

Minutes of the Meeting of Better Environment Advisory Group held on 2nd February from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Present: Councillors: Peter Martin (Chairman)
Andrew MacNaughton (Vice Chairman)

Irene Balls	Janice Henwood
Andrew Barrett-Miles*	Christopher Hersey
Andrew Brock	Jane Keel
Bernard Gillbard	Susanna Kemp*

* Absent

Also Present: Councillors Dumbovic, Hatton and Wall

24. SUBSTITUTES AT MEETINGS OF COMMITTEE – COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 4

None

25. CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED

That it be noted that Councillors Irene Balls and Bernard Gillbard had replaced Councillors Brian Hall and Edward Matthews respectively as members of the Advisory Group.

26. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Barrett-Miles and Kemp.

27. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

28. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Group held on 27th October 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE 17 AUDIT - REFRESH 2010

Simon Hardy, Business Unit Leader for Community Services and Culture said that the purpose of the review was to update the findings of the original audit produced by Kit Campbell Associates in 2006 and test the benchmark standards that were produced at that time. The Community Leisure Officer, Elaine Clarke who would give a brief presentation, had now completed the refresh of the audit. This was the statistical element of the review but more work was required to translate this into existence.

The Community Leisure Officer took Members through the presentation. She highlighted the following information. The background to the review, the work carried out for the review, a summary of the findings and how this fits with the Bigger and

Better play strategy, the way forward and the risks if the standards were not adopted and included in a formal planning framework. The Business Unit Leader added that the Council was already working with Burgess Hill and East Grinstead Town Council's and hoped to be working with Haywards Heath Town Council in future.

A Member queried whether it was necessary to have play provision within such a short distance of travel as was set out in paragraph 33 on page 12 of the report and asked whether this was a national standard. The BUL for Community Services and Culture replied that under the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) standards LAPs (Local Area of Play) were to be within 100m but the suggestion was to relax that standard to 400m for children of 8 and under, and 1000m for children of 8-12. A longer distance would be helpful for fitness and if a facility was more attractive and offered better play value; people would travel a little further.

In reply to a question from the Chairman the BUL for Community Services and Culture said that at present the Council is imposing the 400m standard on new developments. Where there is extant play provision within the distance they seek a financial contribution from the developers to improve the LEAP (Local Equipped Area of Play) rather than provide a new one. Where this is not possible the Council seek new provision.

A Member queried what had happened since the previous audit four years ago, he commented that many of the LAPs and LEAPs were too small and too close to homes and he felt that the Council should be more imaginative in providing play areas. The small ones are underused and can create residential issues through being too close to homes. He expressed concern that allotments appeared to have been overlooked and he asked what the review would feed into in policy terms.

In response the BUL for Community Services and Culture gave the following information. The Local Plan adopted the NPFA standards, deemed under the PPG17 directive to be aspirational. The original audit carried out in 2006 was designed to assess provision against the standard and recommend whether or not additional provision was required. The original standard was roughly correct which was supported by the figures and by stakeholder consultation. The standards now break down into wider provision. Although there is some over provision and some under provision the overall assessment is about right in terms of provision.

With regard to LEAPs and LAPs the Council had learned that a LAP provides limited play value and were now keen to provide bigger and better more imaginative play areas. A separate green infrastructure audit was being carried out in conjunction with the planning policy; the standard was 19m² per person. The refreshed PPG17 will form part of the formal Mid Sussex planning framework

A Member said that she would like the 19m² per person amenity green space to be included in the document. She felt that it was important that the green space provided by the LAPs should not be lost. On page 12 paragraph 30 3rd bullet point she would like the high level of deficiency on the East side of Burgess Hill to be included. She expressed concern that the calculations were based on the 2001 Census, as the population of Mid Sussex had increased since then. She welcomed the fact that the community use of schools had been investigated.

The BUL for Community Services and Culture said that update estimates of population do not offer the ward breakdown that is needed and the population increase when broken down would have relatively little impact on the figures in the

audit. The Member suggested that this might not be the case if there was a large increase in one area.

The BUL for Community Services and Culture said that how the Council would deal with the LAPs would be part of the next phase of work when they would all be mapped onto an overlay on the GIS system so as to enable them to look at the locations and take a view on what needed to be moved and what was no longer needed.

A Member referred to paragraphs 28 and 29 of the report and said that there were examples where tiny play spaces had been shoehorned into new developments. She asked how new play provision on new developments was monitored and reviewed.

A Member welcomed that a planning document would be the result of this work. He agreed that LAPs were often too small and too close to homes to be useful and welcomed the move towards bigger and better play provision. He highlighted the extreme under provision of allotments and hoped that the Council could assist the Town Councils to ameliorate the situation. He also highlighted that Fonthill School (mentioned in the report) was closing.

A Member said that it was very important when deciding a planning application to carefully consider the siting of the play provision. She cited an example where the play provision had been sited next to a balancing pond and was therefore not safe and not user friendly.

A Member said that they recognised that there was under provision but felt that the Council should not be too prescriptive and that there needed to be an element of flexibility. He supported the need for infrastructure contributions but added that the Council needed to be careful about where to put the play provision.

In reply to a Member's question the BUL for Community Services and Culture said that the PPG 17 would be incorporated into a planning policy document. Members felt that this should be recorded in the resolution and were content that the Chairman and BUL for Community Services and Culture would agree the wording.

The Chairman moved to the recommendations, which were unanimously agreed subject to the amendment outlined above.

RESOLVED

That: -

- (1) feedback provided on the detail of the findings and comments on the standards be noted and
- (2) the findings of the refreshed Assessment of Planning Policy Guidance 17: Planning for open space, sport and recreation (PPG17) and proposals regarding the adoption of standards be noted and
- (3) that the standards would be incorporated in a Mid Sussex Planning Policy Document.

30. WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

RESOLVED

That the Advisory Group Work Programme for the Council year 2010/11 be agreed.

Chairman.