

## REPORT OF LEISURE REVIEW PANEL

(Meetings held 30 July, 11 and 18 September 2001)

### 1. **SERVICE OBJECTIVES – RECREATION CENTRES – PROCESS FOR REVIEW (REPORT A - 11 SEPTEMBER 2001; REPORT A – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001) (Minute Nos 20 and 23)**

As part of the review of service objectives of the Recreation Centres following a Best Value Review, a large number of stakeholder witnesses were invited to attend the Panel meeting on 11 September and to give their thoughts on what they believed the Recreation Centres should be providing for the community. 12 witnesses each gave a short presentation and were questioned on their views by Members.

The Best Value Inspectors' report had shown that the Council's Recreation Centres remained highly competitive but they believed that an over-concentration on income generation meant that a need to revisit original values had been shown up.

The conclusions of the session were summarised as follows:-

- The session had broken new ground and had been very valuable in establishing some democratic principles for future use
- The honest views of service users were appreciated
- In terms of redefining the service objectives, the following points had emerged:-
  - The service remained highly competitive
  - The various perspectives of the witnesses had all been useful
  - The Portfolio Holder wished to hear from those who did not currently use Centres
  - The way in which the various Recreation Centres related to their separate communities remained essential
  - The attempt to improve the quality of life of local residents was important, particularly as it impacted on national agenda
  - The excellence of many of the sportsmen and woman who trained at each centre provided excellent role models for young people across the District

The session was felt to be useful and innovative and provided a template for the future consultations with service users.

On 18 September, the Panel considered the findings of the open session. Following a thorough discussion, the Panel agreed to recommend to the Cabinet a revised vision and key objectives for the Recreation Centres, to be incorporated into the overall service plan. This will be underpinned by key action points with

timescales targeted for achievements and linked into each individual recreation centre's business plan. Any resource implications will be identified as part of the ongoing budgetary and expenditure plan process.

**2. APPLEMORE RECREATION CENTRE – EXTENSION TO FITNESS SUITE (REPORT A – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001) (MINUTE NO )**

Three representatives of the Applemore Squash Club attended the meeting and expressed the view that their Club would have to cease operations if the proposed reduction to one squash court at Applemore took place as a result of a scheme to expand the existing gym facilities. The Club had been established for some 22 years and was continuing to allow local people to enjoy the sport. It included a thriving junior section. They were not opposed to the idea of extending the increasingly popular gymnasium facility but felt that further research and design work could be undertaken to see whether additional gym facilities could be accommodated at Applemore, in conjunction with the retention of two or more squash courts.

A number of local Councillors were in attendance and concurred with the views the Squash Club. They expressed the hope that facilities could be retained at Applemore, particularly in view of the Panel's expressed views as to the need to provide the broadest possible range of sporting opportunities for local residents. They also asked for the business case for the extension to be recalculated, to include consideration of whether some or all of the squash courts could be retained and how this was likely to affect the payback period. It was estimated at the meeting that the payback period would be extended by some 11 months if two squash courts were retained.

A report on the present position has been considered by the Panel. This followed the decision of the former Policy and Resources Committee to provide additional gym facilities at Applemore, subject to urgent discussions taking place between the Chairman of the Cabinet, the Leisure and Finance and Support Portfolio Holders and relevant officers as to the detail of the scheme. Subject to a satisfactory outcome, supplementary estimates of £167,100 would be approved in the current financial year to fund the project. It had become apparent during the discussions that the extension to the gym facilities would lead to the incorporation of two of the remaining three squash courts.

At the Panel meeting, the Portfolio Holder said there was a need to continue to balance the subsidy paid to various recreation centres and the aspirations of the general population. It was apparent that squash usage across the District was continuing to decline, whilst the use of gymnasia was continuing to expand.

Following a vote, the Panel resolved to take no further action.

**3. DIBDEN GOLF CENTRE – BRAMSHOTT HILL GOLF CLUB – MATCH GREEN FEES (REPORT B1 – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001) (MINUTE NO 25)**

A representative from the Bramshott Hill Golf Club attended the meeting and protested at the withdrawal of the concession which allows visiting teams not to have to pay for playing golf during official matches. He believed that the Council's attitude to this matter had soured more than 20 years of good working relationships. A patio had recently been built at the Dibden Golf Centre and this has been part funded by the Golf Club. However, they would not have supported the works if the

decision to impose match green fees had been made earlier. The Golf Club felt that their role in sustaining interest in attendance at the Golf Centre was likely to lead to a decline.

The Panel debated the issue and decided to take no further action on this issue.

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