

## Extraordinary Council – 15 March 2000

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Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **15 March 2000**  
when there were present:

Cllr D R Helson – Chairman

Cllr R Adams  
Cllr R S Allen  
Cllr G C Angus  
Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr J M Dickson  
Cllr G Fox  
Cllr Mrs J M Giles  
Cllr J E Grey  
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr N Harris  
Cllr Mrs J Helson  
Cllr A Hosking  
Cllr C C Langlands

Cllr V H Leach  
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon  
Cllr T Livings  
Cllr G A Mockford  
Cllr C R Morgan  
Cllr R A Pearson  
Cllr P D Stebbing  
Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson  
Cllr Mrs M S Vince  
Cllr R E Vingoe  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr P F A Webster  
Cllr D A Weir

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs D E Barnes, C I Black, D M Ford, Mrs J E Ford, Mrs J Hall, Mrs A R Hutchings, V D Hutchings and Mrs M A Weir.

### OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R Crofts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal Services
A Smith	-	Head of Administrative & Member Services
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

### 92 BLATCHES FARM

Council considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services which provided a progress report from the Blatches Farm Working Party on the proposed Cherry Orchard Country Park and recommended the adoption of a Business Plan for the project.

Prior to debate, the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) indicated that the sentence under Phase 5 of the proposed Business Plan Project timescale should be deleted. Also, it would be appropriate if Council could provide Officers with authority to negotiate with the County Council on preferred access arrangements.

*D. Helson*  
18 April 2000

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

- Identified costings were not necessarily the final position and, should other funders be identified, their views could be considered.
- Whilst the District had identified monies within its capital programme, the County Council would also be asked for assistance.
- At this stage financial support was possible from three funding agencies and funding possibilities would be regularly reviewed. Current advice indicated that lottery monies may be forthcoming if the Friends of Roche Valley formed a Trust arrangement. A European funding source might be available once Country Park arrangements were in place.
- Specific time periods were not identified and final conditions would be subject to the terms of the lease.
- Identified grants are payable to the Local Authority.
- Commitment to the scheme from the Friends of Roche Valley would assist in demonstrating community interest.

During debate Members agreed that it would be appropriate to identify the name of the park as the Cherry Orchard Country Park and to adjust the name of the Working Party accordingly.

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

### Resolved

- (1) That the Business Plan attached to the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services be approved and submitted to Essex County Council in support of the proposed establishment of a country park for the land formerly known as Blatches Farm. (CD(F&ES))
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) be authorised to negotiate with the County Council on preferred access arrangements. (CD(F&ES))
- (3) That the park be known as the Cherry Orchard County Park.
- (4) That the Blatches Farm Working Party be renamed the Cherry Orchard Country Park Working Party. (HAMS)



**93 CORPORATE PLAN**

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking approval to the revised version of the Corporate Plan.

In presenting the Plan, the Chief Executive indicated that the document should become more focused and succinct as it was developed over a period of years.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive advised that:-

- The objective of ensuring that, wherever possible, at least 50% of contractors on the Council's Select List are local to the area did not conflict with Best Value requirements and that there would be a forthcoming review of the Council's Select List.
- As contracts came under review, Officers would include provision for contractors to identify themselves as working for the Council.
- Themes within the Corporate Plan related to the Local Plan context.
- Notwithstanding the need to sometimes address new major projects, the document could provide a "snap-shot" of the Authority's activities.
- Given the fit between the Corporate Plan and the Best Value Performance Plan, it was intended to bring forward monitoring reports at the time of the half-yearly Budget Review. The matching of such documents to the budget process would help avoid the duplication of strategic effort.

**Resolved**

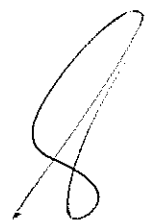
That the Corporate Plan documentation, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be approved. (CE)

**94 BEST VALUE ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN**

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking approval to the Best Value Annual Performance Plan.

In presenting the Plan, the Chief Executive commented on its merits as a 'snapshot' of the work undertaken by the Authority. As with the Corporate Plan, a formal monitoring report would be provided on a half-yearly basis. In terms of general approach, it was important for the Council to remain focused on service delivery.

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

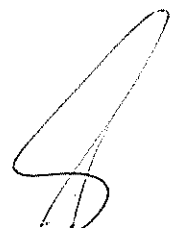


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- A rough estimation of the cost of Officer time which could be associated with plan writing and production was at least £10,000 (excluding on costs) and could well be more.
- Whilst it had been expected that an additional Government allowance of £17,000 would have been received for Performance Plan work, the increase in the Council's Standard Spending Assessment (associated with additional audit and inspection fees) meant that a damping grant arrangement had been introduced, thus cancelling out the allowance.
- The Government had stated that it was looking to Best Value to achieve efficiency gains approximating to around 2% per annum of Local Authority expenditure.
- Whilst the Town & Country Financial Issues Group had been undertaking lobbying activity, its main emphasis would be in respect of decisions to be taken at the Strand 2 stage.
- Following an indication of likely costs from the Audit Commission, £17,000 had been included in the budget for 2000/01 for fees associated with auditing and inspection costs. It was likely that the amount would rise considerably in future years.
- At this stage, consultation was being undertaken via the Council's newspaper, Rochford District Matters. A future report would be submitted to Members on the development of a corporate position statement on consultation.
- Given that the document would be under constant review, copies would be produced in black/white print with an emphasis on minimal printing costs.
- The true value of the document would be established over a period of time.
- Involvement of the Heads of Service in formulation of plans for their own divisions had been invaluable in assisting Officer understanding of the Best Value regime and its application to service areas.

Council agreed a motion moved by Councillor P A Webster and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore together with an amendment moved by Councillor C R Morgan and seconded by Councillor G Fox on the inclusion of cost statements within documents and it was:-



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### Resolved

- (1) That, subject to any necessary minor factual amendments being made by the Chief Executive, the Best Value Annual Performance Plan, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be approved.
- (2) That a statement of the costs of writing, producing and printing (including the number of copies printed) be included within every planning and policy document that the Council produces together with a reference to whether such a document is required by legislation.  
(CE)

The Meeting closed at 8.48pm.

Chairman



Date

