

**Minutes of a Meeting of the
Housing and Central Services Committee
22 July 2004**

Councillor Julie Searle (Chairperson)
Councillor Carol Eade (Vice-Chairperson)

Councillor Carson Albury
*Councillor Brian Boggis
*Councillor Ann Bridges

Councillor Robert Dunn
Councillor Graham Kerner

Absent*

Councillors Michael Mendoza, Liza McKinney and Keith Dollemore were also present. Councillors Michael Mendoza and Liza McKinney left the meeting at 7:15pm following consideration of item 8: Land at Shoreham Beach. Councillor Keith Dollemore left the meeting at 8:40pm following consideration of item 11: Service and Financial Monitoring.

HCSC/74/04 Declarations of Interest / Substitute Members

Councillor Wendy Gray declared her substitution for Councillor Brian Boggis.

Councillor Graham Kerner declared a personal interest in item 9: Golden Sands Caravan Park and item 11: Service and Financial Monitoring as a member of Lancing Parish Council.

Councillor Robert Dunn declared a personal interest as the West Sussex County Council advisor on Children's Services.

Councillor Wendy Gray declared a personal interest in item 9: Golden Sands Caravan Park and item 11: Service and Financial Monitoring as a member of Lancing Parish Council.

HCSC/75/04 Questions and Statements by the Public

Members of the public were invited to ask questions or make statements about any matter for which the Council had a responsibility or which affected the district. The Chairman advised that item 8: Land at Shoreham Beach was likely to be deferred to the next meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee. She noted that some Lancing residents were advised that the meeting commenced at 7:30pm and as such discussion of item 9: Golden Sands Caravan Park would be postponed until then.

HSCS/76/04 Confirmation of Minutes

Resolved that the Minutes of the Corporate Resources Committee held on 27 April 2004 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

HCSC/77/04 Items Raised under Urgency Provisions

The Director, Corporate Services presented an exempt item: Revenues and Housing Benefits System to be considered as an urgent item. The Chairman consented to this item being added to the order of business and noted that it would be considered as item 12.

HCSC/78/04 Working Groups Reporting to Committees

Before the Committee was a report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 5.

The report recommended the Committee to appoint membership and confirm the terms of reference of the Staff Joint Working Group and the Housing Options Working Group.

It was noted that the Staff Joint Working Group was under review and that no appointment would be made at this meeting. The terms of reference were agreed subject to review. The Head of Legal and Democratic Services is to be notified of the working group membership when appointed.

The Chairman proposed Councillors Graham Kerner and Carson Albury as the members of the Housing Options Working Group and that the third place be offered to Councillor Ann Bridges. This was seconded and agreed with the terms of reference attached to the report as Annex D.

Resolved

- (i) that the terms of reference for the Staff Joint Working Group be agreed subject to review and that the membership be appointed at a later date and notified to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services;
- (ii) that the terms of reference for the Housing Options Working Group be agreed and that its members be Councillors Graham Kerner and Carson Albury. The third place to be offered to Councillor Ann Bridges.

HCSC/79/04 Order of Agenda Items

The Chairman advised that item 8: Land at Shoreham Beach would be considered as the next item for the benefit of those members of the public in the gallery interested in this item.

HCSC/80/04 Land at Shoreham Beach – Declaration of Local Nature Reserve and Potential Land Sales

Before the Committee was a report of the Corporate Management Team, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 8.

The Chairman proposed that discussion of this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee with further information. She added that the sale of Council property can be dealt with by officers under the delegated powers set out in the Constitution but that in this case Councillors had wanted to be involved in the item. She believed that this was a sensitive issue and that Adur District Council should aim to set clear strategic guidelines for the sale of land. She apologised to residents for the delay.

The Chairman's proposal was seconded and agreed. It was clarified that all business relating to the sale of land was to go on hold pending discussion by the Policy and Strategy Committee.

Resolved

- (i) that the item be deferred to the next meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee for consideration of a policy on the sale of land;
- (ii) that all business relating to the sale of land is to go 'on hold' pending consideration by the Policy and Strategy Committee.

HCSC/81/04 Draft Work Programme 2004/05

Before the Committee was a report of the Director, Corporate Services and the Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 6.

The Committee agreed the recommendations set out in the report relating to the work programme for 2004/05 as set out in Annex A.

Resolved

- (i) that the work programme for 2004/05 as set out in Annex A to the report be agreed;
- (ii) that it be noted that the work programme for the forthcoming year will be supplemented by other matters of housing and central services in response to emerging issues.

HCSC/82/04 Member Representation on West Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body

Before the Committee was a report of the Head of Housing Strategy and Need, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 7.

The Head of Housing Strategy and Need introduced the report, which asked members to nominate a representative to the West Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body.

The Committee thanked the officer for his work on this item. Councillor Julie Searle was nominated as the council's representative, This was seconded and agreed.

Resolved that Councillor Julie Searle be nominated as the Council's representative on the West Sussex Supporting People Commissioning Body.

HCSC/83/04 Order of Agenda Items

The Chairman advised that items 10 and 11 would be considered ahead of item 9: Golden Sands Caravan Park. This was to allow time for Lancing residents to attend, some of whom had been told that the meeting commenced at 7:30pm.

HCSC/84/04 Statement of Accounts for year ending 31 March 2004

Before the Committee was a report of the Director, Corporate Services, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 10.

The Head of Financial Services introduced the report, apologising for the late circulation of the Statement of Accounts. It was noted that the main report had already been before the Policy and Strategy Committee earlier in the month. The officer reported underspends on the General Fund and Housing Revenue that resulted in higher than forecast reserve on both accounts. He also reported significant underspends and slippage on capital budget projects and indicated that these shortfalls would be addressed by improved project management in the 2004/05 year.

Members asked for clarification on the minimum requirement for general reserves. The officer advised that there is no predetermined figure but that audit guidance indicates an amount of no less than 7% to 8% to address unexpected expenditure pressures. Assessment of the level of risk is a key factor in determining the level of reserves required by a council.

Members approved the Statement of Accounts and noted that questions could be put to the Head of Financial Services if any arose on further reading.

Resolved that the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2004 be approved.

HCSC/85/04 Service and Financial Monitoring – Outturn 2003/04 as at 31 March 2004

Before the Committee was a report of the Corporate Management Team, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 11.

The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services introduced the report on behalf of the Corporate Management Team and invited questions from the Committee.

Members asked why the £10,000 allocated for Lancing Town Centre had not been spent. The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services advised that the Adur Town Centres Co-ordinator was currently undertaking consultation, following which the budget would be used for appropriate works.

The Committee asked why roof repair works for Environment, Community & Housing Services often completed over budget. The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services advised that he could not advise on the detail of the scheme but suggested that this was due to the nature of the works and the element of unexpected repairs often involved. He undertook to supply Councillor Kerner with details of the scheme.

Members asked for further information on the overspend relating to eGovernment salaries. The Head of Financial Services clarified that the monies had been used to cover additional work by internal staff rather than external consultants, resulting in an overall saving.

The Committee asked for clarification on the redundancy costs set out in row 41 of the Corporate Resources capital expenditure. The Head of Financial Services advised that this related to the redundancy of four full time staff in the print room and had resulted in overall revenue savings of up to £35,000 per annum.

Members offered thanks for the report and for the savings achieved but were concerned about the amount of underspend on the capital programme. They asked for acceleration on the capital programme and more accurate information on roofing repairs. The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services advised Members about a number of initiatives taken by the Corporate Management Team to improve performance management of the capital programme.

The Committee discussed their concerns regarding the financial situation for coming years, particularly in relation to the pension deficit. The Director, Corporate Services advised that they were confident in achieving the outturn as planned for 2004/05. However, she added that the financial situation for 2005/06 did not look good. She clarified that pension related expenditure was likely to total up to £150,000 in the first year with further ongoing costs in subsequent years. In addition, reductions in Council Tax of 6% or 7% and the Chancellor's indications that government funding would be directed towards education and social services, would mean that the upcoming financial year would be a difficult one.

Members agreed the report and the new format in Annex D.

Resolved

- (i) that there are no performance areas requiring remedial action;
- (ii) that there are no performance areas requiring further reporting;
- (iii) that the new performance monitoring approach be continued.

HCSC/86/04 Golden Sands Caravan Park

Before the Committee was a report of the Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes as Item 9. The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services advised that recommendations (ii) and (iv) of the report were the same.

The Chairman invited questions and statements from the public relating to this item.

Mrs Matten of 237 Brighton Road, Lancing spoke about her concerns regarding the development of the Golden Sands Caravan Park site. She noted that the two main roads servicing Lancing are often subject to traffic build up and road accidents. She also expressed concerns regarding the increased pressure on Lancing services such as schools and doctor's surgeries that would result from a housing development. Mrs Matten also spoke about the site's susceptibility to flooding.

Mr Jones, Chairman of Golden Sands Licensees Association spoke regarding the proposals in the report, particularly the proposed closure date for the site. He requested a bigger time frame to make improvements to the caravan site. He added that the proposed closure date of 2012 would mean only a further 8 year for the licensees, some of whom will have significantly contributed to improvement of the site.

Mr O'Brien of 102 Golden Sands Caravan Park stated that the meeting with the Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services and Councillor Carol Eade had been useful and had covered many of the leaseholder's concerns. He asked the committee to consider the cost of fees and requested that the fees remain low.

Mrs Bright of 115 Golden Sands Caravan Park asked the Committee to give a definite date for the closure of the site. She felt that the instability was unfair to licensees.

Mrs Lace of 3 The Herons, Lancing stated that she was against the development of the site. She asked for more details regarding the development.

The Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services thanked those who had spoken for their well made points. He spoke about the pressure to provide additional housing in the district but assured those present that concerns regarding local facilities and the risk of flooding would be addressed in the proposed feasibility study.

The Chairman clarified that the District Council had no powers relating to education, health services or the police. the Corporate Director, Environment, Community & Housing Services added that the District Council would work with its partners, such as the Primary Care Trust and the County Council, to overcome such concerns.

The officer drew the Committee's attention to the minutes of the meeting of 15 July 2004 with Golden Sands Caravan Park Licensees, a copies of which were distributed to those present and are attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Appendix A. He noted that the licensees had requested a review of the proposed closure date. He added that the business plan to be received at the next meeting would aim to balance the best interests of Adur District Council Tax Payers and the requests of the licensees. In addition, the proposed feasibility study is to look at many of the concerns raised regarding the suitability of the site.

Councillor Carol Eade thanked the officers for their report and added that the meeting of 15 July 2004, which she had attended, had been useful. A written summary of the meeting written by Councillor Eade was distributed to those present and is attached to the signed copy of these minutes as Appendix B.

The Committee agreed recommendation (i) as set out in the report regarding a business plan. They agreed an amendment to recommendation (iii) to read 'to release the slippage of the balance of £45,000 in the current year's capital programme..'. Members proposed that the £20,000 required for the feasibility study be taken from the balance of the £45,000 slippage. It was also requested that the feasibility study begin this year, rather than 2005/06. These proposals were agreed.

Resolved

- (i) that the Committee receive a detailed Business Plan on Golden Sands Caravan Park at its meeting on 14 September 2004 to investigate the management of the site on a regulation compliant basis and on a proper business footing with the intention of operating the site until 2012;
- (ii) that the balance of the slippage of £45,000 in the current year's capital programme 2004/05, which was earmarked for improving drainage on the site, be released, on the understanding that current enhanced cess pit emptying regime is continued;
- (iii) that capital budget provision be made to the sum of £20,000, from the released balance of £45,000 in (ii) above, to carry out a full feasibility study with a view to redeveloping the site for residential use in 2012.

HCSC/87/04 Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded under Schedule 12, paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended.

HCSC/88/04 Revenues and Housing Benefits System

Before the Committee was an urgent, exempt report of the Director, Corporate Services, copies of which had been circulated to all Members and a copy of which is attached to the signed copy of these Minutes.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services noted that the report had been brought before the committee as an urgent item as the information included within it had only recently become available and the item must be considered before the next meeting.

The Director, Corporate Services introduced the report which asked Members to agree the proposed arrangements for the replacement of the revenues and housing benefits systems. She informed the Committee that joint procurement with Horsham District Council had been explored. She drew the Committee's attention to the results from the joint tender process at Annex 1 to the report, highlighting Capita as the preferred supplier. She advised that the proposed 'Academy' revenues system will be used across the partnership and will therefore be compatible with Mid Sussex and Horsham. Worthing also use this package. She also recommended that Members agree to Capita being approached through a GCat tendering process as the supplier the housing benefits system. This was essential given the timescales to which the Council was working and the issues around existing system maintenance with West Sussex County Council.

The Committee agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

Resolved

- (i) that the Academy (Capita) revenues system be selected for Adur District Council, subject to successful negotiations with the supplier;
- (ii) that the joint appointment of an independent project manager for the duration of the revenues implementation be supported;
- (iii) that tendering through GCat on a single supplier basis for the provision of a Housing Benefits system be agreed.

The meeting was declared closed by the Chairman at 8:50pm, it having commenced at 7:00pm.

Chairman