

Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee

– 19 January 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **19 January 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr P K Savill

Cllr R G S Choppen
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr T Livings

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs S A Harper, Mrs J R Lumley and P F A Webster.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director, (Law, Planning & Administration)
D Deeks	- Head of Financial Services
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

16 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

17 GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services relating to the process of awarding grants to voluntary organisations, prior to the consideration of grants for 2006/07.

In response to Member questions/comments the following was noted:-

- The process was intended to support organisations in the community rather than individual needs, which were separately addressed by schemes such as the gardening service, the handyman service and the taxi voucher scheme.
- The Council would have opportunities in the future to support individuals through the County Council's growing agenda around care and support in the community.
- The grant to most organisations had increased each year at least in line with the level of inflation.

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- Changing circumstances needed to be taken into account each year, for example, the Historical Society for Rayleigh now had an increased role in respect of the Rayleigh Windmill.
- The Council did not specify the way in which organisations should spend their grant funding.
- The Rayleigh & Rochford Association of Voluntary Services (RRAVS), were also supported by the Primary Care Trust and Essex County Council. The Local Strategic Partnership was working with RRAVS in carrying forward their Action Plan which was aimed at focusing on improving their volunteer base and developing new community development initiatives.
- A figure had not been provided last year by one of the organisations in respect of funds held and it would be important to ensure that all the required information was available before any grant funding decisions for the forthcoming years were taken.
- The process of awarding grants had worked successfully over recent years.

Resolved

That the process in respect of the allocation of grant support remain unchanged. (HFS)

18 BEST VALUE USER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2006/07 – CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive detailing the proposals put forward by Government for changes to the content of the Best Value User Satisfaction Survey due to be undertaken in 2006 and seeking feedback on proposals and options.

In response to Member questions/comments the following was noted:-

- The last survey had been carried out in 2003; a sufficiently large sample size was required in order for the analysis to be meaningful.
- The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) collected the results and standardised them across the country to produce comparisons by authority in terms of residents' satisfaction.
- In the 2003 survey, Rochford District Council had been placed in the top quartile of authorities in a number of the satisfaction categories covered.

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- Joint surveys with County Councils could be confusing for residents because of the mix of questions, with residents not knowing which services were provided by the County and which by the District.
- The ODPM were now suggesting further changes to the previous surveys which would make the survey even larger (19 pages as opposed to 12 pages) and might make it difficult for historic comparisons to be made within authorities given the changing nature around some of the questions asked.
- District Councils in general terms seemed to score more highly than other types of authorities in terms of satisfaction.

Members were in agreement with the suggested officer responses, but it was noted that a response was required to the first question in each box around agreeing to the inclusion of an indicator on the subject.

Whilst Members applauded the fact that the officers had included substantial comment and reservation, there was concern that given the standardised format required for the electronic response, much of the additional comment might be lost. Officers confirmed this would be checked and a paper copy sent if necessary.

A copy would also be sent to the Council's Relationship Manager at the Audit Commission for information.

Resolved

That, the Council's response to the consultation be on the basis set out in Appendix A of the report. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.21 pm.

Chairman

Date