

Policy & Finance Committee - 10 September 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **10 September 2002** when there were present:

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

Cllr R S Allen
Cllr A J Humphries
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr C C Langlands

Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C R Morgan and P K Savill.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr Mrs M A Weir.

VISITING

Cllr C I Black.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R Crofts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
S Clarkson	-	Head of Revenue & Housing Management
D Timson	-	Property Maintenance and Highways Manager
H Drye	-	Corporate Policy Manager
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

407 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

408 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J R Pullen declared a prejudicial interest in the item on replacement of civic car by virtue of associations with Rover and left the meeting during consideration thereof.

Councillor R S Allen declared a personal interest in the item on replacement of civic car by virtue of his role as Chairman of the Council.

409 ROCHFORD LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive setting out proposals for the development of a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Rochford and outlining a method and timetable for progressing the Community Strategy.

It was noted that the Strategic Partnership could be viewed as a form of Service Action Plan, covering a ten-year period and involving a variety of services/agencies.

The Committee concurred with the suggestions of the Chairman on the proposed (LSP) Steering Group and it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the structure and membership of the Local Strategic Partnership, as proposed in Appendix 2 and Table 1 of the report of the Chief Executive be agreed, subject to:-
 - The business representation on the Steering Group comprising an independent business representative in addition to an appointee representing the Chambers of Trade and Commerce.
 - The appointment of the Chief Executive of Rochford District Council as Steering Group Chairman.
 - Revision of the proposed appointee numbers relating to four of the Partners so that the final position is:-

<u>Partner</u>	<u>Membership No:</u>
Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust	1
Rayleigh Police Division	1
Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association of Voluntary Services	1
Representatives of the 14 Parish and Town Councils	2

- (2) That the proposed timetable for development of the Community Strategy, as set out in Table 2 of the report of the Chief Executive, be agreed.
- (3) That the proposed Members of the LSP Steering Group be invited to an initial meeting to identify the key themes for the Community Strategy and develop terms of reference and protocols for the Partnership. (CE)

410 CONSULTATION ARRANGEMENTS RELATING TO THE ACAS PAY PROPOSAL

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which set out the terms of the ACAS pay proposals and the factors behind the employer's representatives decision to recommend them to Local Authorities. The Local Government Employers in the Eastern Region were seeking the opinions of Local Authorities on the pay proposals.

The Chief Executive clarified the background to the involvement of ACAS and referred to the misleading nature of recent local press articles on this matter.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive advised that:-

- All staff within Rochford District Council were currently subject to National Agreement arrangements.
- The Authority did not attract London Weighting Allowances.
- There were indications that the Government would take into account that Local Authorities had made a generous pay settlement when considering the requirements for financial assistance in other areas.
- Relatively long time frames would be associated with any decision to report back on possible options to the Authority remaining tied into the national scheme, with initial recommendations unlikely to be available until 2004/05.

Resolved

- (1) That the Local Government Employers in the Eastern Region be advised that, in response to the consultation exercise being carried out seeking employers' opinions, this Council rejects the ACAS proposals for the reasons set out in the report of the Chief Executive.
- (2) That the Chief Executive write to the Deputy Prime Minister expressing this Council's grave concern at the potential effect of this settlement combined with the increase in National Insurance

contributions on the Council's budget for 2003/4, with copies to the two local Members of Parliament and the Local Government Association.

- (3) That Officers examine and report back on possible options to the Authority remaining tied into the national scheme in terms of staff pay and conditions. (CE)

411 COUNCIL BUILDINGS - ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on the outcome of the full access audit carried out on Council buildings to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that the work proposals within the report related to essential works required by statute.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the Disability Discrimination Act Audit and the extent of the works now required to meet the obligations of this Act be acknowledged.
- (2) That the proposed programme of works involving concentration on the detailed design of the main public reception areas in the first instance to enable implementation from 2002/03, be agreed.
- (3) That further reports be produced for associated works to the Council's changing pavilions in 2003/04. (CD(F&ES))

412 FEE WAIVERS FOR PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care on delegating the waiver of some public entertainment licence fees to Officers.

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that:-

- The issue of relief from charges would be included within forthcoming reports on charging and the concepts behind charging.
- Any decisions taken under delegated authority on fee waivers could be reported via the Members Bulletin.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care to determine the waiver of fees for Public Entertainment Licences.
- (2) That the delegation be limited to a maximum sum of £1,000, with all decisions taken under delegated authority reported in the Members' Bulletin.(HHHCC)

413 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATING - APPLICATION FOR DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on an application for Discretionary Rate Relief from the Foulness Island Village Hall Management Committee.

Resolved

That 20% Discretionary "Top-up" Rate Relief be granted to the Foulness Island Village Hall Management Committee with effect from 16 May 2002 until further notice.(HRHM)

414 CONSULTATION RESPONSE - LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) which set out a proposed response to the Government Consultation Paper on Local Government Finance.

The Corporate Director confirmed that he and the Chairman of the Committee had just returned from a meeting of TACFIG authorities at which the issue of how best to put forward Local Authority arguments to Government had been discussed. During the meeting the proposed TACFIG submission had been agreed in principal. The following key messages had also been pervade:-

- The all party group of MP's which supported the TACFIG submission would be lobbying the Government on all possible occasions.
- Parliament would be debating Local Government Finance on the 15 October, and appropriate MPs would be briefed in advance.
- There would be an opportunity for MPs to raise concerns after the Queen's speech when there was the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's debate.
- TACFIG had been promised a meeting with N Rainsford MP.

- It would be useful for Local Authority Members to input into Local Party Conferences wherever possible.
- Endeavours would be made to continue to try to influence groups such as the Local Government Association.
- Wherever possible, any dialogue with Members of Parliament should be supplied to the media.

Resolved

- (1) That this Council's response to the Consultation document be on the basis of the Officer views set out in the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services).
- (2) That a copy of the response be forwarded to the two local Members of Parliament, asking that they co-ordinate their response in the manner agreed at the TACFIG meeting held on 10 September 2002. (CF(F&ES))

415 BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT - A CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which invited Members to comment on a proposed response to consultation by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on Best Value and Performance improvement.

During debate the Committee concurred with a view of a Member that this Council should be concerned at being unable to reconcile the statutory mechanisms/procedural frameworks associated with its role as a Planning Authority with the need to be responsible to the needs of citizens. Reference was made to the minimal control which Members could exercise over planning processes and the associated poor public perception of the service.

Referring to consultation generally, the Chief Executive advised that he would be submitting a report to the next meeting of the Committee on how the District Councils' consultation arrangements could meet the robust statistical requirements associated with Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA). There were indications that the Government would soon be submitting further consultation documents on CPA.

Resolved

That, subject to the inclusion of reference to this Council's concern at being unable to reconcile the statutory mechanisms/procedural frameworks associated with its role as a Planning Authority with the need to be responsive to the needs of citizens, the Officer comments

already submitted on a provisional basis to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, be agreed. (CE)

416 BEST VALUE AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT FOR BEST VALUE TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS – A CONSULTATION PAPER

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which invited Members to comment on a proposed response to the Government Consultation Paper on Best Value and Performance Improvement for Best Value Town and Parish Councils.

Resolved

That the Officer comments set out in the report of the Chief Executive be agreed for submission to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. (CE)

417 INVESTOR IN PEOPLE STANDARDS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) which detailed the Investor in People Standard and sought support in achieving the Standard for the Council.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive advised that one outcome of pursuing the standard would be the development of efficient and effective services to both Councillors and the public.

Resolved

- (1) That the commitment to achieve the Investor in People Standard by 2003/04 be endorsed.
- (2) That it be noted that the costs of the 3 yearly re-assessment are to be met from the Corporate Training Budget. (CD(LPA))

418 CIVIC CAR REPLACEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) setting out proposals for replacement of the civic car.

Resolved

That the Civic Car be replaced with a Rover 75 on the basis set out in the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services).(CD(F&ES))

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 1,7 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

419 VILLAGE SHOP RATE RELIEF FOR BUSINESSES IN RURAL AREAS

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on two applications for rate relief in accordance with the Local Government and Rating Act 1997.

Responding to Member questions, the Head of Revenue and Housing Management advised that legislation required each case to be treated individually and on its own merits.

The Committee agreed a motion relating to the first application, moved by Councillor C J Lumley and seconded by Councillor J M Pullen, and it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That 75% Discretionary Rural Rate Relief be granted with effect from 1 April 2000 until 24 July 2002 to the first applicant set out in the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management.
- (2) That 50% Discretionary Rural Rate Relief be granted with effect from 1 April 2002 until further notice to the second applicant set out in the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management. (HRHM)

420 CONTRACTORS APPROVED LIST UPDATE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provide that an update on the approved list of contractors for construction works and services and proposed the introduction of a higher value list.

Responding to Member questions, the Property Maintenance and Highways Manager advised that the work standards of contractors were vetted prior to their inclusion on the Council's lists.

Resolved

- (1) That the current situation with regard to the Council's Approved List of Contractors be noted.
- (2) That the new list of contractors up to the value of £500,000, as set out in Appendix A to the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services), be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

421 EARLY RETIREMENT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which examined the current Council policy in respect of early retirement in order to determine whether or not it may be better tailored to meet the requirements of succession management.

Resolved

- (1) That no further work be carried out in respect of the options set out in Section 3 of the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services).
- (2) That the principle that cases will be considered where pay-back of financial strain can be achieved within 5 years be agreed.
- (3) That the principle that cases will be considered where the benefits to the organisation are assessed as outweighing the costs, be agreed (CD(F&ES)).

422 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TAXI LICENSING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management setting out proposals emanating from Meetings of the Taxi Licensing Sub-Committee relating to the level of staffing, service delivery and cost of providing the taxi and private hire licensing function and how this inter-relates to other transportation matters.

The Head of Revenue and Housing Management confirmed that the recommendations within the report would help the Authority move towards a cost neutral service. The proposals represented significant savings and would lead to an improved service.

Resolved

- (1) That the transportation functions comprising Taxi Vehicle and Driver Licensing, Car Parking Administration, Community Transport and Decriminalised Parking Enforcement be brought together in one service delivery team.
- (2) That the organisational structure of the Team, as set out at Appendix 2 of the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management, be agreed
- (3) That the post gradings be as set out at Appendix 4 of the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management. (HRHM)

The Meeting closed at 8.22pm

Chairman:

Date: