

Minutes of the Meeting of the **BEACH GARDENS**
BEST VALUE REVIEW WORKING GROUP held at the
Town Hall on **Wednesday, 17th August 2005** at **9.30 a.m.**

Present: -

Councillor A H Miller	Chairman
Councillor Mrs J Farrow	
Councillor M Pratt	
Councillor Mrs Wheeldon	(until 11.00 a.m.)

Also in attendance: -

Mr A J Leeson	Town Clerk (until 10.00 a.m.)
Miss A Stockley	Tourist Information Centre Manager

1) **Apologies**

Apologies for his inability to attend the meeting were received from Councillor Bright.

2) **Review Framework**

The Clerk provided the Working Group with copies of the Council's adopted Review Framework and explained the notions of compare, consult, compete and challenge.

i) **Current position**

The Clerk identified the relevant corporate objectives in the Best Value Performance Plan and it was noted that Beach Gardens was relevant to all but one of these objectives. The principal objective was 'To enable residents to enjoy quality social, recreational, and sporting facilities within the Town'.

It was agreed that if the service were being introduced for the first time the Council would endeavour to provide bowling, tennis and putting themselves in pursuit of the Council's corporate objectives. An important reason for the Town Council providing these services would be to retain control over any investment in such a project. The Council has the powers to provide such facilities under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1976. It was noted that it would be extremely unlikely that either the District or County Council, or a private contractor, would provide this service.

Gaps had been previously identified in the service, related to youth tennis and the bowling club. Discounts had been arranged with the relevant clubs to address this situation. The lack of use of the pavilion in the winter time had also been identified as an issue to address. It was noted that discussions with the staff about these issues was ongoing.

The beneficiaries and customers of this service have been identified. Along with residents and visitors to the town, the Tennis and Bowls Clubs were the principal user groups, and discussions had been held with both.

It was acknowledged that complaints and complements were dealt with on an ongoing basis, but that no overall review had yet been carried out.

The resources used by the service had been identified and the budgetary details are contained in the Council's annual estimates.

In relation to staffing, the Tourist Information Centre Manager reported that informal appraisal had been carried out and that training needs had been identified. The Council's staff handbook is nearing completion and will be issued to all staff in the near future.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at this point.

ii) Compare

The performance indicators in the Best Value Performance Plan were examined and it was noted that most areas were improving. It was agreed to carry out a more detailed analysis of income and statistics on usage over recent years. The need to acquire national Performance Indicators was also highlighted.

ACTION: The Clerk to compile an analysis of income and usage figures over recent years, and to contact Purbeck Sports Centre to acquire national performance indicators.

It was also agreed to carry out a customer satisfaction survey to ascertain the views of the general public.

ACTION: The Tourist Information Manager to conduct a customer survey.

External providers of services were identified and it was agreed to write to them requesting information about their performance over the last two years for comparative purposes. The possibilities of working with external providers were also discussed.

ACTION: The Tourist Information Manager to write to neighbouring local authorities and other external providers to request performance indicators for the previous two years.

iii) Consult

It was felt that the community as a whole had undergone consultation during recent work on the parish plan and that information could be extracted from that work.

It was agreed to carry out a survey of users and other interested parties, including the tennis club, bowls club, youth club, Purbeck View School, Harrow House, the Purbeck Crime Reduction Partnership, neighbours, Residents Association, Chamber of Trade, councillors, staff and staff representatives.

ACTION: The Tourist Information Centre Manager to oversee a user survey of the parties identified above.

iv) Challenge

Beach Gardens enhances the lives of those in the town by providing recreational facilities, especially for the young and older age groups. It was felt that the service is sustainable with a subsidy from the Town Council.

The service is provided by the Town Council in order to provide recreation for all residents and visitors to the town. This not only aides the health and fitness of the town's residents, but also provides an outlet for the energy of the youth of the town. This clearly benefits the whole community.

The service was being provided to meet the demand of the principal user groups, to help promote tourism in the town, enhance social inclusion, and to enable residents to enjoy quality recreational facilities in the town.

If the Town Council did not provide the facility there would clearly be an unmet need for such facilities within the town. There would also be a rise in anti-social behaviour and the health of the population would suffer. There would also be disillusionment in the Town Council's failure to react to demand.

Privatisation was not the preferred option, partly due to the security issues related to a public open space. It was also the Council's wish to keep the gardens open to the public without an entrance fee.

Consideration was given to other providers of the service locally. While it was acknowledged that others might be able to provide part of the service (i.e. tennis courts), it was felt that any partnership arrangement might lead to a deterioration in standards. It was acknowledged that tennis courts were provided by the District Council in Wareham, and as part of the facilities at the Middle School by the County Council.

3) Any Other Matters

A discussion followed on the use of the pavilion at Beach Gardens. The need to consult the bowls and tennis clubs on any proposed changes to the pavilion was acknowledged, although it was also agreed that club members formed a relatively small percentage of the total population of the town, and the facility was provided for the benefit of the whole community. Ultimately, there would have to be compromises made on all sides.

After further discussion it was AGREED:

That the tennis and bowls club be requested to supply information about their usage of the facilities at Beach Gardens in order to assist in the Best Value Review.

ACTION: The Tourist Information Centre Manager to contact the tennis and bowls club in order to ascertain statistical data on their usage of the facilities at Beach Gardens.
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Consideration was then given to the future development of the putting green. The Tourist Information Centre Manager stated that generally feedback from users was positive and the consensus was that it was a beautiful area. The merits of introducing crazy golf were discussed, and it was argued that this would attract children and would have minimal cost implications beyond initial construction of the course. However, there were issues related to noise and details of where to position the crazy golf holes would need careful consideration at a future date.

The need for better signage to Beach Gardens was highlighted.

Councillor Mrs Wheeldon left the meeting at this point.

Plans for new refreshment facilities at the pavilion were then discussed. It was felt that there should not be a fully-functioning café, but that there might be demand for a self-service refreshment area selling pre-packed sandwiches and cakes, with a self-service hot drinks dispenser

It was AGREED:

That the Tourist Information Centre
Manager prepare a business plan for the next
meeting of the Beach Gardens Best Value
Review Working Group.

ACTION: The Tourist Information Centre Manager to prepare a Business Plan for the next meeting of the Beach Gardens Best Value Review Working Group.

The Town Mayor summed up the proposed timescale for action, stressing the need to have the changes to the pavilion in operation for the next summer season. The financial implications need to be known prior to the preparation of the estimates for 2006/07 in December 2005.

4) Date of Next Meeting

No date was set for the next meeting of the Beach Gardens Best Value Review Working Group and Members would be informed at a later date.

The Meeting closed at 11.25 a.m.
