

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE – 14 March 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **14 March 2002**, when there were present:

Cllr D R Helson (Chairman)
Cllr A Hosking (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R Adams	Cllr P J Morgan
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr R E Vingoe
Cllr G A Mockford	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr C R Morgan	Cllr D A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Fox, Cllr Mrs J Helson and Cllr M G B Starke.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Mrs L Hungate and Cllr Mrs M A Weir.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R Crofts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
D Deeks	-	Head of Financial Services
S Clarkson	-	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

101 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr D R Helson declared the following interests in the item on Grants to Outside Bodies and left the meeting whilst consideration was given to the application from the Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS):-

- A pecuniary interest by virtue of part-time employment with RAVS.
- A non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a Member of Rochford Sports Council.
- A non-pecuniary interest as a number of the applications for grant assistance are from voluntary organisations which are members of RAVS.

Cllr Mrs M A Weir declared a non-pecuniary interest in the grant application from Rochford and District Old People's Welfare Committee.

Cllr A Hosking declared an interest in the item on Grants to Outside Bodies by virtue of being this Council's representative on the Rural Community Council of Essex.

Cllr C R Morgan declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees – Hullbridge Village Fair, by virtue of being a Hullbridge Parish Councillor.

102 MINUTES

The Committee received the Minutes of the following meetings:-

- (1) Contracts Sub-Committee – 30 January 2002.
- (2) Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee – 31 January 2002.
- (3) Corporate Resources Sub-Committee – 6 February 2002.
- (4) Finance & General Purposes Committee – 14 February 2002.

Minute 59(4)(i) – Rayleigh Town Centre – Outstanding Issues

It was noted that Resolution (3) of this Minute had in effect been a recommendation which was considered by the Environmental Services Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2002.

Minute 59(4) – Proposed Environmental Centre – Feedback from Rayleigh Town Council

The Chief Executive advised that the Town Council had now confirmed that it would be happy to meet with a Member delegation.

Resolved

That the District Council representation for the Member level meeting with the Town Council be the four Group Leaders or their nominees.

Minute 65 – Review of Polling Places and Polling Stations

It was noted that the Wheatley Ward should have been included within the resolution as one of the designated Polling places for the Rayleigh Central Ward.

103 TAXI VOUCHER SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on determining the amount of Taxi Vouchers to be granted to qualifying applicants and whether additional vouchers ought to be awarded to wheelchair users.

In introducing this item and responding to Member questions, the Head of Revenue and Housing Management advised that:-

- Essex County Council would be contributing £21,053 to enhance the scheme.
- Based on the latest information approximately 80 applicants would be eligible, 18 of whom would be wheelchair users.
- To address the anomalous cost situation for wheelchair users, consideration could be given to the introduction of an uplift in the value of the vouchers awarded to wheelchair users.
- All the taxi companies within the District have signed up to the voucher scheme.
- Council had already agreed that the issue of vouchers should be on the basis of a quarterly allocation with time dated expiry to avoid the build up of commitment.
- The approach taken in inviting people to register an interest in the scheme had been comprehensive.

During debate of the situation for wheelchair users the Committee agreed that, at this stage, an uplift of 50% would be appropriate.

Resolved

- (1) That 20% of the total voucher value available for 2002/03 be held in reserve at this stage to serve new applicants.
- (2) That the Voucher Scheme be operated for six months after which a progress report be submitted to the appropriate Committee.
- (3) That, to address the anomalous cost situation for wheelchair users, the value of the Vouchers awarded to wheelchair users be uplifted by 50%.

(4) That the quarterly value of Vouchers issued be:-

£120 for ambulant persons
£180 for wheelchair users (HRHM).

104 GRANTS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of (Finance and External Services) on applications for grants from existing recipients and new applicants.

Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services (RAVS)

(Note: The Vice-Chairman was in the Chair during consideration of this application).

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- Detail on the role of the Association as a co-ordinating body representing the voluntary sector would be addressed within the Service Level Agreement.
- It was proposed to submit details of the draft Service Level Agreement within a report to the next meeting of the Committee. The report could include detail on the use of financial reserves by the Association.

During debate Members agreed that it would be appropriate for a decision on the request for use of the Civic Suite Council Chamber at a reduced rate to be held in abeyance pending the provision of detailed information on current usage and other accommodation possibilities.

The Committee agreed a motion relating to payment of an interim award, moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr J E Grey.

Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB)

Responding to a Member's questions, the Head of Financial Services advised that:-

- 74% of funding received by the CAB came from the Council, the remainder being from the Fielder Trust and grants from other organisations.
- Whilst the CAB do have tins for voluntary financial donations from clients, the organisation's national philosophy was provision of a free service.

Following a review of all the remaining applications, it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That, with regard to the application by the Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services:-
 - (a) An interim award of £800 be paid to the Association, determination of the balance to be considered in tandem with the draft Service Level Agreement which is being submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
 - (b) A decision on the request for use of the Civic Suite Council Chamber at a reduced rate be held in abeyance pending the provision of detailed information on:-
 - overall usage of the Chamber and the charges requested of users.
 - the possibilities for making available to the Association other accommodation in Rayleigh, such as the Mill Hall.
- (2) That grants be awarded to the other applicants for the 2002/03 Financial Year on the basis set out in the Appendix to these Minutes. (HSM)

105 BENEFIT, COUNCIL TAX, BUSINESS RATES, FORMER TENANTS ARREARS AND SUNDY DEBTORS – WRITE OFFS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) which proposed the writing off of cases.

Resolved

- (1) That the items written off under the Corporate Director's delegated Authority be noted.
- (2) That the following items be now written off in the accounts of the Authority.

National Non-Domestic Rating

Case Number	Amount
768	£4,502.82
770	£654.40

Council Tax

Case Number	Amount
1	£584
773	£1,668.09 (CD(F&ES))

106 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE FEES – HULLBRIDGE VILLAGE FAIR

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on an application for waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees.

Resolved

That the fee due if a Public Entertainment Licence is granted to Hullbridge Parish Council to hold the Hullbridge Village Fair on 16 June 2002 be waived. (HHHCC).

107 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL GOLDEN JUBILEE BOOKLETS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on a request for funding from Essex County Council towards the production of a Golden Jubilee booklet.

Resolved

That no contribution be made to the Essex County Council Golden Jubilee booklet. (CE)

108 NHS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

NOTE: The Chairman agreed to admit this item of business as urgent as the nomination was required before the next meeting of the Community Services Committee.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on the nomination of a member to attend future meetings on NHS Overview and Scrutiny.

Resolved

(1) That Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson be appointed for the remainder of this Municipal Year to attend meetings concerned with developing an Essex-wide approach to NHS Overview and Scrutiny.

(2) That travel and subsistence allowances be paid if necessary. (HHHCC).

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 Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

109 STAFFING ISSUES

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) seeking amendment to the title, duties and grade of Post 31400.

Resolved

That the title, duties and grade of Post 31400 be revised on the basis set out in the exempt report (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these minutes). (CD(FES))

The Meeting closed at 9.10 pm

Chairman

Date

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APPENDIX

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	AMOUNT (£)
Citizens Advice Bureau	
Main Grant	68,000.00
Outreach Service	1,600.00
Mediation	1,000.00
Total	<hr/> 70,600.00 <hr/>
General Grants	
Barling Magna Evergreens Club	110.00
Essex Racial Equality Council	620.00
Great Wakering OAP Club	100.00
Hockley and Hawkwell Old Peoples Welfare Committee	3,300.00
Hullbridge Pensioners Fellowship	110.00
Hullbridge Senior Citizens Welfare Council	3,300.00
Mayday Mobile	1,100.00
Rayleigh Age Concern	3,300.00
Rayleigh Antiquarian and Natural History Society	190.00
Rayleigh Friends of Southend Hospital Cancer Centre	110.00
Rayleigh Good Fellowship Club	560.00
Rayleigh No. 1 Club	450.00
Rayleigh Physically Handicapped Club	800.00
Rayleigh No. 2 Club	250.00
Relate South Essex	800.00

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<u>ORGANISATION</u>	AMOUNT (£)
Rochford & District Access Committee for the Disabled	100.00
Rochford and District Old Peoples' Welfare Committee	3,300.00
Rochford Pre-School Learning Alliance	400.00
Rochford Sports Council	2,250.00
Royal Association for Deaf People	550.00
 New Applicants	
1 st Ashingdon Scout Group	100.00
Age Concern Home Support Service	Nil
Cruse Bereavement Care – Southend Branch	100.00
Foulness Island Community Newsletter	Nil
Rochford Methodist Church	Nil
Rural Community Council of Essex – Rural Initiatives Fund	Nil
St Thomas of Canterbury Church, Hullbridge	Nil