

Runnymede Borough Council

LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

18 June 2009 at 7.30 pm

Members of the  
Committee present: Councillors M J Brown (Chairman), Miss M N Heath and J J Wilson (Vice-Chairmen), A J Davis, Mrs M T Harnden, R N Jones, A M Moore, C J Norman and Mrs G Warner.

Members of the  
Committee absent: Councillor M T Kusneraitis.

100. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

101. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Interim Chief Executive of its wish that the change listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The change was for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillor removed would be reappointed.

<b>Group Requiring Change</b>	<b>Remove from Membership</b>	<b>Appoint Instead</b>
Conservative	Councillor Mrs G M Kingerley	Councillor R N Jones

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

102. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 March 2009 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

103. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A J Davis declared a personal interest in the item 'Allotments Review – Update' as he was an allotment holder in the borough.

104. FINANCIAL MONITORING STATEMENT

(Ref: Minutes of the Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2009, page 819, para 568)

Members received for information the latest financial projections for the 2009/10 financial year for Leisure and Environmental Services.

In addition to the projected budget and forecast, savings still to be delivered and the current year key budget indicators Members were given up to date membership information for both the leisure centres showing membership figures against their targets over the year. At the end of May 2009 ELC had 1,505 members against its target of 1,450 and ALC had 565 members against its revised target of 555. Members were pleased by these healthy figures. Officers confirmed that the ratio between full and concessionary memberships at each centre were: 48:52 and 65:35 respectively.

105. SERVICE PLAN OUTTURN 2008/09

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2008, page 449, para. 311)

The Committee received the outturn performance of Leisure and Environmental services for 2008/09.

The Service Plan had been updated to reflect the Council's obligations under the Local Government Public Engagement In Health Act 2007, which required the Council to produce in partnership with others, a Surrey wide Local Area Agreement, effective from June 2008. The Service Plan also made substantial reference to the new Sustainable Community Strategy which provided an underlying framework against which performance could be monitored and measured.

The newly styled plan identified those areas in which the Council was progressing well, where the service was at risk of not being developed, was failing and where the action was complete.

Attached to the Service Plan were the relevant departmental Equality Action Plans covering the period January 2009 – March 2010.

Members reviewed the plan in detail, noting a number of positive areas where the Council was progressing well. For example, the youth shelter at Heathervale Recreation Ground, which had been a subject of concern initially, but was now acknowledged to be a success.

It was noted that the facilities at Egham Leisure Centre were much improved, and Officers were thanked for their commitment. Officers were requested to keep monitoring funding opportunities in order to upgrade existing facilities which had been identified in the action plan.

The Two Wards project, which was a multi agency initiative led by the County Council, had focussed on Egham Hythe and Chertsey St Ann's and had brought a number of improvements through, for example, the new housing scheme at Wapshott Road and the new Hythe Park. The focus had shifted now to Englefield Green West and it was agreed to provide the Committee with more details of Leisure's involvement in the project, including the criteria for selection and the position in the 'league table' of different wards.

Members made a number of minor amendments to the plan including the consideration of celebrations of the Octocentenary of Magna Carta, and to note that allotments as well as promoting healthy eating were also good exercise.

It was agreed that Members should be notified directly when events were taking place in their wards so that they did not miss the opportunity to attend. This could include the opening of new parks, and other similar ceremonies.

In respect of Environmental Services, Members discussed recycling and the aspiration to reduce the amount of residual household waste collected. It was agreed that achieving these targets rested largely with residents' willingness to waste less and recycle more. The figures were skewed by having to use national guidelines which did not differentiate between borough and county responsibility.

Officers agreed to provide more details on SCS E5 'Champion Effective flood alleviation schemes' which would explain why that section was at risk of not being delivered.

Members also discussed air quality monitoring. Officers confirmed that good progress was being made with the assessment work being carried out in regard to Addlestone and New Haw following the successful appointment of a part time Air Quality Monitoring Officer in April but that it had not yet been possible to reach areas in Egham that Members were keen to be included. It was agreed that Ward Members would be consulted on the location of diffusion tubes in Egham prior to their installation but that it would not be soon enough to provide conclusive figures for several months after installation.

Members noted that the Community Safety section of the plan drew on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership Action Plan where relevant and that it was more difficult to provide definite targets as most were qualitative rather than quantitative.

Members were cautioned against taking note of what appeared to be high increases in crime figures, particularly when reported in the media, due to the low base that some of the areas started at which distorted the picture and fuelled the fear of crime rather than lessening it.

106. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN 2009/10  
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2008, page 75, para 79)

The Committee considered the Environmental Protection Plan for 2009/10. Officers were obliged by the Food Standards Agency and Health and Safety Commission/Executive, to produce this as separate document rather than incorporating it within the main Service Plan.

The Plan set out the aims and objectives of the service to maintain and enhance standards in food hygiene, public health and safety and pollution control through promotion of good practice, inspection and enforcement carried out using a risk based matrix.

In 2009/10 the department planned, in particular, to carry out more inspections at permitted facilities, make improvements at the licensed caravan sites in the borough, expand the collection of green waste, improve website access to departmental information and make more progress with the Council's duties in respect of contaminated land and air quality now that more staffing resources had been allocated to this area.

The Committee was pleased to approve the plan, and thanked Officers for their efforts.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Environmental Protection Plan for 2009/10 be approved.**

107. SAFER RUNNYMEDE ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2006, page 60, para 84)

The Committee received for information the Safer Runnymede Annual Report 2008/09. Members took the opportunity to congratulate Officers on the quality of their service and thanked them for their contribution to the well being of the community and its more vulnerable residents.

The Committee noted the range of activities which were picked up by the CCTV cameras; the prompt action of the operators and their vigilance often prevented people from harm and facilitated criminal incidents being solved.

Members were pleased that improvements to the call centre and its operation had provided an opportunity to expand and thus generate income for the Council.

With regard to anti-social behaviour in the form of graffiti, Members were pleased with the areas that had been cleaned recently, but highlighted an area just within the Runnymede border in need of attention. These were the motorway pillars spanning the Wey Navigation, close to the Basingstoke Canal junction. Officers agreed to investigate further in consultation with the Surrey Highway authority. It was acknowledged that although some graffiti was almost like art, much of it was without merit and should, vehicular access and cost permitting, be removed.

108. ALLOTMENTS REVIEW – UPDATE

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2008, page 248, para 216)

The Committee received a report which provided an update with progress on the review of allotment provision in the borough with the aim of meeting the increasing demand from residents to grow their own fruit, vegetables and flowers.

Officers had received some positive feedback and suggestions from plot holders at the annual allotments meeting. A small working group was being set up to discuss these ideas further and to assess their feasibility. The findings of this group would be reported to Members in due course.

Officers had so far been able to look at the potential to develop a number of sites, either by creating more plots within existing boundaries or extending each site as set out below.

Site	planned for or existing number of plots	potential number of new plots
Hythe Park (Egham Hythe)	18	25

Pinewood (New Haw)	23	8
Sayes Court (New Haw)	90	10
Barrsbrook Farm (Chertsey)	104	20
Thorpe	32	2
Stroude Road (Virginia Water)	107	15 – 20
Boshers (Egham)	122	20
Vicarage Road (Egham)	45	4
Hamm Moor (Addlestone)	to be decided	to be decided

Officers explained that these figures were provisional and depended on a number of factors including; funding being available, the availability of land within or nearby the sites, reaction to the potential loss of open space, soil quality, existing ground features and, where self managed, the plot holders agreeing to the development and how it could be done.

The Committee noted that there was no scope to provide additional plots at the remaining sites in the borough at Bond Street (8), Kings Lane (20), Woodham Lane (11), Wendover Road (12) and St Ann's (22) allotments. The figures in brackets indicated how many plots were currently provided.

Officers had also issued a questionnaire to allotment holders, attracting a 40% response rate and encouraging satisfaction levels for the facilities provided.

The Committee was aware that financial constraints on the Council might prevent expansion and further improvement at a number of the sites but looked forward to receiving a report in due course on fully costed options once consultation with the allotments users had been completed.

#### 109. BUSKING AND STREET ENTERTAINMENT

The Committee received a detailed report inviting Members to approve a way forward in respect of busking and street entertainment in the borough.

The Committee was advised that people busking or performing for a charitable purpose could already take place, and did, usually in the form of carol singing. They were issued with a street collections permit or house to house collections licence as appropriate. However, because essentially there was no difference between busking for charity or private gain it was agreed they should be treated in the same way as far as preventing a nuisance of some kind taking place.

Members were advised that busking was dealt with differently in Surrey and nationwide. Most commonly other local authorities, particularly those where busking took place frequently, had designated areas under the Licensing Act 2003 with Premises Licences and controlled it in that way. However, there was no-where really suitable for that in Runnymede and Officers had taken note of guidance from the Department for Media, Culture and Sport, that it was never really intended that busking and other such 'ad hoc' entertainment should be captured by the Act, although there was nothing to exclude it.

A full public consultation exercise had been undertaken to gauge the opinion of residents, Ward Members, retailers, businesses, musicians and other performers, to busking and to find out what concerns if any people had, whether they had any views about where busking could and should take place and how it should be regulated, if at all.

The consultation exercise had attracted 107 responses out of approximately 400 and opinion had been divided about busking. A small number felt very positive about it but the majority had raised concerns mainly to do with the quality of busking, noise nuisance, obstruction, begging, lowering the tone and stating quite clearly that they did not want buskers near their premises.

It was agreed that although busking didn't appear to be very popular it was not possible to ban it, nor should it be, providing it could be controlled in a manner proportionate to the issue.

Officers confirmed that very few requests for busking were received; mainly from students and church groups, and it was agreed there was no desire to make an industry out of regulating the activity beyond making sure that people did not create any crime and disorder issues or act in

contravention of the Highways Act 1980, the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Street Trading legislation or other relevant legislation.

It was also confirmed that very few complaints about busking had been received but that the quality of buskers should if possible be ensured.

Of the options discussed and having regard to the low number of enquiries and the lack of enforcement resources, internally and with partners, it was agreed that the most practical approach would be to adopt an informal busking policy and voluntary code of conduct, treating each enquiry on a case by case basis which would hopefully avoid any complaints being received. The policy and code would be applied to both buskers for charitable purposes and private gain.

Members amended the voluntary code of conduct to reduce the end time for busking to 6 pm and strengthened the policy to prohibit buskers from selling their wares, which to allow would be in contravention of street trading legislation.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) whilst there does not appear to be a need for a formal ‘busking and street entertainment policy’ the draft informal policy and voluntary code of conduct, as amended and attached at Appendix ‘A’ be approved, subject to consultation with Surrey Police and other relevant parties; and**
- ii) the policy and code of conduct be reviewed in June 2010**

110. PETITION FOR BETTER PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES IN CHERTSEY  
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2006, page 55, para 79)

The Committee noted the receipt of a petition asking for better public toilet provision in the shopping centre in Chertsey. The petition had been signed by approximately 900 people and was accompanied by a letter from former Borough and County Councillor, Mr Lowther, who was well respected in the community and had served the residents of Chertsey for approximately 50 years.

Members enquired whether any progress had been made with the approach made by the former Chief Executive and followed by the Borough Valuer to J Sainsbury’s on whose land the existing facility was, and who were responsible for its upkeep. It was acknowledged that vandalism was a problem which meant they were more often closed than open.

It was understood that the site might be refurbished in the coming year and that it would be prudent to ask Sainsbury’s to re-locate the public toilet elsewhere, and under cover where it would be less prone to vandalism and the elements. This might also provide an opportunity to re-negotiate the lease on more favourable terms.

111. APPOINTMENTS TO LEISURE SUB-GROUPS AND LEISURE RELATED EXTERNAL BODIES

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) The Director of Administration and Leisure and the Director of Finance be re-appointed to serve on the Cabrera Trust Management Committee for the Municipal Year 2009/10;**
- ii) Councillors C J Norman and L C Pouyanne be re-appointed and appointed respectively, to serve on the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group for the Municipal Year 2009/10;**

- iii) **Councillor A J Davis be re-appointed and Councillor J J Wilson be appointed to serve on the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group for the Municipal Year 2009/10;**
- iv) **Councillor Mrs M T Harnden be appointed to serve on the River Thames Alliance for the Municipal Year 2009/10; and**
- v) **Councillors M J Brown and J J Wilson be appointed to serve on the Joint Waste Strategy Consultative Board for the Municipal Year 2009/10.**

112. CHERTSEY MEADS MANAGEMENT LIAISON GROUP – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Liaison Group held on 3 March 2009 as attached at Appendix 'B' were received and noted.

113. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 7 April 2009 as attached at Appendix 'C' were received and noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.58 pm)