

Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 15 January 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **15 January 2004** when there were present:

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

Cllr T G Cutmore
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr D G Stansby

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

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs C I Black, Mrs J R Lumley, Cllr R A Oatham

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr P K Savill

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Clarkson	Head of Revenue and Housing Management
C Nicholson	Solicitor
S Garland	Community Safety Officer
M Martin	Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

Cllr Mrs I Pummell	Essex County Council
B Catt	Senior Manager, Planning and Admissions, Essex County Council

25 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2003 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr T Livings declared a personal interest in item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of having previously held the position of Chairman of Governors at Down Hall School, Rayleigh and currently being a member of the Governing Body at that school.

Cllr Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of being a Governor of Doggetts County Primary School and item 8 by virtue of being the StAR Partnership's representative on the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership.

Councillor C I Black declared a personal interest in item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of being the parent of a pupil at a local secondary school.

Cllr C J Lumley declared a personal interest in item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of being a Governor of Glebe Primary School and Love Lane Primary School.

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley declared a personal interest in item 6 of the Agenda by virtue of being a Governor of Edward Francis Infant and Junior School.

27 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION

The Chairman welcomed County Cllr Mrs I Pummell, the Cabinet Member for Education and Mr B Catt, the County's Senior Manager, Planning and Admissions to the meeting to answer Members' questions in relation to primary and secondary school provision within the District.

Members noted that the County publish a 5 year plan, which is updated annually. The 2003/08 plan would be published shortly, and this would roll forward each year. It would have significant development implications in respect of school place planning.

In respect of primary school provision, the following was noted:-

- 21 primary schools exist within the District including those with separate infant and junior schools and those as an all through primary.
- Parents can express a preference for a place at any school.
- Popularity varies between schools; published results of Key Stage I SATS tests play a part in the choice.
- A significant impact on numbers of school places has been the falling birth rate.
- In general there is a rising number of surplus places, despite increased housing, but with some pressure on specific schools.

In respect of secondary school provision, the following was noted:-

- 4 secondary schools exist within the District.
- Significant movements take place between those living within the Southend area and the District.
- Southend has four selective schools and two denominational schools.
- Significant numbers travel in to the District's 4 secondary schools, which are recognised as good high performing schools.
- There is difficulty in managing secondary school places efficiently, particularly as parents are currently required to express their preference by December for the following year's September intake.
- Places are offered initially to those who express a preference.
- Swayne Park is a community school, with the other three in the district being foundation schools, who manage their own admissions.

- Problems necessarily arise for those parents moving into the area after the date set for expressing a preference for a school place.
- As a result, there is generally more pressure on secondary school places, and this is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future, as parents are happy to pay for their children to travel some distance in order to attend a school of their choice.
- Secondary school provision remains a constant challenge, which is brought about by the way in which the admissions process is operated. It is not possible by law to reserve places.

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

- More than 300 pupils of secondary school age from schools across the County attend the schools in Southend in each year group.
- A smaller number than this travel out from Southend into Essex, resulting in a net inflow to Southend from the rest of Essex.
- The selective schools are responsible for administering the eleven plus examination and determining those eligible for admission.
- Parents are always encouraged to apply for their local secondary place as a safeguard; even if they anticipate their child might obtain a selective place.
- Discussions were still taking place in respect of relocating St Nicholas Primary School to the Park School site, which would not be able to take place until September 2006 at the earliest.
- The future use of the existing St Nicholas school building was outside the jurisdiction of the County Council.
- The County Council works closely with housing developers and relevant planning authorities regarding planning applications and timescales and density of housing anticipated. This process is difficult to monitor and subject to change.
- Whilst there is a net surplus of primary places within the area, certain schools will be oversubscribed and this needs to be managed.
- Temporary accommodation can be provided, but the County would engage in discussion with schools and invite parents to express preferences, taking into account accessibility.

28 DECORATING ALLOWANCES

Note: Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in a subsidiary of B&Q, by virtue of his employment.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which invited Members to consider the re-introduction of awarding a decorating allowance against void properties in a poor state of decoration.

Members noted the options available, but agreed that it would be sensible to maintain the status quo, but introduce a system of inspection and recharging

for damage before licensees placed in Council temporary accommodation were allowed to move into permanent accommodation.

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

Recommended to the Community Services Committee

That an alteration be made to the Lettings Policy, to the effect that a system of inspection and recharging for damage of temporary accommodation be made, prior to offering permanent accommodation. (HRHM)

29 ROCHFORD CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY 2002/05 – UPDATE

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive, which apprised Members of the latest update to the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy 2002/05 concerning the Primary Objective of Substance Misuse.

Members were disappointed at the content of the letter from the Chairman of the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership in response to a number of concerns raised by them at the meeting of this Committee held on 15 July 2003.

Accordingly, it was agreed that the Chairman of the Partnership be invited to a future meeting of this Committee in order that the outstanding concerns might be addressed.

During discussion, the following was noted:-

- Test purchasing took place in the Summer by Trading Standards and Essex Police. This resulted in one caution.
- Rochford Parish Council have given the Youth Offending Team (YOT) use of their rooms for restorative justice work for twelve months.
- The graffiti protocol has been drafted and drawn up for discussion with a view to carrying out a pilot scheme.
- An additional Drug Arrest Referral worker, based in Rayleigh, will be taking up the post on 2 February 2004. She will work with the existing worker and work half the time in connection with arrest referral and the rest in treatment. This should result in more referrals.
- The Drug Arrest Referral Scheme covers the Southend, Rochford and Castle Point areas.

The Community Safety Officer agreed to provide Members with a detailed breakdown of figures via the Members' Bulletin.

Resolved

That the Chairman of the Rochford Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership be invited to a meeting of this Committee to address Members' concerns around the substance misuse needs of the young people in the District. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Chairman

Date