

## **Finance & General Purposes Committee – 7 December 2000**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** held on 7 December 2000 when there were present:

Cllr G Fox – Chairman

Cllr R Adams  
Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr J E Grey  
Cllr D R Helson  
Cllr Mrs J Helson  
Cllr V H Leach  
Cllr Mrs S J Lemon  
Cllr T Livings

Cllr G A Mockford  
Cllr C R Morgan  
Cllr P J Morgan  
Cllr S P Smith  
Cllr M G B Starke  
Cllr P F A Webster  
Cllr D A Weir  
Cllr Mrs M A Weir

### **VISITING MEMBERS**

Cllrs Mrs R Brown and Mrs L Hungate.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R E Vingoe.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren – Chief Executive  
R J Honey – Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)  
R Crofts – Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)  
A Smith – Head of Administrative and Member Services  
J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

### **406 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Mrs R Brown declared a non pecuniary interest in the item on Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau – Nomination to Outside Body by virtue of membership of the CAB Management Committee.

Councillor M G B Starke declared a non pecuniary interest in the item on 50-54 West Street, Rochford by virtue of his spouse's ownership of a listed building elsewhere in Rochford.

### **407 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 October 2000 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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### **408 OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

The Committee was satisfied that all necessary action had been taken or was being taken. Minute 232(6)/00 was carried forward.

### **409 REPORT OF URGENT ACTION**

The Committee received the reports of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care and the Chief Executive on action taken under the Council's urgency procedure relating to:-

- 1) Street trading consent – fee waiver and future policy on applications
- 2) Essex County Council – new political structures

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the reports be noted
- (2) That with regard to Street Trading consent:-
  - (a) The Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) be given delegated power to waive 100% of the Street Trading consent fee for all future fee waiver applications received from Hockley Parish Council for their Christmas Light Switch-on event, unless there are material changes to the format, or objectives of holding this event.
  - (b) The Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) be given delegated power to waive 100% of the Street Trading Consent fee for all future fee waiver applications received from Rochford Parish Council for the May Fayre event, unless there are material changes to the format, or objectives of holding this event.

### **410 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PARENT COMMITTEES**

The Committee considered the recommendations of Parent Committees.

#### **Community Services Committee – 21 November 2000**

**Minute 383 – Relating to Community Safety Sub-Committee  
Minute 162 (Castle Point and Rochford Drug Reference Group  
Update Report).**

#### **Resolved**

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That outside body Members names be included on all future Council reports relating to the work of outside bodies for reference purposes.  
(ALL)

### **411 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Committee received the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and considered the recommendations contained therein:-

#### **(1) Leaders – 7 November 2000.**

##### **Minute 3 – The Thames Gateway – South East**

###### **Resolved**

That, at this stage, support be given to the Council's continued involvement and commitment to the Thames Gateway initiative (CE).

#### **(2) Structural and Procedural Review – 14 November 2000**

##### **Minute 67 – Local Government Act 2000 – New Political Structure**

###### **Resolved**

That, at this stage, option 4 (with four service committees and two overview/scrutiny Committees) be identified as the Council's likely preferred option, Officers to report in detail to the next Meeting of the Sub-Committee on the practical implications of applying this option to enable final recommendations to be submitted to the Meeting of Full Council on 19 December 2000 (CE).

#### **(3) Corporate Resources – 28 November 2000**

##### **Minute 376 – Consultation with Chambers of Trade**

**Note** Councillor Mrs J Helson declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of membership of Rayleigh Town Council.

A Motion was moved by Councillor D R Helson and seconded by Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn that recommendation (2) of minute 376 be revised to read “that the provision of additional CCTV cameras in Rayleigh Town Centre be implemented in consultation with the Chamber of Trade and Rayleigh Town Council to supplement the existing network”.

Those in support of the motion felt that it would be appropriate given that the Council had budgeted with a view to supporting Chambers of Trade. The Chamber's proposal for 2 camera installation had the support of the Police and it would be of value if the District was

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involved in working with the Police in developing CCTV protocol within the Town. Other Members felt that the Sub-Committee recommendation did not preclude further consideration being given to the provision of additional cameras.

Comment was made on the need to be mindful of potential needs in other parts of the District when allocating monies and to the partnership aspect of proposals. In response to Member questions, Officers confirmed that monies not committed this financial year would be carried forward.

The motion was lost on a show of hands and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the provision of an explanatory historical sign board in the Back Lane Car Park, Rochford be referred to the Rochford Town Centre Working Group for consideration.
- (2) That the provision of additional CCTV cameras in Rayleigh Town Centre be deferred, pending a review of the effectiveness of the existing network.
- (3) That the provision of £5,000 for financing joint initiatives with the Chambers of Trade be included within the budget for 2001/2002 (CD(F& ES).

### **Minute 378 – Essex Community Foundation**

#### **Resolved**

That the proposed establishment of the local fund, in partnership with Essex Community Foundation, be not pursued (HFS).

### **Minute 379 – East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC) – Rochford Council Membership.**

A motion was moved by Councillor T G Cutmore and seconded by Councillor P F A Webster that the Council does not join the EELG Conference.

In support of the motion, comment was made that Membership would cost £4,376 more than that paid to similar bodies in the past and that the Council would not be precluded from joining in the future if considered appropriate. Other Members referred to the observation of the Chairman of the Planning Services Committee that Membership would be in the best interests of the Council whose voice needed to be heard within Conference. Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive advised that involvement in Regional Planning Strategy and the advice hitherto obtained from the Regional Employers Organisation would be the main losses to the Council if it did not join the EELGC.

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The Conference had become the regional arm of the Local Government Association. Non membership would leave Rochford as the only authority within the Eastern Region outside Conference, which worked closely with the Regional Development Agency (the body charged with achieving funding for the Thames Gateway).

The motion was lost on the casting vote of the Chairman and it was:-

### **Resolved**

That Rochford District Council rejoin the East of England Local Government Conference from 1 April 2001 (HPS).

### **Minute 381 - Access at rear of 5-9 Prentice Close, Rochford**

#### **Resolved**

That consideration of the request from the owner of No. 4 Malting Villas Road, Rochford for a grant of a right of way over the access owned by the Council at the rear of nos. 5-9 Prentice Close, be deferred pending a Member site visit. (HLS)

### **Minute 382 - Strip of land, 83 Southend Road, Rochford**

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the transfer of a strip of land approximately 1 metre wide on the southern boundary of 83 Southend Road, Rochford to the owners of No.85 Southend Road, Rochford be agreed, at value and subject to a restriction as to its use and on such other terms as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate.
- (2) That the purchasers meet the Council's legal and valuation fees and at their own expense erect a suitable fence to be agreed by the Council along the entire new boundary of the property.(HLS)

### **Minute 383 - Asset Management – Best Value Review**

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Asset Management Plan be adopted.

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- (2) That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) be appointed as Corporate Property Officer, and an Asset Management Group be created on the basis outlined.
- (3) That four Members, one from each Political Group, be appointed to join with the Asset Management Group in considering issues arising from the Audit Commission publication “Hot Property”
- (4) That the CAPS Solutions Uniform 2000 Estate Management module be acquired
- (5) That a basic Global Positioning System be acquired
- (6) That a Local Land & Property Gazetteer to be linked to the National Land Information System be produced.
- (7) That opportunities for Facilities Management, Partnership working and Competition in Asset Management be reviewed within the next twelve months following review of the Leisure and Housing Services
- (8) That the Council’s Asset Register be improved and published and a central record of Stakeholders be created.
- (9) That a Best Value Checklist for future reviews be prepared.
- (10) That a further report on the viability of a Data Centre following a process review of data management within the authority be presented
- (11) That the Action Plan attached to the signed copy of these minutes be implemented (CD(LPA))

### **Minute 384 - Outstanding Contract Issues**

The Committee agreed to consider the detail of this item following exclusion of the public and press.

### **(4) Member Budget Monitoring - 29 November 2000**

### **Minute 105 - Purdeys Industrial Estate, Rochford**

#### **Resolved**

That the District Valuer be instructed to negotiate the sale of the Council’s vacant land at the Purdeys Industrial Estate, Rochford to achieve the maximum return. (CD(LPA))

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### **Minute 107 - Modernising Local Government Finance – Green Paper**

This item would be considered as a separate item later in the meeting. (Minute 413 refers)

### **Minute 108 - Single Status Agreement and Job Evaluation**

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That budget provision of £8,000 split partly in 2000/01-2001/02 for the one off implications of undertaking job evaluation be agreed.
- (2) That a review of the likely funding implications be undertaken at the time of the half yearly budget review. (DC(LP&A))

### **Minute 109 – Land adjoining The Market Car Park, Rayleigh**

#### **Resolved**

That the Asset Management Group undertake an early review of this area. (HLS)

### **Minute 110 – Land at Highfield Crescent, Rayleigh**

#### **Resolved**

That the Head of Legal Services disposes of the surplus land adjacent to 9 Highfield Crescent, subject to any necessary adjustments to the boundary to maintain adequate access and the service of formal notice under the Housing Act 1985 as may be necessary to accommodate such change. The disposal to be at market value and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate. (HLS)

## **412 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2001/2002**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on determining the tax base for each individual Parish or Town Council within the District.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2001/2002 be approved.
- (2) That pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992, the amount calculated by the Rochford District Council as its

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Council Tax Base for the year 2001/2002 shall be in the following parts:-

ASHINGDON	1,172.28
BARLING MAGNA	619.09
CANEWDON	552.48
FOULNESS ISLAND	67.51
GREAT WAKERING	1,967.26
HAWKWELL	4,406.70
HOCKLEY	3,677.32
HULLBRIDGE	2,334.22
PAGLESHAM	103.76
RAWRETH	428.37
RAYLEIGH	11,815.35
ROCHFORD	2,714.98
STAMBRIDGE	231.09
SUTTON	<u>52.57</u>
	30,142.98
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### **413 MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE GREEN PAPER**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which outlined proposed responses to key elements of the Green Paper, as requested by Central Government.

#### **Resolved**

That this Council's response to the Modernising Local Government Finance Green Paper be on the basis of the views set out in the report of the Corporate Director. CD(F&ES)

### **414 COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY – STANDARDS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on adoption of the Commission for Racial Equality Standards for Local Government. Should the Commission Standards be adopted, the next step would be for Officers to produce a policy statement and action plan to implement that part of the Standards that are appropriate to Rochford.

#### **Resolved**

That the Commission for Racial Equality Standards for Local Government be adopted. (HAMS)

### **415 NATIONAL HOLOCAUST DAY**



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The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on Central Government's decision to designate Saturday 27 January 2001 as Holocaust Remembrance Day and how the day could be marked.

During debate, Members agreed a motion moved by Councillor Mrs J Helson and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore relating to the planting of peace roses at local senior schools.

In referring to the wide ranging nature of Nazi persecution, it was agreed that it would be appropriate to consult with the local Jewish community and as many other appropriate groups as possible with a view to identifying a suitable event for future Holocaust days.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That for Holocaust day this year, consultation be undertaken with the four senior schools within the District with a view to the planting of a peace rose at each.
- (2) That consultation be commenced with the local Jewish community and other groups, (including the disabled and church groups) with a view to identifying a suitable event for future Holocaust days. (CE)

### **416 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATING – DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF – SECTIONS 47/48 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1988**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management setting out recommendations following the annual review of all discretionary rate relief cases.

The Committee concurred with the view of the Corporate Director (Finance & External) Services on the value of considering applications from elderly persons organisations in tandem with grant allocations and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the applications from the Rochford Old Persons Welfare Committee Day Centre and the Hockley and Hawkwell Old Peoples Welfare Committee be deferred in order that they can be considered in tandem with future grant allocations.
- (2) That discretionary rate relief for the remaining bodies be as follows from 1 April 2001:-

**Organisation**

**Revision from 1 April 2001**

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Star Shooting Club, Lubbards Lodge Farm Lubbards Lodge Farm, Rayleigh	Relief be reduced to 15% in line with Council policy as only 30% of Members reside in District.
Kent Elms Tennis Club, Aviation Way, Southend-on-Sea	Relief be withdrawn in view of large capital fund and continued annual surpluses
Wakering Yacht Club, Sutton Wharf, Rochford	Relief be withdrawn as a result of continuing surpluses and substantial current assets
Rayleigh Horticultural Society, Lower Wyburns Farm	Relief be withdrawn in view of substantial capital fund and annual surplus shown in latest accounts
Essex Marina Yacht Club, Wallasea Island	Relief be reduced to 15% in line with Council policy as only 30% of members reside within the District
Hawkwell Village Hall	20% discretionary relief (top-up) amounting to £724 be withdrawn in view of large capital fund and continued annual surpluses
Up River Yacht Club, Hullbridge	Relief be increased to 50% in line with Council policy as 53% of members now reside within the District
Hullbridge Sports and Social Club	Relief be withdrawn as a result of substantial capital assets and in excess of 50% of social members

(2) That Discretionary Rate Relief be granted to the following clubs from 1 April 2001:-

- Westcliff Rugby Football Club – 12.5%
- Rochford 100 Rugby Club – 50%
- Rayleigh Lawn Tennis Club – 50%

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The Committee considered the interim report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on work undertaken to date by the Document Production Best Value Officer Review Group.

During debate the Committee agreed a motion moved by Councillor D R Helson and seconded by Councillor Mrs S J Lemon that the Review Group should consider the possibilities for reducing the amount of paper printing associated with the Members Bulletin/agenda despatch and investigate alternatives, such as the use of electronic communication and the deposit of documents in the Members' Room. It was recognised that a balance needed to be achieved between minimising paper usage and the provision of adequate information to Members.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the progress of work to date be noted with a finalised report submitted to Committee in due course.
- (2) That the Officer Review Group give consideration to the possibilities for reducing the amount of paper printing associated with the Members Bulletin/agenda despatch. (HAMS)

### **418 ASSET REVIEW – PARISH TRANSFERS – MALVERN ROAD, LABURNUM GROVE AND WOOD AVENUE, HOCKLEY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on Parish responses to the proposed transfer of play areas and open spaces and the terms of transfer.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Laburnum Grove and Malvern Road play spaces be transferred to Hockley Parish Council and Ashingdon Parish Council respectively, on a long lease of 125 years at a peppercorn rent, and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services deems fit.
- (2) That the Metropolitan Green Belt land off Beckney Avenue, Hockley be transferred to Hockley Parish Council, either at open market value, or on a long lease of 125 years at a peppercorn rent, and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services deems fit. (HLS)

### **419 RAYLEIGH CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) – NOMINATION TO OUTSIDE BODY**

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The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on the appointment of a representative to Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau.

A motion was moved by Councillor P F A Webster and seconded by Councillor J E Grey that Councillor R A Amner be appointed to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

It was noted that the two Citizen Advice Bureaux within the District were proposing to combine into one organisation and that the Council had been asked to consider appointing one Member representative to take into account proposed changes. In debating this aspect the Committee felt it would be preferable to be able to maintain two appointees as originally determined with further review when the period of office ends.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That Councillors Mrs J Hall and R A Amner be this Council's appointees to the Rochford and Rayleigh Citizens Advice Bureau respectively.
- (2) That the Citizens Advice Bureau be asked to retain provision for two Council appointees in accordance with the previously agreed arrangement with further review when the period of office ends and, in the event of this not being agreed by the Bureau, the matter be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee. (HAMS)

## **420 CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS – MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on the use of delegated powers.

### **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

#### **Resolved**

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 9 of schedule 12A of the Act.

## **421 CORPORATE RESOURCES SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTE 384 – OUTSTANDING CONTRACT ISSUES**

The Committee considered the recommendation under Corporate Resources Sub-Committee minute 384.

Responding to Member questions, Officers provided detail of the background to and nature of the contracts and the legal position.

**Resolved**

That the recommendations contained within the exempt appendix to the Minutes be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

**422 IT INFRASTRUCTURE RECABLING**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services providing an update on the condition of the Council's IT network and recommending replacement of the present cabling and associated infrastructure.

Responding to Member questions, Officers advised that:-

- The majority of the network had been in place since the late 1980s and maintenance costs were now high. The condition of much of the network was such that early action needed to be taken.
- Recent network failures had had adverse consequences for service delivery, IT being a core element of the Council's operations. The cost of maintaining the network in this financial year was at least £10,000 above that which would have been expected had the network been satisfactory. There were other less quantifiable costs, such as the need to acquire new software.
- The Council's new IT contractor (Securicor) had expertise in resolving network problems and had worked with other local authorities.
- It was important to proceed on a basis which built in flexibility for the future. Proposals needed to be seen in the context of the emerging IS/IT strategy which would set out a plan of action over a period of time.
- It was proposed to address problems at the Council's Rochford site together with the Tax Office, Members' lounge and Reception areas at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh. Ideally, a review of cabling possibilities for the meeting rooms at Rayleigh would also be appropriate.
- The tender documentation contained phased priority areas and possibilities would become clearer once actual tender amounts were known.

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During debate, Members agreed that it would be appropriate to include the identification of possibilities for the committee room facilities at Rayleigh within the tendering process. Reference was made to the changing pace of technology and to the value of regular review reports being submitted to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee. Reference was also made to the possibility that Best Value Review activity, such as that relating to assets, would have consequences for the strategy.

The Committee agreed a motion moved by Councillor T G Cutmore and seconded by Councillor G J Morgan on the submission of appropriate Committee reports and it was:-

### **RECOMMENDED**

To Council

- (1) That replacement of the IT network infrastructure be agreed in principle, a final decision to be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee via the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee once the outcome of the tender process is known.
- (2) That tender process include identification of costings for introducing appropriate cabling/infrastructure to the meeting rooms at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh.
- (3) That an additional provision of £50,000 be made for network recabling within the Council's capital programme.
- (4) That the action taken by the Corporate Management Board to invite tenders for the replacement of the IT network be affirmed.
- (5) That regular IT review reports be submitted to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee. (HAMS)

### **423 50-54 WEST STREET, ROCHFORD**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Planning Services on the dilapidated buildings at 50-54 West Street, Rochford.

Members noted the contents of a recent letter received from the Southend and District Building Preservation Trust Ltd, setting out the Trust's continued interest in purchasing the properties and update of progress so far.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that a stage could be reached when indicative uses and a need for planning application/conservation area consent had been realised. It would be

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appropriate for the Planning Policy Sub-Committee to give initial consideration to these aspects at that time.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That Officers continue to discuss the options for a suitable renovation and redevelopment scheme with the owners within defined parameters based on the information contained in the report.
- (2) That any initial proposals relating to indicative use and planning application/conservation consent be considered by the Planning Policy Sub-Committee in the first instance. (HOPS)

## **424 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ADVISER**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Financial Services on the appointment of a Treasury Management Adviser for the Authority.

### **Resolved**

That Sector Treasury Services be appointed for a period of 5 years as the Council's Treasury Management Adviser. (HFS)

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_