

Policy & Finance Committee – 14 October 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **14 October 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)
Cllr S P Smith (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C I Black
Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr C G Seagers

Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr J Thomass
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr J R F Mason.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive
R J Honey - Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)
R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson - Head of Revenue and Housing Management
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

432 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 September 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

433 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

(1) Community Transport – Request for Additional Funding

The Committee considered the report of the Finance & Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 September 2004.

Responding to questions, the Head of Revenue and Housing Management advised that:-

- The indicated salary figure related to the appointment of two vocational drivers (to be generally available from 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday, unless dealing with a pre-booked arrangement) and a Transport Co-ordinator (6 hours per day).

- Detail on specific mileages, the number of bookings and the hourly basis of salaries would be furnished to the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee and also be available to Policy Committee Members.
- Administration of the Taxi Voucher Scheme was relatively straightforward although unique in Essex. Most Essex authorities operated community transport schemes through trust arrangements.
- The community transport scheme was funded via Essex County Council grant monies. Membership of the scheme (which was in its first year of development) had already exceeded the numbers associated with the former Dial-a-Ride arrangement.
- The customer base associated with community transport differed from that for the taxi voucher scheme. Users of the community transport bus tended to have significant mobility problems. Users of the taxi voucher scheme tended to find that unconverted vehicles were suitable.

It was confirmed that it would be useful if Members could submit any questions that are pertinent to the examination of community transport provision so that these could be fed into the work of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. A Member observed that any examination would need to establish if continuity could be associated with the grant funding arrangement from Essex County Council and the most efficient way of applying such funding. There would also need to be cognisance of any inter-relationship with the taxi voucher scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That funding of up to £15,500 be made available during this financial year to the Community Transport Scheme from the Essex County Council community transport grant.
- (2) That a detailed examination of community transport provision be conducted over the next six months by the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee, to be concluded by March 2005.
(HRHM)

434 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the schedule relating to progress on decisions.

Telecommunications Installation in Freight House Car Park, Rochford (Minute 62(2)/04)

The Head of Revenue and Housing Management confirmed that he would alert the Head of Legal Services to provide precise details of the agreed lease terms via the Members' Bulletin.

Disposal of Old Ship Lane Public Convenience and Car Park – Further Issues (Minute 355/04)

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that Members would be advised of the precise number of parking spaces at the Old Ship Lane site. It was noted that two of the spaces were for use by disabled persons. Income from the site was approximately £70 - £80 per week and local traders had indicated that they were pleased with the provision.

Kerbside Recycling Expansion/Additional DEFRA Funding (Minute 210/04)

Responding to questions, the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that:-

- Subject to correct bin usage, officers would take into account that there may be situations whereby larger households find that the bin provided is of insufficient capacity for the amount to be recycled.
- There is a financial incentive for the contractor to collect recyclables.
- The contractor had experienced some problems in synchronising bin and leaflet delivery. Member concerns on the quality of sack and bin deliveries would be taken up by the Council's Contract Monitoring Officer.

It was noted that the contractor would be attending a meeting of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 19 October when any contract issues could be raised. It was also noted that the front page of the next edition of Rochford District Matters would highlight recycling. Members agreed that officers and the contractor should be congratulated for their expeditious approach in introducing the new recycling arrangements.

Tourism Study – A Suggested Way Forward (Minute 254(6)(a))

The Chief Executive advised that the draft brief and a list of consultants was due to be despatched to Members during the following week.

Anti-Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator (Minute 254(8)(a))

The Anti-Social Behaviour Co-Ordinator would be invited to attend the meeting of the Community Services Committee in early November. The role involved a number of activities, not just the consideration of anti-social behaviour orders.

435 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking approval to a new procurement strategy for the Council and the nomination of a Member to fill the role of procurement champion.

Referring to feedback from the Audit Commission Relationship Manager, the Corporate Director advised that it would be appropriate to include further detail on the Gershon Review and the achievements associated with the leisure contract in the new procurement strategy.

It was noted that:-

- The newly formed Centre of Procurement Excellence for the Eastern Region, being led by Norfolk County Council, was likely to be issuing strong guidance on achieving savings in line with the requirements of Gershon.
- An Essex Market Place stationary procurement project was in the running for a national award.
- Over the coming months, the Council would need to give detailed consideration to aspects of long-term waste management arrangements and associated procurement. Initially, the County Council would be addressing the Environmental Services Committee in November.
- Any proposals relating to partnership contracts would usually be considered by the Essex Procurement Agency, on which each authority had one vote. Authorities would retain the option of withdrawing from a proposal if the pricing or other matters were not right.

During debate around Gershon, a Member observed that Councils with a clear capability to introduce significant efficiency savings should perhaps already have done so. It was also observed that, over time, the District had clearly achieved efficiencies through the contracting out of a number of service areas.

Resolved

- (1) That the Procurement Strategy be agreed, subject to the inclusion of further detail on the Gershon review and the achievements associated with the leisure and other contracts.
- (2) That the Procurement Champion be the Chairman of the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee or his nominee.
(CD(F&ES))

436 SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP FOR FOURTH OPTION AUTHORITIES

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on whether to support a proposal requesting that the Local Government Association set up a special interest group for fourth option Authorities.

It was noted that no financial resources were required at this stage and that a number of advantages could be associated with setting up a special interest group.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That this Council supports the proposal to set up a fourth option special interest group within the Local Government Association and write to Weir Valley District Council requesting that they prepare a written proposal for consideration and subsequent submission to the Local Government Association.
- (2) That the Leader of the Council be nominated to act as this Council's representative on the Fourth Option Special Interest Group if and when such a body is formed. (CE)

437 SCHEME OF DELEGATION TO OFFICERS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) which examined the current Scheme of Delegation to Officers and recommended changes to simplify and clarify the scheme.

It was noted that, prior to inclusion in the constitution, the numbering in the left-hand margin of Appendix 1 would be adjusted to run consecutively.

The Committee agreed a motion, moved by Councillor S P Smith and seconded by Councillor C I Black, that the word "materially" be removed from the fourth category in Appendix 1 relating to shop fronts.

There was some discussion around the possibility that, where a delegated application raises controversial issues or significant community concern, it

could be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Planning Services Committee, in consultation with the Head of Planning Services, to decide whether such an application should be reported to the Committee for decision.

It was noted that there would be a need to consider the implications of legislation associated with the practice of delegation before finalising the way forward on this possibility. The Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) confirmed that officers would review this aspect to facilitate a decision at Full Council.

Recommended to Council

That the Scheme of Delegation to Officers be amended in accordance with the report, subject to:-

- (1) Removal of the word “materially” from the fourth category in Appendix 1 relating to shop fronts.
- (2) Advice on whether it can be at the discretion of the Chairman of the Planning Services Committee, in consultation with the Head of Planning Services, to decide whether an application which raises controversial issues or significant community concern should be reported to the committee for decision. (CD(LPA))

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 10 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

438 CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES – EXCEPTION TO COMPETITIVE TENDERING REQUIREMENTS – FOOD HYGIENE INSPECTIONS

The Committee noted the exempt report of the Chief Executive on a decision to grant an exception from the competitive tendering rules in respect of the proposed Food Hygiene Inspection contract.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Chairman

Date