

Policy & Finance Committee – 8 April 2003

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **8 April 2003** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)
Cllr J E Grey (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr K A Gibbs
Cllr A J Humphries
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C R Morgan

Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr P K Savill
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr C C Langlands

NON-MEMBERS ATTENDING

Cllrs Mrs M S Vince and Mrs M A Weir

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	Chief Executive
R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
R J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
D Deeks	Head of Financial Services
D Timson	Property Maintenance & Highways Manager
S Worthington	Committee Administrator

176 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2003 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

177 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr C J Lumley declared a personal interest in the item on the Local Government Pension Scheme by virtue of his wife being a member of the Essex County Council pension scheme.

178 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services requesting that the revised proposals for CCTV cameras in Hockley, Rochford Market Square and Hullbridge be agreed using funds previously allocated for each scheme.

Responding to a Member enquiry, Officers confirmed that the digital cameras proposed were capable of digital recording.

In response to a further Member enquiry relating to the positioning of the digital cameras on lighting columns, it was confirmed that the relevant Ward Members would be given details of where the cameras would be positioned.

Resolved

- (1) That the revised proposals for CCTV cameras in Hockley, Rochford Market Square and Hullbridge using funds previously allocated for each scheme be agreed, including the reviewing equipment.
- (2) That, in the case of Hullbridge, the scheme be financially supported by residual funds from the Rochford Market Square and Hockley schemes.
- (3) That any residual funds from the schemes be reserved for repairs and maintenance.
- (4) That all the cameras be installed by June 2003. (CE)

179 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions.

50 – 54 West Street, Rochford

Officers confirmed that no response has yet been received from the developer.

Essex & Southend Waste Local Plan – Proposed Modifications

Officers confirmed that no further measures could be taken with respect to Southend on Sea Borough Council.

Playspaces Rolling Programme 2001/02

Officers confirmed that the fencing work was not yet programmed but would take place during the summer.

Hardwick House

Officers confirmed that funding awarded by the Housing Corporation was on a project basis.

Proposals for the New Park Sports Centre

Officers confirmed that a costings report would be considered by Council on 29 April 2003.

Budget Strategy 2003/04 – 2005/06

Officers confirmed that, following the decision to retain the 2-weekly collection at Golden Cross rather than change to a weekly collection, there should be a minor reduction in costs, with some savings from the £4,000 previously allocated.

180 BEACON COUNCIL SCHEME: CONSULTATION ON FUTURE SCHEMES

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive outlining details of a consultation exercise being carried out by the Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils.

In response to a Member enquiry seeking clarification of partnerships with respect to the proposed Working in Partnership theme, Officers confirmed that this Authority already enjoyed successful partnerships with outside bodies.

Responding to a further Member enquiry, Officers confirmed that possible themes were proposed on the basis of work conducted by this Council in those areas over a reasonable period of time.

Resolved

That the Officer suggestions as to possible future Beacon themes contained in paragraph 4.2 of the report be endorsed. (CE)

181 STOCKTAKE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking Members' views in respect of the proposed response suggested by the Local Government Pensions Committee to the above consultation.

Resolved

That the comments set out in the report be forwarded as this Council's response to the proposals put forward by the Local Government Pensions Committee. (CD(F&ES))

182 DISPOSAL OF OLD SHIP LANE PUBLIC CONVENIENCES AND CAR PARK

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) inviting Members to agree the disposal of the Old Ship Lane Public Conveniences and Car Park.

During debate concern was raised that this proposal would lead to the loss of more car parking spaces in the centre of Rochford following on from the regeneration of the Market Square which had already resulted in a loss of car parking spaces. Thames Gateway was seeking to promote Rochford as a centre for arts, which could generate more demand for parking facilities.

Reference was also made to the need to retain a disabled parking space in Old Ship Lane for those attending chiropody and hearing clinics at Raphael House.

While there was some support for the possibility of demolishing the public conveniences in Old Ship Lane and using the whole site as a pay and display car park Officers confirmed that it would not be financially viable to install and maintain a machine for approximately 8 car parking spaces.

A motion moved by Cllr C R Morgan and seconded by Cllr C J Lumley that the public convenience in Old Ship Lane be demolished and the resulting area used for additional car parking spaces was lost on a show of hands.

Responding to a Member enquiry about whether the value of the land would be enhanced should outline planning permission be already available for residential development of the site, Officers confirmed that the valuation obtained for the site had been an informal one, given the unusual nature of the site.

Resolved

- (1) That outline planning consent be sought for change of use of the Old Ship Lane public convenience and car park site to residential.
- (2) That, subject to the outcome of (1) above, the Old Ship Lane public convenience and car park site be disposed of through local agents at market value and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services considers appropriate.

Concluding the debate it was perceived that there would be some merit in giving careful consideration to all possible uses for the site.

On a motion moved by Cllr C R Morgan and seconded by Cllr C J Lumley it was further:-

Resolved

- (3) That (1) and (2) above be subject to further consideration of all possibilities for the site by the Finance and Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee. (CD(F&ES))

183 INSURANCE RENEWALS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services seeking Members' approval to the renewal of the contracts for insurance from July 2003.

Resolved

That the renewal of insurance contracts with Zurich Municipal for an initial two year term be agreed. (HFS)

184 LOCAL AUTHORITY SOCIAL HOUSING GRANT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Financial Services inviting Members to consider the Council's policy towards Local Authority Social Housing Grant in the light of new changes in legislation.

Responding to a Member enquiry as to how the £300,000 budget for LASHG in 2003/04 might be utilised, Officers confirmed that proposals for prioritising this budget would be prepared for consideration by Members in June.

Resolved

- (1) That this Council continues with schemes 1 to 3 as detailed in the report even if not fully supported through the Local Authority Social Housing Grant (LASHG) process.
- (2) That the budget of £300,000 for LASHG in 2003/04 be removed.
- (3) That a further report be considered at a future date on the revised priorities of the Capital Programme. (HFS)

185 PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT 2003/04

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services providing details of the Planning Delivery Grant and outlining the key areas where the grant can best be targeted in Rochford to enhance the Planning Service.

During debate Members commended the performance of the Planning Department which had resulted in this Authority being awarded a Planning

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Delivery Grant well in excess of the minimum payment.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That a press release be issued on the granting of the Planning Delivery Grant to Rochford District Council.
- (2) That the broad programme of initiatives associated with the Planning Delivery Grant, as set out in the report, be agreed. (HPS)

186 AMENDMENT TO POLLING PLACE FOR HOCKLEY CENTRAL WARD

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative & Member Services advising Members of a necessary amendment to the Polling Place for Hockley Central Ward.

Resolved

- (1) That the action of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration), in the special circumstances outlined in the report, in approving Greensward College as a polling station for Hockley Central be endorsed.
- (2) That the geographical area of Hockley North Ward be designated as an additional polling place for Hockley Central Ward. (HAMS)

187 TRAVELLERS HOMELESSNESS – REQUEST FOR CONTRIBUTION

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care on a request from Mid Beds District Council for financial assistance towards a test case regarding accommodation for homeless travellers.

On a motion moved by Cllr P F A Webster it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That a press release be issued on this Council's policy with respect to accommodation for homeless travellers.
- (2) That £1,000 be donated to Mid Beds District Council towards the cost of the Judicial Review regarding their offer of accommodation to homeless travellers. (HHHCC)

Exclusion Of The Press And Public

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 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed

188 STAFFING ISSUES

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the current position regarding vacancies and long-term sickness absence within the Authority.

Resolved

That the Committee noted the current level of vacancies and long-term sickness absence. (CE)

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Chairman

Date