

## **Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee – 19 September 2006**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy, Finance & Strategic Performance Committee** held on **19 September 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr K A Gibbs  
Cllr J E Grey  
Cllr Mrs J A Mockford  
Cllr R A Oatham

Cllr C G Seagers  
Cllr Mrs M A Starke  
Cllr M G B Starke  
Cllr J Thomass

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr J P Cottis

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr C A Hungate

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse	-	Corporate Director (External Services)
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal Services
J Bourne	-	Leisure & Contracts Manager
T Harper	-	Performance Improvement Officer
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

### **291 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **292 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors J E Grey, Mrs J A Mockford and R A Oatham each declared a prejudicial interest in the item on the Dutch Cottage, Crown Hill, Rayleigh by virtue of being Members of Rayleigh Town Council and left the meeting whilst it was considered.

Councillor C G Seagers declared a personal interest in the item on land adjoining 130 High Street, Great Wakering by virtue of knowing the applicant and did not vote when it was considered.

**293 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS**

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions.

**(1) Evaluation of CCTV Provision (Minute 234/06)**

It was understood that Rayleigh Town Council had been involved in discussing this item with the Police and looking at CCTV Management.

**(2) Rayleigh and Rochford Association of Voluntary Services –  
Position Update (Minute 258(13)(a)/06)**

**Resolved**

That Councillor J M Pullen be appointed a Trustee of the Rayleigh and Rochford Association of Voluntary Services. (CE)

Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

**294 MEMBERS' PERFORMANCE REPORT – 2006/07 QUARTER 1**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the Members' Performance Report – 2006/07 Quarter 1.

It was noted that the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Board had commented positively on the improved format of the performance report and that the performance indicators associated with recycling would be valuable for the work of the Waste Management and Recycling Sub-Committee.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- With regard to the Handy Person/Gardening Service it would be possible to identify aspects such as the fees charged, whether all requests are being met and arrangements (including financial) associated with schemes run in neighbouring authority/ies such as Southend and that may be available through the Hereward Housing Association should transfer of the Council's housing stock go ahead. Overall consideration would be best achieved through a value for money review of the service, which could include service delivery options.
- Whilst it would be possible to include additional information such as previous year quarterly figures, such inclusion needs to be balanced with keeping the size and format of documentation as concise as possible. The Performance Report is a 'live' document and Members should feel free to make suggestions on content at any point in time.

- The Department for Work and Pensions had been asked to explain the situation and confirm its plan for recovery with regard to problems it is having in processing Housing Benefit claims. It would be appropriate to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee (who is also the Council's Benefits Champion) to express further concern on the Council's behalf if responses received from the Department for Work and Pensions are unsatisfactory.
- County Council lighting policy should not have an undue bearing on District Council schemes to improve lighting in District Council alleyways. Such schemes have been put in place in the past. The types of issue that can arise with lighting schemes are often also faced by the Town/Parish Councils. These include delays caused by utility company timeframes.

### **Resolved**

That the performance achieved in Quarter 1 of 2006/07 be noted subject to:-

- The undertaking of a value for money review of the Handy Person/Gardening Service (to include service delivery options). Outcomes to be reported to the Community Services Committee for consideration.
- The delegation of authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee (who is also the Council's Benefits Champion), to express further concern on the Council's behalf if responses received from the Department for Work and Pensions on the problems that that Department has in processing housing benefit claims are unsatisfactory. (CE)

## **295 RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the adoption of a Race Equality Scheme.

Responding to questions, the Chief Executive advised that:-

- Legislation associated with equality is changing and the Council needs to ensure compliance. The proposed scheme reflects best practice, with categorisations being those used in the National Census and elsewhere.
- Document contents could be laid out to give early emphasis to positive aspects.
- Work activity associated with meeting race equality requirements is built into the work programme. Officers would report to Members should resource implications become an issue.

- The experience of other Local Authorities points to how instances of unintentional racial discrimination may arise.

**Resolved**

That, subject to document contents being laid out to give early emphasis to the positive aspects, the Race Equality Scheme, as attached to the report, be adopted. (CE)

**296 RETIREMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on proposals to amend the retirement policy and procedure to meet new employment legislation.

Responding to questions, the Chief Executive advised that the contents of the letter sent to individuals approaching their 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday would be reviewed to ensure that it contains requisite points in a personalised/sensitive manner.

**Resolved**

That, subject to the letter sent to individuals approaching their 65<sup>th</sup> birthday containing requisite points in a personalised/sensitive manner, the new procedure for considering requests to continue working after the age of 65, as outlined in the appendix to the report, be agreed. The normal retirement age of 65 to be retained. (CE)

**297 SINGLE NON-EMERGENCY NUMBER – 101**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services about the implementation of the Single Non-Emergency Number in Essex and seeking approval for the Council to sign up as part of the overall Essex bid.

It was noted that:-

- The Home Office had identified the areas to be covered by this type of service.
- It could be anticipated that, as the single non-emergency number is rolled out across the country, the associated publicity should engender public understanding of when it should be used.
- It is possible that some of the areas covered, such as people being drunk and rowdy in public, may escalate to the point that they merit a '999' call. Whatever arrangements are in place it is unlikely that all problems that can be associated with telephone numbers will be engineered out.

- Some of the information that would be available by virtue of introducing a non-emergency number could be of value for service delivery.
- Officers would report back if there was any question of the Council's costs not being covered by Home Office funding.

**Resolved**

That this Council be part of the Essex 101 Partnership wave 2 bid to operate the Single Non-Emergency Number Service in Essex, subject to the Council's costs being fully identified and covered by Home Office funding. (HAMS)

**298 STRIP OF LAND AT BETTS WOOD, HOCKLEY**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on the purchase of a strip of land at Betts Wood, Hockley.

Responding to questions, the Head of Legal Services advised that the position with regard to that part of the land identified as including and extending beyond Westminster Drive could be verified.

**Resolved**

That, subject to verification of the position with regard to that part of the land identified as including and extending beyond Westminster Drive, the Head of Legal Services be authorised to complete the purchase of the strip of land at Betts Wood, Hockley identified on the plan attached to the report for a nominal sum and on such other terms and conditions as he considers appropriate. (HLS)

**EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Resolved**

That the Press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**299 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF CHERRY ORCHARD JUBILEE COUNTRY PARK**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on the current status of the development of the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and the way forward for future expansion.

The Committee endorsed the observation of a Member that the Country Park had progressed well and that the report should be endorsed.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- The researching of possible grants could include contact with the European Union on funding that might be available relating to improved habitat for wildlife.
- The granting of planning consent is a necessary pre-requisite of compulsory purchase order procedure. The price that the Council would pay for land would be based on intended land use.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the purchase of areas A and D, as identified at Appendix 1 of the exempt report, be agreed. If this is not possible through negotiation with the landowners by December 2006, then a Compulsory Purchase Order process commence on both sites.
- (2) That officers submit applications for planning consent for the change of use of areas A and D as identified at Appendix 1 of the exempt report from agriculture to public open space, together with the preparation and submission of the necessary supporting information.
- (3) That officers continue to research and make applications for possible external grants (including any that might be available from the European Union relating to improved habitat for wildlife) but that, if not successful, a bid be made in the budget setting process 2008/09 for the provision of additional supporting facilities to underpin any successful purchase.
- (4) That the future purchase of areas B and C, as identified at Appendix 1 of the exempt report, be reviewed on an annual basis and brought forward for funding as appropriate when the future of areas A and D is resolved. (CD(ES))

**300 OFFICE CLEANING CONTRACT**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services which sought approval to accepting the lowest tender received for office cleaning following a competitive tendering process.

**Resolved**

That the lowest tender from Mayfield Cleaning Contractors for Office Cleaning for the fixed price sum identified in the exempt report for the four year period 2 October 2006 to 30 September 2010 be accepted. (HAMS)

**301 COMMERCIAL PREMISES – 124, 126 AND 128 HIGH STREET, GREAT WAKERING**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on the sale/re-letting of commercial premises at 124, 126 and 128 High Street, Great Waking.

It was noted that the premises were not part of the Housing Revenue account.

**Resolved**

That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to proceed with the disposal of the shop units at 124, 126 and 128 High Street, Great Waking at market value, and to grant a new lease for number 124 High Street, Great Waking on such other terms and conditions as he considers appropriate. (HLS)

**302 LAND ADJOINING 130 HIGH STREET, GREAT WAKERING**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on the sale of land adjoining 130 High Street, Great Waking.

**Resolved**

That the land adjacent to the garages at Old Hall Court, Great Waking, shown hatched black on the plan attached to the exempt report, be sold at market value to the applicants identified in the report subject to the applicants agreeing to meet the Council's legal fees, costs and valuation expenses and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate. (HLS)

**303 ROCHFORD FIRE STATION – RENEWAL OF LEASE FOR CAR PARKING**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on car parking space lease renewal at the Rochford Fire Station site.

**Resolved**

That a new lease be granted to the Fire Service for the car parking spaces identified in the exempt report at market value on such terms and conditions that the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate. (HLS)

**304 DUTCH COTTAGE, CROWN HILL, RAYLEIGH**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on management arrangements relating to the Dutch Cottage, Crown Hill, Rayleigh.

**Resolved**

That the views of Rayleigh Town Council, Rayleigh Civic Society, the National Trust and the Management Committee of the Dutch Cottage be sought on the possible options for the future management of the Cottage. (HLS)

**305 DEPOT STAFFING – ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on an increase in resources at the Council Depot.

It was noted that, whilst the proposed budget increase could be met from salary savings for 2006/07, it would need to be included in the budgets for future years.

**Resolved**

That Post 37461 be increased to full-time and that the core budget be increased by £8,543 to facilitate this change. (CD(ES))

The meeting closed at 8.46 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....