

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – - 2 July 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on 2 July 2002 when there were present:

Cllr R A Amner (Chairman)

Cllr Mrs L Barber
Cllr Mrs R Brown
Cllr K A Gibbs
Cllr Mrs L Hungate
Cllr C C Langlands

Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

OFFICERS ATTENDING

S Clarkson – Head of Revenue and Housing Management
G Woolhouse – Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
D Timson – Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
P Denholm – Solicitor
Mrs H Drye – Corporate Policy Manager
S Garland – Community Safety Officer
Mrs M Martin – Committee Administrator

REPRESENTING ESSEX POLICE

Inspector A Parkman – Community Safety Officer
P C K Hemsworth – Licensing Officer

280 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2002 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

281 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr C C Langlands declared a personal interest in Agenda items 12, 17 and 19 by virtue of being the leaseholder of a former Council property.

282 ISSUES ARISING FROM COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The following issue arising from the meeting of the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2002 was considered:-

Council Housing Stock (Minute 242)

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Resolved

That the One-bedroom Aged Person designated flats set out below be released for General Occupation:-

Shoebury Road, Great Wakering	4 one-bedroom flats (2 ground-floor and 2 first-floor)
Evergreens, Barling	8 one-bedroom flats (4 ground-floor and 4 first-floor)
Rodwells, Little Wakering	8 one-bedroom flats (4 ground-floor and 4 first-floor)
Sutton Road, Rochford	4 one-bedroom flats (2 ground-floor and 2 first-floor)
Warwick Drive, Rochford	2 one-bedroom flats (1 ground-floor and 1 first-floor)
Boulevard, Rochford	7 one-bedroom flats (4 ground-floor and 3 first-floor)
Harris Court, Hockley	7 one-bedroom flats (5 ground-floor and 2 first-floor)
Shepheards Court, Hockley	6 one-bedroom flats (4 ground-floor and 2 first-floor)
Bardfield Way, Rayleigh	11 one-bedroom flats (6 ground-floor and 5 first-floor)
Sudbury Close, Hawkwell	15 one-bedroom flats (7 ground-floor and 8 first-floor)

(HRHM)

283 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee noted the progress of the outstanding issues. In response to Member questions, the following was noted and agreed:-

Fear of Burglary – Provision of door chains and viewers for vulnerable residents

Members noted that there had been less demand for these than had originally been anticipated, despite the fact it had been well publicised. The Rochford Lions had volunteered to install these but had been unable to cope with the demand.

Resolved

That remaining monies from £1500 set aside for the purpose of providing door chains and viewers for vulnerable residents be used to employ a professional fitter. (CEX)

Rochford Residents Leisure Card and Castle Hall Update

The Property Maintenance & Highways Manager agreed that Members would be notified of the progress made by the Leisure Contractor in respect of these issues.

Caravan Site Licensing

Members noted that a progress report would be brought to the September meeting of this Committee.

284 POLICE REPORT

The Committee welcomed Inspector A Parkman and P.C. K Hemsworth to the meeting. Members received the report of the Essex Police which apprised Members of the current situation as far as police action on crime and disorder reduction is concerned.

In response to Member questions, the following additional points were noted:-

- Inspector Parkman confirmed that he was unable to provide a detailed breakdown of crime statistics to include ages of criminals and comparison with national figures.
- Crime statistics are not recorded using the same boundaries as those of electoral Wards.
- An apparent increase in criminal damage figures may be as a result of better reporting of crime by those affected.
- Rochford Police Station is staffed 24 hours a day, although the front office is only open on a part-time basis.
- A Police officer's workload is generally split on the basis of 40% of their time spent on paperwork and 60% on patrol or on the beat.
- A number of joint initiatives are currently underway between Essex Police and the District Council.

Members thanked the Police officers for attending the meeting.

285 PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF PUBLIC PLACES IN TERMS OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND POLICE ACT 2001 AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES (ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN DESIGNATED PUBLIC PLACES) REGULATIONS 2001

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which sought to identify and make recommendations for the potential designation of public places

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in which the consumption of alcohol should be restricted in terms of the above legislation. Members noted that the legislation would give a Local Authority the power to make an order restricting the consumption of alcohol in designated public places.

Inspector Parkman informed Members that:-

- there had been 15 reports of drink related matters in the Market Square, Rochford between October 2000 and June 2002.
- other legislative options would shortly exist to deal with such issues as alcohol consumption in public places and buying alcohol for those under 18; this would enable the Police to issue fixed penalty notices to those over 18.
- The Police view would be to wait and see what effect this would have on under age alcohol consumption.
- under the terms of the Consumption of Alcohol Act, the Police can currently seize alcohol from an open vessel when the person consuming it in a public place is under 17.
- Adding to existing legislation would increase already stretched staffing resources if effective enforcement were to be achieved.
- Essex Police will shortly introduce an enhanced custody system that would help evidence the problem areas.

Members were concerned that alcohol misuse in public places invariably leads to criminal damage. Incidents of this nature have been reported by residents in the area surrounding Clements Hall, Hawkwell and on a Motion moved by Cllr J R F Mason and seconded by Cllr Mrs M S Vince it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the area surrounding Clements Hall Leisure Centre and Car Park; Rochford Market Square, Rochford and Magnolia Park, Hawkwell be proposed as designated public place in which the consumption of alcohol is restricted.
- (2) That statutory and public consultation be undertaken in respect of Rochford Market Square, Magnolia Park, Hawkwell and the area surrounding Clements Hall Leisure Centre, Hawkwell under the terms of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 and Local Authorities (Alcohol Consumption in Designated Public Place) Regulations 2001. (CEX)

286 HOUSING RENTS – WATER CHARGES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which provided Members with final recommendations to implement actions for the change in policy regarding the collection of water and sewerage charges for all tenants other than those residing in sheltered accommodation.

As part of a Best Value Review an exercise had been undertaken to evaluate the viability of continuing to collect water and sewerage charges. At the meeting of

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the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 19 March 2002, it had been agreed in principle that the Council should cease to collect water rates and sewerage charges from April 2003 and that tenants should pay their bills directly to the appropriate company.

Members were reassured that officers would liaise with the water companies to ensure that advice provided to members of the public would be easy to understand, and available in Braille and other mediums where necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That from April 2003 the Council ceases to collect water and sewerage charges from Essex & Suffolk Water and Anglian Water respectively for all tenants other than those residing in Sheltered Housing.
- (2) That from April 2003, Council tenants are required to pay their water and sewerage charges directly to the water companies.
- (3) That the Head of Revenue and Housing Management works in close partnership with Essex & Suffolk Water and Anglian Water in reassuring tenants and providing appropriate advice and assistance to ensure a smooth transition in April 2003. (HRHM)

287 TENANT LIAISON/OFFICER MEETINGS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to appoint a representative to attend the meetings between the Tenant Representatives and Officers of the Council.

Members noted that these meetings are a forum for the exchange of information and to allow representatives to participate in management to the level with which they are comfortable, in accordance with Government policy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Chairman of the Community Services Committee or his nominee be nominated to attend the Tenant Liaison Meetings for this Municipal Year.
- (2) That attendance at these meetings be an approved duty for the payment of travel and subsistence allowances. (CD(F&ES))

288 ROCHFORD GARDEN WAY – EXTERNAL ENVELOPING WORKS AND CONVERSION OF SHOPS

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought permission for an application to be made in respect of obtaining planning permission to change the external envelope of the

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flats in Rochford Garden Way and for the change of use of the two shops in the same block to residential accommodation.

Members noted that a sum of £125,000 had been set aside to carry out this refurbishment work and an additional £70,000 to convert the two shops. Both these sums are allocated from the Housing Revenue Account's Major Repairs Allowance budget.

Resolved

That, pursuant to Paragraph 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, Officers be delegated to apply for planning permission for the external works to Rochford Garden Way and for the change of use of the two retail units to residential accommodation. (CD(F&ES))

289 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DOGS (FOULING OF LAND) ACT 1996

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which updated Members on the current situation regarding the implementation of the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Act 1996.

Members noted that £5000 had been set aside for the purpose of installing dog bins around the District and requested a breakdown of costs involved in this.

Approval was also sought to enable officers to take advantage of a sponsorship opportunity involving Dog Waste Bins. The sponsorship agreement would require the Council to fix the promotional posters advertising the Company's worming tablets, a copy of which was appended to the report.

Members were concerned that the poster was not more informative and did not include any reference to the dangers of toxicara. However, it was agreed that, in the absence of anything stronger, this did convey a useful message.

Resolved

- (1) That the details regarding the formal adoption of the Dogs (Fouling Of Land) Act 1996 and the installation of 20 extra dog waste bins be noted.
- (3) That this Council enters into the Dog Waste Bin Sponsorship Agreement with Bayer PLC (CD(F&ES))

290 PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF SKATEBOARDING BYELAWS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services which detailed the progress to date with the process of introducing skateboarding byelaws.

The Community Services Committee had resolved at its meeting held on 5 February 2002, that the provisions of the proposed skateboarding byelaws be

agreed for submission to the Home Office for consideration. The Committee had also requested that officers investigate and report back on whether the skateboarding byelaw initiative could be adopted in other areas within the District.

The effect of the proposed byelaws would be to control skateboarding throughout the entire District and to prohibit skateboarding completely in designated areas. In all other areas in the District it would be an offence if a person used a skateboard in a public place in a manner that would cause nuisance or a danger to others.

Essex Police had advised that, if the Council decided to include other areas such as public car parks, whilst they would not object in principle, their policing priorities would not currently include the enforcement of skateboarding or other byelaws.

Some Members were concerned that this Council should seek in the first instance to provide adequate facilities for those wishing to use skateboards recreationally, before considering its prohibition, for example, a decision being made on the provision of skateboarding facilities in King George's playing field, Rayleigh. It was noted that the skateboarding facility which had been provided in Hawkwell had proved of great benefit to all concerned. However, Members agreed that this area should be included in the list of areas to be considered in relation to the introduction of skateboarding bylaws.

On a Motion moved by Cllr J R F Mason and seconded by Cllr Mrs M S Vince and a subsequent Motion moved by Cllr Mrs R Brown and seconded by Cllr Mrs L Hungate it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the area immediately surrounding the Clements Hall Leisure Centre be included, together with all Council owned public car parks in Hockley, Rochford and Rayleigh, as public places to be considered as areas where skateboarding be prohibited.
- (2) That the management of skateboarding within the District be considered by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee. (HLS)

291 A SPECIALIST HEART CENTRE FOR ESSEX – CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which invited Members to agree a response to a consultation by Essex Health Authority on proposals to establish a specialist heart centre in Essex.

Members noted that a National Service Framework had been published for Coronary Heart Disease that sets specific targets for improvements. It recommends that there are local networks for cardiac care linking GP's, local hospitals and specialist centres. National and local specialists have

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recommended that Essex should be the location for a second specialist heart centre in the East of England.

An expert evaluation panel had considered the best location for a centre in Essex and recommended that Basildon Hospital should provide the tertiary cardiac centre. Following consultation by Essex Health Authority on the proposals, full business case submissions will be made to the Secretary of State. The aim would be for the new centre to be operational in 2005/6. Members noted that adequate car parking would be provided.

Resolved

That Essex Health Authority be advised that this Council strongly supports the development of a tertiary cardiac centre for Essex, based at the Basildon Hospital site. (HHHCC)

292 HOUSING STRATEGY/HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME 2002

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which provided Members with an update on the development of the Council's housing strategy and outlined proposed new arrangements for funding and joint partnership working.

The District Council is required to produce a Housing Strategy Statement which reviews housing related issues in its District. The strategy must be consistent with national policy as well as meeting the Authority's wider objectives set out in its Community Plan. This statement had been completely reviewed last year and a new strategy had been produced which covered the four years from 2001 to 2004.

Members noted that, following discussions, with the Department of Transport and the Local Regions, the Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords that Housing Corporation funding would no longer be allocated on an individual local authority basis. The Housing Corporation would be looking for evidence of cross-boundary partnerships at a sub-regional level.

Members congratulated the Head of Service on the work carried out in respect of the Council's Housing Strategy, but were concerned that working across local authority boundaries no longer appeared to be voluntary.

Resolved

- (1) That the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care write to the Local Government Association and the Members of Parliament for the Rayleigh and Rochford & Southend East constituencies, in order to gain their view on the change in emphasis in guidance to require cross-boundary partnerships between local authorities and registered social landlords in new social housing development.
- (2) That the development of the Council's Housing Strategy be noted.

- (3) That a review of the current capital programme in relation to Social Housing support be considered by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee. (HHHCC)

293 DOME CARAVAN PARK – APPLICATION TO ALTER SITE LAYOUT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which invited Members to consider an application to remove a footpath on the Dome Caravan Park, Lower Road, Hockley, under caravan site licence conditions.

Members noted that the site operators had removed a footpath on the site which led from Main Street to The Close. The Site licence conditions state that written approval must be obtained from the Council before such an alteration is made. The site operator had been given the opportunity to submit a retrospective application. This had been received and was appended to the report. A letter of objection was also appended.

Resolved

That the application to remove the footpath which led from the Main Street to The Close on the Dome Caravan Park, Lower Road, Hockley be approved and removed from the site plan. (HHHCC)

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 13 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

294 UNFIT HOUSE

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which asked Members to decide what action to take in respect of an unfit property at Colwood, The Chase, Ashingdon.

Members noted the contents of the report and it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the making of a further Deferred Action Notice is the most satisfactory course of action in respect of Colwood, The Chase, Ashingdon.
- (2) That in the event of representations from the owner following service of the 'Minded To Take Action' notice a further report be made to this Committee.

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- (3) In the event of no representations, the Council serves a further Deferred Action Notice under the provisions of The Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996, section 81.
- (4) That the situation be monitored and a further report be made to this Committee in the event that satisfactory progress is not made with demolition of the property. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 9.40 pm

Chairman

Date