

Finance & General Purposes Committee 12 July 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** held on **12 July 2001** when there were present:

Cllr D R Helson – Chairman

Cllr R Adams

Cllr T G Cutmore

Cllr G Fox

Cllr J E Grey

Cllr Mrs J Helson

Cllr A Hosking

Cllr V H Leach

Cllr T Livings

Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr S P Smith

Cllr M G B Starke

Cllr R E Vingoe

Cllr P F A Webster

Cllr D A Weir

Cllr Mrs M A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G A Mockford and P J Morgan

SUBSTITUTES

Cllrs R A Amner and P A Capon.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P A Warren	-	Chief Executive
R Crofts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
D Deeks	-	Head of Financial Services
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal Services
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

248 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr J R F Mason declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item on Treasury Management (Minute 257) by virtue of being employed by the National Westminster Bank Group.

Councillor T G Cutmore declared a pecuniary interest in the item on Treasury Management (Minute 257) by virtue of being employed by the HSBC Bank and left the meeting during its consideration.

249 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 April 2001 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

250 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee received the schedule relating to decisions since May 2000. Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

Albert Jones Court, Rochford (Minute 288/00)

The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to re-iterate to the County Council this Council's request that the County confirms that all capital receipts received in connection with Albert Jones Court and also the Bungalow site be spent in Rochford District on initiatives for the benefit of Rochford residents, particularly with regard to the provision of elderly persons accommodation. (HHHCC)

Results of the Survey on Car Park Lighting (Minute 89/01)

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that the tender documentation for lighting in car parks could request pricing for both standard lighting columns and the more traditional, with a view to replacement columns being similar to existing where this can be achieved within budget. Members agreed that this approach would be particularly appropriate for the Bellingham Lane Car Park.

251 REPORT OF URGENT ACTION

The Committee received the report of the Chief Executive on action taken under the Council's urgency procedure to communicate this Authority's views on a Consultation Paper published as the Government's response to the Disability Rights Taskforce.

252 THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES FROM PARENT COMMITTEES

The Committee considered the recommendations and references from Parent Committees.

(1) Community Services Committee – 3 July 2001

Minute 217 – Implementation of the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996

Resolved

That an amount of £5,000 be set aside from contingencies for the provision of additional dog waste bins throughout the District.
(CD(F&ES))

(2) Transportation and Environmental Services Committee – 4 July 2001

Minute 236 – Floral Decorations

The Committee agreed to consider the referral under Minute 236 later in the meeting, in tandem with the item on Chambers of Trade – Bids for Town Centre Initiatives (Minute 263).

253 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The Committee received the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and considered the recommendations contained therein:-

(1) Corporate Resources – 19 June 2001

Minute 414 – Towards Inclusion – Civil Rights for Disabled People

The recommendation under this Minute had been dealt with under the Council's urgency procedure (see Minute 251)

Minute 415 – Concessionary Bus Pass Renewals – Resource Implications

Resolved

- (1) That funding be provided in future Budget Strategy and that specific funding of £3,500 be incorporated into the revised budget for 2001/2.
- (2) That an interim report detailing the cost of the exercise be brought to the meeting of the Transportation & Environmental Services Committee to be held on 3 October 2001. (HRHM)

Minute 416 – Mobile Exhibition Unit

Resolved

- (1) That the hire of the Mobile Exhibition Unit be limited to partner organisations that meet our corporate objectives at an initial rate of £150 per day, plus any other staffing costs that accrue such as overtime.
- (2) That the Hirer be required to provide evidence of satisfactory insurance cover.

- (3) That a report be brought to a meeting of the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee in 6 months' time to review the situation. (CE)

Minute 417 – Back Lane Car Park, Rochford

Resolved

That the request for two car parking spaces in Back Lane Car Park be refused. (HRHM)

Minute 418 – The Market Car Park, Rayleigh

Resolved

- (1) That authority be given to officers to negotiate the relocation of the occupants of the scenery store and the demolition of that building. (HLS)
- (2) That the request for the exclusive use of an area in the Market Car Park, Rayleigh be refused. (HRHM)

Minute 419 – Rayleigh Civic Society: Planning Services Minutes

Resolved

That the request by Rayleigh Civic Society to reduce the cost of Planning Services Committee documents to £25 be agreed. (HAMS)

Minute 420 - Homeless and Housing Advice – Staffing Issues

Resolved

That the establishment of the homelessness and housing advice team, as detailed in the report, be approved with immediate effect. (HHHCC)

Minute 421 – Application for Waiver of Public Entertainment Licence Fees, Open Air Concert & Custom/Classic Show, Malyons Farm, Lower Road, Hullbridge

Resolved

That a waiver of 80% of the fee due for a public entertainment licence be granted. (HHHCC)

Minute 422 – Post No. 22600 – Planning Services Division

Resolved

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That post 22600 be made permanent from 26 March 2002 and that the current postholder be offered a contract on that basis. (HPS)

(2) Contracts – 21 June 2001

Minute 104 - Leisure Management Contract –

(1) Selection of Short List of Tenderers

(2) Preparation of Contract Specification

Resolved

- (1) That Contract Standing Order section 14.1(c) be suspended and the proposed shortlist of five companies be approved to be invited to Tender for the Leisure Management Contract.
- (2) That the timetable detailed in the Minute preamble be approved for the production of the Contract Specification. (CD(F&ES))

(3) Structural & Procedural Review – 21 June 2001

Minute 79 – Modernising Agenda – New Political Structures

It was noted that the recommendations under Minute 79 would be submitted to the meeting of Extraordinary Council scheduled for 31 July 2001.

(4) Member Budget Monitoring – 26 June 2001

Minute 137 – Capital Strategy Statement

Resolved

That the draft Capital Strategy Document and consultation process, as appended to the Sub-Committee Minutes, be approved. (HFS)

Minute 139 – Capital Programme

With regard to recommendation (2) of Minute 139, it was agreed that the revised report on Capital Programme possibilities should now be submitted to the meeting of Extraordinary Council on 31 July 2001 for decision.

Resolved

- (1) That an early meeting be arranged between County Councillors, Members of the Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee and Chairmen of the Cherry Orchard Park and Park School Working Groups with a view to progressing discussion of the Blatches Farm/Park School sites. The County Council Members to be

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provided with a background briefing note in advance of the Meeting.

- (2) That the revised report on Capital Programme possibilities be submitted to the meeting of Extraordinary Council scheduled on 31 July 2001 for consideration. (HFS)

Minute 140 – Sheltered Accommodation

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the Council enters detailed discussions with Swan Housing Association and the Housing Corporation.
- (2) That when these discussions are concluded, a detailed report be submitted back to Full Council.
- (3) That, in the interim, special meetings are held for tenant representatives, existing tenants and staff to keep them informed of discussions.
- (4) That consideration be given to site disposal possibilities.
- (5) That future budget considerations include plans to undertake conversion work to bathroom areas at other sheltered accommodation within the District so as to provide individual bathroom facilities.
- (6) That 0.77 acres of land adjacent to Hardwick House, Rayleigh be reconveyed to the Council by Springboard Housing Association at cost in accordance with an Agreement dated 14 September 1993. (HFS/HLS/HRHM/HHHCC)

Minute 142 – Staffing Issues/Work Programme

Resolved

- (1) That a further detailed report be submitted to Full Council outlining the impact of staff vacancies and sickness absence on the Council's current work programme.
- (2) That a virement of £20,000 from the post vacant savings be made to the Staff Advertising Budget. (CE)

(5) Contracts – 5 July 2001

Minute 107 – Timetable

Resolved

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That, together with the timetable recommended by the meeting of the Contracts Sub-Committee held on 21 June 2001, the additional dates listed in the Minute preamble be approved. (CD(F&ES))

Minute 108 – Presentation by PMP

Resolved

That the comments in the Minute preamble form the basis for the preparation of the Leisure Management Contract Draft Specification. (CD(F&ES))

254 CAPITAL PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) detailing progress against the capital programme.

In reviewing the capital programme update schedule, the following was raised:-

(1) 37 – 39 West Street, Rochford

The Head of Legal Services advised that the Compulsory Purchase of the buildings was expected to be completed by the end of August following which transfer to the Southend Building Preservation Trust could take place.

(2) Building Condition Survey Works

The Chairman of the Leisure Sub-Committee referred to his understanding that, at its last meeting, the Sub-Committee had intended that Officers proceed with letting a contract for replacement of the Freight House security lights. The Sub-Committee would consider adjusting the Minute record at its next Meeting.

Members agreed that, in the interim, it would be appropriate to request Full Council to facilitate this letting and it was:-

RECOMMENDED

That the contract for replacement of the Freight House security lights be let immediately following tendering. (CD(F&ES))

(3) Land Rover and Civic Car

Resolved

That replacement of vehicles 935 (Land Rover) and 575 (Civic Car) be deferred. (CD(F&ES))

The Committee concurred with the view of a Member that Officers should be thanked for their work in progressing the various schemes.

255 ADOPTION OF ENFORCEMENT CONCORDAT AND THE HOUSING, HEALTH & COMMUNITY CARE ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care on the adoption of an enforcement concordat and policy.

During debate, the Committee concurred with the view of a Member that, whilst it would be appropriate to adopt the concordat/policy, there would be a need to be mindful of the Council's other resource commitments when giving future consideration to implementation.

Resolved

- (1) That the principles of the enforcement concordat (copy appended to the signed copy of these Minutes) be adopted for all enforcement services.
- (2) That the Housing, Health & Community Care Enforcement Policy (copy appended to the signed copy of these Minutes) be approved.
- (3) That the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care amend or update the divisional enforcement policy as appropriate in the future.
- (4) That enforcement policies in support of the concordat be produced for all relevant divisions of the Council.
- (5) That an implementation plan and estimated resource implications be reported to a future meeting. (HHHCC)

256 QUEENS GOLDEN JUBILEE IN 2002

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on possible initiatives to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee 2002.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore it was:-

Resolved

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That four Members (one from each group) give further consideration to the options set out in the report and consult with Officers, with a view to a report on specific proposals being submitted to a future meeting.
(CE)

257 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services providing an update on Treasury Management matters and proposing a new basis for the lending list.

During debate the Head of Financial Services confirmed that he would consult Sector Treasury Services Ltd on their mechanisms for identifying that information on the ownership structure of organisations in the banking sector is current.

Resolved

That the revised approved counter party list and the Rochford Treasury Management Procedure Guide be amended in line with the report (a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes). (HFS).

258 OUTSIDE BODY REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services on whether the number of Outside Bodies should be reviewed.

Whilst endorsing the principle of a review, Members agreed that it would be appropriate for decisions to be made by the new Council to be appointed for the 2002/03 municipal year. The report could be referred to the new Council and include appropriate detail on the activity of the Outside Bodies.

Resolved

That the report be deferred and referred to the new Council when it should include appropriate detail of the activity of the Outside Bodies.
(HAMS)

259 PROTOCOL FOR WORKING GROUPS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services suggesting some changes to the protocol for Working Groups.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the second paragraph of Working Group Protocol 3 be removed and replaced with 'any request for a change of

membership of a Group during a municipal year must be made to the Chief Executive by the political group to whom the seat has been allocated. The Chief Executive will change the appointment accordingly’.

- (2) That Working Group Protocol 12 be changed to read ‘the quorum for a meeting of a Working Group will be a minimum of two District Members’. (HAMS)

260 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE – SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF – FOOT & MOUTH DISEASE

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on representations made to the Department of the Environment, Transport and The Regions on the exclusion of Rochford from receiving additional Government financial help to address Foot and Mouth Disease.

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that the Authority was now in receipt of a Government Press Release indicating that the Government would not be increasing the number of Local Authorities to which financial assistance would be applied. Rochford currently had 5 Foot and Mouth cases on its books and it would, therefore, be necessary to consider these via the hardship rate relief process at a future meeting.

261 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS – MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the use of delegated authority for orders over £5,000 for the period 1 October 2000 to 31 March 2001.

262 ESSEX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT “CLOSER TO THE COMMUNITY”

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on a consultation document entitled “Closer to the Community” from the Fire Authority in connection with the restructuring of the Fire Service into smaller units.

During debate, Members raised a number of observations including:-

- Whilst it was proposed to combine Southend and Rochford as a community command centre, the demographics and rural/urban natures of the two Council areas differed substantially. The two could not be seen as having broadly similar characteristics and Unitary authorities had different decision making processes to Districts.

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- Whilst the emphasis on fire safety could be endorsed, further details on fire and safety elements would be helpful.
- The document did not indicate whether public consultation meetings would be arranged.
- It would be useful to have information which would enable a comparison between current service delivery arrangements and that proposed.
- Limited time is given for the consultation process when, probably, the proposals have been in formulation for quite a long while.
- A number of statements in the document did not appear to accord with the stated philosophy.

The Committee agreed that it would be appropriate to undertake further communication with the Fire Authority to obtain comments on the above observations in advance of the next meeting of Full Council when the District's response to the consultation document could be finalised.

Resolved

That the Chief Executive communicate with the Fire Authority on the above observations and report its response into the next meeting of Full Council when this Council's response to the consultation document (including on trial arrangements) can be finalised. (CE)

263 CHAMBERS OF TRADE – BIDS FOR TOWN CENTRE INITIATIVES

Note: The Chairman admitted this item of business as urgent in order to ensure immediate progress on the initiatives proposed by the Chambers of Trade.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) outlining proposals submitted by the Chambers of Trade for town centre initiatives. The report was considered in tandem with the funding bid for floral decorations submitted by Rayleigh Town Council (Minute 252(2) refers).

Some Members questioned the validity of the bids and the basis for the proposals. Referring to a suggestion that all funding bids be referred to Full Council the Chief Executive confirmed that, in the interim, the Chambers of Trade could be asked if they were able to provide more information on their proposals.

Resolved

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That the bids from the Chambers of Trade and the Rayleigh Town Council be submitted to Full Council for determination. (CD(F&ES))

264 HOME OFFICE PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FUND

Note: The Chairman admitted this item of business as urgent in order to ensure immediate progress on submitting a grant to the Home Office by the deadline of 13 July 2001.

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out proposals for the submission of a bid to the Home Office for Community Safety Partnership Grant funding.

During debate the Chief Executive advised that the Home Office had now indicated that grant funding of approximately £60,000 may also be available for drugs awareness work. Members suggestions as to how that funding could be spent would be welcome. In relation to this grant monies, detailed criteria had yet to be specified and it was likely that elements of grant would need to be applied to capital purposes.

Resolved

That the following two proposals form the basis of a bid to the Home Office for Community Safety Partnership grant funding:-

- (1) The funding of a one-year time limited post to support administration/information across the current partnership. The employing authority to be the District Council.
- (2) Funding to help support the costs of the consultation associated with the carrying out of an audit of the Council's existing Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy. (CE)

The Meeting closed at 9.05pm

Chairman

Date