

COMMUNITY AND LEISURE COMMITTEE held on 30 OCTOBER 2001 at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm

Present:- Councillor A R Row – Chairman
Councillors Mrs C A Bayley, R J Copping, Mrs D Cornell,
R C Dean, D W Gregory, Mrs J E Menell, D M Miller and G Sell.

Also present:- Councillor R P Chambers and Mr N B Newman – Museum Society.

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillors W F Bowker, A Dean, M A Gayler and P G F Lewis.

Officers in attendance:- J B Dickson, Mrs S McLagan, B D Perkins, Mrs C Roberts and A Stewart.

CL7 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor E C Abrahams who was in hospital. The Chairman expressed the good wishes of the Committee for Councillor Abrahams' speedy recovery.

CL8 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Community and Leisure Committee held on 4 September 2001 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

CL9 LEISURE PFI BOARD

The Committee considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Leisure PFI Board held on 16 October in so far as the Board had recommended a virement of £29,000 to the PFI Budget.

Members were informed by the Director of Resources about the circumstances in which a new contractor and funder had become necessary, and were told that sufficient funds were available in two provisions where projects had not been pursued. The virement would cover additional essential consultancy costs and other changes.

RESOLVED that the Committee's approval be given to the virement of £29,000 to the PFI Budget.

Minute PFI 140 - Complaints about Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre

In answer to a question from Councillor Mrs Menell about the level of cleanliness of the Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre the Head of Community and Leisure Services assured the meeting that the problems

referred to were being addressed and additional cleaning staff were to be employed by the contractor.

CL10 COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Committee considered an action plan arising from a Best Value Review of Community Safety. Councillor A Dean made a statement that

- (i) The principle of outsourcing was of dubious value in the context of emergency plans. He felt that in the light of the recent flooding, in particular, emergency planning required to be improved and that the necessary protection and prevention required to be done by internal staff.
- (ii) He felt that any saving projected from outsourcing would be taken up by consultancy fees to no advantage.

Other Members referred to the impact on plans of the expanding Stansted Airport, the possibilities of “strategic partnerships” with, for example, the Environment Agency, and the general consequences of the recent floods. Councillor A Dean feared that consultants might not make themselves available to the District at the appropriate time due to multiple contracts, and that such people might lack local knowledge. It was noted that the issue of the retirement of an officer on the grounds of efficiency of the service was not for this Committee to consider.

RESOLVED that the proposed action plan be approved subject to the deletion of the first and third “boxes” of action, namely:

- 1 “Approval of Community Safety and Emergency Planning staff structure”, and “EP specialist to commence delivery of training”.

As part of the consideration of the above item Members, discussed the recent floods crisis which had affected a number of residents within the District. Members were concerned that more needed to be done to protect residents and

RESOLVED that officers should work closely with the Environment Agency and other partners to draw up and implement appropriate plans to reduce, and cope with, floods within the district.

CL11 COMMUNITY SAFETY BEST VALUE REVIEW STAFF RESTRUCTURE

In view of the decision under the previous item (Minute CL10) the Committee did not consider this item nor the item in Part II entitled “Community Safety Best Value Review Staffing Restructure”.

CL12 DRAFT BUDGET 2002/03

The Director of Resources presented a report outlining the Committee's initial draft revised estimates of direct costs and income for 2001/02, and estimates for 2002/03 prepared on the basis of existing approved levels of service. He explained the target committee cash limits and referred to the policy priorities approved by the Council on 16 October 2001. Details were given by Councillor R P Chambers of proposed savings which were part of a package intended to achieve those targets and reflect those priorities.

Members questioned Councillor Chambers as regards particular items of the projected savings. Issues raised included the cessation of grants, possible charitable status of the Museum, tourism advertising and funding of youth initiatives budget. Councillor Chambers emphasised that there was time to consider matters further before a final decision would be taken by the full Council.

The Director of Resources stressed that the Council had asked policy committees to draft budgets which would reflect the committees' targets and noted that this committee's budget would therefore have to be reconsidered in January.

RESOLVED that the Administration's proposals for savings (except that related to savings under Emergency Planning – Staffing Changes) be approved with the draft net direct cost budgets, and that Officers be instructed to prepare service plans and full budgets for 2002/03 in the light of these decisions for consideration at the next cycle of committee meetings.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm.