

Policy & Finance Committee – 6 February 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **6 February 2003** when there were present:

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)
Cllr J E Grey (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr R S Allen
Cllr A J Humphries
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr C C Langlands
Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

Apologies for Absence

Cllr K A Gibbs

Officers Present

P Warren	Chief Executive
J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
M Martin	Committee Administrator

50 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2003 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

51 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

Members noted the following updated information:-

Asset Management Best Value Review

The process review of data management is now linked with work on record management, Freedom of Information and document production and reports on those matters in March 2003 will refer to the proposal for a Data Centre arising out of this Best Value review.

50-54 West Street, Rochford

The Head of Planning Services has met with the developer who is carrying out the work under the Urgent Works Notice. The developer will confirm by the end of the month whether he is prepared to submit a further planning application to include preservation of the upper façade of the building. Given that this will involve additional expenditure, the developer has asked whether such work might be eligible for any type of renovation grant. The Head of Planning Services will report further when confirmation of the developer's intentions are to hand.

Market Car Park – RODS Scenery Store

It is anticipated that the asbestos work will commence during this weekend and then the building can be demolished and the car parking area re-surfaced.

Housing Benefit Performance Framework – Adoption of Vision Statement, Policy Objectives and Service Improvement Plan

A report will come back to Committee when the final details have been received.

Land to Rear of 122 Ashingdon Road

The land has been valued at £3,000 and the conveyancing process is underway.

Decriminalised Parking Enforcement – Initial Staffing Requirements

There are still a number of stages to be completed in this process, such as new parking orders, analysis of objections received. Officers will work towards ensuring that implementation can take place from the due date of October 2004.

Brook Road Industrial Estate, Rayleigh – Improvement Scheme

The Council were successful with the bid application. This has met with a positive response from the Chamber of Trade.

Pay Strategy Review

The Chief Executive reported that he had now met with a representative from the Regional Employers' Association and been provided with details of a contact for the Pay Commission.

Outstanding issues were carried forward.

52 REGIONAL ASSEMBLIES (PREPARATIONS) BILL

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided Members with details of the Bill going through Parliament and sought Members' views on two consultation exercises being carried out by the Government in connection with the content of the Bill.

Members noted that the Regional Assemblies (Preparations) Bill had been published in November 2002 and it was anticipated that it would be before the House of Lords by the end of January 2004.

Resolved

- (1) That the officer's response to the Soundings Consultation as outlined in Annex A of the report be endorsed.
- (2) That the officer's comments in connection with the consultation on the guidance to be given to the Boundary Committee be endorsed, with further comments in relation to the role of Quality Parish Councils and better

guidance in relation to media coverage and announcements through the local press.

- (3) That a copy of the responses referred to in (1) and (2) above be sent to both local Members of Parliament and also the Local Government Association. (CE)

53 SECURING IMPROVEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which outlined an initiative being promoted by the Local Government Association (LGA) relating to improvements in Local Government and sought Members' views as to whether the Council should sign up to this.

Members noted that in order to ensure that there is full support behind this initiative, the LGA were asking all Council Leaders to sign up to a commitment to improvement, details of which had been appended to the report.

Members felt that wording should be amended to reflect concerns about the delivery or receipt of support being on a voluntary rather than compulsory basis. The suggested wording could be amended if they had concerns about the actual wording, particularly with regard to whether voluntary, rather than compulsory, provision or receipt of support from other councils should be encouraged.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council supports the Local Government Association's Improvement in Local Government Campaign.
- (2) That the Leader signs the commitment pledge, as follows:

"I support the LGA's proposed commitment to working with its Members to help Councils to secure continuous improvement in their services to local people. Improvement is best delivered from within the sector and as Council Leader I fully support the principle that every Council should be prepared to play its part in the improvement process either by voluntarily providing support to or voluntarily receiving it from other Councils. I will recommend that my Council participates fully in the improvement agenda."
(CE)

54 LAND AT WARWICK DRIVE, ROCHFORD

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided the additional photographic information requested by this Committee when it had previously considered the matter at its

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meeting held on 14 January 2003. A copy of the original report had also been appended.

Resolved

That this Council retains the piece of land in Warwick Drive, Rochford. (HRHM)

55 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee received and noted the exempt report of the Chief Executive which updated Members on the current position regarding vacancies and long-term sickness absence within the Authority.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Chairman

Date