

Corporate Resources Sub-Committee 6 February 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Corporate Resources Sub-Committee** held on **28 November 2000** when there were present:

Cllr C R Morgan - Chairman

Cllr R Adams

Cllr R A Amner

Cllr T G Cutmore

Cllr Mrs S J Lemon

Cllr T Livings

Cllr P Morgan

Cllr P F A Webster

Cllr D A Weir

Cllr Mrs M A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs J Helson

SUBSTITUTE

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren

R Crofts

J Honey

Mrs E Chapman

G Brazendale

Chief Executive

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)

Personnel Manager

Committee Administrator

375 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

376 CONSULTATION WITH CHAMBERS OF TRADE

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) which sought guidance in the use of the finance hitherto allocated to carry out joint initiatives with the Chambers of Trade, and whether a similar provision should be made in 2001/2002.

The Chairman introduced and welcomed to the meeting the following representatives from the Chambers of Trade:-

E Byford – Rayleigh and District Chamber of Trade

J Sheaf – South Essex Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Industry

H Squier - South Essex Chamber of Commerce, Trade and Industry

J Stanton – Rochford and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce

A Wadeson – Hockley Traders' Association

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The Chambers' representative were invited to offer views concerning current issues affecting commerce in their respective town centres, and these are summarised below:-

- Rayleigh and District Chamber

Mr Byford re-iterated the request, contained within the recent letter to the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services), to retain car park charges at their current level.

- Rochford and District Chamber.

Mr Stanton registered concern about the extent of shop closures in Rochford Town Centre, and the Chamber's wish to be closely involved in the activities of the Rochford Town Centre Working Group.

- South Essex Chamber of Commerce

Mr Squier expressed disappointment concerning the District Council's decision not to become a member of the Chamber. He however welcomed the Council's involvement in the South Essex Economic Strategy, which would enable a joint response with neighbouring authorities and organisations in addressing the economic issues affecting the region's economy, such as the Thames Gateway. Mr Sheaf developed the theme of the deteriorating state specifically of Rochford Town Centre and generally of the economy of the surrounding area. Reference was made to the impact of the closure of the Hospital and Lesneys, and the possible effect on local motor component manufacturing of Ford's move from Dagenham, with consequent job losses. Commuting levels generally within the District were high, and clearly local job creation was a prerequisite to revive the economy. In response, the Chairman indicated that the South Essex Economic Strategy was currently researching the likely impact of Ford's relocation upon the local economy.

- Hockley Trader's Association.

Mr Wadeson referred to the proposed changes to the car parking charges for Hockley, the Association's wish to improve the town centre's appearance, and the possible need for additional CCTV cameras. The Chief Executive clarified that any changes to the car parking charges in Hockley had not yet been agreed by Council, as suggested by Mr Wadeson and would be the subject of further consideration.

In response to the issues raised by the Chambers, the Sub-Committee was advised as follows:

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- The Rochford Town Centre Working Group had been reconstituted, and the next meeting was scheduled for early December. The Chamber of Trade had been invited to send a representative as an adviser, and were encouraged to submit ideas for town centre regeneration initiatives for the Group's consideration. Their local knowledge would prove invaluable in this respect.
- Regenerative measures for Rochford would be contingent upon the possible construction of a supermarket to the rear of the Market Square, for which an application was awaited, and the resolution of traffic issues in and around the town centre.
- The provision of a signboard in the Back Lane car park at Rochford, showing the location of buildings of interest, was suggested as a means of enhancing visitors' enjoyment of the town's heritage. The necessary funding could, it was proposed, be met from the finance set aside for joint initiatives with the Chambers of Trade. A motion to this effect, proposed by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn and seconded by Councillor Mrs S J Lemon was, following a vote, defeated. An amendment to this motion, moved by Councillor D A Weir and seconded by Councillor P F A Webster, that this proposal should be referred to the Rochford Town Centre Working Group, was, following a vote, declared carried. (Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn requested that her opposition to this amendment be recorded).

The Sub-Committee then considered a suggested scheme submitted by the Rayleigh Chamber, which involved the installation of two CCTV cameras, in addition to those already provided by the Town Council, to complete the surveillance of the town centre.

It was noted that this proposal was a completely separate initiative from the programme agreed by Community Safety Sub-Committee for the installation of CCTV cameras at various local shopping parades throughout the District.

In considering the Rayleigh Chamber's suggestion, Members were of the opinion that such initiatives should be examined in the context of other town centre priorities; and that further evaluation of the effectiveness of existing CCTV provision in Rayleigh was required before financing additional cameras. A motion to this effect proposed by Councillor C R Morgan and seconded by Councillor R A Amner was agreed.

The Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) sought the Chambers of Trade view upon the form that consultation concerning National Non-Domestic Rate setting for 2001/02 should take, and the Chambers indicated a preference for a formal meeting with this Sub-Committee.

The Chairman thanked the Chambers' representatives for their attendance and they then left the meeting.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the provision of an explanatory historical signboard in the Back Lane Car Park, Rochford, be referred to the Rochford Town Centre Working Group for consideration.
- (2) That the provision of additional CCTV cameras in Rayleigh Town Centre be deferred, pending a review of the effectiveness of the existing network.
- (3) That the provision of £5,000 for financing joint initiatives with the Chambers of Trade be included within the budget for 2001/2002 (CD(F&ES))

377 JOB EVALUATION

The Sub-Committee received a presentation from the Personnel Manager concerning the Council's job evaluation scheme, which covered the following main topics:-

- Why look at job evaluation; the context set by the introduction of the single status agreement.
- Basic principles of job evaluation.
- Advantages of the national joint scheme.
- The computerised evaluation system ("GAUGE") which will be used: how it works; the characteristics of the programme; and details of thirteen factors used in the assessment process. The "knowledge" factor was used to demonstrate to Members how two different job types could be evaluated.
- The proposed process.
- The fundamentals of a new grading structure.
- Issues with the current grading scheme.

Copies of the slides used in the presentation were circulated for Members' information.

In response to questions, Officers advised as follows:-

- It was likely that Councils that did not adopt the national scheme would eventually face legislative challenge from trade unions.
- Each evaluation would take approximately half a day, including initial completion of the assessment proforma and subsequent analysis. The process would involve self-completion, but a facilitator would be required to ensure that answers to particular questions could be evidentially justified.

- The programme would assess the competencies required for particular posts and suggest an appropriate ranking but would not examine the performance of individual employees. The personal development review system currently in use was designed to allow assessment of individuals' achievement of set targets.
- The potential financial implications associated with the scheme's implementation would need to be considered by Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee.

378 ESSEX COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services which examined a proposal to establish a community fund for the Rochford District in partnership with Essex Community Foundation (ECF).

The Fund, which would be administered by the ECF, would receive and grant financial support to charitable organisations, and establish an endowed fund. The Sub-Committee received details of the suggested management of the fund, and the associated operational/administrative arrangements, and concluded that the proposals did not represent a sufficiently significant improvement to the present arrangements for assessing grant applications to warrant adoption. On a motion by Councillor D A Weir and seconded by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn it was

RECOMMENDED

That the proposed establishment of a local fund, in partnership with Essex Community Foundation, be not pursued (HFS)

379 EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE – ROCHFORD COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services which requested Members to reconsider their decision to discontinue membership of the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC)

The Sub-Committee had received a presentation at its last meeting from the Regional Director, Brian Stewart, who outlined a number of benefits of membership. Of particular significance was that, from April 2001, the Conference would take responsibility for preparation of planning guidance for the Region once SERPLAN and SCEALA were discontinued and would carry out the functions of the Regional Employers Organisation for Local Authorities.

The Sub-Committee noted the future subscription fees for Conference membership which would replace those currently paid to SERPLAN

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and the Regional Employers Organisation. Membership of the EELGC would, in 2001/02, cost £4376 more than paid in current subscriptions to these bodies.

The Chief Executive emphasised involvement in regional planning strategy and the advice hitherto obtained from the Regional Employers Organisation as the main losses to the Council if it did not join the EELGC. It was suggested that it would be beneficial for this Council to be involved in discussion of planning issues affecting the District, in particular the Thames Gateway, and to continue to be able to draw upon advice from the Regional Employers Panel, which had been helpful in carrying out the Members Training Programme.

A motion by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore that the Council should not re-join the EELGC was, on the casting vote of the Chairman, declared lost. A motion by Councillor C R Morgan and seconded by Councillor Mrs S J Lemon was, on the casting vote of the Chairman, declared carried.

RECOMMENDED

That Rochford District Council should rejoin the East of England Local Government Conference from 1 April 2001 (HPS)

380 RAYLEIGH WINDMILL

The Corporate Director (Law Planning and Administration) informed the Sub-Committee that the Windmill Working Group had met on 23 November 2000, and had identified a number of issues for further investigation. A report outlining the results would be presented to a future Meeting of the Sub-Committee.

381 ACCESS AT REAR OF 5 – 9 PRENTICE CLOSE, ROCHFORD

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services concerning a request from the owner of No. 4 Malting Villas Road, Rochford for the grant of a right of way over the access owned by the Council at the rear of numbers 5 – 9 Prentice Close, Rochford. A plan of the site was appended to the report.

The Chairman appraised Members of communication received from Councillor D M Ford in which he had expressed concern that the proposals could result in parked cars blocking access to the nearby electricity sub-station. The Sub-Committee therefore agreed that consideration of the proposal should be deferred pending a site visit.

RECOMMENDED

That consideration of the request from the owner of No. 4 Malting Villas Road, Rochford, for a grant of a right of way over the access owned by the Council at the rear of Numbers 5 – 9 Prentice Close, be deferred pending a Member site visit. (HLS)

382 STRIP OF LAND, 83 SOUTHEND ROAD, ROCHFORD

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services outlining a request from the owners of No. 85 Southend Road, Rochford, to purchase a strip of land from the adjoining Council property. A plan showing the location of the site was appended to the report.

It was noted that the Tenant of the adjoining Council property and the Head of Revenues and Housing Management had no objection to the proposed sale, and that the disposal would not materially affect the value of No. 83 Southend Road.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the transfer of a strip of land approximately 1 metre wide on the southern boundary of 83 Southend Road, Rochford to the owners of No.85 Southend Road, Rochford be agreed, at value and subject to a restriction as to its use and on such other terms as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate.
- (2) That the purchasers meet the Council's legal and valuation fees and at their own expense erect a suitable fence to be agreed by the Council along the entire new boundary of the property.(HLS)

383 ASSET MANAGEMENT – BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Sub-Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) which provided an overview of the Best Value Review of asset management. The documentation associated with the review had been placed in the Members' rooms at Rochford and Rayleigh, and was listed in an appendix to the report. The report covered the following main areas:-

- The methodology of the review.
- Present arrangements for the management of the Council's property assets, including the staff and financial resources used.
- Details of surveys of a random selection of households in the District; local organisations using or likely to use Council assets; occupiers, canvassed by the external auditors; and data from

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housing and leisure assessments. Information from the first two of these surveys was appended to the report.

- The benchmarking process, using information from CIPFA statistics (appended to the report).
- Details of the draft asset management plan, with a summary of the guiding principles. The plan was appended in full.
- Options for effective asset management. These included:
 - Reorganisation of the staffing arrangements for managing assets, the principle proposal being the identification of a single individual to fulfil the role of Corporate Property Officer. It was agreed that this should, in the first instance, be the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) who would lead an Asset Management Group appointed from Operational Management Team.
 - Consolidation and enhancement of existing data sources. The main initiatives considered included transferring the property register on to a Geographical Information System by the use of a Uniform 2000 Estates Management Module; progress towards a Local Land and Property Gazetteer linked to a National system; the inclusion of work undertaken for condition surveys of leisure buildings and council houses within the property register; and the pooling of administrative resources to create a Data Centre around the GIS system.
 - Use of the intranet, and improvements to the network, were identified as being necessary to increase data flow. An “ER Mapper” browser would be provided to all service departments and Members to enable examination of aerial photographs.
 - Facilities Management. It was considered unlikely that, at present, a suitable contract for facilities management by the private sector could be assembled, but the Review recommended re-examination in twelve months, following Best Value Reviews and contract negotiation.
 - Issues arising from the Audit Commission publication “Hot Property”. The Asset Management Group, with increased cross-party Member representation, would hold a series of reviews to consider a range of issues identified within this publication.
 - A number of minor recommendations arising from information gained during the Review.

An action plan and timetable for implementing the Review’s recommendations was appended.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Asset Management Plan be adopted.
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) be appointed as Corporate Property Officer, and an Asset Management Group be created on the basis outlined.
- (3) That four Members, one from each Political Group, be appointed to join with the Asset Management Group in considering issues arising from the Audit Commission publication "Hot Property"
- (4) That the CAPS Solutions Uniform 2000 Estate Management module be acquired
- (5) That a basic Global Positioning System be acquired
- (6) That a Local Land & Property Gazetteer to be linked to the National system be produced.
- (7) That opportunities for Facilities Management, Partnership working and Competition in Asset Management be reviewed within the next twelve months following review of the Leisure and Housing Services
- (8) That the Council's Asset Register be improved and published and a central record of Stakeholders be created.
- (9) That a Best Value Checklist for future reviews be prepared.
- (10) That a further report on the viability of a Data Centre following a process review of data management within the authority be presented
- (11) That the Action Plan be implemented (CD(LPA))

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

384 OUTSTANDING CONTRACT ISSUES

The Sub-Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) regarding staff contract issues.

RECOMMENDED

That the recommendations contained within the exempt appendix to these minutes be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

The Meeting closed at 10.00pm.

Chairman

Date