

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** 13 December 2005

Place: Civic Offices, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.47 pm

Members Present: Councillors B Sandler (Chairman), Mrs A Haigh (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, D Bateman, Mrs D Borton, Mrs P Brooks, R Chidley, M Cohen, M Colling, Mrs D Collins, Mrs J Davis, J Demetriou, R D'Souza, K Faulkner, Mrs R Gadsby, R Glozier, P Gode, R Goold, A Green, Mrs A Grigg, R Haines, Mrs H Harding, M Heavens, D Jacobs, D Kelly, J Knapman, Mrs J Lea, A Lee, F Maclaine, J Markham, L Martin, Mrs M McEwen, P McMillan, S Metcalfe, R Morgan, S Murray, Mrs S Perry, Mrs C Pond, Mrs P Richardson, T Richardson, Mrs M Sartin, Mrs P Smith, D Spinks, D Stallan, Ms S Stavrou, G Stollar, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, M Woollard and K Wright

Apologies: Councillors S Barnes, Mrs M Boatman, Mrs P K Rush and B Scrutton

Officers Present: P Haywood (Joint Chief Executive), J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), I Willett (Head of Research and Democratic Services), M Shorten (Principal Valuer/Surveyor), R Barwell (Public Relations and Internet Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

53. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed back Councillor Doug Kelly after his period of absence. Councillor Kelly expressed his appreciation and thanks to all the members for their support over the recent months.

54. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

(1) That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 27 September 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(2) That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 27 October 2005 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record subject to:

- a) Councillor Mrs Harding's name being deleted from apologies and added to members present; and
- b) Councillor Stallan's declaration of interest as set out in minute 48 (c) be altered to read:
"Pursuant to the Council's Code of Members Conduct, Councillor D Stallan declared a personal interest in item 3(a) (Local Plans Alterations Redeposit) by virtue of being a respondent to the consultation in a personal capacity. He declared that this interest was not prejudicial and that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the consideration of the item and voting thereon."
- c) And that Councillor Grigg's declaration remained unaffected.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Stallan declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Members Remuneration Scheme - Review for 2006-07 (recommendation 2)) by virtue of being employed by HM Revenue and Customs. He declared that his interest was not prejudicial and that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the consideration of the item and voting thereon.

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor Cohen declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Members Remuneration Scheme - Review for 2006-07 (recommendation 3)) by virtue of being the Chairman of the Licensing Committee. He declared that his interest was not prejudicial and that he would remain in the meeting for the duration of the consideration of the item but he would not be voting thereon.

(c) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillors Mrs Davis, Mrs Pond, Angold-Stephens and T Richardson declared personal interests in agenda item 16 (Britannia Sports Ground, Langston Road, Loughton – Submission of Tender Bid) by virtue of being member's of Loughton Town Council. They declared that their interests were not prejudicial and that they would remain in the meeting for the duration of the consideration of the item and voting thereon.

56. ANNOUNCEMENTS**1. Chairman's announcements.****(a) Chairman's Quiz Night – 24 February 2006**

The Chairman reminded the meeting that his quiz night was being held on Friday 24 February 2006 at Theydon Bois Village Hall.

(b) Christmas Raffle.

Tickets for the Christmas raffle were now on sale, proceeds were to go to this years' Chairman's chosen charities.

(c) Flowers

The Chairman announced that the flowers from tonight's meeting would be sent to the recently widowed wife of the Superintendent of Epping Forest, Jeremy Wisenfeld. The meeting expressed sadness at the news of his loss and offered its condolences to his family.

2. Leisure Facilities – Charter Mark Re-accreditation.

The Council's five leisure centres, Epping Sports Centre, Loughton Leisure Centre, Ongar Leisure Centre, Waltham Abbey Pool and Waltham Abbey Sports Centre had pioneered the way in being awarded Charter Mark over three years ago and have now been successful in re-applying for this prestigious award.

The award of Charter Mark reflects that the centres consistently provide a high-quality customer focused service. To meet the standard, organisations must demonstrate that they listen to their customers, learn what aspects of their service are most important to them, deliver a service that is tailored to customers' needs and continuously improve.

This award now completes a trio of prestigious service awards alongside ISO 9001:2000 and Investors in People.

Kath Hallé, Deputy Manager at Waltham Abbey Pool, who was responsible for submitting the application on behalf of all the centres, was presented with the award from the Chairman of the Council.

57. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No questions from the public had been submitted.

58. REPORTS OF THE CABINET

(a) Supplementary Estimates 2005-06.

(Mover: Councillor Knapman – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management presented a report recommending:

a) Supplementary revenue estimate of £68,000 to cover the additional costs of the scheme with Transport for London to allow pass holders to travel free on buses based on the assumption that the number of passes issued would not increase substantially.

(b) CSB supplementary estimate of £2,000 be approved to fund the budget shortfall over the current cost of refuse collection and disposal for the year.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

(1) That a supplementary revenue estimate of £68,000 be approved to cover the additional costs of the scheme with Transport for London incurred as a result of higher than anticipated demand for concessionary fares in 2005/06; and

(2) That a CSB supplementary estimate of £2,000 be approved to fund the budget shortfall over the current cost of refuse collection and disposal for the year.

(b) Capital Strategy 2005-09.

(Mover: Councillor Knapman – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management)

The Strategy presented to Council took into account the decision taken by the Cabinet at its' meeting on 14 November 2005 to bring forward the 2007/08 allocation of £200,000 to 2006/07 to enable work on parking reviews to be expedited.

The draft strategy had also been considered by the Finance and Performance Management Committee who recommended that the fifth 'bullet' point in paragraph 10.1 regarding the Council's street cleansing, recycling and refuse contract be deleted.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That the Council adopt the Capital Strategy (attached at page 15) subject to the deletion proposed by the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee.

59. REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report to the Council on a draft protocol for regulating the Council's links with external organisations and partnerships.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Protocol for the Council's relations with Partnerships and External Organisations (attached at page 33) covering member and officer liabilities, indemnities, reporting back to the Council, annual reports and training be approved.

60. REPORT OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - REVIEW OF CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee presented a report to the Council following a review of Contract Standing Orders. This review did not seek to achieve a wholesale re-writing of current contract requirements but merely to bring the document up to date and clarify certain points.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed changes to Contract Standing Orders set out in the report (attached at page 51) be approved and published as part of the Council's Constitution.

61. REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Head of Research and Democratic Services presented a report on behalf of Dr Hawes who unfortunately, could not attend the meeting. The Standards Committee reviewed the Planning Protocol in the light of further advice issued by the Standards

Board for England on the subject of lobbying of Councillors and the declaration of interests by members who serve on more than one tier of local Government.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That the draft amendments to the Planning Protocol (attached at page 81) be approved.

(Recorded in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15.5 that Councillor R Chidley voted against the adoption of the draft Planning Protocol.)

62. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Head of Research and Democratic Services presented a report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on the Members Connectivity Scheme and a review of the Remuneration Scheme for 2006/07. He introduced Mike Donn a member of the panel who attended the meeting to answer any questions on the report.

First amendment moved by Councillor S Metcalfe and seconded by Councillor M Woollard.

“That recommendation 1(b) be removed and that the review mentioned in recommendation 1(c) be changed to read March 2007.”

Carried.

Second amendment moved by Councillor M Heavens and seconded by Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse.

“That ways of paying a special responsibility allowance to Chairmen of the Task and Finish Panels be reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel.”

Carried.

Report as amended **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

Members' Connectivity Scheme

(1) That the proposal of the Council to pay a grant of £500 per member per annum as a supplement to the basic allowance to assist members in receiving electronic notification of and Internet access to papers for Council meetings and associated information be supported, subject to:

(a) the member signing an agreement to undertake to meet the terms and conditions set out in the Members' Connectivity Scheme;

(b) the payment of the grant after March 2007 being reviewed, as by that time it is considered that all members of the Council will have their own computer with Internet access capacity and broadband access to the Internet via a provider;

- (2) That an approach be made to the HM Revenue and Customs seeking a dispensation for income tax liability in respect of the grant.

Licensing Committee

- (3) That no change be made to the amount of the special responsibility allowance for the Chairman of the Licensing Committee;
- (4) That no special responsibility allowances be made for the roles undertaken by other members of the Licensing Committee; and
- (5) That these issues be reviewed by the Remuneration Panel in 2006/07.

Overview and Scrutiny

- (6) That no change be made to the amount of the special responsibility allowance for the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (7) That special responsibility allowances be made to the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panels (at a full rate of £1575 per annum) with effect from the municipal year 2006/07;
- (8) That ways of paying a special responsibility allowance to Chairmen of the Task and Finish Panels be reviewed by the Independent Remuneration Panel; and
- (9) That appropriate provision be made in the draft budget for 2006/07 to cover the cost of special responsibility allowances for the Chairmen of the Overview and Scrutiny Standing Panels (currently 5 x 40% (£630) of the full amount = £3150).

Cabinet

- (10) That no change be made to the amounts of the special responsibility allowance for Portfolio Holders for the 2006/07 municipal year; and
- (11) That the views of Group Leaders be sought on the Panel reviewing special responsibility allowances for Portfolio Holders for the 2007/08 municipal year including the possibility of ranking portfolios into tiers having regard to workload, budgets, staff responsibilities and perception.

Travelling Expenses

- (12) That with effect from the municipal year 2006/07, the mileage rates paid to members equate to the rates paid to employees as set by the Employers' Organisation.

63. MOTIONS

- (a) **Countrycare.**

The Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor S Murray and seconded by Councillor Mrs J Davis.

“Following receipt of the Epping Forest Countrycare 19th Annual Report 2004-05, this Council:

- a) notes the contents of the report; and
- b) congratulates the Countrycare Team on its outstanding environmental achievements across the District.”

Motion as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That following receipt of the Epping Forest Countrycare 19th Annual Report 2004-05, this Council:

- a) notes the contents of the report; and
- b) congratulates the Countrycare Team on its outstanding environmental achievements across the District.

(b) Parking - Waltham Abbey.

The Council considered the following motion moved by Councillor Mrs R Gadsby and seconded by Councillor Ms S Stavrou.

“That allocation of 24 parking spaces within the Quaker Lane car park in Waltham Abbey be taken out of the District Pay and Display scheme and that those 24 spaces be designated as free parking for 2 hours with no return within 3 hours.”

Motion as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That allocation of 24 parking spaces within the Quaker Lane car park in Waltham Abbey be taken out of the District Pay and Display scheme and that those 24 spaces be designated as free parking for 2 hours with no return within 3 hours.

64. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

(a) Roads and Pavements - Gritting

By Councillor S Murray to Councillor R Glozier, acting Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance

“Could the Portfolio Holder say what steps have the Cabinet and appropriate officers taken to ensure that Essex County Council makes arrangements for the roads and pavements of Epping Forest District to be adequately gritted this coming winter (bearing in mind the severity of the winter expected)?”

Response by Councillor R Glozier, acting Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance

“Following notice of the question, advice was sought from the Essex County Council’s Highways Office at Harlow. The County Highway Manager advises that all the County gritting routes have been set in the normal way and all roads which meet the relevant criteria will be gritted. The principles are set out in the leaflet produced by the County Council, a copy of which has been placed in the Chamber for members’ information. It can be seen that the main roads take priority for gritting and snow clearance, and those roads serving institutions such as hospitals and other emergency services.

The County Council has officers on standby throughout the winter period, and those officers take decisions on whether or not to grit based upon the meteorological circumstances (e.g. temperature and moisture).

The overall policy towards gritting and snow clearance has not changed, and this Council has no influence over the decisions made by the County Council in this regard.”

(b) Loughton Leisure Centre - Boilers

By Councillor J Markham to Councillor C Whirbread, Portfolio Holder for Leisure.

“Will the Portfolio Holder advise whether the faulty boilers at Loughton Leisure Centre (to which I drew attention at an earlier Council meeting) have been included on a defects or latent defects list: and

- (a) if so, would he confirm that the Council will not be responsible for their replacement; and
- (b) if not, can he explain why this has not been possible”.

Response by Councillor C Whitbread, Portfolio Holder for Leisure.

“As Councillor Markham has highlighted there have been intermittent problems with the function of the boilers at Loughton Leisure Centre, particularly in the first year of opening. These were attributable mainly to scaling, caused by hard water.

Remedial works have been undertaken by the installation of a water softener. Since this was fitted the boilers have been functioning effectively and do not feature, therefore, on any latent defects list.”

As a supplementary question Councillor Markham asked:

“Could I clarify whether the Portfolio Holder indicated that the cost of the ‘water softener’ equipment would not come back to the Council as extra costs?”

Reply by Councillor Whitbread:

“I will arrange for the Head of Leisure Services to give you a full answer on this point.”

(C) Commercial Waste – Loughton High Road

By Councillor J Markham to Councillor D Jacobs, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Protection.

“Will the Portfolio Holder advise what action he proposes to take to overcome the problems, including anti-social behaviour and danger to those with poor sight, resulting from commercial waste being put out overnight in Loughton High Road for collection on the following day”.

Response by Councillor D Jacobs, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Protection

“The problem of trade waste collections is not unique to Loughton. Unfortunately, many traders do not understand their responsibilities for the waste they produce and the law relating to it. Their inconsiderate behaviour, as the question sets out, makes our town centres look untidy and present a hazard to all those who use the footways.

There are a number of companies providing trade waste services within the District, including the Council’s own contractor. Trade waste should only be put out for collection on the day of collection, and given that the traders have a contract for collection, they should be fully aware of when a collection is due. All traders have a legal responsibility or “Duty of Care” under the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This makes them responsible for ensuring that the waste is properly contained and only put out when due for collection. Officers do investigate complaints of this type including searching the contents of sacks to determine ownership. Letters have been sent to traders reminding them of the law and their personal responsibilities. This issue has also been raised by officers at meetings of Town Centre Partnerships.

The new powers available under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 will strengthen the Council’s ability to take action, including the possible use of fixed penalty notices for offences. Cabinet approved the appointment of additional Waste Management Officers and these are now all in post. One of their key tasks was to undertake higher levels of enforcement of this type, but recent events have regrettably required them to be diverted to the management of the waste contract generally. It is to be hoped that these difficulties will soon be overcome and more attention can be given to this very important issue.”

As a supplementary question Councillor Markham asked:

“Did the Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder say that he will write to all shops not to put their rubbish out overnight?”

Reply by Councillor Jacobs:

“I will be happy to do so.”

(d) Parking Review and Residents’ Parking Permits.**By Councillor K Faulkner to Councillor R Glozier, acting Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance**

“At a recent O&S committee meeting Paul Hardy of Essex County Councils highway department confirmed that he will honour this council’s decisions prior to the highways agency reverting back to County Council. The Portfolio Holder will be aware that these include a parking review for Loughton and the introduction of residents parking permits for the District. Can he therefore advise what action he is

taking to ensure that these matters are quickly dealt with and whether he can instruct his officers to institute some form of progress chasing to ensure there is no further delay in their implementation.”

Response by Councillor R Glozier, acting Portfolio Holder for Civil Engineering and Maintenance

“At the recent meeting of the Cabinet on 14 November 2005, I presented a report on the future programme for parking and traffic management reviews. The report recommended that given the transfer of the highways functions back to the County Council, this Council should concentrate its resources on undertaking parking reviews and any highway alterations associated with those reviews. I also informed the Cabinet that resources were limited and recommended that in order to expedite the future reviews of Loughton and Waltham Abbey Town Centre (these being the next schemes on the agreed priority list) capital resources be brought forward from 2007/08 to 2006/07.

The above recommendations were accepted by the Cabinet and, therefore, works on the two reviews mentioned should commence in the next financial year. A decision on how best to procure those reviews will need to be discussed with the County Council, the options being that the work be handed to the County Council to undertake or the County agrees to this Council procuring the reviews as it has done in the past.”

As a supplementary question Councillor Faulkner asked:

“Could the portfolio please clarify his statement in relation to the policy of Essex Council?”

Reply by Councillor Glozier:

“I repeat the Council is not the highways authority but we will work with the County Council next year to progress parking schemes.”

(e) Roding Valley Meadows

By Councillor K Faulkner to Councillor J Knapman, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management.

“The Roding Valley Meadows were due to be transferred to the new Parish Councils under a scheme agreed by the relevant District Council committees in 1996; despite some initial problems the way forward for the transfer was agreed in around 2001, however the situation has not yet been resolved; Loughton Town Council is currently paying out £100,000 a year for maintenance with no tenure, a situation, it is not prepared to allow to continue for the future without some resolution of the matter;

I now believe that all outstanding problems have been resolved, so could the Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder please advise when this transfer will take place, giving definite dates so Loughton Town Council can prepare its budgets for next year”.

Response by Councillor J Knapman, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management

“On 2 February 2004, the District Council decided to grant Loughton Town Council a 125-year lease in respect of part of the Roding Valley Recreation Ground.

The Leisure Portfolio Holder in consultation with the Finance and Performance Portfolio Holder was authorised to agree final terms.

A draft lease had been submitted to the Town Council prior to that date and discussions had taken place. The Town Council appointed a solicitor who wrote to the Council on 11 May 2004. He raised a number of enquiries as to the terms of the lease and the title to the land. The Town Council's title to the lease must be registered at HM Land Registry and it is necessary for the Town Council's solicitor to be satisfied that the District Council owns the freehold of the land and be aware of any conditions on the freehold title that may affect the leasehold title.

The title to this property was complex. Most of the site was unregistered and questions were raised. It was necessary to arrange for the various titles to be plotted onto a plan that showed the positions of the boundaries between titles and the various leases and easements over the land. This process revealed that the District Council did not have a paper title to the access way adjoining the Oakwood Hill Estate.

The District Council applied for possessory title to that land. However, the Land Registry wanted the District Council to register voluntarily the title to the whole of the recreation area as part of its wider registration programme. We were happy to do so as this would make the title easier to work with and this process is usually quick. Unfortunately in this case, the complex nature of the title led to delays.

The Land Registry has now registered the majority of the title but one area has been omitted. To start registration of that area would be unnecessary as the unregistered title is good and registration would result in further delaying matters.

The lease has been amended to take account of the changes due to registration and the amended documents have been submitted to the Town Council's solicitors.

Once the Town Council finally agree the lease, I will arrange for it to be sealed.

A definite date cannot be given for completion, as it depends, not only the District Council but also the Town Council and its representatives."

(f) Recycling Bags

By Councillor D Stallan to Councillor D Jacobs, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Protection.

"Would the Portfolio Holder please say –

- (a) how often replacement clear plastic recycling bags are issued to residents, bearing in mind the Council's commitment to increasing the volume of recycled materials collected in the District?
- (b) bearing in mind that shops in North Weald (and possibly elsewhere in the District) seem to run out of stocks very quickly, whether he is prepared to change the policy of issuing only one roll of sacks per person at the Council's Information Centres?"

Response by Councillor D Jacobs, Portfolio Holder for Environmental Protection

“Over the past six months or so, the demand for both white garden recycling and clear dry recycling sacks has been unprecedented. While the Information Centre enquiry statistics do not show a detailed breakdown between requests for sacks and other refuse related enquiries, it is fair to say that the vast majority of enquiries in this category were sack requests.

The table in the written copy of this answer compares the three month periods July, August and September for 2004 and 2005, illustrating the increased demand at Information Centres.

2004	July	August	September
Loughton	364	399	374
Epping	264	300	256
W'Abbey	321	316	425
Ongar	23	19	15
Buckhurst Hill	90	120	
	1062	1154	1151
2005			
Loughton	504	755	812
Epping	485	808	1073
W'Abbey	450	918	1137
Ongar	92	145	128
Buckhurst Hill	149	592	549
	1680	3218	3699

Demand was such that Environmental Services and South Herts Waste Management have struggled at times to keep the Information Centres adequately supplied. There have been occasions when supplies to the Centres have been exhausted. In order to ensure that, as far as possible, the Council was able to provide bags to all customers on request, it was necessary to restrict the number to one roll each of garden and clear recycling sacks per visitor. To have issued more rolls per visitor would have led to many more people being turned away empty handed.

As this trend became apparent, large quantities of additional sacks were purchased by Environmental Services. Due to lead-in times these sacks were not immediately available but have now improved the situation considerably. However, were the Council to instruct its Information Centres to increase the number of rolls per visitor, further supply issues and budgetary considerations would inevitably arise.

Members may wish to note that during the period of highest demand for recycling sacks, the Council's Information Centre Assistants have been subjected to intense pressure and frequent expressions of frustration by members of the public. Throughout, they have tried to explain the Council's policies, objectives and difficulties as calmly and diplomatically as possible”.

Supplementary question by Councillor Stellan:

“Did the Portfolio Holder say that he would advise officers of the current policy of providing only one sack to avoid any misunderstanding?”

Reply by Councillor Jacobs:

“They already know the policies as I have regular meetings with them, but I shall remind them.”

65. REGULATORY SERVICES - MEMBER CHAMPION

The Council was asked to consider a request from the Local Authorities Co-ordinators of Regulatory Service and the Local Government association for the Council to nominate a champion for Regulatory Services.

Councillor Mrs D Collins nominated Councillor Mrs P Smith for this position, and this was agreed by the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Mrs P Smith be approved as the Council's Champion for regulatory Services.

66. COMPLAINTS PANEL - MEMBERSHIP AND CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

(1) That Councillor Mrs P Richardson be appointed as a member of the Complaints Panel in place of Councillor T Farr for the remainder of the current municipal year; and

(2) That Councillor Mrs P Richardson be appointed Chairman of the Complaints Panel for the remainder of the current municipal year.

67. PETITION - COUNCILLOR T FARR

Council noted the receipt of a petition signed by 354 members of the public from the Epping Forest District and elsewhere concerning the reinstatement of Councillor T Farr.

68. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below on the grounds that it will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item No.	Subject	Exempt Information and Paragraph Number.
16	Britannia Sports Ground, Langston Rd, Loughton - Submission of Tender Bid	8 & 9

69. BRITANNIA SPORTS GROUND, LANGSTON ROAD, LOUGHTON - SUBMISSION OF TENDER BID

(Mover: Councillor Knapman – Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management)

The Finance and Performance Management Portfolio Holder introduced this report to the Council to consider whether to submit a bid to purchase the Britannia Sports Ground at Langston Road, Loughton and make appropriate financial provision to cover the possibility that the bid is successful.

It was noted that:

- The Bank of England had decided, following a review, to close the facility and to offer it for sale on the open market;
- The facilities are used by current employees, Bank of England pensioners and various local sports clubs. Currently the Bank provides a subsidy of approximately £200,000 per annum to maintain the facilities. It was indicated that the fees and charges are below commercial rates;
- The site was being offered for sale as three lots, namely:
 - a) the Car park and bowling green (zoned as employment development land);
 - b) the sports ground and clubhouse (allocated as Green Belt); and
 - c) the entire site.

The Council debated the merits of submitting a bid for any of the three options but were deterred by the lack of detailed information and the apparent subsidy of £200,000 per annum needed to meet running costs.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Council determines not to submit a bid to purchase the Britannia Sports Ground, Langston Road, Loughton.

(2) That the Bank of England be advised of the decision under (1) above and further informed:

- (a) that the Council continues to be concerned to ensure that irrespective of the future ownership of the property, it should be preserved as a Leisure facility;
- (b) that the Council is prepared to discuss the future of the property if approached by the Bank of England following the completion of the bidding process;
- (c) that the Leader of the Council, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development be authorised to discuss the property with the Bank of England in the event that the Council is approached;
- (d) that the members authorised under (c) above report to the cabinet on the outcome of any discussions.

(3) That a supplementary estimate of £3,750 be approved in respect of fees payable to Humbert's for the report and valuation.

Following further debate, the Leader of the Council received leave from the Council to add a further recommendation to the report to inform the vendor of the Council's interest in retaining the sports facilities and willingness to discuss the site further if approached.

CHAIRMAN