

The Executive – 3 November 2010

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **3 November 2010** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore

Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher

Cllr Mrs T J Capon

Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr C G Seagers

Cllr M J Steptoe

OFFICERS PRESENT

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| P Warren | - | Chief Executive |
| G Woolhouse | - | Deputy Chief Executive |
| A Bugeja | - | Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services |
| J Bourne | - | Head of Community Services |
| J Bostock | - | Member Services Manager |

VISITING

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill

278 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 20 October 2010 (adjourned) and 26 October 2010 (reconvened) were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

279 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE AND REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES/AREA COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Sure Start Scheme at the Grange Community Centre, Rayleigh

Members were pleased to note that Essex County Council had now confirmed the securing of grant funding for the Sure Start Scheme at the Grange Community Centre, Rayleigh. It was anticipated that funds would be released during the next week to allow works to proceed. The Executive endorsed this project, which would be of great value to the community.

280 QUARTERLY REPORT ON PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance on progress against key performance indicators for the second quarter of 2010/11.

It was agreed that it would be appropriate for there to be some minor adjustment to three of the key priorities on page 6.3 of the report to reflect the current position. Members concurred with the observation of the Chairman that it was good to see the positive figures associated with the percentages of Council tax and business rates collected, together with the gradual

improvement to the percentage of recoverable overpayments received against total debt. The proportion of missed bins that were collected within 24 hours was moving in the right direction. The measure under development (kilowatt hour energy consumption at all District Council buildings) would be of interest in the context of building related projects currently underway.

It was noted that targets are developed in the preceding year. Members observed that the performance associated with gardening services and handy person jobs for the elderly was disappointing. Officers confirmed that arrangements associated with both these services were under review given that there would need to be a different supplier with effect from April 2011.

Resolved

That the progress against key performance indicators for the second quarter of 2010/11 be noted subject to:-

- Some adjustment of bullet points 2, 4 and 11 under key priorities to reflect the current position.
- Recognising that arrangements in relation to gardening services and handy person jobs for the elderly are under review given that there will need to be a different supplier with effect from April 2011. (HF)

281 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Community Services on the process involved in administering disabled facilities grants, the criteria and current applications/expenditure.

It was noted that the top figure in the table on report page 7.5 should be 49 weeks, not 35.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- It is an aspiration of all strategic housing authorities, including Rochford, to hold a full register of work carried out. Where works have been carried out to Housing Association properties, it is more likely than is the case for private sector dwellings that equipment can be re-used elsewhere when no longer needed.
- Following receipt of an Occupational Therapist's recommendation an element of initial means testing is undertaken by the Council in tandem with the issue of an application pack. The organisation providing the Home Improvement Agency Service assists applicants with form filling.
- The Home Improvement Agency Service provider appointed following the current tender exercise could be asked whether the contractors utilised to fulfil its role are locally based.

- It can be the case that an Occupational Therapist will change specification requirements during processing.

The Executive recognised that individuals requiring disabled facility grant works would be vulnerable. Concern was raised at the likely total cost of the cross agency process in the context of the value of the grants awarded. It was agreed that it would be appropriate for there to be regular monitoring of performance associated with grant processing stages via the performance statistics reported quarterly to the Executive. It was also felt that concern on the bureaucratic and costly nature of the process associated with administering grants should be raised as part of the Council's input into the South Essex Commission of Enquiry. The Leader confirmed that he would take every opportunity to raise concerns at other forums as appropriate.

Resolved

That the update on the process involved in administering Disabled Facility Grants, the criteria for approving the Grants and the breakdown of current applications and expenditure be noted subject to:-

- Regular monitoring by the Executive through the quarterly key performance indicator statistics of the times associated with various stages of the Disabled Facilities Grants process, in particular the following periods:-
 - from the Occupational Therapist's recommendation to an application being sent out.
 - from receipt of application to approval of grant.
 - from approval of grant to completion of works.
- The organisation appointed to provide the Home Improvement Agency Service following the current tender exercise being asked whether the contractors utilised to fulfil its role are locally based.
- Concerns about the bureaucratic and costly nature of the process associated with administering Disabled Facility Grants being raised as part of the Council's input to the South Essex Commission of Enquiry into more effective health, housing and adult social care services and by the Leader of the Council at other forums as appropriate. (HCS)

282 REVIEW OF LONG TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES AND COUNCIL TAX SECOND HOMES DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNT POLICY

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Community Services on discretionary discount.

It was noted that Councils were not permitted to set the discretionary discount awarded on second homes at a figure lower than 10%. It could be recognised that there may be occasional situations which result in properties being

unoccupied for a period but that this did not outweigh the merits of an approach that related to one of the Council's principal aims of reducing the number of empty homes in the District.

Resolved

- (1) That the discretionary discount awarded on long-term empty properties in the District be reduced from 50% to 0% with effect from 1 April 2011.
- (2) That the discretionary discount awarded on second homes in the District be reduced from 50% to 10% with effect from 1 April 2011.
(HCS)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

283 ROCHFORD RECEPTION AND OFFICE IMPROVEMENTS

Members considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive containing proposals on the way forward with regard to Rochford reception and office improvements.

Resolved

- (1) That the decision to replace the current temporary reception facility at Rochford with a more permanent structure, including improved office accommodation, be deferred and reviewed in two years time, when the budget position concerning local government, its role, responsibilities and the delivery of services should be clearer.
- (2) That officers action the submission of a planning application to renew the temporary consent of the current reception building at Rochford, and also action the necessary works to re-roof the temporary structure, on the basis of the estimated provision identified in the exempt report, to be funded from the capital provision set aside for the reception and office improvement project.
- (3) That the replacement of the heating of Nos 3-13 and electrical systems of Nos 5 – 15 South Street, Rochford be approved on the basis of the estimated provision identified in the exempt report, again to be funded from the capital provision set aside for the reception and office improvement project.
- (4) That the possibility of utilising 57 South Street, Rochford for the purpose identified in the exempt report in the short to medium term –

3 to 5 years – be actioned on the basis of the estimated cost identified.
(HLEMS)

284 CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S APPRAISAL

Members received the exempt note of the Chief Executive’s appraisal.

The meeting closed at 8.38 pm.

Chairman

Date

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