

Finance & General Purposes Committee – 6 December 2001

Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & General Purposes Committee** held on **6 December 2001** when there were present:

Cllr D R Helson – Chairman

Cllr R Adams	Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr P J Morgan
Cllr D F Flack	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs J Helson	Cllr R E Vingoe
Cllr V H Leach	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr T Livings	Cllr D A Weir
Cllr J R F Mason	Cllr Mrs M A Weir
Cllr G A Mockford	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Fox and A Hosking.

SUBSTITUTES

Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn and P D Stebbing.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P A Warren	-	Chief Executive
R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
R Crofts	-	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
J Bostock	-	Principal Committee Administrator

443 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 October 2001 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the word 'Rayleigh' being replaced by 'Rochford' in the second paragraph of Minute 360.

444 OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Committee received the schedule relating to decisions.

Audio Visual Equipment – Tenders (Minute 165/01)

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) advised that:-

- Whilst the supplier had installed the equipment for use, there was adjustment required to a switchbox and some carpentry and tidying work to be undertaken in-house. There was also a need for appropriate staff training to enable the equipment to be used to its full potential.
- Members would be furnished with details of how the equipment can assist the hearing impaired.

The Market Car Park, Rayleigh (Minute 253(1)/01)

It was noted that a report on the outcome of negotiations for relocation of the occupants of the scenery store and the demolition of that building would be submitted to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee in the next cycle.

Proposed Environmental Centre – Feedback from Rayleigh Town Council (Minute 371/01)

It was noted that the Chief Executive had received correspondence from Rayleigh Town Council. The Town Council was unlikely to have a definitive answer on its intentions for the future of the proposed environmental centre within the time frame originally requested. The Chief Executive would consult further with the Town Council and report to the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee in the New Year.

Rayleigh Windmill (Minute 273/01)

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that information on both the timescale for the Windmill project and details of the appointed architect would be published with these Minutes (see [Appendix 1](#)).

Future Consultation Process on Taxi Licensing: Union Recognition (Minute 380i(x)/01)

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) confirmed that details of the dates scheduled for meetings of the Taxi Drivers Forum and the Taxi Circuit Owners Forum would be furnished for publication with these Minutes (see Appendix 1).

Parish/Town Council Planning Workshops (Minute 384/01)

The Chief Executive advised that:-

- Members would be advised of the timing arrangements for workshops.
- It was anticipated that a limited number of representatives from each Parish/Town Council would attend the workshops.

Outstanding Issues would be carried forward.

445 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The Committee received the Minutes of the following Sub-Committees and considered the recommendations contained therein:-

(1) Corporate Resources – 13 November 2001

Minute 431 - Beacon Council Scheme: Consultation on Round 4 Themes

Resolved

- (1) That appropriate themes for Round 4 and beyond be as follows:-
 - Leisure and Health promotion
 - Recycling and Refuse Collection
 - The Management of Parks, Open Spaces and Woodlands
 - Planning and Building Control decisions in respect of householders
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Orders
 - Sport and Leisure for Children and Teens
- (2) That the Advisory Board be made aware of this Authority's concerns regarding the bidding process and its achievability by small District Councils such as Rochford. (CEX)

Minute 432 – Grants to Outside Bodies

Resolved

- (1) That a one-off grant of £400 be made to the Rochford District Guide Association.
- (2) That a one-off grant of £1,000 be made to the Salvation Army, Rayleigh Branch.
- (3) That the 'application for grants' forms be amended, to remove the option for non disclosure of finances. (HFS)

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Minute 433 – The Business Enterprise Agency for South-East Essex

Resolved

That a grant of £1,500, for the financial year 2001/2002 be made to the Business Enterprise Agency, and that the question of alternative basis of support be considered for 2002/2003 (HFS).

Minute 434 – E-Government Strategy – Update

Resolved

- (1) That Officers review the Council's Implementing Electronic Government Statement and IS/ICT Strategy in the light of the comments received from the Department of Transport, Local Government and the Regions.
- (2) That a report be made back to Council once funding levels are known. (CD(LPA))

Minute 436 – Job Evaluation

Resolved

- (1) That the progress made to date on Job Evaluation be noted.
- (2) That a Teach-in on Job Evaluation be arranged for all Members prior to Member Budget Monitoring Sub-Committee considering the matter. (CD(LPA))

Minute 437 – Land at Francis Walk, Rayleigh

The Chairman indicated that the local Ward Member had requested further information on this site.

Resolved

That a decision on land at Francis Walk, Rayleigh be held in abeyance pending investigation of the matters raised by the local Ward Member, a report to be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Resources Sub-Committee (HRHM).

Minute 438 – Staffing Matters – Benefit Verification Framework

Resolved

That the implementation plan timetable and resource implications of the Benefit Verification Framework be adopted. (CD(F&ES))

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(3) Structural and Procedural Review – 15 November 2001

Minute 85 – Modernising Agenda – Amendment to current Standing Order 27 and Revised Scheme of Delegation/Rules of Procedure

During consideration of the recommendations under Minutes 85 the Committee agreed a motion moved by Councillor D F Flack and seconded by Councillor Mrs M A Weir relating to paragraph 3.1(ii) of the proposed Rules of Procedure concerning the calling of Extraordinary meetings of Council.

RECOMMENDED

(1) That current Standing Order 27 be revised to read as follows:-

SO27 (1) No disciplinary action in respect of the head of the authority's paid service (unless he is also a council manager of the authority), its monitoring officer or its chief finance officer, except action described in paragraph 2, may be taken by the authority, or by a committee, a sub-committee, a Joint committee on which the authority is represented, or any other person acting on behalf of the authority, other than in accordance with the recommendation in a report made by a designated independent person under regulation 7 of the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulation 2001 (investigation of alleged misconduct).

SO27 (2) The action mentioned in paragraph 1 is suspension of the officer for the purpose of investigating the alleged misconduct occasioning the action; and any such suspension must be on full pay and terminate no later than the expiry of two months beginning on the day on which the suspension takes effect.

(2) That the Scheme of Delegation in its present form, including all current delegations, be adopted subject to provision for the Head of Planning Services as well as the Head of Legal Services to exercise authority delegated to the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) in his absence.

(3) That the Rules of Procedure and Access to Information Procedure Rules, as amended and attached to the signed copy of these Minutes, be adopted. (CD(LPA))

Minute 86 – Procurement Strategy

RECOMMENDED

That the Draft Procurement Strategy (copy attached to the signed copy of these Minutes) be adopted. (CD(F&ES))

Minute 87 – Advisers to Working Groups

RECOMMENDED

- (1) That Working Group protocol be adjusted to provide that, as a condition of appointment, advisers must agree to declare any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests they may have in connection with the business of the meeting and abide by rules of confidentiality.
- (2) That all Working Group paperwork is to be treated in confidence pending formal report to Council or a Committee unless already in the public domain.
- (3) That officers present a further report to this Subcommittee on public access to Working Groups. (CD(LP&A))

Minute 88 – Committee Timetable

Resolved

That the timetable as attached at [Appendix 2](#) to these Minutes be approved. (CD(LP&A))

(3) Member Budget Monitoring – 20 November 2001

Minute 151 – Budget Strategy – Charges

Resolved

- (1) That the need for a charging policy framework be accepted, proposals to be considered at an early meeting of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee within the new political structure.
- (2) That, for the current budget round, Officers come forward with recommendations for charges as appropriate. (HFS)

446 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2002/2003.

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director of Finance and External Services on the determination of the Tax Base for each individual Parish and Town Council area within the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2002/2003 be approved.

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- (2) That pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 the amount calculated by the Rochford District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2002/2003 shall be in the following parts:- (CD(F&ES))

ASHINGDON	1,182.24
BARLING MAGNA	621.18
CANEWDON	550.60
FOULNESS ISLAND	67.46
GREAT WAKERING	1,969.57
HAWKWELL	4,435.48
HOCKLEY	3,712.67
HULLBRIDGE	2,327.73
PAGLESHAM	100.16
RAWRETH	428.06
RAYLEIGH	11,824.11
ROCHFORD	2,734.03
STAMBRIDGE	231.90
SUTTON	54.31
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	30,239.50
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447 ROCHFORD TOWN SPORTS AND SOCIAL CLUB – APPLICATION FOR NEW LEASE ON THE PAVILION AT ROCHFORD RECREATION GROUND, ROCHFORD.

Note Councillor V H Leach declared a non-percuniary interest in this item by virtue of his daughter's property backing onto the site.

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on a request from the Rochford Town Sports and Social Club for the grant of a new lease on the Pavilion at Rochford Recreation Ground, Stambridge Road, Rochford for a term of 21 years.

It was observed that, the club had only maintained minimal contact with the Council over recent years, and that there appeared to be car parking problems at the site. Comment was made on the need to take account of the role of the pavilion on what is a public recreation facility. The question of whether the Club had consulted the National Playing Fields Association on the proposal was also raised.

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The Committee felt that further information was needed before the request could be determined, including detail on the club's constitution and those matters which are the club's responsibility. There would be value in considering if a lease arrangement could be formulated which would assist the Council in addressing some of the problems which have been associated with this site.

It was noted that the club felt that there was a need to seek a 21 year lease term to secure the necessary grant funding for the proposed extension. It was agreed that, as part of a fuller report, the possibilities for alternative arrangements should be explored as well as the contribution of the Rochford Town Sports and Social Club to the overall provision of leisure and sport activities in the Rochford area. .

Responding to Member questions, the Corporate Director, (Law, Planning and Administration) advised that the lease would be carried over on current terms pending a final decision.

On a motion moved by Councillor C R Morgan and seconded by Councillor P D Stebbing, it was:-

Resolved

That the lease renewal request from the Rochford Town Sports and Social Club be referred to the Leisure Sub-Committee to address the wider issues surrounding the application and the concerns raised. The local Ward Member and Club representatives to be invited to attend the Sub-Committee Meeting (CD(F&ES)/HLS).

448 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on the appointment of Members to the Crouch Harbour Authority and the Southend Night Shelter for the Homeless. The Committee also considered the addendum report of the Head of Administrative and Member Services on appointment to the Rochford Sports Council and the Youth Sports Advisory Group.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Mrs H L A Glynn be re-appointed to the Crouch Harbour Authority for the remainder of the Civic Year.
- (2) That appointment to the Southend Night Shelter for the Homeless be held in abeyance to be considered in line with all outside body appointments at Annual Council on 14 May 2002.
- (3) That the Chairman of the Council's Leisure Sub-Committee, Councillor J R F Mason, be appointed to the Rochford Sports Council for the remainder of the civic year.

- (4) That an article be included in the Members' Bulletin inviting a Member to come forward as the Council's nominee to the Youth Sports Advisory Group. Should no nominee come forward, the appointment to be included in the report on Outside Bodies for the next civic year. (HAMS)

449 ESSEX RURAL TRANSPORT PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services on a request for financial assistance from the Rural Community Council of Essex to support the post of Co-ordinator for the Essex Rural Transport Partnership.

During debate, Members felt that there was a need for additional information on the request, including the salary and job description associated with the post for which funding is sought and the fit of the Partnership with other bodies operating in the same arena and the Council's policy objectives.

Resolved

That officers make all reasonable enquiries to ascertain additional information on the request and submit the application as part of the budget setting process. (HPS/HFS)

450 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR 2002/2003

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the Authority's response to the Department of Transport Local Government and the Regions consultation document on performance indicators for 2002/2003.

During debate the Chief Executive advised that:-

- It was likely the Audit Commission would be submitting details of further changes to performance indicators in the next year.
- Officers were in the process of compiling information on the overall costs of Best Value and other Government initiatives as part of the budget making process.
- The Council is required by statute to publish a number of local performance indicators.
- Resources permitting, it was envisaged that as part of the next District-wide Best Value consultation exercise required in 2003/2004 District residents would be consulted to identify which indicators they would like to see published.

Resolved

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That, subject to the inclusion of comment within BVPI 91 that this indicator needs to be more sensitive to reflect different types of kerbside collection and what is being collected, the responses detailed in Appendix A of the Chief Executive's report be endorsed. (CE)

451 QUALITY PARISH AND TOWN COUNCILS – CONSULTATION PAPER.

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on a consultation paper from the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions on how the 'open quality' accreditation process proposals for Parish and Town Councils will operate.

During debate it was observed that this type of proposal had the potential to introduce disparity between Councils and frustration in terms of what is/is not achievable. A number of resource implications could be associated with the proposals. It could also be observed that adjustments to electoral mandate would not necessarily result in the appointment of an effective and representative membership spread. Very prescribed and restrictive requirements can sometimes be a deterrent to persons wishing to serve in public office.

On a motion moved by Councillor P F Webster and seconded by P D Stebbing it was:-

Resolved

That a Working Group of four members (one from each group) be appointed to review the consultation paper in detail and formulate recommendations for submission to the January meeting of the Partnership Sub-Committee. (CE/HAMS).

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved

That the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

452 50-54 WEST STREET, ROCHFORD

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on the properties at 50-54 West Street, Rochford, together with an addendum report setting out the report on this matter submitted to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee.

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During debate the Committee agreed that it was important to both retain options relating to the site and, given the time taken to reach this point, maintain momentum.

On a motion moved by Councillor M G B Starke and seconded by Councillor D A Weir it was:-

RECOMMENDED

That consideration of the compulsory purchase of 50-54 West Street, Rochford be deferred until the March Committee cycle pending discussions with the owner of the site to produce an acceptable renovation/redevelopment scheme. (HLS).

453 CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF BAILIFF SERVICES.

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on the renewal of the Bailiff contract for the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates.

Resolved

That the contract for the provision of Bailiff services currently held by Hammond Hillman Limited be extended on the same terms as at present (as approved under Council Minute 444/98), until such time as the Lord Chancellor's Bailiff Review be enacted or to January 2003, whichever is the earlier (HRHM).

The meeting closed at 9.08.

Chairman

Date