

## **CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the proceedings of the Leisure Services Committee held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2006 at 7.30 p.m.

### **PRESENT:-**

Alderman J Norris MBE

Councillor Mrs A Beattie  
Councillor J Beattie  
Councillor Ms J Bunting (in the chair)  
Councillor Mrs S Duncan  
Councillor T Jeffers  
Councillor Miss V Stevenson  
Councillor C Tosh

### **IN ATTENDANCE:-**

Director of Finance & Leisure Services, Leisure Services Manager, Sports Development Officer, Grassroots Development Officer and Members' Services Officer

### **APOLOGIES:-**

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Aldermen Copeland and Rice, and Councillors Cochrane and Henderson

## **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Tabled:- Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee dated 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2006 (copy previously circulated)

### **LS/2006/37 : DEFIBRILLATOR FOR BELVOIR ACTIVITY CENTRE (Minute Ref No: LS/2006/21 refers)**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services reported that the Council's Grants Officer was currently trying to obtain grant funding for the provision of a defibrillator for Belvoir Activity Centre under the "Awards for All" scheme.

**RESOLVED:** That the Committee authorise the Director of Finance & Leisure Services to purchase a defibrillator for the Belvoir Activity Centre and to continue to explore grant funding for the procurement.

## **REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & LEISURE SERVICES**

### **LS/2006/38 : TRADING ACCOUNTS**

The Director drew Members' attention to the attached trading accounts for the three Leisure Centres for the period: 1 April 2005 – 28 February 2006. He asked Members to note that he had made various changes to the format of the accounts as requested by the Committee at the last meeting.

He referred to the VAT partial exemption refund of £116k which had now been distributed amongst the 4 leisure centres on a pro rata basis, and had been brought into the accounts as a cash flow item.

The Members wished to congratulate the Officers, at this point, for their work in successfully obtaining the VAT partial exemption refund.

The Director then referred to the detailed indication of operating costs, cost of sales etc., as requested by Members. He drew Members' attention to the trading accounts for the café at the Robinson Centre and pointed out that the net costs shown mainly reflected sickness costs. Furthermore, he added that he had held discussions with the Leisure Services Manager, Acting Ice Bowl Operations Manager and the Catering Manager, with a view to a corporate catering approach.

Councillor Mrs Beattie referred to the increases in vending machine income and the Director reported that although they were performing well, they were having an adverse effect on the catering figures of the cafe.

Councillor Jeffers suggested that it may be pertinent to look at the provision of food through vending machines. The Director responded that this matter was currently being considered at the Ice Bowl.

Councillor Bunting felt that this was an extreme measure and it may be more appropriate to speak to the users of the facility to determine their views.

The Leisure Services Manager concurred that the increase in vending income and the location of café had affected their performance figures. He commented that following a User Meeting, the catering staff were trying to diversify and provide a more upmarket menu, and he felt that improvements could still be made.

Councillor Duncan referred to the losses experienced by the Health Suite to which the Director responded that the initial targets set for this new venture had

been very optimistic and had since been reviewed to a more appropriate level in this new financial year.

Noted.

**LS/2006/39 : VAT – PARTIAL EXEMPTION CLAIM  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/26 refers)**

The Director reported that the total amount of the VAT Partial Exemption Claim refunded had been £116,264.58, with £98,045 being credited to the Council's three Centres.

Noted.

**LS/2006/40 : FIFTY METRE POOL – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/36 refers)**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services reported that, following discussion at the Leisure Park Board, he had attended a meeting with the Sports Council who had expressed an awareness of the fact that Castlereagh had been the first Council to approach them in relation to a 50 metre pool. He added that although Belfast and North Down were also interested in pursuing this matter, a Council team of Officers were currently completing an Expressions of Interest grant application to the Sports Council for submission by 31<sup>st</sup> May.

The Director informed Members that if Castlereagh was successful in its application to provide an overall package, i.e. a Swimming Centre of Excellence at the Leisure Park, incorporating a 50-metre pool, a refurbishment of the Robinson Centre, and a recreational pool at the Lough Moss Centre, the Sports Council would provide a grant for a percentage of the capital costs, whilst the Council would have to finance the balance of capital and the revenue running costs.

He went on to state that a team of Council Officers were looking at a 50m pool in Dublin to ascertain the original capital costs to construct the pool, the running costs, and how well it operated and these would be relayed to the Officer working group.

Alderman Norris queried the timescale of the project, to which the Director responded that should Castlereagh be successful in its bid, the ratepayers of Castlereagh would benefit irrespective of the forthcoming RPA, however he would keep Members updated of any progress.

Noted.

**LS/2006/41 : LOUGH MOSS DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services circulated a draft Lough Moss Development Plan for Members' consideration.

He outlined the details of the plan and indicated that he and the Client Manager had met with several Carryduff residents at the request of Councillor J Beattie. Officers were currently seeking additional funding for the Carryduff playground through the Peoples Millions – Big Lottery Fund and Children in Need schemes to provide a much better scheme.

The Director advised Members that he would like to invite Private Developers to the site and develop the Lough Moss complex at minimal cost to the ratepayers.

Councillor Beattie referred to the topography of the site which might limit development but the Leisure Services Manager confirmed that he would be investigating the land suitability prior to finalisation of the Development Park plans.

Councillor Bunting expressed her concern that Officers should ascertain if the Council were limited to the numbers of applications it could make to this Grant fund. If this was the case and the Council could only submit one application, she felt that the Council should be looking at the Borough holistically to maximise funding and gain best value up to the limit of the grant funding.

The Director confirmed that he would ascertain if there were any limitations to the numbers of applications that could be submitted to these bodies, and would report back to Members.

Councillor Mrs Beattie suggested that if the Council were looking at the Borough holistically, she asked that consideration be given to a playground for the Belvoir area.

Councillor Bunting then referred to the development of the Lough Moss site and asked that Officers ensure that the Robinson Centre continue to be progressed, in addition.

She stated that she was particularly concerned that the Government would put in place spending limitations on local Councils with the run –up to the RPA and Castlereagh residents would lose out on potential facilities.

The Director indicated that the Government was proposing to allocate £50m for the advancement of leisure facilities for the 2012 Olympics, and the Council should therefore also consider applying to construct a Centre of Excellence for Hockey at the Billy Neill Centre.

RESOLVED:- That, the Director ascertain if there was any limit to the number of applications that could be submitted by the Council in respect of the Peoples Millions – Big Lottery Fund/Children in Need schemes, as this would impact on the type of funding application submitted, and any limitations would mean that the Council should look at a more ambitious and holistic application to maximise the grant funding available.

**LS/2006/42 : FINANCIAL TRAINING - ASSISTANT MANAGERS  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/25b refers)**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services informed Members that training had commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> April with a view to improving communication between the 3 Centres through technology, including the setting up of an integrated credit control system. He felt that initial feedback had been very receptive and he would continue with the in-house training using the Council's own financial team.

Noted.

**LS/2006/43 : LOCKERS – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/28 refers)**

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services informed Members that this matter had been actioned by the Acting Ice Bowl Operations Manager and she had since received 4 Expressions of Interest.

He stated that there would be a report prepared for the Leisure Park Board, and he would bring back any recommendations to the next Committee.

RESOLVED:- That, the Director of Finance & Leisure Services be instructed to bring back any recommendations made by the Leisure Park Board, following discussion of the 4 Expressions of Interest received in relation to the lockers.

**LS/2006/44 : TOUR OF THE NORTH  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/31 refers)**

The Director informed Members that organisation of the event was progressing well and he was arranging for an Officer to accompany the Mayor on the day of the Tour of the North, as he had other commitments.

Noted.

**LS/2006/45 : WORLD BOWLS TOURNAMENT  
(Minute Ref No: LS/2006/32 refers)**

The Director drew Members' attention to his report, and commented that the PR & Marketing Manager was currently negotiating with the World Indoor Bowls Council with regard to promotion of the Council's Golf Course during the event.

He added that Belfast Indoor Bowling Stadium were very receptive to the Council's efforts to support the event.

Noted.

At this point the Director of Finance & Leisure Services requested permission to attend another meeting, and he left at 8.25 p.m.

**LS/2006/46 : VERBAL OVERVIEW BY THE GRASS ROOTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER**

The Grassroots Development Officer introduced himself and outlined his remit. He circulated a summary document of the IFA Strategy for Youth Football 2005-9 and outlined the content for Members' information.

Councillor Duncan asked that he ensure that the Castlereagh West was included in the scheme, as this area was continuously neglected and she asked that he Officer ensure that all the pitches within this location were fully utilised.

The Officer commented that he had visited Belvoir Primary School with a view to involving 5 or 6 schools in a satellite programme and this project would be implemented in other locations within the Borough.

The Grassroots Development Officer further added that he would be linking in with Community Groups to ensure that all communities were included.

Councillor Duncan hoped that this scheme would reduce antisocial behaviour, especially in the Four Winds area, due to a lack of facilities.

The Grassroots Development Officer referred to the Midnight Soccer Project and felt that participation in this scheme had reduced antisocial behaviour in other areas and he suggested that it could be introduced in the Four Winds.

Councillor Beattie asked that the Officer ensure that he liaises with Community Workers prior to implementing this project in the Cairnshill area to gauge residents' response.

The Grassroots Development Officer then referred to the Billy Neill Soccer Centre which could be utilised further and he commented that a May Day festival was being held to host a 7-a-side football tournament.

In response to comments made by Alderman Norris regarding school support, the Officer indicated that he had met with 90% of School Principals in Castlereagh and most of them had been very receptive and supportive of the Grassroots project. He stated that once he had met with the local Primary Schools, it was his aim to meet with local Boys Clubs in the Borough.

Councillor Tosh suggested that the Grassroots Development Officer should attend the various Advisory Committees in each of the Community Centres to advise them about the Grassroots scheme.

Alderman Norris also indicated that there would be merit in contacting churches within the Borough to discuss setting up a Church League.

At this point, Councillor Bunting thanked the Grassroots Development Officer for his presentation and offered him the Committee's assistance, should this ever be required.

Noted.

**LS/2006/47 : VERBAL OVERVIEW FROM THE SPORTS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER RE: CHILD PROTECTION POLICY**

The Sports Development Officer referred Members to recent press releases which had placed the onus for Child Protection Policies on Councils. She stated that she had since amended the Council's draft policy on Child Protection and was proposing to carry out training programmes.

She added that a detailed report would be tabled at the May meeting of the Committee and, once adopted, copies of the Child Protection Policy would be displayed in the Council Offices and at each of the Council's Activity Centres.

RESOLVED:- That, the Sports Development Officer be instructed to table a detailed report on the Child Protection Policy at the May Committee meeting.

**LS/2006/48 : WOMENS' SPORTS ASSOCIATION**

The Sports Development Officer reported that she had raised the Council's financial concerns to the CSDA and they had requested that the Council take over financial management of this programme, although they wished to retain management control over procedures.

Noted.

**REPORT FROM THE LEISURE SERVICES MANAGER**

**LS/2006/49 : LOCKERS – ROBINSON CENTRE**

The Leisure Services Manager drew Members' attention to the content of his report and advised that there had been no reports of any faults as a consequence of lockers operated by tokens.

He informed Members that following surveys of 23 different facilities, the vast majority operated refund policies to ensure the return of keys, and from his findings, it appeared that each facility was experiencing similar problems, although the lockers at the Robinson Centre were slightly older than most of the facilities surveyed.

He stated that regular users were currently being issued with tokens on a trial basis for the large lockers at the Robinson Centre. These tokens could be re-used and, when returned, a refund would be given, and he circulated samples of the tokens for Members' consideration.

Following Members' queries, the Officer advised that the only cost to the Council to convert lockers to token operation was actual staff time.

Councillor Duncan asked if the new token system would result in queues of users requesting refunds.

The Officer stated that, if this situation arose, he could utilise the staff from the Health Suite, however the swimming pool had a constant flow of users resulting in very little queues, but it may need to be reviewed if queues did arise at peak periods of business.

Councillor Duncan referred to school usage of the facility, and the Officer responded that most schools used group changing rooms which did not use lockers. However, if necessary, he commented that staff could issue pupils with tokens and any that fail to be returned would result in the school being invoiced accordingly.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Leisure Services Manager be authorised to extend the trial programme for token operated lockers at the Robinson Centre.

**LS/2006/50 : ACCESS AUDIT REPORT ON THE ROBINSON CENTRE**

The Leisure Services Manager advised that, as part of the impending DDA legislation, an Access Audit was carried out at the Robinson Centre and a report completed in October 2004 by the Consultants commissioned to carry out surveys in all of the Council's facilities.

He referred Members to the content of his report and indicated that the estimates were for certain areas and did not cover all of the recommendations in the access audit of 2004, but had been prioritised based on current demand to these areas, and he outlined the estimated costs:-

- Front Entrance Foyer to First Floor & Café Viewing Area, either
  - Option A - wheelchair stair lift : estimated cost £11,500
  - Option B - vertical platform lift in self supporting structure – estimated cost £17,500 + costs associated with some minor building work
- Provision of a seated chair lift at an estimated cost of £6,000 to cover the Health Suite reception to Fitness Suite and Health Suite Reception to Sauna-Spa Changing Rooms
- Sauna-Spa Area – the cost of a stair lift to this area is estimated at £4,700.
- Squash Court Corridor Changing Room to Lower Section - the estimated cost of a stair lift in this area is £5,900
- Squash Court Viewing area – The estimated cost is £4,945 + £1,600 for access from café to viewing area, although demand is seen as minimal, particularly for the squash court viewing area.

Councillor Bunting referred to the seated chair lift proposal to access the Health Suite and asked if it would be robust enough to accommodate the volume of anticipated users and suggested that Officers ascertain if an industrial stair lift was available.

The Officer responded that there were very few options available for chair lifts, but indicated that he would prepare a specification as close to an industrial one as possible which would also accommodate heavier weight limits. However, he reiterated that although there was a demand for a chair lift to this section of the facility, it was not a large demand.

Councillor Mrs Beattie suggested that the Officers ensure that disabled users to the Robinson Centre are made aware that the Belvoir Activity Centre is extremely disabled friendly.

However, the Leisure Services Manager advised that although his staff promoted the Belvoir Activity Centre, the Robinson Centre was the busiest of the Council's centres and the Council had to cater for all types of users, but he reiterated that the swimming pool had adequate disabled facilities.

Councillor Beattie enquired about providing suitable ramps to the stairs, to which the Officer replied that he had previously looked into this matter but it was not feasible to implement.

Following discussion, in which the Leisure Services Manager advised that the necessary work would be capitalised, although Officers were continuing to look at potential grant funding applications, it was

RESOLVED:- That:-

- (a) The Leisure Services Manager be instructed to tender for the following, in compliance with impending DEA legislation:-
- Front Entrance Foyer to First Floor & Café Viewing Area, either
    - Option A - wheelchair stair lift (option B was agreed upon from my recollection)
    - Option B - vertical platform lift in self supporting structure
  - Provision of a seated chair lift to cover the Health Suite reception to Fitness Suite and Health Suite Reception to Sauna-Spa Changing Rooms
  - Sauna-Spa Area – the cost of a stair lift on one side of the two areas.
- (b) The Leisure Services Manager be instructed to ascertain if the proposed chair lift to cover the Health Suite Reception area is robust enough to accommodate the anticipated volume of users, and if there is an industrial type of chair lift manufactured that would be suitable.
- (c) Officers to continue pursuing if grant funding is available to carry out the aforementioned works.

#### **LS/2006/51 : ADVERTISING RATES**

The Leisure Services Manager referred Members to the rates outlined within his report and it was agreed that the following charges apply, on the proviso that the Council does not advertise its competitors:-

- £2.50 per week for an A4 poster and flyers. Poster and flyers to be provided by the advertiser and subject to approval from the Centre Management
- £3.00 per week for an A3 poster and flyers. A3 format will be available from the Centres at an additional cost of £1.00
- There will be 10% discount available for weekly consecutive bookings

#### **LS/2006/52 : LEISURE CENTRE CLOSURE DATES OVER THE EASTER PERIOD**

RESOLVED:- That, the opening times for the Easter period are as follows:-

- Robinson Centre – closed Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> and Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> April.

- Lough Moss – closed Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April from 6.00 p.m.
- Belvoir – closed Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup>, Monday 17<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April.

Centre staff will be required to take annual leave during the closures.

**LS/2006/53 : GRANT APPLICATION**

Members congratulated the Officers for their efforts in acquiring possible funding for sports equipment for the Robinson and Belvoir Centres, namely through the Biffaward Small Grants Scheme.

Noted.

**LS/2006/54 : GROVE SWIMMING POOL**

The Leisure Services Manager referred to previous discussion relating to the targeting of current users of the Grove Swimming Complex which was being closed down. He commented that adverts would shortly be appearing in the local press to highlight the facilities on offer at the Robinson Centre and he would be writing to swimming clubs informing them of the available facilities. However, there was limited availability for club use due to the high demand already on pool space, but the Robinson Centre could offer them gala facilities on a Saturday evening.

In response to a query from Alderman Norris in relation to the refurbishment of the Avoneil Centre, the Officer confirmed that the Robinson Centre had gained some business as a result of the refit.

Noted.

**LS/2006/55 : INCIDENT AT ROBINSON CENTRE**

The Leisure Services Manager advised that the gentleman in question now felt well enough to take up the invitation extended to him by the Mayor to meet with the staff who had carried out the rescue and a provisional date had been set for 28<sup>th</sup> April 2006.

He indicated that if any of the Members wished to be present, he would inform them of the arrangements once they had been confirmed.

Noted.

**LS/2006/56 : AMENDMENTS/ADDITION TO PRICING POLICY**

RESOLVED:- That

- (a) the “new” charge for the School Keep Fit/Fitness Suite be amended to read £2.60 and £2.60 as was reported in December 2005.
- (b) the following “one-off” annual Fitness Suite charges are agreed reflecting a 10% rise that is in keeping with the change to pay and play and monthly charges already approved:-
- Platinum – currently £325 - no change
  - Gold – currently £265 – change to £290
  - Silver – currently £200 - change to £220
  - Off peak - currently £220 - change to £240

As there was no further business, the meeting concluded at 9.20 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2006 with the exception of  
Minute Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE