

## **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 15 October 2002**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **15 October 2002** when there were present:

Cllr M G B Starke (Chairman)  
Cllr T Livings (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr P A Capon  
Cllr Mrs T J Capon  
Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr D F L Flack

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr C J Lumley  
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs R A Amner, Mrs R Brown, Mrs M S Vince and Mrs M A Weir

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Crofts – Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)  
G Woolhouse – Head of Housing, Health & Community Care  
Helen Drye – Corporate Policy Manager  
B Hunt – Principal Building Surveyor  
P Denholm – Solicitor  
J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

### **484 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2002 were approved as a corrected record and signed by the Chairman.

### **485 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

Cllrs T Livings and C J Lumley each declared a personal interest in the Outstanding Issues Schedule by virtue of their role as Town Councillors.

### **486 POLICING IN THE COMMUNITY**

The Committee welcome Chief Superintendent John Mauger, Rayleigh Divisional Commander, who was in attendance to clarify the position in respect of proposed changes to Community Policing arrangements within the District.

The Chief Superintendent provided an outline of his background within the police service and confirmed that an objective of attending the meeting was to provide Members with accurate information on Divisional proposals and address any unfounded rumours.

Whilst no final decisions had been made, a key intention of proposed structural adjustments would be to improve Community Policing. The

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areas of domestic violence, licensing, crime reduction and schools would be brought together as a "Community Safety Unit", with links to intelligence. The current Divisional Support Team was to receive further resourcing and become an enlarged "Pro-active Community Unit" with an emphasis on uniformed work and flexible working patterns. One of the Unit's objectives would be to tackle youth nuisance. Other Sections within the Division would see an increased staff resource of approximately four officers each.

Within the Essex Police area, the Rayleigh Division remained one of the safest. The Essex Force was one of the safest nationally. The Chief Superintendent wished to emphasise the importance he placed on working with the community and confirmed that the Police Stations had an open door policy.

Responding to questions, the Chief Superintendent advised that:-

- The Community Safety Unit would be working on variable shifts and both he and his Inspectors were looking for local accountability.
- Proposals were the outcome of a managerial review. Whilst it is not possible to predict future demands and the need to change the resource balances associated with front line and specialist Officers, the proposals were seen as the present optimum approach. They were scheduled for implementation on 1 December.
- The Division would continue to try to improve service levels. Specifically, the Operations Manager was reviewing response times with a view to achieving improvement. Chief Officers regularly reviewed activity within each Division when making decisions on crime fighting resources.
- This year had seen the introduction of new national crime reporting standards, one aspect of which was that incidents were recorded as crime unless evidence points to the contrary.
- Whilst it would clearly be preferable for the police to be able to visit all schools, this was unlikely to be possible given all competing challenges. The Division was committed to maximising opportunities for visible policing, including being activity involved with the school community.
- There had been no plans within the Division to make support posts redundant and to re-allocating associated work to uniformed Officers.

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- Members should feel free to engage the Division as considered appropriate through both Inspectors and the Chief Inspector.
- A key message recently emphasised within the Division was the valuable role of the "Feel Good Factor" within policy formulation.

During debate and in response to Member questions, the Head of Health, Housing and Community Care advised that the Government had recently announced a review of policy relating to traveller encampments. A Committee Report on this would be produced as soon as the policy proposals were available.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Superintendent for his informative address. Prior to leaving the meeting, the Chief Superintendent wished to confirm that he was more than willing for the Police to attend Council meetings as considered appropriate.

The Committee agreed a motion, moved by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn and seconded by Cllr C R Lumley, and it was:-

### **Resolved**

That the Police be invited to the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee scheduled for 11 February 2003 to provide an update of the operations due to be in place with effect from 1 December 2002. (CE)

## **487 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee received the schedule relating to previous decisions.

### **Rochford Town Sports and Social Club (Minute 166/02)**

It was noted that the decision of the Sports and Social Club to establish the outcome of the planning application prior to submission of a Business Plan was cost related given the resources which would be involved in Plan formulation. If the planning application failed, the Club would be happy to continue on the basis of its current lease.

Outstanding issues would be carried forward.

## **488 HOUSING RENEWAL**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on changes in the legal framework relating to Private Sector Housing Renewal Grants and wide ranging new powers to develop different forms of assistance for Private Sector Property Renewal.

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Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- The legislation associated with the administration of Private Sector and Disabled Facility grants was complicated. It was hoped that any replacement arrangements could be simpler and more equitable – being available to a wider range of residents.
- Mortgages granted by the Council were at a minimum rate set directly by Central Government. The Authority had tried on a number of occasions to encourage holders of Council mortgages to transfer to the Private Sector, but with limited success.

During debate, it was recognised that the Council should be mindful of potential financial costs associated with proposals and the need for appropriate financial support from the Secretary of State. It should not follow that a revised framework resulted in a higher Council Tax bill, particularly in areas such as Rochford where there was a great deal of equity in the privately owned housing stock. Reference was made to the value of remembering that a key purpose of providing accommodation was to meet the needs of individual persons. In focussing on occupants, local authorities also needed to be mindful of possibilities associated with aspects such as regeneration. The approach should, ideally, be one of flexibility, meeting all needs within the context of financial parameters.

### **Resolved**

That a draft Private Sector Renewal Policy, incorporating the above factors and those set out in the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care, be submitted to a future meeting. (HHHCC)

### **489 CONDITION OF PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) on the strategy for public conveniences provisions.

During debate, reference was made to the poor condition of the Old Ship Lane toilets, Rochford. It was felt that, given the nearness of the recently refurbished Back Lane toilets and the associated cost savings, closure of these toilets could be appropriate. Disposal would lead to a capital receipt which could be used to help fund an improvement programme. The Committee agreed a motion moved by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn and seconded by Cllr P A Capon in this regard.

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Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) advised that:-

- The repair work associated with vandalism (set out at paragraph 3.3 of the report) had already been undertaken within existing budget provision.
- Materials used for refurbishing public toilets needed to be of a much higher specification than those used in residential homes, being capable of withstanding high levels of public use.

Reference was made of the potential value of approaching Town and Parish Councils in the first instance on the possibility of joint working. It was suggested that Officers could approach other authorities to ascertain their experiences (cost and otherwise) when introducing "Super Loos".

The Committee agreed a motion relating to discussions with the Town and Parish Councils, moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr P A Capon, and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That proposals be further developed on the basis that the Old Ship toilets, Rochford are closed.
- (2) That Officers undertaken detailed discussion with the Town and Parish Councils relating to the capital and revenue implications of the proposals detailed in the report. (CD(F&ES))

Note: Cllr D F Flack wished it to be recorded that he had voted against (1) above.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....