

## **Community Services Committee – 30 January 2001**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **30 January 2001** when there were present:

Cllr Mrs M A Weir – Chairman

Cllr R S Allen  
Cllr R A Amner  
Cllr Mrs R Brown  
Cllr P A Capon  
Cllr D M Ford  
Cllr Mrs J E Ford  
Cllr D F L Flack  
Cllr K A Gibbs  
Cllr J E Grey

Cllr Mrs J Hall  
Cllr C C Langlands  
Cllr V H Leach  
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon  
Cllr R A Pearson  
Cllr Mrs L I V Phillips  
Cllr Mrs W M Stevenson  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllrs J R F Mason and P F A Webster

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs J Helson.

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr D R Helson.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Crofts – Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)  
G Woolhouse – Head of Housing Health and Community Care  
L Lapite – Solicitor  
S J Neville – Residential Services Unit Manager  
D Timson – Property Maintenance and Highways Manager  
A Wyatt – Committee Administrator

## **38 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor C C Langlands declared a non-pecuniary interest in the items “The Way Forward for Housing – Policy Statement”, “Housing Strategy – Best Value Review” and “Homelessness and Housing Advice – Best Value Review” by virtue of being a leaseholder of a former Council-owned property.

Councillor D M Ford declared an interest in the item “Residual Issues – Best Value Review – Leisure” by virtue of being the independent Chairman of Rochford Arts Forum.

### **39 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 November 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Mrs R Brown in the list of Members attending.

### **40 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee noted the action taken in relation to Minute 163/00.

### **41 REPORTS OF URGENT ACTION**

1. Members noted the action taken in relation to providing the Housing Corporation with this Authority's views on proposals it had received from Housing Associations for funding for scheme development in the District.
2. Members noted the action taken in relation to the appointment of PMP Consultants to carry forward the Leisure Contract process.

### **42 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

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

#### **(1) Leisure Sub-Committee - 9 January 2001**

##### **Minute 91 – Leisure Connection Management Report**

##### **Resolved**

That a report be prepared for the next Meeting of the Leisure Sub-Committee in relation to the issues raised in the Minutes.

#### **(2) Community Safety Sub-Committee – 10 January 2001**

##### **Minute 166 – Land at Laburnham Grove, Hockley**

##### **Resolved**

That in the light of the evidence outlined in the report, no further action be taken on the matter of youth nuisance in this play area at the present time. (CEX)

##### **Minute 167 – Update on Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy**

On considering this Minute, Members wished to express their congratulations to the Evening Echo for their campaign against the activities of bogus callers.

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It was further

### **Resolved**

- (1) That further update reports be submitted to future Meetings of the Community Safety Sub-Committee
- (2) That the points outlined in the Minutes be actioned. (CEX)

### **Minute 168 – Crucial Crew 2001**

#### **Resolved**

That Crucial Crew 2001 be assisted with funding in the amount of £500. (CEX)

### **Minute 169 – Vandalism Damage**

#### **Resolved**

That future reports relating to the cost of vandalism damage be brought to future Meetings of the Community Safety Sub-Committee. (CD(F&ES))

### **Minute 170 – Domestic Violence – Information Campaign**

#### **Resolved**

That an amount of up to £1000 be provided to produce the information pack, posters and support for awareness displays in 2001. (CEX)

### **Minute 171 – Hawkwell Parish Council – Magnolia Park**

#### **Resolved**

That the matter be referred to Full Council for further consideration, with Hawkwell Parish Council being requested to provide lay-out plans and more information relating to the proposal in the interim. (CD (F& ES))

## **(3) Housing Management Sub-Committee – 18 January 2001**

### **Minute 116 – Matters Arising: Capital Programme 2001/2002 (Minute 113)**

#### **Resolved**

That replacement of the boiler at Goodmans, Great Wakering, at an appropriate cost of £70,000 be included within the Capital Programme for 2000/2001. (CD (F&ES))

### 43 ESSEX COUNTY LIBRARY SERVICE

Members welcomed Grace Kempster, Head of Libraries, Information, Heritage and Cultural Service and Tom Holliday, Area Manager for Libraries in the Rochford District, from Essex County Council who had been invited to attend the Meeting to give a brief presentation to Members on how Library Service enhanced community benefit.

With the aid of view-foils, Ms Kempster advised Members of the role of the library service played in the community, its current achievements and future plans.

Mention was made of the services the library provided, over and above the book lending service, which included IT and internet access, books or groups, DVD video and audio loans as well as the move to include libraries from outside of the County on lending lists to enhance the choice available to the public. It was further noted that the library was perceived as a point of information which could perhaps be used to further promote the business of the District Council both at Town and Village libraries and through the mobile library service. The following information was given in response to Members' questions.

- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's Unitary Status had not affected the provision of library services throughout the County.
- Essex County Council and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council collaborated on book purchases to ensure value for money with reservations from Southend Libraries being free as with the rest of the ELAN system.
- It was the hope to improve services at Rochford Library although specific details were still under negotiation.
- It was now possible to access the library services through the Internet including renewing books and placing an order for specific titles. It was the intention to pilot tele-messaging to let people know ordered books were available for collection.
- Readers wanting more specialist subjects could make specific requests to the library staff. If the Essex Library service coupled with Cambridge and Suffolk were unable to assist, staff would endeavour to suggest alternative libraries.
- On the matter of E-Business and Internet on mobile libraries, Members were advised that currently, the mobile unit had on board a lap top computer with a standalone copy of the ELAN database. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council were involved in a pilot project

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using satellite technology to provide internet access from mobile units.

- Members were advised of a project whereby laptop computers were being placed in homes to provide opportunities for the housebound to have access to the library service.

Members thanked Ms Kempster and Mr Holliday for their presentation and they then left the Meeting.

### **44 MEMBER'S ITEM OF BUSINESS**

Pursuant to Standing Order 16(2)(d), the following item standing in the name of Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn had been placed on the Agenda for this Committee's consideration: "To receive an update on the proposed closure plans for the industrial therapy unit, Eldon Way, Hockley".

Noting the report provided by Officers and the update information provided by a Member, it was considered appropriate for the Chief Executive of South East Essex Mental Health NHS Trust to attend the next Meeting of Community Services Committee on 27 March 2001 to provide a presentation on progress with the provision of mental health services within the District.

### **45 THE WAY FORWARD FOR HOUSING – POLICY STATEMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing Health and Community Care which outlined the main points of a policy statement issued by Central Government following consideration of responses to the Green Paper "Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All". Noting the summary of the key policy proposals, Members raised the following points:-

- Housing Points Scheme – Members considered that with the Authority's housing stock being so low, the possibility to offer a choice based system rather than the current allocation system could be unworkable.
- Housing Benefit. - Members noted that housing benefit was, in the first instance, paid to the tenant and it was the tenant's responsibility to pay the landlord for accommodation. It was further noted however, that after eight weeks arrears, a landlord could request direct payment of housing benefits.
- Gypsies – it was noted that the funding for refurbishment of sites would not come from District Councils. However, public money raised through taxation would be used for this purpose.

### **Resolved**

That where appropriate, further reports be made on the implications for the District of these policy proposals as details become available and that these issues be examined as part of the Best Value Housing Reviews. (HHHCC, HRHM,HFS)

### **46 HOUSING STRATEGY – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which advised on progress on producing a new housing strategy and sought to establish a Member Working Group to oversee the exercise.

Noting the background to the Best Value Review and the proposed way forward, Members considered that a Working Group including five Members would be appropriate.

### **Resolved**

(1) That a Working Group be created to carry out the tasks as set out below:-

- Input initial Member views into the strategy
- Oversee the draft strategy for presentation to Council
- Attend the Stakeholder conference
- Oversee final draft strategy for presentation to Council

(2) That Member representatives to the Group be one from each group and the Chairman or Vice Chairman of the Community Services Committee. (CD(F&ES))

### **47 HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING ADVICE – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which outlined the results of the pilot review of Homelessness and Housing Advice Services and which identified issues to be included in an action plan for improvements.

It was considered that the current Appeals Panel of Members should continue and that the increased staff resource, at a total cost of £46,000, as proposed was to be supported with the matter being brought before the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee in the first instance.

### Resolved

- (1) That the homelessness service remains within the Housing, Health & Community Care division.
- (2) That the provision of a comprehensive housing advice service be investigated in principle and that options for separating housing advice and homelessness services be further investigated including joint working with other organisations.
- (3) That the list of issues to be included with the improvement plan be agreed in principle and that a draft plan including target dates and outcomes be brought to the next Committee Meeting.
- (4) That the Finance & General Purposes Committee be requested to agree the current arrangements for procurement of bed and breakfast accommodation.
- (5) That the authority to determine Homelessness Reviews remain with the Appeals Panel.
- (6) That visits be arranged for those Members of the Committee who wish to see the bed and breakfast and temporary accommodation use for homeless persons. (HHHCC)
- (7) That the establishment of the Homelessness and Housing Advice Team (comprising a Senior Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer, a Homelessness and Housing Advice Officer and an Administration Assistant) using the proposed budget allocation for 2001/02, be referred to Corporate Resources Sub-Committee for consideration. (HHHCC)

### 48 RESIDUAL ISSUES – BEST VALUE REVIEW OF LEISURE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which advised Members of issues which had arisen during the Best Value Review of Leisure which lay outside the leisure contract. Noting the issues identified by the Council's external consultants, PMP and the Internal Officer, Group Members considered the proposed action should be carried forward for the following list of items:-

- School facilities
- Liaison communication with sports clubs
- Use of Council Pavilions
- Potential for tourism
- Uses of sports pictures
- Ability to secure sponsorship
- Marketing of woodlands areas

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Whilst considering the matter of usage of Council Pavilions, Members requested that full consultation on this matter should be undertaken as a matter of course.

### **Resolved**

That the list of action outlined above be approved. (CEX)

#### **49 ACCESS TO GROVE NURSERY GROUP VIA GROVE WOODS**

The Committee considered the report of Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which updated Members on the current situation regarding the suggested new path through Grove Woods leading to the nursery group building, as considered at the previous meeting of this Committee. Noting the outcome of the site visit and further information provided within the report, Members considered that Officers in the Contracted Services Division should undertake further consultation/research with Essex County Council and Grove Primary School regarding various access routes and responsibilities followed by further discussion with the Grove Nursery Group with a view to resolving the matter.

### **Resolved**

That consideration of the request be deferred pending the outcome of further information from Essex County Council/Grove Primary School regarding the ownership and use of alternative land on the site and details of the lease. (CD(F&ES))

#### **50 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOGS (FOULING OF LAND) ACT 1996**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought Members' views on the adoption of the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996 following a Notice of Motion considered at the previous Meeting.

Noting the implications of the Act and that, indeed, it would be necessary for the Authority to have adopted the Act by 2006 Members requested that Officers further investigate the matter including consultation with other Local Authorities who have adopted the Act with a full report being brought back to the Committee in 2/3 months time.

It was noted however that enforcement of the Act was difficult and Members considered that Officers should further investigate the use of enforcement cameras, similar to those used for traffic light signals and speeding for inclusion within the report in 2/3 months time.



### **Resolved**

That Officers further investigate the Dogs(Fouling of Land) Act 1996 and bring a further report including the details outlined above to this Committee in 2/3 months time. (CD(F&ES))

### **51 FIVE A SIDE FOOTBALL, FAIRVIEW PLAYING FIELD**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which provided information on the costs involved with formalising the use of the five-a-side football area in Fairview Playing Field and installing a tarmac area for the installation of basketball goals. Noting the current situation with regard to the use of the field, Members considered that before the matter could be progressed further public consultation should be undertaken with residents abutting the site. It was

### **Resolved**

- (1) That basketball be the preferred option on this site.
- (2) That Officers investigate securing two basketball goals from EOBI for this initiative.
- (3) That public consultation be undertaken with properties in Victoria Road and Hockley Road, Rayleigh and that this matter be referred to Full Council at its meeting on 27 February 2001, following public consultation. (CD(F&ES))

### **52 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS – MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee noted the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which advised Members of orders valued at £5,000 or above which had been raised by the Housing, Health & Community Care Division for the period 1/4/2000 to 31/12/2000.

The Meeting closed at 10.00pm.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_