

Runnymede Borough Council

LEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

20 November 2003 at 7.30 pm

Members of the

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

Members of the

Committee Absent: None

Councillors P. A. Greenwood, Mrs J. Norman and P. J. Poole also attended.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Miss M. N. Heath, the newly elected Member for Englefield Green East who had been appointed to the Committee.

503. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2003 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

504. 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 'Summer Playschemes 2003 and 2004', as her children attended the scheme.

Mr R. Fleming, Head of Leisure Services, also declared a personal interest in respect of the same item.

505. ERECTION OF FENCE BETWEEN GOGMORE FARM PARK AND RIVERSDELL CLOSE

The Committee received a report which asked for Members' views on a proposal to erect a fence along the boundaries of Gogmore Farm Park where it adjoins Riversdell Close in Chertsey.

The proposal had been made in response to the anti-social behaviour of a number of young people that local residents had experienced for some years. Reports were that the young people in question had been acting in an anti-social manner whilst using the alley at the end of Riversdell Close which served as a pedestrian route between Chertsey town centre, Gogmore Farm Park, and Cowley Avenue and Pycroft Road beyond.

Members heard that in January 2002 a gate had been installed on one of the bridges which could be locked at night and opened in the mornings by residents. However, this initiative had failed, because the volunteer gatekeeper had been intimidated by local youths. As a result he had been unable to continue these duties. Officers had investigated the possibility of employing someone to take on these duties but the costs were prohibitive.

In order to find a more permanent solution, Ward Members had consulted residents, the County Council, the Police and other interested parties. As a result of consultation with the residents of Riversdell Close, Officers considered that the proposal to erect a fence was probably the most viable option although it was acknowledged that this was not an ideal solution for all. The fence, consisting of a 1.8 metre high 'weld mesh', and associated planting of sharp shrubs would effectively block the route from Gogmore Farm Park to the alley.

The Committee heard representations from the two Ward Members who had been actively involved in the matter, and considered carefully all the points which were made.

All Members were agreed that there was a problem in need of urgent resolution for the well being of the residents of Riversdell Close. However, there was debate on what would be the most suitable

solution in the short and long term, bearing in mind that the proposal was acknowledged to be a measure which could only alleviate and not eliminate the problem.

The Committee received letters in support of the proposals from residents in Riversdell Close and from Safer Runnymede.

The Committee considered various options for a way forward, acknowledging that erecting fencing would adversely affect the open aspect of the site, contemplating that it might be better to either block off the alley altogether or erect only one of the fences to minimise impact, or to install a gate in the proposed fence.

The Committee also considered alternative routes to and from the town centre, and the quality of the footpaths, with regard to surfacing, lighting and security. The Committee considered that, on balance, the alternative route via a path along the banks of the River Bourne to Steven's Bridge would not pose significant problems for the regular users of the alley.

Although Members recognised that the majority of those using the alley were law abiding, the benefits to residents of Riversdell Close had to take precedence in this case.

All parties were agreed that the various forms of anti social behaviour which residents had suffered, had to be addressed quickly by some form of practical action, in line with the Council's recent commitment to zero tolerance with regard to anti social behaviour. However, in the near future, the Council and community and other agencies would work together in order to address the root cause of the problem rather than just its effects.

Accordingly, Members agreed that the proposal to erect a fence as set out in the report should be implemented as soon as possible. The Committee felt that the fence should only be in place for as long as it was strictly necessary; therefore it was also agreed that the scheme be reviewed after 12 months.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the construction of a fence and associated planting be approved and implemented before Christmas 2003; and**
- ii) the scheme be reviewed in November 2004.**

506. TRAIN HORN NOISE – EGHAM AND VIRGINIA WATER

(Ref: Minutes of Council, June 2003, page 66, para. 68, September 2003, page 638, para. 300, and October 2003, page 886, para. 407)

The Committee received a report which provided an update on train horn noise and its effect on residents in the Borough and which sought Members' approval for a continuance of the Council's work in lobbying the rail organisations to reduce train horn noise and improve railway safety in the Borough.

Following the decision of the Council to apply pressure on the Railway Authority to reduce or eliminate train horn noise, a meeting was held with the Railway Safety and Standards Board who had since taken the lead on this matter and issued regular progress reports.

The Council had also acted swiftly, resulting in the decision of Network Rail to close an underused and allegedly unsafe foot crossing owned by Network Rail, at Crown Lane, Virginia Water, where residents had indicated that the problem of noise nuisance was particularly concentrated.

The Committee discussed the various ways in which reducing train horn noise could be achieved. For example, the use of visual warnings instead of train horns and the closure or diversion of footpaths which cross the railway near residential properties.

Whilst it was agreed that all should be done to alleviate the problem of train horn noise, concern was expressed that the Council should not seek to close footpaths where there was an established right of way for pedestrians and or cyclists.

Members expressed their gratitude to Officers for keeping everyone informed of progress and for actively seeking ways of addressing the problem in the Borough.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the Council continues to lobby and apply pressure on the rail organisations and companies to bring about a reduction in the disturbance caused by train horns upon Borough residents; and**
- ii) the Council liaises with Surrey County Council over the possibility of footpath crossing closures or diversions in addition to that proposed for Crown Lane/ Lyne Road, Virginia Water to improve railway safety and reduce the incidence of train horns sounding in the Borough.**

507. SUMMER PLAYSCHMES – 2003 AND 2004

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2002, page 777 para. 441)

The Committee considered a report covering the performance of the 2003 Summer Playschemes and setting out Officers' proposals for the schemes in 2004.

Members were pleased to note that the playschemes had enjoyed another successful year. The Playschemes had been held at six sites across the Borough and it was hoped to extend the scheme to a seventh site at Lyne and Longcross school, probably for 4 - 7 year olds in 2004. This year a total of 1,760 child places had been available on the schemes, of which 87% had been booked. A greater number of people had booked places on a daily basis, but Officers were able to adjust accordingly to meet the booking trends. The Addlestone and Ottershaw Playschemes had proved particularly popular in 2003. However, numbers had reduced again at Englefield Green and New Haw, but Officers had adjusted the number of child spaces available, and in doing so had generated savings by reducing the number of staff required.

It was agreed last year that Officers would extend the special needs scheme to all Playscheme sites in 2003. The partnership with the White Lodge Centre had facilitated a further six such places at Ottershaw where there was demand, in addition to the six places available at the Chertsey site.

Members were pleased to note that OFSTED had awarded a 'satisfactory' grade, following a full inspection of the sites at Egham, Englefield Green and Ottershaw. The remaining sites were due to be inspected in 2004.

A total of 68 staff had been employed to run the Playschemes in 2003, the majority of whom were returning employees and persons recommended by them. Officers considered that a pay rise of 3%, in line with inflation would be sufficient for 2004, with the additional recommendation that to encourage the retention of qualified staff that they also receive an extra 50p per hour. In order to implement OFSTED Recommendations, in-house training would also be enhanced which would necessitate a slight increase in the budgetary requirements for 2004.

As part of the initiative to retain and recruit more experienced staff, the Committee welcomed the proposal for 2004 that staff working on the scheme be offered free spaces for their children and that Runnymede Borough Council staff not working on the scheme be offered places at the reduced residents' rate.

Officers proposed that no change be made to the standard charges for 2004. However, to align the scheme with neighbouring boroughs it was proposed that the concessionary rate be increased slightly, bringing it up to 50% of the full rate.

The Committee endorsed the Officers' proposals for 2004 and expressed their thanks to the staff for all their efforts and to Procter and Gamble Community Matters who had agreed to sponsor the Playschemes once again next year. Members were pleased to note that Procter and Gamble had sponsored the schemes for an 8th year.

RESOLVED that -

- i) provision be made in the draft estimates for 2004/05 in the net sum of £60,500 in respect of the Summer Playschemes with standard charges remaining the same as in 2003;**

- ii) **the Playschemes be run at seven sites in 2004 (if interest shows Lyne and Longcross School to be a suitable venue), with a maximum of 1,832 places available, between the hours of 9.15 a.m. and 3.15 p.m. from 26 July to 20 August 2004, with Officers selecting suitable sites opening their doors for "Extra Hours";**
- iii) **free child places be given to staff working directly on the Playschemes during their hours of work to encourage more experienced staff to join;**
- iv) **Council staff not working on the schemes receive a 50% discount on the price which residents pay for their children's places on the playschemes to add to the "Staff Benefits Package";**
- v) **Officers continue to encourage the inclusion of children with special needs, subject to funding and the appointment of suitable staff; and**
- vi) **the referral scheme be continued, whereby children at risk can attend the schemes free of charge, at an approximate cost to the Council of £2,500 in 2004.**

508. SUMMER 'SPLASH' SCHEME – 2003 AND 2004

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, November 2002, page 778 para 442).

Members received a report detailing the performance of the 'Splash' Scheme in 2003 and Officers' proposals for 2004.

A record 248 young people had taken part in the 'Splash' scheme for 11 to 16 year olds, including 10 who had benefited from the 'Splash' referral scheme for young people at risk. The Committee agreed that the 2004 scheme be operated as in 2003.

In 2003 the standard weekly 'Splash' charge had been increased from £40 to £42. A total of 21 staff were appointed to run the 'scheme comprising 1 Co-ordinator, 2 Senior Instructors and 18 instructors. It was proposed to retain this staff structure in 2004 with staff wages being increased by 3%, in line with equivalent schemes provided elsewhere at a total cost of £26,300.

The Committee noted that owing to a combination of savings and increased income, it was anticipated that the 2003/04 'Splash' scheme would finish with a surplus of £13,800. Of this, £2,000 had been moved to cover the additional costs of the RAZ scheme. Members endorsed the proposal that the Corporate Management Committee be asked to approve the virement of £10,000 from the 'Splash' budget to the provision in the capital programme for the purchase of a new booking system which would be used for all the playschemes run by Leisure Services.

The Committee commended all the staff involved with the 'Splash' scheme. The Committee also expressed its thanks to Procter and Gamble and Surrey Youth Service who had sponsored the scheme in 2003, and was pleased to note that sponsorship from two other local companies was likely in 2004.

RESOLVED that -

- i) **the 2004 'Splash' scheme be operated as in 2003 with 200 places per week on the main scheme with an additional 30 places available for the speciality week;**
- ii) **subject to budgetary approval, the 2004 'Splash' scheme be operated at a net cost to the Council of £ 32,200 and appropriate provision be included in the 2004/2005 estimates;**
- iii) **the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve the virement of £10,000 from the Splash Budget in 2003/04 towards the provision for a new booking system;**
- iv) **the draft budget provide for 'Splash' charges of £42 a week per participant or £21 a week per participant for families receiving benefits or £10 per day, per participant;**

- v) **free places be given to the children of 'Splash' staff; and**
- vi) **Council staff receive a 50% discount on the price which residents pay for their children's places to add to the "Staff Benefits Package".**

509. LAND ACQUISITIONS MANAGED BY LEISURE SERVICES

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2002, page 233, para. 126 and September 2002, page 542 para.308)

The Committee received, for information, an update on the reports to this Committee in 2002 concerning land acquisitions through Section 106 Agreements and other arrangements managed by the Parks and Amenities section for leisure purposes. The Committee recalled that in November 2002, separate pieces of Housing land had been transferred from the Housing and Community Services Committee to Leisure Services.

The other acquisitions which had now been completed were the sites at Aviator Park and The Boathouse (Addlestone), and part of Sandgates (Chertsey).

The Committee noted that there were some substantial costs involved in the setting up and annual maintenance costs of some of the acquisitions. In light of the Council's medium term strategy based on savings of £1 million being achieved by 2004/05, expenditure would have to be kept under review and some of the less appropriate schemes should be reconsidered.

510. BUDGET MONITORING STATEMENT

The Committee received, for information, the budget monitoring statement which incorporated the Revenue Forecast for Leisure and Environmental Services.

The statement had, in the past, been reported periodically to each of the Service Committees and had been re-introduced following the Department of Finance's Best Value Review, which, as part of its Continuous Improvement Plan had made a commitment to improved reporting of financial performance to Members.

511. REFUSE COLLECTION AND STREET CLEANSING CONTRACTS

The Committee received a report which sought Members' approval in principle for combining the contracts for Refuse Collection and Street Cleansing and for seeking consultancy advice on the likely costs of contract renewal.

The Committee agreed that the costs of an early termination of the refuse vehicle leases together with compliance with relevant tendering legislation would have to be considered.

Members expressed concern that if the two contracts were combined the high street cleansing standards currently enjoyed might be compromised by crossworking of staff given the greater priority given to refuse collection.

It was acknowledged that since the transfer of the Highways DSO back to the County Council, the DSO had to bear overheads which had resulted in the refuse contract running at a modest loss. Members considered that by starting the process they would be supporting the DSO and agreed, in principle, therefore that the two contracts should be combined.

UNISON's comments that the Committee should not be making an 'in principle' decision on the basis of consultant's advice which had not yet been received was noted.

Officers agreed to bring a further report to the Committee in early January, once the consultant's advice had been received.

RESOLVED that –

- i) **a consultant be appointed at a sum not exceeding £5,000 (to be met from existing budgets) to advise on likely costs for renewal of the refuse and street cleansing contract;**

- ii) **subject to consideration of the consultancy advice, the principle of combining the refuse and street cleansing contracts be agreed, and**
- iii) **a further report be brought to this Committee following the consultant's report to decide a way forward.**

512. POLLUTION SERVICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE PLANS FOR 2003/04
(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2003, page 191, para. 127)

The Committee received two Service Plans which dealt with those aspects of Environmental Protection which had not already been covered by Plans previously submitted to this Committee.

Members noted that although there was no specific legal requirement to produce the Plans, they would help ensure the improvement of Environmental Protection's Best Value Performance Indicators in this area which were currently under achieving.

RESOLVED that –

the Pollution Service Plan for 2003/04 and the Public Health Service Plan for 2003/04 be approved.

513. BEST VALUE – ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SCOPING AND CHALLENGE REPORT

The Committee received the Scoping and Challenge report for the Council's Environmental Protection Division which included Pollution Control, Housing, with particular reference to the Licensing Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, Public Health, Pest Control and Animal Welfare. Members were asked to consider whether the objectives for the provision of these services continued to meet the Council's aspirations and to satisfy themselves that there had been sufficient rigour in completing this initial phase of the Best Value Review.

A workshop had been held in October 2003 to challenge the current arrangements for the provision of these mainly mandatory services. It emerged that whilst public expectations with regard to enforcement were increasing, with suggestions that a more proactive approach to minimising pollution was needed, compliance by individuals and companies was actually deteriorating.

The Committee commended Officers highly for their work and suggested that the service as a whole might benefit from closer inter departmental coordination to tackle specific issues such as noise.

The next step of the review would involve a comparison with other equivalent service providers together with drawing on nationally published figures, where available, and any relevant Best Value or local performance indicators.

RESOLVED that –

- i) **the objectives of the Environmental Protection Service be reviewed to determine whether they reflect the Council's aspirations for the provision of the service; and**
- ii) **the following proposals for the review suggested by the Challenge phase be endorsed:-**
 - a) **investigate the resource implications of providing a more proactive approach to Environmental Protection;**
 - b) **identify the public level of expectation of the service and ascertain the workload impact of new legislation;**
 - c) **ensure that the administrative support is suitably trained and able to provide the range and level of service required; and**
 - d) **investigate the contracting out of areas of the existing Environmental Protection service, for example Pest Control and Dog Warden service.**

514. WASTE STRATEGY FOR SURREY

The Committee considered a detailed report on proposals for the development of a waste strategy for Surrey including the endorsement of a Council response to the Surrey Local Government Association's consultation paper entitled 'Integrated Waste Management Strategy for Surrey'. It was anticipated that the Surrey Waste Plan would meet the requirements of the strategy. The production of a Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy was set to become a legal obligation for waste disposal and waste collection authorities.

The Committee noted that the Government had set targets for all local authorities to improve levels of recycling. For Surrey a target of 30% had been set for the current financial year, rising to 36% by 2005/06. Members were pleased to note that the County had achieved 17% in 2001/02, and that Runnymede's own rate had already exceeded the 2003/04 target of 10% by 6% and was anticipated to achieve the target of 18% before the end of November 2004.

The Committee was informed that the Charlton Lane site would shortly be accepting plastics, and Officers confirmed they were considering a plastics bring scheme for Runnymede which could be operated from three of the larger car parks in the Borough. It was envisaged that the scheme could be run on a break even basis and at no cost to residents.

The Committee was informed that local authorities were also obliged to meet targets set by the European Union in respect of reducing the amount of waste disposal by landfill by 2020.

Eight options for combining different methods of waste disposal were proposed, although, only three of these would enable the target 36% to be reached. Of these, Members favoured option 'g' as recommended by Officers. This combination included recycling, composting, anaerobic digestion, mechanical biological treatment, thermal treatment and landfill.

Members noted with concern that the long term effects of using clay lined tips for landfill operations impaired the ability of the land to absorb water, resulting in increased flooding.

RESOLVED that –

- i) the move towards more sustainable waste practices in Surrey be endorsed;**
- ii) a 'mix' of technologies including recycling, composting, thermal treatment, anaerobic digestion, mechanical biological treatment and landfill (option g), be approved as the preferred option; and**
- iii) these views be incorporated within this Council's response to the Surrey Local Government Association Consultation Draft on 'An Integrated Waste Management Strategy for Surrey'.**

515. FAIROAKS AIRPORT

The Committee received a report which set out the results of a recent survey in respect of Fairoaks Airport and sought endorsement of a response on the use of the police helicopter to the Fairoaks Airport Consultative Committee.

The Committee noted that Officers had conducted the survey in response to concerns raised by residents living in the vicinity of Fairoaks Airport. Members were very pleased that the survey of 750 residents, randomly selected from a pool of 1,818, had produced a response rate of almost 57%.

The Committee was informed that although a small number of residents had been affected by the Police helicopter, almost half were never affected, and the majority recognised that it was required for operational purposes. However, a greater number were frequently or always affected by non police aircraft. Non police aircraft tended to operate during the day, whereas police helicopters patrolled at night.

Members noted that although the Council had no legal powers over aircraft with regard to planning and noise, they should continue to make representations to the Fairoaks Airport Consultative

Committee on behalf of residents, and work with them to reduce the impact of such operations on residents.

RESOLVED that –

- i) **the Fairoaks Airport Consultative Committee be advised that, whilst there are a number of people affected by the Police helicopter, the overwhelming majority of Runnymede residents accept that it is required for operational reasons;**
- ii) **the Fairoaks Airport Consultative Committee be further advised that a quarter of residents living in the vicinity of the airport consider that they are frequently or very frequently affected by the operation of non-police aircraft from Fairoaks causing unacceptable levels of noise disturbance, and that the Council supports its work in relation to responding to the general concerns of residents but would like it to investigate ways of ameliorating the impact of non-police aircraft on residents living in the immediate vicinity of Fairoaks Airport; and**
- iii) **the Fairoaks Airport Consultative Committee be requested to investigate references made by respondents to specific aircraft.**

516. REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

a) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2003

(i) Affordable Housing Programme – Land at Pooley Green Road, Egham

At its meeting of 11 September 2003, the Economic Development Committee concurred with a recommendation from the Housing and Community Services Committee that an area of Council land at Pooley Green Road, Egham should, subject to the agreement of terms, be sold to the Thames Valley Housing Association for the development of an affordable housing scheme.

The Committee also agreed that this was a sensible scheme.

RESOLVED that –

subject to the agreement of terms, the disposal of the garage compound at Pooley Green Road, Egham, to the Thames Valley Housing Association be approved.

b) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 13 NOVEMBER 2003

(ii) M25 Junction 12 – 15 Widening – Offsite Planting

At its meeting of 13 November 2003, the Economic Development Committee approved in principle, plans for landscaping proposed by the Highways Agency as part of the M25 widening scheme. The views of this Committee were sought because one of the sites, Egham Sports Centre, was on Leisure land.

Members raised no objections to the plans subject to consultation with residents, but requested that the possibility of a commuted sum be negotiated to reflect the significant ongoing maintenance liabilities which would arise from the scheme.

RESOLVED that –

the Highways Agency landscaping proposals be accepted in principle subject to consultation with residents and the agreement of detailed terms including the amount of any commuted sum.

517. APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES**RESOLVED that –**

- i) Councillor J. B. Dean be appointed to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Forum for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2003/04; and**
- ii) Councillor Miss M. N. Heath be appointed to Runnymede Association of Arts for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2003/04.**

518. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP – MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Group held on 7 October 2003 as attached at Appendix 'A' were received and noted.

519. URGENT ACTION – STANDING ORDER 42

The Committee noted that acting in accordance with Standing Order 42, the following action had been undertaken by the Officer shown below after consultation with the Chairman:-

<u>Officer</u>	<u>Action Taken</u>	<u>Central Index No.</u>
Director of Finance	Following the waiving of Standing Orders; the purchase of a set of digitised post war historical maps and associated historical land data to progress the identification of contaminative uses in the Borough. (The total cost of the package including discounts is £11,500 plus VAT).	541

(The meeting ended at 9.45 p.m.)

Chairman