

Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 17 March 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **17 March 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)

Cllr P A Capon
Cllr K A Gibbs

Cllr J E Grey
Cllr T Livings

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs S A Harper, Mrs J R Lumley and D Merrick.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
S Clarkson	- Head of Revenue and Housing Management
M Martin	- Committee Administrator

117 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

118 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr T Livings declared a personal interest in item 7 of the agenda by virtue of being this Council's representative on the Community Transport Trust Board.

119 CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN – PROGRESS

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive introducing the CPA Improvement Plan and associated documentation, providing Members with the opportunity to monitor progress towards its achievement.

Three appendices had been sent out separately which included a copy of the CPA Improvement Plan, the Service Action Plans which underpin the Improvement Plan and a record of the meeting of the Rochford Improvement Panel which had met for the first time in February. It is anticipated that in future the Panel will meet approximately 4 weeks in advance of a report being brought back to Members of this Committee.

In noting the progress, Members were advised that:-

- Two positive judgements on direction of travel are required before the authority is likely to move forward out of the present CPA 'weak' category.
- A CPA update assessment will be made in the Autumn, with a judgement due in December. A review of this authority's Environment activities is scheduled for next January/February 2006.
- The Capacity Building Fund Bid for submission had now been made to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. If successful, it would progress the Council's proposals in respect of Visioning, capacity building in Revenues and Benefits, and Member training.

Like the Improvement Panel, the Members of this Committee felt that it should attempt to focus on specific targeted areas of improvement in its task of monitoring, reviewing and overseeing progress on the Improvement Plan. The Chief Executive therefore recommended that like the Improvement Panel, the Committee might like to focus on the areas of Housing Benefits and Succession Planning in the first instance.

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

- Public consultation in respect of progressing the corporate vision of Rochford District would be undertaken via the Citizens Consultation forum, which has been set up in partnership with Castle Point Borough Council and the Primary Care Trust.
- The Council's preferred option relating to the Housing Option Appraisal process would be submitted to the Government following the Council decision at the special Council meeting in April.

Resolved

That the following key topic areas/SAPs be the focus at the next CPA progress monitoring meeting scheduled for the June/July 2005 cycle:-

- Housing Benefits
- Succession Planning (CE)

120 COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – LONGER TERM FUNDING

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management inviting Members to finalise the longer-term funding for the Community Transport project and encourage the establishment of a Community Transport Trust.

Members noted that this had been a good example of an overview and scrutiny review which had involved gathering evidence and included site visits to two diverse organisations together with Member discussion at three Committee meetings. The officer thanked Cllrs Capon, Livings and the Chairman for their involvement throughout the process.

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Members were reassured that this Council is only a custodian of the money which it transfers on behalf of the County Council to the Community Transport Trust. The Trust would appoint a new board of trustees, as had been seen in the examples at Basildon and Chelmsford, who would act in the capacity of employers.

Members expressed the view that it would be beneficial for the District if this project were able to develop in line with the village bus scheme, which might also include provision for transporting young people late at night from, for example, Southend to the more rural parts of the District.

The Head of Service advised that an addition to the second recommendation was needed to clarify levels of funding required from Essex County Council.

On a Motion moved by Cllr J E Grey and seconded by Cllr P A Capon it was agreed that the present taxi voucher scheme be retained and expanded, with an alternative provision being considered where necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That Rochford and Rayleigh Association for Voluntary Services be encouraged to establish a Community Transport Trust as soon as possible.
- (2) That subject to (1) above, the Council commit to a five-year support plan for Community Transport as indicated in the report, subject to Essex County Council funding continuing at expected levels.
- (3) That, for the present time, the taxi voucher scheme be retained and expanded, although, where necessary, an alternative provision may be considered. (HRHM)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman

Date