

Runnymede Borough Council

LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

17 November 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors R.K. Habgood (Chairman) M.J. Brown (Vice-Chairman), A. Alderson, J.R. Furey, Mrs C.E. Gant, Mrs S.E. Jacobs, A.M. Moore, C.J. Norman and C.J. Ruane.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor C. Knight.

372. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor Mrs C.Y. Jones be removed from the membership of the Committee and that Councillor J.R. Furey be appointed in her place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter Councillor Mrs C.Y. Jones would be reappointed.

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to this request in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

373. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 22 September 2005, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

374. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C. Knight.

375. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Habgood declared a personal interest in the report 'Summer Playschemes 2005/06' because his children had attended the scheme. As his interest was not prejudicial he remained in the room taking a full part in the discussion and voting thereon.

376. CHERTSEY ALLOTMENTS CAPITAL SCHEME

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, February 2003, page 1057, para. 606, March 2003, page 1101, para. 664 and July 2003, page 253, para.164).

The Committee was informed there had been additional expenditure of £71,100 in respect of the Chertsey Allotments capital scheme. This necessitated approval for revised capital programme provision and a revised capital estimate.

Members were generally pleased that the scheme had met its objectives to rationalise allotment provision to match demand, release Council land for 34 units of affordable housing and provide land for an extension to the capacity of Chertsey Cemetery, whilst releasing approximately £8m capital receipts.

The main reasons for the overspend were:

- delays in getting on to the Barrsbrook site which meant that plot holders had to occupy their plots before the construction was complete resulting in delays to the construction. A major contributory factor had been the lengthy process of obtaining Ministerial consent for the closure of Painesfield;
- extra work required by the statutory service providers over and above their initial estimates owing to the requirements of the adjacent housing development;

- the discovery of slow-worms on site. As a protected species of reptile covered by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Council had to make suitable provision for them, as part of the planning consent, to ensure they were unharmed by the development.

The Committee examined the expenditure figures provided by Calfordseadon in some detail, noting the substantial sum being allocated to the sale of the land for housing. As a result, Officers agreed to re-examine the costs allocation between the Housing Project and the Allotments Project.

Members noted that the contamination report was responsible for £30,300 of the overspend and sought clarification that the figure was correct as it appeared excessive.

The Committee remarked upon the fact that the issue had been inaccurately reported in the local press.

RESOLVED that –

Corporate Management Committee be requested to recommend approval of an additional capital estimate in the sum of £71,100 for the extra costs of the Chertsey Allotments capital scheme.

377. SUMMER PLAYSCHMES 2005/06

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2004, page 416, para. 338)

Members received a detailed report setting out the performance of the 2005/06 Summer Playschemes and seeking approval for the terms of its continuation in 2006/07 and associated fees and charges.

The sponsors of the scheme, Procter and Gamble, and the Tussauds Group were thanked for their continued support and Members praised the Officers for the considerable amount of work they put into making the scheme successful, well attended and good value for money.

However, it was agreed, after some debate, to defer a decision on the 2006/07 proposals for fees and charges pending further information. Officers were instructed to examine whether savings above the agreed target, and which had already largely been met by the existing proposals, could be made without serious detriment to the scheme.

Officers agreed to produce a report setting out what impact charges in the region of £50 per week might have on take-up figures and projected income over a three year period, for the next meeting, when the fees and charges could be set for the coming year.

In view of the fact that 72% capacity had been achieved across seven sites, some Members also wanted Officers to review the number of sites at which the scheme was held with a view to further savings being made. Officers confirmed this would be looked at separately at a later date, notwithstanding that the scheme had been expanded in the previous year to alleviate pressure at some sites in the Borough.

378. SUMMER SPLASH SCHEME 2005/06

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2004, page 417, para. 339)

The Committee received a performance report on the Summer Splash Scheme for 2005/06 and approval was sought for the 2006/07 proposals.

Officers confirmed that 279 young people had been booked onto the scheme in advance, with a further 101 bookings on the speciality activities. The scheme was based at St George's College with free transport provided; a referral scheme had benefited 8 young people. Discounts had been available for Council and Splash Scheme staff.

Members thanked the scheme's sponsors, Procter and Gamble and the Tussauds Group, and commended the Officers for their work to make Splash successful, particularly praising the flexibility of staff working on the scheme which helped ensure that it was economically viable. It was agreed to look at ways of increasing attendance on the scheme through wider and more high profile marketing and, in the longer term, the possibility of introducing pro-rata charges for

non-Borough residents who represented 25% of attendees.

Members agreed that because the Splash scheme was aimed at a potentially 'hard to reach' group of young people who should not be discouraged from attending the scheme, there was no need to increase the charges for 2006/07.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the 2006 Splash scheme be operated on the same basis as in 2005 with up to 150 places per week on the main scheme, to be increased if bookings warrant it with additional places available for the speciality week;**
- ii) the 2006 Splash scheme be operated at a net cost to the Council of £27,100 and appropriate provision be included in the 2006/07 estimates;**
- iii) the charges for the 2006 Splash scheme be set at £45 a week per participant or £22.50 a week per participant for families receiving benefits or £10 per day per participant and the out of Borough charge be increased to £12 per day or £60 per week per participant; and**
- iv) the referral scheme in which children at risk can attend the schemes free of charge, with the referring body contributing 50% of the costs be continued.**

379. SURREY YOUTH GAMES AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE 2005/06
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2004, page 418, para. 340)

Members were pleased to learn that Runnymede had again participated enthusiastically in all aspects of the 2005 Surrey Youth Games; and, although not highly placed, it was agreed that the taking part and engaging in successful partnership working was most important – encouraging young people who would not have otherwise been able, to try different sports and receive excellent coaching from a team of dedicated professionals.

The launch day at Egham Leisure Centre had been attended by approximately 65 children, who were given the opportunity to participate in taster sessions for 7 different sports. 253 participated in the games themselves and 200 people attended the presentation evening. Those Members who had also been involved were very impressed with the organisation of the event and the sense of community that the Games fostered.

Thanks were extended to Runnymede Sports Council and Foxhills Golf and Country Club for their financial contributions. Members were disappointed however that BAA Airports would not be supporting the games in future and it was agreed to find out more about the circumstances of this.

Members discussed the types of sports covered in the Games which led to clarification being sought in respect of the agreement between River Bourne Health Club and the Council regarding public use of their swimming pool. Members suspected that some difficulty was being encountered by ordinary members of the public wishing to use the pool and Officers agreed to look into reviving the use of 'mystery swimmers' to check that the terms of the lease were being adhered to.

The Committee was informed that owing to staffing changes, discussions about the Games criteria and scoring structures and the withdrawal of funding from BAA Airports, Surrey Youth Games was currently being reviewed and the Sports and Leisure Development Manager would provide an update to Members via the Members' Bulletin thereafter.

Members were pleased with all the work undertaken in this area and content to approve the same level of support for 2006/07.

RESOLVED that –

the draft estimates for 2006/07 include net provision of £8,000 for the Surrey Youth Games.

380. COMMUNITY SPORTS COACH SCHEME (HOCKEY AND TENNIS)
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2002, page 543, para. 310)

The Committee considered a report setting out plans for hockey and tennis provision in the Borough in the light of recent funding and other opportunities.

Members were pleased to learn that Salesian School in Chertsey had secured £500,000 from the New Opportunities Funding for PE and Sport to build a new astro turf floodlit pitch which would be home for Thames Valley Hockey Club. Construction would commence in January, aiming for completion by May 2006.

With this in mind, Officers had made an application to the Community Sports Coach Scheme to employ a part time hockey coach on a fixed three year term to work with local schools and Thames Valley Hockey Club to initiate a junior hockey programme in Runnymede. A one-off payment of £1,000 had been secured from Surrey Hockey Association and £2,000 from the Coach Scheme itself, subject to confirmation by the Regional Sports Board in December.

The Committee noted that in respect of tennis provision, St George's College had recently handed over the management of its courts (outside College use hours) to an independent body called St George's Tennis Academy. They had applied, with the Lawn Tennis Association, to the Community Sports Coach Scheme, for a Community Tennis Coach in Runnymede. It was intended that the Council would work in partnership with the post, who would be employed by St George's Tennis Academy.

Funding of £30,000 had been requested from the Lawn Tennis Association towards the cost of the post, and St George's Tennis Academy had asked the Council for a contribution for the post. Officers confirmed this could be met from the Sports Development base budget utilising residual monies from the 'Breaking the Tape' project which had now concluded.

Members agreed that these developments were a positive move for pro-active sports development and were pleased to support the proposals. In doing so it was noted that approval from Corporate Management Committee was needed for the change to the staffing establishment in respect of the hockey post.

RESOLVED that –

the community sports coach scheme for hockey and tennis be approved, subject to the necessary authority being given by the Corporate Management Committee in due course, for a variation to the staff establishment.

381. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE TRADING ACCOUNT
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2005, page 456 para. 284)

The Committee received the latest trading position of Egham Leisure Centre, noting the additional information provided comparing actual figures against targets.

Members were disappointed that the centre was £16,347 over the adjusted target, mainly due to the income for the period 1 April to 30 September being 5% below target. Gym membership was also lower than the target of 1,200 by 143 members.

However, it was anticipated that the situation would improve if a proposal to improve facilities at the Centre was approved.

382. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE – FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2005, page 456, para. 284)

The Committee received a substantial report outlining two proposals to make improvements at Egham Leisure Centre in order to increase revenues and bring the centre's facilities up to date.

Members were aware that the centre had been running at an operating loss for some time and competition from other local facilities had affected business. A concerted effort had been made over the last 18 months to improve the situation; through marketing campaigns, promotions and a new staffing structure, with some success, but it had become apparent that further investment was now needed. Officers anticipated that the improvement works could be completed by the Autumn of 2006, if investment was approved.

The first improvement scheme involved refreshing the fitness suite and its equipment, and the second project was the installation of six all weather 5-a-side football pitches and expansion and improvements to the outdoor changing room facilities.

Having undertaken detailed surveys of existing users, studied the demographics, assessed risks, projected income figures against different membership levels and drawn on information provided by extensive market research in accordance with Sport England guidance, Officers believed that making the investment now would yield the necessary returns by 2008 to make the centre successful again in terms of increased usage income, secondary spend and cross selling once new members had been attracted.

Members were reassured that losing one of the squash courts to accommodate part of the 5-a-side football pitches proposal was sound given the under-use of those facilities, and it was confirmed that siting of the pitches would take into account the interests of nearby residents and the Green Belt status of the location.

On balance, Members wished to support the proposals subject to planning and financial approval. The Committee agreed that the fitness suite in particular was in need of attention if it was to compete successfully in the market place and that concentrating on football was sensible given its perennial popularity with the potential customer base in Runnymede.

Concern was expressed that despite their caution, the projected income and membership figures in the published report were a little optimistic in the present economic climate. However, Officers were able to supply figures based on an increase of 100 members as opposed to 200 members. These still resulted in betterment against the financial forecast approved in October 2005 by the end of 2008/09.

Members debated whether there was any mileage in exploring the profit share option for procurement which Officers had briefly considered. However, it was agreed that as the Management arrangement for the centre was due to be reviewed in 2007 it was unnecessary to take the idea further at this stage.

During the discussion, Members sought an update on the position with Abbey Fit Sports Centre. Officers confirmed that signing of the necessary documents by all parties for the lease and dual use agreement was imminent, and a report would be submitted to the next meeting of Corporate Management Committee for selection of a list of tenderers for new gym equipment.

RESOLVED that –

- i) subject to spending and planning approval:-**
 - a) the refurbishment of the fitness suite at Egham Leisure Centre and the replacement of equipment, as described in the proposal at Appendix 'L' of the agenda, be approved;**
 - b) the provision of six all weather 5-a-side football pitches and improvements in the outdoor changing facilities at Egham Leisure Centre, as described in the proposal at Appendix 'L', be approved;**

- c) **Officers be instructed to do all things necessary to progress the schemes, and report on such progress regularly to this Committee; and**
- ii) **the Corporate Management Committee be requested to:-**
 - a) **recommend revised capital programme provision and a capital estimate in the sum of £240,000 in respect of the fitness suite proposal; and**
 - b) **recommend a capital estimate in the sum of £606,000 in respect of the 5-a-side pitches proposal.**

383. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 4 October 2005 as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.)