

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE16 September 2004

Members of the Committee Present: Councillors C.J. Norman (Chairman), M.J. Brown (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P.I. Broadhead, A.J. Davis, Mrs C.E. Gant, Mrs. E. Gill, Miss M.N. Heath, Mrs S.E. Jacobs, A.M. Moore, and C.J. Ruane

Members of the Committee Absent: None

Councillor P.A. Greenwood also attended.

208. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed new Members to the Committee and introduced the Officers to the Committee.

209. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 20 May and 23 June 2004 were confirmed and signed as correct records.

210. SERVICE PLAN 2004/05 PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received for information the updated and revised Service Plan covering the remit of the Leisure and Environment Committee which ranged from Leisure Services across aspects of Technical Services to Safer Runnymede.

In respect of Tourism, Members were keen that where green areas of the Borough were promoted such as around the Magna Carta Memorial that the open aspect of such sites be maintained.

The issue of wheelie bins to Houses in Multiple Occupation was discussed with a view to increasing provision where appropriate to accommodate areas in greater need.

Members noted that the Service Plan document pulled together all the Council's major strategies and performance targets and applied them to the individual services provided to residents and the wider community.

211. POLLUTION SERVICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE PLANS FOR 2004/05  
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2003, page 1058, para 512)

The Committee received updated service plans for Pollution and Public Health. These plans were drawn up to meet the requirements of the Environmental Health Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 166).

Officers anticipated that with improvements being made each year that a top quartile score could be achieved.

Officers agreed to clarify some points within the Air Quality section of the plan and to discuss with relevant colleagues in the Legal Section the possibility of strengthening the enforcement regime in respect of park – home sites to protect residents who make complaints.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Pollution Service Plan for 2004/05 and the Public Health Service Plan for 2004/05 be approved.**

212. POLICE COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS (PCSOs)

By resolution of the Committee this item was deferred pending the outcome of negotiations in respect of future funding arrangements.

213. REFUSE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANSING

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2003, page 1057, para 511 and May 2004, page 1648, para 931)

The Committee received a report which set out revised specifications for both Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing. These had been prepared following the decision made at the last meeting of the Committee to retain these services in-house.

It was agreed that Officers would look at Refuse Collection to ensure that work was fairly shared between the six rounds and efficiency improved by reducing unnecessary mileage. It was hoped that Street Cleansing could be re-organised to meet seasonal needs and introduce greater flexibility to adopt a more localised approach. In this way it would be possible to reach the targets set by the Environmental Protection Act and the more vigorous inspection regime under the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI 199).

Members noted the importance of maintaining high standards in these high profile and highly valued services and welcomed the proposals to improve service operations and expand information available to the public in order to keep complaints to a minimum.

The Committee learned that increased targets for recycling might have an effect on the way in which Refuse Collection was organised in the future. The Committee was invited to attend a Members' seminar which was due to be held in November 2004 to discuss all the issues.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the service specification for refuse collection and street cleansing be adopted for use in these services; and**
- ii) street sweeping continue to operate on a cyclical basis, but litter picking be based on a more vigorous inspection regime.**

214. BOURNE MEADOW - PROPOSED POND

The Committee received a report which outlined a proposal to create a pond at Bourne Meadow.

The purpose of the pond was twofold; namely as an additional natural feature which would visually enhance the area around the River Bourne, and one which would have a limited effect on flooding in the area. Pipes would link the pond to the River Bourne, so that in the event of the field becoming flooded in the Winter months and remaining so for extended periods owing to the topography of the site, flood water would more speedily return to the river through the aforementioned pipes.

When the site was excavated to create the pond, unwanted soil, amounting to approximately 920 cubic metres, could be used to replace contaminated soil which was due to be removed from the Bemonds site in the near future. This proposal would save the cost of purchasing soil to be imported into Bemonds. It would also save the cost of disposal of arisings from the pond at landfill, estimated to be £17,000.

The total cost of the scheme was estimated to be £57,000. Funding for the proposed scheme had, in part, been secured from the Environment Agency and SITA Environmental Trust, through an application made by the Association for the Improvement of Runnymede (AIR) each to a value of £17,500. This left a shortfall of £22,000 to be met by the Council.

The funding situation was however not clear cut. The Environment Agency had originally offered cash funding of £17,500. The Environment Agency had since reduced the cash offer to 'in-kind' funding. This would take the form of the Environment Agency providing the equipment and labour

required to manage and execute the scheme in accordance with the Council's drawings and specification, to a value of £17,500.

The grant from SITA had started life elsewhere. Originally, the grant was earmarked for a flood alleviation scheme in Chertsey which consisted of raising the footpaths in Gogmore Farm Park. This project had not been progressed, and funding had then been directed towards a balancing pond at the Barrsbrook Farm site. However, this too had not gone ahead and Officers finally settled upon a proposal to create a pond at Bourne Meadow.

Members noted that if approval was given to the proposal, Ward Members, Chertsey Society and local residents would be consulted. If the parties agreed with the scheme, planning permission would then need to be sought.

The Committee was informed that there was a time limit on funding from SITA Environmental Trust. Given the delay necessitated by consultation and applying for planning permission if the scheme was approved, it was possible that the SITA grant of £17,500 would in any case be lost. It was confirmed that there was no other scheme which could utilise the grant at this time.

Although some Members considered that any scheme which would help to alleviate flooding would be worthwhile, the Committee agreed that the proposal would not sufficiently address the problem of flooding to justify expenditure of £22,000 and on going maintenance costs of approximately £1,750 per annum. In addition, Members concluded that the value of the pond was not outweighed by the potential saving of £17,000, in landfill costs, achieved by re-using the soil from the pond at the Beomonds site.

**RESOLVED that –**

**no further action be taken in respect of the proposal to create a pond at Bourne Meadow.**

215. BEOMONDS ALLOTMENTS, CHERTSEY

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2003, page 680, para 343 and Corporate Management Committee, October 2003, page 736, para 380)

The Committee's approval was sought to declare that the former site of Beomonds Allotments was surplus to requirements for allotments purposes.

Members recalled that it had originally been intended to use the Beomonds site for allotments. However, concerns had been raised about flooding on the site and subsequently a section of the land was found to be contaminated. Alternative provision of allotments land had since been identified at Barrsbrook Farm, and this was nearing completion. In addition, work had also commenced on the Painesfield residential scheme.

The Beomonds site could not be built on owing to its location in the flood plain. The Committee was informed that Economic Development Committee had resolved that, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State to allow the land to be used for non-allotments purposes, part of the land be used as an extension to Chertsey Library Car Park and the remaining section be considered for Leisure related purposes.

It was confirmed that if the field were made into a car park that suitable material would be used which would assist with drainage rather than contribute to the potential for flooding.

Members agreed that additional car park provision would be sensible and that the possibility of developing an open space with footpaths and car parking would be welcomed.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) given the replacement allotment facility at Barrsbrook Farm, and the problems with contamination and flooding at Beomonds Allotments, the Beomonds Allotment site be declared surplus to requirements for its present use; and**

- ii) **once a new use for the site has been agreed, the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to apply to the Secretary of State to appropriate the site for the agreed new use.**

216. BASINGSTOKE CANAL

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, January 2004, page 1029, para 671)

Members recalled that at their meeting in January 2004 it had been resolved to cut the level of funding to the Basingstoke Canal Authority by 50% to £8,000 per annum for the foreseeable future.

The decision had been made against the backdrop of the Council's Financial Strategy to achieve savings of £1m by 2004/05 together with steeped increases in Council Tax.

The Committee was informed that in May 2004 Hampshire County Council had requested, on behalf of the Basingstoke Canal Joint Management Committee, the Council to re-consider its decision. Officers had drafted a response in consultation with the Chairman to the effect that it was unlikely that the decision would be reversed in the current financial climate.

Members noted that the Council's savings target had grown slightly and accordingly decided to re-affirm the decision made in January 2004.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the decision made by the Leisure and Environment Committee in January 2004, to reduce the level of funding to the Basingstoke Canal Authority to £8,000 in the current and future financial years be re-affirmed.**

217. DECLARATION OF LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (LNR) STATUS OF CABRERA TRUST LAND AT VIRGINIA WATER

The Committee considered a report which sought Members' endorsement of a proposal to declare Cabrera Trust land at Virginia Water a local nature reserve (LNR).

Members recalled that in 1991 the Cabrera Trust Management Committee was established to administer the Council's obligations as Trustee of land known as the Riverside Walk, lying either side of the River Bourne between Wellington Avenue and the Longcross to Virginia Water railway line.

The Management Committee took scientific and environmental advice from the Riverside Walk Advisory Committee, a body consisting of representatives from the local community and experts in different fields including conservation and botany.

Over the years a management plan had been developed and all those involved were keen to preserve and enhance the site. The Cabrera Trust Management Committee and Riverside Walk Advisory Committee had given support to the proposal to declare the site a local nature reserve, which the Council was empowered to do under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to Countryside Act 1949 (as amended) subject to consultation with English Nature. English Nature had visited the site in October 2002 and confirmed that the site met its criteria and that the Council had fulfilled the legal requirement for consultation.

Members were pleased to note that the benefits of an LNR declaration included a greater degree of protection for the site against competing land uses, and that a local nature reserve was more likely to attract external funding for projects of an environmental nature.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the proposal to proceed with the formal declaration of The Riverside Walk, Virginia Water as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) be approved and the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to complete the declaration and any necessary agreements with the Cabrera Trust Management Committee.**

218. TOURISM INITIATIVE - PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a detailed report outlining progress made with the Council's Tourism Initiative, seeking the Committee's support for joining the River Thames Alliance and nominating a representative to attend the annual meeting thereof and which sought Members' views in respect of a policy on accommodation accreditation.

Members were informed that following the establishment of a Tourism Forum the Chairman of the Committee had been elected to Chair it for a period of two years. The Forum had set up a number of sub-groups relating to different aspects of tourism. The River Thames had emerged as an area of clear prominence. As a result the Environment Agency had started the River Thames Alliance, support for which was now being sought.

Members agreed that the aims of the Alliance were ones they considered worthy and that they wished to nominate Councillor B.J. Relph to attend its annual meeting. It was confirmed that no decisions made by the Alliance would be binding on the Council either financially or in terms of policy.

Members were pleased to note that a Tourist Information Centre was now operating out of the annual ticket sales office in Thorpe Park, and it was hoped that this facility would help to promote the Borough and its attractions more widely.

The Committee was informed that positive examples of joint working across the County were underway, such as the contract with Surrey Tourism to commission Economic Impact Studies and the appointment of a Tourism Skills Co-ordinator for Surrey and West Sussex. A further initiative had been research undertaken into the hotel sector which had led to the current debate concerning whether to support a policy of accredited accommodation.

Members discussed the merits of publicising only those establishments which had been accredited by the national scheme as opposed to those who had not. This would be in line with national, regional and county tourism bodies who only published details of accommodation whose quality had been independently accredited. Members were advised that about half of the known establishments in the Borough were already accredited. However, Members had no wish to exclude anyone from being included in relevant Council publications and decided that all establishments should be listed but that those which had received accreditation could be appropriately highlighted.

It was agreed that the Council would continue not to inspect individual premises and that publications would make it clear that no responsibility would be taken by the Council for the standard of accommodation.

**RESOLVED that -**

- i) the Council joins the River Thames Alliance, in recognition of the synergy between its own and the RTA's objectives;**
- ii) Councillor B.J. Relph be nominated to attend RTA meetings for the Municipal Year 2004/05; and**
- iii) in consultation with the Accommodation Sub-Group of the Tourism Forum, a policy of accredited accommodation be supported in principle, on the basis that all accommodation is listed in relevant Council publications, but that those establishments which have been accredited under the National scheme be identified accordingly**

219. CHERTSEY MUSEUM - RUNNYMEDE ROOM

Members received for consideration a proposal to make a bid for grant aid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to support the development of the Runnymede Room at Chertsey Museum.

Officers submitted three options to the Committee for executing the proposal, the last of which was recommended for approval. Although, the most complicated option, Officers considered that if

successful, it would result in a better gallery and one which would represent the whole Borough in a satisfying and attractive way.

Option one involved no external funding; instead, Officers would attempt to revamp the presentation of the history of the Borough, albeit in a basic and largely two dimensional way. This option, although the cheapest, was considered to be the least satisfactory as it would take up a significant amount of Officer time without a corresponding benefit to the Museum or its visitors.

The second option, a digitisation project, was a little more adventurous. A professional photographer would be engaged to produce digitised images of a number of items of historical interest in the Museum's stock to display in the gallery, to augment the static collection outlined in option one. This had the advantages of widening access to the collection whilst preserving the more fragile artefacts, including some of those in the Olive Matthews Collection.

The third, and preferred option, built on option two by providing additional IT interactive displays and an element of oral history. A professional designer would be employed and the services of display professionals to help the Museum realise its full potential in a limited space to maximise the extent of its collections.

The Committee agreed that the current provision of £50,000 in the Capital Programme be maintained as the maximum contribution to the Runnymede Room should an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund be sought. In so doing the Committee noted that the estimated cost of the project was £97,500. If the proposal was approved, Officers would submit a pre-application advice form to the local Lottery advisor. The HLF would then inform the Council whether the type of project being proposed was one which they would be willing to support. The Council would then need to invite tenders from suitable designers to put together a full proposal and application with costings to be determined by the HLF. The whole process could take just under two years to reach fruition, and would happily coincide with a major exhibition to celebrate the bi-centenary of the death of Charles James Fox.

Members acknowledged that the third option would take the longest, was the most expensive and involved in respect of time and effort. However, it was agreed that it was the most appropriate option in order to achieve a first class service to the public.

Officers confirmed that they would be consulting and working with local historical societies and learning from best practice and imaginative examples elsewhere during the course of the project.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) Option 3 for the Runnymede Room be selected; and**
- ii) Officers seek funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support the project.**

220. EGHAM HYTHE PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received for information a progress report on the Egham Hythe Project which had been submitted to Economic Development Committee for its approval in respect of draft proposals for Barrsbrook Farm and Pooley Green Park, consultation on proposals for the development of the Hythe Park and authorisation for the Director of Administration and Leisure to issue a Notice to Quit on the Pooley Green allotment holders on the understanding that they would be offered alternative plots in the new development. Members were pleased to note that the project was going well in consultation with the Friends of the Hythe Group and Woodland Environmental Trust. The Committee recognised the importance of moving ahead with the scheme as it could have positive implications for developments elsewhere in the Borough and for maximising funding opportunities.

221. APPOINTMENTS TO LEISURE SUB-GROUPS**RESOLVED that –**

- i) Councillors C.J. Norman and M.J. Brown be appointed to serve on the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group for the Municipal Year 2004/05;**
- ii) the appointment to the Runnymede Access Liaison Group be deferred to the next meeting; and**
- iii) Councillors A.J. Davis and R.J. Ray be appointed to serve on the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group for the Municipal Year 2004/05**

222. ABBEY FIT – SHORT-LIST OF CONTRACTORS FOR BUILDING EXTENSION

The Committee considered a report which sought approval of a list of contractors to be invited to tender for the construction of the extension to Abbey Fit Sports Centre. The work consisted of a health and fitness gym, aerobics studio, changing accommodation and reception areas.

Members recalled that originally the Director of Administration and Leisure had been given authority to conclude a contract with Mansell Construction Services Limited, subject to being satisfied as to the achievement of value for money.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned company had submitted a price well in excess of the budget estimate and it had become necessary to invite tenders from a wider circle of contractors to obtain a more realistic quotation.

Accordingly, the Committee

**RESOLVED that –**

**the list of contractors as set out below be invited to tender for the construction of the extension to Abbey Fit Sports Centre:-**

**Allenbuild Ltd  
E R Armfield Ltd  
Benson Ltd  
Farnrise Construction  
Kier Southern Ltd  
Mansell Construction Services Ltd**

223. ABBEY FIT JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 June 2004 as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

224. CABRERA TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee Annual General Meeting held on 30 June 2004 and the meeting held on 26 July 2004 as attached at Appendices 'B' and 'C' respectively were received and noted.

225. RIVERSIDE WALK ADVISORY COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 5 July 2004 as attached at Appendix 'D' were received and noted.

226. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP - MINUTES AND REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 6 July 2004 as attached at Appendix 'E' were received and noted.

Although there was no question of any impropriety taking place, the Committee agreed that in the interests of transparency and probity it was sensible for all members of the Steering Group to abide by the Code of Conduct for elected Members in respect of personal interests.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the Terms of Reference of the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group as attached at Appendix 'F' be revised to include the Group's agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct for Members in respect of personal interests**

227. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE TRADING ACCOUNT

The Committee noted the latest set of figures in respect of Egham Leisure Centre's trading account. Members noted that the Centre's name had recently been changed to reflect the re-focus and re-structuring which had taken place. It was hoped that the deficit would be reduced once membership figures improved as anticipated.

Members requested that, for comparative purposes, the table be altered to include a profile to date column.

228. REFERENCE FROM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – LAND AT BISHOPS WAY, EGHAM - DISPOSAL

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(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 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

At a meeting of the Economic Development Committee on 9 September 2004 it was resolved that the Leisure and Environment Committee be requested to declare a section of land at Bishops Way, Egham, amounting to 0.59 acres (0.24 hectares) as surplus to requirements.

The Committee was informed that the land would be purchased and enclosed for use by a local school to enhance its outdoor activities in a more secure environment. Officers confirmed that appropriate provision would be made, by way of restrictive covenants, to control the future use and ownership of the land.

Members were content that the proposal accorded with Council Policy and that the disposal would benefit the Community whilst maintaining the general aspect of the open space.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the 0.59 acres of the Bishops Way Open Space identified at exempt Appendix '1' of the Agenda be declared surplus to requirements**

229. DIRECT SERVICES ORGANISATION – REPLACEMENT VEHICLE PROCUREMENT

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(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 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee's approval was sought to invite seven of the 21 contractors who had expressed an interest in providing the Direct Services Organisation with a new fleet of approximately 30 vehicles to cover Refuse Collection, Street Cleansing and general operations.

Members were advised that a selection criteria model had been used to assess the different contractors in order to achieve high quality and value for money and the impact on the Council financially was expected to be neutral. The Committee was content with the process which had been undertaken to select the most suitable contractors and accordingly.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the contractors listed in the agenda report be invited to tender for the DSO vehicle provision**

230. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT – SELECTION OF TENDERERS

By resolution of the Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(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 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Committee's approval was sought to invite eight contractors to tender for the new Grounds Maintenance Contract which was due to be re-let with effect from 1 January 2005.

Following an exercise to assess specific suitability for inclusion on the list of tenderers for the contract, 21 of the original 32 contractors who had expressed an interest were selected. These were scored against a model and eight contractors emerged as the most appropriate to be invited to tender for the contract.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the contractors with the eight highest scores as set out in the table contained within the agenda report be invited to tender for the Grounds Maintenance Contract**

(The meeting ended at 9.10 p.m.)

Chairman