

**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at 7.30 pm at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN on 11 APRIL 2000**

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

Officers in attendance:- Mrs E Forbes, G Branchett, Mrs M Cox,  
J B Dickson, A Forrow, R Harborough and B D Perkins.

**I. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs S V Schneider. Councillor Copping declared a non-pecuniary interest in any matters relating to the Dunmow Town Strategy Group and the Maltings Preservation Trust. Councillor Chambers declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to Business Services North West Essex. Councillor O'Neill declared a non-pecuniary interest as Chairman of the Friends of Bridge End Gardens.

**I. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2000 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**I. BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute 348(i) - Draft General Fund Revenue Capital and Leasing Programmes 2000/03**

Councillor Copping referred to a reply from the County Treasurer regarding the opportunity for the County Council to use this Council's Basic Credit Approval. The County Council had indicated that it was interested in using this approval to progress the building of a library in Great Dunmow. Councillor Copping reported that Great Dunmow Town Council would be asking the Council to examine the potential to use the Eastern Sector, Great Dunmow, for this project. The Town Council had welcomed this approach and hoped the project could be progressed in the near future.

In reply to a question from Councillor A Dean, Councillor Chambers reported that the Budget Strategy Working Group had been exploring various options and these would be put before the Committee in due course. Councillor A Dean felt it was important that an interim decision be made before the summer recess, so that the Council had a clear policy steer before the budget making process began in the Autumn.

Councillor Chambers reported that, together with the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee the Corporate Director - Finance, and Sir Alan Haselhurst MP he was going to meet the relevant Minister regarding the loss of the Negative Housing Subsidy and the arrangements for transitional relief.

**(ii) Minute 352 - District Promotion Working Party**

In answer to a question from Councillor Copping, Councillor Tyler advised the Committee of matters discussed at the last meeting of Business Development Services (North West Essex).

**I. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in paragraphs 1, 8 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

**I. FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL'S WORK BASED TRAINING SCHEME**

The Committee was advised that for many years the Council had provided a Work Based Training Scheme for young people in the District, through a supplier agreement with the Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC). The Head

of Personnel and Contract Services reported that significant factors had now arisen which questioned the continuing viability of the scheme. The number of provisions required by the Training Standards Council meant it was inevitable that more administrative support would be required to continually monitor, enforce and promote the required training arrangements. It had also not been possible to operate the scheme financially at a break-even level. The employee who operated the Scheme would be leaving the Council shortly and this knowledge and experience would be very difficult to replace. Over the last few years there had been an increasing trend for other work based training suppliers to secure trainees from within the District and for local schools to provide and promote a wider range of post-16 studies. Consequently there was a diminishing supply of young people wishing to pursue work based training, and which limited any realistic growth opportunities which might help to provide a justification for more administrative support and improve the financial operating position. Members discussed the details of the situation and agreed that the factors outlined in the report cast serious doubt on the viability of continuing with the Council's supplier agreement. Members wanted to be assured that those young people already on the Scheme would be found alternative suppliers.

RESOLVED that

- 1 formal notice be given immediately to the Essex Training and Enterprise Council to terminate the Council's supplier agreement for the provision of work based training,
- 2 the post of Assistant Vocational Training Officer be declared redundant and formal redundancy consultations commence with immediate effect and any financial consequences be met from appropriate budgets, and
- 3 a report be made to a future meeting on the success in finding alternative placements for trainees.

The public were then readmitted to the meeting.

## I. ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

### (i) Former Tenant Rent Arrears

The Committee received the list of former tenant rent arrears of over £700 that had been recommended for write-off at the Housing Services Sub-Committee on 21 March 2000.

RESOLVED that the former tenant rent arrears totalling £6,802.34 be written off.

### (ii) Large Scale Grants/Ad-hoc Grants Budgets 2000/01

On 16 March 2000 the Amenities Sub-Committee had recommended that the unspent balances for the previous years Large Scale Grants and Ad-Hoc Grants budgets be carried forward to the 2000/01 budget.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the unspent balance of £580.88 be carried forward to the Large Scale Grants Budget 2000/01, and
- 2 the unspent balance of £935.00 be carried forward to the Ad-Hoc Grants Budget 2000/01.

## I. FINAL ACCOUNTS

The Corporate Director - Finance presented a report which asked Members' to approve two separate issues regarding earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED that

- 1 any additional General Fund surplus, beyond that forecast in the Council's budget, be added to the Housing - New Financial Framework Reserve when the accounts 1999/00 were closed, and
- 2 the DSO Reinvestment Reserve be used, as far as possible, to make revenue contributions to capital to finance the purchase of Contract Services vehicle and plant.

## I. UTTLESFORD LOCAL AGENDA 21 STRATEGY

The Committee recalled that all local authorities were required to adopt a Local Agenda 21 Strategy by the year 2000, and this Council had agreed that a strategy should be prepared by April. A draft strategy had been prepared and circulated to all Members and some of the Council's partners. A workshop for Members and the Local Agenda 21 Forum had subsequently been held. Some changes had been recommended to the draft document and these were outlined in the report. There were further issues still to be discussed, including the identification of indicators and targets both for the Council and its partners.

Arrangements had been made for a formal launch of the consultation at the Uttlesford Local Agenda 21 Forum meeting on 13 June. The consultation period would extend to Monday 4 September. A summary of the strategy would be available and a leaflet could be prepared identifying how individuals and local groups could make a contribution to achieving particular targets. There might be scope for a competition among young people to design the most appropriate promotional material linked to this.

Councillor Dean referred to page 10 of the draft strategy document which set out targets for the number of passengers and employees arriving at the airport by car. This was expressed in terms of a percentage and he suggested that an absolute target would be more meaningful. He proposed that in the case of passengers arriving by car, the target for the year 2004 should be the same number of cars as in the year 2000. Some Members agreed that the document should be more vigorous in its targets relating to the Airport, to ensure that public transport became the primary means for both passengers and staff to travel to and from the airport. However, others queried whether this target was realistic. Officers would need to check the figures circulated by Councillor Dean before including them in the draft LA21 Strategy.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Draft Strategy be approved for consultation, subject to the amendments set out in the report,
- 2 the consultation arrangements outlined above be approved, and
- 3 the principle of the absolute total of passengers and employees going to Stansted Airport by car being the same in 2004 as in 2000 be agreed.

## I. MODERNISING POLITICAL DECISION MAKING FOR THE COUNCIL

Further to the decision of the Council in November 1999 agreeing the principle of a new structure, the Organisation Joint Working Party had continued to meet and develop the principles involved. The Local Government Bill was currently proceeding through Parliament and a number of amendments had been made which had been noted by the Working Party. The main House of Lords amendment had effectively provided for a local authority to retain a committee based structure. The formal Government response to this amendment was awaited.

The report set out the proposed structure and main roles of the Council, Executive and Select Panels. It also referred to the procedural changes that would be required to Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Terms of Reference and Delegation. A suggested timetable for the introduction of the new structures was proposed. It was now suggested that a trial of the new arrangements should be introduced from October 2000 with full implementation from May 2001. A process of public consultation had originally been planned for early February. This had been postponed because of other pressures and commitments and it was now proposed to pursue this after the position with respect to the legislation was clearer.

Councillor O'Neill was unhappy with the use of the term 'Select Panel'. He said this had an analogy with central government and did not reflect fully the role of these bodies. He further proposed that "the name 'Select Panel' be reconsidered and the matter be brought back to the Policy and Resources Committee for decision". Some Members questioned the proposal delaying the public consultation process. There was no indication of when the Government's response to the House of Lords amendment might be received and Members felt that the process of public consultation should be commenced shortly. Councillor Gayler proposed an amendment that "the timetable for the preparation and implementation as set out in annex 4 be approved, subject to delegating the consultation arrangements to the Organisation Joint Working Party". On being put to the vote, the amendment was carried.

Councillor Gayler hoped that the Organisation Joint Working Party would still have the opportunity to consider additional matters and proposed that "the Organisation Joint Working Party be given the authority to investigate area forums". On being put to the vote this proposal was lost on the casting vote of the Chairman.

Councillor Tyler believed that any member should be allowed to attend and speak at any meeting and the reference to 'at the invitation of the Chairman' should be omitted from the relevant outline Standing Order.

RECOMMENDED that

- 1 the structure and roles set out in Appendices 1 and 2 to the report be approved as a basis for detailed planning,
- 2 the outline proposals for revised Standing Orders be agreed, in principle, as a basis for future work,
- 3 the timetable for preparation and implementation as set out in appendix 4 be approved, subject to the timing of the consultation arrangements being delegated to the Organisation Joint Working Party,
- 4 the name 'Select Panel' be re-examined and a new proposal be brought back to the Committee for consideration.

#### **I. HOME OFFICE BID FOR CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION (CCTV)**

Members were advised that the Council had been successful in its bid to the Home Office for a Capital Grant for CCTV at Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Stansted Mountfitchet. Due to the complexity of this project, a specialist Home Office consultant had been engaged by the Council to assist with the specification and tendering process. Once this process was completed, it was anticipated that the work to install the systems would take up to eight months, and it was hoped that it would be up and running by April 2001. However, the Council might have to seek permission from the Secretary of State to install the cameras on any historical/listed buildings. Provisional discussions with British Telecom had indicated that the on-going revenue cost was likely to be in the region of £25,000 per annum.

Councillor Gregory asked whether the mobile units for Thaxted could be used at other locations in the District. This matter would be considered at a later date.

RESOLVED that the CCTV scheme be included in the Capital Programme for 2000/01, to be funded by a Home Office Grant of £278,400, subject to the adjustments set out in paragraph 7 of the report.

#### **I. BEST VALUE REVIEWS 2000/01**

The Committee was asked to approve the Terms of Reference for the Best Value reviews planned for 2000/01. It was noted that, due to the decision made earlier in the meeting, the review of Work Based Training would not now take place. It was envisaged that, for all the reviews, there would be a small reference group of Members who would act as a sounding board for the officer teams working on the reviews. It was suggested that three Members be appointed for each review. The Leader of the Council considered that the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Group should nominate a representative for each review; the Independent Group a representative for four reviews; and the Labour Group a representative for one review.

The Corporate Director - Development said that the Terms of Reference for Housing Services review had been sent to the tenant representatives. A special meeting had been held with the Thaxted Community Group in order to explain the statutory process. At that meeting, the tenants had expressed satisfaction with the existing service provided by the Council and were concerned at the possible transfer of housing stock. However, they understood that this matter had to be considered as part of the review. A tenant panel representative would be part of the Housing Services Review team and all tenants would be kept informed of progress.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Terms of Reference for the five reviews for 2000/01 be approved, and

- 2 Group Leaders pass names of Members to be nominated for each Review Team to the Chief Executive before the next meeting of the Council.

## **I. THE ESSEX APPROACH**

The Committee received the Essex County Council's new Community Plan which was to be ratified at the Association of Essex Councils meeting on 13 April. The objectives and policies set out in the document were broadly based, and there was a degree of commonality with Uttlesford's own strategic objectives, as set out in the Best Value Performance Plan.

RESOLVED that the Essex Approach be endorsed and supported by Uttlesford at the AEC meeting on 13 April 2000.

## **I. PROJECT TO ESTABLISH CICs - STANSTED MOUNTFITCHET/THAXTED**

The Committee was given details of the work to be undertaken to consider the potential for establishing Community Information Centres (CICs) in Stansted Mountfitchet and Thaxted. A working group of officers had been convened to consider the options available. The existing budget allocation was probably not sufficient for a comprehensive CIC service and the important initial task was to carry out research into the need for such a facility before making a commitment to increase budgetary provision. A company would be appointed to assist with the survey, and the provision of £5,000 in last year's budget could be earmarked to meet the cost of this work. It was hoped that the results would be available for the Policy and Resources Committee meeting in July. In the meantime, the working group would continue to develop partnership arrangements and look at suitable premises for each village. Any premises were likely to need adaptation for use as a CIC facility, and it was suggested that the capital allocation of £35,000 from last year's Capital Programme be rolled forward into this financial year for this purpose.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the 1999/2000 Revenue Budget of £5,000 towards running a CIC in Thaxted/Stansted Mountfitchet be earmarked for use in the current financial year to meet the cost of a survey to ascertain the demand for CICs in Thaxted and Stansted Mountfitchet and other preparatory work associated with the project, and
- 2 the £35,000 allocated in the 1999/00 Capital Programme be carried forward into the current financial year for use in the set-up costs of CICs in Thaxted/Stansted Mountfitchet,

## **I. BARCLAYS BANK, THAXTED**

Arising on the above item, the Committee discussed the closure of Barclays Bank branch in Thaxted. Following the announcement of the closure, a meeting had been held between a Director of Barclays and Councillor Chambers, Councillor Mrs Caton, the Corporate Director - Finance and the Chief Executive. The meeting had discussed a proposed joint arrangement which might provide locally based information, banking and community services, by the possible use of the town centre branch. The Director of Barclays had agreed to look further at this proposal and come back to the Council in due course. Councillor Foley expressed strong concern that, as a local member, he had not been advised of the meeting before the relevant press release had been issued. Other Members regretted the closure and asked for details of what had been discussed at the meeting and it was agreed that the briefing note prepared by the Chief Executive would be circulated to all Members.

## **I. REPORTS OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

### **(i) Most Sparsely Populated Councils - Special Interest Group**

The Committee received a report from Councillor R Green and the Corporate Director - Finance on the meeting of the most Sparsely Populated Councils' Special Interest Group that had been held on 20 March 2000.

## **I. HIGHWAYS SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Highways Sub-Committee held on 22 March 2000 were received.

**(i) Minute HW44 - Locally Determined Budget Programme 2000/01**

Councillor Foley asked that the views of the parish council be taken into account when the scheme for the proposed 40mph speed limit at Cutlers Green was drafted.

**(ii) Minute HW46 - Saffron Walden Town Centre**

In answer to a question from Councillor O'Neill, Members were advised that the views of district councillors has on the scheme would be sought shortly.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Highways Sub-Committee held on 22 March 2000 be approved and adopted, including the following recommendation:-

Minute HW44 - Locally Determined Budget Programme 2000/01.

**I. INTERNAL SERVICES SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Services Sub-Committee held on 5 April 2000 were received.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Internal Services Sub-Committee held on 5 April 2000 be approved and adopted, including the following recommendation:-

Minutes IS52 - IT Working Party (i) Telecommunications

**I. 1999/2000 POLICY AND RESOURCES AND GENERAL FUND BUDGET MONITORING REPORTS**

The Committee received the third budgetary control report for the Policy and Resources Committee and the General Fund for 1999/00.

**I. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(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 12A of the Act.

**I. WRITE-OFFS**

The Committee was given details of sundry debtor amounts recommended for write-off.

RESOLVED that the sundry debtor amounts totalling £11,440.97 be written-off.

**I. FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION**

The Corporate Director - Finance presented a report which addressed issues that had been raised in the six monthly internal audit report presented to the Internal Services Sub-Committee on 9 February 2000.

The meeting at 10.30 pm.