

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE22 January 2004 at 7.30 pm

Members of the

Committee Present: Councillors C. J. Norman (Chairman), A. J. Davis, Mrs C.E. Gant, Miss M. N. Heath, Mrs S. E. Jacobs, A. M. Moore, Mrs J. Norman, R. J. Ray and B. J. Relph.

Members of the

Committee Absent: Councillor Mrs P. I. Broadhead.

660. NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

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

661. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2003 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

662. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs P. I. Broadhead.

663. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs C. E. Gant declared a personal interest under the Runnymede Code of Conduct for Members in respect of the report 'Abbey Fit Sports Centre – Approval of Scheme Design' as she was a Council appointed Member Representative on the Abbey Fit Joint Management Committee and was a user of the facilities.

664. REVENUE ESTIMATES 2004/2005

The Committee received the Revenue Estimates for 2004/05 for those services falling within the remit of the Leisure and Environment Committee. Members were informed that each service area had been scrutinised carefully to identify any savings which could be made in accordance with the Council's medium term financial strategy based on savings of £1 million a year being achieved by 2004/05 together with stepped increases in Council Tax.

The Committee noted that the Capital Charges had been subject to a change in the interest rate used and the introduction of a depreciation charge in respect of the Council's land, buildings, vehicles and equipment. The figures also reflected the Council's position within the second financial year of the five year strategic maintenance programme for all Council owned buildings, excluding the housing stock.

The Environmental Services budget had increased due to the new Licensing Act, for which detailed guidance was still awaited, and an increase in recycling costs, owing to a decrease in Government funding. However, other savings and cost reductions totalling £96,000 had been made overall in the Environmental Services budget.

Members gave detailed consideration to the report and noted that possible savings in the Leisure Estimates had been identified in respect of the grounds maintenance regime and a report outlining proposals would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. It was agreed that the fees and charges for the various service areas represented good value for money whilst remaining competitive with neighbouring boroughs, and local competition.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the proposed fees and charges for 2004/2005 be approved to be effective from 1 April 2004 or as appropriate; and**
- ii) the draft Revenue Estimates for 2004/2005 be approved as submitted and the Corporate Management Committee be requested to make provision accordingly.**

665. RECYCLING SERVICE PLAN 2003/2004

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2003, page 1058, para. 512 and page 1059, para. 514)

The Committee received the Recycling Service Plan which covered those service areas which fell under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Local Government (Best Value) Performance Indicators and Performance Standards Order 2001, and the Household Waste Recycling Act 2003.

Although there was no specific legal requirement to produce the Plan, Officers considered updating it was necessary as the plan dated back to 1990. Members noted that the plan would be reviewed once the Surrey-wide strategy for waste management had been finalised later in the year.

Members were pleased that a number of local primary schools had joined the kerbside recycling scheme, and that Officers were giving consideration to joint promotion with Surrey County Council of commercial waste recycling and waste minimisation. To this end, it was suggested that funding might be available through the Association for the Improvement of Runnymede (AIR), for promotional leaflets.

The Committee was informed that cardboard banks were being installed shortly at two of the bring sites in the Borough. Finding a scheme for plastics which was both environmentally friendly and economically viable had been more difficult. However, Officers would bring proposals to the next meeting of the Committee with a view to providing a container for plastics at the Charlton Lane site in April 2004.

RESOLVED that –

the Recycling Service Plan for 2003/2004 be approved.

666. AIR QUALITY IN RUNNYMEDE

The Committee noted for information a report on the latest stages of assessments in respect of air quality which had been submitted to and approved by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

Members recalled that following the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), along a narrow area of land along the M25, the Government had required the Council to undertake a series of Screening and Quality Assessments of air quality in the Borough. The stage 3 report which was undertaken by the Environmental Research Group, Kings College, had identified the need for further assessment work on Nitrogen Dioxide.

Although the stage 3 report was written in accordance with Government guidance, it was suggested that consideration be given in future to the need for estimated errors for all measurements quoted, which would strengthen the scientific credibility of the document. In addition, Members reported that recent evidence supported the case for the scope of future reports to be widened to include PM10s and the effect of Heathrow Airport, particularly in the north of the Borough.

The Committee noted that following liaison between Officers, local Ward Members and the appointed Consultants with regard to further assessment work, a report would be submitted to Committee in due course.

667. COMMUNITY SUPPORT OFFICERS

The Committee received for consideration a report regarding the recent introduction of Community Support Officers (CSOs), and which sought approval for the necessary funding to continue their employment in the Borough.

The Committee learned that Surrey Police, along with a number of other Police Authorities, had experienced some difficulties in recruiting voluntary Special Constables, who, whilst being highly valued, were not able to give a full time service. Community Support Officers had been introduced in response to the demand for a day time uniformed presence in the local community.

Runnymede currently had five CSOs who, in their first year (2003/04), had been fully funded by the Home Office. However, the nature of such initiatives was that funding would diminish, leaving the Police and local communities to ensure their long term provision through partnership funding arrangements.

Members were pleased to note that the Leader of the Council had consented to a sum of £12,500 being vired from the Leader's Position Statement Initiatives to fund the CSOs for 2004/05.

It was agreed that Officers should work with Surrey Police to agree arrangements for the future deployment of CSOs, seek alternative funding beyond 2005 and report annually to the Committee for their approval.

RESOLVED that –

- i) provision in the sum of £12,500 be made in the draft Revenue Estimates, to be financed from the provision for Leader's Position Statement Initiatives, in 2004/05;**
- ii) subject to agreement with Surrey Police as to the future deployment of Community Support Officers, and together with Surrey Police, alternative funding be sought for 2005/2006; and**
- iii) Officers be instructed to agree suitable working arrangements with Surrey Police and to report annually to Committee so that the Council may monitor its ongoing support commitment.**

668. BEST VALUE – COMMUNITY SAFETY – SCOPING AND CHALLENGE REPORT

The Committee received details of the Best Value scoping and challenge exercise undertaken in respect of Community Safety. Members were asked to consider whether the objectives for the provision of the service continued to meet the Council's aspirations and to satisfy themselves that there had been sufficient rigour in completing the challenge phase of the review.

Members were informed that when first introduced, all of the services covered by the review of the Safer Runnymede project were discretionary. However, the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 had since placed a statutory duty on the Council to 'do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area'.

The Committee was pleased to note that the duties, as set out below, performed by the Safer Runnymede team had been organised to make best use of their availability, 24 hours a day;

- CCTV Monitoring Service
- Careline Monitoring Service
- Out of Hours Calls Service
- Intruder/Fire Alarm Receiving
- Speed Camera Project
- Community Constable Scheme
- Environmental Improvement Scheme
- Community Safety Team
- Civic Offices Duties
- Major Incidents

The Committee welcomed the initiative to acquire an effective mobile camera. Officers were in the process of investigating the use of satellite technology which was both accurate and responsive, and which would greatly enhance the service to the public and partner organisations.

Members were content with the sixteen areas of the service which Officers had identified for further exploration and it was confirmed that a review of the 'portering duties' currently undertaken by the team would be fully reviewed.

Members acknowledged that Safer Runnymede was a well thought of and expanding service, endorsing the proposal to undertake a survey during the next stage of the review, the results of which would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Community Safety services as reported continued to reflect the Council's aspirations for the provision of the Community Safety services;**
- ii) the following sixteen matters be examined;**

CCTV Monitoring

- 1) Review the current locations of cameras to ensure they meet current need.**
- 2) How the other services provided impact on the monitoring of CCTV.**
- 3) Examine the potential for increasing income using current and new technologies.**
- 4) The acquisition of an effective mobile or relocatable CCTV camera.**

Careline Monitoring

- 1) The potential to expand the service without increasing staffing costs.**
- 2) Outsourcing the service and could staffing costs be saved.**

Out of Hours Calls

- 1) The potential to expand the service without increasing staffing costs.**
- 2) Outsourcing the service and could staffing costs be saved.**
- 3) Direct provision of services such as housing repairs.**

Intruder/Fire Alarm Receiving

- 1) The potential for savings and for income.**

Speed Camera Project

- 1) Review the services provided to establish what if anything should be continued in discussions with Surrey County Council Highways and Surrey Police.**

Community Constables

- 1) **Reconsider this initiative in the light of the introduction of ' Police Community Support Officers.**

Environmental Improvements

- 1) **How this should be developed in the light of direct funding for some projects from Home Office funds.**

Community Safety Team

- 1) **Definition of the role of the Community Safety Team and working relationships with other Departments/Sections.**
- 2) **The potential of putting a value on all the services provided.**

Civic Offices Duties

- 1) **Are Safer Runnymede Operators the most appropriate staff to be performing these duties?**
- iii) **the use of a user survey and the public community safety survey as the prime sources for the collection of data for the consultation element of the Review be endorsed; and**
- iv) **the scope of this Review and the Challenge Phase be endorsed.**

669. **ABBEY FIT SPORTS CENTRE – APPROVAL OF SCHEME DESIGN**

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 185, para. 121 and Council July 2003, page 299, para. 208)

Members received a report which sought approval for a capital estimate in the sum of £1.2 million for a scheme to develop Abbey Fit Sports Centre. In addition, the Committee's authorisation was required in order for the Director of Administration and Leisure to negotiate and conclude the final terms of the new dual use agreement and lease with the School Foundation.

The Committee was presented with details of two schemes. Officers advised that Scheme B exceeded the capital budget, whereas Scheme A met the project brief which the Consultants had been given and fitted best with the aims of the Business Plan. Members agreed that the overall design of Scheme A made good use of the existing footprint by providing a new health and fitness gym, aerobics studio, separate community changing accommodation, a new sports equipment store, improved reception facilities and extra car parking.

Visually, the new centre would blend in with existing facings and claddings. The Committee was assured that a high standard of security would be achieved and that the facilities would be compliant in terms of access with the Disability Discrimination Act. Some of the site would continue to be fully shared with the School, whilst some areas would only be used under close supervision, or by access with a 'swipe' card, to be held by school and sports centre staff and full members of the centre only.

Although there were sections of void space within the design, Members agreed that this gave scope, subject to budgetary provision, for development once the main works were complete. For example, it was suggested that a crèche might be added in the future.

Members were advised of the financial implications and it was confirmed that appropriate financial mechanisms would be incorporated into the tender documents to assist with the Council's cashflow.

Members recalled that representatives from Jubilee High School, the School Foundation, Officers and Members of the Committee had formed a Steering Group, working with the Consultants to move the project forward in accordance with the aims of the Leader's Position Statement.

Officers envisaged that, subject to a positive response from the School Foundation with regard to the new lease documentation and dual use agreement, work on site could commence by mid August 2004. It was anticipated that the new facilities would be officially opened in April 2005.

Accordingly, the Committee

RESOLVED that –

- i) Scheme A for Abbey Fit Sports Centre be approved;**
- ii) a scheme capital estimate of £1.2 million be made;**
- iii) appropriate financial mechanisms be incorporated into the tender documents to assist with the Council's cash flow; and**
- iv) the Director of Administration and Leisure be authorised to negotiate and conclude the final terms of the lease and revised dual use agreement with the agreement of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee.**

670. AVIATOR PARK RECREATIONAL FACILITIES, STATION ROAD, ADDLESTONE – PARKING RESTRICTIONS

(Ref: Minutes of Planning Committee, October 2000, page 869, para. 384, Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2002, page 234, para. 128 and Planning Committee, September 2003, page 422, para. 259)

The Committee received for information a report concerning the necessity to introduce parking restrictions at a new recreational site at Aviator Park in Addlestone. The proposals had been approved by the Economic Development Committee at their meeting on 15 January 2004 and were due to go out for public consultation shortly.

Members noted that under the proposals parking would be free of charge, but restrictions imposed to ensure that legitimate users of the facilities would not be prevented from parking there by commuters, residents and business employees from the Station Road area, the risk of which was heightened by the close proximity of the site with Addlestone railway station.

The land for the new play area had been transferred to the Council under a section 106 agreement following the redevelopment of the old Marconi site. Members were pleased to note that works were nearly complete on the facilities which included a street skating area, a small multi-use games area, teen shelter and junior football pitch. The play area was due to be officially opened early in the next Municipal Year.

671. BASINGSTOKE CANAL

The Committee received for consideration proposals to reduce the Council's financial contribution in the future to the running costs of the Basingstoke Canal.

Members were informed that Runnymede's part of the canal was a section of 1.42 miles on the eastern boundary of the Borough. The Council's contribution towards running costs was £15,500 in 2003/04 and £15,900 had been requested for 2004/05.

Other local authorities had cut their level of funding in recent years, and it was likely that the Canal Authority would be facing a substantial shortfall in the next financial year.

Members considered that although there was no pleasure to be taken in reducing funding, it might in fact be an opportunity for the Basingstoke Canal Authority to explore ways of actually enhancing what was, in effect, a 30 mile linear park which had the potential to be a vibrant leisure facility.

Accordingly, the Committee

RESOLVED that –

this Council reduces its contribution to running costs to the Basingstoke Canal by 50%, to £8,000 for 2004/05 and thereafter.

672. EGHAM SPORTS CENTRE LEISURE (DSO) TRADING POSITION 2003/04
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 185, para.120)

The Committee received for information a report outlining the current trading position of Egham Sports Centre.

Members were disappointed that the centre had again experienced a difficult year financially which had resulted in a reduction in the trading surplus. After the required transfer of £236,800 to the client-side account had been made, a "loss" of £131,200 was expected on the contractor-side account.

The Committee noted that a new General Manager at Egham Sports Centre had been appointed and a review of the staffing structure was imminent, together with other initiatives which were being considered in order to improve the situation.

After a dip in October 2003, visits had risen again and the refurbishment of the showers, which was part of the programme of works approved by the Committee in January 2003, had been very popular. The most recent customer satisfaction survey was very positive and Officers were confident that the trading position would improve.

The Committee requested that regular trading reports be brought to future meetings of the Committee.

673. ABBEY FIT JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Joint Management Committee held on 21 October 2003, as attached at Appendix 'A', were received and noted.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.40 p.m.)