

**RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD  
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.00pm on 20 NOVEMBER 2003**

Present:- Councillor M A Gayler – Chairman  
Councillors R P Chambers, R J Copping, A Dean,  
A J Ketteridge, S C Jones, A R Row, M J Savage and  
P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance:- M Brean, P O'Dell, J B Dickson, C W Hughes,  
R Kirmani, J Mitchell, I Orton and M Perry

**RE40 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor M L Foley.  
Councillor R P Chambers declared an interest in item RE 44 as being a  
member of Essex County Council.

**RE41 SAS REPORT ON FINAL ACCOUNTS**

The Chairman welcomed Mr L Wilcock from the Audit Commission.  
Laurie Wilcock informed the Committee that the Audit Commission was  
responsible for undertaking an Audit and reporting on whether the Council's  
financial statements presented fairly its financial position, income and  
expenditure. The Auditors were also required to report any inconsistencies on  
the disclosures made by the Council.

The Council had produced draft Financial Statements before the  
30 September 2003 deadline and the Auditors had substantially completed  
the audit of those financial statements.

A revised Statement of Auditing Standards (SAS), SAS 610 reporting to those  
charged with governance was applicable for the first time to the audit of the  
Uttlesford District Council's Accounts. It required auditors to report to those  
charged with governance (as distinct from management) of certain matters  
before they give an opinion on the financial statements. He confirmed that  
there was nothing in the Accounts which was found to be misleading or  
uncertain.

**RE42 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2003 were received,  
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**RE43 BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Minute RE18(i)- Community Support Officers**

The Director of Resources confirmed that there were now five Community Support Officers working in Saffron Walden and Great Dunmow areas.

**(ii) Minute RE 18(iii) Risk Management Group**

The Director of Resources reported that he had received the Strategic Risk Management Report last week and he would circulate it to Members/Officers. A number of meetings had taken place to assist in identifying and prioritising risks.

**(iii) Minute RE 22 Outcome of Parish Review**

In response to Members query the Director of Resources reported on the updated position of the outcome of the Parish Council Review. Essex Association of Local Councils (EALC) had prepared a draft budget for the new Parish of Swards End.

It was agreed that an update be submitted to the next meeting on the EALC'S proposed budget for the new Swards End Parish Council.

**(iii) Electoral Commission Consultation Paper On the Minimum Age of Voting and Candidacy in UK Elections**

The Director of Resources reported that a letter had been sent to Sir Alan Haselhurst MP drawing his attention to EDM746, and a response had been received.

**RE44**

**ESSEX MARKETPLACE – APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

The Performance Manager asked Members to agree that Uttlesford District Council join the Essex Marketplace. The Marketplace is the country wide initiative enabling on-line procurement. Membership of Essex Marketplace would be instrumental in the implementation of e- procurement within the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Council to become a member of the Essex Marketplace during the three years 2004/05 to 2006/07 inclusive,
- 2 officers to identify areas of potential saving from joining the Essex Procurement Agency & Essex Marketplace – the relevant budgets be reduced to fund the subscription fees of £10,600 for 2004/05, £23,600 for 2005/06 and £23,600 for 2006/07 for the three year membership with a savings target of three-times these subscriptions;
- 3 the membership of the Essex Procurement Agency & Essex Marketplace be reviewed by the Member Procurement Task Group on a regular basis.

**RE45 CAPITALISATION OF PENSION FUND DEFICIENCY CONTRIBUTION**

The Director of Resources reported that further to this Committees previous directions to investigate the opportunities available to the Council to make a capital payment towards the Pension Fund deficit, Members were requested to consider the current position. The Essex Pension Funds Actuary had been requested to provide updated information regarding the Fund's estimated position applicable to Uttlesford District Council as at 31 March 2003.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Director of Resources in consultation with the Chairman of Resources Committee to submit a request to the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) for a direction under S40 (6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to take effect before 31 March 2004;
- 2 the capital lump sum payment to be between £3m and £5m in order to eliminate deficiency payment for the four year period 2004/05 to 2007/08;
- 3 the Actuary to confirm that the deficiency was outside the Fund/Council's control;
- 4 the Director of Resources to consider matters such as creating a reserve and report back to a future meeting.

**RE46 GENERAL FUND BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee considered a summary of budget variations upto 31 October 2003 on the General Fund for the current financial year. Details on significant variations and any remedial actions which had been taken were considered.

RESOLVED that

- 1 regular budget monitoring reports be submitted to the appropriate committee and accounted for by the Heads of Services;
- 2 regular overall General Budget Monitoring reports be submitted to the Resources Committee;

**RE47 RESOURCES COMMITTEE POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGET 2004/05**

The Committee received a report which outlined the initial draft General Fund revised estimated direct costs and income for 2003/04 and estimates for next year, 2004/05, prepared on the basis of existing approved levels of service. Also included in the report and in Appendix 2 was information regarding the Budget Review Items identified at the previous meeting of this Committee.

As far as this Committee's own budget was concerned, Members noted those budget variances highlighted in Appendix 2 to the report and agreed the general approach being adopted at this stage.

## RESOLVED that

- 1 the revised 2003/04 budget and draft 2004/05 budget be approved;
- 2 this Committee to set itself a target of £80,000 savings and/or additional income and to report back to the next Resources Committee;
- 3 a further report on Service Plans and Draft budget proposals be prepared for consideration at the next meeting of this Committee on 22 January 2004.

RE48

**GENERAL FUND POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05**

The Director of Resources introduced a detailed report bringing together developments from this cycle of Committees in preparing the Council's General Fund Budget for 2004/05. The Committee considered base budgets, proposals for budget growth and reductions and other key factors in setting the budget. The report proposed a three year indicative strategy to ensure that acceptable Council Tax levels were balanced with the Council's aspirations for service improvements. An overall budget summary covering a three year period as attached as Appendix 1 to the report was discussed.

## RECOMMENDED to Council

- 1 that Committees be instructed to amend their budget to meet the revised 2004/05 Committee totals as below:

	2004/5 Budget from Appendix 1	Budget Review Items Agreed	Additional Target	Revised Committee Total
Resources	£4,459,870	(£51,550)	(£80,000)	£4,328,320
Environment & Transport	£1,842,410	(£166,000)	(£50,000)	£1,626,410
Dev't Control & Licensing	£374,600	£0	£0	£374,600
Health & Housing	£766,100	(£3,000)	(£10,000)	£753,100
Community & Leisure	£1,292,750	£85,800	(£20,000)	£1,368,550

- 2 Best Value reviews be funded from within the services to which they relate;
- 3 a maximum indicative Council Tax of 7.5% be confirmed for 2004/05;
4. Officers to advise on best practice for the construction & ownership of budgets & fees for semi- judicial committees;
5. that CAB & other relevant Groups be reviewed thoroughly by Community & Leisure Committee during 2004 with the intention of starting new 3 years agreements from 2005/06;
6. that budget consultations be carried out using existing focus groups.

**RE49 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS and PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and 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 7 and 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Access to information Act 1972.

**RE50 COMPENSATION CLAIM**

The Head of Legal Services informed the Members regarding a claim for compensation and requested authority to settle the claim.

RESOLVED that the Head of Legal Services be authorised to negotiate a settlement of the claim without recourse to the Lands Tribunal.

**RE51 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting for the remaining items of business.

**RE52 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS****ADOPTION LEAVE**

The Chairman certified the above item as urgent as an employee had requested adoption leave. Members were asked to agree the local agreement to allow employee's taking adoption leave to receive the equivalent benefits to that received by women on maternity leave and that current Personnel Policy notes were amended to show this local agreement.

RESOLVED that In order to treat employees fairly and equitably, the Personnel Policy be amended to give eligible employees who adopt a child an equivalent occupational pay to the occupational maternity pay, i.e ,

1. Weeks 1-6: 9/10 of a week's pay ( amount includes SMP or Maternity Allowance);
2. Week 7-18: If the employee declares in writing that s/he intends to return to work s/he will receive half pay without deduction except to the extent that the half pay plus SMP (or MA and any dependant's allowances if not eligible for SMP) exceeds full pay. This Occupational Adoption Pay (OAL) is paid on the understanding that the employee will return to local authority employment for at least 3 months. If the employee does not intend to return to work, s/he is entitled to receive SMP only;

WEEKS 19-26: For the remaining 8 Weeks the employee will receive their SMP entitlement.

**RE53 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and 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 7 and 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Access to information Act 1972.

**RE54 A NEW FUTURE FOR GOLDS NURSERIES**

The Committee discussed the current position at Golds Nurseries Business Park. They considered a fresh approach to make lettings more attractive and to raise the reputation of the Business Park.

RESOLVED that

- 1 £5,000 be approved for rebranding the site to become the Golds Enterprise Zone;
- 2 £9,000 be approved to match fund a bid for the installation of CCTV on the site;
- 3 that 1 and 2 above be met from reserves, subject to any increase in rental income be used to repay the cost;
- 4 greater flexibility be granted to the Managing Agent to negotiate the principal terms of the lease as described in paragraph 15 and 16 of the report;
- 5 A report on progress of this initiative be submitted to the Resources Committee in June 2004 and regular reports be requested from the Managing Agents.

**RE55 READMISSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting for the remaining items of business.

**RE56 CONFIRMATION OF OFFICERS ACTIONS**

**DUNMOW LEISURE CENTRE**

The Director of Resources reported that this Ombudsman case was discussed at the Leisure (PIF) Board meeting on 16 July 2003. At that meeting it was agreed to approve up to £6,000 to fund fencing and landscaping work in connection with the issues raised by the neighbours to

the Helena Romanes School, Great Dunmow, which involved siting of the access road to the Leisure Centre.

As the expenditure was in connection with an Ombudsman case it was felt that the Committee should be informed.

In accordance with Financial Regulations, it was necessary to confirm the action taken by officers, in consultation with the Vice Chairman of this Committee, to authorise the required expenditure.

RESOLVED that the action taken to authorise expenditure from the Financial Management Reserve, in consultation with the Vice Chairman of this Committee, be confirmed.

**RE57 VARIATION TO CORPORATE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SCHEME**

The Members received a report outlining the details of the Corporate Occupational Health Scheme operated at the three Leisure Centres in the District.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Members be entitled to join the Corporate Occupational Health Scheme, operated by Leisure Connection, under the same terms and conditions as Officers.
- 2 That the fee of £1 per month to cover the administration costs be abolished as recognition of the Council's encouragement for the health of the Council's people.

**RE58 CONTRACT SERVICES – FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The Contract Services Manager reported on the Contract Services financial performance for the seven months up to 31 October 2003.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the report on financial performance of Contract Services be noted.
- 2 Further similar reports be submitted as necessary.

**RE59 RATING REVALUATION of the LORD BUTLER FITNESS & LEISURE CENTRE AND the FORMER DUNMOW LEISURE CENTRE**

The Members were informed of the developments in the national rating of local authority owned leisure centres for the purpose of National Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) with particular reference to the Lord Butler Fitness and Leisure Centre and the former Dunmow Leisure Centre. The Council had appealed against the methods used by the Valuation Office Agency to calculate the rateable value of leisure centre premises. They were

further informed that an agreement had been reached between all parties concerned and the appeal had been withdrawn.

The rateable value for both leisure centres had been reduced considerably resulting in a refund of backdated Business Rates up to the date that they transferred to Leisure Connection.

RESOLVED that the content of this report be noted and Officers be congratulated for their efforts in achieving the refund.

RE60

### **COUNCIL TAX – CHANGES FOR SECOND HOMES AND LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES**

The Committee received a further report which advised the Members of the changes contained in the Local Government Act, which came into effect on 18 November 2003. The Government proposed to allow local authorities discretion to reduce or end the discount for second homes, discounts for long term empty properties and locally defined discounts. It also allowed Local Authorities to create their discounts and exemptions in response to local factors.

After further discussion, the proposal having been seconded was put to the vote and carried.

RECOMMENDED to Council that subject to the agreement by the Director of Resources (in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee) with the County Council that at least 50% of the County Council's share of the additional income should be returned to Uttlesford District Council through increased contributions to Local Service Agreements:-

- 1 the existing discount for second homes be reduced from 50% to the minimum 10%;
- 2 the existing discount for unfurnished long term empty homes be removed;
- 3 no locally defined discounts be approved at this time;
- 4 a letter to be sent to the Minister for Local Government requesting that the additional income received under (2) above should be allowed to be kept locally.

RE61

### **IEG3 STATEMENT**

The Head of Information Technology informed the Members of the decision taken by the E Government Task Group to submit an Implementing Electronic Government 3 (IEG3) Statement to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM ) by the deadline of 10 November 2003. The Government had set a target that by 2005 all appropriate Council services will be available electronically.



RESOLVED that the decision of the E Government Task Group to submit the IEG3 statement to the ODPM be confirmed.

**RE62 ANTI- FRAUD POLICY**

The Committee considered a draft Anti – Fraud Policy for Housing and Council Tax benefit fraud. As part of the recent Revenues Best Value review, a self-assessment of the Anti–Fraud function was carried out, this exercise identified the need for a written Anti Fraud Policy.

RESOLVED that the Anti-Fraud Policy be approved.

**RE63 PERSONNEL STRATEGY**

The Head of Personnel and Office Services requested Members to consider the draft personnel strategy and if adopted then to consider the development of a costed implementation plan, linked to the Corporate Plan.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Personnel Strategy be approved;
- 2 the Members be mentioned specifically and included in the strategy and plan as appropriate;
- 3 the Head of Personnel and Office Services to work with Members, Staff and Unison to develop a costed implementation plan.

**RE64 HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE PPN 13 - UPDATE**

The Committee noted that the attached Personnel Policy Note, 13 Harassment Policy and Procedure had been in place since September 2000. The PPN sets out the Council's policy statement and procedure for dealing with complaints of harassment at work. The current PPN applied to both Members and Employees and this had been continued in the updated version.

RESOLVED that The updated Harassment Policy and Procedure Note PPN13 be approved subject to inclusion of words 'and Members' in the first line of the Policy.

**RE65 RACE EQUALITY SCHEME**

The Members considered the draft Race Equality Schemes (RES), Appendix A as required by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA 2000). The Race Equality Scheme was a written strategy and plan outlining how Uttlesford District Council intended to meet its duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Race Equality Scheme be adopted;
- 2 the annual sum of £ 1,100 be paid to the Essex Race Equality Council as part of an Essex wide partnership funding agreement;
- 3 a similar sum ( as 2 above )be built into the budget for the following years.

**RE66 STAFFING UPDATE**

The Committee noted the table of staff vacancies. The Members instructed the Heads of Service that they must consider all options before a vacancy was required to be filled.

RESOLVED that the current Recruitment to Vacancy Form be developed to take into account, for example, Council priorities, future legislative change, BV review timetables, redistribution of tasks, opportunities to make use of new technologies and partnership working.

**RE67 INTERNAL AUDIT PARTNERSHIP**

The Director of Resources requested that the internal audit partnership with the Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) be made permanent from the 1 April 2004 as benefits to both authorities included consolidating budgetary savings and more sustainable service delivery.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Internal Audit Partnership with Stevenage Borough Council (SBC)be made permanent from 1 April 2004;
- 2 SBC act as host authority for the partnership;
- 3 both authorities jointly draw up an agreement reflecting the partnership operation;
- 4 Councillors Gayler, Jones and Lemon remain on the Audit Partnership Committee for the remainder of this civic year.

**RE68 DUNMOW OFFICES AND DEPOT**

Members considered a report which provided further information regarding the Depot and offices site in Great Dunmow as requested by the Resources Committee on 18 September 2003. The report related to land use and value and requested guidance as to the way forward.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Officers to consult on the possibility of a two year lease and not beyond April 2006, with the voluntary sector for use of the Great

- Dunmow offices, not currently required by the District Council, as a voluntary sector centre and report back to the next meeting;
- 2 Consultants be appointed in conjunction, with the Leader, Chairman of Resources Committee, to undertake a comprehensive options appraisal, to be funded from reserves, for completion by April 2004 with a report to the following meeting of this Committee;
  - 3 A Member/Officer Working Group be established to oversee (2) above and the subsequent project in consultation/conjunction with relevant partners.

The meeting ended at 10.15 pm.