

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF LEISURE TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON MONDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2008
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 8.40 PM**

Members Present: Mrs H Harding (Chairman), K Chana (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs A Haigh, P House, B Rolfe, Mrs P K Rush, P Turpin and H Ulkun

Other members present: M Cohen

Apologies for Absence: Ms J Hedges, S Murray and G Pritchard

Officers Present D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), C Overend (Policy & Research Officer), L MacNeill (Assistant Head of Leisure Services), V Loftis (Market Research Consultation Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

28. SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

Noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

29. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Panel noted that there were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct.

30. MINUTES FROM THE LAST MEETING

The minutes from 18 September 2007 were noted and agreed as a correct record.

Councillor Mrs Haigh asked that when an unscheduled meeting is called members, should be consulted about the date.

31. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel noted the Terms of Reference and Work Programme, which they considered still to be relevant and would not require any amendment.

32. EVALUATION OF THE YOUTH INITIATIVES SCHEME:

The Policy and Research Officer brought the Panel up to date on the evaluation of the Youth Initiatives Scheme. The Panel noted that:

- The scheme was initially developed to provide suitable schemes for young people, and diversionary activities and facilities, in order to reduce anti-social behaviour;
- The Panel had discussed options on how best to evaluate the success of the Council's investment of some £100,000 in each year of the programme;
- It was felt important that the local Town and Parish Councils be consulted and also the local community police officers and the young people themselves;

- The initiative was spread out over a three year programme, with 2007/08 being the final year;
- The 2007/08 projects were only just beginning to take effect;
- There was a variety of approaches used to consult the stake holders;
- Draft consultation documents were tabled at the meeting, in the form of a draft letter to the Police and one to the local Town/Parish Council, these were for the Panel to comment on;
- By the time the Youth Council would be involved, all the schemes would be up and running.

The Chairman asked how the teenagers were to be consulted about this. The Market Research Consultation Officer responded that were to ask the Youth Council to lead on this. We would ask them to help us to design a questionnaire or maybe to organise focus groups. The Council would also go through residents associations and groups.

The Policy and Research Officer said that the question on whether Capital money should be set aside can only be decided after we have got the results of the consultation exercises.

The Deputy Chief Executive added that the Council has about a quarter of a million pounds in Lottery funding to see us through for some time. This can be evaluated over the next year to establish if we need capital money.

Councillor Chana asked if Limes Farm was a different scheme. He was told that it covered projects that were funded directly over the last two / three years. Limes Farm will be coming on stream in the coming year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Panel were happy to endorse the general approach being adopted;
2. That the Panel had no amendments to make to the design of the questionnaire; and
3. That the Youth Council be asked if they wished to participate in helping in consultation with the youth of the area.

33. OLYMPIC LEGACY UPDATE

The Panel noted the latest updates on the various venues for the 2012 Olympic update.

i) White Water Canoe Venue

It was noted that the proposed venue at Spitalbrook in Broxbourne was no longer considered viable. Another site, owned by the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority and in close proximity to Waltham Abbey (the showground site), was being considered as an alternative. This venue would come under the Broxbourne District Council administrative area.

There were plans to keep the site going after the Olympics, by reducing the flow of the white water system so that it was useable for beginners.

Waltham Abbey Town Council was known to be enthusiastic about this new venue, believing it would bring economic advantages with it, post games. It would also provide a legacy for children and young people.

It should be noted that the IOC had not yet agreed this venue.

It was also noted that:

- It was intended that this was going to be the most sustainable games ever;
- It was also intended that that all the games venues should be car free. A traffic plan has been agreed between Essex Police, the organisers and the council. There were concerns about the impact on Epping District and the Central line;
- There were still openings for smaller local contractors to get contracts for the games and they have been made aware of this;
- The legacy costs would fall to the Lea Valley Regional Park Authority and not to EFDC, although the Lea Valley Authority does charge precepts to London Boroughs and to Essex and Hertfordshire County Councils and there may be an increase in their precepts to us.

ii) Mountain Bike Venue

The International Cycling Federation had withdrawn their endorsement for the planned venue at South Weald Park in Brentwood, as there was not a sufficient “drop” to be technically challenging for the top performers.

A search was now underway for an alternative venue in Essex. It was noted that the Corporation of London were not prepared to authorise the use of Forest land.

iii) Olympic Breakfast – 6 December 2007

The event was well attended. The main procurement contracts had now been let, but all sorts of smaller contracts were still to be had for local companies.

iv) Officer Working Group

This group will be established to improve co-ordination within the Council.

34. FUTURE MANAGEMENT OF WALTHAM SPORTS CENTRE

The Deputy Chief Executive updated the Panel on the recent events surrounding the future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre. He reminded the Panel that they had considered a proposed new Dual Use Agreement for the management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre in August. It had covered the respective responsibilities of the Council and King Harold School. Despite some initial resistance from the school, through ongoing dialogue they now have a greater understanding of the implications of a third party Leisure Management Contractor being appointed to undertake the day-to-day operation of this site.

In January 2008, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Assistant Head of Leisure Services attended a meeting with the Head teacher and the School Bursar, when they confirmed that the Governing Body had now formally considered the matter. They agreed that as long as there had no interface with the contractor, who in effect would be the Council’s appointed management agent, they would be prepared to go

down the external contractor route. However, the school was still adamant that education funding should not subsidise community use.

King Harold School is now at the top of the list for refurbishment in Essex, and they have drawn up plans for a new school which are to be agreed this year. This will have knock on effects as the new school will have a gym built. The plans appear to leave the Sports Centre largely unaffected although the building programme may have some implications in terms of access and potential impact on parking.

However the above turns out, there was still the need to formalise an extension with King Harold School on the existing terms of the current agreement, up until 31st March 2009.

Councillor Cohen, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Young People, apprised the Panel of recent developments. Consideration had recently been given to the building of a new sports hall next to the swimming pool. This was currently not a very attractive venue and the addition of a new sports hall would improve its usability and attractiveness to the public. The cost will be approximately £2.3 million and current indications are that the money will be available. A report on this will go to Cabinet on 10 March 2008. As this will need careful consideration, the Cabinet will be asking that Overview and Scrutiny look at the implications that this would have on the area, the Sports Centre and King Harold School.

Councillor Rolf asked where on the site it would go, Councillor Cohen replied that a suitable site had been identified.

Councillor Mrs Rush asked how this would affect the school site. The Deputy Chief Executive answered that benefits will be found in savings in staff; a new gym hall will make the swimming pool venue popular. Waltham Abbey is an area where investment in facilities would be worthwhile. Other Schools have sports halls that are let out to the community, so there is nothing to stop the school making their site available out of hours for local sports clubs.

Councillor Mrs Haigh commented that the new development will have to viable and a good business case will have to be made. Councillor Cohen said this would form a part of what the Overview and Scrutiny feasibility study will look at. There is also the question of where people live and how far they will have to travel. Its availability seven days a week, should also increase its use.

Councillor Ulkun said there would be concerns about use; a good feasibility study was needed. We need to talk to private contractors about what will be needed etc. so we do not make a mistake.

Councillor Rolfe commented that an outside body runs the leisure centres now. Councillor Cohen replied that yes they ran it but they would not build it. We would have to build it and to find out if they will run it for us.

The Deputy Chief Executive commented that in the interim it would be helpful to enter into a holding agreement with King Harold School for the next 12 months. This new proposal had not been put to the school as yet.

RESOLVED:

1. A new Dual Use Agreement is entered into with the Kind Harold School for the future management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre.

2. That the Council seek an external management contractor to undertake their management responsibilities under the new Agreement.

3. That the Contract period be in line with the existing contract for the Council's other four Centres.

4. That the Council enter into a holding arrangement with King Harold School on the existing terms of the current Agreement, up until the 31 March 2009.

35. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was raised.

36. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday, 25 March 2008 was agreed for the next meeting.