

## **COUNCIL MEETING - 22 JULY 2003**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL** **COUNCILLOR MRS BRADLEY - LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE**

#### 1. Galmington Playing Field

The Executive have considered the financial consequences of the Charity Commission inquiry into the Council's management of the Galmington Playing Field.

The Council has been accounting for and treating the Galmington Playing Field as part of the Council's general asset base. A local benefactor had conveyed the field to the Council in 1931 for use by the local community. This subsequently became registered as a Charitable Trust. The Charity Commission has undertaken an inquiry into the Council's administration of the Trust.

The Council is the owner of the playing field and also the trustee of the charity. The Trust is subject to different accounting rules from the other playing fields owned by the Council. The Trust is subject to the rules laid down by the Charity Commission and other relevant charity legislation. As such the Council must account for the income and expenditure relating to the playing field separately from the other council property.

At present the Galmington Playing Field costs more to maintain than the income received from its use. This cost is currently being met from the Parks and Playing Fields budget within the General Fund but these transactions now have to be removed from that Fund.

The Council, as trustee, is obliged to make financial provisions for the Trust to ensure that it is able to continue operations in future years. The Executive feel that the best way to do this is to continue to meet the annual deficit through an annual contribution from the General Fund budget.

The only asset the Trust has is the playing field itself. As trustee, the Council must protect any capital that the Trust had and cannot sell or dispose of any of the capital of the Trust without the prior consent of the Charity Commission. However in 1987 a portion of the field was sold to the adjoining hospital without reference to the Commission. The amount received was £4,900 and it has not been possible to confirm the precise treatment of this income.

The Charity Commission require the Council to re-establish this capital receipt as an additional asset of the Trust. This means that the capital received, together with compounded annual interest since 1987/88, will be maintained as an interest bearing "Permanent Endowment" of the Trust. In total this now amounts to £16,150. The annual interest generated from this investment will now be used to reduce the annual deficit of the playing field.

In order to create this Endowment, it is necessary to take this amount from the General Fund Reserve and as such approval by Council is required.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED THAT £16,150 be transferred from the General Fund Reserve for the creation of the Permanent Endowment Fund of the Galmington Playing Field Trust.

2. The Wellsprings Centre

At its meeting on 22 April 2003, the Council agreed to authorise the carrying out of advanced works to the Centre in order that it be made wind and watertight. On 2 May, Sport England indicated that they were not prepared to give further grant aid to the Council to complete this project. The leaders of the political groups then represented on the Council agreed to make available the necessary funds to complete the project and the Council's chosen contractor, Bluestone Plc, was advised that they could proceed with the completion work.

In the course of carrying out the advanced works, Bluestone have discovered that there are some apparent structural defects which had not previously been identified at the Centre concerning the internal blockwork wall and the means by which it is attached to the structural steel framework of the building. In addition there are problems concerning the connections between the roof purling and the eaves cleats.

These defects have been spotted as a result of the removal of defective cladding on one of the walls at the Centre and there are two other walls constructed in an identical way. Symonds Group Ltd have therefore recommended that the other two walls be inspected for the same problem.

Bluestone Plc quoted the sum of £68,736 excluding VAT to remove the cladding on the other two walls to allow their inspection, to replace that cladding and to carry out the necessary repair work to the one wall now known to suffer from these defects. It was estimated that to repair similar defects on the other two walls will amount to in excess of £18,000 based on the current quotation.

These structural defects could only have been found when the defective cladding was removed. It was necessary and appropriate to ensure that the other two walls were not similarly defective. With the protective cladding removed it was urgent that the repair works be carried out quickly to avoid further risk to the building. Emergency approval was therefore given by the Leader of the Council to Bluestone starting the works immediately.

It is therefore RECOMMENDED that a Supplementary Estimate be made from unallocated Capital Reserves of £34,150.

Councillor Mrs D Bradley

## COUNCIL MEETING 22 JULY 2003

### REPORT OF COUNCILLOR MRS. BRADLEY – LEISURE, ARTS AND CULTURE

#### **Wellsprings Update**

Building work is progressing well on the Wellsprings site. Regular meetings between the Council, Symonds and Bluestone indicate that the new leisure centre will open to the public early in the New Year. The Wellsprings Centre Manager, James Curry (currently based at Blackbrook), is now in the process of re-establishing links with potential clubs, hirers and users and is beginning to put the centre programme together.

#### **Sports Service Best Value Review**

This is our major success story. Rising above hundreds of leisure inspections nationwide Taunton Deane's Sports Services have been judged Good with Excellent prospects for improvements. This is affirmation not only of our capable and dedicated staff but also of the new administration now running this council. This rating from Government's independent Best Value inspectors puts Taunton Deane in the top ten per cent of sports services in the country with few bettering the Council's achievement.

The inspectors visited all the Council's Leisure facilities over one week in May this year and concluded the Council provided a wide range of facilities and services, which are well used, with varied and complementary programmes and a generally good standard of presentation and cleanliness. They noted the service is provided at a relatively low operational cost, is well used and has high levels of customer satisfaction.

The three inspectors said the Council has excellent prospects for improvement for a number of reasons such as the Leisure services track record of improving services with many of the improvement plan targets exceeded in the first year. Most of the proposals in the improvement plan properly focus first on improving the Service for customers.

The Sports Service best value review covered leisure facilities management (Blackbrook Pavilion, Taunton Tennis Centre, Castle Sports Centre, St. James Street Baths, Station Road Pool, Vivary Golf Course and Wellington Sports Centre) and client services including sports development and an active lifestyles programme.

The Service employs 218 full and part-time staff and has a net budget of £1.38 million this financial year. The scope of the review did not include playing pitches or the use of grants. The Council plans to review these independently. This was the second part of the Council's leisure service to be reviewed. The first part, parks and amenities service review, was completed in January 2001 with that service winning the 'Good' rating with 'Promising' prospects for improvement.

The Government has placed a duty on local councils to deliver services to cost and quality standards by the most economic, efficient and effective means available. Best Value is a challenging framework designed to improve local services. Councils are required to assess their own performance and put in place measures to ensure continuous improvement in all of their services.

## **Leisure Trust Update**

Work towards the formation of the Leisure Trust continues to proceed and is placing demands on resources. In particular, the legal documentation and aspects of the lease agreements at Blackbrook and Wellsprings are placing pressure on the proposed implementation timetable. A full update will be presented to the Executive in August.

## **Playing Pitches Strategy**

This Strategy has now received its accreditation.

## **Wheel Sports**

We are working out how best to make provision for both BMX and skate board users bearing in mind the limited funds available to meet aspirations. I am fully aware that the Summer holidays are almost upon us.

## **Arts Plan 2003**

The arts have a cross cutting agenda, particularly addressing economic and environmental priorities of regeneration and sustainability. Delivery is in partnership with other districts and county councils and key strategic arts organisations, in particular The Brewhouse, Take Art! Somerset Dance, Action Track, Somerset Arts Week, Somerset Partnership of Arts in Education Development Agency (SPAEDA) and Equata/Disability Arts. We are also involved in exploring the potential for a Somerset Art Gallery with the Somerset Arts Gallery Trust

## **Pop and Proms in the Park**

Two successful and well-organised events took place in Vivary Park on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> July run by Performing Arts Management complete with firework displays. The only defect to note was the non-materialisation of the beer tent. From my conversations it would appear that this company is interested in building up a market to repeat these events. This is all in line with making a fuller and more varied use of this delightful community asset.

## **The Future**

My attendance at a recent ILAM Conference and also the Hammersmith and Fulham Beacon Council Open Day have driven home to me the hard fact that Councils are not going to be given any more money. Our job is to act as enablers for other organisations to draw down funds from the Community Fund, the Livability Fund, the new Somerset Community Foundation (£500 to £7,000 for the young disadvantaged) and other funds and trusts.