

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE16 June 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

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

Members of the Committee absent: None

93. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman welcomed the new Head of Leisure Services to the Committee.

94. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 17 March and 12 May 2005 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A.M. Moore declared a personal interest in the report 'Safer Runnymede Annual Report' as he was an employee of Royal Holloway College which was mentioned in the report in connection with ongoing discussions taking place between Safer Runnymede and the college about security issues. As his interest was not prejudicial he remained in the room taking part in the discussion.

Councillor A. Alderson declared a personal interest in the report 'Frank Muir Memorial Field – Environmental Improvements' as he was Director of AIR to whom an application for funding the project had been made. As his interest was not prejudicial he remained in the room, taking part in the discussion and voting thereon.

96. SERVICE PLAN 2004/05 – PROGRESS REPORT

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, January 2005, page 629, para. 478 and March 2005, page 907, para. 617)

The Committee received, for information, the outturn report on the last quarter of the Service Plan for 2004/05 which covered Leisure Services, Environmental Protection, Engineering and Safer Runnymede.

Each service area's plan had been re-formatted in anticipation of the format of the approved Strategic Plan, which had for 2005/06 onwards replaced the Leader's Position Statement as the key statement of objectives, aims and targets for the Council.

In respect of Leisure Services, Members noted that the Best Value targets for young people had also been incorporated into the plan from the recent Review, and were pleased that the Council was developing its work to promote healthy life styles. The Committee was sad to note the departure of the Projects and Support Manager whose input into Leisure Services would be missed.

Officers confirmed that a suitable I.T. based system for the administration of the Grounds Maintenance Contract had not yet been identified. However, work was being undertaken to find a more economic in-house solution and Members would be kept informed of any progress.

Members were pleased to note that the new off street car park at Thorpe Village Hall had been completed.

The Committee noted that 2015 would mark the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta and wished to encourage discussions with the National Trust for a visitor centre at the Memorial site to be in place by then. Members thought that the National Trust had already undertaken some fund-raising for such a centre and Officers agreed to report the sentiments of the Committee to the Chief Executive Officer who had undertaken contact with the National Trust.

It was agreed that more work was needed in this area together with further investigation of possible revenue streams.

With regard to Environmental Protection, Officers agreed to supply Members with details of how to access the results of the Air Quality reviews on the Council's website. In respect of Engineering, the Committee was informed that the new refuse vehicles were currently being delivered and Officers were confident that the programme would remain on target.

Members discussed the targets contained within Safer Runnymede's section of the plan and expressed their contentment with the new Anti-Social Behaviour reporting forms which were created in-house and would soon be released to the public.

The forms had been trialed on staff and Members who had sent in approximately 50 replies, which indicated that they would be well used by the public and would assist Safer Runnymede in their work.

97. SAFER RUNNYMEDE ANNUAL REPORT 2004/05  
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, May 2004, page 1645, para. 927)

The Committee received for information the seventh annual report on the Safer Runnymede service.

Officers reported that the Service was functioning successfully, and that despite media coverage, actual crime in the Borough was low and that residents could take comfort from the figures which had been produced.

Members agreed that Safer Runnymede was a credit to the Council for the range of activities provided to a high standard and that because the staff turnover was low, those who worked there were becoming experts and were highly valued.

Members were advised that the Centre had reached its physical capacity, and although Officers would like to develop the service to extend coverage of the cameras to other sites in the Borough it would not be possible to do so until sufficient room had been provided.

In respect of acquiring mobile cameras, Members noted that Officers intended to undertake a trial of such units and report back to a future meeting of the Committee.

98. CRIME, DISORDER AND DRUGS REDUCTION STRATEGY

The Committee considered a detailed report which set out the Safer Runnymede Partnership's Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy. The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 dictated that such a strategy be adopted by local authorities as part of their core policy framework. Therefore, the Strategy, if approved would need to be adopted by full Council at its meeting in July 2005.

Members were informed that the targets contained within the document were those of the Government Office for the South East and were drawn up with a base year of 2003/04.

Officers assured the Committee that despite negative press coverage, crime and the fear of crime was greatly reduced locally. It was noted that there were some local hot spots which distorted the figures and that statistics were affected by the activities of known criminals as they moved in and out of the Borough.

Members were pleased to have confirmation that the funding of the Borough's Police Community Support Officers, which would have drained the Council's resources had it been required to meet part or all of the cost, was currently being met by Surrey Police.

Overall, the partnership had successfully addressed a number of issues, in particular, anti-social behaviour, and initiatives co-ordinated by the Community Incident Action Group and the Joint Action Group and Members were pleased to approve the adoption of the Strategy.

**RECOMMEND that –  
the Crime, Disorder and Drugs Reduction Strategy as attached at Appendix 'A'  
be adopted.**

99. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICE PLAN 2005/06

The Committee considered the Service Plan for Environmental Protection, noting that it had been updated and consolidated from four separate plans into one. As the plan included targets required by the Council's policy framework for corporate approval the Committee was obliged to recommend its adoption by full Council at its meeting in July 2005.

Members were pleased to note the continuing high performance of the Environmental Protection team, which had improved its Best Value Indicator from 83% to 100% by the end of March 2005.

The pest control service was discussed and Officers confirmed that in the summer months, it was sometimes necessary in the interests of ensuring the safety of residents, to refer urgent enquiries to an outside contractor which dealt with wasp nests and other pests.

Officers confirmed that in respect of the organisation of food hygiene the Government had indicated that such matters were best dealt with locally.

**RECOMMEND that –  
the Environmental Protection Service Plan for 2005/06, as attached at  
Appendix 'B' be approved.**

100. PILOT COLLECTION OF GREEN GARDEN WASTE

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, January 2005, page 627, para. 476)

Members received for information an update report on the Pilot Collection of Green Garden Waste which although in its early stages appeared to be enjoying success in respect of the high number of people who had signed up for the service so far. This amounted to almost 1,300 people, approximately half the figure needed to make the scheme cost effective.

Officers advised the Committee that feedback from residents had been mixed and this was substantiated by Ward Members who had dealt with a number of issues raised by residents.

It was agreed that a report be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee in order to review the scheme, provide Members with full details of residents' feedback and an analysis of the scheme on a Ward by Ward basis and to resolve the following issues;

- affordability for older residents; with a view to the consideration of a discount scheme for those aged over 75
- the feasibility of more flexible payment options, particularly to consider those wishing to pay by cash on a monthly basis;
- improvements to promotional and explanatory material in order to gain more positive support for the scheme; and
- consideration of proposals for policing the ban on placing green waste in wheelie bins.

Officers confirmed that, if notified, the Council could arrange for an assisted collection service for those in need of it.

Members noted that the ideal outcome was an increase in home composting and were informed that since the pilot scheme had been introduced there had been a ten fold increase in the number of home composters purchased by residents compared with sales for the whole of 2004.

Members raised a concern in principle with the destination of recyclables and were assured that to the best of the Officers' knowledge, Runnymede's recyclables remained in the United Kingdom and were responsibly dealt with. Furthermore Officers would be undertaking trips to their contractors in order to satisfy themselves that they were operating correctly and that due separation of items was taking place to ensure the quality of such waste was high.

Officers agreed to publish full details of where recyclables from Runnymede go in terms of contractors and destinations.

#### 101. FLOOD RISK ACTION GROUPS/COMMUNITY LIAISON GROUPS – FUTURE

The Committee considered a detailed report which advised Members of certain changes that had been made and which could be made to the Flood Risk Action Groups (FRAGs), which had been set up by the Environment Agency, following the severe flooding which occurred in December 2002 to January 2003.

The Environment Agency intended to reduce the number of FRAGS in existence so that the area from Hurley to Teddington would be covered by one FRAG where before there had been two.

This would necessitate a change to the FRAGs' constitution and inevitably a reduction in the number of Councillors represented thereon. Members noted that in June 2005, the External Appointments Sub-Committee had re-appointed four Members to each of the FRAG's on which they were currently represented until such time as the FRAGs were formally re-constituted.

Members were particularly concerned that the interests of the Chertsey Bourne FRAG, in which they had been very active, might be submerged and urged Officers to make representations to the Environment Agency that they wished the Chertsey FRAG to be re-convened as a matter of urgency.

The Committee was also keen for the Borough led, and more informal, Community Liaison Groups (CLGs), to continue because they had raised interest in flooding issues and made Riparian owners more aware of their responsibilities to maintain the river and its immediate environs.

In particular the CLGs had identified the following areas of priority to ensure that;

- Information flows from the statutory agencies are improved and reviewed regularly in relation to emergency preparedness (e.g. EA, Emergency Services, Local Authorities, Thames Water).
- Thames Water continue to be pressed to improve the foul sewer network to lessen back-surfing and unpleasant fouling in gardens and homes - this will include support for any submission to the Water Services Regulator (OFWAT).
- The emerging EA's improvement proposals in flood alleviation on the River Bourne are technically credible, meet the concerns of residents and are delivered in a reasonable time scale.
- A regular programme by the Local Authority, EA and other riparian owners is agreed to include inspection, clearance and maintenance of the River Bourne, with the Borough Council ensuring sufficient resources are made available to meet its landowning responsibilities (e.g. Chertsey Meads, Gogmore Park, Bourne Meadow).
- A mechanism for encouraging self help among residents to improve their preparedness is provided.
- Information flows effectively between the newly constituted Lower Thames FRAG and the existing Chertsey Bourne FRAG.
- Options for the River Thames, downstream of the "Jubilee River" are brought forward by the EA and representations made at the required level to ensure priority is afforded to any scheme.

Officers agreed to work in consultation with particular Ward Members to take the initiative in respect of discussing the future of the Chertsey Bourne FRAG with the Environment Agency.

It was agreed that both the FRAGs and CLGs opened up channels of communication for local residents, Ward Members and other interested parties in tackling flooding issues together and Members were content with the Officers' Recommendation in respect of the level of attendance and support that should be given to these groups.

**RESOLVED that –  
the revised meeting arrangements for attendance by Members and Officers,  
and continued appropriate Officer support to the Flood Risk Action Groups  
and Community Liaison Groups be approved as set out in the report.**

102. FRANK MUIR MEMORIAL FIELD – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Committee considered a project setting out a series of environmental improvements for the Frank Muir Memorial Field in Thorpe. The improvement programme had been agreed with the Friends of Frank Muir Memorial Field which continued to promote the field, raise funds and act as a source of advice, whilst the Council was trustee of the charity and freeholder of the land.

Members were pleased to note that an application had been made to cover 90% of the project's costs through AIR to BIFFA. However, the Committee was advised that Council's financial regulations required provision to be made in the Capital programme showing receipt and release of the funds. In addition, as the sum was in excess of £50,000, approval of the provision from full Council was also required.

The programme of works is set out below and Members were pleased to approve the project, but in so doing noted that if funding was not available the improvement works would not proceed.

	<u>Budget</u>
Works to improve the wooded areas by removing weed Sycamores and making safe any dead or dying wood.	£3,000
The planting of a bank of native trees and shrubs along the boundary with the Thorpe by-pass.	£5,000
The planting of additional trees and shrubs to fill gaps in existing hedgerows.	£2,000
The planting of new hedgerows to screen unsightly boundaries.	£2,000
The provision of additional benches, with associated litter bins, at suitable points around the field.	£3,700
The construction of a timber boardwalk where a path crosses a particularly wet area.	£2,000
Levelling and improving the surface of the football pitch.	£3,600
Installing a land drainage system to a particularly wet part of the field.	£34,000
Installing various bye-law and anti dog fouling signs.	£1,500
A new stile and steps to be installed at a well used access point.	£500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£57,300</b>

**RESOLVED that –  
Corporate Management Committee be asked to recommend Capital  
Programme Provision and a Capital Estimate in the sum of £57,300 for the  
above scheme, subject to grant funding being available.**

103. RUNNYMEDE PLEASURE GROUND – CATERING CONCESSION

The Committee received a report which advised them that Soft Whip, which operated the popular café at Runnymede Pleasure Ground, had requested an extension to its lease.

Although the matter would be decided by Economic Development Committee, Officers sought the views of this Committee as the Pleasure Ground fell under its umbrella.

Members discussed various issues pertaining to the lease, the progression of which were subject to the terms of the lease, as they considered there were revenue opportunities which might be explored.

Essentially these were to investigate any additional income producing potential for the fairground element at the Ground, and to give consideration to an upwards rent review, mid term through the extended lease.

Members confirmed that the fairground was well used, and suggested that, in any event, electrical safety at the site be checked, and consideration given to monitoring noise levels to ensure they did not become too high.

In response to a particular question, Officers confirmed that they were not aware of any criminal activity, such as car crime, taking place at the pleasure ground owing to the valued vigilance of the Licence Holder being on site which reduced the opportunity for such problems to occur.

Officers were very pleased with the service provided by Soft Whip and keen to support their plans to enhance the café facilities making them more attractive to visitors throughout the year.

The Committee was pleased to recommend that the lease be extended, for Officers to take the lease issues back to other relevant Officers, Soft Whip and Economic Development Committee, and a revised recommendation was agreed accordingly.

**RESOLVED that –**

**Economic Development Committee be informed that this Committee has no objections to a new lease being granted to Soft Whip for the catering concession at Runnymede Pleasure Ground for an additional five years as set out in the report, with an upwards only rent review during the term.**

104. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE TRADING ACCOUNT

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2005, page 911, para. 620)

The Committee received for information the current trading account for the period 1 April – 31 May 2005 for Egham Leisure Centre.

The Committee was informed that unfortunately the membership figures had been incorrectly shown on the Appendix circulated with the Agenda owing to a computer error, and a replacement sheet was circulated to Members which also updated the trading position to the end of May.

Concern was expressed that performance needed to improve. In so doing Members noted the facility was one of community value which had contributed substantially to the Council's revenue income over past years.

It was agreed that Officers submit proposals to the next meeting of the Committee in order to improve the review and reporting structure.

It was also agreed that in future and in order to achieve greater transparency the balance sheet be more detailed in respect of defining what 'Other Income' represented, and that other presentational changes be made to assist Members and Officers in identifying the actual trading position.

105. APPOINTMENTS TO LEISURE SUB-GROUPS**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 2005/06;**
- ii) **Councillor R.K. Habgood be appointed and Councillor M.J. Brown be re-appointed to serve on the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group for the Municipal Year 2005/06;**
- iii) **Councillor Mrs E. Gill be re-appointed to the Runnymede Access Liaison Group for the Municipal Year 2005/06;**
- iv) **Councillors A.J. Davis and R.J. Ray be re-appointed to serve on the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group for the Municipal Year 2005/06; and**
- v) **Councillor B.J. Relph be re-appointed to serve on the River Thames Alliance for the Municipal year 2005/06.**

106. APPOINTMENTS TO ABBEY FIT PROJECT GROUP

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 185, para. 121)

The Committee was advised that the Abbey Fit project had reached an appropriate stage for the Abbey Fit Joint Management Committee, as represented by its Chairman, Councillor Ms. C. M. Simmons, and this Committee, as represented by the Chairman, Councillor R.K. Habgood, to have a more formal input into the Project Group in order to oversee proceedings and comment on developments as appropriate.

Members noted that the authority to make decisions and responsibility for the conduct of the project remained with the Leisure and Environment Committee and relevant Officers.

**RESOLVED that –**

**Councillors Ms. C. M. Simmons and R.K. Habgood be appointed to serve on the Abbey Fit Project Group for the Municipal Year 2005/06.**

107. CHERTSEY MEADS MANAGEMENT LIAISON GROUP – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Group held on 15 March 2005, attached at Appendix 'C' were received and noted.

108. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – MINUTES AND REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 6 April 2005, attached at Appendix 'D' were received and noted.

In addition, Members approved the updated Terms of Reference which accommodated recent changes in the Leisure Services department.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the revised Terms of Reference be approved.**

109. STANDING ORDER 42 - URGENT ACTIONS

The Committee noted that the following actions had been taken since the Committee's last meeting after consultation with the Chairman under Standing Order 42.

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Action Taken</u>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Technical Services	To formally concur with the Surrey Police request to renew the designation of a geographical area of Woodham and New Haw granting discretionary powers for Surrey Police to enable them to disperse groups for a further period of six months.	580
Director of Technical Services	To formally concur with the Surrey Police request to designate a geographical area of Englefield Green granting discretionary powers for Surrey Police to enable them to disperse groups for a period of six months.	586

The Committee was advised that it was usual practice for these matters to be dealt with under the Urgency provisions in the Constitution. However, in doing so, it was agreed to give consideration to the feasibility of consulting Ward Members and the Committee on the review and renewal of Section 30 orders.

Members noted that full consultation with Ward Members took place when a section 30 order was initially considered and that the Council was guided by Surrey Police in these matters.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.20 p.m.)