

Policy & Finance Committee – 14 January 2004

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **14 January 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr P F A Webster (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs M A Starke (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr J E Grey
Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr P K Savill
Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr S P Smith
Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr D A Weir

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr K H Hudson.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R Crofts	- Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
J Bostock	- Principal Committee Administrator

17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2003 were approved as a corrected record and signed by the Chairman.

18 ISSUES ARISING FROM OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

(1) Housing Benefit Performance Standards

The Committee considered the report of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 9 December 2003.

Resolved

- (1) That a bid for £15,000 be included in the 2004/05 draft budget (subject to the outcome of the standards fund bid).
- (2) That the Chairman of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee be appointed as the "benefits champion". (HRHM)

19 PROCUREMENT AGENCY FOR ESSEX

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance and External Services) which sought approval to the authority joining the Procurement Agency for Essex.

It was noted that the £8,000 contribution could be offset by savings in officer time in terms of the work involved in reviewing and revising the existing strategy. It was also noted that, whilst the agency had put forward a business case to show the availability of savings, these were unlikely to be significant for smaller authorities, particularly where a number of services are contracted out.

It was observed that membership would fulfil the requirements of the Government's national procurement strategy. In this context it would be hoped savings could be achieved.

Resolved

That the Essex Procurement Agency be joined with effect from 1 April 2004, subject to budget provision being made available at the Council meeting to be held on 27 January 2004. (CD(F&ES))

20 CORPORATE DEBT POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue and Housing Management on the adoption of a corporate debt policy.

Resolved

That the corporate debt policy, as appended to the report, be adopted. (HRHM)

21 CORPORATE WRITE OFF POLICY

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the adoption of a Corporate Write Off policy.

During debate on the draft policy, Members concurred with the Chairman that it would be appropriate to include the Corporate Director in the consideration process for full debt write-off.

Resolved

That, subject to inclusion of the Corporate Director in the consideration process for full debt write-off, the corporate write-off policy, as appended to the report, be adopted. (HRHM)

22 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATING – MANDATORY AND DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on applications for mandatory and discretionary rate relief.

Resolved

That discretionary rate relief be granted as follows:

- (a) Rethink - 20% top up relief with effect from 30 May 2003.
- (b) Hullbridge Gardens Association - 30% relief with effect from 1 April 2003. (HRHM)

23 HOUSING BENEFIT CUSTOMER SURVEY RESULTS

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Revenue & Housing Management on the interim results of the biennial Housing Benefit Customer Survey Stock.

Resolved

- (1) That the interim survey results be noted.
- (2) That a full report be received in April 2004. (HRHM)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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.

24 STAFFING REPORT

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) on the regrading of a post.

Resolved

That post 23200 be regraded from scale PO6-9 to PO14-17. (CD(LP&A))

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The meeting closed at 7.44 pm.

Chairman

Date