

## **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 12 June 2003**

---

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **12 June 2003** when there were present:

Cllr T Livings (Chairman)  
Cllr Mrs T J Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr T G Cutmore  
Cllr P K Savill  
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs M A Starke  
Cllr Mrs M S Vince  
Cllr P F A Webster

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr C J Lumley

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

A Bugeja	Head of Legal Services
G Woolhouse	Head of Housing, Health & Community Care
S Neville	Residential Service Unit Manager
J Bourne	Leisure & Contracts Manager
G Dawson	Senior Monitoring Officer/Parks Officer
M Martin	Committee Administrator

### **267 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **268 SERVICETEAM – GROUNDS MAINTENANCE UPDATE**

The Chairman welcomed Gary Such, Serviceteam's Regional Manager, to the meeting. Members were pleased to note the following progress on the Grounds Maintenance contract:-

- Although the contract was behind schedule for May/June in some areas, Serviceteam anticipated catching up by July/August.
- The team were currently up to cut 6 of the seasonal grass cutting programme.
- Continued monitoring of play areas for vandalism.
- Working closely with the Council to deal with flytipping at recycling bank sites.
- Soil samples taken this season from sports pitches demonstrated they were in top condition, which would show further improvement next season.
- Weedkiller spraying had taken place on hard surfaces with another due in July.
- Few continuing problems with some shrubberies, due to excessive weed growth.

## Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 12 June 2003

---

Members reported that they were pleased with what they had observed of late in respect of this contract and requested that thanks be passed on to the appropriate staff. In particular one Member wished to congratulate Serviceteam on a very swift response to a problem which had been reported recently by a local resident.

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

- Groundsmen would be reminded not to park their vehicles on pavements or on zig zag lines on approach to pedestrian crossings whilst emptying bins.
- In respect of a dangerous new 'game' which involved young people kicking green glass bottles about on open spaces, careful monitoring would continue to take place by Serviceteam, who would liaise closely with the District Council's Senior Monitoring Officer/Parks Officer. If any 'hotspots' could be identified, the Police/District's Community Safety Officer would be informed.
- Successful bids had been made for lottery funding for pitches at St John Fisher Playing Field and Rawreth which, together with money identified in the Capital budget, would enable the drainage works to be undertaken during the summer months.
- Close monitoring would take place in response to reports of damaged trees/evidence of hare coursing at Millview Meadows and would be reported to the Police, if appropriate.

### **269 OVERALL WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive and noted the main areas of the Committee's work programme for the 2003/04 municipal year. The report had picked up revisions/amendments made since the previous year's work programme was agreed and included details of the Committee's work over the previous 12 months.

Members noted that:-

- the work programme would continue to develop the policy framework in respect of unauthorised activities by gypsies/travellers following the Motion agreed by Council at its meeting held last December. Council had agreed that further representations be made to the Government to secure the tightening of the planning enforcement system to deal with such activities.
- the Police would be liaising with the District Council on the approach to be taken in Essex and Members would be regularly updated.

### **Resolved**

That the 2003/2004 work programme, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be agreed. (CE)

### 270 REPORT OF THE HOUSING BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE

Members of the Committee received a recommendation from the meeting of the Housing Best Value Sub-Committee held on 1 April 2003, when it had considered progress with the Housing Strategy Best Value Review Action Plan.

Members noted that if no suitable response were received from either the South Essex Partnership NHS Trust or Essex County Council's Social Services, this would hamper progress on formulating a suitable Housing Strategy.

#### **Resolved**

That Essex County Council and the South Essex Partnership NHS Trust be advised of this Council's concern at the difficulties being experienced in obtaining information on the quantification of supported housing needs for people with mental health problems. (HHHCC)

### 271 PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which recommended a policy for the provision of financial assistance for the repair, improvement and adaptation of private sector property.

Members noted the following amendments to the draft policy:-

- Paragraph 7 – amend the wording to read “The prior residence requirement .....applications under 6(e) and (g) above.”
- Paragraph 8 – amend the first sentence to read “In order to make a valid application for grant the applicant must submit the following documents, as appropriate.
- Paragraph 8 – include an additional point (i) to read “Proof of responsibility for a child/proof of pregnancy.”

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- The final report of the survey, commissioned to update the Council's information on the condition of the private sector stock, was still awaited and the Council's Legal team were being consulted over this.
- The Council had been assured that the company would supply the information. Final payment would, however, be withheld until this had been received. Abandoning the process at this stage would only require another survey to be undertaken.
- Partner agencies carry out checks relating to information supplied.
- Once the final results of the survey had been received, the Policy would be re-checked. Minor amendments would be dealt with under delegated authority. Any significant policy change would be brought back to Committee.

## Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 12 June 2003

---

- Assistance would be available through the administering body, the Springboard Home Improvement Agency in terms of help with completing forms and providing appropriate advice, which could include directing people to other sources of help. It was noted that the Agency charges applicants an administration fee of 15% of total costs in respect of Disabled Facilities Grants and 10% for discretionary grants, subject to a £50 minimum fee.
- Provision of funding had been made within the current capital programme but operation of the scheme for future years would be dependant on agreement on the revenue budget and capital programme.

On a Motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore, it was:-

### **Recommended to Community Services Committee**

That, subject to the amendments above, the policy on private sector housing renewal assistance appended to the report be agreed for immediate implementation for the financial year 2003/04. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 8.28 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....