

# Community Services Committee – 11 January 2005

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **11 January 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr Mrs L Hungate (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr G A Mockford  
Cllr J M Pullen

Cllr S P Smith  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr Mrs C A Weston  
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

## **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner, Mrs H L A Glynn, Cllr J Thomass

## **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr C A Hungate

## **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson	- Head of Revenue and Housing Management
J Pritchard	- Housing Manager
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

## **1 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## **2 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services, which related to an item of business which had been referred to this Committee by the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2004 with the recommendation that the Committee be requested to consider asking the STAR Partnership to change its name.

On a Motion moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr G A Mockford, Members deferred making a decision on the recommendation and requested that details of the contributions made by all funding partners to the STAR Partnership be fed into the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider at its meeting on 1 February 2005 when it considers the STAR Partnership's progress report.

### **Resolved**

That the information requested above be provided for Members of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to consider at its meeting to be held on 9 February 2005, when Russ McLean of the STAR Partnership will be presenting his report.

### **3 MUTUAL EXCHANGES**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider reversing the decision to levy a charge on tenants moving by mutual exchange following additional research recently undertaken.

The Committee agreed an amendment to the recommendation for the purpose of greater clarity.

### **Resolved**

That the charge is removed for tenants who are arranging to move through a mutual exchange, noting that this will meet the requirement of the Audit Commission and that the costs of around £1,000 per annum will be met from the Housing Revenue Account and tenants generally. (HRHM)

### **4 SHELTERED HOUSING – FIRE SAFETY AUDIT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management, which invited Members to consider the results of the Fire Safety Audit recently commissioned by the Council in respect of its twelve sheltered housing schemes across the District.

In response to Member questions/comment the Head of Service advised that:-

- an advance notice would be circulated emphasising that extinguishers are for the use of trained personnel and that no warden must put themselves at risk.
- all reasonable necessary fire fighting equipment would be made available at schemes
- smoking is permitted in communal areas of sheltered housing schemes; usually within designated areas
- incidents caused by fire occur infrequently and are usually related to the use of microwaves and cookers within a tenant's own flat
- all sheltered schemes have an alarm which is connected to a central system with a direct link to the warden, Basildon Careline and the blue light services
- a programme of fitting smoke and heat detectors within all flats is now completed

- fire alarms are checked on a weekly basis and the link to the central control is checked on a monthly basis.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That all existing wardens undergo basic training on the use of fire extinguishers.
- (2) That all new employee wardens undergo similar training within the first month of appointment.
- (3) That the Housing Manager introduces a 'fire safety housekeeping' regime to ensure raised awareness to these issues.
- (4) That the fire safety audit report be accepted and the recommendations contained therein be implemented.
- (5) That costs be met from the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme. (HRHM)

## **5 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUSINESS PLAN**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management, which invited Members to consider the draft Housing Revenue Account business plan and to make comments if considered appropriate.

Members noted that the draft plan had been submitted to GO East and that the majority of the requirements had been fulfilled. The Head of Service and Housing Manager anticipated that, following their forthcoming meeting with GO East, the outstanding requirements would be met.

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

- The main thrust of the document is to inform the Government about the management of its housing stock.
- The information on page 29 is a summary of what is in the budget including repairs; these can be seen in more detail in the yellow pages of the budget book.
- The Housing Option Appraisal report should be with Members by April 2005 and it is anticipated that the decision will be signed off by May 2005.
- The implementation will then take place and feature in the review of the Business Plan later in the year.
- Improvements would be made to the diagram on page 3, which was intended to provide a visual representation of how the Business Planning process fits into the Council's agenda, together with the provision of a short written explanation.

### Resolved

- (1) That an improved diagram be presented on page 3 of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, together with a form of words beneath describing how the Business Planning process fits into the Council's agenda.
- (2) That, together with the amendment referred to in point (1) above, the draft Housing Revenue Account Business Plan be endorsed. (HRHM)

## 6 EMERGENCY PLANNING – THE CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT 2004 – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive, which introduced the consultation process initiated by the publication of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, and the draft Regulations and Guidance documents that accompany the Act.

Members noted that:-

- whilst the draft guidance had been lengthy, officers had concurred with it
- this would, however, represent increased work and responsibilities for the County and District Councils
- the District had been identified as a Category 1 responder, and would therefore be looking to work in partnership with others to meet its requirements
- an option being considered on a countywide basis is for a central core in the County Council with each District becoming a centre of excellence in a specialist area
- a report would be going to Essex Local Government Association on the way forward
- initial estimates suggest that the District would require one full time and one part time member of staff to cover its responsibilities, for which additional funding is required
- the Government had included £19,000 grant calculations; however, this translates into an actual grant of around £6,000
- the District should, therefore, express concern over the inadequacy of the funding, including that provided to the County Council.

### Resolved

- (1) That the likely implications of the legislation in relation to Rochford District be noted.
- (2) That a provision of £25,000 be considered for the 2005/2006 Budget Strategy.

- (3) That this Council's response to the consultation is to express continuing concern over the inadequacy of the funding set aside to implement and carry forward the consequences of legislation.
- (4) That the joint discharge of duties be explored in partnership with other Essex local authorities. (CE)

### 7 PROPOSED ST JOHN AMBULANCE HEADQUARTERS – HOCKLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE

**Note:** Cllr Mrs C A Weston declared a personal interest by virtue of being a Member of Hockley Parish Council.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which advised Members of the latest progress with this issue.

The Corporate Director reported that he had still not received a written explanation of the reasons for the withdrawal of consent by the Hockley Community Centre in respect of the St John Ambulance request to construct a headquarters on the site.

The Committee noted that Hockley Parish Council was similarly awaiting a written explanation of the decision taken by the trustees of the Community Centre.

Members requested that the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) write formally to the Hockley Community Centre, indicating a deadline for reply, and requesting this information be supplied in writing, together with a copy of the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Centre at which the decision had been taken.

#### **Resolved**

That Members be provided with an update on this issue at the meeting of the Community Services Committee to be held on 1 February 2005.

The meeting closed at 8.27 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....