

**FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at  
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 26  
NOVEMBER 2009**

Present: Councillor R P Chambers—Chairman  
Councillors R Clover, J E N Davey, A Dean, K L Eden, D M  
Jones, A J Ketteridge, R M Lemon, H S Rolfe, and  
A D Walters

Officers in attendance: J Mitchell (Chief Executive), T Cowper  
(Principal Accountant), A Knight (Principal Accountant), S  
Joyce (Chief Finance Officer), C Roberts (Democratic  
Services Officer) and A Webb (Director of Central Services)

**FA26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T P Knight, G  
Sell, R D Sherer and P A Wilcock.

Declarations of interest were made later during the meeting as follows:-

Councillor K Eden - a personal non-prejudicial interest in so far as he  
was a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council.

Councillor A J Ketteridge - a personal non-prejudicial interest in so far as  
he was a member of the Saffron Walden Town Council.

**FA27 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2009 and the  
extraordinary meeting held on 12 October 2009 were received and  
signed as a correct record subject, at the request of Councillor Dean, to  
the amendment of Minute FA14 paragraph 3 line 3 to read "objective way  
to see that it provided value for money" instead of "hard way".

**FA28 CHAIRMAN'S VERBAL REPORT**

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the approaching budget  
cycle and reminded the Committee that although excellent progress had  
been made the Council was still in a period of financial stringency.  
Underspends should be welcomed cautiously; hopefully the Council  
would be better off next year but resources needed to be retained to  
cover any contingency.

Councillor Dean asked a question concerning Minute FA15 and the Chief  
Executive explained that the question could not be answered in the open  
part of the meeting. The Chairman agreed that Councillor Dean could  
raise the matter in the closed session later in the meeting.

FA29

## **LEAD OFFICER'S REPORT**

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Central Services which provided updates on (i) progress with drafting the contract for the sale of the Council Offices at Great Dunmow, and (ii) the ICT Backup solution; this was to be installed in the next week.

RESOLVED that the Lead Officer's report be noted.

FA30

## **2009/10 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered the Chief Finance Officer's report on Budget Monitoring.

This report was produced in accordance with the budget reporting method and timetable which had been approved by the Committee on 25 June. It detailed financial performance relating to General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Capital Programme and Treasury Management, and was based upon actual expenditure and income from April to September and forecasts for the end of the financial year.

The report contained detailed information about the causes and effects of the changes in the Council's finances during the quarter to September 2009. Members welcomed the clarity of the report and the good news contained in it particularly regarding the projected dividend payout from Landsbanki.

Councillors Walters and Rolfe voiced some concern about the figures for void levels in housing, and wondered whether this was linked with choice based letting. It was noted that a report on this topic was going to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor A Dean made the following points:(i) three members of an Uttlesford group had asked for a meeting with Councillor Rolfe and the Leader to discuss matters contained in the paragraph "Variable items..."(which included the new budget established for Business Support and Development) (ii) as regards budgets to be transferred to the Planning Development Reserve he felt this money should be used to boost consultation on the development programme (iii) since the parking income was lower than budget due to less excess charge notices, he wished to know if the financial effect of the Christmas free parking concession had been properly assessed.

The Chief Finance Officer explained that the free Christmas parking had been provided to help the traders and was being paid for from LABGI grant money for business support and development.

In answer to a question from Councillor Dean Councillor Chambers confirmed that the free parking had been spoken of in Committee, the

idea of it being to promote trade and help local traders. Councillor Walters said that the main complaint he heard from retailers was that customers were shopping to a time-limit due to car parking limits.

The Chief Executive added that this initiative had been discussed with both Chambers of Trade and was inspired by a Chester City Council "free after three" project. It had the benefit of diverting school run traffic and was being introduced as an experiment for two hours per week. Councillor Chambers continued that if the experiment proved successful it would be referred back to the Committee to consider continuing it.

Councillor Dean expressed displeasure at the way this initiative had been actioned; he said it needed to be thought through and had not been referred to the Economic Development Group which showed disrespect to them; he also asked how the success or otherwise of the experiment would be assessed and what would happen regarding income at the Crafton Green Car Park which was jointly owned by District and Parish.

Councillor Chambers assured him that no disrespect was intended.

Councillor Dean asked for a report to the Committee on the success or otherwise, cost of and public reaction to the experiment. He commented that the experiment had not received even an officer report.

Councillors Lemon and Chambers explained that they would receive feedback from the public on the experiment and felt the reaction would be favourable.

Councillor Chambers assured Councillor Dean that he would try to avoid repetition of the matter of which Councillor Dean was complaining.

Councillor Jones commented that Councillor Dean's point about the income at the Crafton Green Car Park was a fair one, but that the other inquiries were about operational matters and there had been time for those to be tabled by Councillor Dean.

#### RESOLVED

1 to note and approve the report,

2 to approve the Capital Programme budget adjustments for 2009/10 as set out in the report

3 to authorise officers in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee to submit an application for capitalisation of Icelandic losses if it appears in the Council's interests so to do in the light of the latest information available by the deadline of 15 December 2009 and

4 in the light of tenders received to approve an increase from £60,000 to £100,000 in the capital budget funds allocated for refurbishment of the glazed link at the Council Offices.

FA31

## **TRANSFER OF BRIDGE END GARDEN TO SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL**

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive, Director of Operations and Chief Finance Officer to the Environment Committee which had referred it to the Finance and Administration Committee to recommend to the Council the assignment of the lease and transfer of the responsibility for Bridge End Garden and respective equipment, materials and assets to Saffron Walden Town Council on tapering funding of up to 5 years as part of the package of Saffron Walden amenities already determined, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Environment Committee contained in Minute E27 of the meeting of that Committee held on 10 November 2009.

In answer to a question from Councillor Dean the Chairman of the Committee explained that it was open to any Member who wished to scrutinise the agreement for assignment of the lease and transfer of responsibilities.

RESOLVED that the Council be recommended to approve the assignment of the lease and transfer the responsibility for Bridge End Garden and respective equipment, materials and assets to Saffron Walden Town Council on tapering funding of up to 5 years as part of the package of Saffron Walden amenities already determined, and in accordance with the recommendations of the Environment Committee contained in Minute E27 of the meeting of that Committee held on 10 November 2009.

(The decision in Minute E27 added the following recommendations;

“Saffron Walden Town Council be asked to give serious consideration to the recommendations made in the Appraisal Report.

For the duration of the tapered funding an Annual report be made to the Scrutiny Committee.”)

FA32

## **ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKING GROUP 5 NOVEMBER 2009**

Members considered the Minutes of the meeting of the Working Group held on 5 November 2009 which recommended approval of a programme of electoral reviews.

RESOLVED that the following programme of electoral reviews be approved:

- a. A community governance review (terms of reference yet to be decided, but definitely to include Foresthall Park, and the

boundary between Birchanger and Stansted) to begin in June/July 2010.

b. A formal approach be made to both Little Canfield and Takeley parish councils, and to the newly formed residents association, to ascertain their views about future parish arrangements in respect of the Priors Green development site, and whether the residents of Priors Green would benefit from a formal review of boundaries to co-incide with the review proposed in (a) above.

c. A review of parish electoral arrangements throughout Uttlesford to be completed before the parish elections due in May 2011.

d. A review of Returning Officer's fees and charges to be completed by December 2010.

e. A review of polling districts and polling places within the district, or a more limited review of arrangements needing particular attention, to be completed by November 2010.

**FA33 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100(I) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Dean wished to have it minuted that he disagreed with the exclusion of the Press and Public.

**FA34 HERITAGE LOTTERY SITE – NEGOTIATIONS WITH SAINSBURYS**

At the request of Councillor Dean the Chief Executive gave details of these negotiations and the reasons why the agreement in contemplation was regarded as the best obtainable for the Council.

**FA34 SEASON'S GREETINGS**

The Chairman of the Committee wished all present a happy Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm.