

## **Policy & Finance Committee – 11 April 2002**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **11 April 2002** when there were present:

Cllr A Hosking (Vice-Chairman in the Chair)

Cllr R Adams

Cllr J E Grey

Cllr G A Mockford

Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr P J Morgan

Cllr M G B Starke

Cllr R E Vingoe

Cllr P F A Webster

Cllr D A Weir

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs G Fox, D R Helson and Mrs J Helson.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllrs Mrs J M Giles, V H Leach and D A Weir.

### **VISITING**

Cllr C I Black

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren – Chief Executive

R J Honey – Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)

R Crofts – Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

D Deeks – Head of Financial Services

Mrs H Drye – Corporate Policy Manager

Mrs E Chapman – Personnel Manager

F Laycock – Senior Environmental Health Officer/Unison Secretary

J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

At the commencement of the meeting Members and Officers stood in silent tribute to the Chairman of the Council, Cllr Mrs S J Lemon, who had passed away earlier in the day.

### **149 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr D A Weir and Cllr Mrs M A Weir each declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees, Golden Jubilee Fair, Rochford, by virtue of being Members of Rochford Parish Council.

Cllr Mrs J M Giles declared a non-pecuniary interest in references to Rayleigh Town Council by virtue of being a Member of the Town Council.

### 150 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY – FRAIL ELDERING HOUSING NEEDS

Members considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on a request from the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Policy and Finance Committee consider the retention of the Housing and Support Partnership as consultants on the development of a housing strategy for frail older people together with the possible sources of funding for this.

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that, should the principle of retaining the Housing Support Partnership be agreed, the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be advised of the detail of the research and consultation envisaged.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That £7,000 be made available for further consultancy work from the Housing & Support Partnership, to be funded from underspend in the 2001/02 budget allocated for this work. (HHHCC)
- (2) That the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee be advised of the detail of the research and consultation envisaged. (HHHCC)

### 151 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee received the schedule relating to decisions. It was observed that it would assist review if the commentary used to identify project progress could be as uniform and informative as possible.

#### **50–54 West Street, Rochford (Minute 423/00)**

A report on this site was to be considered by the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its next meeting. A planning application was imminent.

#### **Audio Visual Equipment – Tenders (Minute 165/01)**

Work was underway to resolve outstanding practical problems.

#### **Standards Committee – Recruitment of Independent & Parish Representatives (Minute 59(2)/02)**

There had already been some expressions of interest in the Independent Representative role. The appointment of a Parish Representative would take place in the new Municipal Year.

### **Market Car Park – Rayleigh Operatic & Dramatic Society (RODS) Scenery Store (Minute 59(3)/02)**

Members recognised that this matter could be progressed effectively if the Committee was able to determine a view on the timetable to be associated with RODS proposals to secure premises at Lubbards Farm.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr V H Leach, it was:-

#### **Resolved**

That, subject to consideration by the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee, RODS be given a timeframe of three months to submit a planning application to the Authority in respect of the Lubbards Farm site and a further three months from the date of receiving planning approval to vacate the Scenery Store in the market Car Park, Rayleigh. (CD(F&ES)

### **Proposed Environmental Centre – Feedback from Rayleigh Town Council (Minute 59(3)/02)**

The Chief Executive was seeking amplification from Rayleigh Town Council following correspondence from the Town Council that they did not want a Member Level Meeting.

### **Playspaces Rolling Programme 2001/02 (Minute 274/01)**

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that Officers would investigate and report back on the status of work being undertaken following meetings on the Pooles Lane Recreation Ground, Hullbridge.

### **Capital Programme (Minute 286/01)**

Contracts relating to Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park had been exchanged and completion would be on 23 April 2002.

### **Playspaces Rolling Programme 2001/02 Consultation Responses (Minute 380(vi)/01)**

Subject to dry ground conditions, work to establish the skateboarding facility at Canewdon would commence in the week beginning 6 May 2002.

### **Contract Review (Minute 380(ix)/01)**

Officers would be reporting to Council in the new Municipal Year with recommendations for revised Contract Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.

### **Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park Scheme (Minute 470/01)**

It was noted that a report setting out scheme progress to date was being submitted to the next meeting of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee. More planting, fencing and seeding would be needed to achieve the jigsaw grant. Monitoring of the scheme would be undertaken by the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman of the former Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park Working Group referred to recent aspects of concern about project progress. Although these had been addressed it could be observed that, in retrospect, the Working Group should have been retained as a Task and Finish Group along the lines agreed for the Town Centre Working Groups.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the Chairman of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be consulted on the possibility of inviting Members of the former Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park Working Group to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **Leisure Management Contract (Minute 47/02)**

The final contract documentation would be signed within the next few weeks.

### **Budget Strategy and Council Tax (Minute 51/02)**

The inclusion of any works to Public Toilets not within the current Capital Programme would be a matter for decision by the new Council.

Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

## **152 COMMUNITY STRATEGIES AND LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided detail on Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships and outlined ways forward for the District Council.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that whilst the development of the Community Plan was a statutory requirement for the District Council, consultation would be undertaken with all other partners on their commitment and the possibility of funding contributions to ensure the Strategy was effectively implemented.

### **Resolved**

That consultation be undertaken with the various partners within the community to identify ways of progressing the Community Plan and Local Strategic Partnership, a report to be submitted on progress to this Committee prior to the Summer recess. (CE)

### **153 ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION STRATEGY**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive proposing that the Council should investigate the establishment of a wider consultation network to provide feedback on a regular basis on a variety of issues.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- The approach proposed would fit well with both existing requirements to consult and proposals set out in the latest Audit Commission Consultation Paper on Comprehensive Performance Assessment, details of which were being submitted to the next meeting of Full Council.
- Detailed arrangements could include “refresher” mechanisms aimed at ensuring that citizen consultees on any forum/panel remained independent and typical.
- Officers would approach other public agencies such as the Primary Care Trust and the Police on the possibilities for sharing resources/maximising the range and scope of consultation activity.
- It was envisaged that a report setting out proposals in more detail would be submitted back for Council consideration prior to the summer recess.

During discussion it was recognised that, whilst it would be possible to continue using existing consultation mechanisms, a forum/citizens panel approach was likely to be more cost effective. Costs would be more easily identifiable and an element of consistency would be introduced.

On a motion moved by Councillor V H Leach and seconded by Councillor A Hosking it was:-

### **Resolved**

That Officers undertake detailed investigation of the possibilities for establishing a Community Consultation Forum/Citizens Panel and report back with costings early in the new Municipal Year. (CE)

### **154 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out proposals, together with a timetable, for undertaking his appraisal under the modernised committee system.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That appraisal of the Chief Executive be undertaken by a Member Group comprising Group Leaders, the Chairman of the Policy & Finance Committee and the Chairman of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- (2) That the Member Group undertake appraisals twice yearly (in April and October) and report outcomes direct to the Policy & Finance Committee. (CE)

### **155 ENFORCEMENT POLICY, REVENUE SERVICES**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on adoption of the Revenue Services Enforcement Policies.

During debate, particular reference was made to the informative format of the Council Tax/National Non Domestic Rates Policy in making use of a flow chart.

#### **Resolved**

That the proposed enforcement policies for Car Parking Charges, Housing Benefit Overpayments and Council Tax/National Non-Domestic Rates, as set out in the report of Head of Revenue and Housing Management (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes), be agreed. (HRHM)

### **156 RAYLEIGH ASSOCIATION OF VOLUNTARY SERVICES (RAVS) – SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT AND FUNDING**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services which sought approval to the Service Level Agreement with RAVS/funding support and addressed a request for hire of the Council Chamber.

Members endorsed the proposed Service Level Agreement and funding mechanism. During debate on use of the Council Chamber, reference was made to the need to be mindful of Civic Suite proposals emanating from the Asset Management Review Working Group. Reference was also made to the special suitability of the Council Chamber for occasions such as Annual General Meetings. It was recognised that the Council needed to retain first call on the

accommodation for Extraordinary meetings and that there are a number of venues within Rayleigh suitable for disabled persons.

The Committee agreed a motion relating to use of the Chamber, moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor J E Grey, and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Service Level Agreement between RAVS and the Council be agreed.
- (2) That the funding arrangement contained within the Service Level Agreement be agreed. This to be a total grant of £1,600 in 2002/03 increased by inflation for 2003/04 and 2004/05
- (3) That RAVS and other voluntary organisations be allowed to use the Civic Suite Council Chamber free of charge once a year (HFS).

### **157 ROCHFORD RESERVOIR – GRANT OF NEW MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT**

**Note:** Councillor V H Leach declared a pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of his daughter being a user of the facility and left the Meeting during its consideration.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on the granting of a new Management Agreement to the Rochford Angling Club.

### **Resolved**

That a New Management Agreement be granted to the Rochford Angling Club for a term of five years from 15 March 2002 at an annual fee of £550 and upon such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services deems fit. (HLS)

### **158 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE FEES, VILLAGE FAIR, GREAT WAKERING**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Health, Housing and Community Care on an application for waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees for the Village Fair, Great Wakering scheduled for 26 August 2002.

### **Resolved**

That the fees due if a Public Entertainment Licence is granted be waived by 100%. (HHHCC)

### **159 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE FEES, GOLDEN JUBILEE FAIR, ROCHFORD**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on an application for waiver of Public Entertainment Licence fees for the Golden Jubilee Fair, Rochford scheduled for 3 June 2002.

#### **Resolved**

That the fees due if a Public Entertainment Licence is granted be waived by 100%. (HHHCC)

### **160 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE FEES, OPEN AIR CONCERT AND CUSTOMERS/CLASSIC SHOW, MALYONS FARM, LOWER ROAD, HULLBRIDGE**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on an application for waiver of Public Entertainment Licence fees for the open air concert and custom/classic show, Malyons Farm, Lower Road, Hullbridge scheduled for 4 August 2002.

The Committee endorsed the view of a Member that, in line with previous years, an 80% fee waiver would be appropriate.

#### **Resolved**

That the fees due if a Public Entertainment Licence is granted be waived by 80%. (HHHCC)

### **161 MOBILE EXHIBITION UNIT**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which reviewed the usage of the Mobile Exhibition Unit over a period and, in the light of that review, sought the Committee's views on the current policy for hire.

#### **Resolved**

That the current policy of hiring and charging for the Council's Mobile Exhibition Unit be continued for a further twelve months with a review in March 2003. (CE)

#### **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

#### **Resolved**

That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined



in paragraphs 9 and 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act, 1972 would be disclosed.

### **162 CIVIC SUITE, RAYLEIGH**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) on a request relating to Civic Suite accommodation.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- Should the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee continue the work of the Asset Management Group, this would include a detailed review of the position relating to all current users of the Civic Suite.
- At this stage it was only possible to make assumptions about the Town Council's longer-term accommodation objectives.

A Member made particular reference to the value of ensuring that any arrangements agreed with the Town Council for use of the Civic Suite should be such that there would be no conflict with any proposed improvement works. The Committee agreed a motion, moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr J E Grey, on this aspect of the proposals and it was:-

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to continue the work of the Asset Management Group in connection with the Asset Management Plan, with particular reference to use of the Civic Suite, and report back to this Committee on the viability of improvement works to that building.
- (2) That Rayleigh Town Council be advised that, because consideration is being given to the possibility of improvement work to the Civic Suite, no extension of their lease can be agreed but that the existing facility can be made available on a monthly rental basis pending the commencement of any works. (CD(LPA)).

### **163 JOB EVALUATION**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) on the job evaluation project which was expanded upon by both the Personnel Manager and Mr Laycock as Unison Branch Secretary.

During debate Cllr P F A Webster, the Council's representative on the Regional Employers Organisation, advised that the report accorded with conclusions reached by the Employers Organisation.

Members noted the background to development of the job evaluation software and:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the implementation of Job Evaluation be postponed until it can be demonstrated that a substantial number of authorities, at least 10% nationally, have successfully implemented a pay and grading structure based on it.
- (2) That the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee consider and recommend a Grading Appeals Mechanism.  
(CD(LP&A))

### **164 STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive on Staffing Matters.

### **Resolved**

That the current levels of vacancies and long-term sickness absence, as set out in the exempt report of the Chief Executive, be noted. (CE)

At the close of the meeting the Vice-Chairman, on behalf of the Chairman, wished to record thanks to Members and Officers for their sterling work over the Municipal Year and to extend best wishes to those Councillors who would be leaving Council service at Year end.

The meeting closed at 9.39 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....