

Policy & Finance Committee – 14 January 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **14 January 2003** when there were present:

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)

Cllr J E Grey (Vice-Chairman)

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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs M A Starke

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive

R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)

A J Bugeja - Head of Legal Services

S Fowler - Head of Administrative and Member Services

J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

7 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

8 COMBINING ENGLISH LOCAL AUTHORITY, GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS IN 2004 – CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on the consultation paper from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister that proposed that the European, District and Parish elections should be combined on the same date in June 2004

Resolved

That the views set out in the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services form the basis of this Council's response to the consultation paper. (HAMS)

9 FINANCE BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) on the carrying out of a soft marketing and bench marking exercise as part of the Finance Best Value Review.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- Best Value required Local Authorities to achieve value for money and establish that a service was efficient and cost-effective. Reviews dovetailed into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process and would be considered by independent Inspectors. The Finance Review was programmed for completion in March 2003.
- The Best Value Budget was created to facilitate the type of exercise being proposed. It was possible that there could be a return on expenditure in that an outcome of the marketing could be the identification of changes in practices and procedures that would result in savings.
- It may be possible to spread some of the associated costs over two years instead of one. The Government would consider that account had been taken of costs associated with Best Value within the overall grant settlement.

Resolved

- (1) That a soft market test and benchmarking exercise be carried out as part of the Best Value Review of the Financial Services of the Authority.
- (2) That the cost of the above exercise be financed from the Best Value consultation budget. (CD(F&ES))

10 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel relating to Member Allowances.

During debate, it was observed that discretionary allowances could bring difficulties and that it would be preferable for any additional available monies to be applied to the basic allowance. With regard to carer's allowance, comment was made that removal of a requirement that a registered body must be used could be potentially dangerous in the light of current concerns associated with child safety.

Recommended to Council:-

- (1) That, subject to provision for advisers to Committee meetings to receive travel expenses on the same basis as Councillors, no change be made to the type of Allowances paid by the Authority.
- (2) That the Allowance amounts be revised to the suggested maximums set out at Appendix 5 of the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services). (CD(F&ES))

11 HOCKLEY COMMUNITY CENTRE – REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on an application for financial assistance from the Hockley Community Centre Association in respect of costs incurred following the occupation of land by travellers.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that the Authority had no insurable interest in this matter and it was highly unlikely that the Association's insurance policies would provide cover for the type of costs incurred.

Whilst recognising that the Authority would not want to set a precedent, Members were mindful that the Association had been faced with problems over which it had little or no control.

On a Motion moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor P K Savill, it was:-

Resolved

That, on this occasion and subject to Hockley Parish Council agreeing to a contribution of £1,500.00, a grant of £3,000.00 be paid to the Hockley Community Centre Association in respect of costs incurred by the Association following the occupation of land by travellers.
(CD(F&ES))

12 GRADING APPEALS STRUCTURE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which sought approval to amendment to delegated authority in respect of grading appeals.

Resolved

That authority be delegated to the Head of Paid Service to determine grading appeals. (CE)

13 CONTRACT MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services that provided details of two contracts valued at £5,000 or above awarded under delegated authority.

Resolved

That the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services detailing two contracts awarded under delegated authority be noted. (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 paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed

14 LAND AT WARWICK DRIVE, ROCHFORD

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which sought agreement for the valuation and subsequent disposal of a piece of land at Warwick Drive, Rochford.

During debate, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to defer consideration of this item for further information and it was:-

Resolved

That consideration of this item be deferred for one month pending the provision of site photographs and information about the possibilities associated with adjacent land. (HRHM)

The Meeting closed at 7.52pm

Chairman.....

Date.....