

LICENSING AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Meeting held on Thursday, 28th June, 2007 at the Council Offices,
Farnborough at 7.00 p.m.

Voting Members

Cr. S.J. Masterson (Chairman)
Cr. A.M. Ferrier (Vice-Chairman)

Cr. N.M. Baines
Cr. D. Cappleman
Cr. J.P. Matthews

a Cr. Mrs. L.J. Hoppitt
Cr. G. Paparesti

Cr. B.W. Parker
Cr. M.D. Smith
a Cr. M.J. Tennant

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Crs. Mrs. L.J. Hoppitt
and M.J. Tennant.

97. **MINUTES –**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th May, 2007 were confirmed and
signed by the Chairman.

98. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS –**

The Committee considered the Head of Financial Services' Report No.
FIN0709 which sought approval for the Council's financial statements for
2006/07.

The Head of Finance reported that the Statement of Accounts had been
prepared in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
(CIPFA) 'Statement of Recommended Practice' for 2006, (the SORP), and in
accordance with the 'Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003' (updated in 2006).

The Committee was informed that regulations required that the statement
of accounts should be approved by a Committee of the Council by 30th June,
2007 and signed by the Chairman. Following this, once audited, the financial
statements would be published by 30th September, 2007.

It was highlighted that, in accordance, with the SORP, a number of
significant changes had been made to the layout of the statements for 2006/07.
Notably, the Consolidated Revenue Account, which had previously been the key
focus of the financial statements had been replaced with three separate
statements:

(1) **Income and Expenditure Account**

This account summarised all of the Council's income and expenditure for the year including notional accounting entries required by the SORP, such as depreciation charges, pension liabilities and deferred charges, such as the social housing grants. Although the Statement showed a large deficit, the Committee was assured that this was purely because of changes to accounting procedures. This meant that the notional accounting entries mentioned were no longer reversed out in this account but were now shown in the following statement and the deficit was not therefore the figure to be taken for Council Tax purposes. The Committee was also asked to note that there had also been a change to capital accounting procedures which meant that notional interest was no longer charged into the cost of services.

(2) **Statement of Movement on the General Fund Balance**

This Statement showed whether the Council had over or under spent against the Council Tax raised for the year and summarised the differences between the outturn on the Income and Expenditure Account and the General Fund Balance. It was this statement that showed the true impact on the Council's revenue balances and hence the Council Tax. The note following this Statement provided a more detailed breakdown of the summarised figures.

(3) **Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses**

This Statement summarised the total gains and losses for the Council for the year, including gains and losses relating to the revaluation of fixed assets and the liability for retirement benefits.

Having scrutinised the accounts, Members queried in particular the variance in the net expenditure year on year and were informed that the reduction in the net cost of services in 2006/07 was mainly due to the change in capital charges and the removal of the notional interest charges from the accounts. In addition, Members queried the 20% difference in the actual capital spend compared to the budget. The Head of Financial Services explained that this was because projects planned and budgeted for in the Capital Programme were sometimes delayed and budgets for these projects would be carried forward into the following year and adjusted in the revised budget. In 2005/06 some significant capital projects, for example Westgate, had not been completed and the related budgets were subsequently carried forward into 2006/07. This had resulted in the 20% difference between the original budget and the actual spend.

RESOLVED: That

- (i) the Council's financial statements for 2006/07, as set out in the Head of Financial Services' Report No. FIN0609, be approved; and
- (ii) the Chairman be authorised to sign the financial statements for 2006/07 as a correct record.

NOTE: Cr. B.W. Parker declared a personal interest as a member of Farnborough Gate Bowls Club and, in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct, remained in the meeting during the discussion and voting thereon.

99. **SAFE2EAT FOOD HYGIENE RATING SYSTEM –**

The Committee received the Head of Environmental Health's Report No. ENH07028 which provided details of a new food hygiene rating system which would replace the existing Five Star Award Scheme. The Head of Environmental Health gave a presentation which provided an overview of the Scheme. The Committee was informed that the new system would be a web based system and would provide residents with information on the hygiene standards of Rushmoor's local food businesses. The Scheme was also being adopted as a partnership of all Hampshire authorities and had been subject to wide consultation with local businesses. The Scheme would be launched during July, 2007.

The Committee was informed that businesses would be rated in accordance with the Food Standard Agency's rating system following formal inspections by Environmental Health. All businesses would be included in the scheme and the results published on the web as either 'excellent', 'satisfactory' or 'unsatisfactory'. Businesses would also receive a certificate which could be displayed on their premises.

The Head of Environmental Health highlighted a number of advantages of the Scheme, including:

- helping the public make informed purchasing decisions,
- raising standards within the food retail industry by creating a publicity incentive for local businesses,
- inconsistencies in scoring would be identified, thereby maintaining officer consistency both within the Borough and with other authorities,
- the data could be used to compare levels of unsatisfactory businesses across local authority areas,
- the Scheme supported the Freedom of Information agenda.

Unsatisfactory businesses would be subject to follow up action in order to raise standards to a satisfactory level and would remain deemed as unsatisfactory on the website for a minimum of three months.

The Head of Environmental Health's presentation included a demonstration of how the website would work and explained that premises would be plotted on a map and a 'drill down' system could be used to obtain further details.

Members welcomed the new scheme and felt that it was an improvement on the previous Five Star Scheme in that the information would be more

accessible to the public. Members sought clarification on whether external areas would also be inspected, and raised concerns about whether the Scheme would be fair to premises owners who could be affected by other environmental factors beyond their control, such as flats above their premises.

In response, the Head of Environmental Health assured the Committee that external areas were taken into account during inspections. With regard to the fairness of the Scheme, Members were assured that the inspections were not just based on cleanliness and that confidence in management was also taken into consideration. In addition, 'a right to reply' section on the website was also being considered. Furthermore, businesses would be given a 'sign off' sheet to ensure that they were aware of their rating at all times.

RESOLVED: That the Report be noted and the Safe2Eat scheme be endorsed.

100. LICENSING PRESENTATION –

The Committee received a presentation from the Head of Environmental Health and the Solicitor to the Council as part of the ongoing training programme provided to Members on the key principles of licensing.

The presentation updated Members on:

- the basics of licensing and the general principles of the legislation,
- the types of licence applications dealt with by Environmental Health,
- the Council's responsibilities under the Gambling Act, 2005, and
- the principles and procedures for hearings.

RESOLVED: That the update be noted.

The Meeting closed at 8.45 p.m.

S.J. MASTERSON
CHAIRMAN
