

**RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30 pm on 22 JANUARY 2004**

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

Also present:- Councillors C A Bayley, K J Clarke, E W Hicks and
S Flack.

Tenants Representative: Mr G Shaw was also present.

Officers in attendance: A Bovaird, M Brean, P O'Dell, J B Dickson, R Kirmani,
I Orton and P Snow.

RE69 **APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R J Copping
Councillor R P Chambers declared an interest as being a member of Essex
Police Authority.

RE70 **WELCOME THE NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

The Chairman welcomed Alasdair Bovaird, the new Chief Executive, to his
first meeting of the Resources Committee.

RE71 **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2003 were received,
confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

RE72 **BUSINESS ARISING**

**(i) Council Tax – Changes For Second Homes And Long Term Empty
Homes**

Councillor Dean said that he had sent a letter to the Minister for Local
Government requesting that the additional income received if the existing
discount for long term empty homes was removed should be allowed to be
kept locally. He had received a response on 16 December 2003. The Minister
had pointed out in his letter that local authorities should take the decision to
reduce the discount on long term property on housing grounds and not as a
tax raising measure. The Director of Resources reported that Essex County
Council had agreed not less than 60% of its share of the new additional
income from second homes would be returned to the Uttlesford District
Council to reimburse expenditure on concurrent functions. The amount was
estimated to be around £40,000.

RE73 NEW HOUSING CAPITAL OPPORTUNITIES

The Committee welcomed Members of the Health and Housing Committee and the tenants representative to the meeting. The Director of Resources outlined the main changes for housing capital arising from the new Capital Finance Regulations. The report confirmed and explained the arrangements for the national pooling of capital receipts from April 2004 and also the transitional measures available to debt-free authorities such as Uttlesford.

The new opportunities made available for the next few years were explained, and recommendations identifying a realistically deliverable three year Programme would be presented to this Committee on 3 February

RESOLVED that

- 1 Officers to prepare the draft Housing Capital Programme which would identify a realistically deliverable three year programme of additional work;
- 2 Officers, Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of the Resources Committee, Health and Housing Committee and appropriate Scrutiny Committee (s) to meet and discuss the draft Housing Capital Programme before the meeting of this Committee on 3 February 2004.

**RE74 CONFIRMATION OF OFFICERS ACTIONS
MARKET SUPPLEMENT FOR PLANNING OFFICERS**

The Director of Resources reported that Market Supplements for two years to be paid for by the Planning Delivery Grant, had been authorised by Officers in consultation with the Chairman of this Committee.

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

RESOLVED that the action taken by officers in consultation with the Chairman of Resources Committee to approve Market Supplement for two years, funded by the Planning Delivery Grant, be confirmed.

RE75 RESOURCES COMMITTEE POLICY PRIORITIES AND BUDGETS 2004/05

The Committee received a report which finalised the Committee's General Fund Budgets for 2004/05, based on guidance issued by the Council and subject to this Committee's review of the Council's overall financial position at its meeting on 3 February 2004. The report contained details of the Committee's base budgets, including direct costs and recharges, together with budget growth or reductions previously considered. The report also reflected the decisions taken at the Council meeting on 16 December to reduce the previously set savings targets for this Committee. The figures contained in the report were subject to final checks for consistency and accuracy and did not include the revenue effects of any new capital programme items, the impact on internal charges of any growth or savings, or

effect on this Committee of budget items included within the Corporate Quality of Life Plan.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that

- 1 the draft budgets for 2004/05 contained in Appendix 1 be approved;
- 2 the savings options contained in paragraph 9 of the report be approved;
- 3 the budget for the appointment of a part-time audit post for a fixed term of one year as outlined in paragraph 10 of the report be approved.

RE76

BUDGET STRATEGY – GENERAL FUND SUMMARY – 2004/05

The Committee considered a brief summary report on the updated overall estimated General Fund budget position for 2004/05. Due to several outstanding issues being delayed it had not been possible to produce the usual comprehensive overall summary. This would now be submitted to the Extraordinary Resources Committee on 3 February 2004.

RESOLVED that officers be instructed to prepare the final budget report to the Extraordinary meeting of this Committee on 3 February 2004.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that

- 1 the overall District Council Requirement of £7,253,960 be confirmed;
- 2 the preferred 2004/05 indicative Council Tax increase of 7.5% be confirmed.

RE77

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The Performance Manager reported on progress with the introduction of a Performance Management System within Uttlesford. The report recommended the layout of the reporting mechanism and the process to resolve issues of underperformance.

The report also recommended that performance monitoring would be reported to the Scrutiny Committee(s) and that they could refer any issues to the appropriate policy committee.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the suggested range of performance measures, performance targets, including the use of traffic light systems and smiley faces be approved;

- 2 the intention to report the Performance Review Data to Scrutiny Committee(s) be noted
- 3 the requirement for any red indicators to have a Rescue Recovery Package from the relevant manager incorporated into the report be noted.

RE78 RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Resources requested that Members confirm the action taken by the Member/Officer Risk Management Steering Group to approve a Risk Management Strategy and then to submit it to the Audit Commission as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) submission papers.

RESOLVED that the decision of the Member/Officer Risk Management Steering Group to approve and submit the Risk Management Strategy to the Audit Commission as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment submissions be confirmed.

RE79 SEWARDS END PARISH COUNCIL

The Electoral Services Officer reported the arrangements for the creation of a new Parish Council in Swards End. He outlined the details of the level of precept that would be required by the Parish Council for the first year of operation and other administrative arrangements.

RESOLVED that the proposed precept of £11,080 on behalf of Swards End Parish Council for the year commencing 1 April 2004, as set out in detail in the Appendix attached to the report, be approved.

RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL that the proposed arrangements for the appointment of Parish Councillors to take office on 1 April 2004, until 31 March 2005, or until such time as an election of Parish Councillors could be held, whichever is the earlier, be approved.

RE80 DUNMOW OFFICES AND DEPOT

Members considered a report regarding the Dunmow Offices and Depot which was probably the most important site included in the approved Asset Management Plan for future development. The plans required a full option appraisal of the combined office and depot site. It was anticipated that the new depot site at Chelmsford Road, Great Dunmow would be available during 2006 with a transfer away from the current site later that year.

The report updated Members on progress since the last Resources Committee on 20 November 2003. The Scrutiny Committee 2 had referred back the decisions of this Committee for reconsideration.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the wording for the property advisors advertisement and the additional guidance information for undertaking a comprehensive options appraisal be approved to allow an appointment to be made as soon as possible;
- 2 best endeavours be used to investigate the provision of long-term accommodation within the district for the voluntary sector. Failing no better option, to undertake to provide accommodation for the voluntary sector within Dunmow;
- 3 temporary accommodation for the voluntary sector should be provided within the existing council offices on the same terms as currently apply to Stortford Road ie £6/7 sq ft plus service charges and that the minimum required works costing around £3,000 to provide for disabled access be carried out;
- 4 an additional Member from the Conservative Group be appointed to the Member/Officer Working Group;
- 5 the terms of reference for the appointment of consultants (item 4 (b) of the report) to include a line ' and to have regard to the Access to Services Review that is being undertaken'.

RE81

ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(i) E-Government Task Group – Essex Online Virement

The Director of Resources reported that the Council continued to actively participate in the Essex Online Partnership (EOLP) and would lead a study into registration and authentication of online transactions. However, there were relatively few tangible outcomes from various EOLP projects taking place during the current financial year. As a consequence around £16,000 of the £30,000 budget would not be spent, instead it was proposed to allocate part of this budget to the development of online Revenue Services. This work was presently unfunded.

RESOLVED that the sum of £10,000 to be vired from Essex Online Partnership capital budget to the E-Services Development (General) capital budget, in accordance with Financial Regulation FF3 be approved.

(ii) Scrutiny Committee 2 – Revenue Services Best Value Review Improvement Plan

The Head of Revenue Services reported the details of the Best Value review of Revenue Services and Anti-Fraud Team. The Members were requested to approve and adopt the Service Improvement Plan, which had already been approved by Scrutiny Committee 2 on 3 December 2003.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the Revenue Services Best Value Review Service Improvement Plan be approved subject to further reports causing budgetary consequences be submitted to this Committee;
- 2 all future Best Value Review Service Improvement Plans refer to meeting the Terms of Reference requirements.

RE82 STAFFING UPDATE

The Committee noted the table of staff vacancies that had arisen since the last meeting of this Committee.

RE83 EXCLUSION OF THE 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 items of business on the grounds that these involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RE84 NNDR WRITE OFFS

The Committee considered a report that detailed some local businesses in bankruptcy or liquidation.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The NNDR balances to date of bankrupt and companies in liquidation as listed in the report be written off;
- 2 letters be sent to the District Valuer and the Government requesting that timely action be taken in deciding changes to assessments.

RE85 GOLDS NURSERIES – WRITE OFFS

The Committee considered a report that detailed rent arrears accrued by a company that had gone into liquidation.

RESOLVED that the rent arrears accrued by the company in liquidation be written off.

RE86 CONTRACT SERVICES ESTIMATES 2004/05

The Committee considered the report regarding the Contract Services Revised Estimates for 2003/04 and Estimates for 2004/05.

RESOLVED that the Contract Services Revised Estimates for 2003/04 and Estimates for 2004/05 be approved.

RE87

REPLACEMENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Committee considered the report which detailed the joint procurement exercise with Stevenage Borough Council for the provision of replacement Financial Management Information Systems (FMIS) at both locations. Tenders had been requested and officers were now in a position to let contracts.

RESOLVED that provisions for replacement of the Financial Management Information Systems be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.10 pm.