

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 15 FEBRUARY 2000**

Present:- Councillor Mrs M A Caton - Chairman
Councillors G R Brown, R P Chambers, R J Copping, A Dean,
M A Gayler, R D Green, D W Gregory, P G F Lewis,
R A Merrion, R J O'Neill, G Sell and Mrs S V Schnieder

Also present: Councillors E C Abrahams, Mrs C A Bayley, W F Bowker,
Mrs C A Cant, Mrs J F Cheetham, R A E Clifford, R C Dean,
Mrs S Flack, Mrs D M Haggerwood, M A Hibbs, E M Hill,
D M Jones, A J Ketteridge, Mrs C M Little, Mrs J E Menell,
D J Morson, G Sell, R C Smith, R W L Stone, A R Thawley and
P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E Forbes, Mrs M Cox, J B Dickson,
A Farrow, Mrs J Postings and P J Snow.

I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M L Foley and
R B Tyler.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to the Maltings Preservation Trust.
Councillor A Dean declared a pecuniary interest in the item on Telecommunications as an employee of British
Telecom.

Councillor Copping declared a non-pecuniary interest in matters relating to the Dunmow Town Strategy Group, the
Maltings Preservation Trust and Business Link (North West Essex).

I. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2000 and the special meeting held on 10 February 2000 were
received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as correct records, subject to the inclusion of the following at Minute
345 of the meeting on 10 February 2000;

"It was agreed that a report be made to a future meeting regarding the progress on the implementation of the CIC at
Thaxted and Stansted".

I. BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute 288 - Draft General Fund Revenue Capital and Leasing Programmes 2000/03

Councillor A Dean asked if a reply had been received from the County Treasurer regarding the opportunity for
the County Council to use this Council's Basic Credit Approval to enable projects in the Uttlesford area to
proceed. The proposal had been agreed in principle by County Council Members and possible schemes were
now being considered by the Capital Programme Management Team. A reply was expected early in March.
Councillor A Dean was given an assurance by Councillor Chambers that this money would only be used to
progress new capital projects in the Uttlesford district.

(ii) Minute 300 Insurance Tender

The Corporate Director - Finance reported that the results of the tender exercise had been further analysed
and the contract had now been awarded. He added that the exercise had been worthwhile resulting in
savings of over £40,000 p.a.

I. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT ESTIMATES AND RENT SETTING 2000/01

The Committee received details of the draft estimates for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and an explanation of the basis of the determination of the rent level for 2000/01. This had already been considered by the Tenants' Panels and the Housing Services Sub-Committee

RESOLVED that

- 1 the estimates as presented be accepted on the basis of an average weekly rent increase of £2.12 in line with the DETR guideline equivalent of 4.3%;
- 2 heating charges as detailed in paragraph 13 of the report to the Housing Services Sub-Committee on 1 February 2000 be revised in accordance with the recommendations of the auditor to produce a reduction in income of £6,000;
- 3 garage rents be increased from £3.80 to £4.00 per week to produce additional income of £6,000;
- 4 sewerage charges to tenants be increased, where necessary, up to the percentage decided for a dwelling rent increase.
- 5 to address the overall shortfall of £169,070 in the budget.
 - (i) Permission be sought from the Secretary of State to transfer up to £75,000 from DSO balances to the HRA in preference to the benefit going to the General Fund;
 - (ii) any remaining shortfall be found from a managed temporary reduction in the repairs programme for 2000/01.
- 6 the dwelling rent multiplier be increased from 1.958 to 2.042, to produce a rent increase of 4.3% in line with DETR guidelines.

I. **DISTRICT COUNCIL BUDGET REQUIREMENT AND COUNCIL TAX 2000/01**

The Corporate Director - Finance presented a report based on the recommendations made by the Policy and Resources Committee at its Special Meeting on 10 February 2000. The report set out the statutory information and recommendations necessary to determine the District Council budget requirements for the 2000/01 Council Tax.

RECOMMENDED that the Council approve the draft Capital Programme 2000/04 and the General Fund Revenue Estimates 2000/01 and adopt the proposals set out in paragraph 23 of the report.

I. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7.50 pm to allow a special meeting of the Council to be held.

The meeting was reconvened at 9.00 pm.

I. **DISTRICT PROMOTION BUDGET WORKING PARTY**

The Minutes of the meeting of the District Promotion Budget Working Party held on 25 January 2000 were received.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham, the Vice-Chairman of the Working Party, said that the Members had struggled to award grants in accordance with the laid down criteria, and this had resulted in the surplus in this budget.

Councillor R P Chambers then proposed the recommendations set out in Minute DP4 with an amendment to recommendation 4 to read "£10,000 to be added as an earmarked reserve for Business Development Services North West Essex, and £10,000 to be added to the budget for the promotion of local centres.

Councillor Chambers considered that Business Development Services was an area in which the Council should become involved. He suggested the £10,000 be placed in an earmarked reserve until such time as a firm proposal was put forward and agreed by the Committee.

Councillor Copping declared a non-pecuniary interest in this matter as he had submitted the bid under DPB(001).

Councillor Copping considered that the whole concept of the District Promotion Budget had been poorly handled. He believed that there was still potential for grants to be awarded under this scheme and asked that the surplus funds remain under this budget head. He did not consider that an earmarked reserve for Business Development Services could be justified at this time. He then proposed an amendment, which was duly seconded, that "the balance of funds remain in the District Promotion Budget".

Councillor Mrs Menell expressed her disappointment at the operation of this scheme. She hoped that those organisations that had not been successful would be given full details of why their bids had not met the criteria. There was general agreement that money under this budget head should not be diverted to fund other schemes. Members felt that the criteria were perhaps too rigid and should be looked at again.

The amendment was then put to the vote and was lost.

Councillor Gayler, seconded by Councillor A Dean, then proposed a further amendment "that the surplus of funds on the District Promotion Budget be added to the General Reserves". On being put to the vote this amendment was carried, and it was therefore

RESOLVED that recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of Minute BP4 - be approved and a new resolution 4 be added to read as follows

4 The balance of funds under the District Promotion budget be added to the General Reserves.

It was further

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the District Promotion Budget Working Party held on 25 January, as amended, be approved and adopted.

I. **PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW WORKING GROUP**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Periodic Electoral Review Working Group held on 7 February 2000 were received. The Committee recalled that the Working Group had been given a brief to submit a scheme for local consultation purposes, and then prepare a final scheme for approval by this Committee to be submitted to the Local Government Commission. A scheme, based on 42 members, had been agreed for consultation purposes in December. Following the responses received the Working Group had considered a number of options to resolve the main objections and had selected a scheme based on 44 Members, as set out in the Minutes.

Since that meeting, Officers had given further thought to the composition of the new warding scheme, and a small number of proposed changes were set out in a supplementary report circulated at the meeting.

Councillor Gayler proposed that the Committee accept the original scheme as set out in the Minutes. He conceded that there were always going to be some areas that were unhappy with the proposals but felt that the recommended scheme was a sensible way forward.

Councillor Mrs Cheetham expressed concern at the proposal to split the Broxted Ward. Some Members felt that an increase to 44 members was a move in the wrong direction, others highlighted that the rural areas appeared to have the highest number of electors per councillor.

Councillor R P Chambers then proposed an amendment which was duly seconded that "the Council adopt the revised warding scheme as set out on the supplementary sheet". The amendment was put to the vote and agreed, on the casting vote of the Chairman.

The Electoral Officer advised the Committee that the internal ward boundaries of Saffron Walden had now been defined. Also, there had been an objection by the National Trust to the naming of the Hatfield Forest Ward. This had been on the grounds that the National Trust was a charitable organisation. The Committee did not consider this to be a valid objection and felt that the name should be retained.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The scheme recommended by the Working Group, as amended by the supplementary schedule attached to these Minutes, be approved for submission to the Local Government Commission. and

2 The Minutes of the meeting of the Periodic Electoral Review Working Group held on 7 February 2000 be approved.

I. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES SERVICE STATEMENT**

The Committee received the Equal Opportunities Service Statement for the Legal Services Business Centre.

RESOLVED that

the Equal Opportunities Services Statement for the Legal Services Business Centre be approved.

I. **HIGHWAYS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Highways Sub-Committee held on 2 February 2000 were received.

(i) **Minute HW34 - Speed Limits in Chelmsford Road Great Dunmow and Barnston**

Councillor Copping was pleased that a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee and hoped that this matter would continued to be pursued.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Highways Sub-Committee held on 2 February 2000 be approved and adopted.

I. **INTERNAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Services Sub-Committee held on 9 February 2000 were received.

(i) **Minute IS40 - Equal Opportunities Service Statement**

Members referred to the recommendation which asked this Committee to consider the principle of holding meetings in different locations throughout the district. Members asked that Officers draw up a possible schedule. Councillor O'Neill asked Members to consider this matter very carefully in terms of any real benefit to the community and also the likely cost implications.

The Home Office had been contacted with regard to the possibility of this Council becoming a pilot authority for electronic voting. The deadline for submitting applications had been the middle of January and only those authorities that were to hold local elections in May this year were eligible.

(ii) **Minute IS43 - Review of Elected Members' Mentoring Scheme**

Councillor Sell was advised of the arrangement for new members of the Council who might be elected at local by-elections, which would be for such Members to be assigned a Member mentor and an Officer advisor.

(iii) **Minute IS48 - Internal Audit Section**

Councillor Copping was very concerned at the content of the Internal Audit Section report. He asked that a report be submitted to a future meeting to report progress in verifying the problems so that more robust procedures were in place.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Services Sub-Committee held on 9 February 2000 be approved and adopted including the following recommendations:

Minute IS40 - Equal Opportunities Service Statement

Minute IS42 - Draft Corporate Training and Development Policy

Minute IS41 - Probationary Period and Procedure

I. BEST VALUE SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the meeting of the Best Value Sub-Committee held on 26 January were received.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Best Value Sub-Committee held on 26 January 2000 be approved and adopted.

I. AIRPORT WORKING PARTY

The Minutes of the meeting of the Airport Working Party held on 18 October 1999 and 17 January 2000 were received.

(i) Minute AP30 - Korean Air Crash

Councillor A Dean had now received a reply from the Minister regarding his representations concerning vetting of airlines. He would circulate this reply to all Members. He also asked for a report on possible land contamination to be submitted to a meeting of the Environmental Services Sub-Committee.

(ii) Minute AP23 - Stansted Airport Update

The Chief Executive updated the Committee on the situation with regard to the recent hijacking. On the afternoon of 11 February, the Council had been advised that it would not be required to provide a reception centre and its involvement in the incident had ceased.

I. HOME OFFICE BID FOR CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION

The Committee was advised that the Council had submitted an application for the installation of a closed circuit TV (CCTV) system in Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow, Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted in the summer of 1999. The application had been successful in passing stage I of the bidding process in all of the centres except Thaxted. A more detailed application for the other three settlements had been submitted and a decision was expected by the end of March 2000. The Partnership considered that a mobile unit in Thaxted would be of benefit to its residents and complement the security measures being installed in the other three settlements. If funding could be made available, it was felt that the initiative should be included in the overall project, but only if the other three settlements were successful in obtaining monies from the Home Office.

RESOLVED that £5,000 be earmarked from savings in the current year's Community Safety budget to be used in the next financial year to provide Thaxted with a mobile CCTV system should the other three settlements be successful in their applications to the Home Office.

I. OVERALL BORROWING LIMIT 2000/01

Members were advised that under the provision of Section 45 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 the Council was required to determine borrowing limits for each financial year.

These limits were for:

- (a) An overall borrowing limit.
- (b) A short-term borrowing limit within the overall borrowing limit.
- (c) A limit on the proportion of the total amount of interest payable by the Council which is at a rate or rates which can be varied by the Lender or by reference to external factors.

RESOLVED that the limits as required by Section 45 for 2000/01 be

a	£5 million
b	£5 million
c	0%

I. **ADDITIONAL COUNCIL MEETING**

Members were asked whether an additional Council Meeting should be held on Tuesday 25 April 2000 to avoid the need to transact both the business arising from the last committee cycle of the current council year and from the Council's Annual Meeting on the same evening. Members had been consulted on this proposal and to date only three members had indicated that they did not agree. It was noted that 25 April was not the only date on which such a meeting could be held.

RECOMMENDED that an additional Council Meeting be held on Tuesday 25 April 2000.

I. **TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2000/01**

In order to provide for any delay there might be in implementing the new political management arrangements, a timetable had been prepared on the basis of the existing committee structure. At this stage it was thought necessary only to timetable two cycles of meetings. It had subsequently become apparent that the meeting of the Housing Services Sub-Committee scheduled for 13 June coincided with the Housing Conference. It was therefore suggested that this meeting be rearranged for 20 June 2000.

RESOLVED that the attached timetable of meetings, as amended, be approved.

I. **MILLENNIUM YOUTH CHALLENGE**

Members were advised on the progress made with regard to the Millennium Youth Challenge.

I. **SERVICE PLAN 2000/01**

Members were given details of the Service Plan 2000/01 for this Committee's services.

I. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100 A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 1, 7 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12 A of the Act.

I. **TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

The Committee was advised of the situation in relation to the tenders received for the supply of new telecommunications equipment. All the tenders were over the budget and the implications were being considered. A full report would be prepared for the next Committee agenda.

I. **TENDERS FOR CASH COLLECTION SERVICE**

Tenders for the cash collection service had been invited from four companies. Two tenders had been received and it was

RESOLVED that the quotation by Securitas UK Limited be accepted for a 3 year period from 1 April 2000, on terms and conditions agreed by the Chief Executive.

I. **WRITE-OFFS**

The Committee received the details of sundry debtors recommended for write-off. In answer to Members' queries, the Corporate Director - Finance confirmed that he was looking to implement new follow-up procedures.

RESOLVED that the Sundry Debtor amounts totalling £13,854.07 be written off.

The meeting ended at 10.25 pm.