

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE22 September 2005 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M.J. Brown (Vice-Chairman), A. Alderson, A.J. Davis, Mrs C.E. Gant, Mrs C.Y. Jones, C. Knight, A.M. Moore, C.J. Ruane and G.B. Woodger.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillor Mrs S.E. Jacobs.

275. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Group mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that the changes listed below be made to the membership of the Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be re-appointed.

Group requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor R.K. Habgood	Councillor G.B. Woodger
Conservative	Councillor C.J. Norman	Councillor A.J. Davis

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

Councillor Woodger was elected as Chairman for the meeting, owing to the temporary indisposition of Councillor Brown at the meeting.

276. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 June 2005, were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

277. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Brown and Ruane declared a personal interest in the report 'Literary Institute, Egham', as both had taken part in the decision made at Economic Development Committee in respect of the terms of a proposed lease of the premises.

278. SERVICE PLAN 2005/06

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2005, page 907, para. 617 and June 2005, page 63, para. 96)

The Committee gave detailed consideration to the proposed Service Plan for 2005/06 covering Leisure Services, Engineering, Environmental Protection and Safer Runnymede.

Members were pleased to note that the document had been substantially rationalised to reduce duplication and focus on current targets rather than presenting the Committee with a full history on every topic.

The Committee highlighted areas in Leisure where focus was concentrated on positive delivery of services to promote the Borough's parks and engage young people in healthy, sporting and cultural activities. Of particular note were plans to achieve 'green flag' status for two of the parks; initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles, including investigations into the possibility of undertaking a pilot project with the Primary Care Trust, and a scheme to facilitate visits to Chertsey Museum in partnership with the Council's Yellow Bus service.

Members suggested that a working group could be established on the promotion of healthy lifestyles to young people and expressed a wish to be involved therein.

It was agreed that to better identify progress during the year statistics be amended in connection with Chertsey Museum to present annualised usage statistics alongside the quarterly figures.

Turning to Environmental Protection, Officers confirmed that as Licensing now came under the remit of the Licensing Committee a separate service plan would be submitted to its November meeting. However, where Licensing issues overlapped with 'quality of life' covered by Environmental Protection such as noise these would stay with the Leisure and Environment Plan.

Members noted that the plastics recycling through the Borough's bring sites was improving but that greater publicity might be necessary to ensure further participation.

Members discussed the Safer Runnymede targets and it was agreed to seek clarification on those set nationally and whether there was any scope for local variation or determination. In doing so it was acknowledged that the Council was not the body of sole responsibility in this regard.

It was agreed to request whether it would be possible to amend the target in relation to Domestic Abuse to read 'To reduce the number of reported repeat offences'.

RESOLVED that –

the Service Plan for 2005/06 as amended be approved.

279. NIGHT FLYING RESTRICTIONS AT HEATHROW, GATWICK AND STANSTED
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 192, para. 128)

The Committee was invited to approve a draft response on a recent consultation from the Department for Transport on Night Flying Restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted.

The Committee was advised that every five or six years the Department for Transport (DfT) enters into an agreement with the airlines over the number of flights allowed at Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick between 11.30 p.m. and 6.00 a.m. This is referred to as the "night quota" period. The current agreement expires in October 2005 but as there is not enough time to agree a new regime for this coming year the DfT is proposing that arrangements stay as they are for the year from October 2005 to October 2006.

Members recalled that the Council was invited to comment on an earlier consultation on Night Flying Restrictions and since that time Members' views had not altered substantially but they were keen to emphasise that the current departure times should not be relaxed.

The Committee discussed the frequency and duration of night flights and the instances of 'disregards' where an airport manager could authorise night flights outside of the stipulated time if circumstances warranted. It was confirmed that in such cases a fine was paid by the airline in question into a central fund some of which found its way back to the local authority.

It was agreed that engaging consultants for the next phase of the exercise was a good idea and that it should be done in association with other affected local authorities in the West London area.

The Committee agreed that the following comments be forwarded to the DfT;

"The Council has previously commented that noise from aircraft mainly affects the northern part of the Borough. The impact on these residents is from aircraft departing from Heathrow and the frequency is influenced by wind direction. Arrivals tend to follow a path that passes north of the Borough. Night flights between 11.30 pm. to 6.00 a.m., are arrivals and as such they do not significantly impact on the Borough. The key issue for the Borough is the 'departures' between 6.00 a.m. to 7.00 a.m., and 11.00 p.m. to 11.30 p.m. The current departures required for the period 6.00 a.m. to 7.00 a.m., and 11.00 p.m. to 11.30 p.m., should not be relaxed.

It is understood that the package of measures proposed in the DfT Consultation on Night Flying may be subject to a formal challenge by some of the West London Boroughs. The Council will monitor progress on the issues to be considered and will wish to reserve the right to comment further if appropriate. However, the Council is mindful of the benefits of Heathrow and any further comment will balance the local, economic and environmental considerations."

Members agreed that the Council should maintain a watching brief on the development of Heathrow; noting that in respect of night flying at the Airport the implications of arrivals between 11.30 p.m. and 6.00 a.m., are limited, but the departures between 11.00 p.m. and 11.30 p.m., and 6.00 a.m. to 7.00 a.m., would be closely monitored as the policy framework develops.

RESOLVED that –

the comments set out above be forwarded to the Department for Transport as the formal response of the Council to the document entitled 'Night Flying Restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports' June 2005.

280. GREEN WASTE COLLECTIONS

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2004, page 421, para 348, January 2005, page 627, para. 476, June 2005, page 65, para 100, and Review Board, July 2005, page 289, para.168)

The Committee considered a report updating Members on the pilot scheme for the collection of green waste and which addressed concerns raised at a recent meeting of the Review Board convened to scrutinise the green waste collection service.

Members noted that the scheme had been in operation for six months, and after a slow start was picking up with 1,722 participants across the areas of Thorpe, Thorpe Lea, Woodham and Rowtown, representing 13.87% of the population. However, this was still short of the target take-up figure of 2,700 needed for the scheme to break even. Members were assured however that the shortfall in the current financial year would be substantially covered by a Government grant carried forward from 2004/05 for the green waste scheme.

In response to complaints about the hastiness with which the scheme had been introduced and what some people felt was the officious terminology of accompanying literature, both processes had been reviewed. As a result new invitations and better explanatory information had been produced and more communication with Ward Members and residents had and was taking place.

Members discussed the charging structure of the scheme which had also been the subject of extensive debate at Review Board. Officers proposed a variation on the regime which would allow concessions to be made for people with small gardens who needed fewer sacks in which to collect their green waste.

Members agreed that charging £10 or £20 per annum for a fortnightly collection of one or two sacks was equitable, alongside the existing standard charge of £30 per annum. However, it was agreed to review the charges from April 2006 to ensure value for money and that the Council was in step with other local authorities.

The Committee discussed the merits of home composting or participating in the green waste collection service. Some concern was expressed that striving to achieve the 18% recycling target set by the Government and at the same time encouraging home composting might be counteractive. Members requested that a full appraisal of the service and financial merits and effects of a free of charge green waste service be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

In addition, some Members considered that in spite of the Council's ability under the Environmental Pollution Act to do so, where an alternative service was provided, banning green waste from the ordinary wheeled refuse bins was a punitive measure and difficult to enforce. It was agreed that a further report would be brought to the next meeting to address these points.

Officers confirmed that a trip to the green waste collection site in Basingstoke for Members of the Committee and other interested parties would take place shortly.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the charge for the green waste collection service be £30 per annum but with discretion to allow for a reduced charge of £10 or £20 for those residents who only require one or two sacks and to make an additional charge for those requiring more than three sacks to cover the additional costs of collection involved; and**
- ii) the charges be reviewed from April 2006.**

281. PLAY AREAS – REFURBISHMENT AND REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 188, para. 123 and Corporate Management Committee, July 2003, page 264, para. 175)

The Committee received a report which sought approval to re-phase the refurbishment and replacement programme of the Council's play areas; invite a select list of contractors to tender for ten of those areas as part of that scheme; approve a new project to improve the existing play area at Sumner Place, Addlestone and another to provide a play area at Chertsey Meads. The latter two projects required Standing Order C2 to be waived so that suitable contractors, as already identified, could be invited to tender for the projects.

Officers were pleased to report that despite the delay in commencing works, owing to staff shortages, the programme now had a dedicated project manager who had undertaken a full review of the sites resulting in the re-aligned proposals before the Committee.

Officers estimated that the works on the initial ten play areas would be completed by Spring 2006, and that the overall programme of replacement and repair was expected to be within the original capital budget of £329,000, as set out below:

<u>Financial Year</u>	<u>Capital Expenditure</u>
2005/06	£205,500
2006/07	£40,000
Future Years (Pooley Green Lands)	£83,500
Revised total programme	£329,000

Members noted that although the overall cost of the programme was unchanged at £329,000; approval from Corporate Management Committee was needed for the re-phasing of the Capital Programme.

Members particularly welcomed the proposals to improve the play areas at Sumner Place in Addlestone and Spring Rise in Egham and looked forward to proposals being submitted for the Pooley Green/Hythe land review, which would incorporate the recreation grounds at Pooley Green and Charta Road and Bishops Way open space.

Members were pleased to note that the Council had received £87,000 through Section 106 monies, in connection with the Mead Lane and Bridge Wharf developments in Chertsey, for a new play area on Chertsey Meads, designed to suit the environmentally sensitive nature of the open space.

The play area had been approved in principle by the Chertsey Meads Management Liaison Group and Officers had already secured initial design ideas and costings from a number of suitable manufacturers. However, in order to choose contractors to tender for the final design the Committee agreed to waive Standing Order C2 and requested that Corporate Management Committee approve the Capital Estimate to cover the costs of the project.

Once approval had been given Officers could proceed with the next phase to apply for planning permission for the Chertsey Meads Play Area and continue with consultation on its final design with local residents and schools, user groups, Ward Members and other stakeholders.

Officers confirmed that there would be a play area provided by the developer at Fernlands Open Space, the sale of which for a housing development had recently been approved.

RESOLVED that –

- i) tenders for the refurbishment and replacement of existing play area equipment, be invited from the first 7 contractors attached at Exempt Appendix 'B1' of the Agenda;**
- ii) Standing Order C2 be waived for the design and build of the play area at Chertsey Meads and for the improvements to Sumner Place play area;**
- iii) the improvement scheme for the play area at Sumner Place to be funded in the sum of £18,000 from the Parks revenue budget;**
- iv) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve the re-phasing of the Capital budget for the programme of refurbishment and reprovision of play areas as set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report; and**
- v) Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a Capital Estimate in the sum of £87,000 for the new play area on Chertsey Meads to be financed from Section 106 monies received.**

282. SAYES COURT AND CROCKFORD BRIDGE OPEN SPACES FOOTPATH IMPROVEMENTS

Members considered proposals to make improvements to the footpaths through Sayes Court and at Crockford Bridge open spaces. Officers had undertaken a consultation exercise and the vast majority of residents were in favour of the proposed scheme which would increase accessibility to the Riverside Walk and improve the route through to Sayes Court open space, which in the winter months was sometimes unusable.

The full scheme included a new footpath through Sayes Court Open Space to link properties in Brookhurst Road, Templefield Close and Orchard Way with Brighton Road; improvements to the steps at Crockford Bridge to bring them up to acceptable standards; the regrading of parts of the existing path to provide disabled access between the riverside walk and Brighton Road; signposts at each end of the route and new dog-waste bins along the route. The estimated cost of these works was £18,000.

During the discussion Members raised the future of the car park at Crockford Bridge across which the existing access route ran. Officers were not aware that the car park was extensively used by residents. However, it was agreed that a survey of its usage would be undertaken and the findings presented to this Committee prior to any decision being made by the Economic Development Committee on its disposal or retention at a later date.

RESOLVED that –

improvements to the footpath network at Sayes Court and Crockford Bridge Open Spaces be implemented as set out above.

283. ABBEY FIT SPORTS CENTRE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, March 2005, page 912, para. 625 and Corporate Management Committee, March 2005, page 978, para. 643)

Members were updated on progress with the Abbey Fit project. They were advised that Ashe Construction had now produced a tender within budget; however this had resulted in the following changes; minor amendments to external elevations, to suit structural requirements and design solutions; minor amendments to internal layouts to suit construction modules; roof structure and coverings to existing building would be renewed and revised access layouts to suit current building regulations requirements.

The external changes would require planning permission but Members were informed that it was anticipated these could be agreed at Officer level.

In addition, the school was also undertaking works. However, in order to minimise the impact on the Abbey Fit project it had been agreed that Ashe would take over responsibility for the side access road prior to commencing works and allow Mansell ongoing access for deliveries and access to the rear courtyard until the end of October 2005 and the New Opportunities Fund contractor space for a skip within their working area. In addition, Ashe would move the access road control point down to the road entrance.

Members noted that Ashe required a four week lead in from receipt of the order, but would complete the works within 32 working weeks, which allowing for Christmas and the Easter holidays was a 35 week contract.

The Committee was pleased with this progression but disturbed that the lease and dual use agreement, having been agreed in principle, had not yet been signed by the appropriate bodies, despite the fact that for the project to be funded and therefore proceed these had to be in place.

It was hoped this would be rectified shortly once the County Council had been reminded so that work could commence on site before the end of October and be completed by June 2006. In addition, Officers would bring a report on the tendering exercise for new fitness equipment to the next meeting in November.

Officers confirmed that revised revenue budgets for Abbey Fit would be presented to the January meeting as part of the budget build process.

284. EGHAM LEISURE CENTRE TRADING POSITION AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2005, page 68, para. 104)

The Committee received the latest trading position of Egham Leisure Centre, noting the additional information provided comparing actual figures against targets.

Members were disappointed that the centre was £12,671 over the adjusted target, mainly due to the income for the period April to July being 4% below target. However it was noted that the centre compared favourably with others in respect of the subsidy it received.

It was hoped that membership figures would increase as a result of the proposal to improve facilities for five-a-side football, re-launch of the gym package, extend the soft play area, re-locate the bar and re-configure the reception and lobby space. Officers confirmed that a full business plan for improvements to the centre as outlined above would be submitted to the next meeting for consideration.

Officers confirmed that the bar was open on Sundays but a complaint from a user to a Member identified that it was not open on a particular Sunday lunchtime. Officers would investigate this and report back to the Member on the normal opening times and the reasons why it may not have been open on this particular date.

285. LITERARY INSTITUTE, EGHAM

The Committee considered a report suggesting that the Literary Institute in Egham be declared surplus to requirements so that the premises, apart from the residential flat, could be leased to Strode's College on terms authorised by the Economic Development Committee.

Members were advised that the Literary Institute, a Grade II listed building in the heart of Egham was underused and ran at a significant financial deficit. The departure of Bournewood Trust, a key user, had brought matters to the point where Officers had to consider its future given that the -current income of £17,200 compared unfavourably to the running costs of approximately £71,600.

The proposal to lease the majority of the building to Strode's College for an initial term of 10 years would result in net revenue savings of approximately £49,000 and generate a rental income of £10,000 per annum.

Members noted that the residential flat occupied by one of the Council's employees would be retained by the Council, that Egham Museum would continue to occupy their part of the building rent free and that the Citizens Advice Bureau would be re-located.

Members were pleased that steps were being taken to find alternative venues for the small number of existing user groups of the Institute, and that the college had promised to honour all the one-off bookings that had already been accepted and would accommodate where possible the existing regular users where this did not conflict with their own use of the building.

Several Members understood that there would be a meeting with the users and expressed a wish to attend to give their views and assistance.

It was moved and seconded that the Literary Institute be formally declared surplus to requirements; subject to the lease of the flat and the position of Egham Museum being protected.

An amendment to that original motion was moved and seconded to the effect that the building should only be declared surplus to requirements if the alternative arrangements were acceptable to all existing community hirers. The amendment was defeated by 7 votes to 2.

However, Members were reluctant to declare the premises surplus to all future requirements for Leisure purposes, but content with the proposed lease to Strode's College as the building would be used for educational purposes by a valued local college, the majority of the local users would be accommodated and the others assisted to find alternative accommodation, and the future of the museum would be secure.

The Committee was mindful of Council policy which was to ensure that property remained suitable for the purpose to which it is put and that demand existed to a level which justified the cost of retaining the asset.

Therefore, after debate a further amendment to the original motion was passed, resulting in the resolution set out below, which it was confirmed did not prevent the decision of the Economic Development Committee from being implemented.

RESOLVED that –

this Committee supports the lease of Egham Literary Institute to Strode's College on the terms provisionally agreed by Officers and the College, but that the Literary Institute not be declared surplus to requirements without a further review by this Committee.

Upon a requisition that the names of those voting on the motion be recorded, there voted:-

For: (7) Councillors M.J. Brown, A.J. Davis, Mrs C.E. Gant, Mrs C.Y. Jones, C. Knight, C.J. Ruane and G.B. Woodger

Against: (2) Councillors A. Alderson and A.M. Moore.

286. ABBEY FIT JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 6 June 2005 as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

287. CABRERA TRUST MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29 June 2005 and the ordinary meeting of the Cabrera Trust Management Committee held on 25 July 2005 as attached at Appendices 'B' and 'C' respectively were received and noted.

288. RIVERSIDE WALK ADVISORY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Committee held on 4 July 2005 as attached at Appendix 'D' were received and noted.

289. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – MINUTES, MEMBERSHIP, AND REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 5 July 2005 as attached at Appendix 'E' were received and noted.

The Committee was advised that the Membership of the Steering Group had altered slightly since the last meeting to reflect the departure of the County Council's Libraries Service representative and the nomination of a secondary schools representative to serve on the Group. These changes had necessitated an updating of the Group's Terms of Reference, approval for which was needed by the parent committee.

Members noted the continuing good work of the Steering Group in supporting local arts organisations.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the revised Terms of Reference of the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group as amended above be approved; and**
- ii) the appointment of Mr D Gould from Jubilee High School, to serve on the Steering Group be approved.**

Chairman

(The meeting finished at 9.54 p.m.)