

Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 5 March 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the **Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **5 March 2024** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Vice-Chairman: Cllr N J Booth

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr A G Cross
Cllr R Lambourne
Cllr E O K Mason
Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr R Milne
Cllr G W Myers

Cllr Mrs S J Page
Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I H Ward
Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon

109 VISITING MEMBER

Cllr Richard C D Linden

110 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs E O K Mason and J N Gooding.

111 SUBSTITUTES

None.

112 OFFICERS PRESENT

G Campbell - Director, Policy & Delivery
M Stickley - Corporate Manager – Democratic Services
S Summers - Strategic Director
E Yule - Strategic Director

113 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to a correction that Councillor Richard Linden be listed as attending that meeting rather than Councilor R Lambourne.

114 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

115 THE MILL ARTS & EVENTS CENTRE UPDATE

The committee considered the report of the Director, Assets & Investments updating the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date of the resolutions made by the Executive and Full Council.

The committee discussed the resourcing of market research and the options for the future of the centre, noting officers' views that support was particularly needed around commissioning, that the team which operated the site was small and often serviced openings seven days a week, and that the market research for the site was separate to a wider review of the councils' leisure services. The committee noted that the report provided a retrospective summary of progress to date and officers agreed to provide a history of decision-making on the Mill Hall Arts and Events Centre following the meeting.

The committee discussed the timeline for the market research, the number of responses to consultations already undertaken, and the charging rates for use of the centre. The committee noted that the Strategic Assets Working Group was the body currently reviewing the centre, and discussed whether a standalone working group for the site was needed.

An amendment to the recommendations was moved by Councillor N J Booth, seconded by S E Wootton, to insert the following recommendation:

To recommend that a cross-party working group is appointed by the Council at its annual meeting in May 2024 to act as a steering group for matters relating to the Mill Hall Arts and Events Centre, and that officers prepare a proposed terms of reference for this working group to be presented to the annual Council meeting, and that the first meeting of the working group should be held in June 2024.

The amendment was put to the vote and agreed.

For: 13
Against: 0
Abstain: 0

An amendment to the amended recommendations was moved by Councillor D L Belton, seconded by Councillor I H Ward, to insert the following recommendation:

To propose to the Lead Member for Assets that market research on the Mill Hall is concluded by September 2024 and the results reported to the next possible meeting of the working group after September 2024.

The committee discussed the reasoning for the proposed amendment to ensure that consultation was not delayed by the establishment of a working group which would not meet until June 2024.

The amendment was put to the vote and agreed.

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For: 8
Against: 3
Abstain: 2

In response to a question about recommendations to Lead Members, it was confirmed that although such roles would not exist following the council's transition to a committee system of governance, the work to prepare the specification of market research would take place under the ambit of the current Lead Member for Assets.

Resolved:

1. That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review the updated information presented within the report.
2. To recommend that a cross-party working group is appointed by the Council at its annual meeting in May 2024 to act as a steering group for matters relating to the Mill Hall Arts and Events Centre, and that officers prepare a proposed terms of reference for this working group to be presented to the annual Council meeting, and that the first meeting of the working group should be held in June 2024.
3. To propose to the Lead Member for Assets that market research on the Mill Hall is concluded by September 2024 and the results reported to the next possible meeting of the working group after September 2024 should such a group be established by Council.

116 IMPROVING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE CREDIT AND FINANCIAL SERVICES FOR LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS VIA CREDIT UNIONS

Members pre-scrutinised the report of the Interim Director, Communications & Health relating to the Motion on Notice regarding Credit Unions proposed at Full Council on 14 December 2023, prior to its recommendation to the Executive.

The committee commended the quality of the report.

An amendment to the recommendations was moved by Councillor Mrs E Gadsdon, seconded by Councillor S E Wootton, to ensure that the review of how the council could support credit unions in delivering face-to-face services would include identifying such support. The amendment was put to the vote and carried.

For: 12
Against: 0
Abstain: 1

The recommendations were moved by the Chairman, Councillor J E McPherson, and seconded by Councillor R Milne.

Resolved:

- (1) To note the contents of the report.

- (2) To sign a Partner Agreement, supported by Essex County Council and Essex Police to demonstrate the Council's clear commitment in taking a zero-tolerance approach to any issues of illegal money lending, (i.e., loan sharks).
- (3) To submit an application for recognition for the England Illegal Money Lending Tea, (IMLT), Partner Recognition Standard.
- (4) To review with the intention of identifying how the Council could support with providing community access points or facilities that could be utilised by credit unions to support the delivery of face-to-face services in our communities.

117 SCOPING REQUEST TO REVIEW CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Members considered the report of the Director, Policy & Delivery providing Members with a scoping document outlining the work intended in a review of the authority's engagement arrangements with its stakeholders.

The recommendations were moved by the Chairman, Councillor J E McPherson, and seconded by Councillor I H Ward.

Resolved:

1. To endorse the review and its scope in order for the review on engagement methodology at Rochford District Council to be undertaken.
2. That the Committee makes any recommendations to the Executive for consideration.

For: 13

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

118 KEY DECISIONS DOCUMENT

Members noted the contents of the Key Decisions Document.

119 WORK PLAN

Members considered and noted the contents of the Work Plan.

In response to a question, officers confirmed that Councillor R Milne's request at the previous meeting of the committee that Finch Field and Dutch Cottage be added to the work plan would be reflected in the work plan going forward.

The meeting closed at 20:51 [Type time here].

Chairman

Date

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