

RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 18 NOVEMBER 2004

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

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

RE46 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors S Flack, R Harris and V J T Lelliott.

RE47 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2004 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

RE48 **BUSINESS ARISING**

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

Councillor A Row asked for confirmation on the progress of the refurbishment of the public conveniences. He was informed that the expected date of completion would be around 13 December 2004. It was confirmed that a lot of extra work had been needed and the budget was still on target.

RE49 **ITEMS REFERRED FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

(i) Health and Housing Committee 4 November 2004 – Rent Deposit Scheme

The Committee considered the recommendation from the Health and Housing Committee on 4 November for the provision of £25k from the General Fund 2005/06, which would enable further work to be undertaken regarding the Rent Deposit Scheme and help to prevent homelessness in the District.

In response to a question from Councillor Ketteridge the Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) explained that the £25k was a provisional upper level figure.

RESOLVED that the report be noted and that £25k be budgeted for a Rent Deposit Scheme in 2005/06 subject to a scheme being approved at a future meeting of the Health and Housing Committee.

RE50 AUDIT COMMISSION REPORT ON 2003/04 ACCOUNTS

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) introduced the report, which was a letter to Councillor Gayler confirming that the financial statements audit had been carried out and that there were no un-adjusted mis-statements which needed to be drawn to attention of the Committee.

The Chairman commended the Finance Section for their good work.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of the letter from the Audit Commission to enable them to conclude the audit and issue an unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements.

RE51 RESOURCES COMMITTEE SERVICE PLANS BUDGET AND COUNCIL PRIORITIES

The Committee received a report reviewing the Resources Committees service plans, budget and Council priorities. The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) explained that the budget had been revised and took all the spending pressures into account in giving a current up to date picture.

Councillor Savage questioned the increase in the revised 2004/05 and draft budget 2005/06 for reprographics costs. In reply the Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) confirmed that the increase in the revised budget was due to an understated budget and the predicted figure was based on last year's costs.

In response to a question from Councillor Savage the Executive Manager (Human Resources) explained that the Human Resource learning and development forthcoming timetable of events was very wide and there would be a need for additional financial help.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the revised 2004/05 budget and draft 2005/06 budget be approved for submission and further consideration during the next cycle.
- 2 charging £50k in relation to the Judicial Review of the Government White Paper to the external legal fees earmarked reserve be approved.
- 3 the draft Service Plans relating to the Resources Committee's activities be approved and the new spending pressures identified be noted.
- 4 the prioritisation analysis contained in Appendix 3 be noted.

RE52 RESOURCES COMMITTEE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the draft Capital Programme report, which detailed the capital schemes that were the direct responsibility of the Resources Committee.

The Chairman informed the Committee that currently they could not say whether the Committee could afford these schemes but the main driver was to see whether the Committee were happy with the schemes forwarded.

Councillor A Dean questioned the £8,500 figure for accommodation works for the planning staff and asked for more research into the costings. In response the Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) said that the figure was an assumption of what may be needed and more research would be done further into the budgetary cycle.

In response to a question from Councillor Row the Chief Executive informed the Committee that the problems with the air conditioning for the Council Chamber were in hand.

RESOLVED that Members approve in principle the 2005/06 Capital Programme and forward it through to the next stage of the financial cycle.

RE53 COUNCIL CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) introduced the report, which reviewed the Council draft capital programmes including proposed capital schemes and detailed figures outlining a number of amendments to the previously advised figures.

Councillor Savage pointed out the cost of Airport Noise Monitoring Equipment and questioned why BAA were not paying.

Councillor A Dean questioned the reduction in the costing for the essential CCTV upgrade and the need to understand more on the subject, which was backed by Councillor Savage. In response the Chairman agreed that further detail would be given and assessed at the next stage of the budgetary cycle.

RESOLVED that Members approve in principle the 2005/06 Capital Programme and forward it through to the next stage of the financial cycle.

RE54 EXECUTIVE PROGRAMME OFFICE RESOURCES

The Executive Manager (Quality of Life) summarised the report, which provided detail on the progress of the establishment of the Executive Programme Office (EPO). She explained that the report provided justification for the provision of a permanent post for a PA/Programme Assistant at an estimated costing of £25k from 2005/06, and a revenue budget estimated at

£60k to help assist the EPO with work in order to deliver projects emerging from the new Corporate Plan.

Councillor P Wilcock mentioned that the role of the PA needed to be flexible and that the candidate would need to be IT literate.

In reply from a comment made by Councillor M Savage, Councillor A Dean replied that due to the size of this authority there was a need to buy in resources from time to time, as there was not necessarily the expertise in house, the Chief Executive confirmed the need for purchasing consultancy services due to the small size of the authority.

Councillor J Ketteridge added that this item would need to be assessed further when there was money in the budget. The Chairman confirmed that the item would be considered in full at the next stage of the budgetary cycle.

RESOLVED that

- 1 The post of PA/Programme Assistant be created on a permanent basis at an estimated cost of £25k p.a. from 2005/06 and that pro rata cost of appointment in 2004/05 (approximately £6,000) be funded from reserves.
- 2 A revenue budget of £60k be created to meet the cost of employing additional capacity to carry out the work to develop feasibility studies /options appraisals associated with projects in the new Corporate Plan.
- 3 All of the above to be subject to full consideration in the 2005/06 budgetary process.

RE55

CINEMA AT SAFFRON WALDEN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

Members considered a detailed report concerning the proposal to establish a Cinema at Saffron Walden County High School (SWCHS).

The Committee considered the details in the report. The Executive Manager (Quality of Life) informed the Committee that Uttlesford District Council's representation as a potential partner with SWCHS would be very good for the Council and would help meet the Quality of Life objective.

Councillor Row expressed a concern regarding the eight-week delay in showing mainstream films. In response the Executive Manager (Quality of Life) informed the Committee that this would affect only a minority as the majority of potential customers would be looking for convenience and figures had reflected this.

Councillor A Dean informed the Committee of his concern regarding the ongoing revenue contribution and suggested that this issue needed to be discussed further with the SWCHS.

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

1. Subject to the establishment of a satisfactory partnership agreement with SWCHS to implement an independent trust to manage a cinema, the Council contributes £80k from its Capital Programme for the purchase of equipment for the Cinema at SWCHS and negotiates a tapering revenue contribution up to a maximum of £5k per annum from September 2005.
2. The Council appoints a member representative to the Independent Trust to operate the Cinema facility
3. Officers, together with the trust, explore further initiatives to provide improved access to the cinema across the rest of Uttlesford.

Councillor P A Wilcock raised a concern with the proposed recommendation regarding the word tapering and hoped that it would not hinder any negotiation.

In response to a question from Councillor Ketteridge the Executive Manager (Quality of Life) informed the Committee that the Independent Trust had not been established yet.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Subject to the establishment of a satisfactory partnership agreement with SWCHS to implement an independent trust to manage a cinema, the council contributes £80k from its Capital Programme for the purchase of equipment for the Cinema at SWCHS and negotiates a tapering revenue contribution up to a maximum of £5k per annum from September 2005.
- 2 The Council appoints a member representative to the Independent Trust to operate the Cinema facility
- 3 Officers, together with the trust, explore further initiatives to provide improved access to the cinema across the rest of Uttlesford.

RE56

COUNTER FRAUD PARTNERSHIP

The Committee considered the detailed report presented by the Executive Manager (Corporate Governance) that outlined the consultations with staff regarding the Counter Fraud Partnership with East Herts District Council.

He informed the Committee that another Fraud investigator at East Herts had handed their notice in since he had produced the report.

RESOLVED that Members do not proceed with the proposed partnership at this stage and continue with the provision of the Benefit Fraud Service in house

RE57

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) introduced the report, which was set out in two parts.

(i) Part one

The Committee considered a detailed report that outlined the ODPM Pay and Workforce Strategy, which emphasised five priority areas critical to developing the local government workforce in order to secure the delivery of better and more effective customer focused public services.

Members considered the recommendations outlined in the report regarding the purchase of a competency framework from Essex County Council for £4,000 and the purchase of up to two days consultancy time from ECC at £450 per day to align the framework and additional consultancy support for up to 10 days at £450 per day for leader training and assistance.

Councillor Savage was in full support of the recommendations and questioned if the system would help the Council gain a 100% level of appraisals. In reply the Chief Executive and the Executive Manager (Human Resources) confirmed the framework would provide support for managers to help them plan, review and set employees targets in order to meet the appraisal target but they could not promise that a 100% target would be met.

RESOLVED that

- 1 Members approve the purchase of a competency framework from Essex County Council for £4k, and
- 2 Up to two days consultancy time from Essex County Council be purchased to align the framework to Uttlesford District Council. At £450 per day.
- 3 Members note the success of the ODPM bid and agreed an additional £2k be made available to support middle managers/future leaders to attend the new Essex wide programme.
- 4 Members approve consultancy support, at £450 per day for up to 10 days, to support the cohorts of leaders to undertake a skills audit of their teams.
- 5 All of the above to be subject to full consideration in the 2005/06 budgetary process.

(ii) Part Two

Members considered the request for the creation of an index linked education fund of £12,000 per year to support employees gain qualifications and accreditation in professional and technical areas that would be relevant to the business and service needs of the Council. It also described an offer of

interest free loans under the rules of the Inland Revenue to enable employees to train and attend courses in areas which were not work related but were of interest to them.

Councillor A Dean questioned where this spending would fit into the budget. In response the Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) informed the Committee that further work of castings would be looked into for the next stage of the budgetary cycle.

RESOLVED that:

- 1 Members support the creation of an £12k education fund and
- 2 The Chief Executive and Executive Managers be tasked to identify the core areas for 100% funding during 2005/06 and to create an assessment panel, reporting to Members on outcomes.
- 3 Members support the use of Reserves to provide interest free loans, following the Inland Revenue rules in support of Life Long Learning and
- 4 Where the Inland Revenue rules prevented an employee accessing an interest free loan Members support the use of Reserves to offer a loan on the same interest rate as car loans.
- 5 All of the above to be subject to full consideration in the 2005/06 budgetary process.
- 6 A report on the total use of the training budget be forwarded as part of the 2005/06 budgetary process.

RE58 **PARTNERSHIP IN PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT STATEMENT**

The Committee received a report outlining a statement of Partnership in Performance Improvement, which had been recommended by the Local Joint Committee for adoption by the Council.

RESOLVED that the 'Partnership in Performance Improvement' statement be agreed for adoption by Council.

RE59 **TUPE TRANSFER OF STAFF**

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) presented the report to inform Members of the termination of the Highways Agency LSA and the transfer of two members of UDC staff to Essex County Council.

RESOLVED that Members note the report and advise the Executive Manager (Human Resources) if they require any further updates in due course.

RE60

CORPORATE CAPACITY AND CENTRAL STAFFING RESOURCES

The Chief Executive introduced the report, which addressed the creation of the Strategic Development Advisory Group and arrangements for officer support in the form of a Research Officer and an Administrative Officer estimated at an annual cost of £37k. The report explained that on the assumption that the posts were filled before 1 January 2005 it would give a total in-year cost of £10,500.

The report also set out the central staffing issues giving evidence that the corporate core of the Council was under resourced. It also outlined proposals to deal with the staffing issues including the new post of an Executive Assistant.

The Chief Executive informed the Committee that there were no cost difficulties with the proposals. He also updated Members that a successful candidate for the post of Executive Manager (Strategy and Performance) had accepted the offer and was likely to be in place by the end of January 2005.

RESOLVED that Members

- 1 Note the agreed arrangements for officer support to the Strategic Development Advisory Group.
- 2 Note the proposals for changed support arrangements in the corporate core, and requested a further report.

RE61

STAFF COMMUNICATION AND MORALE

The Committee received a report outlining two parallel and independent exercises, which had been undertaken in late summer early autumn within the organisation to assess staff opinions and attitudes. The report also provided Members with a proposed action plan, which had been agreed between management and Unison and addressed the staff's issues and what could be done about them.

The Chief Executive was keen to thank all the members of staff for their willingness to participate in the sessions as a lot of time had been invested. He also thanked Unison for the approach they had taken with the questionnaire and appreciated all the information he had received. He went on to inform the Committee that there were some areas of concern, however some were encouraging. The areas of concern had been addressed in the action plan especially the subject of bullying. He added that bullies would be dealt with by a zero tolerance policy.

Councillor S Jones commended the report and added that there had been issues with Members bullying officers. In reply the Chief Executive said that some people were unaware that their behaviour could be classed as bullying and in general the effect of their behaviour on other people.

RESOLVED that Members

- 1 Agree and support the action plan set out in paragraph 19 of the report.
- 2 The Chief Executive brings regular reports updating the Committee on the progress of the actions and the impact they were having on staff opinions.

RE62

HOME COMPUTING INITIATIVE

The report was introduced by the Executive Manager (Human Resources) and outlined the Home Computing Initiative (HCI). She explained that the Council would purchase computing equipment on behalf of employees for their personal use. The equipment would then leased to employee who would pay the Council over a set period a sum equal to the cost. At the end of the lease they would have the option of purchasing the equipment for a nominal sum of around £50.

RESOLVED that the Council introduces a Home Computing Initiative Scheme with the initial cost being met from reserves on the understanding that these costs would be returned back to the reserves.

RE63

AMENDED TRAVEL PLAN

This report was presented to the Committee setting out issues to increase other modes of travel and to decrease/increase personal travel and work-related travel. It also made recommendations for the immediate implementation or some for subsequent review on a six-monthly basis.

In response to a question from Councillor Ketteridge the Executive Manager (Human Resources) informed the committee that the only costs would be money for lockers and short-term parking signs.

Councillor A Dean added that the ideas should be promoted to the staff and that the Councillors should set a good example.

RESOLVED that the following proposals be implemented as soon as is practicable:

- Green Service Targets.
- A car-share register for members
- A Green Target Mileage Scheme for Members.
- To agree that further work is undertaken to identify the cost/effect of an incentive payment to encourage conversion to remote payments.
- Greater publicity for on-line payments of Council Services.
- Short-stay parking time-limit notices be posted in the visitors parking area if further problems arise.

- Lockers for use of cyclists, walkers, bikers, be installed.
- Allocate a Lead Member and a Lead Officer, for co-ordination/lobbying of an integrated transport resolution.

That any of the following, plus any of the above not implemented at this stage, be reviewed on a six-monthly basis, with a view to considering its implementation:

- A Green Bank Scheme.
- For major meetings, a mini bus collection of Members along major routes.
- Implement a 'staff car-park waiting list' for newly recruited employees.
- Green vehicles with specified CO2 emissions to be inbuilt as part of formal Council Policy.
- Travel Expenses incentives, for members, to bias towards car sharing and away from single occupancy.

RE64

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Financial Strategy and Service Planning Process

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item on the grounds of urgency as a decision was required before the next meeting.

The Committee received a report providing an update on the latest position of the Council's General Fund Budget for 2005/06. It included figures and issues considered by policy committees in this committee cycle, with the exception of Development Control who would consider its budget on 22 November. The report proposed that the results of the prioritisation process be used to address the budget shortfall for 2005/06 and to provide a basis for longer term planning of the Council's finances.

Councillor Ketteridge informed the Committee of his concerns about the increasing expenditure figures; he explained that there was a need to make enormous savings, as the money would eventually run out. The Chairman agreed and informed the Committee that the spending pressure would need to be addressed and would be considered later in the budgetary process and he stressed that in some cases the Committee might have to say no. Councillor A Dean added that the big expenditures and gaps would have to be plugged. He explained that there had been major under investment and an overall funding limit may be needed to bridge the gap.

In response to a question from Councillor A Dean the Executive Programme Manager (Quality of Life) informed Members that the Council's Communications Officer was working with other officers to prepare public consultation on the budget, Access to Services and the Corporate Quality of Life Plan and this would be presented to the Committee in January 2005 for comment.

RESOLVED that

- 1 the revised 2004/05 base budgets for Committees be approved.
- 2 the financial consequences of the Corporate Plan be approved.
- 3 the service prioritisation contained in Appendix 4 be approved.
- 4 the strategy outlined in paragraphs 19-23 be agreed as the basis for determining how the spending pressures could be met and how budget reductions were to be made, and officers be instructed in consultation with the Prioritisation Working Group of Members, to take reports to the committees in January giving options to achieve the overall budget required.
- 5 officer be instructed to take a report to the Council meeting on 14 December notifying Members of the savings targets for individual services.
- 6 the Government be lobbied for additional funding, dependent on the outcome of the Local Government finance settlement.

(ii) AOB Requested by Local Joint Committee

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of this item on the grounds of urgency, as Members required the information before the next meeting.

Councillor Gayler declared an interest as a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme and left the room for the discussion of this item.

The Executive Manager (Human Resources) introduced a report to inform the Committee on the changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) due to commence in April 2005. She added that during the last LJC, Unison asked for support to lobby for a later start date and for a structured staggered introduction as they felt it was not an effective way to progress.

Councillor A Dean informed the Committee that further information would be needed in order to understand the position.

RESOLVED that further consideration be given to this matter and it be, discussed at the next meeting of Group Leaders.

RE65

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 paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

RE66 **REQUEST FOR EARLY RETIREMENT**

Members considered the report which sought the approval for the early retirement of an employee.

RESOLVED that Members agreed to the early retirement of the employee on the terms that were set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 10:30pm.