

Community Services Committee – 2 September 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **2 September 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr Mrs L Hungate (Acting Chairman)

Cllr R A Amner

Cllr Mrs R Brown

Cllr R G S Choppen

Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

VISITING MEMBER

Cllrs C A Black, Mrs M S Vince

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner, K A Gibbs, T E Goodwin and Mrs B J Wilkins

SUBSTITUTES

Cllrs C A Hungate, P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Clarkson

G Woolhouse

D Timson

M Martin

Head of Revenue and Housing Management

Head of Housing, Health & Community Care

Property Maintenance & Highways Manager

Committee Administrator

382 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the following bullet point to Minute 304:-

- Paragraph 7(c) – amend the wording to read:-

“Owner-occupiers who are disabled (or their carers) or who are on a low income who receive a qualifying benefit.

A qualifying benefit in respect of 7(c) is:

Income Support which includes a disability premium

Council Tax Benefit which includes a disability premium

Housing Benefit which includes a disability premium

Child Tax Credit (where household income is less than £14,200)

Working Tax Credit (where household income is less than £14,200)".

383 MEETING THE NEEDS OF OLDER PEOPLE IN ESSEX - CONSULTATION

Note: Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of being the County's Deputy Portfolio Holder for Community Care.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing Health and Community Care to which had been attached the County's consultation document in respect of its remaining care homes for older people.

The Chairman welcomed Roger Sinden, the County's Head of Community Care to the meeting, who presented to Members the main points of the County's consultation document.

In response to a Member question, the following was noted:-

- Public sector care home costs are calculated from a combination of the costs incurred within the care home, together with overheads which have to be borne from other County departments.
- These costs tend to be less responsive to local factors than independent homes, due to, for example, costs of pension schemes and sickness pay.
- The quality of the County's care homes is overseen by an independent regulator.

Members thanked the County officer for the comprehensive information he had been able to supply and on a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr R G S Choppen it was:-

Resolved

That, in response to Essex County Council's consultation on its remaining care homes and day care centres, including Sweyne Court, Rayleigh, this Council recommends they only be considered for transfer through leasehold disposal and that the County Council retains the freehold. (HHHCC)

384 FORMER PLAY SPACE AT TYLNEY AVENUE, ROCHFORD

The Committee received the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which advised Members of the proposals received from two Housing Associations for the development of housing on the former play space at Tylney Avenue, Rochford, and to seek approval for the preferred scheme.

Members noted that it was evident from the number of telephone calls and letters received that there was public concern over a range of issues and on a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr C A Hungate it was:-

Resolved

That this item be deferred and referred to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee for more detailed consideration. (HHHCC)

385 HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ON COUNCIL OWNED LAND BY SWAN HOUSING GROUP

The Committee received the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which sought Members' approval for the formal transfer of Council owned land at nil cost to Swan Housing Group (Cygnet Housing Association) to enable the development of a number of housing schemes to proceed.

Members noted that although this was a formal request to consider the transfer of land, the developments would still be subject to the normal planning process. However, Members were of the view that adequate public consultation should take place concerning the five sites outlined in this report, together with the site referred to in the previous Agenda item, and on a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr C A Hungate it was:-

Resolved

That this item be deferred and referred to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee for more detailed consideration. (HHHCC)

386 GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care on an item which had been referred from Council on 26 June 2003. The report commented on the specific requests made by the person who had asked the question at Council, together with possible policy decisions.

On a Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr P F A Webster it was agreed that the first recommendation be strengthened to include writing to the appropriate Minister to confirm that the Council is of the view that GM crops should not be grown at all.

On a further Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs S A Harper it was agreed that an additional recommendation be included to ensure that the planning of the Civic Dinner reflected the Council's view on GM foods.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council believes that GM crops should not be grown, and writes to the appropriate Minister setting out this position.

- (2) That the Head of Legal Services seeks a voluntary agreement with tenants of agricultural land owned by the Council not to grow any GM crop, and that the leases be amended to prohibit this at the first available opportunity.
- (3) That the Council's grounds maintenance contractor be advised that GM grass should not be cultivated, should it become available.
- (4) That tenants of Council houses be advised, by means of the 'Your Home' magazine, of the Council's concern and encouraged not to grow any GM plants which may become available.
- (5) That suppliers be advised that the Council does not intend to purchase any goods containing GM material.
- (6) That no GM products be used in the Chairman's Civic Dinner and that free range foods be used where these are available. (HHHCC/HLS)

387 REMOVAL EXPENSES AND HOME LOSS PAYMENTS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to agree a fixed sum allowance for those tenants subject to the decanting exercise at Hardwick House sheltered housing scheme in Rayleigh.

Members recommended that if possible an ex-gratia payment be paid to tenants who had already vacated their properties, thus bringing it in line with the payment which would be available from September for those compulsorily moved.

Resolved

- (1) That the sum of £675.00 be paid as a Type "A" removal fee from Hardwick House (permanent move).
- (2) That the sum of £861.00 be paid as a Type "B" removal fee from Hardwick House (returning to the Swan Housing Association Complex when completed).
- (3) That the Home loss payment of £3100 be paid from the 1st September 2003 to tenants compulsorily moved from Hardwick House.
- (4) That the Home loss payment of £1500, together with an ex-gratia payment of £1600, be paid to those tenants who have already vacated, provided that this is not ultra vires. (HRHM)

388 MUSEUMS IN ESSEX MEMBERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive, which sought Members' agreement to Rochford District Council joining the Museums in Essex Service.

Members noted that the cost of joining would be in the order of £1,500 per year and were of the opinion that this represented a good investment.

On a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was:-

Resolved

That this Council join the Museums in Essex service, in order to help develop a quality bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a museum within Rayleigh Windmill. (CD(F&ES))

389 QUALIFYING DISTANCE FOR THE TRANSPORT TO SCHOOL OF CHILDREN - CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which sought Members' comments in respect of proposals being put forward by the County Council to alter the "qualifying distance" criteria for children of compulsory school age attending denominational secondary schools on grounds of their faith, selective schools or whose families purchase a spare seat on contracted transport.

Members agreed that the County's existing schedule of assistance should be retained and on a Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr Mrs R Brown it was:-

Resolved

That in response to the County's consultation, this Council recommends that the current policies should remain unchanged. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman

Date