

Minutes of the meeting of the **Compulsory Competitive Tendering Panel** held on **14 February 2000** when there were present:

Cllr Mrs J Helson – Chairman

Cllr D E Barnes
Cllr V D Hutchings

Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr D A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr G Fox

SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Mrs M S Vince

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mr R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)
Mr A Galloway - Head of Leisure and Client Services
Mr G Brazendale - Committee Administrator

81 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 December 1999 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

82 OUTSTANDING ISSUES – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Client Services which updated Members on a number of outstanding issues in connection with the draft specification for the Grounds Maintenance Contract, which had previously been considered in detail at the Panel's Meetings on 14 and 15 January 1999.

These were as follows:

- Seeking sponsorship from commercial organisations for the maintenance of grassed areas and/or planted areas on roadside verges and roundabouts.

The Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) informed Members that Corporate Management Board had met with Marketforce, a company which specialised in devising sponsorship packages for local authorities, to identify possible commercial interest in planting and maintaining grassed verges and roundabouts in the District. Marketforce had requested further

Information to determine the practicability of the suggestion, and a report would be taken to Corporate Resources Sub-Committee should it appear possible to further develop the proposals.

For Members' clarification, it was explained that there was only one soft landscaped roundabout in the District, situated in Cherry Orchard Way, which could lend itself to commercial sponsorship of planting and soft landscaping. Under the Highways Act, Essex County Council was required to conduct a single cut per year of the roundabout, for which it currently paid this Authority to carry out. The cost of any additional maintenance/planting would fall to the District or external sponsors, if a suitable agreement could be reached. Some Members considered that the equity of this arrangement should be reviewed with the County Council. Regarding external sources of funding, the Panel suggested that an initial letter could be sent to the Parish Councils seeking expressions of interest in contributing towards the cost of further planting and maintenance of verges; if a positive response was received, the financial implications could be further investigated. It was also suggested that Fords, which had recently located in premises in Cherry Orchard Way, could be approached concerning planting on the roundabout. Alternatively, if no sponsorship was forthcoming, the possibility of inexpensive planting could be investigated.

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- Prevention of unauthorised parking on grassed verges. Members noted the outcome of enquiries with Southend on Sea Borough Council's Leisure Services Department concerning the measures that had been adopted to combat unauthorised parking on grass verges. The principal approach had been to erect signs referring to the Essex Act (1987), under which offenders could be prosecuted, along lengths of verge which suffer damage. The signs were constructed in such a way as to physically prevent unauthorised parking. Although Members noted that this measure had met with success, concern was expressed about the cost of producing and erecting the signs, which would be determined by the number of areas it was proposed to cover. It was therefore agreed that a report outlining the costs and identifying priority

locations to receive signage, should be brought back to the Panel for further consideration.

- Co-ordination of verge and road maintenance by Essex County Council. It was agreed that, following a positive outcome to initial approaches to the County Council, Officers should continue liaison to ensure co-ordination of the District Council's cleansing works with the County Council's road maintenance programme.

In conclusion, the Corporate Director informed Members that the final version of the new grounds maintenance contract, which reflected the views expressed at the Panel's Meetings early in 1999, would be reported to the forthcoming Meeting of Community Services Committee for approval.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Officers continue to seek external sources of funding for the planting and maintenance of roadside verges and roundabouts.
- (2) That a further report, outlining the costs of producing and installing signs referring to Section 6 of the Essex Act 1987 in priority areas to be identified, be brought back to Members.
- (3) That Officers liaise with the County Council's Highways Division to co-ordinate their road maintenance programme with the District Council's timetable for cleansing of the central reservation of the A127 and A130. (HLCS)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

83 CONTRACT MONITORING

The Panel considered the confidential report of the Head of Leisure and Client Services, which outlined details of the current Contract Monitoring arrangements for the Leisure, Refuse Collection, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance Contracts, together with proposals for changes to those processes in the light of Best Value and in readiness for the new Contracts. The Panel had, prior to the meeting, also been provided with revised figures giving the financial

implications of transferring a number of contractor functions from the Assistant Contract Inspector posts to the appropriate new contract.

Regarding the Leisure Contract, Members noted that the closing date for tender submissions by consultants (which it had been agreed to appoint to examine the entire leisure contract) was 25 February 2000 and, it was considered appropriate to await their views concerning monitoring procedures. The content of the new leisure contract, which had not yet been finalised, would also determine the level of monitoring that it would be necessary to adopt.

The Panel examined the proposals for the establishment of a new Contract Monitoring Unit, in particular the suggested management structure and associated grading of posts. It was indicated that three Contract Monitoring Officers (CMOs) would be sufficient to ensure that adequate monitoring would be undertaken, provided that they were not, as at present, required to carry out other duties.

Following Member discussion it was agreed that a further report should be prepared for the next Meeting of the Panel examining the possibility of establishing a monitoring regime for all but the leisure contract, comprising three CMOs, giving details of staff grades, the day-to-day tasks to be undertaken and the geographical zoning of responsibilities. Other elements that would need to be examined were the budgetary impact of filling the existing vacancy and the staffing implications of implementing the suggested changes by 1 April 2000. Members also requested that Officers consider the establishment of an additional post to carry out the non-monitoring duties which currently fell within the remit of the Monitoring Officers, together with strategies for the effective execution of these tasks.

RE-ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved

That the public and press be re-admitted for the remainder of the Meeting.

84 INVENTORY OF PLAYSPACES

The Panel considered the report of the Head of Leisure and Client Services which provided a summary of the information contained within the Inventory of Playspaces that had been prepared following a previous request from Members. Further information regarding the Inventory's contents was circulated at the Meeting.

During discussion the following main points arose:

- Many of the playspaces had been up-graded since the life expectancy of the equipment had been assessed, and the information contained within the Inventory would therefore need to be updated before the new leisure contract was finalised.
- Community Services Committee would assess and determine the type of, and need for, play provision largely based on Members' local knowledge. Priorities for expenditure would be determined by the proposed location, the catchment area the facility would serve and the proximity of other playspaces.
- Currently, playspaces were visited twice weekly for inspection purposes, to empty bins and to identify any maintenance problems. It was noted that the National Playing Fields Association recommended a once-weekly inspection, mainly to ensure that safety standards were being met, and Members therefore questioned whether the frequency of visits to playspaces within the District could be reduced. It was therefore agreed to recommend that provision should be made within the new leisure contract for safety inspections to take place once weekly and for maintenance-related visits (for example for grass cutting or refuse picking) to be tied in with the output contract.
- The Chairman reminded the Panel that the main reason for requesting the inventory had been to determine whether the current provision was adequate or whether, in certain areas, there could be over-provision in which case individual playspaces could be sold and the maintenance costs element of the leisure contract thereby reduced. It was agreed that the location of, and need for, playspaces should be addressed by Community Services Committee, using the information contained within the inventory.

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That the format and content of the Inventory Document be agreed, subject to up-dating where necessary being carried out.
- (2) That provision be made within the new leisure contract for safety inspections of playspaces to take place once-weekly and for maintenance-related visits to be co-ordinated with the output contract. (HLCS)

It was further:

RECOMMENDED TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

That the location of, and demand for, playspaces be reviewed, to determine the suitability of current provision in the light of the findings of the Playspace Inventory Document. (HLCS)

The Meeting opened at 10.30am and closed at 3.20pm

Chairman

Date