

Council – 27 February 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** held on **15 February 2001** when there were present:

Cllr G Fox – Chairman

Cllr R Adams
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr D F Flack
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn
Cllr J E Grey
Cllr D R Helson
Cllr Mrs J Helson
Cllr V H Leach
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon
Cllr T Livings

Cllr G A Mockford
Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr P J Morgan
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr R E Vingoe
Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr D A Weir
Cllr Mrs M A Weir

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr Mrs M J Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	Chief Executive
R J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
G Woolhouse	Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
A Smith	Head of Administrative & Member Services
D Timson	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
J Bostock	Principal Committee Administrator

66 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 December 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the final paragraph of Minute 422 referring to Councillor P J and not G J Morgan.

67 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

Essex Police Best Value Structural Review (Minute 440/00)

Responding to Member questions on the latest position, the Chief Executive referred to recent communication indicating that the Police Authority would soon be determining the Best Value Public Consultation Process

It would be possible to supply copies of the Police document to voluntary groups within the District.

Following discussion on the importance which could be associated with ensuring full consultation a motion was moved by Councillor Mrs J Helson and seconded by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn and it was:-

Resolved

That this Authority makes provisional arrangements for two Public Consultation Meetings in both the Rayleigh and Rochford areas in anticipation of the Police Authority agreeing to undertake full public consultation on the Essex Police Best Value Structural Review. (CE)

68 REPORT OF URGENT ACTION

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive on action taken under the Council's urgency procedure to communicate this Council's views on the Government consultation paper on the Power to Promote or Improve Economic, Social or Environmental Well-Being.

69 RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES FROM PARENT COMMITTEES

The Committee considered the recommendations and references from Parent Committees.

(1) Transportation and Environmental Services Committee – 25 January 2001

Minute 18 – Minutes

The report requested by the Transportation and Environmental Services Committee on the Bellingham Lane/Mill Hall Car Park project was the subject of a separate Agenda item (see Minute 76)

(2) Community Services Committee – 30 January 2001

Minute 47 – Homelessness and Housing Advice – Best Value Review

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on the request of the Community Services Committee that this Committee be asked to agree the current arrangements for procurement of bed and breakfast accommodation.

Responding to Member questions, the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care advised that there was a significant demand for bed and breakfast accommodation across the District and that some

accommodation was utilised for asylum seekers. Whilst approaches were sometimes made to achieve accommodation in areas further afield than the Southend Borough area, the Council was legally obliged to ensure facilities were suitable in all respects, including continuity of schooling arrangements for children.

Resolved

That the current arrangements for procurement of bed and breakfast accommodation be agreed. (HHHCC)

70 MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES

The Committee received the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and considered the recommendations contained therein

(1) Member Budget Monitoring – 3 January 2001

(2) Partnership – 17 January 2001

Minute 104 – Community Strategies

The Recommendation under this Minute was considered later in the Meeting in tandem with the Agenda item on Community Strategies (Minute 71 refers).

Minute 105 – Our Countryside: The Future

Resolved

That the summary of the White Paper “Our Countryside – The Future” be noted and that further reports be brought to appropriate Committees as the individual elements of the proposals outlined in the document are developed by the Government. (HPS)

Minute 106 – Our Towns and Cities: The Future

Resolved

That the summary of the White Paper “Our Towns and Cities: The Future” be noted and that further reports be brought to appropriate Committees as the individual elements of the proposals outlined in the document are developed by the Government. (HPS)

3. Structural and Procedural Review – 24 January 2001

Minute 72 – Draft Guidance on Standards Committees

Resolved

That the observations set out in the Minute form the basis of this Council's response to the Government's Consultation Paper on Standards Committees. (CE)

4. Corporate Resources – 6 February 2001

Minute 387 – Minutes

Responding to questions on financial provision for CCTV proposals, the Corporate Director advised that:-

- The Rayleigh Chamber of Trade would be provided with detailed information on the mechanics and time-frame for funding. A meeting with the Town Council and the Chamber of Trade had been scheduled.
- Following recent decisions, the sum of £1000 remained available.
- It would be appropriate to provide for any residual bids to be made by the end of June 2001.

During debate reference was made to the availability of monies for Parish Councils to submit bids for CCTV schemes in their own areas.

On a motion moved by Councillor D R Helson and seconded by Councillors Mrs S J Lemon it was:-

Resolved

That any residual bids for CCTV from the Chambers of Trade must have been received by the end of June 2001 (i.e. three months from the commencement of the new financial year). (CD(F&ES))

Minute 389 – Access at rear of 5-9 Prentice Close, Rochford

Resolved

- (1) That the request for a right of way to allow vehicular access to the rear of No.4 Malting Villas Road, Rochford be refused.
- (2) That the request for parking bays to be marked out and allocated to Nos. 5-9 Prentice Close, Rochford, to provide two parking spaces convenient to each of the properties be referred to the Housing Management Sub-Committee. (HRHM)

Minute 390 – Grants to Outside Bodies

Resolved

- (1) That grants be awarded in 2001/02 to the following organisations as shown:-

CAB

Rayleigh CAB	
Rochford CAB	
Additional funding	61,800
Home Visiting	4,200
Outreach Service	1,600
Mediation	<u>1,000</u>
	<u>68,600</u>

Barling Evergreen Club	105
Essex Racial Equality Council	600
Great Wakering OAP Club	100
Hockley & Hawkwell Old Peoples Welfare	3,200
Hockley over 60's	100
Hullbridge Pensioners fellowship	105
Hullbridge Senior Citizens Welfare Council	3,200
Mayday Mobile	1,060
RAVS	1,500
Rayleigh Age Concern	3,200
Rayleigh Friends of Southend Cancer Unit	110
Rayleigh Good Fellowship	750
Rayleigh No.1 Club	600
Rayleigh No. 2 Club	330
Rayleigh Physically Handicapped Club	880
Rochford & District Access Committee	100
Rochford & District Old Peoples Welfare	3,200
Rochford Pre School Learning Alliance	400
Rochford Sports Council	2,175
Royal Association for the Deaf	520

- (2) That Rayleigh Antiquarian Society's request for a grant of £160 be agreed, with Officers to identify a suitable source of funding. (CD(F&ES))

Minute 391 – Members' Allowances 2001/02

Resolved

- (1) That for 2001/02 Members' Allowances be calculated on the basis of the existing system, with an increase of 3%.
- (2) That Officers present a report on the composition and levels of reimbursement with a view to setting up an Independent Review Panel to determine the level of allowances for 2002/03. (CD(F&ES))

Minute 392 – Thames Gateway – South Essex

Resolved

That a contribution of £5,000 be made towards the Thames Gateway South Essex Initiative. (CE)

Minute 393 – Essex Wide Best Value General Consultation Survey

Resolved

That the contents of the report be noted, with the findings being fed through to the appropriate Best Value service reviews and other relevant Council initiatives. (CE)

Minute 394 – Community Legal Service

Resolved

- (1) That Officers continue to work as part of the partnership and keep Members informed of progress.
- (2) That a representative on the Steering Group be appointed from the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee for the remainder of this municipal year. (HLS)

Minute 395 – Rochford Economic Audit

Resolved

- (1) That the consultants' report be referred to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee which is responsible for consideration of the new Local Plan.
- (2) That the action involving the Council's partner organisations, as outlined in the Chief Executive's report, be endorsed.
- (3) That Officers complete their work on a draft economic strategy for the District, based on the consultants' report, for consideration at a future meeting. (CE)

Minute 396 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees – Village Fair, Great Wakering

Resolved

That the fee due for a Public Entertainment Licence of the Great Woking Village Fair, if granted, be waived in full. (HHHCC)

Minute 397 – Land at Mill Hall, Rayleigh

Resolved

That the land at the Mill Hall, Rayleigh, identified on the plan attached to the Corporate Director's exempt report, be sold subject to a covenant to protect its use. (CD(F&ES))

Minute 398 – Mill Hall, Rayleigh – installation of CCTV

Resolved

- (1) That Officers undertake the installation of a CCTV system to cover the whole of the Mill Hall site, at an approximate cost of £8,500 with the balance of the budgetary allocation being used for other schemes to be identified.
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) be authorised to utilise part of the £20,000 budget provision for 2001/02 in the current financial year. (CD)F&ES))

(5) Member Budget Monitoring – 7 February 2001

Minute 130 – Power to Promote Well Being

The recommendations under this Minute had been dealt with via the Council's Urgency Procedure.

Minute 131 – Town and Country Financial Issues Group

Resolved

That the observations of the Sub-Committee and of the Town and Country Financial Issues Group, as set out in the Minute, be agreed.

Minute 132 – The Provision of Effective Contract Monitoring in conjunction with and In-house Civic Chauffeur Service

The Committee concurred with the view of a Member that it should be specified that the post of part-time Depot Assistant deputised for the chauffeur.

Resolved

That in order to enable the Contract Monitoring Officers to undertake full and effective monitoring of contracts in line with the retention of civic chauffeuring in-house, approval be given to:-

- (1) Recruitment to a post of part-time Civic Chauffeur on scale 1 for a two year fixed term contract.
- (2) Contracting out the installation of bins/street name plates.
- (3) Recruitment to a post of part-time Depot Assistant on scale 3. This post to deputise for the Chauffeur. (CD(F&ES))

71 COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on recent Government guidance for developing Community Strategies, together with the recommendations of the Council's Partnership Sub-Committee thereon.

During debate on possibilities, Members made the following observations:-

- The development of Community Strategy proposals could provide exciting opportunities.
- It could be of value to consider if the Terms of Reference of the current Town Centre Working Groups could be expanded to include consideration of Community Strategies, with an overarching role for the Partnership Sub-Committee in collating final documentation. Against this, account should be taken of the need to ensure that arrangements are equitable with appropriate sections of the community involved. Town Centre Working Groups should continue to address their existing objectives.
- In setting the groundwork for developing strategies, it will be important to be clear on funding/financial implications and the outcomes to be achieved.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive referred to the preparatory work which was being undertaken County-wide to ensure an effective step process. It would be important to establish working arrangements with partner bodies. Strategies represented an opportunity to develop integrated service action plans, with the amount of financing committed by various agencies identified and provision made for community input. Pro-active work on strategy development would accord with recent observations of the Council's external auditor on facilitating work with partner organisations. In terms of timing, it would be appropriate for the Council's Structural and Procedural Review Sub-Committee to give detailed consideration to possibilities once decisions on a new political structure had been made.

On a motion moved by Councillor Mrs J Helson and seconded by Councillor V H Leach it was:-

Resolved

That a report on the way forward be submitted to the first Meeting of the Structural and Procedural Review Sub-Committee in the next municipal year, the report to address the observations made during this meeting. (CE)

72 BEST VALUE – ROLLING PROGRAMME OF SERVICE REVIEWS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on a revised rolling programme of Best Value Service reviews.

During debate, reference was made to the benefit of early Member involvement in service reviews. A Panel of Members comprising representation from the various Groups on the Council would enable all party support.

Resolved

- (1) That the programme of Service Reviews, as set out at Appendix 1 to these Minutes, be agreed.
- (2) That a panel of four Members (one from each Group) be established to input into forthcoming Best Value service reviews. (CE/HAMS)

73 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATING – DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF – SECTIONS 47/48 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on the re-instatement of discretionary rate relief to two football clubs.

Members felt that the equitable approach would be to apply rate relief from the year the Council's current criteria came into effect.

On a motion moved by Councillor D R Helson and seconded by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn it was:-

Resolved

That relief be granted to the Rochford Hundred Rugby Football Club and the Westcliff Rugby Football Club with effect from 1 April 2000 (the year the Council's current rate relief policy came into effect.) (HRHM)

74 BENEFIT, COUNCIL TAX, BUSINESS RATES, FORMER TENANT ARREARS AND SUNDRY DEBTORS – WRITE-OFFS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on cases written-off under delegated authority and cases needing Committee approval.

It was noted that the National Non Domestic Rate and Council Tax cases set out in Appendix B of the report had already been written-off.

Members agreed that staff should be congratulated on their effective work in achieving debt recovery.

Resolved

- (1) That the items written-off under the Corporate Director's delegated authority be noted.
- (2) That the items shown under sundry debtors, benefits and former tenant arrears in Appendix B of the report (appended to the signed copy of these minutes) be now written-off in the accounts of the Authority. (HRHM/HFS)

75 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2001/02

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services on the adoption of a timetable of meetings for the 2001/02 municipal year.

The Committee agreed that, given the number of strategies requiring approval prior to the beginning of April, it would be appropriate to include provision for a Council meeting on 19 March 2002 to consider strategies. As Parish Councils had commitments at the time of the proposed meeting of Annual Council, it was felt that Tuesday 14 May would be the preferred day for the District's Annual Meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that it would be for a future meeting of Council to determine whether to trial any proposed new political structure and that the timetable from January 2002 to May 2002 could be filled later as considered appropriate. The Chief Executive advised that the Council would need to be in a position to submit proposals on its new political structure prior to the summer recess.

RECOMMENDED

That the proposed timetable of meetings 2001/02, as revised and set out at Appendix 2 to these Minutes, be approved on the basis that there will be further review of arrangements from January 2002 once the Council has finalised a way forward on the Modernising Agenda. (HAMS)

76 BELLINGHAM LANE/MILL HALL CAR PARK PROJECT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) on the current position relating to the Bellingham Lane/Mill Hall Car Park project. A copy of a letter dated 12 February 2001 from the main contractor had been tabled. In a supporting presentation, Officers highlighted some of the factors which could be associated with project delays.

During the presentation and responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- Overall, delays could not be associated with just one contractor. Specialist contractors had been required for some of the work. Whilst some tenders for specialist work had been sought in advance of those for the main contract, the requirements of the Conservation Area application had meant works could not be let until the final groundwork tender had been agreed.
- There is an agreement with the main contractor that works be completed by 23 February 2001. Following this date, the Council could apply liquidated damages. Such damages are calculated on the basis of loss which the Council can prove. There needs to be a clear case for damages and Officers were reviewing losses associated with car parking and capital.
- The amount to be paid to the main contractor would be the originally agreed tender figure (no additional costs would be accepted). National conditions set a retention figure of 5% for this type of contract, payment of which is expected within twenty-eight days of the final invoice.
- The main contractor had undertaken other small works for the Authority.
- Orders had been placed for the street furniture associated with the project.
- Consideration was currently being given to addressing potential problems which could be associated with skateboarding at the site.
- A sanction which can be applied to a contractor is removal from the Council's Approved List of Contractors.
- The main contractor had been the lowest tenderer and references had been satisfactory. Notwithstanding delays, the contractor's workmanship was good and the project was within budget.

During debate, comment was made that Members should have received more detailed information on project delays at an earlier stage. Such information would have assisted communication with local residents. This item raised some concerns on the way contracts are

managed and the process for agreeing contract extension. There may be value in reviewing the criteria used to check contractors. Whilst not direct losses to the Council there are financial implications for shopkeepers in the vicinity of the project.

In discussing the value of Member involvement in an early review of the contract management process, Members concurred with the Chief Executive that, in line with earlier debate on Best Value, it would be appropriate to appoint a four Member cross Group Panel.

On a motion moved by Councillor Mrs J Helson and seconded by Councillor V H Leach it was:-

Resolved

That in view of the fact that the overall works for the Bellingham Lane/Mill Hall Car Park project are already more than two months over schedule and that Members have now been advised that the project will further overrun and will not be finished by 23 February 2001:-

- (1) The Chief Executive be instructed to undertake an internal investigation into the management of this contract and to submit a report on a confidential basis to the next Meeting of this Committee.
- (2) A Process Review of contract management be undertaken immediately, with a cross Group Panel of four Members appointed on the same basis as for a Best Value Review. (CE)

77 57 SOUTH STREET – JOINT MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on appointments to the 57 South Street Joint Management Board.

In responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director advised on the nature of the partnership arrangement, including funding provision. It was noted that Officers from the three partner bodies were Board appointees.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillors D M Ford and D A Weir be appointed to represent the Council on the 57 South Street Joint Management Board.
- (2) That it be requested co-opted Members with voting rights be appointed, the Council's appointees to be Councillors R A Amner and Mrs H L A Glynn.

- (3) That attendance at meetings of the Board be an approved duty.
(CD(F&ES))

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

78 REDUCTION OR REMISSION OF BUSINESS RATE LIABILITY

Note: Councillor T Livings declared an interest in this item by virtue of trading with the applicant and left the meeting whilst it was being considered.

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on an application for remission of business rate liability (reference N100631476).

During debate Members noted previous relief which had been granted to the applicant and when loan commitments were likely to conclude. The Corporate Director (Finance & External) Services confirmed that applicant's are made aware that any relief commitment is for the defined period only.

On a motion moved by Councillor D R Helson and seconded by Councillor P F A Webster it was:-

Resolved

That relief be granted for applicant ref N100631476 on the following basis:-

Relief of 50% for 1999/2000

Relief of 25% for 2000/2001 (HRHM)

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm

Chairman _____

Date _____

Year 2 (2001/2002)

Community Safety	Approaches to improving safety, including reduction in crime and disorder, domestic violence and drug abuse: reducing the fear of crime
Economic Regeneration	Encouraging the growth of economic activity in the District
Emergency Planning	Contingency arrangements to deal with public emergencies
Strategic Housing (continuing from year 1)	The Council's strategy for housing including private sector housing, the homeless and housing advice
Housing Management (continuing from year 1)	The management of the Council's own stock including rent setting, allocations, and maintenance
Development and Building Control	Assessment of planning applications and building control applications

Community Safety, Economic Regeneration, and Emergency Planning are being undertaken by a number of other Essex local authorities and partners. It would, therefore, appear appropriate to look at the potential for joint working with these and other organisations. Joint working might include:

- Service options and delivery
- Consultation
- Bench-marking
- Best practice

Year 3 (2002/2003)

Financial Management	The ways and means of managing all monies moving into, through and out of the organisation
Public Regulation, Inspection and Protection	Those issues that affect the public including licensing, food safety, health and safety enforcement, pollution, planning enforcement
Environmental Stewardship	Means for using resources to protect the environment for future generations

Year 4 (2003/2004)

Managing our Environment	The operational issues of managing the Council's environmental contracts/services
Communications	The means for developing corporate thinking throughout the organisation, and the Council's interface with the public
Transport Activities and Parking	Community transport initiatives, taxis and parking within the District
Democratic Renewal	Operation of committee, elections and electoral registration, and review how the new political structure is bedding in

Year 5 (2004/2005)

Support Services	What goes on behind the scenes to support front-line delivery
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CYCLE OF MEETINGS 2001/2002

APPENDIX 2

2001							2002					
	MAY	JUNE	JULY	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
Mon			2	3	1		3				1	
Tues	1		3 Com Serv	4 Env Health Sub	2 Com Serv		4				2	
Wed	2		4 T & ES	5 Planning Policy Sub	3 T&ES		5				3	1
Thur	3		5 Audit Serv	6 Trans Sub	4 Audit Serv	1 Trans Sub	6 F & GP				4	2
Fri	4	1	6	7	5	2	7		1	1	5	3
Mon	7 Bank Hol	4	9	10	8	5	10		4	4	8	6
Tues	8 Annual Council	5 Env Health Sub	10	11 Leisure Sub	9	6 Leisure Sub	11 S & P Rev		5	5	9	7
Wed	9	6 Planning Policy Sub	11	12 Housing Man Sub	10	7 Housing Man Sub	12 Budget Monitoring		6	6	10	8
Thur	10	7 Trans Sub	12 F&GP	13 Comm Safety Sub	11 F&GP	8 Comm Safety Sub	13 Plan Serv		7	7	11	9
Fri	11	8	13	14 Contracts Sub *	12	9 Contracts Sub *	14		8	8	12	10
Mon	14	11	16	17	15	12	17		11	11	15	13
Tues	15	12 Leisure Sub	17 S&P Rev	18 Corporate Res Sub	16 S&P Rev	13 Corporate Res Sub	18 Council		12	12	16	14 Annual Council
Wed	16	13 Housing Man Sub	18	19	17	14	19		13	13	17	15
Thurs	17	14 Com Safety Sub	19 Partner Sub	20 Struc & Procedural	18 Partner Sub	15 Struc & Procedural	20		14	14	18	16
Fri	18	15 Contracts Sub*	20	21	19	16	21	18	15	15	19	17
Mon	21	18	23	24	22	19	24	21	18	18	22	20
Tues	22	19 Corporate Res Sub	24 Council	25 Budget Monitoring	23 Council	20 Budget Monitoring	25 Xmas Day	22 Council (Budget)	19 Council-(Council Tax)	19 Council (Strategies)	23 Council	21
Wed	23	20	25	26	24	21	26 Bank Hol	23	20	20	24	22
Thurs	24	21 Struc & Procedural	26 Plan Serv	27 Plan Serv	25 Plan Serv	22 Plan Serv	27	24	21	21	25	23
Fri	25	22	27	28	26	23	28	25	22	22	26	24
Mon	28 Bank Hol	25	30		29	26	31	28	25	25	29	27
Tues	29	26 Budget Monitoring	31		30 Env Health Sub	27 Com Serv		29	26 Council	26	30	28
Wed	30	27	AUGUST		31 Planning Policy Sub	28 T & ES		30	27	27		29
Thurs	31 Plan Serv	28 Plan Serv	30 Plan Serv			29 Audit Serv		31	28	28		30
Fri		29				30				29		

* Contracts Sub-Committee starts at 10.00am

Member Training to be held 10-24 May 2001