

SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT, AND COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD

21 November 2016

Councillor Adrian Chandler (Chairman)
Councillor Pauline Searle (Vice-Chairman) – in the chair

Councillor Christian Holliday	* Councillor Tony Phillips
* Councillor Liz Hooper	* Councillor David Quelch
* Councillor Jennifer Jordan	* Councillor David Reeve
* Councillor Nigel Kearse	* Councillor James Walsh
* Councillor Dennis Paul	Councillor David Wright

*Present

Councillors Richard Billington and Michael Illman were also in attendance.

S29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adrian Chandler and Christian Holliday.

S30 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no disclosures of interest.

S31 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2016, subject to a correction to indicate that the time at which the meeting finished was 9.02 pm, not 9.02 am.

Subject to that correction, the Vice-Chairman signed the minutes.

S32 PROPOSED LEISURE STRATEGY

The Leisure Services Manager gave a presentation to the Board on the relative merits of preparing a Leisure Strategy for the Borough in view of the Corporate Plan objective to prepare such a strategy by May 2017.

The Board noted that, nationally, leisure strategies tended to cover one, some or all of the following main themes:

- Active people / health and well-being strategy
- Sport development
- Facilities planning (mostly for major changes in the property portfolio or operation)
- Pitch strategies
- Cultural strategies (including museums, theatres etc.)

In their initial research, officers had not found a strategy that also incorporated Play or Art Development; however, it was likely that these specific strategies existed in at least some of the authorities in question. The Council already had

- the Play Strategy (incorporating sections on Play Development and Play Equipment)
- the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and
- the Sports Development Strategy (incorporating a section on facilities).

The Council was currently in the process of renewing its Art Development and Public Art strategies. Other documents contained some key leisure policy; notably, the Leisure Partnership Agreement (LPA), which encompassed the three main Council sports and leisure venues: Guildford Spectrum Leisure Complex, Guildford Lido and Ash Manor Sports Centre.

The key objectives for the operation of the leisure venues, as provided in the LPA, were:

- To improve the health and wellbeing of the community through increased participation
- To use sport and leisure to bring communities together
- To enable access to services by specific groups with identified needs
- To encourage and provide affordable and sustainable local facilities and services
- To explore partnerships with other organisations where these will benefit the community
- To work with clubs and voluntary organisations in the borough to develop their activities and skill levels
- To encourage investment in the facilities to maintain and enhance the quality of service
- To bear in mind the rights, needs and aspirations of facility users and staff
- To demonstrate value for money and continuous improvement
- To recognise and maximise commercial opportunities in the facilities
- To improve the financial 'bottom line' of the Council

These summary objectives formed the framework for the current Council policy surrounding leisure and were reviewed annually as part of the leisure contract report to ensure they were still appropriate.

Councillors noted that there was currently no pitch strategy for the borough. There were a number of pitch locations of various types and sizes, all of which were well maintained and well used. Some of the Council's pavilion buildings and community centres were in need of further investment in maintenance to ensure a better quality of experience for the users.

The Board was informed that the Council did not currently have a cultural strategy and the facilities that might be included in such a document were undergoing a transformation process at present and it was unlikely that their inclusion within a strategy at this stage, when so much was uncertain, would deliver tangible benefits.

Two other Corporate Plan objectives were likely to have considerable bearing on a Leisure Strategy if it were to include facilities management planning, namely:

- (1) The feasibility of a new sports and entertainment venue
- (2) Completion of the refurbishment of Guildford Spectrum, including the roof, pool air handling system and other improvements.

These two objectives had been discussed in a paper considered by the Borough EAB on 31 October 2016.

The paper had suggested an outline for the process of developing the facility's mix for a replacement venue for Guildford Spectrum if appropriate. The process included significant public consultation, the data from which would be essential for making informed decisions within a facilities led Leisure Strategy.

Within the LPA, there was a requirement for a regular non user survey, which was currently being commissioned by Freedom Leisure. Data from this survey would be extremely useful in reviewing the existing leisure policy and therefore any subsequent Leisure Strategy.

During the debate, the following points and clarifications were made:

- It would be premature to develop a leisure strategy without the data from the proposed public consultation on the feasibility of a new sports and entertainment venue
- Any change to the Lido as part of a facilities led strategy would need to be sensitively managed
- Notwithstanding the possible development of a new sports and entertainment venue, which could take many years to open, the Council still needed to ensure that Spectrum was properly maintained.

Following the debate, the Board

RESOLVED: That the development of a facilities led Leisure Strategy be dependent on the outcome of the public consultation on the feasibility of a new sports and entertainment venue and the non-user survey being commissioned by Freedom Leisure.

S33 BUSINESS PLANNING - GENERAL FUND OUTLINE BUDGET 2017-18

The Board considered a report on the current position on the 2017-18 outline budget which included proposals for preparing a balanced budget. The Board was invited to pass any comments to the Executive.

The Joint EAB Budget Working Group (JEABBWG) had considered the outline budget, in particular the suggested growth and proposals for savings and additional income, and its comments were included in the report.

During the debate, councillors made the following comments:

- It was suggested that, in order to address the £79,000 increase in the cost of Park and Ride, fares could increase or charging for parking could be introduced. Officers responded by clarifying that the decision to increase fares or charge for parking would have to be made by the Guildford Local Committee. The £79,000 increase in Park and Ride costs was attributable to the withdrawal of County Council funding of the Onslow Park and Ride service and that the funding gap would be made up from the on-street and off-street parking surplus.
- An enquiry as to whether Section 106 monies from the Queen Elizabeth Park development for Park and Ride for the north of Guildford were still available.
- The bid for full time salary funding for the Tourism Marketing Assistant and Banner Boards Capital Bid (PR000256), demonstrated that the Council was leading by example, which should encourage local businesses to expand their use of apprenticeships.
- In response to the invitation to the Board to comment on the specific matters listed on paragraph 17.1 of the report:
 - (a) The Board made no comment on the medium term financial strategy
 - (b) In relation to the variances in section 11 and Appendix 3 between the 2016-17 budget and the 2017-18 outline budget, the Board expressed concern:
 - over the inference from paragraph 11.10 of the report that the Council is pushing the solution to the funding gap into the future by identifying the necessary savings of around £5m over the five-year period to 2020-21;
 - that some of the potential actions for reducing the funding gap listed (a) to (h) in paragraph 11.17, for example, adjusting some of the assumptions,

do not give the impression that real savings will be achieved. Officers responded by acknowledging that the funding gap is being addressed by the Council's transformation programme but that proposals arising inevitably take time to introduce. The Lead Councillor for Finance accepted the need to face up to the significant financial challenges facing the Council in the future.

- (c) The Board supported the proposed growth bids and proposals for savings or income
- (d) The Board supported the proposed use of the new homes bonus, business rates equalisation and budget pressures reserves as described in the report
- (e) In relation to the suggested ways, outlined in paragraph 11.17 that officers proposed to balance the budget for 2017-18, the Board expressed concern that some of the potential actions for reducing the funding gap listed (a) to (h) in paragraph 11.17, for example, adjusting some of the assumptions, did not give the impression that real savings would be achieved. Officers responded by acknowledging that the funding gap was being addressed by the Council's transformation programme but that proposals arising inevitably took time to introduce. The Lead Councillor for Finance accepted the need to face up to the significant financial challenges facing the Council in the future.
- (f) In relation to the proposed fees and charges, the Board expressed concern that the proposed increase in burial charge for an earthen grave 6ft x 3 ft (children's section) was 10.6% (£85), the highest percentage increase in all the proposed cemetery charges.

Following the debate, the Board

RESOLVED: That the comments set out above be referred to the Executive.

S34 PROGRESS WITH MATTERS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE EAB

Councillors noted progress with matters previously considered by the Society EAB.

S35 EAB WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered and noted the EAB work programmes.

The meeting finished at 8.10 pm

Signed

Date

Chairman