

Leisure, Tourism & Heritage Committee – 16 November 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Leisure, Tourism & Heritage Committee** held on **16 November 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr J P Cottis
Cllr T E Goodwin

Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr C J Lumley

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
J Bourne	- Leisure & Contracts Manager
S Rom	- Economic Development Officer
J Bostock	- Principal Committee Administrator
J O'Brien	- Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

S Evans	- Regional Manager, Virgin Active
S Brown	- Contract Operations Manager, Holmes Place Leisure Management
M Hill	- Interim Communications Manager, Thames Gateway South Essex

391 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

392 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr R A Amner declared a personal interest in the item on Thames Gateway Brand Identity Presentation, and a prejudicial interest in the item on Holmes Place Progress Report (and left the meeting during consideration of this item).

Cllr C I Black declared a personal interest in the item on Holmes Place Progress Report by virtue of his spouse being a member at Clements Hall.

Cllr J P Cottis declared a personal interest in the item on Holmes Place Progress Report by virtue of being a user of the Rayleigh Leisure Centre facilities.

Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in the item on Thames Gateway Brand Identity Presentation by virtue of being a Board Member of Thames Gateway South Essex, and a personal interest on the Holmes Place Progress Report by virtue of his son being a member of Clements Hall.

393 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions:-

(1) **Bird Watching – Tourism Potential (Minute 263/06)**

It was noted that a meeting between officers and the RSPB had taken place since the last meeting of the Committee to look at potential sites. Clarity would be needed on the RSPB's proposals and a comprehensive report would be provided for the Committee's consideration in due course. Officers confirmed that the RSPB were interested in acquiring sites within the District. Any updates would be presented to the Committee as soon as possible. Officers advised that Parish and Town Councils were consulted as part of the process.

A Member observed that it would be important to be mindful of other forms of wildlife in addition to birds.

(2) **Rayleigh Windmill Terms of Licence – Rayleigh Historical Society (Minute 333/06)**

It was noted that a meeting had been held with the Windmill Management Board since the last update on this item. The Rayleigh Historical Society had confirmed that they would sign the licence fee agreement as proposed by the Committee at their last meeting, and officers were confident that this would be completed by the deadline given of 25 December 2006.

394 HOLMES PLACE PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) that provided Members with a progress report from Holmes Place Leisure Management on the progress and development of the leisure management contract, and further received a presentation from Stephen Brown (Contract Operations Manager).

In presenting the report and answering questions, Stephen Brown advised that:-

- A correction should be made to the report to replace the term 'merger' with 'acquisition'. The acquisition of Holmes Place UK by Virgin Active had taken place on 1 November 2006 and 47 sites had been involved.
- Open channels of communication had already been established and Holmes Place had been working closely with Virgin Active to ensure a

smooth transition. The coming weeks and months would show the benefits provided by the acquisition. However, the training and resources into staff since the completion of the acquisition had been very impressive. An interim logo had been designed with uniforms being adapted to incorporate this.

- The need for the Rayleigh Leisure Centre was apparent from taking into account the level of demand for the facilities so far, which had far exceeded original expectations. There had been a good take-up and balance between club members and recreational users of the bowling facilities at this site which had been encouraging to see. The basketball post problems had been resolved and the posts would be installed in December 2006.
- The hyper activities at the Rayleigh Leisure Centre targeted the age of 12 to 16 year olds as a starting point and had been facilitated through external funding. The activities included football, dodge ball and table tennis on a rotation basis to maximise the up-take. Stephen Brown will report back to Members via officers on the numbers that the Rayleigh Leisure Centre is looking to engage through the hyper activities.
- The baby changing facilities in the changing rooms at the Rayleigh Leisure Centre would be looked into.
- The Mill Arts & Events Centre offered a diversity of activities in the heart of Rayleigh which had good accessibility for the local community.
- It was appreciated that the staffing resource at the Freight House had now stabilised. The venue offered steady services. The catering aspect was paramount to its success.
- Lighting enhancements had been made in the Pullman Suite and Great Eastern Room at the Freight House and improvements would be extended to all areas. Comments made by Members that the lighting in the Pullman Suite the previous evening had been extremely poor when they had attended a training session at the venue would be investigated.
- Estimates had been received on fitting air conditioning throughout the Freight House. These would be fed into the budget process of the new company.
- The management of the car parking facilities at the Freight House would be examined to see whether further measures could be taken to curtail parking by British Rail users.

- The standard of provision at Great Wakering Sports Centre would be looked into, following Member comments that this site could benefit from further capital investment.
- The incident at the Clements Hall swimming pool whereby a chemical had been put into the water by members of the public was now resolved. The pool had been re-opened for business on the morning of this meeting following consultations with professionals who confirmed from water samples that there was no longer contamination present. The Police are continuing to work with the management of the facility to identify the suspects.

Steven Evans confirmed that he would be assessing all sites with Stephen Brown to address and prioritise issues. The acquisition of Holmes Place UK by Virgin Active was an exciting new venture and business would be as usual. It would take between three and twelve months to understand all aspects and there would be a lot of learning, listening and progression to be made.

The Committee observed that it was disappointing to see that vandalism had been a problem at Clements Hall but were now encouraged by the involvement of the Police working in partnership with the centre's staff and the Council to achieve positive results.

A Member advised that civil weddings may soon be held at the Rayleigh Windmill and suggested that Virgin Active may be able to come up with a package in this regard to support such events utilising the reception facilities at The Mill Arts & Events Centre.

The Committee concurred that they wished Holmes Place UK and Virgin Active a long and fruitful relationship together, to the benefit of the residents of Rochford District.

Resolved

That the content of the Holmes Place progress report in relation to the leisure management contract be noted. (CD(ES))

395 TOURISM VOLUME VALUE STUDY FOR ROCHFORD DISTRICT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive that, as part of the work around developing the tourism agenda, provided baseline information on the current impact of tourism in the District, based on data for 2004.

In presenting the report the Chief Executive advised that, whilst this is a simplistic study, it is a universal model recognised and approved by the East

of England Tourist Board. The study could be particularly beneficial to the Council if applying for funding.

Officers agreed with the observations of Members that caution was needed with some of the content in the report and it could be said that clarity is not consistently provided for the conclusions reached. There was some comment as to whether the study represented good value for money. The Chief Executive responded that its value would only be evident in future years when the Council could look back and see what, if anything, had been achieved.

A Member suggested that the study represented a good stepping-stone for the Council.

Resolved

That the content of the Volume Value Study be noted and that regard be had to its findings in the future development of the tourism agenda within the District. (CE)

396 FERNDALE ROAD SCOUT HUT – FUTURE LEASE OPTIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) that advised Members on the lease currently held by Crouch Valley District Scout Executive for the Ferndale Road Scout hut in Rayleigh.

In response to a Member question officers advised that if the Downhall Under Fives Pre-School Group were to obtain a new lease on the same area of land they would be responsible for the financing of a new building, subject to a successful planning application.

The Committee felt that full facts were needed to reach a verdict on the third recommendation of the report. It was recognised that, whilst speed is of the essence with this item, further consultation would be appropriate between officers and the Downhall Under Fives Pre-School and the Scout Association.

Resolved

- (1) That the request by Crouch Valley District Scout Executive to surrender their lease for land at the Ferndale Open Space on Ferndale Road, Rayleigh be agreed.
- (2) That the clause within the lease that requires the Scout Association to bear the cost of removal of the building and making good of the surface of the ground be implemented.
- (3) That a decision on a new lease be deferred pending further officer discussion with the Downhall Under Fives and the Scout Association on the possibilities of the two organisations working together to provide facilities for the building. A report to be submitted to a January meeting of

either the Leisure, Tourism & Heritage Committee or the Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee, whichever is the earliest. (CD(ES))

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that exempt information as disclosed in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

397 THAMES GATEWAY BRAND IDENTITY PRESENTATION

The Committee received a presentation from Mick Hill, Interim Communications Manager, outlining Thames Gateway work on revising its brand identity.

Members made the following observations:-

- That Thames Gateway had used imaginative branding, which was colourful and covered many themes. This was more than just a logo and it was encouraging to see images that showed good businesses, the seaside and countryside of South Essex.
- It was positive to look at Rochford within the broad South Essex area and consider the number of activities that are ongoing, engaging and relating to people.
- It should be noted that, as a small District, the Council is actually doing a lot for and keen to be involved with Thames Gateway South Essex. Projects such as Websters Way car park and Rayleigh Windmill demonstrate the benefits the District has obtained via Thames Gateway.

In answering the concern of a Member, Mick Hill confirmed that traffic and transport infrastructure is known to be an ongoing problem, which is something that Thames Gateway South Essex is not looking to hide but rather continue to promote and lobby for investment and address the current issues across South Essex.

The Committee thanked Mick Hill for his contribution to the meeting and looked forward to hearing more about the future work of the Thames Gateway South Essex partnership as it rolled out its branding.

398 TENDERING PROCESS FOR THE GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (External Services) that sought approval for the tendering process to be adopted in letting the Council's grounds maintenance contract.

Officers confirmed that the purpose of this report was to discuss the method of procurement to be used for the new Rochford contracts that were due to start April 2008. It was also the aim to run the Council's procurement as part of an aligned process with Southend Borough Council, albeit for two distinctly separate contracts.

The Committee observed that the indicative timeline as set out in Appendix A reflected a busy schedule.

Resolved

- (1) That the Competitive Dialogue process be implemented for the tendering of the Council's Ground Maintenance contract.
- (2) That the indicative timeline set out in Appendix (A) of the exempt report to ensure the new contract commences in April 2008 be agreed.
- (3) That advertising in the Official European Journal of the European Union to seek companies interested in providing grounds maintenance services in Rochford and, if suitable, to be part of an aligned procurement process with Southend on Sea Borough Council be agreed. (CD(ES))

The meeting closed at 10.05pm

Chairman

Date