



FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

CIVIC OFFICES CIVIC WAY FAREHAM HAMPSHIRE

Minutes of the Policy, Strategy and Finance Overview Panel

*Minutes of a meeting held on 13 November 2003
at the Civic Offices Civic Offices*

PRESENT:

Councillor F G Devonshire
(Chairman)

Councillor R H Price
(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: P J Davies (deputising for Councillor Mrs D M Burton-Jenkins)
M F Godrich
Mrs D R Harrison
T G Knight (deputising for Councillor J V Bryant)
and D J Murray

Also present: Councillors Mrs C L A Hockley, L Keeble and A Mandry

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J V Bryant and Mrs D M Burton-Jenkins.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the meeting of the Panel held on 18 September 2003 be confirmed and signed as a correct record (ps-030918-m) subject to the addition of the comment from Councillor Knight expressing his concern that the Council should not appear to be eager to borrow; in relation to minute 7(a) – New prudential code for capital finance.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – WORK PROGRAMME – GREEN TRAVEL PLANS

(See minute 9 below)

The Chairman referred to the notes contained in the Panel's work programme which referred to earlier proposals from the Planning and Transportation Overview Panel that a joint members' steering group be set up with input from that Panel and the Policy, Strategy and Finance Overview Panel, to develop green travel plans in Fareham.

The Chairman advised the members that, at its meeting on 11 November, 2003, the Planning and Transportation Overview Panel had confirmed its desire to progress the establishment of the steering group and had appointed Councillors Mrs Harrison and Mrs Trott to serve on the group.

It was AGREED:

- (a) that the Panel endorses the establishment of a joint members' steering group to develop green travel plans in Fareham consisting of two members from each of the Policy, Strategy and Finance and Planning and Transportation Overview Panels; and
- (b) that this Panel's representatives on the joint members' steering group be Councillors M F Godrich and R H Price.

4. REVIEW OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

(Minute 18 of Council Meeting, 25 September 2003)

The Director of Housing informed the members that, at its meeting on 25 September, 2003, the Council had decided to consult with the Panel and the Executive, on a review of the overview and scrutiny process. As a consequence, the Director submitted a report, (containing a copy of the original report to the Council on 25 September), which proposed changes to the structure and roles of the panels and suggested some significant changes in practice (copy of report ps-031113-r06-dbx, circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes). The key elements of the proposed revisions were:-

- (a) to authorise an all party group to keep the overview structure and practice under review.
- (b) to agree the principles of expectation.
- (c) to implement the structure and membership of a Scrutiny Board and panels and their terms of reference.
- (d) to appoint to a Scrutiny Board and panels.

4. cont'd

- (e) to amend the call-in requirement from “not less than 25% of the members of the overview panel” to “at least 3 non-Executive members of the Council”.
- (f) to improve the practice of overview and scrutiny by good practice guides and training.
- (g) to make consequential amendments to the Council’s constitution.

The Panel discussed the proposals and particular issues raised by members were:-

- (i) The desirability of ensuring that the operation of the proposed Scrutiny Board and Review Panels did not introduce unnecessary additional administration.
- (ii) As it was envisaged that the Review Panels would generally report to the proposed Scrutiny Board, particular attention would need to be given to monitoring workloads of the Board and the Review Panels to ensure efficient use of resources and proper progress of business.
- (iii) The options for the chairmanship of the proposed Scrutiny Board and, more particularly, whether the post might be held by a member of an opposition group; in addition, the need to ensure that the most able members were appointed to serve on the Scrutiny Board.
- (iv) Whether it would be advisable to establish an additional Review Panel to undertake the Policy, Strategy and Finance role, thereby relieving the workload of the proposed Scrutiny Board.

It was then AGREED that the Council be informed that the Panel supports the proposals for the revised overview and scrutiny arrangements set out in paragraph 3 of the report of the Director of Housing to the Panel, subject to the following comments:-

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| Sub-paragraph 3(b)(i)
(Panels to be non-adversarial) | the Panel suggests adding the words “but encourage open debate”. |
| Sub-paragraph 3(c)
(Structure, Membership and terms of reference of Scrutiny Board and Review Panels) | the Panel believes that an additional Policy Development and Review Panel should be established to cover those non-scrutiny areas currently within the purview of the Policy, Strategy and Finance Overview Panel. (Voting: 4 for and 3 against) |

4. cont'd

Sub-paragraph 3(d)(ii) (Council to appoint members of the Scrutiny Board)	After a debate on the specific meaning, the Panel vote on the proposal, as paper, was: - 4 for (including the Chairman's casting vote) and 3 against.
Sub-paragraph 3(d)(iii) (Appointment of Scrutiny Board and Panels)	the Panel suggests deleting the first sentence ie "As an informal arrangement and not part of the constitution, that the most experienced councillors are asked to serve on the Scrutiny Board" - the Panel supports the principle of the "right person for the job" when deciding on the appointment of a chairman of the proposed Scrutiny Board.
Sub-paragraph 3(d)(vii) (Co-option)	the Panel supports the current arrangements for co-option. (An alternative proposal that non-councillors should not be co-opted on to the proposed Review Panels was lost: 3 voting for that proposal and 4 voting against, (including the Chairman's casting vote against).

5. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS – COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Panel was informed that, at its meeting on 22 September, 2003, the Executive had considered a quarterly report on performance which included details of Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's). The Executive had noted that many of the BVPI's under the community safety heading stated that data was not currently recorded by Hampshire Constabulary and had requested the Overview Panel to look into matter.

The Panel was advised that investigations had now been made and the Police had confirmed that their method of recording the sub-categories of the relevant BVPI (127) (which related to violent offences) had not been consistent in the past; hence the lack of data. However, steps had now been taken to improve recording methods and to ensure that information of a more reliable value was produced. Reporting was due to commence in the next financial year, with new base line data.

It was AGREED that the Executive be advised of the above proposals which should ensure that, in the future, the community safety monitoring data for violent offences is available in the quarterly report on corporate performance.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – 2004-06 REVIEW

The Economic Development Manager, Mr Tony Mundy presented a report from the Director of Planning and Transportation which referred to proposals for a two-year extension of the Economic Development Strategy Overview 1999-2004, until 2006, with an action programme for the same period. (copy of report ps-031113-r01-tmu, circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes). The Panel was advised that the Economic Development Strategy Overview would then be reviewed more rigorously, when the community and planning strategy background had been clarified.

The report stated that the Executive would consider the suggested two-year extension of the Strategy Overview and the proposed action programme at its meeting on 24 November 2003 and the Panel was invited to consider the matter and submit any comments or views to that meeting.

Mr Mundy informed the Panel that since the report had been circulated additional information was available on the Area Investment Framework and he circulated details to be added to the Development Overview and Prospects section of the report, as follows:-

“An Area Investment Framework (AIF) for Southeast Hampshire is currently being prepared to identify the overall pattern of public and private investment in the area over the next five years with the objective of agreeing key regeneration projects that may need intervention from SEEDA or other agencies to bring them about. The AIF will seek to co-ordinate the ambitions of the five Local Strategic Partnerships in the area while addressing the outcome targets of the SEEDA. In Fareham’s case the borough is included in the AIF as it is part of the Priority Area for Economic Regeneration that spans South Hampshire. Whereas the success of Fareham relative to its neighbours means that the priority for investment to address deprivation issues will focus on the nationally ranked worst wards in Gosport, Havant and Portsmouth, there will also be opportunities to attract investment to fill funding gaps in Fareham to ensure the availability of development sites, to resolve infrastructure issues, to ensure the ongoing success of the town centre and to address localised pockets of deprivation. There will also be area wide projects from which Fareham will benefit as a result of investment to provide support structures to promote equality of economic, social and environmental well-being”.

Mr Mundy added that this would, as a consequence, add “Seeking to take advantage of the funding opportunities arising from the AIF for Southeast Hampshire” to the priorities and programme.

The Panel discussed the report and particular issues raised by members were housing provision for key workers and the local pressures, particularly on housing, which were attendant upon economic growth.

It was AGREED that the Executive be informed that the Panel broadly supports the proposals set out in the conclusion to the report for taking forward the economic development strategy and action programme but suggests:

6. cont'd

- (i) that a full "ground-up" review of the strategy should be carried out in two years' time; and
- (ii) that the Executive should take into particular account the need to maintain sustainable growth.

7. TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE – ROLL FORWARD 2004-07 AND REVIEW

The Panel was advised by the Head of Planning Policy and Development, Mr Richard Jolley, that the current Town Centre Management Initiative was due to expire in March 2004, and that the Executive had decided to support, in principle, the roll-forward of the Initiative for the next three years. Mr Jolley presented a report from the Director of Planning and Transportation which detailed options for the Council's future support of the Initiative and which invited the Panel to submit any views or comments to the Executive which would give further consideration to the matter at its meeting on 24 November 2003. (copy of report ps-031113-r02-gca, circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

The Panel discussed the future of the initiative and, in particular, the options for encouraging and maintaining greater participation of the local traders and the business community. A member raised the specific point of the possibility of a market being established on a site in the western wards and it was agreed that this could be included in the work programme for discussion at a future date.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Cllr A Mandry the Executive Member for Planning and Transportation joined the meeting and addressed the members on this matter.

It was AGREED that the Executive be informed :-

- (a) that the Panel endorses the revised Aims and Vision, Terms of Reference for the Town Centre Management Steering Group and Job Profile for the Town Manager and also the future Council financial support for the partnership initiative as set out in the report; and
- (b) that the Panel endorses the view that the Town Centre Management Steering Group should explore all opportunities to encourage and maintain increased involvement of local traders and the business community in the town centre management initiative.

8. FEES AND CHARGES 2004/05

(Minute 6 of 21 November 2002)

(Councillor D J Murray declared a personal interest in this matter as a governor of Cams Hill School in relation to Leisure facilities available at the school).

8. cont'd

The Panel received, for consultation purposes, a report from the Director of Finance and Resources on the proposed fees and charges for services and activities in 2004/05 (copy of report ps-031113-r04-kth, circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

The Council's Head of Strategic Finance, Mr Keith Thompson, advised members that the purpose of the report was to give the Panel the opportunity to consider the proposed fees and charges for 2004/05 and to submit any comments to the Executive.

The Panel reviewed the proposed fees and charges, and noted, in particular, the budget guidelines which stipulated that fees and charges be increased to achieve at least a 5% rise in income, wherever possible, and that every effort be made to identify new sources of income. In addition, every effort was to be made to ensure that market price was being charged in all areas. To illustrate the position, Mr Thompson referred the Panel to paragraph 5 of the report, which contained a table showing the 2003/04 budget for fees and charges and the additional income that an increase of 5% would generate for each service.

The Panel discussed the report and particular issues raised by members were:-

- Statutory/Controlled Charges – Litter – Effective implementation of the fixed penalty charge of £50 for dropped litter. (The Executive member for Health and Environment, Councillor L Keeble, spoke on this matter, at the invitation of the Chairman.
- Food Safety Training Courses – Maintaining prices at competitive levels and providing good value. (It was noted that the current fees for the refresher and top-up modules were £21 and not £26 as stated in the report).
- Cemeteries and Burial Grounds – Whether it was appropriate to charge the proposed new fee for the re-erection of a headstone, if the cause was vandalism.
- Homecheck Service – Options for promoting the service to increase take-up. (The Executive Member for Leisure, Councillor Mrs C L A Hockley spoke on this matter, at the invitation of the Chairman).
- Recreation Grounds and Open Spaces – The possible effect of any increased charges on the demand for tennis courts.

8. cont'd

The Panel then proceeded to consider the specific issue of car parking charges and a number of charging options were put forward by the Director of Planning and Transportation. The Director informed the Panel that it was not a practical proposition to increase charges by 5% across the board and the various options had both advantages and disadvantages. He also emphasised that the estimates of additional income were based on current usage and that there was always a likelihood of reduced parking activity, with the consequential effect on income, following the introduction of increased charges. He added that it was not possible to forecast the effect of such changes on income.

The Panel discussed various issues including:-

- alternatives to increasing charges eg council tax
- the consequences/implications of the Market Quay development
- the spread of on-street parking
- charging for coastal car parking
- charging for parking in outlying shopping centres of the Borough

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor A Mandry, the Executive member for planning and Transportation addressed the Panel on this matter.

It was then AGREED:-

- (a) that the Executive be informed that the Panel endorses the proposed fees and charges for 2004/05 as set out in the report, subject to the following views:-
 - (i) Cemeteries and Burial Grounds – that in a case where the work is required as a result of vandalism, no new charge should be introduced under fees for memorials for the re-erection of a headstone including additional inscription
(Voting: 5 in favour).
 - (ii) Housing – Homecheck Service – that the existing contribution required towards the cost of this service be retained at £10 for 2004/05.
(Voting: 3 for and 2 against with 1 member declaring an abstention from voting).
- (b) that the Executive also be informed that with respect to car parking charges, the Panel considers:-
 - (i) that extended charging hours should be introduced as soon as possible to include Sundays and Bank Holidays.
 - (ii) that charging should be introduced as soon as possible in coastal car parks.

8. cont'd

- (iii) that as far as town centre car parks are concerned, any increases be postponed until the completion of the Market Quay Development (scheduled for September 2004) and then introduced in line with option 2 of the report. ie increasing hourly fees in short and long stay car parks by 10p per hour, apart from the first hour.
(Voting on (b) above: 4 for (including the Chairman's casting vote) and 3 against).

It was also AGREED that the Executive be informed of a minority report comprising the views of Councillors R H Price and D J Murray who wished to state that they opposed the increase under option 2 as too excessive and that they were also opposed to the introduction of charges for the use of coastal car parks. Councillor T G Knight stated that he also wished to be associated with the minority report insofar as he did not support the introduction of charges for coastal car parks.

9. WORK PROGRAMME

(Minute 8 of 18 September 2003 and also see minute 3 above)

The members received a report on the Panel's current work programme for 2003/04, agreed at the last meeting on 18 September, 2003, (copy of report ps-031113-r05-pbo, circulated with agenda and appended to signed minutes).

The Panel reviewed the programme and it was AGREED:-

- (a) that it be noted that the consideration of the capital programme had been deferred from this meeting until the meeting of the Panel scheduled for 15 January 2004 in order to allow for the consideration of new capital schemes; and
- (b) that the results of the Annual Residents' Survey 2003 would be reported to the Panel at the meeting on 15 January 2004.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm and
ended at 9.20 pm)