

The Executive – 8 February 2012

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **8 February 2012** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs J E McPherson	Cllr M J Steptoe

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services
Y Woodward	-	Head of Finance
J Bourne	-	Head of Community Services
R Evans	-	Head of Environmental Services
J Bostock	-	Member Services Manager

20 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

21 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2011

The Executive reviewed the performance report on key performance indicators.

It was noted that the percentages in relation to appeals allowed against the Authority's decision to refuse planning applications related to a small sample.

The Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing and the Head of Community Services updated the Executive on the activity underway in relation to recent decisions by the Portfolio Holder aimed at shortening the average time taken to process disabled facility grants. The Portfolio Holder had observed actual cases being dealt with and there had been a meeting with the Regional Manager of the Papworth Trust on the way forward. The Trust was restructuring with a view to improvement. The Trust commissioned work on access showers and lifts, which formed the majority of the works within the Rochford District. There are indications that additional work will be able to be achieved within existing budgets.

It was noted that, under the terms of the grants scheme, there is a legal requirement that clients have work completed within twelve months. There are penalties for contractors not meeting requirements. Conditions require that a grant is repaid if a client moves from a building that has had disabled works

within a specified period. The District Council maintains a list of properties at which equipment has been installed under the grants process.

The Head of Community Services confirmed that performance statistics should reflect delays that are associated with the grants process rather than circumstances where, for instance, a client requests that works are put on hold. It was recognised that it would be appropriate to seek clarification of the policy operated by Rochford Housing Association given indications that, once an Association property is vacated, any appliances associated with disabled facility grant works are removed and disposed of.

It was noted that an organisation remained interested in the Great Wakering Leisure Facility. It was also noted that the District had the second lowest number of crimes per 1,000 residents when compared with other Community Safety Partnerships in Essex, crime levels and associated matters having been discussed at a meeting of the Council's Community Safety Partnership earlier in the day.

Resolved

That the progress against key performance indicators for the third quarter of 2011/12, as set out in the report, be received subject to noting that:-

- Recent decisions by the Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions aimed at shortening the average time taken to process Disabled Facility Grants, combined with associated work being undertaken by the Portfolio Holder and the Head of Community Services, should lead to a significant improvement over the next six months.
- That an organisation remains interested in the Great Wakering Leisure Facility.
- That the District has the second lowest number of crimes per 1,000 residents when compared with other Community Safety Partnerships in Essex. (HF)

22 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2011

The Executive reviewed the performance report on key projects.

It was noted that the precise timelines associated with the town centre pre-submission plans would be set out in the Key Policies and Actions report being submitted to Full Council.

Resolved

That the progress against key projects for the third quarter of 2011/12, as set out in the report, be received subject to noting that the precise time lines

associated with the town centre pre-submission plans will be set out in the Key Policies and Actions report being submitted to Full Council. (HF)

23 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS MADE BY FULL COUNCIL/THE EXECUTIVE

The Executive reviewed the progress on decisions schedule.

The Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing advised that consideration was being given to a legal aspect associated with the revision of the homelessness review process.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that detail could be provided on the market rental identified in relation to the lease of the Rayleigh Grange Community Hall and the discount given. It was also confirmed that the majority of grants to voluntary organisations were not phased and that consideration was being given to the possibility of the introduction of two grant rounds during a year.

Resolved

That the progress on decisions made by Full Council/The Executive, as set out in the schedule, be received subject to noting that:-

- Consideration is being given to a legal aspect associated with the revision of the homelessness review process.
- Detail can be provided on the market rental identified in relation to the lease of the Rayleigh Grange Community Hall and the discount given.
- That the majority of grants to voluntary organisations are not phased and that consideration is being given to the possibility of the introduction of two grant rounds during a year. (HLEMS)

24 QUARTER THREE 2011/12 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Executive considered the report of Head of Finance on current year end forecasts for the revenue budgets of the Council based on financial performance in the period April to December, current performance on key financial indicators and the Quarter Three Capital Monitoring Report.

Responding to questions, the Head of Finance confirmed that the precise position with regard to rate liability in cases where retrospective planning permission had been granted for commercial and residential properties would be looked into.

Resolved

- (1) That the current year-end forecasts for the revenue budgets of the Council based on financial performance in period April - December of the financial year 2011/12, as shown in appendix 1 of the report, be noted.

- (2) That the current financial performance on key financial indicators, as shown in appendix 2 of the report, be noted.
- (3) That the quarter 3 capital monitoring report, as shown in appendix 3 to the report, be agreed. (HF)

25 POLICE REFORM AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT 2011: IMPLICATIONS FOR ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

Members considered the report of the Chief Executive on the implications of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011.

Resolved

That it be noted that:-

- The elections in connection with the elected Police and Crime Commissioner will take place on 15 November 2012.
- There are likely to be further changes around the Partnership agenda, related to both Community Safety and the wider Essex Partnership structure.
- From the 2012/13 Municipal Year, the intention is to establish an Essex-wide Police and Crime Panel, with a contribution towards its operation from this Council of £2,000 to be funded from the Community Safety Reserve.

It was further:-

Recommended to Full Council that the Council's representative on the Police and Crime Panel should be the Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Wellbeing, Health and Community Safety. (CE)

26 PROPOSAL TO DISPOSE OF ROCHFORD POLICE STATION

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Community Services on the Essex Police proposal to dispose of Rochford Police Station.

In endorsing section 3 of the report, particular reference was made to the value of exploring the possibility of the Police utilising facilities operated by the Council so as to maintain a presence. Discussions could include whether the Council's offices at Rochford would be able to accommodate the 24 hour external public telephone link currently located at the Police Station and/or act as a base for the Local Neighbourhood Police Beat Team.

Resolved

That the Essex Police proposal to dispose of Rochford Police Station be noted. The Police to be made aware of the Council's position regarding their

proposal based on the information included in section 3 of the report, including an exploration of the possibility of the Police utilising facilities operated by the Council to maintain a presence. (HCS)

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 3 of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

27 BUSINESS RATES WRITE-OFF

The Executive considered the exempt report of the Head of Community Services on the writing-off of outstanding business rates with regard to premises in Rochford and Hockley.

During discussion it was recognised that, with forthcoming changes to business rate arrangements, the Council's collection processes would need to remain as efficient as possible. In terms of the courts, local authorities are not viewed as secure creditors. Where a business defaults in the payment of business rates, it is possible for the Authority to remove the facility to pay by instalments, but all businesses have the right to pay by instalment if they adhere to the repayment schedule. The identification of potential issues via a review of court lists was part of considerations.

Resolved

- (1) That the outstanding Business Rates in relation to the premises in Rochford, as identified in the exempt report, be written off as irrecoverable.
- (2) That the outstanding Business Rates in relation to the premises in Hockley, as identified in the exempt report, be written off as irrecoverable. (HCS)

28 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

Note: The Chairman agreed to accept this item of business as urgent in view of contract related timescales.

The Executive considered the exempt report of the Head of Environmental Services on the current position and the way forward with regard to the Grounds Maintenance Contract.

Key aspects of the discussion on this matter are set out in the exempt appendix to these minutes.

Resolved

- (1) That the current Grounds Maintenance Contract be not re-assigned or novated.
- (2) That the current Grounds Maintenance Contract be formally terminated.
- (3) That it be noted that short-term arrangements can be in place up to April 2013 to manage the services.
- (4) That officers commence the procurement process for the services concerned with a view to letting a contract by 1 April 2013.
- (5) That a Member Advisory Group comprising six Members, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, be constituted to oversee the procurement process.
- (6) That the above decisions be taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in because of the urgency in securing a long-term solution for running the services, minimising risk and ensuring that appropriate contingency arrangements are in place. (HES)

The meeting closed at 9.25 pm.

Chairman

Date

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