

POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 12 November 2002

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **12 November 2002** 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 C Langlands
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

OFFICES PRESENT

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

547 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

548 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the third consultation document produced by the Audit Commission on Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

During debate, and in response to Member questions, the Chief Executive advised that:-

- It may be appropriate for Officers to work with other Borough and District Councils on matters of mutual interest. Councils often liaised on common processes and the sharing of best practice/self-assessment would assist in the development of bench-marking.
- It was clear that local authorities should not underestimate the time, energy and resources associated with Comprehensive Performance Assessment. The proposed budget provision of £30,000 would help facilitate peer review and appropriate training, but did not reflect the cost of other work input. The actual cost for 2003/04 could be in excess of £100,000 in terms of Officer and Member time that will need to be devoted to the process.

Resolved

- (1) That the Officer comments set out in the report be forwarded to the Audit Commission and copied to the Local Government Association as this Council's observations on the consultation document.
- (2) That a Member and staff training programme be put in place on Corporate Performance Assessment and its implications for Rochford District Council.
- (3) That a budget provision of £30,000 for Corporate Performance Assessment work be considered as part of the 2003/04 budget making process.
- (4) That Officers work with other Borough and District Councils on matters of mutual interest as appropriate. (CE)

549 SOUTHEND-ON-SEA COMMUNITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the Community Strategy for Southend-on-Sea.

During debate, Members observed that it was difficult to reach final conclusions without specific action plans and costings.

Responding to questions, the Chief Executive advised that:-

- It would be of value to have an indication of the total resources associated with strategy proposals. The actions resulting from strategies often crossed Borough/District boundaries and it was important that Councils avoided work duplication and that strategies meshed together. Lessons learnt by Southend-on-Sea would be of value for the Rochford District in its own strategy formulation.
- In terms of the Thames Gateway, Southend-on-Sea and Rochford were seen as an area of educational and cultural focus.

Resolved

That, subject to the observation that it is difficult to reach conclusions without specific action plans and costings, the Officer comments within the report be forwarded to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and the Southend Strategic Partnership as this Council's views on the Community Strategy for Southend-on-Sea. (CE)

550 COMMUNITY LEGAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the assessment of legal advice needs identified by the Community Legal Services Partnership.

Resolved

That this Council concurs with the Community Legal Service Partnership Assessment of the Legal Advice needs of Castle Point and Rochford. (CE)

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 paragraphs 9, 7 and 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

551 UPGRADE OF THE LAVERS SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEME

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) on the situation following the receipt of tenders for the proposed works at the Lavers.

During debate and in response to Member questions, the Corporate Director advised that:-

- In order to progress the scheme as quickly as possible it would be appropriate for the Committee to determine that the decision to appoint a contractor was urgent and, as such, not subject to call-in pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny procedure rule 15(h).
- Full references had been taken up in respect of the recommended contractor. Whilst it was not possible to guarantee exceedance, a contract contingency sum had been provided for. Contract documentation would also include provision for liquidated damages.
- This type of contract was fixed tender and of a different nature to those associated with the town centre improvement schemes, which fell within the County Council's Contract 2000.

Resolved

- (1) That the lowest tender submitted by F J Capon, in the sum of £482,299, be approved.

- (2) That provision be made in the 2003/04 capital programme for scheme completion.
- (3) That pursuant to Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15(h) this decision is an urgent one and, as such, not subject to call-in. (CD(F&ES))

552 LAND AT ROCHFORD GARDEN WAY, ROCHFORD

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on a request from a leaseholder for adjacent land to be included in a lease.

During debate, the Committee endorsed the view of a Member that it would be appropriate to establish that there are no rights of way over the land in question.

Resolved

That, subject to there being no established right of way over the land, the land adjacent to number 78 and 80 Rochford Garden Way, Rochford, as shown on the plan attached to the exempt report, be leased as part of property No. 78 Rochford Garden Way, Rochford, in consideration of the sum set out in the exempt report or the open market value of the land, whichever is the greater, and subject to the other conditions set out in the report. (HRHM).

553 REDUCTION OR REMISSION OF BUSINESS RATE LIABILITY

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on an application for the reduction or remission of business rate liability in accordance with Section 40 Local Government Finance Act 1998.

Noting that the Local Authority bore 25% of the cost of any relief, the Committee agreed a motion moved by Councillor K A Gibbs and seconded by Councillor P K Savill and it was:-

Resolved

That 100% relief be granted (£905.13) to the applicant detailed in the exempt report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management. (HRHM)

554 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee considered the exempt monitoring report of the Chief Executive on staffing matters.

Resolved

That the details set out in the exempt monitoring report of the Chief Executive on staffing matters be noted.

555 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

The Committee received and noted the exempt note of the Chief Executive's appraisal dated 23 October 2002.

The meeting closed at 7.53pm.

Chairman

Date