

# **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

## **11 April 2000**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** held on **Tuesday 11 April 2000** when there were present:

Cllr C R Morgan - Chairman

Cllr R Adams	Cllr V H Leach
Cllr D E Barnes	Cllr Mrs S J Lemon
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr T Livings
Cllr G Fox	Cllr G A Mockford
Cllr D F Flack	Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson
Cllr Mrs J M Giles	Cllr R E Vingoe
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr D R Helson	Cllr D A Weir
Cllr Mrs J Helson	Cllr Mrs M A Weir

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs J E Grey and Mrs M S Vince.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr V D Hutchings.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
G Woolhouse	- Head of Health, Housing & Community Care
A Smith	- Head of Administrative & Member Services
J Bostock	- Principal Committee Administrator

### **114 MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

The interests recorded in the Minutes to be received and considered were taken as read.

Councillor V H Leach declared an interest in Community Services Minute 74 (petition from residents regarding youth problems at Doggetts Play Space) by virtue of his daughter having submitted a petition on the subject.

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Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a non pecuniary interest in Community Services Minute 74 by virtue of residency in Doggetts Close.

Councillors G Fox, Mrs J M Giles, Mrs J Helson, Mrs S J Lemon, T Livings, Mrs W M Stevenson, Mrs M S Vince, and R E Vingoe each declared an interest in the item on Essex School Organisation Plan 2000/2005 by virtue of being School Governors.

#### **115 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **116 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee was satisfied that all necessary action had been or was being taken. Minute 42/00 was carried forward.

#### **117 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARENT COMMITTEES**

The Committee considered the recommendations of the Parent Committees.

##### **Community Services Committee – 1 March 2000**

##### **Minute 74 – Petition from Residents Regarding Youth Problems at Doggetts Play Space**

In considering the reference for funding from the Community Services Committee, Members had before them a copy of the original report from the Head of Leisure & Client Services to Community Services together with additional information on counter-petitions which had been received on this subject and the resource implications of relocation of the Play Space Aerial runway.

During debate, some Members wished to re-emphasise concern at the lack of public and Ward Member consultation undertaken in the formulation of proposals. Responding to questions, the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) indicated that, should the Committee agree to funding re-siting of the runway, such funding could be drawn from the Capital Rolling Programme. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for suitable locations to be identified to assist any future Council decision about re-siting.

The Committee agreed a Motion moved by Councillor D E Barnes and seconded by Councillor Mrs M A Weir on funding approval and a Motion moved by Councillor Mrs W S Stevenson and seconded by Councillor D F Flack on referral to Full Council and it was:-

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#### **Resolved**

- (1) That approval be given to funding the removal and re-siting of the arial runway in Doggetts Play Space at an estimated cost of between £6000 and £8000, the monies to be drawn from the Capital Rolling Programme.
- (2) That the question of suitable locations be referred to the next Meeting of Full Council to which a Report on location possibilities should be submitted. (CD (F& ES))

#### **118 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee received the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and considered the recommendations contained therein:-

##### **(1) Member Budget Monitoring Working Group – 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2000**

###### **Minute 74 – Asset Review**

#### **Resolved**

That Officers undertake an Asset Review in respect of 9 Highfield Crescent, Rayleigh. (HLS)

##### **(2) Compulsory Competitive Tendering Panel – 14<sup>th</sup> February 2000**

###### **Minute 82 – Outstanding Issues – Grounds Maintenance Contract**

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That Officers continue to seek external sources of funding for the planting and maintenance of roadside verges and roundabouts.
- (2) That a further report, outlining the costs of producing and installing signs referring to Section 6 of the Essex Act 1987 in priority areas to be identified, be brought back to Members.
- (3) That Officers liaise with the County Council's Highways Division to co-ordinate their road maintenance programme with the District Council's timetable for cleansing of the central reservation of the A127 and A130. (HLCS)

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#### **Minute 84 – Inventory of Playspaces**

##### **Resolved**

- (1) That the format and content of the inventory document be agreed, subject to updating where necessary being carried out.
- (2) That provision be made within the new Leisure Contract for safety inspections of playspaces to take place once-weekly and for maintenance related visits to be co-ordinated with the output contract. (HLCS)
- (3) **Corporate Resources Sub-Committee – 25 January 2000 (adjourned) and 15 February 2000 (reconvened)**
- (4) **Compulsory Competitive Tendering Panel – 9 March 2000**

#### **Minute 89 – Current and Future Monitoring of the Leisure, Refuse Collection and Recycling, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Contracts**

##### **Resolved**

- (1) That the new monitoring structure be adopted as soon as possible with all existing staff retaining their current grade.
- (2) That the vacant Assistant Contracts Inspector post be advertised as soon as possible.
- (3) That prices be obtained for the contracting out of periphery activities with a further report being made to the Panel on the outcome. (HLCS)
- (5) **Partnership Sub-Committee (Essex Links) – 23 March 2000**
- (6) **Corporate Resources Sub-Committee – 28 March 2000**

#### **Minute 314 – Member Training and Support**

##### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Local Government Information Unit Training Charter for Members be adopted.
- (2) That self-tuition facilities in the Members' Lounges at Rochford and at Rayleigh, including the acquisition of two PCs and training materials at a cost of £3,000, be provided.

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- (3) That Members of the Council be allowed to make use of the Council's IT facilities, including Email addresses and Internet access, in support of their duties as Councillors. (HAMS)

#### **Minute 315 – Managing Violence in the Workplace – Code of Practice No. 1**

##### **Resolved**

That the Code of Practice for Managing Violence in the Workplace be adopted subject to the amendments suggested by the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee and be included in the Staff Handbook. (HAMS)

#### **Minute 316 – Community Legal Service**

##### **Resolved**

- (1) That following publication of the draft guidance, Officers investigate the proposal further in collaboration with Castle Point Borough Council and report back to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee.
- (2) That when the above report is submitted, the Regional Planning and Partnership Manager of the Legal Services Commission be invited to give a presentation on the subject. (CD(F&ES))

#### **Minute 317 – Association of Essex Councils (AEC) Economic Development Seminar**

##### **Resolved**

That one Member be nominated from each group plus the Chairs of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee (or their nominees) to attend the AEC Economic Development Seminar on 14 April 2000. (HCPI)

#### **Minute 318 – Application to Hire Public Open Space at the King George V Playing Field, Ashingdon**

##### **Resolved**

That the Churches of Rochford and District 's request be agreed, subject to the following conditions:-

- (1) that the Playing Field be kept open, and an area marked out exclusively for the Churches' use

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- (2) that the Churches apply for a Public Entertainment Licence for the event, if required
- (3) that a market rent for the field's hire be levied, but a grant of a corresponding sum be awarded from the Playing Field Maintenance Budget. (HLCS)

#### **Minute 319 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees – Barn Dance, New Hall Farm, Lambourne Hall Road, Canewdon**

##### **Resolved**

That a waiver of 80% of the fee due for Public Entertainment Licence be granted. (HHHCC)

#### **Minute 320 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees – Hawkwell Village Fair**

##### **Resolved**

That a waiver of 100% of the fee due for a Public Entertainment Licence be granted. (HHHCC)

#### **Minute 321 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees - Hullbridge Village Fair**

##### **Resolved**

That a waiver of 100% of the fee due for a Public Entertainment Licence be granted. (HHHCC)

#### **Minute 322 – Application for Street Trading Consent Fee Waiver, May Fayre, Market Square and West Street, Rochford**

##### **Resolved**

That a waiver of 100% of the fee due for a Street Trading Consent Licence be granted. (HHHCC)

#### **Minute 323 – Relocation of Flood Siren at Hullbridge**

##### **Resolved**

That, subject to Planning Permission, the Head of Legal of Services complete a licence at a nominal fee with Essex County Council for the erection of a flood warning siren in the approximate position within Hullbridge Recreation Ground as marked on the plan attached to the

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report and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services deems fit. (HLS)

#### **Minute 324 – Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS)**

##### **Resolved**

That the payment to RAVS of £1,500 grant aid for 2000/2001 be deferred until the position of the organisation can be clarified. (CE)

#### **Minute 325 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees: Open Air Concert and Custom/Classic Show, Malyons Farm, Lower Road, Hullbridge**

##### **Resolved**

That a waiver of 80% of the fee due for a Public Entertainment Licence be granted. (HHHCC)

#### **Minute 326 – Chief Officers' Remuneration**

##### **Resolved**

That the grade for third tier officers subject to JNC Chief Officer Pay and Conditions be amended as outlined in the confidential report. (CE)

#### **(7) Urgency Sub-Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2000**

**Note:** The Committee addressed the exempt appendix to these Minutes after exclusion of the public and press.

#### **(8) Compulsory Competitive Tendering Panel – 6<sup>th</sup> April 2000**

**Note:** The Committee addressed the recommendations under Minutes 91 and 92 of these Minutes after exclusion of the public and press.

## **119 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL – THE ESSEX APPROACH**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which brought attention to the County Council's strategic document "The Essex Approach" and sought views as to whether the District Council should support the broad principles and objectives contained within the document.

During debate, Members observed that-

- The Care Programme element of the Approach documentation appeared biased towards young persons and lacking in reference to other client care groups, such as the elderly.

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- That references to such matters as equal opportunities seemed rather sparse.
- It was hoped that any new partnership working arrangements were an improvement on past and current experience.

#### **Resolved**

That Essex County Council be advised that, subject to the above observations, this Council is willing to work together in areas of mutual benefit to both partners and support the broad principles and objectives contained within 'The Essex Approach'. (CE)

#### **120 ESSEX SCHOOLS ORGANISATION PLAN 2000/2005**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Initiatives which sought comments on the Draft Essex Schools' Organisation Plan 2000/2005 and highlighted the implications for Rochford District.

During debate Members made the following observations:-

- The Plan does not recognise the serious problems currently associated with pupil numbers, particularly in parts of the Rochford District. Examples were given of both secondary and primary school level where there was real difficulty in gaining access to schools. The Statistical Tables demonstrated that Rochford had experienced the largest pupil increase amongst District Councils.
- The Local Education Authority should be aware that the District is not prepared to accept substandard education or pupil accommodation.
- From a planning authority perspective, District Members have previously recognised shortcomings in terms of the availability of school places relative to housing allocations. The County Council should certainly be aware of concerns given that schools within the District have previously alerted the County to problems associated with this.
- The educational success of schools within the District meant that there was a high demand for places, with pupils flowing in from outside the district. There were concerns that these pressures would continue to grow, given that the siblings of those offered places also have attendance rights.
- It was felt that, over recent years, successive Governments had made decisions that contributed to the current problems. More



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recently the creation of Southend on Sea as a Unitary Authority, has added to concerns.

- The high number of statemented pupils identified at Sweyne Park was queried and it was felt that the County should be asked for clarification on this matter.
- Given the history of school closures, problems have built up over a period of years.
- Very disappointed and extremely concerned that many of the issues raised in the consideration of last years document still appeared to be the case with little progress as to their resolution.
- There is concern at indications from non-education authority sources that plans concerning primary school provision at the Park School site are now available. Such plans should be furnished to the District Council.
- There is an overriding need for a period of stability in pupil levels at current funding levels.
- There is a perception that schools are unwilling to enrol special needs children as this impacts upon their position in the Government league tables. This is particularly concerning given the values associated with special needs pupils remaining with their peer group for as long as possible.

The Committee concurred with the conclusion of the Chairman that it would be appropriate to request a Member level meeting with the County Council on this subject. This was particularly important given that the issues raised last year by the Council when the previous Schools' organisation plan was considered still appear to be the case with little insight given as to how or if they will be addressed. Such an approach would reflect the spirit of partnership enshrined in 'The Essex Approach' document. The Committee recognised that agencies other than the County Council had an influence on statistics, but agreed that it would appropriate to approach the County in the first instance.

#### **Resolved**

That, given the high level of concern about the issues raised in the Essex Schools Organisational Plan 2000/2005, the County Council be asked for a joint Member level meeting to discuss the way forward.  
(CE)

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#### **121 HOMELESSNESS APPLICATION – OMBUDSMAN INVESTIGATION**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which detailed an Ombudsman finding of maladministration with injustice and the Ombudsman's recommendations relating to an ex gratia payment and review of arrangements.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Ombudsman's findings and report be accepted.
- (2) That a total ex-gratia payment of £750 be paid to the complainants.
- (3) That the Ombudsman be advised of the action taken or being taken to address the failures identified in his report. (HHHCC)

#### **122 ESSEX YOUNG PEOPLES DAY 2000**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on participation in the Essex Young Peoples Day 2000.

During debate, Members endorsed the view of the Chairman of the Council that it would be appropriate to invite pupils from Schools which had recently participated in the District Council's' Citizenship Debate to represent the District at the Young Peoples Day.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That support be given, in principle, to the aims of the proposed Essex Young Peoples Day 2000 and, subject to further information being provided on what would be expected of this Council, the Council actively participate in the arrangements for the day.
- (2) That pupils from those schools involved in the recent District Council Citizenship Debate be invited to represent the District at the Essex Young Peoples Day 2000 event. (HAMS)

#### **123 ESSEX DISABLED PEOPLES ASSOCIATION STEERING GROUP**

The Committee considered the Report of the Chief Executive which sought views as to whether the Council should nominate a representative to serve on the Essex Disabled Peoples Association Steering Group on behalf of the Association of Essex Councils.

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Members noted that since the report was prepared the Association had identified three possible nominees from other Authorities.

Notwithstanding the possibility that a nomination may be unsuccessful, it was agreed that the District Councillor involved in leading the review of the Dial-a-Ride scheme should be able to attend if possible. On a Motion moved by Councillor D E Barnes and seconded by Councillor Mrs J Helson it was:-

#### **Resolved**

That Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn be forwarded as a nominee to the Essex Disabled Peoples Association Steering Group. (CE)

#### **124 TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION TRAINING SESSION**

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Initiatives which sought nominations to attend a Traffic Management Information and Training session on 25 May 2000.

#### **Resolved**

That the Chairs of the Transportation and Environmental Services Committee and Transportation Sub-Committee, or their nominees, be appointed to attend the training session with an Officer (HCPI)

#### **125 EXTENSION TO EXISTING MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS 2005, 2006 AND 2018**

The Committee considered the Report of the Head of Leisure and Client Services which sought extension of Maintenance Contracts.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That Maintenance Contracts 2005 and 2006 be extended for a period of 6 months from 31 March 2000.
- (2) That Maintenance Contract 2018 be extended for a period of 12 months from 31 March 2000 (HLCS).

#### **126 COMMITTEE TIMETABLE**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on the adoption of a timetable of meetings for the 2000/2001 Municipal Year.

During debate Members agreed that, if possible, it would be appropriate to move the proposed date for Annual Council from Wednesday 17 May 2000 to avoid a clash with the Annual Meeting of Parish Councils. The Committee concurred with the Chief Executive that this could be achieved by scheduling Annual Council for Thursday

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18 May with the Member training originally proposed for that date being rescheduled to Friday 19 May.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

That the timetable of meetings for 2000/2001, as set out in the appendix to these Minutes, be adopted. (HAMS)

#### **127 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS – MONITORING REPORT**

##### **Resolved**

That the report of the Head of Financial Services advising on the use of delegated powers be received. (HFS)

#### **128 FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE APPEALS PANEL**

##### **Resolved**

That the following Councillors be appointed to serve on the Finance and General Purposes Committee Appeals Panel:-

Councillors T G Cutmore, D F Flack, Mrs H L A Glynn, V D Hutchings, Mrs S J Lemon and G A Mockford.

#### **129 CAR PARKING CHARGES**

At the request of Councillor V H Leach, the Committee considered the following proposal:-

“In view of the Notice provided to Council Members that the Rayleigh and District Chamber of Trade propose to present a petition to Council on the revised parking charges and the fact that the Car Parking Order has not yet been advertised, it is proposed that this Committee recommends to Council that:-

- (1) Minute 16(iv) – 18 January 2000 be rescinded in accordance with Standing Order 20.7(a) and
- (2) The car parking charging bands be rescinded”.

In addressing the proposal, Councillor Leach indicated that he would be happy for the term ‘rescinded’ be replaced with the term ‘reconsidered’. He emphasised that the main aim of reconsideration would be to assist the local economy. Rayleigh Chamber of Trade are concerned that removal of the half hour charging meant fewer cars using car parks and shop trade being lost to large out of town stores.

Those Members in favour of reconsidering the car park charging bands referred to the importance of being mindful of the Council's current circumstances rather than those of a few months ago and to the recently adopted Corporate Plan which recognised that there could be conflict between competing aims such as service charging levels and the requirements of the local economy. A key factor in current bands is the absence of a half hour charging band.

Those Members who felt there should be no change to the Council's decision emphasised that any reduction in revenue from car parking would have to be met via another source or a cut in services. Reference was made to the recent budget process during which it had been recognised that charging needed to be at a level to cover the cost of introducing free Saturday afternoon car parking.

The proposal having been moved by Councillor V H Leach and seconded by Councillor Mrs J Helson was lost on a show of hands.

#### **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**Resolved** that, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraphs 9 and 1 of Part 12 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

#### **130 INCREASED COSTS FOR CLEMENTS HALL SWIMMING POOL ROOF**

**Note:** The Chairman agreed to admit this item of business as urgent in view of additional work identified in the current scheme which requires additional funding. The contractor was on site and a decision was needed for the scheme to progress.

The Committee considered the confidential report of the Head of Leisure and Client Services on increased costs which had been identified associated with roofing works at Clements Hall.

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) reported on the outcome of discussions with the Council's Leisure Contractor and indicated:-

- That the Clements Hall building had been a design and build project and that, as such, there was a lack of detailed records as to the building.
- The background to the drawing up of the original specification and the appointment of contractor.

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- The background to the differences between estimates for the roofing element of the project and the figure now sought.

Whilst concerned at the costs associated with this matter, the Committee accepted that it was appropriate to make an early decision to minimise further costs.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the following special items relating to the Clements Hall project be deferred until savings from the current programme are identified:-

Car Park Resurfacing  
Sanding and sealing of the Rochford Suite floor  
Replacement of obsolete lights in the Rochford Suite

- (2) That the further roofing works identified in the report be authorised as a matter of urgency with the additional costs funded in the first instance from the deferral of Special Items (£16,000) and Capital Programme (£10,000).
- (3) That Officers be authorised to review the funding during the year, with the aim of charging the maximum sum possible to the Revenue Budget. (HLCS)

**Note:** Councillors D E Barnes and Mrs H L A Glynn wished it to be recorded that they had voted against the above decision.

#### **131 COMPULSORY COMPETITIVE TENDERING PANEL – 6 APRIL 2000**

The Committee addressed the recommendations under Panel Minutes 91 and 92.

#### **Minute 91 – I T Facilities Management Contract**

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the tenders submitted by the Triad Group, EASAMS, Sema Group and WS Atkins be rejected;
- (2) That the development of the in-house comparator be noted, but that the option of service delivery through an in-house facility be not pursued;
- (3) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) be delegated with responsibility for undertaking further negotiations

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with Securicor Information Systems in order to secure a final contract that may be entered into in accordance with the Council's standing orders with effect from 1 April 2001 at a tendered core cost of £435,875;

- (4) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) be instructed to explore contract potential on the basis set out in the exempt Appendix to the Panel Minutes
- (5) That the Head of Administrative and member Services develops proposals for a 'project' based IT budget and reports back to a future meeting of the Corporate Resources Sub Committee.

#### **Minute 92 – IT Client Side**

##### **Resolved**

- (1) That the recommended roles and responsibilities for IT set out in the report from Vantagepoint be adopted.
- (2) That a budget of £21,500 be provided for the procurement of IT consultancy support during 2000/01.
- (3) That Vantagepoint be appointed for up to a maximum of 20 days at a cost of £16,000 to provide consultancy support for the preparation of the Council's IS/IT strategy and the transition to a new IT facilities management contract.
- (4) That the proposal for Corporate Resources Sub-Committee to be delegated authority to determine all operational IT matters, and to make recommendations on issues affecting IT strategy and policy, be considered by Council in the next municipal year.
- (5) That the recommendations contained within the exempt appendix to the Panel Minutes be agreed (HAMS)

#### **132 URGENCY SUB-COMMITTEE – 28 MARCH 2000**

The Committee was advised in confidence of the process which had resulted in the referral of certain personnel issues by the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee to the Urgency Sub-Committee of this Committee.

A motion, moved by Councillor D F Flack and seconded by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn, that in future such matters should be dealt with by an Urgency Meeting of the Full Committee was lost on a show of hands.

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#### **Resolved**

That the decisions of the Finance and General Purposes Urgency Sub-Committee held on 28 March 2000 concerning two Heads of Service be ratified. (CE)

The Meeting closed at 11.25pm

Chairman

Date