

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 8 FEBRUARY 2000**

Present:- Councillor A R Row - Chairman
Councillors E C Abrahams, Mrs C A Bayley, Mrs D Cornell,
Mrs C M Dean, R C Dean, Mrs S Flack, M A Hibbs,
A J Ketteridge, Mrs J E Menell, D M Miller, D J Morson,
G W Powers and P A Wilcock.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor M A Gayler

Officers in attendance:- M R Dellow, Mrs S McLagan, B D Perkins and
M T Purkiss.

I. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E M Hill and
A C Streeter.

I. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs D Cornell declared a pecuniary interest in the item relating to rent setting and a non-pecuniary interest
in relation to the item concerning state pensions.

I. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 1999 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a
correct record.

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute 264 - Representatives on Outside Bodies

The Corporate Directorate-Development reported that the Head of Environmental Services had been co-opted
as a Member of the Board of the Uttlesford Primary Care Group. The Chairman asked that the Committee's
congratulations be passed on to Mr Secker.

(ii) Minute 266 - Draft Service Plans

Members were advised of the information concerning the information which had been requested at the last
meeting relating to housing and energy related matters.

I. AMENITIES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Sub-Committee held on 27 January 2000. The
Chairman reported that consideration of the item relating to the revenue estimates would be dealt with later in the
meeting when the re-examination of the draft revenue estimates for 2000/01 would be considered.

(i) Minute AM61 - Bridge End Gardens Working Party

It was noted that a letter had been sent to all Members concerning the current situation regarding the
Environmental Task Force. The Corporate Director-Development stated that further information was being
obtained from other partners relating to this issue and he hoped that this information would be available to
Members of the Policy and Resources Committee at their special meeting on 10 February 2000.

(ii) Minute AM62(i) - Feedback from Car Park Tour

It was noted that the reference in this Minute to White Street Car Park should be amended to read Chequers Lane Car Park.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Amenities Sub-Committee held on 27 January 2000 be approved and adopted.

I. HOUSING SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE

The Committee received the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Services Sub-Committee held on 1 February 2000.

(i) Minute HS77 - The Development Programme

Councillor Mrs Flack said that she was aware of slippage in a scheme within her area and she considered that there was a need to keep tenants informed when delays occurred. The Corporate Director-Development said that he would take this matter up with the Property Services Manager.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Services Sub-Committee held on 1 February 2000 be approved and adopted.

I. REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

(i) Dunmow Society

Councillor Mrs Flack reported on a meeting of the Dunmow Society which she had attended on 24 January 2000. Apart from the normal consideration of planning matters she reported that particular concern had been expressed about the amount of fly posting in the area, the plans for the toilets in White Street Car Park and the proposed review of the electoral wards for Great Dunmow.

(ii) Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service

Councillor Mrs Menell reported that Uttlesford Council for Voluntary Service would be hosting a special event on behalf of the Uttlesford Community Partnership on Thursday 22 February 2000 at Felsted School. The event was entitled "Bring Your Partners" and the purpose of the day was to consider the value of partnership working and a vision for the future.

(iii) Uttlesford Volunteer Bureau

Councillor Mrs Menell reported that the problems which the Volunteer Bureau had encountered with the room at the Dunmow Council Offices had now been resolved.

(iv) Uttlesford Community Support Group

Councillor Mrs Menell reported that the Uttlesford Community Support Group for Vulnerable Persons continued to meet on a monthly basis, but would be redefining its overall purpose at its next meeting. It was currently inviting victims of abuse to contact the group to enable an assessment to be made of the extent of the problem in the District.

(v) Buffy Bus

Councillor Mrs Menell reported that a roadshow would be held on the Buffy Bus throughout March in relation to the Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership (ECC Learning Services). The partnership would be using the bus for its childcare training and recruitment roadshow. A normal timetable would be resumed in April.

(vi) Saffron Walden Citizens Advice Bureau

Councillor Row reported that he had visited the new premises occupied by the Saffron Walden Citizens Advice Bureau in Barnards Yard and stated that these were an excellent addition to the facilities in the District.

I. RE-EXAMINATION OF DRAFT REVENUE ESTIMATES 2000/01

Members were reminded that the Policy and Resources Committee had considered the overall position of the revenue estimates presented to it in the context of the severe financial restraints facing the Council after April 2001. It had asked that Sub-Committees and Committees be instructed to re-examine their estimates and rank growth items in priority order and to identify any possible efficiency savings.

Members also had before them the Minutes of the Amenities Sub-Committee and Housing Services Sub-Committee which contained recommendations on issues relating to their budgets. In particular, the Committee considered the recommendations which had been made on the ranking of growth items.

Councillor Powers asked that it be noted that he was not prepared to take part in the ranking process and he also expressed his concern at the way in which the item relating to a Village Appraisals Fieldworker had been dealt with at the meeting of the Amenities Sub-Committee. He stated that further background information had been passed to all Members including a list of projects which had been funded in Uttlesford totalling over one million pounds. He added that the amount requested was comparatively small and urged all Members to reconsider this proposal. Councillor Mrs Menell considered that much of the work which would be undertaken by the fieldworker could be undertaken by Town and Parish Councils. Councillor Powers then moved and it was seconded that this item be reinstated in the draft revenue estimates. However, on being put to the vote this proposal was lost and it was

RECOMMENDED that this item be deleted from the draft estimates.

The Committee then discussed the item for the provision of a coffee bar at the Stansted Youth Centre. Councillor Hibbs stated that he was not aware of any decision from Essex County Council to dispose of the current youth centre site or of any proposal to relocate to the Peter Kirk School. Councillor Mrs Dean said that the provision of a coffee bar was a community project which had come forward from young people in Stansted, rather than being an Essex County Council project. A number of Members felt that more information was needed on this project to enable a decision to be made. Councillor Mrs Menell suggested that the project could be more appropriately funded from the Community Support Grant Scheme.

RESOLVED that consideration of the item for the provision of a coffee bar at the Youth Centre at Stansted be deferred to enable further information to be obtained.

The Committee briefly discussed the item for tourism modelling packages and

RECOMMENDED that this item be deleted from the draft estimates.

Councillor Row stressed the importance of this item and hoped that it would be looked at again in future years.

The Committee then discussed the proposal for a gardener at Bridge End Gardens and noted the discussion of this item at the Amenities Sub-Committee on 27 January 2000. A note was circulated to all Members providing background information on a number of issues relating to this item and, in particular, clarifying that the Council's legal officers were satisfied that the current arrangements met the contractual requirements relating to the appointment of a gardener. Councillor Hibbs stated that he saw the proposal for a gardener as an addition to the work carried out by Serviceteam and Councillor Miller considered that the Council had a moral obligation to improve the gardens for the benefit of the community.

RECOMMENDED that the item for a gardener at Bridge End Gardens be retained in the draft revenue estimates on the basis of an appointment being made in or after October 2000 and the costs reduced by 50% for 2000/01.

The Committee then considered the ranking of the various growth items, and

RESOLVED that the following order of priority be agreed:-

RANK	GROWTH ITEM DESCRIPTION	COST 2000/1
1	New Public Convenience-Swan Meadow	£18,930

2	Thaxted TIC	£ 400
3	Bridge End Gardens - Partnership Funding	£25,000
4	Bridge End Gardens - Gardener (half year, commencing October 2000)	£ 8,570
5	Arts Development Officer	£19,900
6	Museum Education Officer	£ 5,900
7	Tourism Assistant-added hours	£ 6,410
8	Administrative Assistant-parking (additional hours)	£ 1,800

Councillor Mrs Menell wished it to be placed on record that she considered that the item for a gardener at Bridge End Gardens should be ranked at number 8.

It was noted that the item relating to the skateboard/roller blade ramp at Stansted (£19,000) would be transferred to the capital programme.

Councillor Hibbs referred to the time spent discussing a small number of relatively minor schemes when Members did not have an opportunity to discuss in details large amounts already included within the draft budget. The Corporate Director-Development reminded Members that they had had the opportunity to discuss and rank all aspects of the base budget.

Councillor Powers was also concerned at the time spent on evaluating the merits of these schemes and considered that there needed to be a better way of agreeing the budgets, particularly having regard to the requirements of the Best Value regime.

I. NOTICES OF MOTION

The following Notices of Motion referred from the meeting of the Council on 18 January 2000 were considered:-

(i) State Pension

The Committee considered the following Motion proposed by Councillor M A Gayler and duly seconded:-

"This Council:-

notes that the state pension will rise by just 75p next April;

believes that this does not reflect the true rise in the cost of living of local pensioners;

notes that whilst the level of means-tested "Minimum Income Guarantee" will rise by £3.45, hundreds of pensioners in Uttlesford who may be entitled to claim this benefit may fail to do so;

and therefore calls on the Government substantially to increase the basic state pension, especially for older pensioners;

and calls on local MP Sir Alan Haselhurst to back the campaign by Liberal Democrat MPs to oppose the 75p increase."

Councillor Gayler added that the Council had recently decided to increase the average weekly rent by £2.12. The 75p increase in state pension was not sufficient to meet this and other increasing costs and he asked Members to urge the Government to do more. In response to a suggestion from Councillor Ketteridge he agreed to amend the Notice of Motion by the deletion of the words "Liberal Democrat".

RESOLVED that the Motion, as amended, be supported.

(ii) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

The Committee considered the following Motion proposed by Councillor G W Powers and duly seconded:

"The Council acknowledges:

- (a) the successes of the many and varied projects initiated by local communities and individuals across the district, and made possible through its community grant schemes;
- (b) the invaluable work carried out for the benefit of the community by the district's many voluntary organisations;

both of which have demonstrated the benefits of working in partnership."

The Council:-

- (a) reaffirms its commitment to working with voluntary organisations and supporting local community projects;
- (b) reaffirms its ongoing financial support for these endeavours.

In response to a suggestion from Councillor Row, Councillor Powers agreed to amend the Motion by the addition of the words "subject to funding" after the words "financial support" in the last line of the Motion.

RESOLVED that the Notice of Motion, as amended, be supported.

I. TAKELEY DAY CENTRE

Members considered a report which summarised the value of the Takeley Day Centre to the elderly in Takeley and noted that much of the activity was supported and appreciated by the residents of Priors Wood Court.

The Day Centre at Takeley did not have comprehensive facilities for the disabled. The organisers had identified a need for this and to include within it a showering arrangement and a small room for chiropody and as an area which could be used for other purposes.

Tenders had been received for this work with the lowest being £24,000. The General Fund Capital budget figure was £14,000 and the balance required to support the project was £10,000.

Officers were aware that there would be a significant saving associated with the noise insulation programme arising from tenants preferring not to have secondary glazing installed. This saving would be in excess of £60,000 and a report would be presented at a future meeting when the exact position was known.

RESOLVED that the benefits of the improvement for the Day Centre for the residents of Priors Wood Court be acknowledged in budget support from the Housing Revenue Capital Programme in the sum of £10,000.

I. REVIEW OF CAR PARKING AT STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET

Members received a report which summarised the usage of the Lower Street and Crafton Green car parks in Stansted Mountfitchet. It was noted that the charges for these car parks would be reviewed in October 2000 with any recommendations coming into effect on 1 April 2001.

I. COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD SCHEME

The Chairman reminded Members that the presentations to recipients of Community Achievement Awards would take place at the Council Offices on Thursday 17 February 2000 starting at 6.00pm

The meeting ended at 9.35pm