest autumn ever, due to a concertina effect of postponed shows;
- (f) public skating admissions have already caught up and exceeded those in 2019, although there is a worry that that these will reduce during Winter 2021-22 if further restrictions are imposed;
- (g) an external box office has been established for security reasons, stewarding has been brought in-house, and a new scanning system has been established. Motorpoint has extended its naming rights on the arena until 2024 and has rebranded the building;
- (h) operational improvements have delivered record food and beverage takings on like-for-like Arena events and Panthers matches have had a 30% uplift on spend per head;
- (i) there is a huge backlog of tours for the next 30 months, and new relationships with promoters have been established as other arenas are already booked up.

The Chair congratulated the NIC on the successful re-opening.

During discussion and in response to questions, the following points were raised:

- (j) in terms of being financially sustainable, the NIC hopes to break even and not require further financial support. However, it remains to be seen what will happen with the recent surge in Covid-19 cases and possible further restrictions;
- (k) the arena has been used for events rather than skating since reopening as conversion is expensive. This has led to a reduced number of public skating sessions but a better per-hour return;
- (l) most shows were postponed rather than cancelled, some several times, as there is usually a commitment from the artists. Customers had a right to a refund but the majority did not take this up and kept their tickets for the rescheduled dates. Shows in January are quite likely to move too due to the new wave of Covid-19, with one show already rescheduled;
- (m) the costs of just up-keeping the building are significant, so if shows continue to be postponed it will cause problems, as there will be no revenue from food, beverages and merchandise. If social distancing requirements come in then shows will be cancelled as the promoters cannot make enough money;
- (n) the introduction of Covid Pass requirements has not caused any major problems as they were announced early enough to get procedures in place. Spectators have generally complied and arrived early as required.

Resolved to record the thanks of the Committee to Mr Ingham for his attendance and informative presentation.

48 Exclusion of the public

The Committee agreed to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, as the sensitive nature of the business affairs under consideration could, if made public, prejudice the ability of the companies concerned to operate effectively in a competitive market.

49 Council owned company discussion - Nottingham Ice Centre

This item does not contain any decisions that are eligible for call-in.

The Committee received a presentation by Martin Ingham, Chief Executive of Nottingham Ice Centre (NIC)Ltd.

50 Council owned companies - financial update

This item does not contain any decisions that are eligible for call-in.

Ian Edward, Strategic Advisor for Companies, presented the report, updating the Committee on the latest position in respect of Council owned companies.

Resolved to note the update.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure the sub-committee understands the current financial position of the group of companies of Nottingham City Council and any risks highlighted in the report for action.

Other options considered:

None.