

Community Services Committee – 1 December 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **1 December 2005** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S P Smith
Vice-Chairman: Cllr R A Amner

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr Mrs L Hungate

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs H L A Glynn, J R F Mason, J M Pullen, and J Thomass.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
G Woolhouse	- Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
D Timson	- Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

475 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

476 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Mrs J R Lumley and Mrs M J Webster each declared a personal interest in the item on the Windmill Sub-Committee by virtue of being members of the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Committee.

477 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the report of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee referring a number of recommendations made at its meeting on 22 November 2005, which had been the culmination of meetings held during the Committee's review of partnership arrangements. At that meeting, Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had drawn together the conclusions and agreed the key findings.

Members were pleased to note the scale of the review undertaken and the wide range of representation of those interviewed. In particular, it was pleasing to learn how much the partners valued the Council's contribution.

Resolved

- (1) That definitions around 'partnerships' be clarified, as opposed to structures such as 'outside bodies'.
- (2) That a Council-wide 'Partnership' Guidance document be produced to provide a clear framework for determining whether to enter into partnership arrangements and the factors to be taken into account in ensuring effective partnership working. This could include a definition in relation to (1).
- (3) That terms of reference be requested from each of the partnerships the Council is currently involved with, together with details on governance, funding arrangements and performance management. This information can then be held in a central register.
- (4) That the register compiled as a result of (3) be used as a basis to formally review the Council's involvement in partnerships every 3 years, commencing in Spring 2006.
- (5) That such a review exclude those key Partnerships evaluated as part of this review.
- (6) That as a matter of standard practice, each Partnership the Council is involved in be asked to remind each of its participants every year of their roles and responsibilities in connection with the Partnership, and to reconfirm their commitment to the Partnership.
- (7) That the Member Training and Development Programme include a section around 'Partnership' working, the Partnerships the Council is involved in, and the roles and responsibilities of Members working in partnership structures.
- (8) That the minutes of the meetings of the key partnerships, the subject of this review, be appended to the Members' Bulletin for information purposes.
- (9) That in the context of the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership (TGSE), a Rochford Steering Group be re-established, with a view to considering whether it should be combined with the delivery steering group operating in Castle Point, to be determined in conjunction with TGSE and Castle Point Borough Council and operational as soon as practicable.
- (10) That the Local Strategic Partnership be requested to look at its governance, reporting arrangements, membership and performance management in the light of the emerging Local Area Agreement process.

- (11) That the Local Strategic Partnership be asked to maximise an effective working relationship with the Castle Point Local Strategic Partnership, to examine common agenda items, whilst recognising that the growth of any joint partnership needs to be organic rather than enforced.
- (12) That the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership be requested to focus on partner commitment and work sharing and improvements in performance management over the next 12 months and that the Council maintains its attendance and commitment to this key partnership, particularly in the light of the emerging LAA process and the possible restructuring of the Police network.
- (13) That Member/officer presence be retained on the Joint Health Partnership Board with Castle Point in order to retain the contact with the Primary Care Trust, but on a much reduced scale of 1 Member and 1 officer only, as opposed to the present arrangement of up to 3 Members and 2 officers.
- (14) That the evolving Children and Young Person's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) be asked to provide further information to enable the Council to determine its proper level of commitment to this body; in particular clarification around how the District Youth Strategy Group fits with CYPSP. (CE)

478 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions and in response to Member questions the following was noted:-

Catering Franchises on Open Spaces (Minute 37/05)

Despite advertising through the local press, it had not been possible to attract another franchisee to the site at Ashingdon. The operation had not proved to be profitable and therefore there were no plans to advance this. The ice-cream vendor still operated at the Hockley Woods site.

Sutton Court Playspace, Rochford (Minute 42/05)

All works had been completed and the playspace was currently being voluntarily locked at night.

Application by Rayleigh Police Division – Renewal of Dispersal Powers (Minute 216/05)

The Police had indicated they were still unable to provide feedback on the success of these powers locally. Members expressed great concern over the delay and the Chief Executive advised that he would continue to pursue this and keep Members informed.

Civil Contingencies Act 2004 – Update on Progress and Implications for this Council (Minute 217/05)

Members expressed concern at the lack of clarity and responsiveness from Government departments in the reporting of recent incidents around quarantined birds in relation to avian flu.

Report of the Windmill Sub-Committee (Minute 321/05)

The bid for additional funding of £100,000 had been submitted to Thames Gateway in October 2005.

A response from Legal Services was awaited over their investigations into whether the Windmill could be used for wedding ceremonies.

Playspace Rolling Programme 2005/06 (Minute 323/05)

The programme of playspace refurbishments was on target.

Request to use the Beacon at the Mill, Rayleigh for Christmas Lights (Minute 369/05)

Members affirmed the effectiveness of the Christmas lighting at the Beacon.

Outstanding issues would be carried forward.

479 HEAD AND NECK SURGERY IN ESSEX – CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care inviting Members to respond to a formal consultation on head and neck surgery in Essex.

Members noted that it continued to be difficult to recruit for specialist staff, in particular oral and maxillofacial surgery and in order to attract world-class surgeons an interesting caseload coupled with modern facilities was required.

The professional bodies recommended that there needed to be a minimum population of one million to feed into a centre of excellence and the strategic health authority had indicated that the specialist inpatient centre should be the same centre as that for head and neck cancer surgery.

Members were in agreement with the officer recommendation that, as a larger proportion of head and neck surgery cases originated at Basildon and Southend, rather than Broomfield or Harlow, there was a strong case for recommending that a specialist centre should be based in the south of the County, which would be consistent with the earlier response of the Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee to the cancer surgery issue.

Resolved

That Essex Strategic Health Authority be advised that this Council wishes to see a specialist head and neck surgery inpatient centre developed at Basildon Hospital, since the majority of cases likely to be treated at the centre originate in the south of the County and that this also reflects the established corridors of movement and transport patterns across the County. It also recognises the potential growth in the south of the County, particularly the Thames Gateway growth area. (HHHCC)

480 HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care inviting Members to consider the progress being made in implementing the Housing Strategy.

Members requested that in future the Action Plan should more readily identify areas of concern. Officers indicated that this could be achieved using a similar traffic light method to that used on Service Action Plans.

In order to provide greater clarity/response to Member questions, it was noted that:-

- Sir John Egan had been involved in writing the report "Rethinking Construction" with the aim of examining the scope for improving quality and efficiency in the construction industry by improved client/contractor relationships.
- Financial schemes aimed at delivering more homes for rent included providing cash incentives to tenants.
- The budget for the Cash Incentives Scheme would be reduced to £75,000 in the Capital Programme, and it was unlikely that more than three homes would be delivered for rent this year.
- The Homebuy scheme was market driven and dependant on the financial capabilities of those on the housing register to secure a mortgage.
- The Transfer Incentive Scheme had been re-introduced some time ago whereby tenants would be given a cash incentive to downsize their property. Members indicated that the sum of money should be sufficient to cover out of pocket expenses and removal fees, as well as providing an inducement to move to a smaller property. Officers agreed to bring a report back to Members on this scheme.
- The £5,000 set aside for consultancy fees for developing a strategy for bringing long-term empty homes back into use was unlikely to be required as the work could be carried out within the Council's existing resources. Proposals would be brought forward in the new year as part of a wider review of private sector housing renewal strategy.

- Funding for the promotion of financial incentives for owner-occupiers to repair their homes was funded through the capital programme. The capital programme is under pressure due to a slump in the take up of the right-to-buy programme.
- A cumulative figure would be provided in future in respect of the provision of alternatives to hostel/bed and breakfast accommodation.
- Funding had been received back from Essex County Council in respect of the failed attempt to use accommodation at Spa Court, Hockley for the provision of intermediate care facilities.

Members congratulated officers on all that had been achieved with this heavy programme of work.

Resolved

That the progress being made in implementing the Housing Strategy 2004-2007 be noted. (HHHCC)

481 ESSEX SUPPORTING PEOPLE – SERVICE USER INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care inviting Members to consider and agree the Council's response to the Essex Supporting People draft strategy on service user involvement.

Members were in agreement with the suggested officer comments to the specific questions.

In terms of general comments on the strategy, it was felt that the development of the strategy should include reference to a wider range of Service user representative organisations with a more balanced coverage across the County as a whole.

Concern was also expressed at the lack of reference in the document to either health services or the needs of families/carers as part of the support mechanism.

Resolved

That the Council's response to the Essex Supporting People draft strategy be as outlined in the officer's report together with the following additional comments:-

- There needs to be a wider range of service user representative organisations involved than was the case in the development of the Supporting People 5 Year Strategy, with a more balanced coverage across the County.
- There is a lack of reference to health services, which are an integral part of any support mechanism.
- The document focuses on individual needs, and does not include any reference to the requirements of families and carers. (HHHCC)

482 REPORT OF THE HERITAGE SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Heritage Sub-Committee referring a recommendation from its meeting held on 15 November 2005, that budget provision of £7,000 be requested to provide for a programme of heritage events in 2006/07.

Members noted that this sum of money would be factored in to the budget process.

Resolved

That budget provision of £7,000 be requested to provide for a programme of heritage events in 2006/07. (CD(F&ES))

483 REPORT OF THE WINDMILL SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee considered the report of the Heritage Sub-Committee referring a number of recommendations from its meeting held on 22 November 2005.

These included the recommendations that the progress of the development of the project be noted, the principle of management arrangements be agreed and that final negotiations with the other parties involved should proceed.

Members queried the recommended hire charge of £17.00 for 3 hours per floor of the Windmill. Officers advised that the Sub-Committee had felt the initial rate should not discourage the use of the building, with a view to reviewing it in future years once demand was known.

As Chairman of the Sub-Committee, Cllr Mrs M J Webster thanked officers for all the hard work that had culminated in the beautifully lit building, which could be enjoyed at some distance around.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress of the development of the Windmill project be noted.

- (2) That the principle of management arrangements, as set out in the appendix to the officer's report, be agreed, subject to the amendments listed below and that final negotiations proceed with the other parties involved:-
- That membership of the Management Group include two Members of Rochford District Council and one Member of Rayleigh Town Council.
 - Section 4 of the Agreement should be re-titled to reflect that it is a summary of the aspirations of the Management Group with respect to Rayleigh Windmill.
 - In item 4.2, "registered museum" should be replaced by "accredited museum".
 - In item 4.3, the first sentence of the second paragraph should read: "The National Trust Local Committee will also seek to maintain and enhance its existing Guardianship Scheme and reach other schools by means of a range of activities
- (3) That the appointment of a consultant be agreed to design the interior of the Windmill display system, subject to a successful outcome of the bid to Thames Gateway South Essex.
- (4) That the commercial rate for hiring the Windmill should be set initially at £17.00 for 3 hours, doubled as set out in the budget book, per floor of the Windmill and that the Management Group should determine a reduced charging policy for charities and community organisations.
- (5) That a new lease be drawn up for the Historical Society of Rayleigh, at a cost of £500 per annum, to be grant funded each year by Rochford District Council.
- (6) That officers liaise with the Historical Society of Rayleigh to explore the possibility of a temporary museum exhibition being developed, to be placed in the Windmill early in the New Year. (CD(F&ES))

484 POLICE FORCE RESTRUCTURING

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' views on the restructuring of the Police Force as proposed by Government.

Members were in agreement with Essex Police and the Essex Police Authority that a fourth option should be considered which would enable Essex to remain as a 'stand alone force' rather than becoming part of a regional force. This would be in the best interests of the District, a view that was shared by the local Members of Parliament. The projected growth in the

population over the next few years would also point to this being the preferred option.

Disappointment was expressed at the short timescale that had been provided for the response to be made. Members requested that a press release be issued indicating the Council's strong support for retaining a 'stand alone force'.

Resolved

- (1) That the response to the consultation should indicate that this Council, in common with the two local Members of Parliament, believes that the option for Essex Police to remain as a stand-alone force will be the best option for the County as a whole, particularly given the projected increase in the population over the next few years.
- (2) That a press release be issued indicating the Council's strong support for retaining an Essex Police 'stand alone force'. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Chairman

Date