

## **Community Services Committee – 5 April 2005**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **5 April 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr R A Amner (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs L Hungate (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr K A Gibbs  
Cllr J M Pullen  
Cllr S P Smith

Cllr J Thomass  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr K H Hudson

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn, Mrs J R Lumley, G A Mockford and Mrs B J Wilkins.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllrs C I Black and P F A Webster

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson	- Head of Revenue & Housing Management
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
A Coulson	- Housing, Client & Strategy Officer
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

### **124 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **125 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest in item 10 on the Agenda by virtue of her involvement with the Essex Supporting People Commissioning Body.

Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in items 11 and 16 on the Agenda by virtue of his role as this Council's representative on the East of England Regional Assembly.

### 126 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions and in response to Member questions the following was noted:-

#### **Woodland Strategy Resources (Minute 428/03)**

An update report on this subject would be considered later on this agenda. (CD(F&ES))

#### **Skateboard Facilities – Clements Hall (Minute 500/03)**

Whilst there is currently no timetable set, it is part of the 2005/06 Capital Programme to fund the replacement of the existing ramp. (CD(F&ES))

#### **Unfit House (Minute 112/04)**

Preparatory work had started on 4 April 2005 and building work would commence on 11 April 2005. (HHHCC)

#### **Housing Strategy – Update (Minute 417/04)**

Officers were congratulated on the work undertaken to achieve this standard. Officers confirmed that a printed version of the Strategy would be sent out to Members shortly. (HHHCC)

#### **Funding for Potential Housing Scheme (Minute 423/04)**

A bid by the Swan Housing Group to the Housing Corporation had not been successful and therefore a privately owned development of 16 two bedroom flats would be built on this site. (HHHCC)

#### **Sheltered Housing – Fire Safety Audit (Minute 4/05)**

Officers confirmed that basic training for new employee wardens in the use of fire extinguishers could be incorporated within the first week of appointment, with specialist training being provided within the first month. (HRHM)

#### **Emergency Planning – The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – Public Consultation (Minute 6/05)**

A report including more detail around the County-wide solution will be brought forward to this Committee in due course. (CE)

#### **Pets in Sheltered Accommodation (Minute 35/05)**

Officers were congratulated on the decision taken that pet owning applicants be considered for tenancies at a number of units, which was being well received by residents. (HRHM)

### **Catering Franchises on Open Spaces (Minute 37/05)**

Officers would consider the bids received against the criteria agreed by Members and go for the best price. (CD(F&ES))

### **St John Ambulance – Hockley Community Centre – Update (Minute 41/05)**

Ward Members reported that it was not appropriate to hold a public meeting as the Community Centre were not prepared to enter into dialogue over this matter.

Concern was expressed at the poor condition of the fabric and furnishings of the social club. (CD(F&ES))

### **Sutton Court Playspace, Rochford (Minute 42/05)**

Officers reported that a meeting of the Playspace Sub-Committee had been held and the views of the Police, the Youth Service and local residents had been considered. This had resulted in a decision that the playspace would remain unlocked for a trial period of two months.

During this time the Youth Service would work with the young people of the area to come up with some designs which would be passed to the District Council to cost up. The Parish Council would look at finding some additional external funding for this project and the young people would also look at some small scale fundraising. (CD(F&ES))

## **127 ESSEX SUPPORTING PEOPLE 5 YEAR STRATEGY 2005-2010 (FINAL DRAFT)**

Mr Bauke Van der Meer, the Strategy and Policy Manager from the Essex Supporting People Team was welcomed to the meeting.

He outlined the following key points:-

- Supporting People was launched two and a half years ago, with cash limited funding. Around 17 different client groups exist, although some areas do not meet the eligibility criteria. Service delivery types do not always match the needs of the various client groups. Short term accommodation-based housing leads to a need to be able to move people on when they are ready otherwise there is inefficiency and service blocking, particularly in the areas of homelessness and chaotic lifestyles. Short term housing needs will continue to increase and floating support services will need to improve as accommodation-based provision will not increase.

## Community Services Committee – 5 April 2005

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- In the case of sheltered housing provision for older people, various schemes are often not 'fit for purpose', which leads to high void levels and an increasingly inefficient service.
- 80% of funding for older people is delivered through sheltered housing services. Three quarters of the likely client group currently live outside sheltered housing and therefore cannot receive help in the current service set up. In terms of extra care for the frail elderly it is necessary to work with the housing department to identify possibilities.
- More work is needed on the draft action plan before July in order to tie in with locally identified needs.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- Should the housing option appraisal process opt for the transfer of the housing stock, the Supporting People team would work in partnership with the Housing Association, but involving the core strategy group/ commissioning body and the local strategic group.
- The Housing Association will still be faced with similar problems in considering how to meet the needs of a changing population.
- Housing related support services are only delivered to those travellers and gypsies residing on legal sites, for example, help with accessing the provision of education for travellers' children, and access to social services.
- A statutory duty exists to help people become more independent and to be able to meet their responsibilities.
- Members of this Committee would be informed as to when the research into gypsy and travellers' housing needs would be completed.
- The wording at the base of the graph on page 79 of the 5 year strategy booklet should read: 'Figure 1 Benchmark Analysis: Travellers'.
- The shortfall figures are based on an average of 5 families per 100,000 population receiving support across 6 comparable Counties.
- Benchmarks are based on services on the ground across different client groups and do not necessarily define need. However, they do provide accurate figures for funding purposes.
- The Housing Best Value Sub-Committee would continue to discuss and recommend accordingly in respect of the reconfiguring of services to meet the needs of residents.
- Once the final management/ownership of housing stock is in place, Members still have a crucial role to play in terms of setting strategic direction.
- Prior to the existence of Supporting People, funding was provided through the Housing Benefits mechanism. The introduction of Supporting People funding saw the support costs of housing teased away from the "bricks and mortar" element of pure rent. This only occurred in the case of Council owned Sheltered Housing provision where the Council were contracted to ECC to provide fairly low levels of support.

### 128 REVISED DRAFT EAST OF ENGLAND REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2005-2010

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care apprising Members of the background to the draft Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010 which had been sent to Members under separate cover together with a paper on Housing Investment in East of England 2006-2008.

Members noted that this builds on the Government's Sustainable Communities Plan which was launched approximately two years ago. The document is designed to fit with the East of England Plan.

There are nine sub-regions within the East of England. The detail contained in the strategy document around the Thames Gateway – South Essex sub-region is weak and needs to be strengthened in terms of the issues/challenges and the good work that has been done in terms of the joint housing needs research.

In response to a question relating to the results of the recent Housing Audit carried out by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, Members were advised that the Head of Planning Services would be asked to respond directly to the Members of the Committee.

In terms of the need to provide adequate affordable housing, concern was expressed that the design aspect of such housing is crucial to any initiative, together with adequate infrastructure in place to support it.

The Essex Design Initiative was referred to which aims to promote high quality high density housing and to ensure that this type of housing does not become the housing of last resort. However, high density housing is not appropriate for all areas of the sub region, particularly in the rural parts of Essex.

On a Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr C I Black it was:-

#### **Resolved**

That the following comments on the Revised Draft East of England Regional Housing Strategy 2005-2010 be forwarded to the Regional Housing Forum:-

- Adequate funding required for housing and infrastructure, which needs to be in place, to ensure sustainability.
- High density housing is not appropriate in some areas of the Thames Gateway South Essex sub region and particularly in rural parts of Essex.
- There is a need for high quality design housing. (HHHCC)

### **129 GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR DIGITAL TELEVISION SWITCHOVER**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management updating Members on the situation regarding the switchover from analogue to digital television transmission.

#### **Resolved**

That no further action be taken until the final outcome of the Stock Option Appraisal exercise is known. (HRHM)

### **130 INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY – SPA COURT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management bringing Members up to date with the latest position regarding the Intermediate Care Facility at Spa Court.

The Head of Service advised Members that since writing the report, it was his understanding that Essex County Council were now intending to pay the full amount of the invoice.

#### **Resolved**

That the actions taken to secure re-imburement of the £9,400 outlay be endorsed. (HRHM)

### **131 RACIAL INCIDENTS IN COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management and noted the occurrences of racial incidents in Council accommodation over the past year.

### **132 RACIAL EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management and noted the results of the monitoring of ethnic origin of both housing applicants and those housed through the housing register.

### **133 EAST OF ENGLAND CHILDREN'S SERVICES MEMBER NETWORK**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking Members' views as to whether or not to become involved in the East of England Children's Services Member Network.

On a Motion moved by Cllr S P Smith and seconded by Cllr K A Gibbs it was:-

### Resolved

- (1) That this Council participates in the East of England Children's Services Member Network.
- (2) That Cllrs R A Amner and S P Smith be nominated to attend the first meeting of the network.
- (3) That attendance at this meeting will be an approved duty for which travelling and subsistence allowances are payable. (CD(F&ES))

### 134 WOODLANDS ENVIRONMENTAL LIAISON OFFICER

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) updating Members on specific issues related to the Council's Woodlands Section, with particular reference to Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and the planned appointment of an Environmental Liaison Officer.

Members noted that:-

- The post of Arboricultural Officer is being advertised at the right grade for the current market.
- Should the latest recruitment process not prove successful, there may be some spare capacity via the County Council.

Members of the Committee were pleased with the suggestion that the planting of the oak trees could be used to celebrate and commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar and also welcomed the intention to offer the public the opportunity to sponsor an oak tree.

The cost of sponsorship and the detail around the siting of the sponsorship detail was still to be determined. Suggestions included a plate being displayed on the tree or the ground adjacent to the tree and/or a map of the area detailing the sponsorship.

### Resolved

- (1) That 200 oak trees be planted in Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park in commemoration of the Battle of Trafalgar.
- (2) That the provision of 200 English specimen oak trees at a cost of approximately £8,000 be funded through the Cherry Orchard capital works programme. (CD(F&ES))

**EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved**

That the public and press be excluded from the Meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**135 TOWER CARAVAN PARK: REQUEST FOR ALTERATION OF SITE LICENCE CONDITIONS**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care inviting Members to agree an alteration to a site licence condition.

**Resolved**

That the proposed alteration to the site licence condition referred to in the exempt report be approved, but without the need to move the caravan when sold. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 9 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....