

Meeting of the

# EASTBOURNE AREA COMMITTEE

held at the Town Hall on Wednesday 13 February 2002

PRESENT:-

**East Sussex County Councillors:** TUNWELL (Chairman), Mrs HEALY, Mrs LEIGH, SKILTON, TUTT, VICKERS and Miss WOODALL.

**Eastbourne Borough Councillors:** BELSEY (as substitute for Councillor Taylor), Mrs CHARLTON, LACEY, OBE, LEGGETT, MARSDEN (Vice-Chairman), MARSH (as substitute for Councillor Stanley), PARSONS and STANBURY (as substitute for Councillor Mrs Goodall).

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Ellis (ESCC), Mrs Goodall, Stanley and Taylor (EBC).

**Officers:**

**East Sussex County Council:** Mr R Partridge, Assistant Director of Legal and Community Services; Mr T Brierley, Head of Financial Services; Mr D Marshall, Head of Trading Standards; Ms D Thorpe, Head of Libraries, Information and Arts and Mr C Clarke, Traffic and Safety Manager, Transport and Environment Department

**Eastbourne Borough Council:** Mr M Ray, Chief Executive; Mr M Probyn, Head of Amenities; Mr S Russell, Head of Strategic Development and Mr D Robinson, Member Services Manager

19.	<b>MINUTES.</b> The Chairman was authorised to sign the minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2001 as a correct record.	
20.	<p><b>COUNCIL BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2002/2003.</b></p> <p><b>(a) East Sussex County Council.</b> Mr Brierley presented the report of the County Council's budget on behalf of the County Director of Corporate Resources. In particular he highlighted pressures in a number of areas including education, social services and waste disposal. There had been an overall increase in the County's standard spending assessment of 5.9% including 6.6% for education and 5.1% for social services. However spending in these areas had, in the past, exceeded SSA with the County redirecting additional resources to these budgets. The Cabinet's proposals to the County Council were for a 6.1% increase in spending. Outside of education, portfolios had been asked to find some £8m of savings to provide for funds to be redirected to other areas and give additional flexibility to the Council's budget. A Council Tax rise in line with Government expectations at 5.2% would be recommended.</p> <p>Councillors raised comment on the number of areas of the budget including:-</p> <p>(i) <b>Education and Social Services SSA.</b> Query as to why the actual spending increases in these areas was not at the SSA increase level. As explained above the reason was due to higher than SSA spend in past years.</p> <p>(ii) <b>Members' Allowances.</b> A question was put concerning provision for increased Members' Allowances. This was covered at paragraph 3.1 of the report Mr Partridge indicated that additional detail on this proposal was publicly available in the County Council's budget meeting papers that had been published earlier today.</p> <p>(iii) <b>Old Town Library.</b> (Note: Councillor Tunwell vacated the Chair for this item and took no part in the discussions or vote. Councillor Marsden, Acting Chairman).</p> <p>Ms Thorpe was invited to explain the reasons behind the proposal to close the Old Town Library. She said that the proposal was part of a new strategy for library services intended to meet national library standards and concentrate resources on buildings that could host a wide range of services. She cited the example of the Government's People's Network initiative for which the County had received grant of £750,000 for I.T. equipment. The Eastbourne Central Library would receive 40 computers as part the project and was the first library in the country to pilot this. Currently there were 9 that were fully utilised by the public. Ms Thorpe also referred to the need for increase spending on new books in order to meet national standards. Some £200,000 had been added to the new book fund this year. In order to redirect resources the County were looking to close 4 small libraries. The Old Town Library had been selected in view of its proximity to the Central Library and declining use in the period 1997-2001. 45,000 people visited the library in 1997 and 31,319 in 2001. The library was small and there was little space for activities, additional computers or other facilities. Hours of opening were currently limited to 20¾ hours per week compared to the Central Library of 42½ hours.</p> <p>A number of Councillors raised concerns at the proposed closure. Councillor Skilton said that for many residents of the Old Town the Central Library was over 2 miles away with the cost of bus services at £1 a single journey. He gave figures showing an increased number of book issues over the last four years. He was concerned particularly for the elderly, children and young parents who could be denied access to library services. In response to concerns regarding the elderly Ms Thorpe drew attention to the housebound library service.</p> <p>Councillor Lacey reported that through the motion passed by the Borough Council on 23 January 2002 the County had been advised of this Council's regret at the</p>	

proposed library closure. Mr Partridge reported that the County Cabinet had considered the Council's representations and that a formal reply would be made following the budget council meeting. Councillor Lacey went on to express concern that recent proposed public meetings into the future of library services in East Sussex had been were to be held at Lewes and Hastings but not in Eastbourne. Ms Thorpe said that the meetings had been arranged as part of the Best Value Review of Libraries and although this was not under her control she would pass on the Borough's concerns on this point. (Note: A meeting had subsequently been arranged for Tuesday 5 March at Eastbourne Town Hall from 6.30pm to 7.30pm).

**RESOLVED:** (11 votes in favour) That the East Sussex County Council be asked to reconsider the proposed closure of the Old Town Library.

(iv) **Disposal of Fridges.** Members noted the additional costs arising from more stringent disposal requirements now required by the EU in respect of fridges. The Committee was advised that the St Philips Avenue household waste site would continue to take fridges brought in by the public at no charge and that OAP's in the town could use the bulky household waste collection service.

(Note: Councillor Stanbury (EBC) took no part in the discussions and vote in relation to the County's budget in view of his employment by the County Council).

(b) **Eastbourne Borough Council.** Members had previously received copies of the Borough's budget proposals (these have been circulated as item 6 to the Cabinet agenda for 6 February and also sent separately to County Members not Members of the Borough Council). All County Members had been invited to attend a presentation on the budget consultation meeting held on 6 February 2002.

**NOTED.**

<p>21.</p>	<p><b>UPDATE ON COMMUNITY PLANNING AND LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.</b> The Committee considered a joint report outlining progress on community planning and local strategic partnerships in both Eastbourne and East Sussex. This updated the report that had been made to the Area Committee at its last meeting on 24 October 2001.</p> <p>The East Sussex Strategic Partnership had held its first formal meeting on the 11 December 2001 agreeing its membership and a work plan.</p> <p>A core group of organisations have met in Eastbourne on 22 January 2002 to progress the formation of a Local Strategic Partnership for Eastbourne.</p> <p>Details of the membership of both groups were given in appendices to the report.</p> <p><b>NOTED.</b></p>	<p><b>LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.</b></p>
<p>22.</p>	<p><b>HIGHWAY SCHEMES IN EASTBOURNE.</b> The Committee considered the report of the County Director of Transport and Environment listing details of highway schemes under construction or being designed within the next twelve months in Eastbourne. as follows:-</p> <p><b>NOTED.</b></p>	

	(Note: Councillors Skilton and Tunwell declared an interest in those matters above relating to public bus services in view of his office as a directors of Eastbourne Buses).	
	<p><b>23. MATTERS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION BY THE AREA COMMITTEE.</b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> That the provisional list of items for the meeting on 20 March 2002 include the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Sure Start</li> <li>· Highway Schemes</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>24. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS.</b> The following previously agreed date was noted:-</p> <p><b>20 March 2002</b></p> <p>The following dates for 2002/2003 were agreed:-</p> <p><b>26 June 2002</b></p> <p><b>16 October 2002</b></p> <p><b>15 January 2003</b></p> <p><b>26 March 2003</b></p> <p>All meetings at 6.00 pm on Wednesdays.</p>	
	The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.	
		<p><b>M E Tunwell</b></p> <p><b>Chairman</b></p>
	(der:\P\area\02.02.18\mins)	