

RESOURCES COMMITTEE held at COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN at 7.30pm on 17 NOVEMBER 2005

Present: - Councillor S C Jones – Chairman.
Councillors H Baker, C A Bayley, R P Chambers, M A Gayler, R T Harris, A J Ketteridge, J I Loughlin, J P Murphy, M J Savage and P A Wilcock.

Officers in attendance: - A Bovaird, V Harvey, S McLagen, P O'Dell, S Saward, P Snow, T Turner and C Wingfield.

RE29

PRESENTATION ON THE SAFFRON WALDEN PARTNERSHIP

The Saffron Walden Project Officer, Sarah Saward, gave a presentation on her role and the work of the Saffron Walden Partnership. She explained that her role came from a Healthcheck of Saffron Walden, which was driven by the Saffron Walden Initiative. The Saffron Walden Partnership consists of the Saffron Walden initiative, Saffron Walden Town Council, Uttlesford District Council and Essex County Council.

The Healthcheck identified an action plan for Saffron Walden which consisted of seven key objectives and one hundred actions. At the start of the Project Officer's role, these actions were prioritised and initial projects identified were to support the local economy, enjoy the town, build lasting partnerships and identify and secure funding.

A lot of projects have been completed to date, including the establishment of the Saffron Walden Business Forum, a parking questionnaire, Christmas shopping campaign and an investigation into Best Practice with Young People in Market Towns. Many of the existing projects in the town were also being supported by the Project Officer.

Also within the Project Officer's role she is positioning Saffron Walden within a bigger picture and building links with EEDA, ExDRA and the LSP.

The future of the Project Officer role is uncertain as funding was yet to be secured beyond March 2006. The current projects are being developed to be sustainable and should more funding be made available then projects would be developed around Transport, Affordable Housing and Young People.

RE30

APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology was received from Councillor A R Row.

Councillor Bayley declared an interest as a member of the Saffron Walden Initiative.

Councillors Murphy and Jones declared interests as members of the Museum Task group.

Councillor Gayler declared a personal interest as a member of the Local Government Pensions Scheme.

RE31 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held 29 September 2005 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman to be a correct record.

RE32 MATTER ARISING

RE22 – Performance Information Management Report

The Executive Manager (Finance and Asset Strategy) told the Committee that 46% of the staff had received appraisals and the rest would be having theirs shortly.

RE33 SURRENDER OF LEASE FOR LAND TO THE REAR OF 50 CASTLE STREET

The Executive Manager (Quality of Life) presented the Committee with a report outlining the sale of a small plot of land by Saffron Walden Museum Society. It was situated at the rear of 50 Castle Street and the sale proceeds would go to the Heritage Quest Centre. She said that the surrender would not reduce the value of the lease and then asked the Committee to confirm the Council could surrender the lease of the land.

RESOLVED that the Committee confirmed that the Council surrendered its lease of the land without consideration, i.e. that the Museum Society would not pay the Council compensation for the reduction of land leased to the Council.

RE34 CORPORATE PLAN ACTION PLAN – MONITORING REPORT

The Executive Manager (Quality of Life) provided Members with details of the progress that had been made to implement a Project Management approach and on the projects and actions set out in the Corporate Action Plan.

She said that she was currently considering the benefits of adapting a Project Management toolkit that the EEDA had produced and how to develop the project management culture in the Council

She presented details of the reasons behind the proposals for amendments to the completion dates for nine of the projects With regard to Project 26 (consideration of how the Council could enhance its position when dealing with major strategic issues and development), Councillor Savage asked if there would be benchmark stages, to which the Chief Executive explained that by March 2006, proposals would be needed when SDAG would complete their work.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee commented on the progress made.
2. That the Committee agreed the proposed amendments to the completion dates for projects 13a, 13b, 13c, 16, 23d, 25b, 27a, 30a, 30b.

RE35

PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEWS

The Electoral Registration Officer provided the Committee with a summary of an eight-year programme of Periodic Electoral Reviews (PERs) concluded in October 2004. The Electoral Commission, having taken over responsibility for The Boundary Committee for England, was undertaking a fundamental evaluation of the policies and processes used by these bodies to guide PERs. The closing date for responses to the consultation was Friday, 25 November.

He explained that there were 6 possible options to choose from and the main areas of importance were:

- Should there be further reviews
- The areas of difficulty
- Factors to be taken into consideration
- What would be the implications

This item had already been to Scrutiny 2 Committee and it was resolved by them that the item should be open to the Resources Committee for their comments also.

Councillor Savage thanked The Electoral Registration Officer for an excellent report. He suggested that a small group be made by members (possibly one from each political party). Councillor Ketteridge said he would be happy to meet with Councillor Savage and it was agreed to ask Cllr Godwin (Independent) if she would join. The Electoral Registration Officer was very much in favour of this happening and suggested the group also discussed Parish reviews, and continue to meet regularly for the short term.

RESOLVED that a small member group be formed to feed back a response to the Electoral Services Officer.

RE36

DISTRICT COUNCIL COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT CONSULTATION

The Executive Manager (Strategy & Performance) summarised the Audit Commission's consultation exercise on District Council CPA. She said her recommendation was for Group B, which would allow the Commission to identify that a council may be ready to be considered for re-categorisation before any activity to confirm whether re-categorisation should take place.

Councillor Gayler proposed to support Group B and Councillor Savage seconded it.

RESOLVED that the Council responded to the consultation document expressing a preference for Group B options, and Option 4 in particular.

RE37 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2004/05

The Executive Manager (Finance & Asset Strategy) provided the Committee with a report which put on record the revised Statement of Accounts for 2004/05 and the associated revised report from the Council's External Auditors.

He emphasised to Members of the Committee that they were not being asked to agree the revised Statement of Accounts, just to note it.

RE38 GENERAL FUND BUDGET 2006/07 PROGRESS REPORT

The Executive Manager (Finance & Asset Strategy) gave the Committee a brief update on the key issues regarding the Council's 2006/07 General Fund Budget.

The Council appeared to receive better funding for extensions to the Concessionary Fares Scheme and could gain approximately £31,000. Figures also emerged from the Local Authority Business Growth Initiatives Scheme and initial figures from the Government indicated potential additional funding of over £150,000 for the Council in 2006/07.

Information received on 4 November said the Government could be changing the basis on which it provided funding and incentives relating to the work in Anti-Fraud. An initial estimate of £80,000 could be lost from 2006/07.

There had been no official announcement regarding capping of council tax. Councillor Ketteridge suggested the Committee made comments on the principle of capping.

Any improvement on the Council's budget position for 2006/07 based on factors provided in the General Fund Budget 2006/07 Progress Report may have given scope to amend the savings targets previously set.

The settlement figures were to be received by 8 December and the Executive Manager (Finance & Asset Strategy) said he wanted to send something out by mid December.

Members noted this report.

RE39 IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW CONSTITUTION

The Executive Manager (Finance & Asset Strategy) advised the committee of the need to report back to full Council at its meeting in December regarding

issues relating to the implementation of the new Constitution following the Council decision taken on 18 October 2005.

All the functions of the Resources Committee would transfer to the new Operations Committee. The new committee would deal with policy and strategic decisions. Agendas should be structured so that the Committee could concentrate on its prime duty. Occasionally the Committee may be required to allocate time to issues emerging from the Area Panels.

Members were asked to agree the recommendations to assist the new Operations Committee with its work.

RESOLVED that

1. The Asset review Task continued to meet with a view to a report being brought to the first meeting of the newly constituted Operations Committee in February 2006.
2. That the information Technology Working Group, Corporate Support Working Group, Corporate Procurement Group, Risk, Management Work Group and Local Service Agreement Working Party continued to meet and report issues to the Operations Committee as appropriate with a review of their roles and functions being taken to the Committee in March 2006.
3. Presentations to the Operations Committee would normally take place prior to the official starting time of 7.30pm.
4. The Members Bulletin be used where appropriate for issues that would otherwise only require noting by the Operations Committee.

RE39

PENSION SCHEME – PROPOSED CHANGES

The Executive Manager (Finance & Asset Strategy) asked the Committee to agree to the sending of a letter to the Government seeking an early resolution of the current dispute regarding changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Several major changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme had been proposed for some time. The last meeting of the Tripartite Committee on 2 November recorded significant progress towards changes in the Scheme to take effect from 1 April 2006. Prior to the meeting Uttlesford Unison submitted a letter to the Council asking for urgent help in securing justice for members to the Local government Pension Scheme.

The Council was in a difficult position regarding this because as a good employer it wanted a fast resolution to provide staff with adequate and fair pensions. However, the Council would be represented in negotiations by the Employers' Organisation and must have faith with them.

Councillor Murphy was of the opinion that the Government were probably working on completing the scheme as fast as possible, and sending a letter would not make them work any faster. The Committee thought this was the best course of action. It was

RESOLVED that the Committee would note the report and not take any action.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm.