

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the Leisure Services Committee held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Thursday, 4th January 2007 at 7.30 p.m.

PRESENT:-

Alderman J Norris MBE

Councillor Mrs A M Beattie
Councillor J Beattie
Councillor Ms J Bunting
Councillor Mrs J Cochrane
Councillor D Drysdale
Councillor J Spratt
Councillor C Tosh

IN ATTENDANCE:-

Director of Leisure & Finance Services, Area Manager (Leisure), General Manager of Leisure & Marketing, Plant Manager and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES:-

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Councillors Hall and Duncan

LS/2007/01 : CHAIRING THE MEETING

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Members agreed that it be

RESOLVED:- That, Councillor Spratt take the chair for tonight's Leisure Services Committee meeting.

LS/2007/02 : MINUTES

Tabled:- Minutes of the Leisure Services Committee held on 7th December 2006 (copy enclosed)

Noted.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

LS/2007/03 : ROBINSON CENTRE REDEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP (Minute Ref No:- LS/2006/143 refers)

The Officers advised Members that the wording of this minute was misleading and clarified that, at the last meeting of the Committee, Members had agreed that there was no requirement to reform the Robinson Centre Redevelopment Working Group. However, Members were of the opinion that it would be worthwhile reconsidering the options available with regard to the redevelopment of the Centre and that the Area Manager (Leisure) would prepare a report outlining those options, to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:- Members agreed that the wording of this minute did not reflect that there was no necessity for the reforming of the Robinson Centre Redevelopment Working Group. However, the Area Manager (Leisure) would prepare a report on the options available for the redevelopment of the Robinson Centre and bring it to a future meeting of the Committee for reconsideration.

LS/2007/04 : OFFER OF SPONSORSHIP FOR A COMMUNITY PROJECT (Minute Ref No: LS/2006/147 refers)

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services informed Members that he would be discussing this matter with Tesco's later in the month.

Noted.

LS/2007/05 : POSSIBLE LOUGH MOSS DEVELOPMENT (Minute Ref No: LS/2006/155 refers)

Members were advised that a representative from C A Haffey & Son would be making a presentation at a future meeting of the Committee.

Noted.

LS/2007/06 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM TANYA ROSS (DIVING COACH AT THE ROBINSON CENTRE) RE: DIVING BOARDS AT THE ROBINSON CENTRE (Minute Ref No: LS/2006/158 refers)

The Area Manager (Leisure) informed Members that, to date, he had not received any response from Swim Ireland in relation to the new diving boards at the new Robinson Centre.

Noted.

AREA MANAGER (LEISURE)

LS/2007/07 : CHP UNIT AT THE ROBINSON CENTRE

Members were informed that work had started on the installation of the CHP unit and that the estimated completion date would be the end of February 2007.

Noted.

LS/2007/08 : SECURITY FENCE AT THE ROBINSON CENTRE

The Area Manager reported that the new Ibex security fence for the rear of the Robinson Centre, had been ordered and it was anticipated that this work would be carried out in January.

Noted.

LS/2007/09 : PRICING STRATEGY FOR 2007/2008

Members considered the Officer's pricing recommendations for the Robinson, Lough Moss and Belvoir Centres for the 2007/2008 financial year.

The Area Manager (Leisure) stated that, compared to other Centres, the proposed pricing strategy was very competitive.

He referred to current negotiations with Eze Fitness in relating to a pricing structure for the fitness suites, and outlined that consideration had to be given to the potential increase in competition from mainland UK competitors. However, following discussion with Eze Fitness, he would bring a recommended pricing strategy to the next meeting of the Committee.

In response to a query from Councillor Drysdale with regard to the number of squash courts and their usage, the Officer explained that there were 3 courts at the Robinson Centre and 2 at Lough Moss. Whilst they were not used to their maximum during the daytime, he commented that the courts were utilised for other sports use and birthday parties etc.

Councillor Beattie referred to the crèche, and the Area Manager (Leisure) stated that although the Council was currently charging £1, which was substantially less than other Councils, the crèche was not financially viable and operating at a significant loss.

He therefore recommended that the Council raise the price of the crèche to £2, with a further price increase to be reviewed in 6 months time.

In response to concerns raised in relation to the Council's Child Protection policy, the Officer assured Members that the current policy protected employees working in the crèche.

Following a proposal by Councillor J Beattie, which was seconded by Councillor Mrs Beattie, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Committee authorise the Area Manager (Leisure) to implement the pricing strategy for 2007-2008, as outlined at the meeting, and to bring back a pricing structure, following finalisation of discussions with Eze Fitness.

LS/2007/10 : BELVOIR DEVELOPMENT (MULTI-PURPOSE PITCH)

The Area Manager (Leisure) informed Members that the Capital Projects Officer was preparing the necessary documentation for the planning application.

He then referred to meetings with Pastor McIlrath and representatives from his Church, who had expressed continued concern in relation to the proximity of the pitch and its potential impacts on Church services.

The Area Manager (Leisure) indicated that he had informed the Church that the Council would be trying to locate the pitch as far as away from the Church without incurring any costs, and the impacts on Church services would be extremely limited.

However, despite these measures, he felt that the position with the Church had reached a stalemate, and they were opposed to this project.

Councillor Mrs Beattie stated that Pastor McIlrath was seeking a meeting with either the Council, or the Leisure Services Committee, to explain the reasons for the Church's objections. However, she referred to the necessity in progressing the development because of the fast approaching deadline in the timescale for grant funding. She went on to add that during the course of the meetings with the Church representatives, it had been explained to them that the Activity

Centre had been in existence, prior to the construction of the Church building, but to alleviate the Church's concerns, the Council had agreed to plant additional screening which would detract and restrict the visual and noise impacts of the pitch.

She further expressed her concern that Belvoir was not a designated TSN and, as such, received very little grant funding, therefore it was important that the Council maximise this funding which would ultimately benefit the Belvoir community.

Councillor Ms Bunting agreed that the Council should expedite this project as it was needed in the area and it was important that the deadline for the grant funding was met.

Following a proposal from Councillor Mrs Beattie, which was seconded by Councillor Ms Bunting, it was

RESOLVED:- That, whilst the Members are sympathetic to the Church and the concerns expressed by their representatives, the Council must be mindful of the fact that it has to represent all sections of the community, and it has a responsibility to encourage sport in the young people of Belvoir.

Furthermore, that because of the time constraints in respect of grant funding, this project must be progressed expeditiously to ensure that the residents of Belvoir will benefit from the multi-purpose pitch. Therefore, Members were of the view that it would not be possible to set up a Special Leisure Services Committee or Council Meeting with Pastor McIlrath and the representatives from the Church before the funding deadline expires.

LS/2007/11 : RESERVOIR DEVELOPMENT

The Area Manager (Leisure) advised that he had since received an emailed response from the Water Service, which had been attached to his report for Members' information.

Councillor Spratt stated that the Group who had met with the Leisure Services Committee had expressed their eagerness in progressing this project.

Councillor J Beattie referred to Government legislation, and his understanding that the Water Service would have to sell off their land, therefore he felt that this may have some bearing on the lack of a proper response from the Department.

Noted.

LS/2007/12 : CONTAINER FOR BELVOIR

The Area Manager (Leisure) confirmed that a container had now been ordered to house the protective mats currently stored at the Ice Bowl.

Councillor Ms Bunting wished to congratulate the Officer in progressing this matter.

Noted.

LS/2007/13 : LETTER FROM THE IFA

The Area Manager (Leisure) referred Members to the content of his report, and indicated that he had since been informed that the first round of funding had been awarded to QUB.

He reported that he had subsequently contacted the IFA to ascertain how the funding had been awarded, but had been assured that they were keen to work with the Council and Castlereagh would be considered when the second phase of funding was being implemented.

Noted.

LS/2007/14 : ADVERTISING (FOR INFORMATION)

The Area Manager (Leisure) referred Members to his report in which 2 companies had expressed an interest in operating a plasma screen advertising system, which would run from a dedicated server allowing different messages to be played on different screens in each location.

He outlined the financial implications of each offer, but stated that, in his view, the Visualise North Ltd proposal would be more have more financial benefit. Furthermore, he stated that the Council would be able to use these screens to advertise their own projects at no cost, as the company would bear the advertising costs of production.

Members then discussed the financial advantages and disadvantages of each of the offers and asked if the Area Manager (Leisure) had any indication in relation to the electricity costs in operating the system, which may limit the financial benefits of signing up to this system.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED:- That, the Officer be instructed to take back both offers and review the further costs of both schemes before any decision would be made by Members.

In addition, he will ascertain the electricity costs of operating the plasma screen to enable Members to make an informed decision in relation to the system.

LS/2007/15 : DEFIBRILLATOR UPDATE

The Area Manager (Leisure) indicated that the defibrillators were now in place at both Belvoir and the Ice Bowl and staff training had taken place with regard to the operation of same.

Noted.

REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & LEISURE SERVICES

LS/2007/16 : PROVISIONAL TRADING ACCOUNTS FOR LEISURE CENTRES FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2006 – 30 NOVEMBER 2006

At this point in the proceedings, the Director of Leisure Services introduced Mr Ivor Gibson, new Plant Manager, and Mr Ross Gillanders, new General Manager Leisure & Marketing to the meeting.

Councillor Spratt welcomed him to the meeting, on behalf of the Members.

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services then referred Members to the trading accounts for the period 1st April – 30th November 2006.

He reiterated that the Council had significantly reduced its budgets for each of the Centres and referred Members to the comparative figures for the previous year. He stated that each of the Centres, with the exception of Lough Moss, had reached their targets, and it was anticipated that Lough Moss would achieve its targets by next year.

Councillor J Beattie wished to congratulate the Officer on his measures in reducing these costs.

Councillor Ms Bunting referred to the Lough Moss Centre and the significant variance in food sales, and asked if the café had been closed.

The Area Manager (Leisure) stated that a new catering outlet should have been introduced at the Centre but this had not materialised, however the Director clarified that the deficit figure had been reflected in the overall figures.

Councillor Bunting then referred to the soft play area figures and the Director reiterated that if this area had been operating, it would have significantly benefited the trading accounts for the centre.

He went on to add that there had been an under spend in Salaries & Wages and stated that, in his view, this had been due to a fall in sickness levels since last year, in addition to an over-estimation of the budget levels.

Councillor Drysdale referred to the Kids Club at Lough Moss and was delighted with the income levels. However, he sought clarification with regard to why the Kids Club at Belvoir Activity Centre had not performed as well.

The Area Manager (Leisure) responded that the Summer Schemes at Belvoir were of a smaller scale and had suffered because the local churches had operated similar schemes at no charge. In addition, he stated that the Council's Community Services schemes ran in competition with those organised by Leisure Services and therefore impacted on the numbers of children using them.

Councillor Ms Bunting referred to the generality of the figure headings in relation to Cost of Sales/Operating Costs etc. and asked for further clarification of the headings to identify the variances of scale in greater detail.

The Director of Finance & Leisure Services referred Members to the supplement pages at the back of his trading accounts, which provided a breakdown of these figures. However, he added that he would arrange that the figure headings and their respective costs would be summarised in greater detail for the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Ms Bunting concurred that further detail and a breakdown of each of the headings would enable Members to have a better understanding of the figures.

The Director agreed that he would arrange for a Statement of Account to be prepared which would outline the variances and highlight the matching costs of sales to the relevant heading. In addition, he would ensure that the income levels were also clarified further.

At this point, Members discussed the matter in detail and the Director clarified each of the trading accounts figures for Members' information.

Councillor Bunting concluded that although the trading accounts may have reflected an increase in general, the Centres had not reached their anticipated income levels whilst accruing additional expenditure.

She referred to the food sales figures and sought an action plan in relation to the installation of a café at the Lough Moss Centre.

The Director reported that the General Manager Leisure & Marketing was preparing a report on Corporate Catering which would capitalise on economies of scale.

He then reiterated that the budgets for each of the Centres were deliberately restricted to enable the Centres to run on strict deadlines and break even.

Councillor Bunting referred to the Managers on PPR and the assurances given by Officers earlier in the year, that the targets that had been set were realistic and achievable. She stressed the need for Members to know what is going on especially as the Council is considering its estimates for the next financial year.

The Director referred to the major cuts that had been made to Leisure and stated that although Councillor Bunting had a valid point, no other Council had attempted to reduce its Leisure budgets so drastically.

Councillor Bunting wished to congratulate the Director on his remarkable job in turning Leisure around but reiterated that she was only seeking clarification of the accounts.

RESOLVED:- That, the Director of Finance & Leisure Services would arrange for a Statement of Account to be prepared which would outline the variances and highlight the matching costs of sales to the relevant heading. In addition, he would ensure that the income levels were further clarified to enable Members to have a better understanding of the trading accounts.

STAFF-IN-COMMITTEE

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LS/2007/18 : PLASMA SCREEN

Councillor Cochrane referred to earlier discussion in relation to the plasma screen and advised Members that she had now been informed that the electricity costs per 15 hours usage would be 45p, which would equate to approximately

£12.00 per month. This would therefore have to be taken into account when the financial benefits of entering into such an agreement were being considered.

Noted.

As there was no further business, the meeting concluded at 9.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this _____ day of
_____ 2007 with the exception of

Minute Nos: _____

MAYOR