

Runnymede Borough Council

LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

24 September 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, J R Furey, Mrs L M Gillham, Mrs M T Harnden, Mrs G Kingerley, C J Norman and Mrs G Warner.

Members of the
Committee absent: None

285. FIRE PRECAUTIONS

The Chairman read out the Fire Precautions.

286. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Groups mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive of their wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be reappointed.

Group Requiring Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor M T Kusneraitis	Councillor J R Furey
Runnymede Independents	Councillor A M Moore	Councillor Mrs L M Gillham

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

287. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 June 2009 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

288. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs M T Harnden and Mrs L M Gillham declared a personal interest in the item 'Play Builder Funding', as they were both trustees of the Frank Muir Memorial Field which was one of the areas which would benefit from a project in the scheme.

289. FINANCIAL MONITORING STATEMENT

(Ref: Minutes of the Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2009, page 85, para 104)

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, the Committee was advised of a number of recent changes which had affected the budget profiles. Members were disappointed to learn that the membership figures for the Leisure Centres had been overstated owing to an issue with the database. This had had a knock on effect of overstating the budget at both centres. The Committee was assured that up to date figures would be included in future reports once the issues had been resolved, noting that based on current data, a deficit of approximately £50,000 at year end was now likely at Egham and up to £10,000 at Addlestone.

Although there had been a fall in income on allotments and cemeteries there was a welcome increase in income from the public halls. Officers were asked to confirm what the position was with the tenancy of the former Egham Garden Centre and whether the site would be converted fully to allotments and to keep them up to date on progress with the plans to extend the cemetery at Addlestone. Officers confirmed that burial plots would be available for sale once the layout and availability of the new Addlestone Cemetery had been finalised.

In respect of Environmental Services, Officers reported a shortfall of £30,000 on subscriptions to the Green Waste scheme because only 24 new households had signed up in the last 12 months.

The Committee was concerned by a new item on the budget to cover the cost of removing approximately 10,000 tyres that had been fly tipped at a site in the borough, which owing to its difficulty to access and the scale of the problem would cost in the region of £80,000 to clear, to be split between the Borough and County Council.

The Committee noted that the County had withdrawn its contribution of £5,000 to leaf clearance and re-instated its contribution of £5,000 towards graffiti removal. A further loss of £30,000 from Surrey Police to Safer Runnymede was met with concern. Officers were instructed to arrange a meeting with the Chief Constable of Surrey Police and the new Chief Executive to discuss its reinstatement.

290. PLAY BUILDER FUNDING

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2007, page 64, para 93 and November 2007, page 517, para 365)

The Committee was informed that under the Government's 'Play Builder' funding scheme, Runnymede had been allocated £100,000 and that the other 10 Surrey authorities had also been allocated that amount to provide 22 projects across the county that focussed on 'natural play' for 8-13 year olds, whilst complementing aims within each council's Open Space Strategy, where one was in place.

Officers wanted to allocate the funding equally between two projects – one at the Frank Muir Memorial Field in Thorpe for Skateboarding and the other to an as yet unidentified project within the Addlestone Bourneside ward.

The Committee was informed that the Early Years Service was leading on the Surrey Play Builder bid with an Officer at the County Council acting as project manager in consultation with the districts and boroughs.

The Committee agreed that as the project in Thorpe to provide a skate park had already been partly progressed and had received local support and funding of £12,000 from the Youth Opportunity Fund and £8,000 from other sources including Procter and Gamble, it should be the first project to be completed utilising the Play Builder Funding.

Members were anxious that the facilities provided should be accessible to all, particularly children who were wheel chair users and that they should be fully involved in the formation of the schemes and any consultation exercise. It was acknowledged that specific equipment for wheelchair users was expensive, up to £10,000 for a single item. However, with funding of potentially £70,000 (adding together the £50,000, £12,000 and £8,000 from the funding already received for Thorpe) it was considered an option worth pursuing on this project or the second project once identified.

Members were also keen, resources permitting, to increase the provision of teen shelters in the borough, noting the success of the one in Heathervale Recreation Ground.

The Committee was informed that an options report for projects in Addlestone Bourneside would be submitted to a future meeting, but no later than March 2010.

Officers also confirmed that a response to a local resident making specific representations regarding equipment for children with disabilities had been responded to in a timely fashion.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Play Builder funding programme be supported to enable the Council to draw down the £100,000 allocated for two play area projects in the Borough;**
- ii) the Thorpe Skate Facilities on Frank Muir Memorial Field be progressed to meet the completion deadline for the first project of the end of March 2010; and**
- iii) Officers be instructed to consider options for a second project within the Addlestone Bourneside Ward, reporting back on proposals at a future meeting, to be no later than March 2010, to ensure that funding deadlines are met for the completion of the second project.**

291. HYTHE PARK PROJECT

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2005, page 908, para 618, June 2006, page 58 para 80, March 2008, page 838 para 609, November 2008, page 454, para 319 and Economic Development Committee, September 2005, page 441, para 262)

The Committee expressed its pleasure with the new Hythe Park, commending Officers on their work with the Friends of Hythe Park to make the park a success for the new park users. The park was officially opened in June 2009; containing a community garden, orchard and seating, surfaced footpaths and cycle routes, a multi use games area, play areas for toddlers and older children, an open grass area for community events, wildflower meadows, a wet/dry area and two CCTV cameras linked to safer Runnymede.

Members recalled that work had been delayed on site, firstly due to slowworms, which had to be captured and relocated and then flooding on site which created drainage problems and necessitated additional seeding where the ground had experienced some pooling of water.

Members noted that the total budget for the project was £616,200, which had been funded from a variety of sources including the Capital Programme, the Big Lottery and landfill tax funding from Biffa and Sita. There was likely to be an over-spend of approximately £10,000 owing to the drainage remedial works, and an under-spend of £8,000 on the schemes paid for by Big Lottery funding. It was unfortunate that the under-spend could only be used for additional play facilities and not off-set the over-spend on the project.

It was disappointing that the allotments had not yet been provided owing to a lack of external funding and Officers would continue to look at opportunities for funding and report back in due course. In the meantime, Officers were requested to assess the demand for allotments at the Hythe Park.

RESOLVED that –

Officers continue to look at opportunities to fund the provision of allotments at Hythe Park and report to this Committee on progress in due course.

292. VICTORY PARK PAVILION

The Committee's in principle approval was sought to replace the 40 year old sports pavilion in Victory Park which currently housed a small pre-school and changing rooms, toilets and shower facilities for other users of the park, primarily football and tennis teams and a small office for the parks staff. It was noted that the park also provided an equipped play area, paddling pool for children, bowls, cricket, putting and croquet and had achieved Green Flag status for the last three years.

Members accepted the pavilion was beneficial to the community. However, the pavilion only attracted direct income of up to £5,000 per annum and its dilapidated state made repairs and maintenance increasingly unviable. To replace the pavilion in the way outlined in the report was

likely to cost £400,000. Members noted that although Early Years was prepared to make a welcome contribution of £100,000, there was still £300,000 for the Council to find, which had not been budgeted for.

Members agreed that in order to replace it in such a way as to include changing rooms for football and cricket teams, an office and mess room for staff, public toilets and a space with a classroom, toilets and kitchen for the pre-school would only be viable if external funding was secured, noting that even then the maintenance costs of a new purpose built building might be prohibitive without a greater return for the investment.

Members were nervous about providing a building which was both initially expensive and a drain to maintain in the long term. They were also concerned about recent vandalism, which Officers confirmed had been limited by having staff on site to deal with any problems that arose.

Officers were instructed to look at alternative options, including a scaled down project, at a lower cost and to report back when the funding position was clear.

RESOLVED that –

the replacement of the sports pavilion at Victory Park be supported in principle, subject to external funding, and a further report be submitted to this Committee once the situation regarding external funding is clear.

293. PETITION FOR BETTER PUBLIC TOILET FACILITIES IN CHERTSEY
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2006, page 55, para 79 and June 2009, page 89, para 110)

Members received a report outlining the options which might be pursued to address the lack of public toilet provision in Chertsey, a petition about which had been noted at the previous meeting of the Committee in June.

Officers confirmed that although there was a public toilet at the Sainsbury store in the town centre it was frequently closed because of vandalism and anti-social behaviour. The terms of the lease to Sainsburys did not require the toilets to be kept open and Members also noted that providing public toilets was not a statutory duty for the local authority.

The Committee recalled its decision, following a review, to close a number of public toilets in the borough in 2006 to make cost savings. These savings had only partly been achieved because it was resolved at the time that not all the public toilets would be closed. Apart from seasonally provided facilities in some of the Council's parks and open spaces the two main facilities which remained opened were those at Cooper's Hill in Englefield Green, with a contribution towards their upkeep of £2,000 per annum from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and those at The Precinct in Egham.

Officers had undertaken some research into the provision of public toilets, noting guidance from the Department of Communities and Local Government which confirmed that as well as there being a public expectation for their provision, it was beneficial for public health and well being to do so as long as the facilities were of a high standard and well maintained. The Committee agreed that it was increasingly difficult to maintain such standards unless the toilets were inside managed buildings such as shopping centres.

Members noted that in Chertsey there were public toilets provided as part of a planning condition at The Boathouse public house and hotel on Chertsey Bridge, although these were not convenient for the town centre.

The Committee discussed the benefits of a Community Toilet Scheme, which were operated in some other boroughs. In return for a contribution from the council, businesses such as pubs would allow non-customers to use their facilities. In Richmond this was operated with 75 participating businesses each receiving an allowance of between £800 and £1,000 per year. Members felt that although laudable, this scheme was too expensive.

The Committee also considered that the cost of approximately £6,000 to take over the operation of the one public toilet in question in Chertsey was also too costly.

The final option in the report was to continue taking opportunities where possible to negotiate the provision of public toilets in private commercial developments and establish a formal planning policy as part of the Local Development Framework. It was felt that this option was the most appropriate.

Officers did agree however to also give consideration to replicating a scheme elsewhere which Members drew to their attention. This scheme involved having a coded access system for customers to use the retailer's facilities.

294. CHARGING POLICY FOR THE SUPPLY OF WHEELED BINS

The Committee's approval was sought to extend the charging regime for the supply of wheeled bins. Members were also advised of an enhancement to the Green Waste Collection service.

Members noted that the current policy was to charge residents that lost their bin, or it had been stolen or damaged. There was however no charge to supply bins to new properties, or where wear and tear had led the resident to ask for a replacement.

The Committee was aware that the current requirement for new housing provision in Runnymede under the South East Plan was to provide a minimum 161 dwellings per annum. In addition, and to illustrate the point Officers had estimated that if a new development at the former DERA site in Longcross was built, with a proposal to build 2,500 new properties, the cost of providing bins would be a minimum of £50,000.

The need to generate income in the current financial climate was paramount and Members agreed that a new charging structure was necessary, but that a discount of 50% would be applied to residents in receipt of Council Tax or Housing Benefit and that no charge would be levied where replacement of the bin was necessary because of damage caused by Council collection staff or vehicles.

Officers had considered the option of installing micro-chips in the bins. These could be used to locate lost bins, and assist with route planning and workload assessment. However, this idea was abandoned on the grounds of cost, practicality and human rights.

Officers confirmed that residents who declined to pay for the supply of a wheeled bin would be served with a notice under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 requiring them to provide a bin for the containerisation of their household waste. However, the Council would not be obliged to empty bins provided by residents that did not comply with its supply, design or safety requirements which the Act also allowed the Council to specify.

In respect of Green Waste, Officers recommended the introduction of wheeled bins for its collection to be offered for sale to residents as an alternative to having the heavy duty bags which were currently used.

Residents would still have to pay an annual subscription for the service if they chose to have a 240 litre bin instead of bags; the bin would cost £34 and the annual subscription would be £40, which was the same as having 3 bags under the current regime.

During the debate Members raised the issue of side waste and properties that either had more than one bin and/or did not participate in the kerbside recycling scheme. Members agreed that although for whatever reason there was some inconsistency in practice and public satisfaction rates were probably higher where side waste was taken, it was correct not to take it. Officers would consider enhancing the enforcement of the official policy not to collect side waste (resources permitting) and review those properties with additional bins, which by and large, also did not recycle.

RESOLVED that –

- i) **the charges (as set out below) be applied with immediate effect for the provision of wheeled bins and bulk containers for new properties or where bins are replaced after being lost, stolen or damaged;**

New (based on the purchase cost of the container plus a sum for delivery, storage and administration)

1,100 litre bin (communal facilities)	£234
360 litre bin (families of 6 or more only)	£47
240 litre bin	£34
120 litre bin	£32

Second Hand/refurbished (when available)

360 litre bin	£45
240 litre bin	£25
120 litre bin	£20

- ii) **the green garden waste scheme be enhanced by giving residents who subscribe to the service the choice of purchasing a wheeled bin rather than using bags.**

295. ADDLESTONE LEISURE CENTRE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 2 June 2009, as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

Members noted some progress with two items since the last meeting of the Joint Management Committee. Firstly, Officers from the County Council had met with Members regarding the transfer of title on the joint lease, and this was now in hand. Secondly, there would be no decisions regarding the success or otherwise of bids to the Tulk Fund until October 2009. It was noted that the criteria to receive funding took into account the amount of sufficient playing fields that a bidder had already. It was understood that as 12 applications across the County had been made from the fund, which totalled £625,000 it was unlikely that all bidders would be successful.

296. CABRERA TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 June and 24 July 2009, as attached at Appendices 'B' and 'C' were received and noted.

297. RIVERSIDE WALK ADVISORY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 6 July 2009, as attached at Appendix 'D' were received and noted.

298. KERBSIDE RECYCLING CONTRACT – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

(Ref: Minutes of the former Executive Committee, December 2000, page 1038, para 497, Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2001, page 121, para 97, January 2002, page 755, paras 512 and 513, June 2002, page 229, para 120, September 2002, page 546, paras 316, 317 and 321, November 2002, page 774, para 438, January 2003, page 982, para 576, June 2003, pages 192 and 195, paras 129 and 132, November 2003, page 1059, para 514, January 2004, page 1205, para 665, November 2004, page 421, para 348, January 2005, page 627 and 628, paras 476 and 477, September 2005, page 453, para 280, January 2006, pages 744 and 745 and paras. 506 and 507, June 2006, page 61, para 85, September 2006, page 287, para 253, January 2007, page 707, para 489, June 2007, page 63, para 91, September 2007, page 333, para 258, June 2008, page 77, para 81, November 2008, page 455, para 321, Corporate Management Committee, July 2002, page 312, para 152, November 2005, page 560, para 352 and Full Council, March 2002, page 922, para 604, October 2002, page 692, para 375, July 2006, page 179, para 164, March 2007, page 1045, para 584 and October 2007 page 454, para 315.)

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraphs 1, 3 and 7 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Officers wished to time the letting of the contract so as to facilitate ongoing discussions on partnership working in some form to take place with a neighbouring authority and the current contract had already been extended by six months, as it was due to expire in February 2010.

The Committee agreed that the new contract should be for a period of seven years, noting its estimated value which required the Council to adhere to EU procurement regulations.

The contract had been drawn up so as to retain flexibility with regard to frequency of collection, as well as expanding the range of materials that could be collected and how it might relate to the refuse collection service in due course bearing in mind that the recycling vehicles would before too long reach the end of their useful life. The Committee agreed that it was important to retain an open mind and look at all the options carefully.

Members were pleased that the contract specification had been agreed, and that based on the evaluation of the responses to a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire 5 contractors, plus the Council DSO out of a potential 13 companies had met the criteria, so that Officers were now in a position to proceed with issuing the tender documents and invitations to those 6 parties.

The Committee was informed that 2 of the original 8 companies out of 13 that had appeared to have met the criteria had in fact proved unsatisfactory and it was agreed to remove them from the published list on the Agenda.

It was acknowledged that the timetable was very tight, especially as the date to receive tender bids was being put back a week to allow tenderers an extra week to prepare their submissions. However, it was considered feasible that Officers would be able to (at least verbally) report the outcome of the tender evaluations to the next meeting of the Committee in November.

Officers also confirmed that at the November meeting a detailed report setting out the costed options for refuse collection and recycling, including the collection of kitchen organic waste and any other relevant items arising from the evaluation of the tenders would be presented for consideration.

Members were cautioned that because the current contract was so competitively priced the cost of the contract was likely to increase substantially and provision in the five-year Financial Forecast had been made accordingly.

The Committee re-affirmed its commitment to the Surrey wide Memorandum of Understanding for implementing the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Surrey to achieve, amongst other things, higher rates of recycling and composting in future years.

RESOLVED that –

tenders for the Kerbside Recycling Contract be invited from the 6 contractors (5 contractors plus the Council's DSO), who have been short listed and have met the criteria.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.13 pm)