

Runnymede Borough CouncilLEISURE AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE22 November 2001 at 7.30 p.m.

Members of the
Committee present: Councillors C.J. Norman (Chairman), Mrs S.E. Jacobs (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs F.J. Barden, E.G. Barrett, B.A. Clarke, A.G. Collins, Mrs. L.M. Gillham,
D.W. Parr and Ms. C.M. Simmons

Members of the
Committee absent: Councillor Mrs C.Y. Jones

Co-opted Members
of the Committee
absent: Mrs B. Miller and Mr T. Watson

Councillor Mrs E.E. Price also attended.

387. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 20 September 2001 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

388. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Mrs C.Y. Jones.

389. M25 - WIDENING BETWEEN JUNCTIONS 12 TO 15

(Ref: Minutes of Leisure and Environment Committee, June 2001, pages 122-123, para. 99).

In June the Committee had expressed concern about the proposed use of thin surfacing techniques as opposed to porous asphalt. Members had also regretted that the barriers would not be noise absorbent, and had requested the Officers to raise these concerns with the Highways Agency. It was now reported that following these representations the Highways Agency had agreed to make all the barriers noise absorbent. Members were still perturbed, however, that the barriers did not cover the entire length of widening, nor did they cover all of the M3 slip roads. It was felt that although no properties were directly adjacent to the stretch between Crabtree Road and Clockhouse Lane, the traffic noise would be carried across Thorpe Lea Road to the properties in the Warwick Avenue area.

Members noted that the Highway Agency preferred thin surfacing because it was less disruptive to traffic flow when being laid (and during maintenance periods), was more durable, less vulnerable to freezing, and gave equal noise reductions. It was noted that comparative noise monitoring tests would be carried out by the Council after the road was resurfaced.

RESOLVED that -

the Highways Agency be requested to ensure that noise absorbent barriers are provided comprehensively between Junction 12 (M3) and the Runnymede Bridge.

390. STUDY INTO THE HEALTH OF POPULATIONS AROUND LANDFILL SITES

The Committee noted a "Study by the Small Area Health Statistics Unit on health outcomes in populations living around landfill sites" (Appendix 'A' herewith). The study explained that *"the lack of consistency in the findings for all landfill sites and for special landfill sites further complicates any attempt to draw firm conclusions from this study about the possible health effects of landfill sites"*.

Members discussed the study's implications for the landfill site at Norlands Lane, and expressed concern about the formula of the deodorising spray there. Officers replied that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had confirmed that these sprays were non-toxic and contained (unspecified) "natural" products. However, Members sought clarification. Members also sought assurances about the cleaning regimes employed on the sprays themselves, learning that contaminated pipes could spread harmful bacteria. The Borough Environmental Services Officer undertook to make further enquiries and inform Members of the outcome.

391. LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE - MINUTES

RESOLVED that -

the Minutes of the meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee held on 27 September 2001, attached at Appendix 'B' be received and adopted.

392. HOMEWOOD PARK - COSTS OF TRAVELLER INCURSION

(Ref. Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, 4 October 2001, page 449, para. 290).

At its meeting on 4 October 2001 the Corporate Management Committee had agreed actions necessary to minimise the impact of any future incursions by travellers. This Committee welcomed the proposed programme which had been agreed by the full Council and reiterated that lobbying to give local authorities greater powers to deal effectively with large groups of travellers should be vigorously pursued.

The Committee noted that a supplementary revenue estimate was required to cover the costs of the traveller incursions at Homewood Park in May/June 2001. The cost of £82,000 was made up as follows:-

Emergency defences and clear up

Ditches to reduce access points	£100
Removal of abandoned cars	£160
Repairs to structures	£800
Removal and disposal of waste and reinstatement	£20,221

On site security, post incursion

Security staff	£9,120
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Ongoing works to deter future incursions

DSO works to construct ditches, bunds and bridges and to improve existing height barrier	£50,673
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Other costs

Court fees	£120
Consultants fees	£750

Total £81,944

In addition, there were the "hidden costs" of the substantial amount of staff time devoted exclusively to dealing with the incursions. It was agreed that Officers would attempt to quantify this for Members' information. It was also agreed that a copy of the public leaflet commissioned by the Service Review Board would be sent to the Chairman for information.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve the supplementary estimate in the sum of £82,000 to cover the costs of the traveller incursion at Homewood Park; and**
- ii) the Council decision to press the Government for increased enforcement powers be endorsed, and Officers be requested to promote this policy at every opportunity.**

393. ST. AUGUSTINE'S GREEN, ADDLESTONE - MAINTENANCE OF NEW OPEN SPACE

Members were advised that the Council would shortly be granted a 20 year lease for a new open space in Addlestone through a Section 106 Agreement with the developers of the Bourne Business Park. This piece of land covered approximately 0.7 acres (0.28 hectares) and was located between the end of Albert Road and the Weybridge Road, Addlestone.

It was anticipated that the open space (named "St. Augustine's Green" due to its proximity to the Church) would prove popular with local office workers and local residents. The appropriate signage, a bench, litter and dog waste bins had been installed. The maintenance costs were estimated at £1,000 for this year and £1,300 per annum in subsequent years.

RESOLVED that -

the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary estimate in the sum of £1,000 in the current financial year and note the financial implications in future years.

394. THORPE CEMETERY - PETITION

A petition had been posted in the grounds of Thorpe Cemetery asking for signatories to complain about the "neglect" of the Cemetery. On seeing this petition, Council Officers had met the organiser to discuss the issues that were causing concern. It was explained that, in recent years the Cemetery had benefited from unsolicited voluntary work carried out by a couple who had lived nearby. The work had eventually become too much for these volunteers and they had given it up. This loss of input had inevitably adversely affected the appearance of the Cemetery, as the standard of maintenance reverted to that found in other Cemeteries in the Borough.

Following the meeting, Officers had acted to deal with the complaints. A subsequent conversation with the petition organiser (who had actually submitted the petition with its 107 signatories in September) showed that most of the concerns had been rectified before the petition was received by the Council. All works had been funded from existing revenue budgets.

Members were gratified at the prompt response of the Officers and hoped that the Cemetery's future maintenance would not give rise to any dissatisfaction. Officers were asked to monitor the possibility of subsidence at the site, since structural works were being carried out on adjacent land.

395. SUMMER PLAYSCHEMES - 2001 AND 2002

(Ref. Minutes of former Executive Committee, 10 January 2001, page 1131, para. 538).

The Committee considered a comprehensive report which covered both the performance of the 2001 Summer Playschemes and plans for next year's schemes.

Members were advised that six Playschemes were provided every summer. The schemes were staff intensive, seeing a ratio of 1 adult to 7 children (5 to 7 year olds), and 1 adult to 8 children (8 to 11 year olds), plus two 'floating' instructors. A total of 73 staff had been employed this summer. The administration of the schemes was controlled by a Leisure Development Officer (who also administered the 'Splash' scheme) who received some temporary clerical support. Unfortunately this Officer had been absent on sick leave since May 2001 (and had now left the Council's employment) with the result that the Sports Development Officer had been seconded to cover this work. This had caused stress to personnel and the organisation alike, and it was clear that additional resources were required if the schemes were to be totally effective in 2002. An additional report on the agenda recommended the establishment of an Assistant Leisure Development Officer (see later Minute). However, it was proposed to maintain the existing on-site staff structure in 2002, the only substantial difference being an adjustment to wages in line with inflation and the introduction of holiday pay, as required by statute.

Members were disappointed to see that bookings were 7% down on the previous year (91% of places as opposed to 98%). This was a pattern experienced by neighbouring authorities and might have been partly due to local competing schemes offering more hours per day and thereby benefiting working parents. One consequence was that the costs had exceeded the estimates by a sum of £16,700 although there were other contributory factors. It was proposed to amend the charging structure in 2002 to encourage the participation of larger families.

A new software package to ease administration and facilitate bookings was also necessary and Officers would report back options for this to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary estimate of £16,700 to cover the additional costs of operating the 2001 Playschemes;**
- ii) the Playschemes be run at six sites in 2002, with 1,952 places available, between the hours of 9.15 a.m. and 3.15 p.m. from 29 July to 23 August 2002;**
- iii) subject to budgetary approval, the 2002 Playschemes be operated at a net cost to the Council of £68,000 and appropriate provision be included in the 2002/03 estimates;**
- iv) the draft budget provide for the charges set out in Appendix 'C' including a reduction for families with more than one child on the schemes;**
- v) provision be made for a draft staffing budget of £72,800 to retain competitive wage levels and allow for holiday pay due to casual workers;**
- vi) Officers continue to encourage the inclusion of children with special needs, subject to funding and the appointment of suitable staff;**
- vii) the referral scheme be continued, whereby children at risk can attend the schemes free of charge, at an approximate cost to the Council of £2,000 in 2002; and**
- viii) Officers report options for a new bookings system to the Corporate Management Committee.**

396. 'SPLASH' SCHEME - 2001 AND 2002

(Ref: Minutes of former Executive Committee, 13 December 2000, page 1034, para. 491).

The Committee received a report on the performance of the 'Splash' scheme in 2001 and the proposals for 2002.

It was reported that the scheme for 11 to 16 year olds had run for three weeks (30 July to 17 August). This year the scheme had attracted 267 young people who took up 429 out of 625 places. This compared with 408 young people who enrolled in 2000, and 547 in 1999. This lower attendance had contributed to increased costs of £18,200, although the decline in sponsorship and other factors had also added to this deficit. Next year it was proposed to increase the weekly charge to £40 (from £38), with concessions paying £15.75 (£15). Surrey County Council would continue to provide funding for staff to assist disabled participants, and the Youth Service would also fund staff to work specifically with disadvantaged young people. Staff wages would be increased by 3% and an allowance for statutory holiday pay would also be included.

Members noted that, as in the case of the Playschemes, the absence of the main administrator and co-ordinator had caused severe problems. There was also a need to purchase a suitable software database, and a report on the options available (with costings) would be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee.

The Committee reiterated their support for the 'Splash' scheme which provided beneficial experiences for the Borough's young people, including a number who were disadvantaged or vulnerable.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary estimate of £18,200 to cover the additional costs of operating the 2001 'Splash' scheme;**
- ii) the 2002 'Splash' scheme be operated as in 2001 with 200 places per week on the main scheme and an additional 25 places available for the drama week;**
- iii) subject to budgetary approval, the 2002 'Splash' scheme be operated at a net cost to the Council of £35,900 and appropriate provision be included in the 2002/2003 estimates;**
- iv) the draft budget provide for 'Splash' charges of £40 a week per participant or £15.75 a week per participant for families receiving benefits; and**
- v) provision be made for a draft staffing budget of £22,317 to retain competitive wage levels and allow for holiday pay due to casual workers.**

397. LEISURE DEVELOPMENT

During consideration of the previous items on the Playschemes and 'Splash', Members had noted the heavy workload placed on the Leisure Development Officer. This Officer, working with limited temporary clerical support, was responsible for running the Playschemes and 'Splash' offering over 2,500 places to over 800 children. Prior to 1993 this post had only had responsibility for the Playschemes, and 'Splash' had been added on with no increase in establishment. This heavy workload had resulted in 200 hours overtime being worked in 1999, 133 hours in 2000 and almost 300 hours in 2001. The previous two Leisure Development Officers had both stated that there was too much work for one person to maintain the safety and quality of the schemes or to extend them in any way. The long-term sickness of the postholder, followed by her resignation, had seen the onerous workload falling on the Sports Development Officer with obvious implications for the efficiency of the schemes and the Leisure Division generally.

Members noted that these staffing pressures made it difficult to recruit adequate Playscheme/'Splash' staff well before the commencement of the schemes, and to pursue possible sponsorship leads (which demanded considerable liaison and negotiation). The inability to pursue sponsorship vigorously had contributed to the financial losses incurred this year. A significant change was also likely to result from the Ofsted requirement that at least half of Playscheme staff should be specially trained in childcare, with all Playschemes being registered by Ofsted from September 2001.

Enhanced staffing would allow additional playschemes to be run in half terms and at Easter as was done in other Boroughs and requested by parents. It would also be possible to develop a hire service for playscheme and sports equipment for suitable local groups. The proposal would also improve the Council's ability to co-ordinate or harmonise with the services for young people provided by the Sports Centres, the Museum, the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and the Youth Strategy Action Group.

Essentially the Committee faced three options:

- i) establish a new post of Assistant Leisure Development Officer;
- ii) contract out the existing schemes to an independent organisation - this would require the submission of tenders but would probably cost more than in-house provision, or

- iii) reduce the service offered - this could mean at a minimum, not running activities at three of the six Playscheme sites or at maximum the deletion of the Summer Playschemes and/or "Splash".

The Committee gave the matter careful consideration and agreed that it did not want to see a diminution of this worthwhile public service. Therefore, option (i) was favoured.

RESOLVED that -

- i) subject to the agreement of the Corporate Management Committee to ii) below, provision be made in the draft estimates for 2001/02 and 2002/03 for the employment of an Assistant Leisure Development Officer at an annual cost not exceeding £23,000 per annum; and**
- ii) a report be submitted to the Corporate Management Committee requesting authorisation of this addition to the establishment.**

398. ABBAYLANDS SPORTS CENTRE - REPLACEMENT OF GYMNASTIC MATS

Half of the 32 gymnastic mats at Abbeylands Sports Centre now required replacement. In view of the success of the new Sports Acro classes (which required a higher specification safety mat) the Committee decided to purchase 24 specialist mats and a trolley. A modest expansion of the popular Sports Acro classes would see a net surplus of £1,400 per annum, whereas maximum take-up could see a surplus of £4,200 per annum. Given that the mats had an estimated life of ten years, the Committee accepted the viability of purchase.

RESOLVED that -

the Corporate Management Committee be requested to approve a supplementary estimate in the sum of £5,300 in the current year for the purchase of specialist gymnastic mats, and note the resulting anticipated minimum net surplus of £1,400 per annum.

399. ABBAYLANDS SPORTS CENTRE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Abbeylands Sports Centre JMC dated 9 October 2001 (Appendix 'D' herewith).

400. MEETING WITH ALLOTMENT REPRESENTATIVES - MINUTES

The Committee noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2001 (Appendix 'E' herewith).

401. RUNNYMEDE ARTS DEVELOPMENT STEERING GROUP - MINUTES

The Committee noted the Minutes of the meeting of the Runnymede Arts Development Steering Group held on 2 October 2001 (Appendix 'F' herewith).

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 8.58 p.m.)