

# LEISURE AND YOUTH POLICY AND REVIEW PANEL

Meeting held on Monday, 16th March, 2015 at the Council Offices,  
Farnborough at 7.00 p.m.

## **Voting Members**

Cr. Liz Corps (Chairman)  
Cr. D.M. Welch (Vice-Chairman)

Cr. Mrs. D.B. Bedford	Cr. K. Dibble	a Cr. Barbara Donaghue
Cr. T.D. Bridgeman		Cr. G.B. Lyon
Cr. P.I.C. Crerar		Cr. B.A. Thomas

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Cr. Barbara Donaghue.

## 19. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12th January, 2015 were agreed as a correct record.

## 20. **OPEN SPACES, SPORTS AND RECREATION STUDY –**

The Panel welcomed Mr. Peter Amies, Head of Community, and Mr. Andy Ford, Parks Development Officer, who attended the meeting to advise the Panel on the findings of the Open Space, Sport and Recreation study that had been carried out as part of the work related to the Rushmoor Plan. A full copy of the report could be found on the Rushmoor website. One of the main objectives of the study had been to identify deficiencies and surpluses in the provision of open space, sport and recreation in the Borough. This had been achieved by auditing fourteen indoor facilities and 123 open spaces to help underpin planning policies and justify developer contributions and community infrastructure levy receipts.

The Panel was advised that participation in sporting activities in Rushmoor was higher than the County average. Dominant groups categorised in the study included: settling down males (26-45), comfortable mid-life males (46-55), middle England mums (46-55) and retired people.

Open space consultation workshops had been carried out to assess residents' satisfaction levels and areas for improvement. It had been found that there were high levels of satisfaction relating to the open spaces available although improvements could be made around directional signage, connectivity and public rights of way on Ministry Of Defence land and a better balance between bio-diversity and recreation could be sought. It was

also suggested that green gyms and trim trails were in demand and the Panel noted that, in the future, it was hoped that at least one of these types of facilities could be installed in both Aldershot and Farnborough. A survey had also been carried out in line with the workshops to which 328 people had responded. It had been identified that 80% of people valued the open spaces available and 70% used them at least once a week for a range of reasons, including for children's activities, to observe wildlife and to relax and exercise. Some concerns had been noted from the survey, these included dog fouling, litter, the provision of additional bins and seats and the need for improved signage. However, 76% of people felt safe when visiting the open spaces and 73% felt that the parks were well maintained and clean. It was noted that the younger generation had highlighted a desire for skate parks, a BMX track and a climbing wall.

It was explained that, as part of the process, an indoor sports consultation had also been carried out with eight schools, 33 clubs and thirteen governing bodies interviewed. Findings showed that satisfaction levels were above the county average, the indoor provision in Rushmoor was well catered for and there was a considerable amount of sporting activity taking place in the Borough. From the interviews, schools were generally satisfied with the facilities they accessed for community use but felt that they could be assisted to enable more community use of their facilities. The clubs that were involved stated that, as membership numbers increased, it was difficult to access quality facilities to accommodate them. Most issues raised related to cost, availability and the suitability of the equipment.

Specific indoor facilities were considered by the Panel in further detail:

- Swimming Pools – It was noted that Rushmoor had a high level of water space, 22sqm per 1,000 population, with peak capacity use at 56%. On average 9.2% of the Borough population swam once a week or more compared to the regional average of 6.8%. Priorities identified were:
  - Improve the Aldershot Pools hall, in particular the ceiling and changing facilities
  - Consider a movable boom in Farnborough
- Sports Halls – it was advised that supply exceeded demand with peak capacity usage at 67% compared to the County average of 59%. 32% of the community used the facilities once or more a week and a large proportion of the indoor space had recently been released due to the 3G pitches being installed across the Borough. Priorities identified were:
  - Improve school sports halls and changing facilities
  - Promote released space for other recreational uses

- Health and fitness – It was advised that there was a high number of fitness stations in the Borough (855 stations), nine stations per 1,000 population in Rushmoor compared to 4.7 stations county-wide. 23% used the facilities more than once a week compared to 15% regionally. Priorities included improving the offer at the Aldershot Pools and the Connaught Leisure Centre.

The Panel was advised that other sports had also been looked at in more depth, including; indoor bowls, squash, martial arts and gymnastics. Provision for these sports was sufficient to meet demand and Mr. Amies reported that the Military had judo and boxing facilities and an approach could be made to them to consider opening them to the public. The identified priorities in these areas were to ensure that the quality of the existing facilities was maintained and that the activities were promoted.

The Panel discussed the standards of the open spaces. It was advised that the quality of Southwood Woodland and Rowhill was very high, and the green corridors such as Basingstoke Canal, Cove Brook Greenway and Blackwater Valley were also of a high standard. It was noted, however, that there were opportunities to better link the green corridors with wider open space networks.

There was then a discussion around allotment provision and cemeteries and churchyards. The Panel noted that interviews would be held later that week for the vacant Allotments Officer post. The new post holder would work to alleviate the issues around the shortfall in provision compared to the length of the waiting list by reducing the size of some plots and releasing unworked plots where appropriate. In relation to cemeteries and churchyards, it was advised that some work was required at Redan Road, St. John's and Victoria Road cemeteries to enhance and meet deficiencies in parks and natural green spaces.

The Panel was informed of the findings relating to provision for young people. It was noted that the local community was pleased with the number of play areas and were willing to travel to the larger play spaces of which there were seven in the Borough. Of the seven, it was advised that Manor Park, Aldershot and Municipal Gardens, Aldershot would this year be consulted on for upgrading. The Borough had sixteen medium sized play areas of which ten achieved the quality benchmark but provided limited play value and, of the 29 small sites, ten met the quality benchmark and five reached neither the benchmark standard nor the play value. It was advised that further consideration needed to be given to playground provision to identify play areas surplus to requirements and this would be done through consultation with Ward Councillors.

In summary the following recommendation would be made for the Rushmoor Local Plan Development Planning Document (DPD):

- All new open space quality standards be set in line with the study findings and the opportunity, where appropriate, be taken to enhance existing areas rather than providing a new provision of a lesser facility.
- The network of parks and gardens be protected and enhanced and the provision of new signage and parking be provided where necessary.
- The Ministry of Defence be encouraged to retain public use of its land
- The deficiency in allotment provision be addressed
- Community groups be encouraged to get involved in open space to share knowledge/skills
- Consideration be given to the impacts of noise and illumination on bio diversity
- Retain and enhance indoor sports provision
- Seek to enhance local play experiences and consider natural play areas
- Consideration be given to establishing a charitable trust to open up more funding opportunities
- Identify opportunities to deliver improvements through the Community Infrastructure Levy

The Panel **ENDORSED** the recommendations.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Amies and Mr. Ford for attending the meeting and giving a comprehensive overview of the study.

## 21. **WORK PROGRAMME –**

The Panel **NOTED** the current work programme. It was advised that the Panel's Annual Report would be produced for the Council meeting on 23rd April, 2015 and the next meeting of the Lido Task and Finish Group would be held on Monday 30th March, 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

The meeting closed at 8.18 p.m.

CR. LIZ CORPS  
CHAIRMAN

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