
57 SOUTH STREET

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Members' views on the continuation of support in respect of the above.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The property at 57 South Street, Rochford was formerly used as offices, let out to SEETEC Business Technology Centre Ltd. Following their termination of training, the building was deemed to be surplus to requirements and disposal was considered.
- 2.2 Following representation from the Rochford Parish Council, it was agreed in late 1997 to work in partnership to provide a youth information facility.
- 2.3 At a meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 16 September 1999, it was agreed that, for the first three years of the project, Rochford would fund the payment of National Non Domestic Rates, utility bills and repair and maintenance (Minute 360/99 refers). The Rochford Parish Council funded the purchase of some furniture and equipment and the cleaning of the building. The Youth Service funded the staffing resource necessary to provide three three-hour sessions of advice-giving each week.
- 2.4 In July 2000, the building was leased to Essex County Council at a peppercorn rent for a period of seven years with a rent review after three years.
- 2.5 The first three years of the project has now expired.
- 2.6 The usage of the facility is growing as more of the local youth becomes aware of its existence. During the period of January to April this year, the opening hours were:-

Mondays 6 p.m.-9 p.m.
Wednesdays 3 p.m.-9 p.m.

The number of visitors to the facility during the period was 615, with 55 new contacts being made.

In addition, the Rochford Locality Complementary Education Scheme runs on Wednesdays from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., working with young people from King Edmund School, who are at risk of disengaging from formal education.

The Duke of Edinburgh scheme operates on alternate Mondays.

3 THE WAY FORWARD

- 3.1. The agreement of Rochford to fund the elements of expenditure set out in paragraph 2.3 above expires at the end of July 2003. Decisions are, therefore, required as to whether or not the Council wishes to continue supporting the facility.
- 3.2. Essex County Council representatives have indicated that they view this as a valuable local service and are happy to continue resourcing the project. It is also understood that the Parish Council will give favourable consideration to continuing its contribution.
- 3.3. Should Rochford wish to continue with this scheme, the costs are estimated as follows:-

Business Rates	£4,000
Utility Payments	£1,000
Maintenance and Repair	£4,400 (annual average over a three year period)

- 3.4. This initiative does appear to be serving a need within the local community and, if Rochford were to discontinue support, the facility would, in all probability, close.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The current support is within the agreed budget for 2003/4. Should Members wish to continue support there will be an additional cost of £4,000 per year as some elements of the cost are currently being met from the Crime and Disorder reserve. Normally additional budget commitments are agreed within the overall budget strategy, however in view of the small scale of this item it is possible to agree this now.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The provision of this facility gives valuable contact with young people as well as advice. It provides a safe venue to discuss issues which contributes to a reduction in criminal activities.

6 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. This facility provides a valuable resource within the Parish of Rochford.

7 RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That support of the project until expiry of the lease in July 2007 be continued.
(CD(F&ES))

Roger Crofts

Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)

For further information please contact Roger Crofts on:-

Tel:- 01702 546377 extn. 3006

E-Mail:- roger.crofts@rochford.gov.uk