

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE18 January 2007 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors C.J. Norman (Chairman) M.J. Brown and Miss M.N. Heath (Vice-Chairmen), Mrs P.I. Broadhead, R.J. Edis, Ms. R.E. Haylor, A.M. Moore, B.J. Relph, P.I. Roberts.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor C.J. Ruane

Councillors Mrs R.M. Denby, J.M. Edwards, J.R. Furey, C. Knight and N. Stewert also attended.

482. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the 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.

Group requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Runnymede Independent Residents' Group	Councillor Mrs E. Gill	Councillor B.J. Relph

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

483. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2006, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

484. REVENUE ESTIMATES 2007/08

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, January 2006, page 742, para. 503)

The Committee received the Revenue Estimates for 2007/08 in respect of Leisure Services, Engineering, Environmental Health and Safer Runnymede.

In respect of Leisure Services, Members noted that the Egham Leisure Centre budget reflected the decision to combine the client and contractor budgets. Members were advised that a £17,000 betterment on the forecasted figure had been achieved and that the January membership showed an increase of 85 on the previous month.

Net expenditure at Addlestone Leisure Centre had increased and membership reduced as a result of the building works. Unfortunately, a shortfall of £70,000 on the net betterment target of £102,000 was projected. Members were advised that this was because the forecast had been based on the Consultant's report which had predicted a faster increase in membership figures than was achievable and had assumed more equipment being provided than in reality there was space for.

Officers were confident that the membership figures would improve in due course but were very pleased with the new facilities.

In other areas of Leisure including the Parks, Public Halls and Playschemes the savings targets had either been met or exceeded.

The main areas of activity within Environmental Services were the review of public conveniences which it was anticipated would result in savings of £45,000 and developments in recycling and

refuse. Members noted that Green Waste Collection had its own budget page from 2007/08 to reflect the increased service across the borough.

Two new sets of charges had been introduced. These were for trade waste 'collections only' for churches, charities and schools and a new fee for each additional item in special collections.

One area of concern were the hire and repair costs of Refuse and Street Cleansing vehicles. This had been highlighted by two serious incidents which had necessitated last minute alterations to the repair and hire charges. Owing to the amount of time that the vehicles involved would be off the road Members were informed that the Council's insurance was insufficient to cover the hire costs. Therefore, a supplementary Revenue Estimate was needed in the sum of £35,000 in the current year's budget.

Members learned that the driver of the refuse vehicle involved in the latest incident had been run over, sustaining cuts and bruises, whilst trying to divert traffic away from a fire, in one of the vehicles which subject to further investigation, appeared to have resulted from an electrical fault in the vehicle.

Members commented on the withdrawal of the Summer Noise Response Service which Officers confirmed had been cut as part of the revenue reductions programme. A reduced service would result but abatement notices could still be served after an event which had attracted substantiated complaints.

Officers agreed to make the air quality monitoring survey available to Members of the Committee.

Members commended one of the Council's policy objectives to remove graffiti and apprehend those responsible through partnership work with the Police and local schools.

The Committee was pleased to note that the Safer Runnymede budget had made savings of approximately £18,000, and that compared with other Surrey Districts, Runnymede's expenditure on Community Safety was relatively high.

**RESOLVED that –**

- i) the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary Revenue Estimate in 2006/07 in the sum of £35,000 for the additional repair and hire charges associated with the Street Cleansing and Refuse fleet of vehicles;**
- ii) the draft Revenue Estimates for 2007/08 as amended, be approved and the Corporate Management Committee be requested to make provision accordingly; and**
- iii) the proposed fees and charges for 2007/08 be approved, to be effective either from the first week of April 2007 or 1 April 2007 as appropriate**

485. BISHOPS WAY RECREATION GROUND IMPROVEMENTS  
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2006, page 520, para. 360)

Members received a report following on from the previous meeting, detailing the results of a consultation exercise undertaken to assess residents preferences for improvements to Bishops Way Recreation Ground in Egham Hythe.

The Committee was advised that several options had been laid before the community and that an encouraging amount of people had attended events at Thorpe Lea Primary School and the Hythe Centre and/completed questionnaires giving Officers a clear idea of what the final layout and design should be.

Members agreed that the project be progressed in phases as and when funding for each element became available. The total cost of the project was estimated to be £112,000. The first phase,

to refurbish the toddlers play area, was guaranteed, as the funding of £43,000 was contained within the play area refurbishment programme recently reviewed by the Corporate Management Committee.

The remaining phases, costing approximately £69,000, depended on obtaining a grant of £50,000 from the SITA Trust through the Association for the Improvement of Runnymede (AIR) and subject to County Council approval, a grant of £8,000 from County Councillor Mrs Y. Lay.

The Committee was very pleased for these contributions and Officers were hopeful that the shortfall of £11,000 could be met from corporate sponsorship or internally from the Parks revenue budget.

Officers were asked to note the feedback from Members in respect of the timetable for the introduction of benches to the scheme in order to balance the needs of different sectors of the community.

Members commended Officers on their efforts to involve residents in the project which it was agreed would be a very positive contribution to Egham Hythe.

**RESOLVED that –**

**the final layout and design for improvements to Bishop's Way Recreation Ground be approved as set out below:-**

- i) Toddlers Play Area – Design C with colourful graphics in the surfacing, and consideration given to providing a gated access to the car parking area;**

**and subject to funding being available the remaining elements as set out below;**

- ii) Adventure Play Area – Design B with consideration given to its proximity to the Toddlers Play Area, and the introduction of more colour into the overall design;**
- iii) Teen Area – Design B;**
- iv) BMX Track – Option 3 with retention of the millennium planting where possible in the design;**
- v) the introduction of benches and picnic tables throughout the scheme, where appropriate and funding allows; and**
- vi) all comments received during the consultation period to be considered and incorporated where practical and appropriate**

486. PLAYSCHEMES AND SPLASH VENUES

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2006, pages 518 and 519, paras. 357 and 358)

The Committee received a progress report on settling the venues for the Egham and Chertsey Playschemes, and SPLASH.

The Committee recalled that at the last meeting it had been agreed to reduce the number of playscheme venues in response to lessening demand, to close the site at Lyne and relocate the Chertsey scheme to a more secure venue.

Members were informed that OFSTED inspections were in the process of being undertaken for the chosen venues in Egham (Magna Carta School) and Chertsey (St Anne's Catholic Primary School) for the Playschemes and that the outcome would be reported to them in due course.

Officers were confident that both sites would be approved as they met the necessary criteria for security and facilities. In addition, the proposed site in Chertsey would make an ideal base for special needs provision in partnership with the White Lodge Centre and was slightly cheaper, reflecting a saving of approximately £1,000 per year.

Members expressed some concern about the temperature at the Hythe Centre, from where the Egham playscheme was moving. Officers confirmed that there might be a design issue with the windows and that the absence of air conditioning was a problem in the summer. It was hoped that similar problems would not be encountered in the new civic offices.

In respect of SPLASH the Committee was pleased to approve the move back to Jubilee High School and Addlestone Leisure Centre, subject to confirmation of the costs. Officers anticipated that no additional costs would be incurred by using these venues.

**RESOLVED that –  
subject to OFSTED approval, the Chertsey playscheme be re-located to St Anne's Catholic Primary School, Chertsey, the Egham playscheme to Magna Carta School and the SPLASH scheme to Jubilee High School / Addlestone Leisure Centre from 2007.**

#### 487. COMMUNITY SPORTS NETWORKS

The Committee considered a report outlining Sport England's 'Delivery System for Sport'. The main commitment to which involved setting up Community Sports Networks (CSN's) across the country aimed at increasing participation at all levels in sporting activities.

Officers were keen to stress that the CSN's were not intended to replace local Sports Councils, but were something into which they could feed and that the Runnymede Sports Council, amongst others, would be consulted on any proposals. It was noted that a CSN would have a broad membership drawn from agencies such as the Primary Care Trust, County and educational bodies.

If CSN's were set up the opportunity would arise to access funding of £21.5 million in the South East. Therefore, it was acknowledged that CSN's could be a useful funding channel for sports provision. However, it was likely to be significant Officer time taken up in preparing bids for suitable projects.

The Committee had some reservations about the proposals and instructed Officers to consult locally and garner feedback from other Surrey Districts and those with community sports networks pilots before proceeding any further.

**RESOLVED that –  
the establishment of a community sports network, as a sub-group of the Leisure and Culture Task Group, or other options, be investigated and a report submitted to this Committee in due course.**

#### 488. ADDLESTONE LEISURE CENTRE – UPDATE

The Committee noted that the improved Addlestone Leisure Centre had opened on 28 October 2006 and had attracted 285 members by mid-January. Members were disappointed that BT had caused a few technical problems during the opening weekend and Officers were discussing this with them, with a view to obtaining compensation. Despite these difficulties the Centre had received 300 visits during the opening weekend.

A new brochure was tabled at the meeting and Members were much encouraged by the positive feedback that had been received so far. Members were pleased at the prospect of linking Egham and Addlestone Leisure Centres to facilitate bookings on site and via the web.

It was noted that an official opening ceremony would take place on a date to be confirmed but probably in late February 2007 and further promotion of the Centre would be included in the forthcoming new Council newsletter.

489. REFUSE COLLECTION AND RECYCLING

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2002, page 546, para. 321 and January 2006, pages 744 and 745 and paras. 506 and 507 and Corporate Management Committee, November 2005, page 560, para. 352)

The Committee considered a detailed report on proposals to change the way in which refuse should be collected in the borough and which also brought Members up to date with the position on recycling.

The Committee was very concerned that the borough was producing too much waste and throwing away in the normal waste 50% of the 80% of materials that could be recycled, despite having nearly reached the Government's Best Value Performance Indicator target of 18%.

Members noted that Runnymede's recycling target for future years, through the recently adopted Surrey Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, would be considerably greater at 40% by 2010 and 50% by 2015. These targets were set in response to the significant challenges ahead that would require significant increases in waste minimisation and recycling, if large costs under the Landfill Allowance Trading Scheme (LATS) were to be avoided in Surrey, and the number of waste disposal facilities that would need to be built in the county were to be kept to a minimum.

Officers confirmed that significant increases in recycling were unlikely to be achieved unless a move to Alternate Weekly Collections (AWC) was introduced.

Members agreed that the cost implications of LATS were such that the Surrey Council Tax payer was likely to pay millions of pounds of additional Council Tax if the targets for waste minimisation and recycling were not met.

The Committee was informed that approximately 180 of the 363 Waste Collection Authorities in England collected refuse on an alternate weekly basis. More locally, AWC had been introduced in Woking, Mole Valley and Waverley, although Elmbridge, Spelthorne and Tandridge had decided not to introduce AWC.

Officers summarised the current refuse and recycling facilities which consisted of:

- an in house weekly kerbside collection of refuse,
- special collections
- clinical collections
- trade waste collection
- an outsourced kerbside weekly recycling collection serving 92% of properties
- facilities to recycle plastic bottles, glass, textiles, cans and newspapers at various bring sites, and
- an in house fortnightly green waste collection service which had been rolled out across the whole borough.
- home composters – 7,000 having been sold to residents at a subsidised rate

Officers confirmed that it was still expensive to collect tetrapaks but that cardboard/mixed paper recycling banks were being put in place very shortly with further opportunities being examined in due course.

Members discussed the merits of using bins for recycling rather than boxes and bags as some of the neighbouring authorities and others elsewhere did. Officers confirmed that introducing bins for recycling would cost in the region of £600,000, which although in practical terms had its advantages, was not financially viable. Another disadvantage was that using bins meant that materials would then need to be sent off to a sorting station (MRF) which could be expensive and result in poor grade material for recycling.

It was also noted that Runnymede's method of recycling had been identified in a report by consultants Eunomia as one of the optimum methods of collection.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken extensively across the borough with a leaflet drop to 35,000 households. The consultation asked residents what they thought about refuse

collection taking place every fortnight (Alternate Weekly Collection AWC), rather than weekly and also asked for feedback on recycling issues.

Only 258 responses had been received, representing 0.73% of the potential 35,000 responses, the majority did not want AWC.

The Committee discussed its concerns and those of residents in respect of AWC. These fell into the following categories:

- a build up of uncollected waste attracting rats, flies, foxes and maggots
- increased odours from waste especially during the summer
- health hazard
- insufficient recycling facilities
- increased incidents of fly tipping
- requests for larger wheeled bins
- Reduced Council Tax
- Household Waste/Civic Amenity Sites
- Green Waste

It was agreed that although it was acceptable to raise these concerns they were largely unfounded. For example evidence elsewhere was that if residents adhered to the rules concerning no raised lids or side waste unwanted visitors in the form of foxes or other creatures happened very rarely. Members conceded that more care would need to be taken when disposing of one's rubbish, particularly putrescible waste in order to minimise odour and any perceived health hazard. Double wrapping of food waste would be necessary to avoid maggot infestation and information to residents during the next few months would be vital for a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

The overriding point was that environmentally there was little option but to introduce AWC. In doing so however it was stressed that facilities for recycling had to be enhanced to enable residents to participate and thus find AWC more acceptable and that health and safety issues were addressed fully and confirm availability to residents of acquiring an additional box for the current recycling service and ensure that all households have a box that want one.

It was agreed that Officers must enhance publicity and improve communication in respect of recycling opportunities, and have a communications policy in place to address the needs of those with different needs to ensure they did not have any problems adapting to a new scheme.

The Working Group was requested to give consideration to the provision of bins according to size of household and to note the request for a plastic caps recycling facility. It was stated however that providing everyone with bigger bins would defeat the object of producing less waste to be disposed of. However a non discriminatory policy would need to be put in place to allow for larger bins where there was an absolute and objective need.

It was important to monitor levels of fly tipping but Officers were confident, based on information provided by other Surrey districts with AWC such as Mole Valley and Waverley, that it would not increase.

In respect of the request for a reduced Council Tax resulting from any savings Members asserted that the introduction of AWC was not a cost cutting exercise as there would actually be considerable costs associated with it. For example up to six additional staff would be needed for a period of 12 months to deal with the anticipated high volume of enquiries from residents and to make personal visits to assist with waste minimisation and recycling issues because how AWC was communicated to residents and implemented practically would be very important.

Officers agreed to advise Members when the County Council revised arrangements at Lyne Tip in respect of facilities for plastic recycling and improved access would be operational.

The Committee agreed that green waste collection should not be provided free of charge, and that as take up had increased there was no justification to reduce or withdraw the charge.

Officers estimated that there would be transitional costs of £70,000 in the first six months, reducing to £35,000 for the second six months. Offsetting this it was likely that with AWC the income from the sale of recycled waste and from recycling credits would increase. For example if, as expected, 6,000 tonnes of materials were recycled in 2008, over £270,000 in recycling credits would be generated. In addition, Members were pleased to note that an additional recycling credit income of £130,000 could be achieved if the tonnage of recycled material rose by 3,000 tonnes per year.

Any savings made would go towards making improvements to the recycling service or the Council's savings targets as paraded in the Financial Forecast.

The Committee noted that detailed consideration would also have to be given in the near future to consolidating the number of refuse collection rounds in preparation for AWC. In practice this would mean a reduction in rounds the remainder of which would have to be re-organised to suit the new regime. Officers considered that in the long run there might be cost savings associated with this re-organisation, but that any reductions in staffing could be achieved through natural wastage and non filling of vacancies.

The Committee was pleased that extensive preparatory work had and was being undertaken including visits to other authorities such as Waverley to assess how AWC operated and Officers confirmed that an action plan would be drawn up covering the following areas:

- i) Consultation with staff, UNISON and the recycling contractor
- ii) Projected costs/savings, provision of resources (initially costs would exceed savings)
- iii) Resource implications for the Council including additional staff where necessary
- iv) Anticipated changes in waste flows
- v) Timetable for introduction of changes
- vi) Recruiting project partners (media, residents, community groups)
- vii) Establishing support mechanisms (additional phone lines, computer systems)
- viii) Requests for changing size of wheeled bins (some residents had small, 120 litre wheeled bins, rather than large, 240 litre wheeled bins).

It was noted that UNISON was being generally supportive about the prospect of AWC in response to the initial consultation and advised that further discussions would take place in due course on specific staffing issues.

It was agreed that a further detailed report on temporary and permanent staffing requirements, and fully costed proposals be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee in due course if AWC secured approval at full Council at its meeting in March 2007.

It was agreed that a Member Officer Working Group be set up to oversee the project if approved by full Council and allow full participation from Members. Input from colleagues and Ward Members would be welcomed, particularly on recycling issues. To that end Officers were instructed to ensure that all areas of the Borough were represented on the group.

It was acknowledged that there were difficulties with recycling, and that the Council would be looking to make improvements in consultation with the contractor. It was also agreed that the publicity in respect of the Christmas arrangements had been poor, and that the timing of the ban on raised lids and side waste might have been better timed. Officers pointed out that enforcement of the new regime was difficult and that staff had been instructed to adopt a sensible approach to avoid criticism over what was an unpopular but necessary policy with residents so far.

Members discussed all the issues and agreed that inaction over the coming months was not an option. Landfill site availability in the South East would end shortly, and costs under the Landfill

Allowance Trading Scheme would make disposal of Biodegradable Municipal Waste very expensive. Costs would escalate, future Best Value Performance Indicator targets would not be met, and additional facilities such as incinerators would have to be built to deal with the waste, if a step change was not taken now to minimise waste and maximise recycling.

Officers were instructed in consultation with the Chairman to re-arrange the refuse and recycling briefing that was scheduled for 30 January, owing to a clash with another meeting that evening. It was agreed that all Members would be invited to attend the briefing.

**RECOMMEND that –**

- i) subject to consultation with staff, UNISON and the recycling contractor, the introduction of alternate weekly collections of residual household waste be approved in principle;**
- ii) a further detailed report on temporary and permanent staffing requirements, and fully costed proposals be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee in due course; and**
- iii) a Member/Officer working group for refuse collection and recycling be established for a period of 18 months, to be extended if necessary, with the remit of overseeing the introduction of alternate weekly collection and giving appropriate guidance to officers, with three Members to be appointed to serve on the Group.**

490. URGENT ACTION –STANDING ORDER 42

The Committee noted that the following action had been taken since this 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 Administration and Leisure	To authorise the use of Abbeyfields recreation ground, Chertsey from midday Saturday 2 December for a rally against the suggested health cuts to A&E and other services at St Peters and Royal Surrey County Hospitals. This will not be a party political arranged campaign and is a broad based campaign involving UNISON branches along with other trade unions and members of the community. The reason they have called the rally for midday is to avoid conflict with any football matches. They are not able to accurately predict numbers but a maximum of 400 is expected. The organisers will ensure that this rally is properly stewarded – they have had experience in holding and running successful public rallies in the past.	626

Members were pleased that the event had been peaceful, and relatively well attended bearing in mind the inclement conditions.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.27 p.m.)