

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 5 June 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held on **5 June 2002** when there were present:

Cllr R A Amner (Chairman)

Cllr Mrs L Barber
Cllr Mrs R Brown
Cllr K A Gibbs
Cllr T E Goodwin
Cllr Mrs L Hungate
Cllr C C Langlands

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr J R F Mason

NON-MEMBERS ATTENDING

Cllrs T Livings and Mrs M J Webster

OFFICERS ATTENDING

S Clarkson – Head of Revenue and Housing Management
S Fowler – Head of Administrative and Member Services
G Woolhouse – Head of Housing, Health and Community Care
J Bourne - Leisure and Contracts Manager
H Drye – Corporate Policy Manager
A Wilson – Local Supporting People Officer, Castle Point and Rochford
M Martin – Committee Administrator

213 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2002 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Minute 128 – Police Report

The Corporate Policy Manager reported that the information requested by Members at the last meeting of this Committee would be brought to the next meeting, to be held on 2 July 2002. The delay in receiving this information had been due to Police staff sickness.

Members requested that the Police be informed of their disappointment in this delay.

214 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest in Agenda item 11 by virtue of being the Vice Chairman for the Essex Commissioning Body for Supporting People in Essex.

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Cllr Mrs M S Vince declared a personal interest in Agenda item 13 by virtue of being a member of the Rochford District Domestic Violence Panel.

215 MOTION ON NOTICE

The Committee received the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services which detailed a Motion which had been received from Councillors Mrs H L A Glynn, R S Allen and Mrs M S Vince.

During debate it was noted that:-

- the Crime Stoppers initiative is one of value and this would be a highly effective method of bringing it to the attention of residents.
- use could be made of the Crime and Disorder Strategy budget for funding this proposal.
- the Police could be contacted to see whether they have any remaining of the smaller logos which they had funded.
- Members of this Council might also consider displaying one on their own vehicle.

Members were in general agreement at the recommendation to display Crime Stoppers Logos on Council vehicles. It was felt, however, that Council notepaper would not be an appropriate advertising tool.

On an amendment to the original Motion moved by Cllr Mrs M S Vince and seconded by Cllr Mrs C J Lumley it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That this Committee agrees in principle the use of removable Crime Stoppers Logos on all Council vehicles as appropriate.
- (2) That funding for this be provided from the Crime and Disorder Strategy Budget to a maximum of £500. (CEX)

216 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFITS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which asked Members to consider adopting the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) new Performance Standards for Council Tax Benefits and Housing Benefits and to incorporate an implementation timetable within the Financial Services Best Value Review.

Copies of the newly developed performance standards package had been issued to local authorities and had been made available for Members' perusal. A briefing note had been appended to the report setting out the reasons for the introduction of the standards.

Members noted that because of this Council's heavy additional workload in respect of the new Weekly Incorrect Benefit Subsidy regime together with the Verification Framework, both of which had been introduced on 1 April 2002, it would be difficult to meet the stringent timetable outlined in the Briefing Note.

Members agreed that concern about the deadlines should be reported back to the DWP requesting that consideration be given to the allocation of additional resources for this Council to assist in achieving the recommended guidelines.

Resolved

- (1) That the Department for Work and Pensions' new Performance Standard for Council Tax Benefits and Housing Benefits be adopted.
- (2) That an implementation timetable be incorporated within the Financial Services Best Value Review. (HRHM)

217 DECENT HOMES DELIVERY – ACTION PLAN

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which asked Members to consider formal adoption of the Decent Homes Delivery Action Plan, as appended to the report. This would be a mechanism for assessing the current number of non-decent or potentially non-decent Council dwellings in the District.

An Action Plan had been forwarded to the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) to ensure Non-Decent Homes identification. To date no response had been received back from GO-East.

Members noted the need to adopt an Action Plan in order to demonstrate to GO-East that the Council is fully committed to delivering Decent Homes in the Rochford District.

Resolved

That the Decent Homes Delivery Action Plan be adopted. (HRHM)

218 RACIAL EQUALITY MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received and noted the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management which set out the results of racial equality monitoring. In compliance with the Commission for Racial Equality's Race Relations Code of Practice in Rented Housing, the Council has monitored the numbers of people within Ethnic groups who are on the Housing Register and have been housed.

Members noted that in the last year the Council had been unable to secure permanent accommodation for any families within Ethnic groups. Of the 697 families currently on the Housing Register, 8 families are from Ethnic groups. Members requested that these figures be produced on future reports.

219 SUPPORTING PEOPLE LOCAL POSITION STATEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which asked Members to approve the Rochford Supporting People Position Statement, which had been appended to the report.

The Local Supporting People Officer for Castle Point and Rochford informed Members that the statement is an important part of the County strategy for Supporting People. Members congratulated the officer on the preparation of a very detailed document.

During debate the following points were noted:-

- Cllr M G B Starke is the District's representative on the Member-level Essex Commissioning Body. This will meet in July to consider the strategy and will be responsible for approving and allocating grant funding.
- The Chief Executive is part of the Chief Officer Steering Group and the Head of Housing Health and Community Care is part of the Implementation and Planning Group.
- Funding from a variety of sources will be brought into a single system for financing housing support services (the Supporting People Grant) from April 2003.
- Concerns about the lack of any dedicated units in the District for drug and alcohol abusers would need to be considered further.
- Consideration would be given to using Albert Jones Court as part of the Essex Supporting People Strategy.
- The volunteer run Age Concern Rochford Home Support service should be promoted.

Resolved

That the Rochford Supporting People Position Statement be approved. (HHHCC)

220 CHANGES TO LICENSING HOURS DURING ALL FUTURE NEW YEARS' EVES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which asked Members to consider a consultation document from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport relating to proposed changes to licensing hours for future New Years' Eves.

Members noted that the Government had first proposed that licensing hours be relaxed in 1998 and this had been approved the following year by the House of Commons Select Committee on Deregulation. However, the House of Lords Committee on Delegated Power and Deregulation argued for a more cautious approach and recommended that the Millennium Eve should be treated as a trial.

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The police service were concerned that a further trial period of relaxed hours should be monitored during a normal New Year's Eve. The Government replicated the Millennium arrangements which allowed on-licensed premises and registered members' clubs to open if they wished for a continuous period of 36 hours between 31 December 2001 and New Year's Day 2002, and again provided for a system of restriction orders.

Having reviewed the impact of this extension, the Government concluded that there was no significant detrimental impact in terms of crime, noise or anti-social behaviour.

During Member debate it was noted that:-

- Relatively few licensed premises had opened for the whole 36 hour period.
- No problems had arisen in the District as a result of this extension of licensing hours during the past two New Years' Eves.
- Whilst some Members expressed concern that these proposals would actively encourage excessive drinking, Essex Police support the view that an extension of hours helps to avoid binge drinking and avoids large numbers moving out on to the streets at the same time.
- The Government were not considering making any special provision relating to New Year's Day falling on a Sunday from the point of view of employees of the Christian faith being required to work.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed all-night relaxation of licensing hours at all future New Years' Eves be supported and that all existing public entertainment licences should be extended automatically in line with the relaxed hours permitting sales of alcohol on all future New Years' Eves.
- (2) That applications for restrictions orders should be made to licensing justices regardless of the existence of appropriate or timely licensing sessions, and that the proposed arrangements for these orders satisfy the tests of proportionality, fair balance and desirability.
- (3) That the proposals put forward in the consultation exercise maintain necessary protection for those affected and that they do not prevent any person from continuing to exercise any right or freedom which he might reasonably expect to continue to exercise. (HHHCC)

221 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (DV) – SECONDARY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which invited Members to approve funding support for the Secondary School Domestic Violence Awareness Programme. Members noted that this request was in line with the District's Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy.

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The Rochford District Domestic Violence Panel and its counterpart in Castle Point, together with representation from the County Council and Rayleigh Police had discussed a proposal to progress the action for a second year in all Secondary Schools with the assistance of a theatre company.

Resolved

That funding support of £1,400 for the Secondary School Domestic Violence Awareness Programme be agreed. (CEX)

222 CROWN HILL ART PROJECT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) which requested the support of Members for an art project at the top of Crown Hill, Rayleigh.

A local ceramist and sculptor had contacted the Council with a view to undertaking an art project involving local schools and sheltered housing schemes in Rayleigh. The project would involve creating a mosaic mural, celebrating Rayleigh over the centuries and would be a permanent feature on the wall at the top of Crown Hill.

A project team had been established which consisted of the Rochford Youth Arts Partnership, with representatives from Sweyne Park and Fitzwimarc Schools and Rayleigh Town Council.

Members noted that:-

- the materials used would be suitable to withstand vibration from nearby traffic and the finished mosaic would also be treated to combat graffiti.
- a Member could be elected to represent the District Council on the project team.
- local residents would be involved in public consultation once the design brief had been approved by the project team.

Resolved

- (1) That the Crown Hill Art project be supported in kind, at no cost to the Council.
- (2) That Cllr J M Pullen be nominated to attend the project team meetings and that attendance at these meeting be regarded as an approved duty.
(CD(F&ES))

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

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That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

223 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT – EX-GRATIA PAYMENT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which recommended payment of expenses incurred in the preparation of a Disabled Facilities Grant, where because of unforeseen circumstances, the application had not proceeded.

Resolved

That an ex-gratia payment of £1019.37 be paid to the applicant identified in the exempt report, a copy of which is attached as an exempt appendix to the signed copy of these Minutes. (HHHCC)

The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman

Date