

**REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**LEISURE AND CULTURAL STRATEGY REVIEW PANEL**

**26 JANUARY 2004**

**Held at 6.00 p.m. in the Front Committee Room at the Town Hall, Reigate**

Present: Councillors J.A. Meech (Chairman), S.N.W. Marshall, G.L. Norman and E. Russell

Officers in support: Graham Cook, Director of Services to the Community; Gill Wilson, Head of Leisure Services; Amanda Brown, Leisure Administration Officer; and Chris Phelan, Scrutiny Support Officer

**1. CHAIRMAN OF THE REVIEW PANEL**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 October 2003 appointed Councillor J.A. Meech as the Chairman of the Panel.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTES**

Councillor R. Miah.

**3. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PANEL**

The Panel noted that it had been established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider two specific matters, namely:

- The Parks and Open Spaces Policy Statement; and
- The Leisure and Cultural Strategy.

It was noted that the Executive would consider the consultation draft of the Leisure and Cultural Strategy in March 2004. The Panel would examine the draft Strategy and comment to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee accordingly.

**Corporate Governance issues**

The following matters were agreed, that:

1. meetings of the Panel be open to the press and public and be held at the Town Hall at 6pm (with flexibility to adjust this if required);
2. consideration of who to receive evidence from be reconsidered as necessary;
3. no specialists be Co-Opted onto the Panel at present (with flexibility to return to this as needed);
4. the Chairman of the Panel would determine, in consultation with the Head of Leisure Services and the Scrutiny Support Officer, the mechanism for questions/statements at meetings; who to receive evidence from and the overall scope of questions to be asked of witnesses; and

5. appropriate publicity arrangements be made for the next meeting of the Panel.

#### 4. **PARKS AND OPEN SPACES POLICY STATEMENT**

Gill Wilson made a presentation on the issues that were addressed in the Policy Statement and highlighted the priority areas that the Executive was focussing on in its recommendations. This included the consideration of:

- the proposed National Parks Hierarchy Model of categorisation of provision;
- the rationalisation of Parks buildings and structures;
- the rationalisation of Play and Youth provision; and
- the rationalisation of the allotments service to recognise supply and demand.

Arising from this presentation the Panel noted that, despite additional marketing efforts, eight of the Council's allotments remained underused three of which are almost empty and that the Policy Statement was looking into the alternatives open to the Council for these sites. The Panel requested that the Ward Members for those areas be advised of the position so that they could comment to the Panel on this matter if they wished.

The Panel also considered the opportunities for private sector investment into some of the Council's facilities. This included the viability of eating and Public conveniences being provided on a commercial basis as additional facilities in Parks.

It was noted that the Policy Statement was a 'high level' Strategic document that sought to provide overall guidance on the service for the period up to 2005/06. It was not a Management Strategy for the operation of individual sites but rather an overarching review of Borough wide provision. Taking this into account the Executive had published it for consultation purposes with key partners and stakeholders to seek views on this 'high level' approach. The Executive proposed to produce a separate Parks and Open Spaces Strategy, which would compliment the Policy Statement, and provide more detailed management arrangements for the service.

The Panel considered that before it offered its views to the Executive on the Policy Statement the community should be given an opportunity of responding on the contents of the Statement. The Panel therefore agreed to:

1. publicise its next meeting with a press release and formal public notice in the local press;
2. publish the Policy Statement on the website and ensure it is available in the Helpshops; and
3. invite 'online' responses to the Strategy, via the Overview and Scrutiny webpage.

Any comments received arising from the additional publicity would be brought to the next meeting of the Panel.

5. **DATE OF THE NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE PANEL**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Panel be held at 6pm on 12 February 2004 to further consider the Parks and Open Spaces Policy Statement and any comments received from the community.

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