

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 16 July 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **16 July 2002** when there were present:

Cllr M G B Starke – Chairman

Cllr T Livings

Cllr P A Capon

Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr T G Cutmore

Cllr D F L Flack

Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn.

VISITING

Cllrs A J Humphries, Mrs M S Vince and Mrs M A Weir.

OFFICERS ATTENDING

R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)
A Bugeja	Head of Legal Services
H Drye	Corporate Policy Manager
S Neville	Residential Services Unit Manager
J Bourne	Leisure and Contracts Manager
E Chapman	Personnel Manager
A Coulson	Housing, Client and Strategy Officer
G Dawson	Senior Monitoring Officer/Parks Officer
S Garland	Community Safety Officer
C Evans	Legal Officer
A Wyatt	Committee Administrator

322 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 18 June 2002 were approved as a correct and signed by the Chairman.

323 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in the item "Outstanding Issues - Rochford Town Sports and Social Club" by virtue of living in close proximity to the Sports and Social Club.

Councillor T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in the item "Frail Elderly Needs" by virtue of being this Authority's representative on Rochford's Crossroads. Councillor T Livings also declared a personal interest in the same item by virtue of being this Authority's representative on Rayleigh Age Concern.

Councillor Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in the item "StAR Update" by virtue of being a member of the StAR Partnership.

Councillor T Livings declared a personal interest in the item "Referral from Community Services Committee - Management of Skateboarding" by virtue of being a member of Rayleigh Town Council.

324 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee noted the progress on the outstanding issues. In response to Members' questions the following was noted and agreed:-

Frail Elderly Housing Needs Study

It was noted that £7,000 funding, and not £700 as stated in the report, had been agreed from the under-spend on the Frail Elderly Needs Report to retain The Housing and Support Partnership as consultants on this project.

Rochford Town Sports and Social Club

The Committee was advised by the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) that Rochford Town Sports and Social Club wished to have their planning application determined prior to submission of the business plan. Members were disappointed to note this but, were mindful of the reasoning behind the decision from the Sports and Social Club.

325 SERVICETEAM GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Members welcomed Gary Sutch, Regional Manager, Serviceteam, who had been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the progress on the Grounds Maintenance Contract in the Rochford District.

Members noted that Serviceteam had recently been purchased by the Cleanaway Group, although the Serviceteam brand had remained. The company buyout had provoked heavy investment in capital and management training to improve the company profile.

Concerns were raised with regard to grass cutting. It was noted that, on occasions, the grass was not cut to an acceptable standard or height and that the cuttings were left, often making the cut grass look worse than the uncut grass. Mr Sutch advised Members that it was hoped

that, as the partnership with the Grounds Maintenance Contract developed, matters such as these could be addressed within the existing contract boundaries.

A Member raised an issue in respect of overgrown alleyways and pathways within the Hawkwell area and Mr Sutch undertook to investigate each site on receipt of the list of alleyways concerned.

Members thanked Mr Sutch for his presentation and he then left the meeting.

326 FRAIL ELDERLY NEEDS

The Committee welcomed Elizabeth Vale (Age Concern) and Heather Garnet and Marion Horsley (Rochford Crossroads) who had been invited to attend the meeting to give comment and advice on their assessment of the housing and support needs of frail older people.

Age Concern

By way of introduction, Members were advised that it was Age Concern's view that the majority of frail elderly people wish to remain independent and within their own properties for as long as possible. Mention was made of the current grants regime and the use of discretionary renovation grants to assist the elderly with adaptations to make properties suitable for use by the occupier. Mention was further made of the equity release schemes, which had been mooted at previous meetings. It was noted that Age Concern produced leaflets outlining the pros and cons of the current equity release schemes available to the elderly.

Moving on to the provision of sheltered housing and nursing home care, it was noted that the elderly often wished to remain within their own communities rather than being moved away purely on the grounds of bed availability and cost.

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) undertook to look into the matter of the Authority's policy in respect of persons with disabilities being able to use sheltered housing stock.

Crossroads

By way of introduction, Heather Garnet and Marion Horsley presented the work of the Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme and the inadequacies of the accommodation currently available to residents within the District for disabled access. They went on to speak about the Council's warden controlled schemes and made reference to the

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Careline alarm system, which was managed for the Authority by Chelmsford Borough Council.

Mention was made of the degradation felt by the elderly when requiring care, making reference to the elderly owner occupiers being asset rich but cash poor.

Members' questions were answered in relation to the following points:-

- The need for 24 hour care cover in relation to the sheltered housing schemes and the potential provision of additional care at these schemes.
- The unsuitability of "1950's" style bungalows for adaptation for the disabled, in particular the wheelchair bound.

327 StAR UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on the Star Partnership's progress with initiatives within the District of Rochford.

Members welcomed Paola Pedrelli, Val Thomas and Sarah Redwood from the Partnership, who had attended the meeting to present their report and answer questions. The Committee noted that the Primary Care Trust welcomed the Partnership working with the District Council, in particular in relation to the funding of the Community Development Worker post for a further 2 years. Questions were answered in relation to the following points:-

- The parenting programme
- The play at home programme
- The breakfast club
- Proposals for rolling out the programmes into Rayleigh

Members were pleased to note that it was the intention for the Community Development Worker to undertake work to establish the need for a community project throughout the entire Rochford District over the coming months.

328 COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which introduced the local Best Value Review of Community Safety by

providing an assessment of the current service provided by the District Council.

During a page by page analysis of the schedule, the following points were raised:-

- Domestic Violence – Support for Victims

It was noted that the Community Safety Unit worked closely with the Housing Management Division in relation to this particular point.

- Anti- Social Behaviour – Dog Fouling

Members questioned whether this particular assessment was too low given recent District Council initiatives in relation to additional dog waste bins and the introduction of The Dogs Fouling of Land Act 1996.

- Anti-Social Behaviour – Abandoned Vehicles

Members questioned whether the assessments given in relation to this item were high enough. The Committee was advised of a recent agreement with the Police to share data relating to registered vehicle owners which would hopefully half the time taken to deal with the matter of abandoned vehicles.

- Fear of Crime – Information on Actual Crime in Locality

Members noted Officers' comments in respect of evidence to support the assessment in that the information was not published widely enough. It was noted that Rochford District Matters had been used to promote House Safety. The newspaper could also be used to publicise good news and challenge bad news relating to crime within the District.

- Fear of Crime – Actual Crime to Minority Groups

Noting the high score for this item, Members were advised that Police statistics received in relation to 'hate crime' on grounds of sexual orientation, race or disability were few due to the lack of reported incidents. Incidents reported may increase as victims become more confident that reports will receive multi-agency support.

- Actual Crime – Bogus Callers

Members noted that it was the intention for an article on bogus callers to be included within the Autumn edition of Rochford District

Matters with a small cut-out notice for use by members of the public which could be used to deter unwanted callers.

- Actual Crime – Not Responding to Issues seen on the Street

Members noted that the Police did not always act on reports by the public on the perceived use of drugs. The partnership is looking at signs of drug-taking at particular sites and targeting follow-up initiatives .

In noting and agreeing the assessments made by Officers, the methodology used was questioned and it was agreed that the information used to provide the scorings would be made available to Members for their information.

Resolved

That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee receives this report. (CEX)

329 BEST VALUE REVIEW ACTION PLAN UPDATE – HOUSING STRATEGY/HOMELESSNESS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on progress on implementing the Housing Strategy/Homelessness Action Plan.

Noting the details provided within the schedule, the following points were made during discussion:-

- Page 11.7 Young Mothers

It was noted that the homelessness statistics should be available in late July 2002.

- Page 11.9 – Point 2(10)

It was noted that further analysis of demand for publicity for the young people on the availability of Council accommodation would be undertaken during normal Officer time.

- Page 11.15 – Point 2(18)

Given the cancellation of the meeting with Parishes due to lack of interest, Members questioned whether partnership working was indeed working between the two tiers. It was, however, considered essential for the Parishes to be involved within the process and therefore that a meeting should be arranged.

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- Page 11.16 – Point 2(22)

It was noted that the Estuary Housing Association bid under the Starter Home Initiative had not been supported by the Government on the last two occasions. However, it was hoped that Government support would be forthcoming should there be an opportunity for further bidding.

- Page 11.17 – Point 2(24)

Mindful of the need for the Housing Condition Survey, concern was expressed by some Members at the way in which the survey had been undertaken. These matters were being investigated with the successful contractor.

- Page 11.18 – Point 2(26)

It was noted that with regard to an Empty Homes Officer the Government's proposals relating to second homes and Council Tax was awaited as this may release funds for such posts.

- Page 11.21 – Point 2(30)

It was noted that the Cash Incentive Scheme Grant had increased from £19,000 to £22,000 for the year 2002/2003 per Grant .

- Page 11.24 – Point 2(34)

It was noted that the improvements to Hatfield House had been delayed whilst decisions were made about the most appropriate heating system to be installed. Members concurred with the Officers' view that disruption should be kept to a minimal level at the site and that the works should be properly phased in order to reduce inconvenience to existing tenants.

- Page 11.28 – Point 2(43)

Officers agreed to clarify the possibility of health/social services funding in respect of the co-ordination of the housing needs of older people leaving hospital.

- Page 11.29 – Point 3(1)

Officers undertook to identify which budget had been used to fund the Housing Strategy Forum Meeting.

- Page 11.32 – Point 3(7)

It was noted that bids in relation to infill site development had not been supported by the Housing Corporation, although the bids were still live, and that the registered social landlords involved were currently in the process of ascertaining what work was needed in order to bring the matters to fruition.

Homelessness Action Plan

- Page 11.45(F)

It was noted that previously the storage of personal belongings for homeless families had been undertaken in Council garages. However, this process was now being reviewed with a view to proper storage facilities being provided. At this stage it was not known what cost this would incur.

- Page 11.55(C)

Members wished to be advised of the costs which would be incurred in carrying out investigations into whether there was a rough sleepers problem within the Rochford District.

Resolved

That, subject to the above comments, the progress being made on the implementation of the action plans be noted and that they form part of this year's Housing Investment Programme submission. (HHHCC)

330 CHERRY ORCHARD JUBILEE PARK UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided Members with an update on the progress of the works at the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park and also gave details of the grants that had successfully been obtained for the project.

Members were pleased to note that the project was moving along and that grant monies would enable the project to continue without impact on the District Council's resources. The Committee asked that the proposed site visit to the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park take place on a Saturday morning in order for maximum attendance. Members congratulated Officers for the sterling work undertaken in respect of this matter.

331 ESTIMATE FOR NEW FOOTPATH AND LAND DRAINAGE – SWEYNE PARK

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which indicated costs associated with

the additional footpaths and land drainage around the Clover Leaf play area at Sweyne Park. Members were pleased to note that the tenders returned had come below the budgeted sum and agreed, therefore, that Footpath D should be extended by 160 metres and that Officers could proceed with education and sign boards as previously requested by Members.

Resolved

- (1) That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Council that the following paths' lengths be constructed.

Path A	110 metres
Path B	400 metres
Path C	240 metres
Path D	110 + 160 metres
- (2) That the land drainage at the Clover Leaf play space be undertaken.
- (3) That additional interest tables and additional wild flower planting should take place around the area with improved signage being provided at footpath A explaining the reasons why the area was not regularly mown. (CD(F&ES))

332 MEMORIAL TO FORMER COUNCILLOR MRS S J LEMON

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which outlined some options in relation to a permanent memorial to former Councillor Mrs S J Lemon, who had been Chairman of the Council the previous Municipal Year.

In noting the late Mrs Lemon's husband's wish, Members considered that Option 2 should be pursued and it was

Resolved

That the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Full Council the planting of a tree in memory of former Councillor Mrs S J Lemon either in Sweyne Park or in close proximity to the Mill Hall and the Windmill as a permanent memorial. (CEX)

333 BYE - LAWS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF SKATEBOARDING WITHIN THE DISTRICT

Members considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on the management of skateboarding within the Rochford District.

Members noted this item had been referred by the Community Services Committee on 2 July to this Committee for consideration. Noting the progress which had been made in relation to the introduction of bye – laws in respect of skateboarding within the District, it was considered that it would be unfair for bye – laws to be introduced to prohibit skateboarding when no alternative facilities had been provided.

During debate it was felt that Bye - Law 1 in respect of controlling nuisance could be supported but that prohibition of skateboarding in certain areas would need further thought.

On a motion moved by Councillor T G Cutmore and seconded by Councillor P A Capon it was

Resolved

That the introduction of bye-laws be deferred pending the determination and provision of proposed facilities at the King Georges Playing Field, Rayleigh (HLS).

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

334 SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which set out how central control might be adopted for a trial period before any management decisions were taken in respect of Sheltered Housing Scheme management.

Resolved

That the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommends to Council that

- (1) Interim management arrangements be considered for sheltered housing for a twelve month trial period based on wardens working a 37 hour week and supervising paired schemes.
- (2) Out of hours calls be referred to a call centre.

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- (3) Hardwick House be included within these arrangements until the outcome of the bidding process with the Housing Corporation is known.
- (4) Francis Walk be managed as a Sheltered Housing Scheme and be included within the scheme but that the District Council's intentions be made clear to current tenants in that the stock would no longer be managed as a Sheltered Housing Scheme but that it would be retained for tenants of a pensionable age. (HRHM)

The Meeting closed at 10.30pm.

Chairman

Date