

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10 December 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **10 December 2003** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs T J Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
J Bourne - Leisure & Contracts Manager
E Rowland - Leisure Client Officer
C Thomas - Emergency Planning & Health and Safety Officer
C Nicholson - Solicitor
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

566 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

567 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

568 SERVICETEAM – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided an update on the progress of the grounds maintenance contract.

The Chairman welcomed Gary Such, Serviceteam's Regional Manager and Derek Leicester, Contract Manager, who were in attendance to answer any questions.

Responding to questions, Mr Such advised that:-

- Whilst there are still problems associated with smashed bottles on playing fields, these are not as bad as six months ago. Visual checks were undertaken.

- The new supervisor would be addressing operational issues associated with grass cutting at the edge of playing fields.

A Member observed that compliments about the standard of the King George Playing Field had been received from users.

In endorsing the report, the Committee hoped that the good work would continue.

Resolved

That the progress report be noted. (CD(F&ES))

569 STAR PARTNERSHIP

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

The Chairman welcomed Russ McLean, StAR Partnership Co-ordinator and Val Thomas (Head of Health Promotion) and Sarah Redwood (Senior Health Promotion Specialist) of the Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust.

Responding to questions, Mr McLean advised that:-

- The Partnership's achievements would not have been possible without the assistance of key partners. Rochford District Council's Members and officers had been particularly supportive.
- The Partnership was jointly funded by the District Council and the Primary Care Trust. There were no financial contributions from the Parish/Town Councils, although two local councils gave assistance in terms of venue provision.
- The arrangements associated with the StAR Youth Football project had just been finalised with the football clubs. Work was being undertaken in liaison with the Sports Council.
- There was an identified need to undertake outreach work with the Town/Parish Councils.
- The Getting On and Getting Better project had been featured in Rochford District Matters and the subject of press releases to the local media/leaflet distribution. It could be acknowledged that for future similar events early publicity would be appropriate.

Val Thomas made reference to the pleasing progress made by the Partnership Co-ordinator over the last nine months. It would be good to see this continue.

Resolved

That the report setting out the StAR Partnership's progress and initiatives with the Rochford District be noted. (CE)

570 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the schedule relating to progress on decisions.

Public Regulation, Inspection and Protection Best Value Review – Interim Report (Minute 18/03)

The Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) confirmed that the recommendations of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be fed into the budget process.

Substance Misuse and Needs of Young People Across Rochford District (Minute 346/03)

It was confirmed that, since Agenda despatch, a letter had been received from the Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. This would be forwarded to Members. Officers would also investigate further the reasons for the delay in receiving the statistical and other information requested by the Council. (CE)

Older Persons Housing Study (Minute 470/03)

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that a report on the strategy for older persons housing and support would be submitted to Committee in March/April 2004. (HHHCC/HRHM)

571 CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided details of the draft cultural strategy produced for the management and development of the Council's cultural areas and activities.

During debate a Member observed that, whilst a number of recent surveys seemed to point to a lack of opportunities for youth, it may be the case that more could be done to publicise the wide range of opportunities actually available within the District. During discussion of possibilities associated with cinemas it was observed that atmosphere could play a part in attracting custom. Members made reference to the rich history of the District, which could serve the introduction of museum provision well.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- It was intended to undertake more work in publicising services, particularly with regard to those available to youth. Further publicity possibilities may arise once the review of the Council's youth policy had been finalised.
- There had been positive customer feedback associated with the cinema facility managed by Holmes Place at The Mill Hall. It would be worth monitoring the facility to ensure the maintenance of current or improved levels of attendance. Holmes Place had run a Saturday morning film for young persons once a month, although this facility had not been particularly well-attended.
- The specific costs associated with the various projects could be introduced in the yearly Action Plans. Thames Gateway would be approached on funding possibilities.
- A draft sponsorship pack had been completed to ascertain whether local businesses would be willing to sponsor activities. Work was under way to set up a leisure directory for the Rochford District.
- Over the last year approximately £80,000 had been attracted for cultural activities within the District. Some of the difficulties experienced with obtaining monies from established funding streams could be associated with an external perception that the District was relatively wealthy. Whilst there was strong community spirit within the District, only a few organisations were able to receive grant funding directly.

Resolved

That the draft Cultural Strategy be endorsed. (CD(F&ES))

572 EMERGENCY PLANNING – BEST VALUE REVIEW UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress relating to the emergency planning best value review action plan.

Responding to questions, the Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Manager advised that:-

- Based on current information, it appeared that the Home Office would be removing funding associated with the Emergency Communication network with effect from 2005.
- There are a number of partners involved in developing emergency response arrangements. It is likely that one District responsibility under forthcoming legislation will be the building of a local resilience forum. The Council's primary partner would be with the police.

- It is likely that the Civil Contingency Bill will become law in 2005. There are a number of, as yet, unresolved issues associated with the introduction of legislation such as the level of funding which will be available to local authorities and the involvement of central government.
- The expenditure estimates set out in the report related to staffing costs only. Once full responsibility fell to the District, there may be a need to consider a separation of officer duties.

Resolved

That the progress made on the emergency planning best value review action plan be noted (CE)

573 COMMUNITY SAFETY – BEST VALUE REVIEW UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive, which provided an update on progress relating to the community safety best value review action plan.

During debate of the fear of crime, it was observed that newspapers often seemed to sensationalise crime as a way of increasing sales.

Responding to questions, the Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Manager advised that:-

- He would respond to individual Member queries on when the analysis of the youth service evaluation of its advice and information provision at 57 South Street is likely to be concluded and the information within the crime and disorder nuisance database.
- No further information had been received on the availability of revenue funding from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister relating to a Woman's Second Stage Refuge.

Resolved

That the progress made on the community safety action plan be noted. (CE)

574 CONCLUSIONS OF THE HOUSING BEST VALUE SUB COMMITTEE ON PROPOSED HOUSING SCHEMES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which set out a process for Full Council to consider recommendations associated with four of the six proposed housing schemes within the District.

On a motion, moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore, it was:-

Resolved

That the Housing Best Value Sub Committee report its recommendations direct to Full Council on 18 December 2003. (HHHCC)

575 PLAYSPACE SUB COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on recommendations of the Playspace Sub Committee.

RECOMMENDED to the Community Services Committee:-

- (1) That the existing 2003/04 budgeted programme be carried out.
- (2) That the programme for 2004/05 be on the same financial basis as the 2003/04 programme; i.e. the total capital and revenue expenditure should not exceed expenditure during 2003/04.

It was further:-

Resolved

That the time scale for the review be extended to the end of May 2004.
(CD(F&ES))

The Meeting closed at 9.03pm

Chairman

Date