

## **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 22 April 2003**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **22 April 2003** when there were present:

Cllr T G Cutmore (Chairman)  
Cllr T Livings (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Cllr G A Mockford  
Cllr C G Seagers

Cllr M G B Starke  
Cllr J Thomass

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

R Crofts	Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)
R J Honey	Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)
H Drye	Corporate Policy Manager
S Rom	Economic Development Officer
M Martin	Committee Administrator

### **206 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2003 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **207 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS**

The Committee received the schedule relating to progress on decisions and noted that the outstanding issue was to be dealt with later on the agenda.

### **208 RAYLEIGH MARKET – REVIEW**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Legal Services which sought Members' views on the process and timetable of the review and involvement of interested parties.

Members noted that:-

- an initial meeting of this Committee to commence the review could be held on the same evening as the Finance & Policy Committee scheduled for 10 June 2003, to which the key parties listed in the Officer's report would be invited.
- The feasibility of the relocation of the market within the High Street would be the focus of the first meeting.
- This could then be followed up with extensive public consultation at the direction of the Committee and might include the use of questionnaires, resident surveys and the Council's mobile exhibition unit.

Members were in agreement that, whilst the Rayleigh Chamber of Trade was included in this list, shopkeepers should be consulted separately, in order that their individual views might be considered.

**Resolved**

- (1) That a meeting of the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee be held on 10 June 2003 for the purpose of commencing the Rayleigh Market Review.
- (2) That the following consultees be invited to provide representation at that meeting:-  
  
The Market Operator  
Rayleigh Town Council  
The Rayleigh & District Chamber of Trade  
Market Traders  
The Highway Authority  
The Police
- (3) That a study of the history of the market in its present location be provided for Members of the Committee. (HLS)

**209 ROCHFORD DISTRICT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY  
2003-2007**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which outlined the draft Economic Development Strategy for Rochford for the period 2003/07 for Members' consideration.

In response to Member questions/comments, it was confirmed that-

- the timescale for consultation and reporting back to Members was realistic and achievable, as the Council was already working with many of the partner agencies.
- The views of private businesses would be taken into account when preparing the finalised strategy.
- The figure supplied, relating to the number of jobs dependent on the future of the London Southend Airport, should include ancillary workers.
- Statistics relating to out commuting by train in paragraphs 3.6 and 7.56 should not be limited to First Great Eastern.
- A 'SWOT' analysis would set out to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.
- The list of 'Local Economic Initiatives – What we have achieved so far' should be expanded to include the District's involvement in the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park and the on-going work around the Rayleigh Windmill.
- The list of 'Local Economic Initiatives – What we plan to achieve over the next five years' should include the Council's enhancement of electronic links to speed services.

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- Within the section entitled 'Town Centre and Industrial Enhancement' it should be made clear that the Council had 'part-funded' a Market Town Health Check for Rochford.
- The development of the Broadband infrastructure was essential in order to attract new businesses to the area. Reference to suppliers should include cable companies as well as British Telecom.
- Under 'Actions' in the Town Centre section, reference should be made to improved lighting in town centres which works in tandem with CCTV to reduce crime.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That, subject to inclusion of the comments listed above, the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2003/07 be agreed for consultation purposes.
- (2) That the views of the business community be sought on the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2003/07 and reported back to Committee with a finalised version by October 2003. (CE)

## **210 BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE CONSULTATION PROTOCOL**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive which provided Members with a draft consultation protocol for business representative groups such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Chambers of Trade and Federation of Small Businesses.

In response to Member questions/comments it was confirmed that:-

- the consultation would take place in tandem with the consultation on the Rochford District Economic Development Strategy 2003/07.
- Research had suggested that this Council was ahead of other local authorities in producing such a protocol.
- Section headings would be amended to read: 'What you may expect from the Rochford District Council' and 'What the District Council may expect from you'.
- The document could evolve to include other business representative organisations, if identified.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That, subject to the above comments, the draft Business Representative Consultation Protocol be agreed.
- (2) That consultation with businesses take place prior to reporting back to the Committee with a finalised version in October 2003. (CE)

**211 ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) which provided Members with further information on progress and a programme for implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 coming into force in full in January 2005.

In response to Member questions, it was confirmed that:-

- By January 2005 any person making a request to the Council for information must be informed whether the information is held, and if so, it must be made available.
- Further reports would be brought back to the Committee on matters of detail including regulations relating to charges for the provision of information.
- There are a limited number of exemptions, but it is necessary to decide whether it is in the public interest before relying on these.
- There would need to be a managed process of archiving and destruction of records and documentation.

**Resolved**

That the progress made to date with regard to the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 be noted and endorsed. (CD(LP&A))

**EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Resolved**

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**212 AUDIT REPORT**

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Chief Executive which drew Members' attention to completed audit investigations and provided an update of audit recommendations.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the conclusions and results from the above audits be agreed.
- (2) That the update information on the audit recommendations, outlined in Appendix 2, be agreed. (CE)

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The Chairman wished to express his thanks to Members of the Committee and Officers for their support throughout the municipal year.

The meeting closed at 8.29 pm

Chairman .....

Date .....