

## MINUTES OF POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON

24 March 2009

7.30pm-8.55pm

### PRESENT

### COUNCILLORS

Simon Carter (Chairman)

Manny Doku  
Chris Millington

Andrew Johnson  
Russell Perrin  
Mark Wilkinson

Eddie Johnson  
Clive Souter

### ALSO PRESENT

Jean Clark

Nick Macy (up to and including item 7)

### 135. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Jean Clark and Chris Millington each declared a personal interest in agenda item 7 (The Provision of Welfare Rights and Advice Services in Harlow) as they were Council representatives on the Advice Centre User/Management Group and the Citizens Advice Bureau respectively.

### 136. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2009 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 137. MATTERS ARISING

None.

### 138. WRITTEN QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

None.

139. **NON-CONTENTIOUS BUSINESS**

**RESOLVED** that the following items be taken as non-contentious business:-

- 9 Committee Forward Work Plan
- 11 Progress on Adjustments to Uncorrected Misstatements in Management Letter of Representation.
- 14 Contracts Awarded Under Delegated Powers.
- 15 Charges for Property Search Services.
- 16 Working Party/Committee Minutes
- 17 Committee Decision Tracking.
- 18 Chairman's Report on Possible Committee Items for 2009/10 Municipal Year.

140. **THE PROVISION OF WELFARE RIGHTS AND ADVICE SERVICES IN HARLOW**

The Committee received a report on the provision of welfare rights and advice services in Harlow.

Members were given time to read the amended recommendations and appended letter from Harlow Welfare Rights and Advice, which had been tabled.

In response to a query, it was agreed that members of this committee would be informed from where in the existing budgets, the additional funding of £50,000 had been re-allocated.

The Chairman thanked officers for all their hard work over the last few weeks, culminating in the presentation of this report to the Committee.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the impact that a reduction in the budget will have on welfare rights and advice services be noted;
- (b) the proposals set out in this report to lessen the impact of a budget reduction be agreed, particularly in the Action Plan to the Equalities Impact Assessment at Appendix 4;
- (c) it be agreed that the budget for specialist welfare rights and advice services for 2009/2010 be set at £120,000 and that the services be re-tendered, but in the event of no acceptable tenders being received, the services be provided by the Council;

- (d) the Harlow Welfare Rights and Advice (HWR&A) contract be extended for a further period of 3 months until 30 June 2009, to be funded to the level of £30,000 for that period to provide, as a minimum, the services set out in the letter from HWR&A to the Chief Executive dated 23 March 2009, appended to these recommendations;
- (e) in the event that HWR&A is unwilling or unable to accept this contract extension on these terms, the services be provided by the Council until the tender process has been completed;
- (f) a further sum of up to £50,000 be approved, which may be allocated for 2009/2010 for the provision of general advice services, to be found from within existing budgets;
- (g) delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, to negotiate with the Citizens Advice Bureau for the provision of general advice services and if appropriate enter into an agreement for such service provision for the sum up to £50,000;
- (h) the call-in procedure shall not apply to this decision on the basis that it is urgent as any delay that may result from the call-in process would be prejudicial to the interests of the Council. The reasons for this are that the Council would be unable to provide a welfare, rights and advice service upon expiry of the current contract.

141. **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

**RESOLVED** that the Committee Work Plan be noted.

142. **CORPORATE PLAN 2009/10-2012/13**

The Committee received a report which outlined the further development of the Corporate Plan and provided an opportunity to review the detailed performance measures and targets for 2009/10.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) the revised Corporate Plan 2009/10-2013/14, at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved;

- (b) the proposed review and monitoring process for the Corporate Plan be noted.

143. **PROGRESS ON ADJUSTMENTS TO UNCORRECTED MISSTATEMENTS IN MANAGEMENT LETTER OF REPRESENTATION**

Further to Minute 51 (25/9/08), the Committee received a report on the progress made in determining the treatment of unadjusted misstatements within the Council's 2007/08 Statement of Accounts.

External advisors had provided computations for the required amendments to balance sheet values which, following agreement by the District Auditor, would be reported within the 2008/09 Statement of Accounts.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

144. **PROCUREMENT PORTAL UPDATE**

Further to Minute 52 (25 September 2008), the Committee received a progress report on the development of this portal.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

145. **LADYSHOT EXTERNAL REFURBISHMENT PROJECT NO: K08/064**

The Committee received a report seeking approval for a tender for external refurbishment works at 26-33, 160-183, 232-247 and 248-255 Ladyshot.

**RESOLVED** that the tender submitted by Contractor C be accepted as the most economically advantageous, in the sum of £415,521.16, subject to contract and leaseholder consultation.

146. **CONTRACTS AWARDED UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The Committee received a report on action taken under delegated powers for the period 23 December 2008 to March 2009, regarding Standing Orders relating to Contracts.

**RESOLVED** that the action taken be noted.

147. **CHARGES FOR PROPERTY SEARCH SERVICES**

The Committee received a report proposing the introduction of charges for property searches.

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) cost based property search fees, as shown in Appendix 1, be introduced from 6 April 2009;
- (b) the Council adopts the 'one stop shop' method of providing search information to third parties.

148. **WORKING PARTY/GROUP/COMMITTEE MINUTES**

- (a) Budget & Performance Monitoring Working Party

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Budget & Performance Monitoring Working Party meetings held on 18 February 2009 and 11 March 2009 be noted.

- (b) Safety Committee

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Safety Committee held on 3 March 2009 be noted.

- (c) Theatre Development Working Group

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Theatre Development Working Group held on 4 March 2009 be noted.

149. **COMMITTEE DECISION TRACKING**

The Committee received a list of all the decisions it had made during the current municipal year.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

150. **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON POSSIBLE COMMITTEE ITEMS FOR 2009/10**

The Committee received a report from the Chair of this Committee outlining possible agenda items for the following municipal year.

**RESOLVED** that the possible future agenda items for the next municipal year, as set out in paragraph 4 of the report, be noted.

151. **REFERENCES FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

- (a) Environment & Community Committee  
19 March 2009

Community Engagement Final Report

The Scrutiny Committee had requested that the Environment & Community Committee approve the recommendations set out in Appendix 1 of the report subject to certain amendments.

The Environment & Community Committee noted this reference and referred it (together with the report and duly amended appendix 1) to the Policy & Resources Committee, as the subject was more appropriately dealt with under paragraph 5 of its terms of reference.

**RESOLVED** that

- (i) Community Partnerships be reinstated after discussions with key partners on the format, proposed remit and scope of Community Partnerships within 3 months;
- (ii) a section within Harlow Times be dedicated to resident associations;
- (iii) more information on resident associations be placed on the Council's website;
- (iv) the Council engage with the newly formulated residents federation;
- (v) relevant information be made available within Harlow's gypsy sites;
- (vi) place a list of faith groups in a relevant section on the Council's website;
- (vii) Harlow Council facilitate a meeting for the Interfaith Forum;
- (viii) the day-to-day management of the community notice boards be given to the relevant resident association where possible;

152. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

- (a) Geoff Brown, Head of Performance and Customer Service  
Peter Quirk, Policy and Performance Manager

The Chairman announced that both Geoff Brown and Peter Quirk were leaving the Council. On behalf of the Committee, he thanked both officers for their hard work whilst working for the Council and wished them well for the future.

CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE