

Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22 July 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **22 July 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)
Cllr J Thomass (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr P A Capon
Cllr K A Gibbs
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn
Cllr C C Langlands

Cllr T Livings
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr C R Morgan

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs Mrs S A Harper, M G B Starke, Mrs M S Vince and D A Weir.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	Chief Executive
R Crofts	Corporate Director, Finance & External Services
J Honey	Corporate Director, Law, Planning & Administration
S Fowler	Head of Administrative & Member Services
D Timson	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
M Martin	Committee Administrator

353 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2003 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

354 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee noted the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions. Outstanding issues were carried forward.

355 DISPOSAL OF OLD SHIP LANE PUBLIC CONVENIENCE AND CAR PARK – FURTHER ISSUES

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which considered the various options in relation to the closure of the Old Ship Lane public convenience and disposal of the site, including the car park.

Members noted the strength of feeling from local residents and other interested parties over the potential loss of car parking spaces.

Members also considered that the recent enhancement of the market square aimed at regenerating the town centre, together with the fact that Thames Gateway were seeking to promote Rochford as a centre for arts and crafts placed a greater importance on providing adequate car parking facilities within the town centre.

On a Motion, moved by Cllr P A Gibbs and seconded by Cllr P A Capon, together with an amendment moved by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn and seconded by Cllr P A Capon it was:-

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the Old Ship Lane public convenience be demolished and redeveloped for car parking purposes to provide a total of approximately 10 spaces to the rear of the Old Ship public house.
- (2) That the car park be brought within the Council's Car Parking Order and that the spaces be designated as paying spaces, with a maximum permitted stay of 2 hours.
- (3) That the above be financed from within the existing Capital Programme (CD(F&ES))

356 ASSET MANAGEMENT

The Committee received the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) which presented the Asset Management Plan 2003 for review by this Committee.

Members congratulated officers on the quality of this report and requested details of the costs involved in producing the Asset Management Plan, together with the Finance Best Value Review and the Code of Corporate Governance which were also before this Committee for consideration.

Members noted that the Asset Management Plan had attracted a credit approval of £50,000 over each of the previous two years.

Resolved

That officers would report back to this Committee with costings for the preparation of the Asset Management Plan, the Finance Best Value Review and the Code of Corporate Governance. (CD(F&ES))

357 FINANCE BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which summarised the Finance Best Value Review,

outlined the actions which had already been agreed and recommended the action plans which had been appended to the report.

Members congratulated officers on the quality of the report and were pleased to note that the outcomes of the review would lead to various improvements and that benchmarks provided a useful checklist against performance.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the action plans set out in Appendices 2, 3 and 4 to the report be agreed.
- (2) That officers be instructed to initiate negotiations with regard to forming a partnership for the delivery of the national non domestic rates service.
- (3) That the Head of Financial Services be instructed to report in December with proposals for improvements to the payroll and personnel services. (CD(F&ES))

Resolved

That further reports be submitted to this Committee during the October cycle of meetings with regard to the updated action plans of Housing Benefits and Financial Services. (CD(F&ES))

358 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which sought Member approval to the revised assessment of our compliance with the Local Code of Corporate Governance.

Members noted that it would be necessary to appoint an officer to co-ordinate officer and Member training and development to gain Investors in People accreditation and carry forward the Organisational Development Plan in line with objectives set out in the Code at section (c) of Dimension 4: Risk Management and Internal Control. The cost could be met from within the Training budget.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That a Training & Development Support Officer be appointed. (CD(LP&A))
- (2) That the annual assessment of the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

359 REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services which contained details of the responses to the questionnaire circulated to Members about the operation of the Committee structure and the Member training programme in 2002/03 and also contained some proposals for improvement for Members' consideration.

In particular, Members welcomed the introduction of a scoping form for use, when appropriate, by Overview & Scrutiny Committees. This could be used as a checklist for policy development/review to ensure that the discussion stays focussed.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the use of a scoping form be introduced at the start of each policy development/review.
- (2) That each Overview & Scrutiny Committee should consider the most appropriate venue for its work.
- (3) That the use of site visits and expert witnesses be considered as appropriate.
- (4) That the broadcasting of Council meetings on the website be pursued when cost-effective technology can be identified.
- (5) That further training in Overview & Scrutiny be arranged for Members.
- (6) That specific budget provision of £5,000 for Overview & Scrutiny be considered as part of the draft 2004/05 budget.
- (7) That all internal audit reports be considered by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee in the first instance.
(HAMS)

360 SIGNAGE IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services which invited Members to consider proposals for signage within the Council Chamber following discussions at a meeting of this Committee on 25 March 2003.

Members congratulated officers on the excellent cost-effective proposal, which would achieve a more professional looking image. An example of the sign was displayed at the meeting and Members noted that, as the signs

Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22 July 2003

could be hooked over the rail of the dais, this would not involve any alteration to the woodwork.

Recommended to Council

That improved signage, as detailed within the report, be purchased for the Council Chamber. (HAMS)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman

Date