

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 15 NOVEMBER 2007

Present:- Councillor R P Chambers – Chairman.
Councillors R Clover, K L Eden, M L Foley, D M Jones, A J Ketteridge, T P Knight, R M Lemon, H S Rolfe, R D Sherer, G Sell, A D Walters and P A Wilcock.

Also present:- Councillors S Barker and R Chamberlain.

Officers in attendance:- A Bovaird, W Cockerell, J Mitchell, C Roberts, P Snow and A Webb.

FA11 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M A Gayler.

FA12 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Administration Committee held on 20 September 2007 were approved and signed as a correct record.

FA13 CHAIRMAN'S VERBAL REPORT

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the September meeting of the Committee and assured Members that although there was a long way to go, the Council was on the way to a firm financial footing. Reports would be received at the meeting from the Chief Executive (verbal) and the Acting Chief Financial Officer who was doing a very good job regarding the accounts. A full report would go to the meeting of the Council on 11 December 2007.

FA14 LEAD OFFICER REPORT

The Acting Chief Financial Officer updated Members about recruitment of new finance staff and gave a description of the progress so far of the accounts review and the timetable of forthcoming processes.

Members noted that the financial staff had not been at full strength for some years.

Councillors Eden and Rolfe made a request for clear statistics linking the individual budget figures with the objectives of the corporate plan and Adrian Webb said that he expected the corporate plan to be submitted to the Council meeting on 11 December 2007.

Councillor S Barker mentioned a possible clash of dates regarding the Council meeting scheduled for 14 February and Adrian Webb explained that necessary date changes would be made.

Councillor R Chamberlain asked how Members could be more involved in identifying areas for spending. He drew attention particularly to the opportunity for a commemoration (by way of wreath laying ceremony or other event) of the 90th anniversary in 2008 of the end of World War I. It was noted that the British Legion was very supportive of this sort of idea. The Chairman of the Committee asked Members to discuss possibilities for such an event with their group leaders.

FA15

REPLACEMENT NOISE MONITORING EQUIPMENT - TAKELEY

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Environmental Health Officer about a need to replace, or permanently discontinue equipment at a permanent noise monitoring site close to Stansted Airport, Takeley. The cost of replacement would be in the order of £12,000. Members noted that it was important for officers to carry out work which included monitoring in connection with Stansted Airport and that this would need replacement equipment. The Acting Chief Financial Officer informed Members of the funding position

RESOLVED that replacement noise monitoring equipment be purchased for use at Takeley at a cost of £12,000 from funds in the 2007/08 capital programme.

FA16

REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND PLACES

Members considered the report of the Electoral Services Officer on the review of its polling districts and polling places which had to take place by the end of the year 2007. The report contained recommendations from each of the three Area Panels, and comments had been requested from Great Dunmow Town Council on the proposed changes so far as they affected that Town. The Committee was requested to approve a revised scheme of polling arrangements covering the entire District to provide convenient arrangements for electors in the District as required by law.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Council adopts a revised scheme of polling districts and polling places for the District, with effect from 30 November 2007, as set out in appendix 3 to the report, as modified by the recommendations of the East, North and South-West Area Panels specified in the report, subject to the substitution of the description in paragraph 22, relating to the boundary of the new Flitch Green polling district, for the description contained in the East Area Panel minute; the arrangements for Great Dunmow North and Great Dunmow South to be as set out in part 2 below, as agreed at this meeting;
- 2 polling arrangements for Great Dunmow North be as follows:
 - Great Dunmow North-West: that part of Great Dunmow North ward lying to the west of a line running from the ward boundary on Rosemary Lane between Rose Chalet and Jubilee Court and then proceeding along the northern boundary of the properties fronting Rosemary Lane, then to the west of Rosemary Close, Crescent

Close, Rosemary Crescent and Downs Crescent, and then along the western boundary of the Emblems development, then proceeding to the parish boundary immediately to the west of Newton Hall, polling at Great Dunmow Primary School off Woodlands Park Drive.

- Great Dunmow North-East: the remaining part of Great Dunmow North ward not included in the Great Dunmow North-West polling district, polling at the Dourdan Pavilion off The Causeway. and polling arrangements for Great Dunmow South to be:
- Great Dunmow South-West: that part of Great Dunmow South ward lying mainly to the north and west of a line running, from the parish boundary, in a generally north-easterly direction, first along the A120. then along the western edge of the Lukins Mead development to the southern by-pass, then in a westerly direction along the by-pass, then in a northerly direction along the eastern edge of Springfields, Highfields, and then Standrums, then passing immediately to the south of 34 High Street, then in a south-easterly direction along High Street to the junction with Braintree Road, then along the centre of Braintree Road to the parish boundary, polling at the E T Foakes Memorial Hall, Stortford Road.
- Great Dunmow South-East: the remaining part of Great Dunmow South ward not included in the Great Dunmow South-West polling district, polling at the United Reform Church, New Street.

FA17 UTTLESFORD IN 2011 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME – PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee had received a written report from the Director of Business Transformation updating on the progress of the Uttlesford in 2011 Transformation Programme work streams, but the Director was unable to attend due to a hospital operation. The report was therefore withdrawn to be submitted at the next meeting.

FA18 WICKEN HOUSE WICKEN BONHUNT

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive seeking Members' views on an inquiry from agents seeking to dispose of Wicken House. The Chairman of the Committee pointed out that the Council could not afford to purchase it and Councillor Ketteridge agreed and felt the house would be of little use to the Council.

RESOLVED that in view of lack of funds the Essex County Council's invitation to buy Wicken House be rejected.

FA19 VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY AND EARLY RETIREMENT

The Committee received an update from the Chief Executive following completion of the decision process for staff wishing to take early retirement or voluntary redundancy. The Chief Executive explained that 33 staff had made enquiries of whom 15 had applied and been considered and 10 had been agreed

for voluntary redundancy. The saving per annum would be approximately £265,000 and the cost per annum approximately £250,000. The saving within 2007/08 would be approximately £66,000. Councillor D Jones asked what activities would be ceasing, if any, and the Chief Executive said that he would tell the Council of any savings. Councillor Sell asked whether overtime claims would be likely as a result and the Chief Executive said that people might be moved from elsewhere to meet needs. He added that overtime had been halted so would only apply where it was to the advantage of the Council.

Councillor Wilcock asked about staff morale, sickness absence and applications for re-gradings and the Chief Executive said that he thought these were no more significant than a month ago. He had been meeting the union representative once a fortnight and needed now to speak to staff direct.

Councillor Sell asked whether further staff were likely to be leaving beyond the ten approved voluntary redundancies and the Chief Executive said he saw no need for a request for voluntary redundancy in the foreseeable future. He did anticipate reductions by natural wastage and redeployment and could not say that there would not be isolated redundancies where skills were not required.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.