

Minutes of the meeting of the **Corporate Resources Sub-Committee** held on **3 April 2001** when there were present:

Cllr C R Morgan (Chairman)

Cllr R Adams
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr Mrs J M Giles
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon

Cllr P Morgan
Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr Mrs M A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Livings and Cllr D A Weir

SUBSTITUTE

Cllr Mrs M J Webster

NON-MEMBER ATTENDING

Cllr Mrs R Brown

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	Chief Executive
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)
D Deeks	Head of Financial Services
A Smith	Head of Administrative and Member Services

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs Webster declared an interest in Minute No 400 (Information Systems and Information Technology Strategy) by virtue of her being a governor of SEEVIC.

Cllr Mrs Weir declared an interest in Minute No 401 (Grants and Community Support) by virtue of her being a member of the management committee of the Rochford & District Old Peoples' Welfare. Cllrs Mrs Brown, Mrs Giles and C Morgan also declared an interest in this item by virtue of their respective association with the Rayleigh CAB, Rayleigh Age Concern and the Hullbridge Senior Citizens Welfare Council.

Cllr Mrs Brown and Cllr C Morgan also declared an interest in Minute No 402 (Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees –

Hullbridge Village Fayre) by virtue of their being members of Hullbridge Parish Council.

399 MINUTES

- (1) The Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 February 2001 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- (2) Minute 394 – Community Legal Service

RESOLVED to appoint Cllr Mrs Brown as the Council's representative on the steering group of the local Community Legal Service Partnership for the remainder of the current municipal year. (HLS)

400 INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY STRATEGY

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on a proposed Information Systems (IS)/Information Technology (IT) strategy for the Council for the period 2001/02 to 2005/06. This strategy also included a draft implementing electronic government statement (IEG) that the Council was required to submit to the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions by the end of July 2001.

Mr S Watson of Vantagepoint consultants, who had assisted the Head of Administrative and Member Services with the preparation of the strategy, attended the meeting for this item.

The Sub-Committee was informed that the strategy aimed to provide a framework for the future development of information systems and information technology within the Council. Proposed developments had been included that Heads of Service had identified as necessary to support the continued delivery of their services in the light of anticipated legislative change, changing requirements in the way services are delivered and the need to deliver best value. Known requirements to replace current IT applications due to obsolescence were also included within the strategy.

The strategy set out a proposed Council response to the joint Central Government and Local Government Association initiative to develop electronic access to Council services and promote greater opportunities for residents and businesses to participate in the "information age". As well as suggesting a possible vision for electronic delivery of and access to this Council's services, the strategy set out key actions and the resources necessary to implement these. The Sub-Committee noted that Central Government was proposing to make available up to £250,000 per annum in 2002/03 and 2003/04 to

assist the Council implement its strategy. However, this funding would be subject to the submission of an acceptable IEG by the end of July 2001.

Whilst identifying detailed proposals to maintain and improve Council services, the Sub-Committee was informed that all major initiatives contained within the strategy would require the preparation of a full business justification before being brought forward to Members for approval to proceed further.

During discussion, Members expressed concern at the potential cost of improving services through the maintenance and development of information systems and IT. It was recognised that without significant Central Government funding the Council would be unable to afford the additional implementation costs of the strategy estimated at £1.063m over 5 years.

Some Members also expressed concern that adopting a strategy at this stage may limit the Council's ability to undertake other future initiatives of greater priority. However, the Chief Executive sought to assure Members that the strategy simply provided a framework on which the Council could plan its future development of services. The strategy would be subject to annual review and would form a part of the preparation of the Council's estimates as well as its Corporate and Best Value Performance Plans. There would be full opportunity therefore for Members to assess the competing priorities for the resources available each year.

In response to Members' desire to see traditional methods of service delivery maintained, the Head of Administrative and Member Services explained that the Council would need to maintain current service delivery arrangements alongside any alternative, electronic based services. The Council had already set itself a best value target to have 100% of its services capable of delivery electronically available by this method by 2005. The best value survey conducted by the Council in December 2000 had also found nearly a third of Rochford residents expressing a desire to access the Council's services electronically. It was important therefore to ensure that services are provided in a manner that met the requirements of all sections of the community.

Since preparing his report, the Head of Administrative and Member Services informed the meeting that the consortium of Essex authorities bid for pathfinder funding in 2001/02 (paragraph 5.96) had been unsuccessful and that the Strategy would need to be updated to reflect this.

During discussion, it was also agreed that paragraph 5.71 of the strategy should be amended to emphasise the restriction that cost would place on the implementation of the strategy.

The Sub-Committee recognised that the Council already had budgetary provision during 2001/02 for the development of information systems and supporting technology. It was also acknowledged that many of the proposals within the action plan for 2001/02 could be achieved without additional cost. In both of these cases, Members were of the view that these initiatives should continue to be progressed.

After lengthy debate, it was

RECOMMENDED

subject to the amendments at paragraphs 5.71 and 5.96 referred to above, to note the IS/IT Strategy, incorporating the Council's implementing electronic government statement, and to agree that it form the basis of a bid to Central Government for funding the introduction of electronic service delivery. (HAMS)

401 GRANTS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services on proposed Council support for voluntary organisations in 2001/02.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) to award a grant of £750 to Relate - South Essex;
- (2) to grant 20% discretionary NNDR rate relief to

Hockley and Hawkwell Old Peoples Welfare Committee
Hullbridge Senior Citizens Welfare Council
Rayleigh Age Concern
Rochford and District Old Peoples Welfare (HFS)

**402 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT
LICENCE FEES – HULLBRIDGE VILLAGE FAYRE**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on an application for the waiver of public entertainment licence fees for the Hullbridge Village Fayre due to take place on 24 June 2001.

RECOMMENDED

that 100% of the application fee due for a public entertainment licence, if granted, be waived. (HHCC)

**403 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT
LICENCE FEES – BARN DANCE, NEW HALL FARM, LAMBOURNE
ROAD, CANEWDON**

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care concerning an application for the waiver of public entertainment licence fees for the Barn Dance at New Hall Farm, Canewdon that was due to take place on 8 June 2001.

RECOMMENDED

that 80% of the application fee due for a public entertainment licence, if granted, be waived – this waiver also to apply in the event of it proving necessary to hold the barn dance on an alternative date as a result of any restrictions that might apply arising from the present foot and mouth outbreak. (HHCC)

404 YOUTH TRAINING (FOUNDATION MODERN APPRENTICESHIP)

The Sub-Committee considered a report from the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) proposing changes to the Council's Youth Training Scheme arrangements.

It was noted that in the current economic climate, young people were often able to obtain jobs without joining a youth training scheme. Those who did join the Council's scheme were often successful in obtaining employment before completing their training placement.

However, the Council was frequently approached to provide placements for people with disabilities or women returning to employment who at present were not eligible for support under the Council's current training scheme.

The Sub-Committee recognised the importance of providing high quality training places to young people. It was also mindful of the need to try and retain trainees to a point where they might prove to be a potential source of candidates for the Council's scale 1-2 vacancies. In order to achieve these twin aims, it was considered appropriate for the Council to move towards direct employment of trainees. A rate pegged to the National Minimum Wage (presently £3.20 per hour) would provide a reasonable wage level as well as a benchmark for annual up rating. This could be funded from the present youth training budget.

The Sub-Committee also saw merit in the present scheme being extended to offer short placements to those with disabilities or women returning to work where candidates were appropriate to meet the Council's requirements.

In recognition of the value of the training scheme, the Sub-Committee was of the view that the present budget should be increased by £1,255 to £21,855. This would allow up to 3 trainees to be employed each year with management being able to choose the mix between trainees and placements for those with disabilities or women returners.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) to increase the youth training budget in 2001/02 to £21,855 to enable up to 3 paid trainees to be employed
- (2) to widen the Council's Youth training scheme to offer short term placements for people with disabilities and women returning to work after a period of absence from the workplace. (CD(LPA))

405 HARASSMENT AT WORK POLICY AND STAFF GUIDANCE

The Sub-Committee considered a report by the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) proposing the adoption of an Harassment at Work Policy and the introduction of Staff Guidance on Harassment.

The Sub-Committee recognised that as a good employer it should have policies to deal with harassment in the work place. Additionally, such policies were necessary to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory duties under employment and other legislation.

Accordingly, it was **RECOMMENDED**

to adopt the Harassment at Work Policy and Staff Guidance on Harassment as attached at the appendix to the signed copy of these Minutes. (CD(LPA))

406 SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF – FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE

In order that the Council may make speedy representations to the Government on its proposed aid package for small businesses in rural areas badly affected by foot and mouth disease, the Chairman agreed that this item should be admitted as urgent business.

After considering the report of the Chief Executive on the terms of the aid package, Members expressed their extreme disappointment that the Rochford District had not been included in the list of eligible local authorities. The scheme was intended to benefit small business in areas affected by foot and mouth disease and Members acknowledged that this District had experienced one of the first cases of foot and mouth in the current outbreak.

The Sub-Committee therefore **RECOMMENDED**

that the strongest possible representations be made to the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, with copies to the Local Government Association and the local Members of Parliament, seeking the inclusion of Rochford District Council to the list of authorities in the Eastern Region covered by the rural aid package. (CEX)

407 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the business set out at Minute No 408 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would otherwise be disclosed.

408 LAND AT GOLDEN CROSS PARADE, ASHINGDON

The Sub-Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on the current position on negotiations concerning the future of an area of land at Golden Cross Parade, Ashingdon. In view of the advice provided by the Head of Legal Services, the Sub-Committee reluctantly

RESOLVED

- (1) not to proceed further with the acquisition of the site.
- (2) to continue to monitor the site to ensure that the improvements and repairs advised by the owner of the land were undertaken. (HLS)

The meeting closed at 10.20pm.

Chairman _____

Date _____

