

## **Policy and Finance Committee - 8 July 2003**

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy and Finance Committee** held on **8 July 2003** when there were present:

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs M A Starke (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr J E Grey  
Cllr K H Hudson  
Cllr A J Humphries  
Cllr C A Hungate  
Cllr C J Lumley

Cllr J R F Mason  
Cllr P K Savill  
Cllr C G Seagers  
Cllr S P Smith  
Cllr D A Weir

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr D G Stansby

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
D Deeks	- Head of Financial Services
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

### **325 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 June 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **326 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr C A Hungate declared a personal interest in item 17 of the agenda by virtue of living in the vicinity. Cllr C G Seagers declared a prejudicial interest in item 13 of the agenda by virtue of being a member of Great Wakering Parish Council and left the Chamber during discussion of this item. Cllrs J R F Mason and D A Weir declared a personal interest in item 11 of the agenda by virtue of being members of Hawkwell Parish Council.

### **327 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS**

The Committee noted the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions.

### **328 CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services reviewing the current Capital Programme, seeking approval to the Capital Strategy for 2004/05 and detailing the initial position regarding prudential

borrowing.

Members expressed concern that any delay by Central Government in introducing the new prudential borrowing system could cause difficulties with major capital projects such as the Park Sports Centre.

Responding to Member enquiries, Officers advised:-

- that a report on office accommodation would be brought to Committee in September/October as outlined in the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan.
- That the contract for the Rochford Garden Way project was a fixed price contract.
- That the Government would not be providing any third year funding for the Council's IS/ICT Strategy but grants will be available for partnership projects. This Authority was, therefore, working with other agencies, such as Essex County Council, to develop partnership projects.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the revised Capital Programme, as outlined in Appendix A to the report, be agreed, together with the amendment outlined in the addendum to the report.
- (2) That the Capital Strategy, as outlined in Appendix B to the report, be agreed.
- (3) That the progress in relation to prudential borrowing be noted. (HFS)

## **329 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services on the results of consultation with local councils.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That this report be referred to the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to aid their discussions with Parishes on playspaces.
- (2) That Officers meet initially with Parishes in the early stages of the budget strategy to identify emerging issues and to exchange information.
- (3) That, following this meeting, the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee invites representatives of the Town and Parish Councils to a meeting to ensure there is mutual understanding of Parish and District Council budget issues and short and long term objectives. (HFS)

### **330 HOCKLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking Members' views with regard to a request from Hockley Parish Council for a Member meeting with respect to the above.

#### **Resolved**

That there should be an evening Member meeting with Hockley Parish Council, comprising 3 Members from Hockley Parish Council and the following 3 Members of this Council:

- Cllr K H Hudson
- Cllr Mrs L Hungate
- Cllr P F A Webster (CD(F&ES))

### **331 APPLICATION FOR WAIVER OF PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT LICENCE FEES – VILLAGE FAIR, GREAT WAKERING**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care inviting Members to determine an application for the waiver of Public Entertainment Licence fees relating to a village fair being organised by Great Wakering Parish Council.

It was noted that this was the fourth year that this Council had considered an application for waiver of fees for this event. Members were aware that a Best Value Review of Public Regulation was underway which would include a review of the Council's policy in respect of licence fee waivers.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to a loss of income should the fee waiver be granted, Officers advised that this related to Officer time.

#### **Resolved**

That the Public Entertainment Licence fees be waived with respect to the Great Wakering village fair, but give notice that this is likely to change for future events. (HHHCC)

### **332 HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Benefit on the progress of the Housing Benefit Performance Standards with the proposal of a full assessment findings report to be presented to Members in October 2003.

#### **Resolved**

That consideration of the new assessment be deferred until October 2003 to allow Officers time to carry out the necessary work. (HRHM)

### **333 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION LINKS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services seeking Members' endorsement to the principle of further improving the electronic communication links between the Council's office sites, and also providing links for remote sites/workers, including Members, to be able to access the Council's information electronically.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the principle of the further improvement of the Council's electronic communication links be endorsed.
- (2) That the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee be requested to review detailed proposals at its next meeting (subject to the full information being available) for recommendation to Council.  
(HAMS)

### **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 paragraphs 9 and 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

### **334 LAND AT GATSCOME CLOSE, HOCKLEY**

The Committee considered the exempt note of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on whether to dispose of a strip of land at Gatscombe Close, Hockley to an adjoining owner.

A Motion moved by Cllr S P Smith and seconded by Cllr J E Grey that the land should not be disposed of was amended by a Motion moved by Cllr C G Seagers and seconded by Cllr C A Hungate adding the words "other than on a leasehold basis". The amendment was lost on a show of hands and it was:-

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the strip of land at Gatscombe Close, Hockley should not be disposed of to the adjoining owner. (CD(F&ES))

### 335 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the current position regarding vacancies and long-term sickness absence within the Authority.

#### **Resolved**

That the current level of vacancies and long-term sickness absence be noted.  
(CE)

The Meeting closed at 8.27 pm

Chairman.....

Date.....