

Runnymede Borough Council

LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

20 January 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

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 Mrs J. Norman.

Members of the Committee absent: None

471. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor C.J. Ruane be removed from Membership of the Committee and that Councillor Mrs J. Norman be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting. Thereafter Councillor Ruane would be reappointed.

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

472. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 November 2004 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

473. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs S.E. Jacobs declared a personal interest under the Runnymede Code of Conduct for Members in respect of the report 'Best Value Review and Continuous Improvement Plan – Young People's Activities' as it mentioned the Summer Playscheme which one of her children attended. As her interest was not prejudicial she remained in the room taking a full part in the discussion and voting thereon.

474. REVENUE ESTIMATES FOR 2005/06

The Committee received and considered the draft revenue estimates and fees and charges 2005/06 for the services under its remit and approved requests for supplementary revenue estimates in respect of Egham Leisure Centre, Abbey Fit Sports Centre and the Refuse Collection Service.

Members learned that during the course of the year 2004/05, both Egham Leisure Centre (ELC) and Abbey Fit Sports Centre had experienced a difficult year, suffering a reduction in income of £65,600 and £26,400 respectively. The membership figures at ELC had been lower than desired, and uncertainty over the future of Abbey Fit, combined with fewer visitors had necessitated that the shortfall be covered by a supplementary revenue estimate.

In respect of the aging Refuse Collection Fleet, expenditure had been incurred to cover the costs of hiring additional vehicles to maintain the service. Members approved a supplementary revenue estimate of £25,000 in 2004/05 for this purpose.

To ease the reporting and administration burden of the Refuse and Street Cleansing budgets it was agreed to terminate the Refuse Collection DSO arrangement early on 31 March and extend the Street Cleansing DSO arrangement to 31 March 2005 to enable the client and contractor budgets to be merged from 1 April 2005.

In respect of the Safer Runnymede Budget, Members were advised that the estimated £25,000 contribution for PCSOs in 2005/6 had yet to be agreed, pending discussions with Surrey Police on issues including deployment of the Community Constables and their hours of duty.

Members noted that the review of Public Conveniences would be the subject of a report to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the proposed fees and charges for 2005/06 were consistent with the Council's financial policy and took into account market forces and the feasibility of users paying more for the services they received to cover increased costs.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Street Cleansing DSO trading account be formally extended to enable the continuation of the separate client and contractor budgets to 31 March 2005;**
- ii) the Refuse Collection DSO trading account be formally wound up on 31 March 2005 to enable the separate client and contractor budgets to be merged from 1 April 2005;**
- iii) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve supplementary revenue estimates in 2004/05 of £65,600 and £26,400 for the reduction in income at Egham Leisure Centre and Abbey Fit Sports Centre respectively;**
- iv) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary revenue estimate in the sum of £25,000 in 2004/05 for the increase in costs associated with the current Refuse Collection Fleet;**
- v) the proposed fees and charges for 2005/06 as set out in Appendix 'A' of the Agenda be approved to be effective from 1 April 2005 or as appropriate; and**
- vi) the draft Revenue Estimates for 2005/06 be approved as submitted and Corporate Management Committee be requested to make provision accordingly.**

475. BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN – ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SERVICE

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2003, page 1058, para. 513)

The Committee gave consideration to a Best Value Service Review and proposed Continuous Improvement Plan in respect of Environmental Protection. The review encompassed the following services currently undertaken by the Environmental Protection Section; Pollution, Public Health, Pest Control and the Stray Dog Collection Service.

Members noted that each service area had been the subject of a rigorous assessment against the four Best Value elements of challenge, compare, consult and compete. The process, conducted in accordance with the approved corporate model, had included a challenge workshop in October 2003 attended by staff and Members, and the benchmarking of services and costs with other Surrey Districts where comparative data was available. Members noted that the Council dealt with a higher number of pollution cases per members of staff than any of the other Surrey districts.

The views of service users had been obtained from existing customer satisfaction records, new surveys specifically undertaken for the exercise and the use of the Runnymede Residents Panel in respect of the Pollution and Pest Control Service. Feedback from these groups helped identify the likely needs, priorities and expectations of future generations of service users. Members were informed that in response to feedback Officers intended to raise the profile of Enforcement and explore the possibility of joint working with a neighbouring authority in respect of pest control and stray dog collection.

The Review, guided by the Council's relevant policy objectives and strategic planning framework, had identified a number of intentions to improve the service and/or reduce expenditure.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Service Review, as attached at Appendix 'B' of the Agenda, be endorsed;**
- ii) the Head of Environmental Protection be requested to report to a future meeting of the Leisure and Environment Committee regarding implementation and monitoring of the Continuous Improvement Plan; and**
- iii) the Continuous Improvement Plan be approved with particular reference to the following:**

Targets to be implemented at Officer level:

- i) To revise the Service Plans for the Pollution and Public Health Service in respect of the findings of this Service Review;**
By April 2005 (thereafter annually)
- ii) To introduce a continuous customer consultation scheme for users of the service aimed at assessing customer satisfaction;**
By April 2005 (then ongoing)
- iii) To raise awareness of the Environmental Protection Division's Enforcement Policy;**
By August 2005
- iv) Review the objectives of the Pollution, Pest Control and Stray Dog Collection Services to determine whether they continue to reflect the Council's, members of the public and business aspirations for the provision of this service; and**
By March 2006
- v) Investigate if there is any scope for Partnership working with other local authorities in respect of pest control and the stray dog collection service.**

By August 2005

476. PILOT COLLECTION OF GREEN GARDEN WASTE

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2004, page 421, para.348 and Corporate Management Committee, 2 December 2004, page 480, para. 386)

The Committee received details of a proposed pilot collection of green garden waste, approval for which had been secured at the last meeting of the Committee in November 2004.

It was accepted that Government Policy was rapidly moving towards higher recycling targets coupled with fines imposed on authorities not meeting the required landfill allowance trading scheme targets. The proposed scheme was intended to contribute towards those targets and promote more recycling in the Borough.

Members agreed that in order for the scheme to be successful it was necessary to ban the disposal of green garden waste in wheeled bins in the pilot area and to notify residents participating in the scheme that such waste would only be collected in re-usable polypropylene bags provided by the Council.

Officers were reasonably confident that between 10 and 20% of residents in the pilot area would take up the scheme and that the charge of £30 per household per year for the service was acceptable. It was confirmed that a discount would not be available for the elderly. However, those living in sheltered housing with gardens owned by the Council would be covered by the new Grounds Maintenance Contract, in which provision for green waste recycling had been made.

Members were assured they would have an active role in the selection of the pilot area, and Officers would work with the Direct Services Organisation who would be undertaking collections on a fortnightly basis in addition to the normal refuse collection service.

Officers planned to undertake a high profile campaign to promote the pilot scheme, setting out amongst other things which types of green waste would be accepted for example grass cuttings and weedy waste would be but stones and flowers pots would not, collection schedules, the benefits of participation and giving notice to residents in the area of the pilot scheme that green garden waste put into the wheeled bins would not be emptied where an alternative as specified by the Council was available.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Director of Technical Services, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, be authorised to agree the extent of the pilot scheme for the collection of green garden waste in the Borough, following consultation with relevant Ward Members;**
- ii) residents within the pilot area be advised that the disposal of green garden waste in domestic bins is no longer acceptable and that bins containing such waste will not be emptied;**
- iii) notice be given pursuant to Section 46 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as to the number and kind of receptacles in which green waste will be collected within the pilot area; and**
- iv) a charge of £30 per household, per annum be made to those residents wishing to take advantage of the green garden waste collection service.**

477. PLASTIC BOTTLE RECYCLING SCHEME

The Committee considered a proposal to introduce a 'bring' recycling scheme for the collection of plastic bottles across the Borough.

Members noted that a suitable outlet and contractor for plastic bottles had been identified in Langley, Berkshire. Bottles would be collected twice weekly from the bring sites in the Borough by the Council's Direct Services Team and taken to the site in Langley where they would be washed, shredded and flaked, ready for use in making products such as garden fences and posts.

The cost of introducing the scheme would be largely cost neutral, after purchase of the banks, although the value of the bottles could fluctuate depending on market conditions.

As with other recycling services, residents would be clearly informed which types of plastic would be accepted and where the bring sites were as well as being provided with background information about why the scheme was being introduced. The Committee was quite enthusiastic in supporting the new initiative and keen for it to be successful.

Members were pleased to note that the introduction of the scheme would coincide with the replacement of the Council's other bottle banks, and that the service would be reviewed when the current kerbside recycling scheme contract came to an end in 2010.

It was agreed that Officers would assess whether the Plastic Bottle Recycling scheme could be included in the Council's Community Recycling Donation scheme.

RESOLVED that –

- i) a 'bring' recycling scheme for the collection of plastic bottles be introduced and the 2005/06 budget amended accordingly;**
- ii) a contract on terms to be agreed by the Director of Administration and Leisure for a period of five years with C. Bayliss Limited be approved; and**
- iii) Standing Order C.2, so far as it is relevant be waived owing to the impracticability of undertaking a formal competitive tendering exercise in this case.**

478. BEST VALUE REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PLAN – YOUNG PEOPLE'S ACTIVITIES

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, September 2003, page 679, para. 342)

The Committee received a very detailed and comprehensive report in respect of a Best Value review of activities provided by the Council for young people. The review encompassed play and youth activities, Chertsey Museum, the Council's Leisure Centres, Active Sport, Surrey Youth Games, sports courses, travel plans, cycling shelters, Junior Citizen, school visits to different areas of the Council, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, activities for young people in Community halls and joint activities with the Youth Development Service and other bodies.

Members noted that each service area had been the subject of assessment against the four Best Value elements of challenge, compare, consult and compete. The process, conducted in accordance with the approved corporate model, had included a challenge workshop in September 2003 attended by staff, Members, users and providers of the service, and the benchmarking of services and costs with other Surrey Districts where comparative data was available.

The views of service users had been obtained from existing customer satisfaction records, residents' panels surveys specifically undertaken for the exercise and focus group work to gain input from different groups of young people. Feedback had helped to identify that what the Council provided was largely what people wanted, and consultation had also taken place with Runnymede Youth Are Talking (RYAT).

Some Members considered that the volume of sports related activities outweighed that of the arts especially compared to the amount of arts activity in other Boroughs. However, the Committee was informed that the majority of other Surrey Districts employed an Arts Officer, but that the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group supported a number of youth focussed arts organisations in the Borough.

The Review, guided by the Council's relevant policy objectives and strategic planning framework, had identified a number of areas for action, which were contained in the draft youth strategy; 'Runnymede – Listening to Young People' which formed the Continuous Improvement Plan to be adopted by the Council and was presented in the form of the Service Plan for ease of inclusion in the larger Service Plan for Leisure Services.

It was noted that the review effectively addressed concerns raised in the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report about a lack of a co-ordinated approach to youth provision, setting out the youth strategy in the context of changes in legislation and examples of successful joint-working with other bodies and identification of clear priorities and objectives.

The Committee thanked Officers for the considerable amount of work which had been undertaken during the course of the review and for providing a high quality of services to young people in Runnymede.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the draft youth strategy "Runnymede – Listening to Young People" be adopted as defining the Council's approach to services for young people; and**
- ii) the Action Plan, as set out below be adopted as the Best Value Continuous Improvement Plan for Young People's activities in Runnymede;**

ACTION PLAN

ACTIVITIES

- i) Investigate increased use of Council-owned facilities, e.g. halls, sports centres for young people;**
- ii) Pursue Ofsted and training organisations to develop high quality, but realistic standards for playscheme staff;**
- iii) Investigate options for cross-border working (Spelthorne, Woking, Windsor) to maximise capacity;**
- iv) Improve communication/contact with Youth Development Service and Health services relating to children and young people;**
- v) Identify gaps in statutory provision and review expansion of existing provision, e.g.**
 - Chertsey Museum education work**
 - Coaching in youth centres, sports centres and for "hard to reach" young people and for voluntary groups**
 - Inclusion of 16+ age group in sports courses at sports centres, Community Sports Leadership Award**
 - Use of arts activities to engage young people.**
- vi) Contribute to the Community Safety Strategy for the Borough by developing diversionary activities for young people in appropriate locations;**

CONSULTATION

- vii) Consult with young people about the development of new services and facilities through the Youth Forum and other voluntary organisations working with Young People;**
- viii) Identify how best to consult young people and how to integrate their choices into Council policy;**
- ix) Continue to encourage the voice of Young People in town centre regeneration e.g. in the 'Planning for Real' type exercises;**

CHILD PROTECTION

- x) Develop internal guidelines and protocols for training and information sharing under the child protection policy;**
- xi) Ensure that the part played by drug and alcohol misuse in youth problems is recognised and by working with partners, address these issues wherever and whenever they arise;**

GRANT AID

- xii) Support scout, guide, voluntary youth groups and individual young people through grant aid and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.**
- xiii) Work with SCVYS to investigate the feasibility of developing a system for grant aiding voluntary groups for young people, both for work to buildings and for revenue grant aid;**
- xiv) Publicise the availability of the Council's grants for young people for achievement in sports and the arts;**
- xv) Maintain close links between the Community Strategy, the Youth Forum and other young people;**

INFORMATION

- xvi) Improve information for young people;**
- xvii) Review the best means of giving simple information about where to go for housing advice to organisations such as the Youth service and churches;**
- xviii) Improve co-ordination in respect of schools' visits and newsletters - investigate where advice and information could be combined;**

TRANSPORT

- xix) Investigate the feasibility of schemes to provide transport for young people that enable them to access leisure facilities in Staines, Woking and Windsor safely, reliably and at reasonable cost, e.g. the Spelthorne Community Safety initiative.**
- xx) Review the use of Yellow buses for holiday activities, or the use of a shared bus with Community Safety – to visit schools with community safety messages and use during holidays;**
- xxi) Develop opportunities for cycling development and safety, following the installation of cycle shelters and paths across the Borough;**

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

- xxii) Improve liaison with the voluntary sector, particularly reviewing: gaps in funding for general youth activities, particularly in the 11-13 age group; and**
- xxiii) Investigate feasibility and demand for hiring summer scheme and sports equipment for use by youth organisations (both voluntary and statutory sector).**

479. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE TRADING ACCOUNT

The Committee received for information the current trading account for the period April to December 2004 for Egham Leisure Centre (ELC).

Members noted that although the level of expenditure had remained constant, income was not picking up as expected. It was thought that this could, in part, be due to the fact that the new Fitness Manager had only been in post since mid-December 2004. However, a new aerobics programme including 'body pump' and 'combat' sessions had already been introduced and were proving to be popular new activities.

In addition, a local ballroom dancing group had been attracted to the venue and a regular booking had been set up. Members were also encouraged by the news that 46 new members had been signed up at ELC.

It was agreed that in future the membership figures would be included in the trading account for comparative purposes.

Members were invited to participate in an Aerobathon and Gym Challenge on 5 February 2005. Its purpose was to raise money for 'After the Wave' which was set up following the Tsunami in Sri Lanka to help people in the Community of Hambontoa buy new fishing boats to replace the 20,000 which had been destroyed. The link with Runnymede was that the administrator of the fund had been best man to the Chairman of ELC's Mountaineering Club.

The Committee was pleased to see that ELC was being utilised for the event and gave it full support.

480. ABBEY FIT JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 October 2004 as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.17 p.m.)