

**ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Member Budget Monitoring Working Group**

**At a Reconvened Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2000. Present:** Councillors D E Barnes (Chairman), C R Morgan, R E Vingoe and P F A Webster.

**Apologies:** Councillor V H Leach.

**Substitutes:** Councillor Mrs J Helson.

72 **BUDGET STRATEGY**

The Working Group continued to consider the draft budget for 2000/2001 and the following additional information was circulated by the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services).

- The schedule of suggested fees and charges
- The original list of specific budget requests for 2000/2001
- A revised set of figures in respect of the budget requests, following a further internal sifting exercise
- A revised list of other budgetary items against which no specific sums had yet been attributed and which would have a negative budgetary impact

During discussion, the following main points arose:-

**Fees and Charges**

- Concessionary fares. Members noted that it was anticipated that the total cost to the Council of providing passes for concessionary fares would be unchanged in 2000/2001 despite the proposals contained within the report to increase the charge to customers for individual passes. It was therefore agreed that there should be no increase at present, but that the charges should be reviewed in line with Government policy. The proposed increase in the charge per journey for Dial-a-Ride, from £1.10 to £1.20 was agreed.
- Car Parks. The Working Group was aware that, at its last Meeting, Council had agreed that the existing pay and display ticket machines be upgraded to improve the efficiency of the collection of parking fees. It was anticipated that the new machines would be fully operational across the District by 1 April. In addition, Council had also agreed to continue to offer free parking on Saturdays, to encourage visitors to town centres. Members considered the proposals within the report for increasing car parking charges, and also made reference to the suggested alternative tariffs that had previously been submitted by the Rochford and Hockley Chambers of Trade. A number of views were expressed about the level of any increase to the charges, the banding of the length of stay to which the charges related, and the timing of the increase. The legal process, including the issue of an Order, would have a bearing upon the timing. The Working Group agreed that, as a general principle, the costs of the installation of the new machines and the provision of free Saturday parking should be recovered in full from the income

generated by car parking charges. It was suggested, therefore, that a review be carried out in June to assess the extent of any budgetary shortfall which could then, if necessary, be addressed by increasing parking charges with effect from October. If an increase was needed, a number of possible charging structures could be considered, including those submitted by the Chambers of Trade.

- Hackney Carriage and Private Vehicle Licensing. The Working Group was informed that, by 2002, all applicants' vehicles would need to be wheelchair accessible, and that the proposed increases for 2000/2001 reflected an interim stage between the current rate and the higher level intended post 2002. The aim of the proposed increases in this area was to ensure that the service was self-financing, rather than incurring a cost to the Council as had hitherto been the case. It was noted that a new banding for operators' licences had been introduced. The increased charges identified in the report were agreed.
- Licences. The Corporate Director undertook to provide a Member with details of the number of pavement permissions that had been granted.
- Cemeteries. In reply to a Member question, the Head of Financial Services indicated that the proposed increase was in line with inflation.
- Pavilion hire for playgroups. It was proposed, and agreed, to reduce these charges in view of the financial position of many playgroups.
- Local Land Charges. Members were informed that the proposed increase in search fees was significant but in line with the Essex average. It was anticipated that the increase would generate an additional income of £50,000.
- Possible new charges. Members considered a number of possible new charges in relation to: boot fairs; domestic pest control; furniture collections; public convenience and elections, but agreed to recommend that none of these be implemented.

The Working Group then considered a revised set of figures relating to items, which were not currently included within the budget. A list of items that could comprise future demands on the Council's budget was also examined, and the likely implications for the Council Tax were assessed.

### **Recommended**

1. That there be no increase in the charge for Concessionary fare passes at present, but the charges be reviewed in line with Government Policy.
2. That a review of the income received from car parking charges be carried out in June 2000 and, if necessary, the charges be increased from October 2000, using a tariff to be determined.
3. That the proposed new charges as set out in the charges report be not implemented. (CD(F & ES))

The Meeting closed at 8.30pm

Chairman .....

Date .....