

Minutes of the meeting of the **Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee** on **25 September 2001** when there were present:

Cllr Mrs J Helson – Chairman

Cllr D R Helson
Cllr R E Vingoe
Cllr P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

143 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2001 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

144 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Sub-Committee received the schedule relating to decisions.

With regard to Sheltered Accommodation (Minute 286/01), it was noted that Officers would be reporting back into the Committee process on the outcome of discussions with Swan Housing Association and the Housing Corporation prior to year end.

Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

145 BUDGET MONITORING 2001/02

The Sub-Committee received the report of the Head of Financial Services setting out the interim Budget Monitoring Statement for the current financial year .

In introducing this item, the Head of Financial Services indicated that the Authority may to some extent be affected financially by the recent terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre (the monitoring statement having been produced prior to that event).

Insurance

Quotations relating to the Council's property base are 40% higher than normal. The Authority has a separate policy relating to terrorism and there are likely to be some increases. Whilst risk associated with main contracts was the responsibility of the contractor, the Council may find there are risk insurance implications for smaller contracts.

The Local Economy

A proportion of the local economy was related to aircraft support. Future Government spending would be based on growth in the economy so there is a possibility that the future grants situation may change. Income for areas such as planning, land charges and building control is based around the property market and there may be a need for future review of projected figures.

Investment Income

Whilst figures should not need amending at the moment, there is likely to be future pressure on investment income.

Responding to Member questions on the monitoring statement, Officers advised that:-

- Approximately £150,000 of the corporate savings figure of £225,000 related to recruitment drag.
- Historically, it was likely some further savings would emanate once all savings associated with smaller contracts had been grouped.
- It would be possible to retain the format of the document whilst providing more detailed spending information in future reports.

Reviewing the document page by page, particular note was made of certain elements as follows:-

Bus Passes

Given the new arrangements in place for administration of bus passes, Officers would be concentrating on income calculations to ensure full transparency

Crime and Disorder

A document setting out how Crime and Disorder monies had been spent would be submitted to the next Community Safety Sub Committee

Grants to Voluntary Bodies	These had been identified in a way which matched the form of accounts required by Best Value.
Foundation Modern Apprenticeship	A key aspect of proceeding would be to identify appropriate candidates and a suitable training programme. The situation would be reported back at the 6 monthly review stage.
Recycling – Stage 1	Broad estimates currently indicated a saving of £20,000 on revenue. On capital, the saving was likely to be approximately £5,000.
Sewers and Ditch Clearance	Whilst current budget provision was almost spent, appropriate virements could be identified to enable urgent work to go ahead. This heading may need to be reviewed given recent Government warnings about future flooding possibilities within the Region.

146 COMMUNICATIONS WITH ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL/SOUTHEND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Note: The Chairman admitted this item of business as urgent in view of the need for early responses to the County Council and Southend Borough Council.

(1) Joint Member Meeting with Essex County Council to discuss areas of mutual interest.

Following on from recent discussions relating to Blatches Farm/Park School, the Chief Executive had been approached by the relevant portfolio holder at the County Council, Councillor R Bass, about the possibility of a further joint meeting to discuss other property/site issues of mutual interest, such as the Bungalow and Albert Jones Court,.

RECOMMENDED

That arrangements be made for a further joint Member meeting with the County Council to discuss sites/properties of mutual interest, the District Council's representatives to be the respective Group Leaders or their nominees. (CE)

(2) Area Forums

The Sub-Committee considered correspondence recently received by all the Group Leaders from Lord Hanningfield, Leader of Essex County Council, setting out proposals for setting up Area Forums and requesting observations by Friday 5 October. Under the Area Forum concept, Rochford would be grouped with Castle Point and Basildon.

The Sub-Committee's view was that at this point in time it could see very little value from a Rochford District Council perspective in the arrangement as proposed, clustering Castle Point, Basildon and Rochford. The County are involved in a wide variety of activities, e.g. transport, youth services, elderly services, etc. and partnerships, e.g. crime and disorder, on a District-wide basis and these are likely to remain and grow in the future. As a result, the District would be much more interested in more regular County/District meetings on a single district area basis, rather than as a cluster as proposed. In this way, local District and local County Members, together with the relevant portfolio holders, could meet together and discuss/resolve issues of common importance to their constituents related to the services that each tier provides within the District.

Where there are matters of common issue across Essex, the Association of Essex Authorities would appear the appropriate forum. Where there are matters that rest above the District, but are not pan Essex, then the appropriate fora can be arranged on an as and when basis.

It was agreed that the above should form the basis of the response sent on behalf of all the Group Leaders.

(3) Southend Borough Council

The Chief Executive reported a recent correspondence received from Southend Borough Council seeking a joint Member level meeting to discuss a wide range of issues, from Civic Amenity sites through to Dial-a-Ride, Traffic Issues and Local Strategic Partnerships.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the response suggested by the Chief Executive (a copy of which is set out in the Appendix to these Minutes).

The Meeting closed at 8.58pm.

Chairman:

Date:

APPENDIX

P. Warren, BA(Hons), MRTPI, DMS
Chief Executive

My Ref: PW/JJ
Your Ref:

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Date: 27th September 2001

Dear George,

Civic Amenity Site and Other Issues

I refer to your letter of 7th September and my holding response of 13th September. I have now had the opportunity to discuss the matter with Group Leaders. They would welcome the opportunity to meet with your Members on a regular basis to discuss issues of common concern. You will recall that it was this Authority that has been pressing for a meeting to discuss the operation of the Civic Amenity sites for some time.

However, as I said in my holding response, I do think we need to recognise the realities around "old" and "new" Essex and consequently for some of the topics listed, we need Member representatives from either the County Council, Castle Point Borough Council, or both, if the discussions are to be reasonably meaningful. With reference to the items listed, I would suggest:-

- Civic Amenity Sites/Dial a Ride/Local Strategic Partnership issues – Southend Borough Council, Rochford District Council, Essex County Council and Castle Point Borough Council.
- Traffic Issues - Southend Borough Council, Rochford District Council and Essex County Council.

Mr. G. Krawiec,
Chief Executive & Town Clerk,
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council,
Civic Centre,
SOUTHEND-ON-SEA,
Essex. SS2 6ER

- Community Legal Services - Southend Borough Council, Rochford District Council and Castle Point Borough Council.

Continued

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- Planning Issues - Southend Borough Council and Rochford District Council, to which we could also add Blatches Farm and London Southend Airport

Member representation would vary, depending on the subject(s) under discussion.

I trust you accept the rationale behind the above and if you and your Members are in agreement, we can divide the organisational arrangements between us.

Yours sincerely,

Chief Executive