

COUNCIL MEETING - 20 JULY 2004

RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL **COUNCILLOR BRADLEY – LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE**

Establishment of a Leisure Trust – Tone Leisure (South West) Limited

The Executive have considered a report, which recommends the transfer of the Council's leisure facilities and its health and sport development services to Tone Leisure (South West) Limited. The report revisited the issues outlined in a report submitted to the Executive on 22 December 2003, when the decision was made to defer transfer for a period of six months.

In October 2002 the Council approved in principle the establishment of a Leisure Trust to operate its leisure centres, development services and Vivary Park Golf Course. However there were a number of outstanding issues at that time and it was subsequently agreed to defer the decision for six months. We have now been informed of the progress that has been made on the issues that led to the decision to defer the Leisure Trust six months previously.

The formation of a Leisure Trust will allow the Council to generate tax based savings through reduced NNDR costs and through an improved VAT recovery regime, which the Trust is able to take advantage of. Details of the financial issues surrounding the proposal are contained in the report.

The Council's consultants, Strategic Leisure Limited, has been involved in this project since its inception and submitted their objective assessment on the proposed transfer. Strategic Leisure believe that sufficient progress has been made on the unresolved items to unequivocally recommend that the transfer should proceed.

Now that the majority of outstanding issues have either been resolved or are likely to be resolved in the near future, the point has been reached where a transfer can be recommended. It is recognised that the Council must continue to develop its leisure strategy and its ability to monitor the financial and operational efficacy of the Trust to ensure its corporate vision and desired outcomes for the service are delivered. Equally this will require that the Council allocates sufficient revenue and capital support to ensure the Trust remains viable subject to it meeting the agreed targets.

Full details of all the issues surrounding this proposal are contained in an exempt report which was circulated to all Councillors with the agenda for the Executive meeting on 23 June 2004. Further copies of the report can be obtained from the Member Services Manager if required.

The Leisure Trust remains the best value method of service delivery and the last six months of negotiation, especially around the leases, pensions and service review, have significantly reduced the risks to the authority.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that:

- (i) the Council's leisure facilities and its health and sport development services be transferred to Tone Leisure (South West) Limited on the terms described in the report and as set out in the associated documentation;
- (ii) the level of deficit funding required for Tone Leisure to operate the services (excluding Blackbrook) for the first 8 months at £452,000 be agreed;

- (iii) Standing Orders be suspended to enable the Council to enter into an 8 month management contract with Tone Leisure in relation to Blackbrook and the management fee for the first 8 months be £535,000. The income from this arrangement to be returned to the Council's General Fund budget;
- (iv) Somerset County Council be provided with a Pensions Guarantee;
- (v) the residual savings, including reduced costs, NNDR and an improved VAT recovery regime, generated by the formation of the Trust be ring fenced for reinvestment in the facilities managed by the Trust;
- (vi) an interest free loan of £50,000 be made to Tone Leisure, subject to the loan being repaid over the following 6 years with the first payment taking place in August 2006;
- (vii) the appropriate officers be thanked for their hard work in reaching this position and the Health and Leisure Review Panel be thanked for its constructive contribution to the process.

COUNCILLOR MRS D BRADLEY

COUNCIL MEETING 20th JULY 2004

REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. D. BRADLEY – LEISURE, ART AND CULTURE

SPORTS DEVELOPMENT: The Taunton Deane Triathlon took place on May 16th with 350 participants. Again this was a happy and successful event and our thanks go to all the staff who worked so hard headed up by Dan Webb and Clare Morgans.

LEISURE SERVICE ACTIVITIES

Tennis – Doubles Series 2004: this is currently running most successfully at the Tennis Centre and is aimed at young casual players who wish to play competitive tennis but not to train to a high level. Players at 14 years and under and 11 and under have so far competed in two tournament since March. A final tournament takes place in July preparatory to the “Grand Finals” in September. This series is attracting a large number of players who would normally not consider playing competitive tennis.

Play Tennis 2004. Two open days have been run this year by the Tennis Centre in partnership with Taunton Tennis Club as part of the national Play Tennis initiative. Over 100 newcomers attended free session and tested their skills in Mini Tennis and full court tennis for adults.

Childrens’ Holiday Activities: as usual an extensive programme of activities and summer camps will take place at the Blackbrook, Wellington and Wellsprings Centres. Tone Leisure also offers a total of 300 childcare places on a daily basis and is able to provide support for disabled children and those with particular needs.

Vibe Sport is a new initiative funded through the Crime & Disorder Partnership. Leisure staff and Youth Workers have been working jointly since 18th June on Friday nights and numbers have already reached 10 per session.

Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership (SASP) comprise local authorities and a wide range of other agencies, all of which may utilise physical activity and sports in achieving their sometimes diverse objects. Its mission is “to create a healthier and more active community in Somerset”. Taunton Deane has play a valuable role in contributing to SASP’s 3-year strategy which is influenced by national and regional objectives in particular the target of mass participation in physical activity (5 a day!)

On Saturday 11th July the **Somerset Partnership Youth Games** took place at Millfield organised by SASP and manned by officers from the participating districts. The Taunton Deane schools and clubs emerged with huge success laden with medals. These games are open to all except those who area already playing for the County.

Health: the Proactive Physical referral Scheme continues to grow and to expand its range of activities to include fitball, gym, aqua and relaxation. The **Visually Impaired** now have a range of activities including circuits, gym and fitball set up by Tone Leisure and the Somerset Association for the Blind. **Cardiac Rehab.**

continues at Wellsprings. Following rehabilitation clients continue to develop their fitness and confidence in twice weekly sessions. Refreshments at the end give an opportunity for individuals to discuss lifestyle issues.

From this it is clear that while leisure services may not be a statutory duty for us, they nevertheless lead in contributing to community well-being and social inclusion.

PARKS & GREEN SPACES

Paws in the Park went off very well and both owners and dogs had a good day and our thanks go to Steven Cuthill who organised the event.

The Friends of Vivary Park are now up and running and former councillor Adrian Prior-Sankey has accepted the chair with Shaun Cregan as his deputy.

Parks Activity Coordinators: in response to the feedback from our consultation we are piloting a scheme in the school summer holidays aimed at providing free informal activities for young people in our parks. Two Parks Activity Coordinators in blue shirts and base ball caps will work one day a week in each of the 5 parks in Taunton. They will provide a staff presence, organise informal activities and games, and interact with the young people to gauge their opinions about the parks and about the type of changes or additions they would like to see for them. They will work Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon until 7 pm. If the project is successful in engaging with young people, we will seek external funding and partners to extend the scheme next year to key parishes and towns.

Taunton Flower Show; the Chelsea of the South West takes place in Vivary Park on Wednesday 4th and Thursday 5th August. Taunton Deane Horticultural & Floricultural Society itself a voluntary association welcomes volunteers to help on these two days with such matters as stewarding. May I commend to you all this splendid event that really does have something for everyone and makes a very happy family day out as it includes the Model Railway!

CULTURE AND ART

The Cultural Quarter Consortium continues to meet. It embraces both officers and councillors from the Deane and the County and more importantly key stakeholders such as the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society which was formed in the C19th with the specific aim of acquiring Taunton castle not only to preserve it but also to display and add to its collections. These are now looked after by the County Heritage Service which runs the SCC Museum. Other partners are the Somerset Art Gallery Trust working to provide exhibition space, the Brewhouse Theatre and Arts Centre, SCAT, Richard Huish College, the Town Centre Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hydrographic Office and Taunton Cultural Provision Group. They are together endeavouring to flesh out the concept of a cultural Quarter around Castle Green as put forward in the Taunton Vision which will benefit residents and visitors alike.

Blue Stick Garden and Somerset Arts Week: with Cllrs Guerrier & Cavill, I recently attend the launch of the internationally renowned Blue Stick Garden at

Hestercombe , a modern design by Quebec Canadian landscape architect Claude Cornier which uses rows of blue painted sticks of varying heights to create a herbaceous effect inspired by the designs of Gertrude Jekyll and the colour spectrum of the Himalayan blue poppy. This international art experience will be followed up over 11-26 September with the Somerset Art Weeks, (celebrating the visual arts in Somerset) which draw people from all over the country down to Somerset and its artists: www.somersetartweek.org.uk - 01460 259324.

NETWORKING

ILAM

I have just returned from the annual conference of the Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management. The keynote theme was the Health Agenda. As we are by now all aware the government is getting extremely concerned about the size of the NHS bill. On the basis that prevention is better or cheaper than cure it is looking to all of us, especially councils, to promote healthy living. I concentrated on the Contribution of the Parks to the Health Agenda, Knowing Parks and Improving Health. The latter involved a tour of sports facilities. One was entered direct from the street, with library to the left, swimming straight ahead and the IT suite upstairs and the drink machines on the landing. The library had seen a 70% increase in visits. The conference took place in the Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow; European Capital of Culture.; cultural regeneration still features highly in Glasgow's development agenda. I now hope to obtain supporting documentation on the economic aspects.

SWMLAC

I attended a seminar run by the South West Museums Libraries and Archives Council to launch the report entitled Making a Difference – the impact of museums, libraries and archives in the South West. SWMLAC is a quango set up to map out what is in the region and what is happening. Its job is to try and sort out priorities and help with individual strategies for the museums and archives in the South West. The author of the report Colin Mercer then made a very convincing case for the value, economically, socially and culturally of the museums, libraries and archives service. This argument is important as I believe it can be extended to the arts and culture in its widest definition of bringing people together in any joint creative activity.

Taunton Male Voice Choir; I recently attended their annual concert at the Tacchi-Morris Centre which I always enjoy. They have received a small arts development grant from Taunton Deane which has enabled them to pull down quite a substantial sum of money to run free “Male Choral Workshops” for voice and choral training on Saturday 7th August, Wednesdays 11, 18 & 25 August and Saturday 4th September. Contacts are Tony Slavin on 01823 283681 and Brian Reynolds on 01823 276326.

Youth Celebration took place at the new SCAT Conference Centre on 10th July. It showcased the Youth Organisations of Taunton Deane and celebrated young peoples' achievements. It is quite clear that there is a lot of commitment from many people including the churches to the youth of Taunton.

Councillor Mrs D. Bradley