

Policy & Finance Committee – 5 December 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **5 December 2002** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)
Cllr J E Grey (Vice-Chairman)

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
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr A J Humphries

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	Chief Executive
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
S Clarkson	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
M Martin	Committee Administrator

592 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Statement on Council Tax

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) updated Members verbally with details of the announcement which had been made by Central Government earlier that day regarding the grant to local authorities for the forthcoming tax year.

Members noted that:-

- There would be an increase in the grant from £3.499m this year to £3.827m. This grant includes a mix of NNDR and Government Grant.
- Under the new spend, the Government are suggesting we spend £9.639m, with £5.886m to come from Council Tax. This would represent a 97.5% increase, to be funded from Council Tax.
- The increase represents a grant of £48.66 per head of population for this district, which compares, for example, with £54.22 for Uttlesford and £98.79 for Harlow.
- The Corporate Director would bring a report back to Members, detailing how these figures would affect the Budget Strategy.

593 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the report of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee on:-

(1) Review of the Constitution

(a) Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15

Resolved

That the replacement of Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15 with the wording set out at Appendix B to the report be referred to Full Council for adoption. (CD(LP&A))

(b) Financial Regulations

Resolved

That, subject to the amendments proposed by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the revisions to Financial Regulations, as set out in the report, be referred to Full Council for adoption. (CD(LP&A))

(c) Contract Procedure Rules

Resolved

That the revisions to the Contract Procedure Rules, as set out in the report, be referred to Full Council for adoption. (CD(LP&A))

(2) Record of Councillor Attendance

Resolved

That the following recommendations from the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee be referred to Full Council:-

- (1) That publication of the record of Councillor attendance continue on the following basis:-
 - Once compiled and confirmed with each Member, the document should be published in the Members Bulletin and Rochford District Matters and on the Council's intranet and internet sites.
 - The columns relating to each individual Council/Committee meeting and Sub-Committee should be removed so that there is only an overall column showing possible and actual attendance (with fuller detail supplied to Members individually on request).

- Provision to be made to take account of absence due to special circumstances (such as hospital appointments or family bereavement) and attendance at other Council events/business.
- (2) That the publication arrangements in (1) above be forwarded to the Standards Committee to assist that Committee in its process of deciding how it might monitor Members' attendance at meetings and training sessions. (HAMS)

594 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee noted the progress of the outstanding issues and the following matters arising:-

Council Buildings – Access for the Disabled (Minute 411/02)

Members noted that detailed reports including costings relating to the associated works to the Council's changing pavilions would be produced for either the January or February 2003 meeting of this Committee.

Civic Car Replacement (Minute 418/02)

Members noted that an order had been placed on the basis of prices obtained from two car dealers which had been identical. The price includes the official regalia.

Housing Corporation Funding Bids (Minute 441/01)

Members noted that the allocation would enable two properties to be purchased by Swan Housing Association for rent. The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) agreed to advise Members of the Committee of the location of these properties.

Estimates for new Footpath and Land Drainage – Sweyne Park (Min 376/02)

Members noted that the drainage works at the Clover Leaf play space were complete and that a sharp sand top dressing had been put down. The pathway was almost finished. Final reinstatement works around the paths would be completed towards the end of March. The wild flower seeding would take place after that time when the ground conditions and weather would be more suitable..

Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

595 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which invited Members to agree the method of calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2003/2004. Calculations had been

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undertaken for each Parish and Town Council area and these details had been appended to the report.

Members noted that this was the last time this report would need to be brought before them because the Government intended to repeal the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 next year.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the method of calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2003/2004 be agreed.
- (2) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 the amount calculated by the Rochford District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2003/2004 shall be in the following parts:- (CD(F&ES))

Ashingdon	1215.83
Barling Magna	624.09
Canewdon	549.29
Foulness Island	67.74
Great Wakering	1965.36
Hawkwell	4470.52
Hockley	3758.04
Hullbridge	2335.48
Paglesham	101.05
Rawreth	427.09
Rayleigh	11909.56
Rochford	2747.11
Stambridge	233.10
Sutton	53.36

596 ACCOUNT AND AUDIT REGULATIONS 2003 – CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which advised Members of proposals contained in the regulations and requested that a response to the consultation be agreed. Copies of the proposals had been placed in the Members' Rooms at Rochford and Rayleigh.

In particular, Members noted that:-

- In future it would be necessary to publish the actual remuneration of the three statutory officers, plus the next five highest paid offers in the authority.
- This Council has always published details of Members' Allowances annually in the local press.
- To ensure there is Member 'ownership' of the Accounts, the Chairman of the Council or appropriate Committee that approves the accounts would be required to sign them.

- The deadline approval of the accounts is to be brought forward to 31 August for the year 2003/04, 31 July for 2004/05 and 30 June for 2005/06, in order to align the approval of the accounts with the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan. The Corporate Director reported that in order to achieve the June deadline, it would mean identifying reductions in the timetable and would require full co-operation from all divisions.
- External auditors may well need to increase their charges, as they will be required to audit the accounts of the local authorities at the same time as those of the private sector.

Resolved

That the comments contained in the report form the basis of the Council's response to the consultation on Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003. (CD(F&ES))

597 ENTITLEMENT CARDS AND IDENTITY FRAUD CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which invited Members to agree a response to the consultation document on Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud. Copies of the document had been placed in the Members' Rooms at Rayleigh and Rochford.

Members noted that:-

- Due to the comprehensive nature of the consultation document, the report covered each of the 35 specific points requiring a response.
- the Government was only proposing a voluntary entitlement card scheme as opposed to a compulsory scheme.

The majority of Members were of the view that it would not be fair to impose such a scheme, as people are entitled to some degree of privacy, but were in favour of a voluntary scheme.

Resolved

That the Council's response to the consultation document be on the basis that it would support a voluntary scheme, together with the appropriate additional comments set out in the report. (CD(F&ES))

598 LAND TO REAR OF 122 ASHINGDON ROAD

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which sought Members' agreement for the valuation and subsequent disposal of a piece of land to the owner of 122 Ashingdon Road, Rochford.

Resolved

- (1) That a valuation for the land be obtained.

- (2) That the land be sold to the owner of 122 Ashingdon Road at market value, with the provision that the land be used solely for the extension of the garden. (HRHM)

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 11 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

599 REVENUES AND BENEFITS – SERVICES DELIVERY OPTION

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which proposed changes to the delivery of the Revenue Collection and Housing Benefit Administration Service.

Resolved

- (1) That the generic work delivery of the Revenue and Benefit functions be agreed
- (2) That the staffing structure, grades and team responsibilities be agreed as set out in the exempt appendix to these Minutes.
- (3) That the posts designated as three-year term-contract posts be re-designated as fully established posts. (HRHM)

600 DECRIMINALISED PARKING ENFORCEMENT – INITIAL STAFFING REQUIREMENTS

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider the appointment of a Parking Supervisor with specific duties associated with the introduction of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) in the District and to agree the priorities for the DPE Implementation Plan.

Members noted that:-

- Essex County Council had successfully applied to the Secretary of State for powers relating to parking enforcement under the Road Traffic Act 1991. Using a phased approach, they aim to see all District Council areas covered by the powers within a two-year timeframe, with the intention of including Rochford in the scheme in October 2004.
- It is now appropriate to make a start on the DPE process.
- The opportunity exists to regularise the lining and signing of Town Centres , which would enable the police to enforce their powers and clear the streets of indiscriminated parking until responsibility is transferred to the District.

During Member debate the following points were noted:-

- this Council should determine whether this enforcement could be used to generate revenue in line with the drive from Central Government towards social responsibility.
- The Council itself could organise the service or invite a Contractor to take on the role.
- A mobile “ rapid response squad”, who could be alerted by the public, could be used to tackle indiscriminated parking.
- The Parking Supervisor would address these issues as a priority.

Resolved

- (1) That a Parking Supervisor be appointed on grade SO 1/2.
- (2) That the DPE Implementation Plan prioritises Rochford and Rayleigh Town Centres together with the residential areas in the vicinity of the District’s three main line railway stations. (HRHM)

The meeting closed at 8.10 pm.

Chairman

Date