

Executive Board – 26 September 2007

Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive Board** held on **26 September 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice-Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K J Gordon.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Internal Services)
J Bourne	- Head of Community Services
S Fowler	- Head of Information and Customer Services
S Scrutton	- Head of Planning and Transportation
S Logan	- Revenue and Benefits Manager
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

319 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

320 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs M J Webster declared a personal interest in item 9 of the agenda relating to land adjacent to 21 London Hill, Rayleigh by virtue of being Vice-Chairman of the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Committee.

321 MATTERS REFERRED TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD/REPORTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(1) Report of the Review Committee – 11 September 2007

The Board Considered the report of the Review Committee on a review of issues around anti-social behaviour. At its meeting on 11 September 2007 the Review Committee approved a series of recommendations aimed at addressing issues relating to anti-social behaviour.

It was observed that recommendations 2 – 4 addressed the fact that there were instances of young people congregating on the streets within the district. Particular attention was drawn to recommendation 3 which addressed the necessity of establishing an effective means of informal communication with young people in order to properly establish their needs.

Resolved

- (1) That Essex County Council be lobbied to look to focus their spending via the Youth Service on areas of prevention rather than cure.
- (2) That Central Government be lobbied to look at ways that central funding could be focused on providing activities for young people as a preventative measure rather than trying to cure the problems once they have occurred.
- (3) That the Council:-
 - Consolidate existing formal methods of communication with young people in the District.
 - Establish formal methods of communicating with young people in the District.
- (4) That the Council lobby the various partnership organisations within the District that, like the Council, they continue to look ways to engage with the young people to establish what affordable facilities could be provided to them that would better manage the large numbers of young people currently congregating at inappropriate landmarks within the District.
- (5) That, where possible, the residents of the District are encouraged to report all incidents of anti-social behaviour to the Police and that issues of public confidence and perception that may be discouraging such reporting can be addressed.
- (6) That the Criminal Justice System (Ministry of Justice, the local Justices' Panel, the Courts, the Police and the Crown Prosecution Service) be lobbied to take a tougher stance on individuals who persistently commit acts of anti-social behaviour. (CE)

(2) Report of the Central Area Committee – 20 September 2007

The Board considered the report of the Central Area Committee on issues relating to a youth project being undertaken by Hawkwell Parish Council in partnership with Hockley and Ashingdon Parish Councils. Agreement was being sought from the Council in principle to the release of land at Clements Hall recreation fields for the siting of a community shelter for youths.

It was emphasised that the costs of the shelter would be funded by Hawkwell Parish Council, who were also seeking further external funding. Further work would be required in terms of consultation with residents living in the area of the recreation fields, planning requirements, and details relating to the exact location of the shelter, future maintenance, and insurance.

The Board agreed a Motion, moved by Cllr K H Hudson and seconded by Cllr M G B Starke, that the Council should agree in principle to release land on the Clements Hall recreation fields for siting a community shelter.

Resolved

That agreement in principle be given to the siting of a community shelter on the Clements Hall recreation fields. (HCS)

322 ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL – PEER REVIEW REPORT

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on the IDeA draft Peer Review report. Members were advised that the final IDeA report had now been published, copies of which they would receive the following day. In addition, two members of the Peer Review team would be presenting the report's conclusions to Members on 1 October 2007.

Members welcomed this external review of the Council, which highlighted areas requiring further focus and felt that the broad thrust of the report was fair. It was observed that further work was needed on identifying key priorities for the Authority and on focusing these in order to tie in closely with the Council's vision.

Members concurred that there would be merit in deferring any detailed discussion on the final report until after Members had received the presentation of the IDeA team next week.

Resolved

That determination of the main action points arising from the final IDeA Peer Review report be deferred until the next meeting of the Executive Board, following the IDeA presentation in early October. (CE)

323 ICT STRATEGY 2007 – 2011 (FORWARD PLAN REF NO 1/07)

The Board considered the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services on the Information Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy for the period 2007-2011.

In response to Member concern relating to a problem experienced with Thin Client terminals in the Members' Office earlier in the week, officers advised that the rate of system availability was 99.94%; systems usually operated at this rate. This was an isolated incident, which was unrelated to the remote location of the Civic Suite, and had arisen as a result of the load balancing software not being able to correctly balance users across the different servers.

It was emphasised that Sungard Vivista attended monthly progress meetings with officers and the Staffing and Resources Management Team monitor ICT on a monthly basis. Systems were constantly kept under review and upgraded as necessary. The thin client servers had been upgraded and additional RAM installed within the last year.

Members concurred that there would be merit in the Executive Board Member for Resources and Service Development and the Member Champion for Web Development and E Government Applications receiving a copy of the monthly ICT report from Sungard Vivista. It was noted that as a general principle, the Board Member with responsibility for a service delivered by contract would attend regular review meetings with the contractor, in this case Sungard Vivista, reporting back to the Board as necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That the ICT Strategy 2007-2011 and action plan for 2007/08 be approved.
- (2) That the ICT action plan be received on an annual basis. (HICS)

324 PROPOSED PATHFINDER TRUST FOR SCHOOLS IN ROCHFORD DISTRICT

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on proposals being considered for a Schools' Pathfinder Trust in Rochford District.

It was emphasised that the Trust proposed by the Fitzwimarc School and King Edmund School was supported by the County Council and, if agreed by the Governing Bodies, would commence in the next financial year. This Authority would be invited to become a Trust partner.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to potential resource implications for the Council, officers advised that it was understood that the Authority would not be required to make a financial contribution in order to join the Trust as a partner. It was, however, possible that there might be future Trust projects that the Council would wish to promote, which would require funding; this would be for the Council to determine.

Resolved

That the Council's support be offered for the principle of establishing a Pathfinder Trust for Schools in the Rochford District and that it indicates its willingness to become a partner in such an arrangement. (CE)

325 LAND ADJACENT TO 21 LONDON HILL, RAYLEIGH

(Note: Cllr J M Pullen declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of membership of the National Trust Rayleigh Mount Local Committee).

The Board considered the report of the Corporate Director (Internal Services) on the designation and protection of land in Council ownership to the east of the Sensory Garden and adjacent to 21 London Hill, Rayleigh.

Particular reference was made of the need to maintain the area as a natural wildlife haven as the site was a natural habitat for a variety of wildlife. It was further emphasised that developing the site as an extension to the Sensory Garden might have a detrimental impact on existing wildlife there. It was observed that there could be merit, in future, in exploring the possibility of placing cameras at appropriate locations in order to develop a wildlife observational post near the Mill, where wildlife could be observed on screen by visitors to the Windmill and, potentially, on the Council website.

Members also indicated that they were mindful of National Trust proposals to re-open the ancient Barbican entrance to Rayleigh Mount and Members felt that Council policy should confirm that the land might be included in any future National Trust proposals with respect to the Barbican Entrance. It was considered that there should be minimal management of the site, with limited maintenance work conducted on site by the Woodlands team as part of its annual work programme.

Resolved

That Council policy as to its land adjacent to 21 London Hill, Rayleigh be that this is not available for development but may be considered should any proposal come forward from the National Trust with regard to re-opening the Barbican entrance to Rayleigh Mount at a future date. (CD(IS))

326 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

The Board considered the report of the Head of Community Services on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

It was highlighted that the DFG process was demand led, with no control over the number of applications submitted. It was further emphasised that it was difficult to predict when works would be completed and grants could often be approved in one financial year, with the works not being completed until the next year. It was, as a result, difficult to establish meaningful targets. It was observed that it would therefore be more appropriate to monitor how the Authority processes DFG and ensures that this is done to a high standard.

Members were particularly concerned that the Government was decreasing its funding of DFG at a time when costs were on the increase. The Board agreed a Motion, moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr D G Stansby, that a letter expressing this concern should be sent to the two local MPs.

Resolved

- (1) That no targets be set for completion of Disabled Facilities Grants for future years, given the difficulties highlighted in the report.
- (2) That a letter be sent to the 2 local MPs expressing this Council's concern at the reduction in Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants. (HCS)

327 WYVERN COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT

The Board considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation on a request from Wyvern Community Transport to receive 100% of the funding allocated to Rochford District Council from Essex County Council under the Community Transport Partnership Agreement for 2008/09.

Officers drew attention to the need to amend the figures in paragraph 2.3 of the report to 450 individual members, 45 group members and 1000 trips.

Members all concurred that the Council's Taxi Voucher Scheme provided scheme members with a real choice in transport, and the ability to arrange their own transport when they wanted it. It was observed that there could be merit in asking the press to issue an article on the need for volunteer drivers within the district.

The recommendations as set out in the report were moved by Cllr M G B Starke and seconded by Cllr P F A Webster and a supplementary Motion was moved by Cllr Mrs M J Webster and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore that a press release be issued relating to the need for more volunteer drivers and it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the request from Wyvern Community Transport to receive 100% of the funding provided by Essex County Council as part of the Community Transport Partnership Agreement be refused for 2008/09.
- (2) That Wyvern Community Transport be requested to give consideration to arrangements for greater levels of engagement with the Council and to consider options for the operation and funding of the service in 2009.
- (3) That a press release be issued relating to the need for more volunteer drivers for Wyvern Community Transport. (HPT)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the public and press 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.

328 REVENUES AND BENEFITS PARTNERSHIP

The Board considered the exempt report of the Head of Community Services providing a progress update on the revenues and benefits shared services partnership working initiative.

Members indicated that further information relating to the Anglia Revenue Partnership and to the proposals of other Local Authorities should be made available to the Board. It was further considered that there would be merit in the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive discussing a range of options relating to various Authorities.

The Board agreed a Motion, moved by Cllr K H Hudson and seconded by Cllr M G B Starke that this issue should be deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

Resolved

That this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Board and further information provided to Members. (HCS)

The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

Chairman

Date

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