

RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 23 SEPTEMBER 2004

Present: - Councillors R P Chambers, A Dean, R T Harris, A J Ketteridge, A R Row, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

Also present:- Councillor D J Morson.

Officers in attendance: - V Borges, A Bovaird, M Cox, C Hughes, S Mclagan and P O'Dell.

RE32 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman it was

RESOLVED that Councillor P A Wilcock be appointed Chairman for this meeting.

RE33 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M A Gayler, M L Foley and S C Jones.

RE32 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2004 and of the extraordinary meeting held on the 31 August 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

RE33 BUSINESS ARISING

(i) Minute RE16 – Executive Programme Office

Councillor A Dean asked for an up date on the progress of the voluntary sector's moves to the Dunmow offices. He was advised that everything was proceeding as planned and that the CVS were in a position to sign the lease. He asked that further information be put in the Member's bulletin.

Councillor R P Chambers asked for a written reply to his question regarding the cost to date of the Quality of Life Corporate Plan.

(ii) Minute RE29 – Hill Street Saffron Walden Refurbishment of Public Conveniences

Councillor A Dean asked for confirmation that the refurbishment of the public conveniences was due to commence shortly. He was informed that the contractors should start work within the next couple of weeks on a 10 week

contract. It was confirmed that £71k would be the maximum cost of the project, which included a contingency figure of £6k.

RE34

ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(i) Minute CL20 – Museum Resource Centre

The Committee considered recommendation 1 from the Community and Leisure Committee held on the 7 September 2004.

1. Subject to the approval of the Resources Committee to the expenditure the Committee agrees to make a capital contribution of the minimum amount of £60k to attract Heritage Lottery Fund grant (5%) and that officers report to the meeting in January details of any funds secured from other sources so that a decision can be taken whether to make a funding application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Councillor Morson, Chairman of the Community and Leisure Committee, spoke in support of the recommendation. He outlined the background to the development of the project and its importance to the museum. He asked the Committee to include the £60k within the Capital Programme in order to keep the project alive. This would just be a statement of intent and no spending would take place unless the shortfall in funding could be found from other sources.

Councillor Dean said that the museum was an excellent facility with dedicated staff. He commented that the Newport depot was inadequate and some action needed to be taken. However, he could not support the recommendation from the Community and Leisure Committee. It was important to ensure that the museum was sustainable for the future. The recommendation did not address the bigger issues, and if supported, the Council's finances would be put under too big a strain. He considered that there should be an all-embracing study for the future of the museum.

He then proposed the following motion that was seconded by Councillor Savage.

1. "Resources Committee reaffirms the Council's commitment to a long-term sustainable future of the Saffron Walden Museum";
2. "The Committee also recognises the need to resolve the difficulties inherent in the current facilities, and recognises that the store facility at Newport in particular is not fit for purpose;
3. However, regardless of the potential success or otherwise of the current proposal, the current arrangements for the financing of the Saffron Walden Museum are not sustainable in the medium term;
4. Therefore, an officer-member working group, with the support of the Museum Curator and with the full involvement of the S W Museum Society should be established to identify and evaluate options for securing long-term financial viability for the museum in Saffron Walden and a museum service for the district as a whole and that the Community and Leisure Committee be authorised to draw up to £30,000 from reserves or other available budgets as identified by officers in

consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of Resources, and the Chairman of the Community and Leisure Committee to support this study.

5. Meanwhile, in respect of the current proposal, the Committee advises the Community and Leisure committee to pursue alternative storage facilities if the existing Newport facilities cannot continue to be used as it considers it would be inappropriate at this time to make a financial commitment to any capital project”.

Councillor Chambers said that the recommendation in the minute did not commit the Council to expenditure but gave time for more funding to be obtained for the project. If funding could not be found the project would not go ahead. He proposed an amendment that was seconded by Councillor Ketteridge that:

“The recommendations set out in minute CL20 (i) (option A) of the Community and Leisure Committee on 7 September be approved”.

Councillor Harris asked about the viability of using Gold’s Nursery for the Resource Centre. He was advised that this option had been looked at but it was not of the required standard for the needs of museum storage. A new building on this site would not be cost effective.

The Museum Curator explained the importance of this project and how investment behind the scenes would determine the service the museum could provide. The Newport depot was not appropriate for storage or for officer’s working on site. She also reported that she had obtained an Audience Development Grant of £24k to assist in the projects planning and the results would be fed into the main grant application.

In answer to question from Councillor Ketteridge it was confirmed that the £60k would be put into the Draft Capital Programme. This would in turn have an effect on Council Tax in terms of loss of capital receipts. Councillor Ketteridge said that the Council had a financial obligation towards the museum and funding could be found from uncommitted items in the Quality of Life Plan.

A number of members were concerned that commitment to the £60k might mean that the Council would be obliged to meet the shortfall in funding in the longer term.

Councillor Morson summed up by confirming that he was only asking for time to progress the project and come back to the Committee in January with details of the funding that had been achieved. He added that there was no need to set up another working group, as it would open up solved issues.

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

Councillor Dean said that his proposal would still allow lottery funding to be investigated but there would be no capital investment at this stage. At the request of Councillor Ketteridge he agreed to add the word “financial and other commitments” to the first line of his motion.

RESOLVED that

1. Resources Committee reaffirms the Council's financial and other commitment to a long-term sustainable future of the Saffron Walden Museum;
2. The Committee also recognises the need to resolve the difficulties inherent in the current facilities, and recognises that the store facility at Newport in particular is not fit for purpose;
3. However, regardless of the potential success or otherwise of the current proposal, the current arrangements for the financing of the Saffron Walden Museum are not sustainable in the medium term;
4. Therefore, an officer-member working group, with the support of the Museum Curator and with the full involvement of the S W Museum Society should be established to identify and evaluate options for securing long-term financial viability for the museum in Saffron Walden and a museum service for the district as a whole and that the Community and Leisure Committee be authorised to draw up to £30,000 from reserves or other available budgets as identified by officers in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of Resources, and the Chairman of the Community and Leisure Committee to support this study.
5. Meanwhile, in respect of the current proposal, the committee advises the Community and Leisure Committee to pursue alternative storage facilities if the existing Newport facilities cannot continue to be used as it considers it would be inappropriate at this time to make a financial commitment to any capital project.

(ii) Minute CL24 – Grant Schemes

RESOLVED that the item be deferred for further consideration during the budget setting process.

(iii) Minute HH22 – Strategic Housing Role of the Council

The Committee considered the recommendation from the Health and Housing Committee on the 9 September for another member of staff to work alongside the current Housing Policy and Enabling Officer to undertake more routine duties enabling the current officer to deal with the strategic duties. The extra cost in the current financial year of £7,000 would be met by the Council's reserves.

Members asked to be provided with more detailed information when the Committee was considering a financial matter referred from another committee.

RESOLVED that the establishment of a Housing Enabling and Development Officer be approved.

The Committee received a report reviewing the Council's Capital Programme and associated funding requirements.

Members noted that the current years Capital Programme was £5,126,300 and that there were signs of a slowdown in capital receipts, although the assumed balance of receipts still available at 31 March 2008 of £7.4m meant that a continue slowdown, would not threaten schemes in the current programme. However, new schemes would require evaluation against the revised view of resources available and/or uncommitted schemes in the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED that a review of the Capital Programme takes place and a report be taken to all relevant committees in November cycle of meetings.

RE36

SAFFRON WALDEN INITIATIVE HEALTHCHECK

The Executive Programme Manager (Quality of Life) introduced a report, which outlined the work that had been carried out by the Saffron Walden Initiative. They had produced a draft Healthcheck report and Action Plan for Saffron Walden and had achieved 50% of funding for a Saffron Walden Project Officer (SWPO). Members were asked to consider making a contribution from reserves of £2,375 in 2004/05 and £8,250 in 2005/06 equating to a 25% share of total recruitment costs. The Council was also asked to act as employer for the post.

In reply to a question from Councillor Harris it was confirmed the proposed costing included the management costs required for the employment. He also asked if the Town Council had committed their share of the cost. He was advised the Town Council were meeting on 27 September to discuss this further.

Councillor Row pointed out that the Health check only covered 40% of the district and asked what efforts would be made for the remaining 60%. The officer replied that the check might encourage other areas to consider a village plan and support would be offered.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 Subject to the remaining shortfall being achieved by the Saffron Walden Initiative a contribution towards the deficit figures of £2,375 in 2004/05 and £8,250 in 2005/06 be provided to enable the recruitment of the Saffron Walden Project Officer.
- 2 If funding is achieved the Council to act as an employer as suggested at the meeting.

RE39

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN THE RECRUITMENT OF CHIEF AND DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICERS

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) introduced the report, which looked at the recruitment of Chief and Deputy Chief Officers. Under the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations 2001 Members could be involved in these appointments. Due to the new management structure of the Council there was a vastly increased number of staff that could be classed as Deputy Chief officers as they reported directly to the Executive Managers. The Committee considered whether to delegate these appointments to officers.

Members were also asked to consider appointing a panel on a yearly basis in line with other Committees in the Council.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Annual Council to create a Chief Officer Recruitment Panel to fill any vacancies at Chief Executive and Chief Officer level.
- 2 The recruitment of Deputy Chief Officers to be delegated to the Head of Paid Service and Executive Managers or their representatives as allowed by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) Regulations.

RE40 **RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT**

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) introduced the first budgetary control report for 2004/05 and that there were no significant variances. Members noted the budgetary control position as at 31 July 2004.

RE41 **CORPORATE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT**

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) introduced the first budgetary control report for 2004/05. It included information that policy committees had already considered during the committee cycle. There were no significant variations. Members noted the budgetary control position for all Committees as at 31 July 2004.

RE42 **FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS**

The Committee received a report providing an update on external and internal factors affecting the Council's General Fund Budget for 2005/06 and beyond. The report described the early stages of preparation of the General Budget of 2005/06.

RESOLVED that Members noted the Council's latest position of the General Fund Budget for 2005/06, and the proposed approach to the early stages of the budget process.

RE43 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

The Committee received a report setting out details of the Council's borrowing and investments for the financial year 2003/04 and monitoring information on the Council's performance against the performance indicators.

RESOLVED that the report be accepted.

RE44 BANK TENDER

At the last meeting the Committee had considered the partnership with Essex County Council (ECC) regarding the new contract for banking arrangements. Officers had asked the ECC several important questions about the lender process, which they were not yet in a position to answer. On this basis and the fact that it was unlikely that any significant savings would be made the proposal instead would be to progress procurement independently of the ECC and employ the services of consultants to assist in preparing the tender documents to ensure best value for money was achieved. The cost of employing a consultant for this work would be £2,000, which could be met from existing budgets.

RESOLVED that the Council procure banking services on its own behalf after the current contract expires in March 2005.

RE45 PLANNING FOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive presented a report regarding progress on the development of the organisation. Over the last few months there had been a number of ideas for improvements, which now needed to be pulled together and gain support from all sections of the council organisation. The external agenda for the Council was clearly set out in the Quality of Life plan but there were some internal weaknesses that needed to be addressed to improve the capacity of the organisation and to develop. There were a large number of commitments to action.

The report set out five key themes, which would provide a framework to carry out these activities, as well as the expected outcomes from the JMT away day on 9 October. Councillor Dean hoped that the day would achieve a clearer picture of what the Council was doing and how to carry it out.

The meeting ended at 9:45pm.