

MINUTES

Community Services Scrutiny Panel

30th September, 2008

Present: Councillors Howarth (in the Chair), Cowper, Laverick, Lightley, Mavin, Robinson, D Smith, Walton and Young.

Also Present: Councillors Kellett, Stoddart and Turnbull.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Crooks, McDonnell and Mavin.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2nd September, 2008, were confirmed as a correct record.

3. Review of Graveyards

A draft report on the Panel's review of its previous scrutiny of closed churchyards and graveyards had been circulated.

Subject to the correction of a typographical error, it was agreed that this report be passed to the Scrutiny Committee for their consideration.

4. Review of Playing Pitch Strategy

The Council's Technical Support Manager (Environment & Leisure), Streetscene Technical Officer and Policy and Regeneration Manager were in attendance and the Chairman gave a brief recap on the Panel's Scrutiny of the Playing Pitch Strategy for the benefit of those Members who had not been involved previously.

The Panel had previously made a number of recommendations on the pitches, changing facilities, maintenance, signage and working with other organisations and the Council's Officers gave Members an update on progress made towards implementing these.

The Active Durham initiative was now in place with the Community Sports Network and local groups were working with Leisure Services at grass roots level and across all age groups. This initiative was Sports Council funded for three years, and would therefore continue following LGR.

It was considered to be most important that playing pitches were retained following LGR, especially those which were leased to the City Council from organisations such as CISWO. Two or three pitches did not have on site changing facilities, and it was felt that the County Council should be asked to give consideration to provision in the future.

Self adhesive signs had been provided in changing facilities, and a code of conduct and hire agreement was provided when bookings were being taken.

Funding had been made available to have the playing pitches surveyed to recommend improvements that could be made. Some of the recommended works had been carried out over the summer, such as breaking up compacted areas to improve drainage, herbicide treatments, a fertiliser programme and the making up of soil levels and seeding. The survey had also identified pitches where drainage infrastructure required work, but as funding was not available, these works had not been completed.

The legislation governing dogs at now changed under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act. A legal process could be followed to introduce a Dog Control Order. Initially all of the Districts would be looking to introduce Orders relating to dog fouling, and in due course they could be made to require dogs to be kept on leads and also banned in certain areas. The new unitary Authority would be looking to introduce these Orders over the next two to three years.

Leisure Services work closely with schools, and schools use Council facilities where they have none of their own. The School Sports Partnership continued to provide facilities.

The City News had been used to try to recruit more sports coaches but the response had been disappointing. Durham University ran sports coaching courses with were also open to residents and this had been more successful.

The Unitary bid stated that standards would be maintained and improved, and it was hopeful therefore that the initiatives in place would further increase demand in the future.

The final review report and recommendations would be considered by the Panel at the next Meeting, and in addition to being forwarded to the Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet, it was agreed that these should also be brought to the attention of the relevant LGR workstreams.

5. Any Other Business

The Chairman informed Members that Council House Repairs would be the topic of the Meeting to be held on 28th October, 2008.

The Meeting terminated at 6.35 pm