

Community Services Committee – 4 November 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **4 November 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr K A Gibbs (Chairman)
Cllr T E Goodwin (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R A Amner
Cllr Mrs R Brown
Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr D G Stansby

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs S A Harper, Mrs L Hungate, C C Langlands, Mrs J R Lumley, and Mrs M J Webster

SUBSTITUTES

Cllrs J E Grey, A J Humphries , C A Hungate,

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
G Woolhouse	Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
D Timson	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
J Bourne	Leisure & Contracts Manager
M Martin	Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Martin Thomas, Community Housing Task Force

495 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

496 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr A J Humphries declared a personal interest in item 13 of the Agenda, by virtue of being Chairman of the Windmill Sub-Committee.

497 STOCK OPTION APPRAISAL

The Chairman welcomed Mr Thomas of the Community Housing Task Force (CHTF) to the meeting. He outlined to Members via a presentation the process of carrying out a Stock Option Appraisal. The following key points were noted:-

- It would be essential for tenants to be at the heart of the consultation and fully involved in the decision making, along with stakeholders, community representatives, voluntary organisations, residents and staff.
- All the available options would need to be looked at and the chosen option must be able to deliver decent homes.
- There would be a need to fit with neighbourhood strategy and mixed model solutions.
- The process should result in a long term action plan.
- Robust information on stock conditions and housing demand would be needed.
- The appraisal must be completed and signed off by July 2005.
- The chosen option must deliver sustainable decency by 2010.
- Priorities need to be decided, a vision agreed and objectives shared by stakeholders.
- Ensure that an independent tenant adviser is appointed.
- The whole process could take around 15 months.
- The CHTF would be available as a resource to the Council and would sign off the Communication & Empowerment Strategy and agree an appropriate timetable/project plan.

During the subsequent discussion, Members noted that:-

- Whilst this Council had experienced poor tenant participation levels in the past, since the appointment of a Tenant Participation Officer, the level of participation had more than trebled. Five groups had originally been set up across the District, two of which had now merged to leave four groups currently in existence.
- The appraisal would form part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council.

498 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Note: This report was deferred for discussion to a future meeting of this Committee, when the latest approved format would be available.

499 FURNITURE RECYCLING SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided Members with details of local initiatives

currently in place in connection with the recycling and re-use of household furniture and what benefits these can have to the residents of this District.

Members thanked officers for the report. In response to a Member question, officers reported that it was unlikely that such a scheme would result in a recycling credit, as the goods would be collected by a third party. Members further noted that another outlet existed in Westcliff-on-Sea, run by the Salvation Army, who were also able to collect from residents.

A Member expressed disappointment that no retail outlet currently existed within the District for the purchase of recycled furniture and on a Motion moved by Cllr J R F Mason and seconded by Cllr C R Morgan it was recommended that the Hamelin Trust be encouraged to establish a shop within the District and that the Council investigate sources of funding to achieve this.

The Motion was lost on a show of hands.

Members requested that a press release be issued highlighting that the Council had recognised the issues around furniture recycling and would be supporting the Hamelin Trust in this environmental and recycling initiative.

Resolved

That the Council actively promotes the services of the Hamelin Trust Furniture Recycling Scheme to its residents as part of its recycling initiatives through its publications, such as Rochford District Matters, other promotional material and through the Council's website. (CD(F&ES))

500 SKATEBOARD FACILITIES – CLEMENTS HALL

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided Members with details regarding a request made to the Council for a skateboarding facility to be placed on the playing fields behind Clements Hall Leisure Centre.

Members applauded the initiative of the young people concerned, and whilst they supported it in principle, it was recognised that it would be essential for local residents to be well informed before being fully consulted on this proposal, particularly as such a venture had the potential to attract many spectators.

Resolved

That the Council provide a full scale skateboarding facility at Clements Hall playing fields, subject to due processes, such as planning permission, full public consultation and obtaining the required funding. (CD(F&ES))

501 RAYLEIGH WINDMILL HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND BID

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought agreement to the proposed way forward in developing the new bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Members congratulated officers on the comprehensive nature of the report and noted that there could be a potential long term cost involved should the Council agree to go ahead with the bid.

However, if the Windmill were turned into an active museum the costs could be offset against the changed stature of the District as a museum provider, which may attract other funding sources.

Resolved

- (1) That officers apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a pre-project planning grant of up to £50,000, as identified in the report, whilst progressing the requirement for additional building space and for restoration works' tenders.
- (2) That the draft pre-planning bid be considered at a meeting of the Windmill Sub-Committee in November.
- (3) That a final decision to submit the pre-planning bid be referred back to the Community Services Committee. (CD(F&ES))

502 ANNUAL VANDALISM REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided Members with information regarding the cost of vandalism to Council property throughout the District, covering the period 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003.

Members were concerned that the word 'vandalism' in the report title was misleading and considered that incidents such as those reported should be termed 'criminal damage'.

Members noted that there had recently been some incidents at the Great Waking Sports Centre, where staff had been intimidated. There had been a lack of police response. As a result, the Corporate Director had set up a joint meeting of the Youth Service, Police, Parish Council and Holmes Place to consider the issues raised.

Other Members reported concern over the lack of Police response to recent incidents within the Hockley and Hawkwell area.

Resolved

- (1) That the cost of criminal damage to the District Council covering the period 1 October 2002 to 30 September 2003 be noted.
- (2) That the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee be invited to develop a specific action plan with Police support to combat criminal damage, including the targeting of schools and clubs, as part of an educational campaign. (CD(F&ES))

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

503 HOUSING RESOURCE ISSUES

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which apprised Members of the resource implications required in order to address the requirements of a number of housing issues and to carry out the housing option appraisal exercise.

- (1) That additional budget resources be sought from the Policy & Finance Committee in order to:
 - (i) appoint a Housing Manager on a 3-year fixed contract at Grade PO18-21; the position to be advertised immediately.
 - (ii) make the post, as described in the report, permanent on salary scale PO6-9, with effect from 1 April 2004.
- (2) That a bid be made for resources in the budget strategy, in order to employ a Housing Service Development Officer at salary scale PO6-9, with a view to recruiting in the financial year. (CD(F&ES))

504 LAND – WORCESTER DRIVE/WARWICK DRIVE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider a request for the sale of a parcel of land held by the Council.

Resolved

That the occupier be invited to purchase the land at market value under terms and conditions to be agreed by the Head of Legal Services. (HRHM/HLS)

505 DISPOSAL OF GARAGE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought agreement for the valuation and subsequent disposal of the garage referred to in the report.

Resolved

- (1) That a valuation of the garage be obtained.
- (2) That the garage be sold at current market valuation and on terms agreed by the Head of Legal Services. (HRHM/HLS)

The meeting closed at 9.14 pm.

Chairman

Date