

LEISURE SERVICES COMMITTEE
24 FEBRUARY 1998

Present: Councillor North (Chairman), Councillors Bettison, Blatchford, Egan, Fawcett, Finnie, Flood, Good, Grayson, Miss Haydon, Mrs Hayes, Mrs Keene, McCormack, North, Thompson and Wheaton

Also in Attendance:
Councillor Mills

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Taylor

529. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed the new Director of Leisure Services, Vincent Paliczka and the Council's new Youth and Community Officer, Malcolm Penny.

530. Vote of Thanks

RESOLVED that votes of thanks be accorded to Mark Devon and Helen Tranter for their work and commitment to the department over the last six months.

531 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 January 1998 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of a vote of thanks to Chris Vaal in relation to Minute 453 - Young People in Sport (Annual Report).

532. Leisure Services Executive Sub Committee - Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Leisure Services Executive Sub Committee held on 18 December 1997, as detailed at Appendix A, be received.

533. Fishing at Farley Moor Lake (Item 11)

Following a request at the last meeting for a report on the implication of extending the fishing season at Farley Moor Lake (Minute 447 refers), the Director of Leisure Services submitted a report detailing the history and previous Council decisions relating to the site, particularly in relation to the local swan life.

It was noted that many fisherman had requested that fishing take place earlier than 1 November, the current start time for the fishing season at the lake. However, informal discussions with Swan Lifeline had shown that they were opposed to fishing being allowed earlier in the year. Swan Lifeline had also suggested that one area of the bank was designated as a no fishing zone and this could be used for feeding swans which was necessary as there was insufficient natural weed.

The Committee had originally been asked to consider extending the fishing season so that fishing was permitted from mid June each year, however in the light of new information the Chairman suggested that the current fishing season should be retained and the Council should formally apply to Thames Water to take management of the site.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the current fishing season at Farley Moor Lake be retained;
- (ii) no fishing be allowed on the northern bank;
- (iii) the Council formally apply to Thames Water to take management control of the site; and
- (iv) a further report be submitted to Leisure Services Committee within 12 months.

534. **Environment Strategy 1998-2000 (Item 1)**

The Director of Public and Environmental Services presented the Environment Strategy for 1998-2000 which had been endorsed by the Public and Environmental Services Committee at its meeting on 8 January 1998.

The strategy document highlighted the work undertaken by the Council's Environmental Impact Group in enhancing further the corporate approach to environmental issues currently adopted within Bracknell Forest. The strategy sought to ensure that the Council's policies and practices reflected an informed decision making process that endeavoured to maximise benefits relevant to environmental consequences and accordingly much could be achieved with little or no extra cost.

Once the strategy had been informally agreed it would be officially launched at the Environment Fair in May and shortly afterwards it was hoped to organise a major seminar for local businesses to promote Agenda 21, to share ideas and encourage mutual commitment.

The Director of Leisure Services highlighted how Leisure Services could contribute to the Strategy, particularly in the fields of education, transport, planning and development, pollution prevention and control, landscape and major conservation, health and well-being, economic development, waste management, energy and water consumption and these were noted by the Committee.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the draft environmental strategy, as reported be endorsed;
- (ii) Leisure Services take a proactive role in meeting the Council's environmental targets through positive management action and appropriate policy decisions; and

- (iii) Public and Environmental Services Committee notes the contribution Leisure Services makes to the health and well-being of the community.

535. Capital Programme 1998/99 - 2000/01 (Item 2)

The Committee considered a joint report from the Director of Leisure Service and Director of Corporate Services which reviewed the 1997/98 programme and considered new schemes for 1998/99.

Members were asked to consider a range of projects for the 1998/99 capital programme which had an estimated value of £1,050,500. However, it was noted that given the total resources available to the Council as a whole, it would not be within the Council's resources to undertake all of the projects. Accordingly a three year programme would be developed so allowing for better forward planning and setting of priorities.

The Committee also considered the proposed capital programme for 1998/99 which created a priority list for the Committee and which would be subsequently submitted to the Strategy and Policy Committee for consideration. The list also included slippage on schemes progressed for the 1997/98 capital programme which had not be completed. It was noted that no provision had been made for Easthampstead Park House, although to ensure that the property was not overlooked while responsibilities were being established, Strategy and Policy Committee would be asked to note that a potential investment in excess of £325,000 may be required.

In presenting the report the Director amended the proposed capital programme in the sum of £9,000, this being an increase from £10,000 to £19,000 for project A9 - grant to Brakenhale School.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the scheme summarised in Annexe A of the report be submitted at the Strategy and Policy Committee for inclusion in the capital programme 1998/99; and
- (ii) the Strategy and Policy Committee be asked to note the potential capital investment required for Easthampstead Park House.

536. Capital Grants 1997/98 (Item 3)

The Director of Leisure Services reported that within the capital programme for Leisure Committee for the 1997/98 financial year £71,000 remained unallocated for capital grants. Accordingly, Officers reported on proposals for allocating money to projects at Farleywood Play Area, Binfield, North Ascot Youth Club, Great Hollands Community Centre and the 1998/99 Year of Reading/Children's Books.

RESOLVED that the £71,000 underspend on 1997/98 capital programme be allocated as follows:

- (i) £20,000 for the laying of a rubber safety surface on the play area at the Farleywood Centre;
- (ii) £16,000 towards the North Ascot Youth Club;
- (iii) £20,000 as an additional contribution towards improvements at Great Hollands Community Centre; and
- (iv) £15,000 be approved to purchase Children's books in support of the 1998/99 Year of Reading.

537. Bracknell Sport and Leisure Centre - Installation of New Water Main (Item 4)

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report outlining water supply problems being experienced at Bracknell Sport and Leisure Centre and sought approval to a proposed solution.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) a new water main be provided for Bracknell Sport and Leisure Centre;
- (ii) up to £22,500 be released from the 1997/98 capital programme for the projects; and
- (iii) the Borough Surveyor be authorised to seek tenders for the above works and accept the most appropriate.

538. Security Cameras - The Lookout (Item 5)

The Director of Leisure Services reported on a proposal to install CCTV cameras covering the car park area at The Lookout in order to deter crime and improve security and supervision.

The project had been identified in the approved 1997/98 capital programme.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) up to £30,000 be approved for security cameras at The Lookout from 1997/98 capital programme; and
- (ii) the Borough Surveyor be authorised to seek tenders to this work and to accept the most appropriate.

539. Grant Variation Requests (Item 6)

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report giving details of requests for variations to the terms of grants from South Hill Park and the Bracknell Lawn and Tennis Club.

South Hill Park had been given a grant of £49,500 from the 1996/97 capital programme and had spent all but £3,213 of this. The outstanding projects on which grants were awarded were a wheelchair lift to the recital room (£1,500) and improvements of the recital room (£2,250). South Hill Park had asked to spend all the remaining money on stages and lighting and a piano lift for the recital room. The omissions of a stair lift from the project had been justified by the Director of South Hill Park on the basis that it was no longer required as better arrangements would be made when the building was altered as part of the proposed major redevelopment. However, whilst the rationale behind this request was well founded, there was major concern that the proposed development had not been agreed by the Arts Council and consequently the creation of better access for disabled people was by no means certain. Accordingly, it was considered that Lottery funds should not be relied upon and that the services and facilities at South Hill Park should benefit from the full grant which was originally awarded.

The grant application for Bracknell Lawn Tennis Club had been approved in April 1997. Further to this the Tennis Club had been active in pursuing implementation of the project and had been offered grants of £45,000 by the Lawn Tennis Association towards construction of their new pavilion and floodlights. A submission had been made for Lottery funding and the outcome was still awaited. Planning permission had been obtained. However, work on site was unlikely to start before the deadline of 31 March 1998 and in view of the hard work which had gone into the project it was recommended that the deadline be extended for a further year.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the variation request from South Hill Park to spend £3,213, remaining from their previous grant only on improvements to the recital room, be refused for the reasons identified above; and
- (ii) the deadline for implementation of the grant of £45,000 to the Bracknell Lawn Tennis Club be extended to 30 September 1998.

540. **Archives (Item 7)**

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report giving details of future joint arrangements for the management of archives in Berkshire which would come into effect on 1 April 1998 when the new unitary authority come into being.

RESOLVED that the joint arrangements detailed in the officer's report (paragraphs 4.2 to 4.5 refer) be approved.

541. **Local Government Reorganisation - Joint Arrangements for Public Libraries and Information Services (Item 8)**

The Director of Leisure Services reported on future joint arrangements for the management of the Library Service IT (DYNIX and WAN), Music and Drama Library, mobile Libraries

and specialist services and inter authority transport, including the need to purchase a new mobile library vehicle.

In considering this matter members were made aware that the DYNIX system did not cover the small libraries and officers undertook to use every extension to the system in the future.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the joint arrangements detailed in the officer's report be approved; and
- (ii) the Director of Leisure Services be authorised to approve the Council's contributions for the purchase of a new mobile library vehicle.

542. Proposed Public Footpath, Chavey Down (Item 9)

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report proposing that the Council enter into a Public Path Creation Agreement with two landowners in order to convert an existing privately maintained park in Chavey Down into a public footpath. The footpath will become public maintainable and would be added to the definitive map of public right of way.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the safety works identified in the report be included in the 1998/99 capital programme as a priority; and
- (ii) the Council enters into a Public Path Creation Agreement as detailed in the officer's report.

543. Definitive Map of Public Right of Way (Item 10)

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a report informing members that from 1 April 1998 the Borough Council, as a unitary authority, would be responsible for reviewing and updating the definitive map of public rights of way, and reported on the nature of work involved and the details of the existing backlog of work which would be inherited from the County Council on 1 April.

In considering the officer's report, members noted that the current legislation, particularly provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 relating to the reclassification of roads used as public paths, was unreasonably onerous and complex and the process could be streamlined and less costly if the requirement to automatically refer objections to the Secretary of State and hold public inquiries were to be dropped and replaced by an appeal procedure.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the responsibilities in terms of public rights of way, as reported, be noted; and

- (ii) the Chairman be authorised to write to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions requesting it to review the process regarding reclassification with a view to minimising the bureaucracy involved.

544. Wildmoor Heath - Joint Arrangements (Item 12)

The Director of Leisure Services reported on joint arrangements with the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists' Trust with regard to the acquisition of land at Wildmoor Heath.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the joint arrangements detailed in the officer's report be approved for a period of two years; and
- (ii) the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Naturalists' Trust will be informed that the arrangements did not involve any long term commitment to funding the project.

(Councillor Blatchford declared a non pecuniary interest in the above item as a member of the BBONT and took no part in the discussion or voting thereon.)

545. The Look Out Discovery Outpost - Sponsorship (Item 13)

The Director of Leisure Services reported that Southern Electric had agreed to sponsor the new energy efficient model house exhibit for the Discovery Outpost in the sum of £5,000.

In considering this item, the Committee requested that a site visit be arranged for members, together with other leisure facilities.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the sum of £5,000 sponsorship money from Southern Electric be accepted; and
- (ii) delegated authority be given to the Director of Leisure Services and Borough Solicitor to enter into an agreement with Southern Electric regarding the energy house exhibit.

546. Contract Monitoring Progress Report - Sports and Leisure Management (Item 14)

The Director of Leisure Services submitted a detailed report informing members of the contract performance of the Sport and Leisure DSO for the period 1 January 1996 to 31 March 1997, including an appraisal of the financial performance of the DSO.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Leisure Direct Services Organisation be commended on its good performance; and

- (ii) the Chairman writes to this effect to the DSO Manager.

547. Management Arrangements - Youth Centres (Item 15)

The Director of Leisure Services highlighted existing arrangements for the management of Youth Centres and set out proposals for a consultation process to examine the management structures and financial arrangements for such Centres.

As part of the consultation arrangements the Director of Leisure Services or his nominee would attend forthcoming meetings of the Youth Centres to examine options for future management.

With regards to finance it was agreed that the Borough Finance Officer should review the expenditure and income profile of individual Centres to create a new budget structure for each Centre.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the Director of Leisure Services or his nominee, attends the forthcoming management meetings of Bracknell Forest's Youth Centres to examine options for future management;
- (ii) the Borough Finance Officer be authorised to restructure the financial arrangements of the Youth Centres using the parameters set out in the officer's report; and
- (iii) a further report be submitted to Leisure Services Committee during the June cycle.

548. Items for Information (Items 16, 17, 18 and 19)

The Committee received and noted the following information items:

- Land near South Hill Park (Item 16)
- Binfield Library Progress (Item 17)
- Leisure Capital Programme - Progress of Construction Projects (Item 18)
- Corporate Maintenance Contracts (Item 19)

The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 9.00pm.

CHAIRMAN