

## **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 25 November 2003**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **25 November 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)  
Cllr J Thomass (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr C C Langlands  
Cllr T Livings

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr C R Morgan

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr C J Lumley

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P A Capon.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr Mrs S A Harper

### **REPRESENTING THE PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS**

Cllr P A Beckers	Rayleigh Town
Cllr J Dickson	Hawkwell Parish and Rochford Parish
Cllr P Lonergan	Ashingdon Parish
Cllr K Morgan	Hullbridge Parish

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	Chief Executive
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
A Bugeja	Head of Legal Services
D Deeks	Head of Financial Services
C Thomas	Emergency Planning & Health & Safety Manager
M Martin	Committee Administrator

### **529 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**530 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs T G Cutmore, Mrs H L A Glynn, T Livings, C J Lumley and C R Morgan each declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 by virtue of being town/parish councillors.

Cllrs H L A Glynn and Cllr T Livings each declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 by virtue of taking part in public collections for charities.

**531 TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services which invited Members to receive comments and suggestions from the Town and Parish Councils, in order to assist the overall service delivery within Rochford District. Town and Parish Councils had each been invited to send a representative to the meeting.

Members noted that the Town/Parish Councils had been requested to send a summary of their budget making papers to the District Council at the same time as notification of their precept. The Head of Financial Services reassured those representatives present at the meeting that the information need only consist of broad objectives under appropriate headings.

Members of the Committee welcomed the submissions that had been received, but agreed that, in order to enable clarity of service delivery, areas of particular concern ought to be the subject of more detailed discussion. There was no objection to the formation of a Sub-Committee on a non pro-rata basis.

**Resolved**

That a Parish Liaison Sub-Committee of 5 Members be established, comprising 3 Members from the Conservative Group and 1 Member from each of the Labour and Liberal Democrat Groups. (HFS/HAMS)

**532 CORPORATE PLAN/BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2003/04 -  
HALF-YEARLY REVIEW**

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive, which updated Members on progress made to date in respect of the Corporate Plan/Best Value Performance Plan.

In noting the report, the following Member comments/responses to Member questions were noted:-

- page 7.4 - there would be a slight slippage until early 2004 in items 1, 4 and 5 under planned improvements to the council's website.

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- page 7.5 - increasing the proportion of homeless applications determined within 33 days was a key target for improvement.
- page 7.6 - the completion of a study, to be funded by NACRO, which would identify the incidence and nature of rural crime, would be discussed further at the next Crime and Disorder Partnership meeting,
- page 7.6 - the 'drop in' centre at 57 South Street for those suffering from domestic violence operated for 3-4 hours per week. Essex County Council were providing the level of service in accordance with their agreement. However, the Management Committee was seeking to generate extra usage. This would be dependant on resources from the County Council and other partners being attracted to the project to provide additional services. The Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be conducting a review of policies and services for young people within the District.
- page 7.7 – pleasure that the target for council housing voids had been exceeded.
- page 7.7 – disappointment that due to increased homelessness applications, it would be difficult to meet the target of April 2004 for ceasing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- page 7.7 - 5 seats existed for Rochford on the Young Essex Assembly and the elections would take place in January 2004.
- page 7.8 - Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park – despite recent rainfall, permission is still required from the Environment Agency to fill the lake.
- page 7.8 - monitoring of progress around the community transport scheme could be considered once it had been in operation for a year.
- page 7.8 - attempts to encourage recycling by local businesses continued. Officers agreed to confirm to Members of the Committee whether this would benefit recycling credits.
- page 7.9 - it was anticipated that the building of new leisure facilities on the former Park School site would commence in 2005.
- page 7.10 - no extra costs would be incurred as a result of the delay in completing drainage upgrades at Rawreth Lane and St John Fisher playing fields.
- page 7.13 - it may be possible to attract funding through the Thames Gateway initiative for the enhancement of Rochford town as a centre for 'arts and crafts'.
- page 7.19 – the increased number of Committee meetings serviced was noted. This had necessitated the occasional scheduling of two meetings on the same evening, provided that a clash of Membership was not involved. Members were advised to pass their comments via officers, if this situation prevented them from attending one of the meetings as a visitor.
- page 7.27 – a number of figures were not available during the quarter reported, due to their annual publication only.
- page 7.29 – officers were congratulated on the excellent figures.
- page 7.33 – the bank reconciliation statement would be completed by 20 January.

- page 7.35 – increased numbers in bed and breakfast accommodation were due in part to the lowering of the eligible age range to 16 for those suffering from domestic problems. The provision of adequate social housing was dependant upon the planning process and contributions from Housing Associations.
- page 7.38 – cumulative “no” responses were necessary until the definition behind the indicators had been fully agreed
- page 7.41 – officers agreed to confirm to Members of the Committee how statutory notifications are carried out.
- page 7.45 – pleasure that targets achieved, particularly in the light of the high targets required, and that using contractors had proved to be more effective.
- page 7.49 – the criteria for “non-decent” homes was set by the Government
- Page 7.52 – officers would advise Members of the definition used to produce the volume statistics.
- Page 7.53 – there were fewer searches being carried out which is a reflection of market conditions.
- Page 7.58 – officers would continue to address the issue of contractor’s performance; Members noted that the contractors were fined when performance drops.
- Page 7.78 – disappointed to note the increased average time taken to determine applications, due to large scale ones, such as Reads Nursery.
- Page 7.85 – officers agreed to confirm to Members of the Committee the Government definition of the “on time” target.
- Page 7.89 – pleasure that there had been large scale increases in the average attendance of scheme occupiers at surgery meeting, due to the Council’s appointment of a tenant liaison officer.
- Page 7.90 – pleasure that car parking income in general had increased.

### **533 COST OF PRODUCING CORPORATE DOCUMENTS**

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided information in respect of the costs incurred in producing the Finance Best Value Report, the Corporate Governance Strategy and the Asset Management Plan.

In noting the details, Members congratulated the officer on the excellent report.

### **534 THE REGULATION OF PUBLIC COLLECTIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services which related to a Government consultation paper which contained proposals for a new local authority licensing scheme for public charitable collections conducted both house to house and in the street.

Members welcomed the consultation, particularly the definition of ‘public place’ to include, for example, supermarket and railway station forecourts and noted that the Government intended that this legislation should be in place by the middle of next year.

**Resolved**

That the comments set out as an appendix to the report be forwarded as this Council’s comments on the consultation paper on proposals for a new local authority licensing scheme. (HAMS)

**535 REPORT OF THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which invited Members to respond to the recommendations of the Holocaust Memorial Sub-Committee.

Members noted that:-

- since the preparation of the report, Rayleigh Town Council had pledged a maximum of £1000, for this project, to be spent on railings to surround the memorial.
- The Sub-Committee had anticipated that a memorial would be completed during the current Chairman’s term of office.

Whilst some Members were concerned that such a memorial could attract criminal damage, other Members were of the opinion that it would be a pity to reject the proposal for that reason alone.

It was agreed that this item should be recommended to Council, in order that all Members could be included in the decision-making.

**Recommended to Council**

That the commissioning of a permanent Holocaust Memorial, as set out in the report, be endorsed. (CE)

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....