
KEY POLICIES AND ACTIONS FOR 2007/2008

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report formally sets out the main areas of policy development for 2007/2008. It identifies the main projects to be progressed and implemented and also highlights the main areas of service development/change. It also identifies issues on which the Council may wish to request consideration by the Review Committee and outlines the timetable for establishing the budget for 2008/2009.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 With the budget agreed at Full Council on 30th January and with the Council Tax set at last week's meeting, it is opportune for Members to formally agree to the main areas of the Council's work programme for the coming year, particularly taking into account the report outlining proposals for a new political decision making structure, which is also on tonight's agenda.
- 2.2 At the same time, Members can consider the programme relating to the monitoring of the 2007/2008 budget and the preparation of the 2008/2009 budget. Members views are sought on those policy, resource and service issues which might be appropriate for examination by the Review Committee, although it will be for that Committee to determine its work programme.
- 2.3 This approach is in line with the budget and policy framework procedure rules. It also provides a transparent and closer linkage between the Council's budgetary process and work programme.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The majority of the Council's work is governed by statute and is driven by legislative requirements. A number of the items included in this year's budget are on that basis – elections, choice based lettings and contaminated land. There will also be the enforcement, education and information activities around implementing the "No Smoking" agenda.
- 3.2 There are proposals to change the Council's political decision making structure as we respond to the Local Government White Paper and the emerging Local Government Bill, and as always, there will be a focus on continuing service improvement, delivery and achieving the "Gershon" savings required of the Authority.
- 3.3 At the same time, within the budget making process, Members have decided on making specific allocations in the revenue budget for particular priorities around the young and the old, and ensuring through the capital programme further enhancements are delivered in terms of

the Sweyne Park extension, plus continuing to progress the expansion around Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.

- 3.4 The coming year will see a focus, depending on feedback from the Relationship Manager and the Audit Commission, on applying for a potential regrading under the current CPA system in October, and if successful, on preparing for a CPA re-inspection later in the financial year. The application for re-assessment would be preceded by a Peer Review in June/July as preparation for that process. We will also need to focus on the outcomes arising from the Access to Services Best Value Review, with the finalised report anticipated from the Audit Commission towards the end of March.
- 3.5 Key priorities for the Council for the year will be the completion of the Local Authority Housing Stock Transfer process and the effective operation of Rochford Housing Association as an independent body; progression of the procurement process for the major contracts around refuse collection and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance, to ensure that new contracts are in place by April 2008; and the progression of the Housing Benefits/Council Tax Partnership arrangement with Chelmsford to improve the Service capacity and performance of both Authorities.
- 3.6 There will also be an emphasis on renewing our IT applications to ensure our service delivery and access to services continues to improve, paid for through budget savings and income generation throughout the year. More work will also be done internally around the value for money agenda to ensure that, on a service by service basis, we not only deliver in a cost effective way, but can ably demonstrate that we are doing so.
- 3.7 The attached appendices A, B, C and D make no attempt to cover all the Council's functions. Instead, they focus on the "headline" areas of work for the forthcoming year. Appendix A deals with the policy framework, Appendix B with the main projects, Appendix C with service development/change, and Appendix D with those areas which emerged via the budget process but which are being progressed via other routes. In each of the Appendices, the linkage to one or more of the Council's six corporate aims listed below, is also given.
1. To provide quality cost effective services
 2. To work towards a safer and more caring community
 3. To promote a green and sustainable environment
 4. To encourage a thriving economy
 5. To improve the quality of life for people in the District
 6. To maintain and enhance the local heritage and culture
- 3.8 Subject to any Member comments on the programme, the intention would be to publicise its content in the next edition of Rochford District Matters. This again would be in line with the Council's approved constitution.

- 3.9 The key elements of the Council's work programme will be included within the emerging revised corporate plan, work on which is now underway, and in the 2007 Performance Plan, which will need to be considered and approved by Full Council in June.
- 3.10 Given the work programme outlined and the issues coming before Council in the foreseeable future, Appendix E outlines those topics suggested for study by the Review Committee. However, in requesting subjects for consideration, Members need to take into account the capacity of the Review Committee and note that it sets its own agenda.
- 3.11 Appendix F sets out the process and timetable for monitoring the 2007/2008 budget and preparing the 2008/2009 budget for Members' information. The intention is to combine the half-yearly review of the budget with a half-yearly review of the work programme in November. There will also be a mid year Performance report on all our main Performance Indicators. In this way, it is envisaged that Members can review progress on both the budget and the work programme at a critical stage during the financial year and make any adjustments that might be appropriate to ensure key targets are met or reassessed.
- 3.12 Finally, Appendix G sets out a list of events, for Members reference, which will impact on the Authority during the year. It is not all-encompassing, but does attempt to capture the key activities which the Council will be involved in.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Council **RESOLVES**
- (1) that the work programme for 2007/2008 as set out in Appendices A, B, C and D and the public notification of its content, as outlined in the report, be agreed.
 - (2) that those areas of work, with or without amendments, for consideration by the Review Committee, as outlined in Appendix E, be agreed.
 - (3) That the programme for the monitoring of the 2007/2008 budget and the development of the 2008/2009 budget, as outlined in Appendix F, be noted.
 - (4) That the main events timetable outlined in Appendix G be noted.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

None

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Appendix A

Policy Development WorkCouncil's Corporate Strategy (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

- Review existing and prepare a revised strategy in the light of 2007/2008 Budget Process – for Consideration and approval by Council April 2007

Local Development Documents (3, 4, 5 & 6)

- Update and revise Local Development Scheme April 2007
- Finalisation of Core Strategy following consultation May/June 2007
- Public Inquiry into Core Strategy Nov 2007
- Production of Allocations Policy Options April/May 2007
- Development Control Statement
 - Option development June/July 2007
 - Submission to Gov Office Jan 2008
 - Final public consultation Feb/March 2008
- West Rochford Action Area Plan (jointly with SBC)
 - Option Development Oct/Nov 2007

Asset Management Plan (1 & 5)

Report on Asset Management Performance Indicators July 2007

Review Asset Management Plan July 2007

IT Strategy (1 & 5)

Agree new IT 5 year strategy and Action Plan June 2007

Capital Strategy (1)

Review and production of new Capital Strategy Nov/Dec 2007

Performance Plan (1)

Prepare 2007 Performance Plan for
Member consideration and approval

June 2007

Statement of Efficiency (Gershon) (1)

Production of Annual Statement

April 2007

Economic Development Strategy (1, 4 and 5)

Review and prepare new Strategy for
Member consideration and approval

June 2007

Rochford District Sustainable Community Strategy
(2,3,4,5, & 6)

Review and prepare new strategy, with Partners,
for Approval by the Local Strategic Partnership

March 2008

Procurement Strategy (1)

Review and prepare a new revised Procurement Study

July 2007

Access to Services Strategy and Work Programme (1, 2, 5)

Production of Strategy and Action Plan

June 2007

Appendix B

Main ProjectsCherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park (3 & 5)

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|---|---|
| ▪ Submit Planning application for expanded Park and revised access arrangements | Feb 2007 |
| ▪ Purchase of additional land for expansion of Country Park | Ongoing - dependent on negotiations (may require CPO) |

Sweyne Park Extension (3 and 5)

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| ▪ Undertake first phase of ground preparation works, boundary fencing and possible drainage works | Autumn 2007 |
| ▪ Consider layout arrangements, facilities, management, etc | Oct 2007 |

Great Wakering Youth Provision (2 and 5)

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| ▪ Scope project with potential partners | April 2007 |
| ▪ Develop project options for consideration | Autumn 2007 |
| ▪ Decision on way forward | Winter 2007 |

Appendix C

Key Service ImprovementsHousing Option Appraisal (1, 2 & 5)

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|---|-------------------------------------|
| ▪ Preliminary agreement between Council and Rochford Housing Association as to which houses, flats, bungalows and related sites are to be transferred to Rochford Housing Association | Mid February 2007 |
| ▪ Preliminary agreement by Council and Rochford Housing Association as to transfer price and arrangements for sharing of any proceeds from future Right to Buy sales | Mid March 2007 |
| ▪ Preliminary agreement by Council and Rochford Housing Association as to arrangements for VAT recovery and sharing. | Mid March 2007 |
| ▪ Application by Rochford Housing Association for registration by the Housing Corporation. | End March 2007 |
| ▪ Council and Rochford Housing Association to identify and agree which contracts are to be assigned/novated. | Mid April 2007 |
| ▪ Post transfer operational arrangements finalised, including monitoring and nomination procedures | May/June 2007 |
| ▪ Registration of Rochford Housing Association by Housing Corporation. | May 2007 |
| ▪ Agreement by Council and Rochford Housing Association as to Right to Buy cut off/stock guarantee (date when no further RTB applications will be accepted pre transfer). | June 2007 (4 weeks before transfer) |
| ▪ Formal agreement by Council and Rochford Housing Association as to final terms of Transfer Contract | June/July 2007 |
| ▪ Approval by Secretary of State to transfer | July 2007 |
| ▪ Transfer of housing stock and staff | July 2007 |

Renewal of the Refuse Collection and Recycling, Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing Contracts (1, 3 and 5)

- Invitation to submit detailed solutions March 2007
- Evaluation, clarification and dialogue on detailed Solutions July 2007
- Final tender returns August 2007
- Final approval of preferred bidder Sept 2007
- Award of Contract Nov 2007
- Contract commencement April 2008

HandyPerson/HandyGardening Scheme (1, 2 and 5)

- Completion of Value for Money study and recommendation on way forward June 2007

Revenues and Benefits Partnership with Chelmsford (1 and 2)

- Consider business case for Partnership with Implementation Plan Mar/Apr 2007
- Work on aligning practices, procedures, literature, etc Ongoing
- Finalise partnership structure and operation for agreement Oct/Nov 2007
- Implementation Apr 2008

Youth Initiatives in Great Wakering (2 and 5)

- See earlier capital project – development of specific schemes for revenue expenditure June 2007

Disabled Facilities Grant Provision (2 and 5)

- Grants approval and adaptation works completed to 16 properties Mar 2008

Choice Based Lettings (1, 2 and 5)

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| ▪ TGSE Project Manager appointed | Mar 2007 |
| ▪ Project plan approved by TGSE | May 2007 |
| ▪ Proposals drafted following consultation with
LAs or RSLs | Dec 2007 |
| ▪ LAs report to committee/Cabinet for agreement | Jan/Feb 2008 |
| ▪ CBL scheme implemented | Dec 2008 |

Service Improvement in Key Areas (1)

- Planning
- Housing Benefits/Council Tax
- Recycling
- Environmental Health
- Complaints Handling

Appendix D**Areas which emerged through the budget process which are being pursued via other routes**

Inter Youth Sports Competitions – to be progressed through RDC Sports Development Work (monitored through Community Services)

Local Health Facilities plus Brickfields Development – to be progressed through the Local Development Framework (monitored through Planning, Policy and Transportation)

IT Infrastructure Development – to be progressed through IT Strategy and Action Plan (monitored through Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance)

Employment and Training Facility – to be progressed through Economic Development Strategy (monitored through Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance)

Apprenticeships – as with Employment and Training Facility above

Civic Amenities Site – to be progressed through the Local Development Framework (monitored through Planning Policy and Transportation)

Schools Access – to be progressed via the review into the District's Community Strategy (to be monitored via Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance)

Alleyway Lighting – if specific areas are identified, to be pursued through bid submissions to the Community Safety Home Office Budget (to be monitored via Community Services)

Increase Recycling Awareness – to be progressed via existing initiatives and Grant monies available (to be monitored via Environmental Services)

Improve Elderly Services - to be progressed via the review of the Community Strategy (to be monitored via Policy, Finance and Strategic Performance)

Pandemic and Flooding Planning – to be progressed via existing resources and partnerships with other authorities and other agencies (to be monitored Via Community Services)

Tourism Promotion – to be progressed via implementation of existing initiatives and review of the planning policies through the preparation of the Local Development Framework (to be monitored through Planning Policy and Transportation and Leisure, Tourism and Heritage).

Road Infrastructure and Public Transport Issues – to be progressed via the Local Development Framework and ECC Transport Planning Initiatives (monitored via Planning Policy and Transportation).

Community Policing – to be progressed via Community Safety Initiatives with funding via the Community Safety Home Office Fund (to be monitored via the Community Services).

Appendix E

Issues requested for consideration by the Review Committee

Understanding of Planning Appeal Procedures and the effectiveness of different forms of representation

Mental Health Services/Provision specifically with respect to the emerging new facility at Rochford

Operation of the New Political Decision Making Structure

Implications of Global Warming agenda on Rochford District and the role the District Council and its communities might play

Appendix F

Budget Process

Closure of Accounts approved	June 2007
Performance Plan identifying Performance over last year and targets for 2007/2008	July 2007
Draft Internal Divisional Plans produced – internal bidding system	Oct 2007
Consultation with Local Chambers/Business around potential budget items/issues	Oct 2007
Half Yearly Review and Review of Budget Strategy	Nov 2007
Members Awayday – half yearly review and first input into 2008/2009 Budget	Nov 2007
Member Awayday – Finalise priorities for budget	Jan 2008
Budget setting when budget for the Council is agreed	Jan 2008
Council tax set	Feb 2008
Key Plans and Actions Report	Feb 2008
Internal Divisional Action Plans finalised	Mar 2008
Corporate Plan updated and agreed	April 2008

Appendix G

Key Events For RDC**Key Milestones**

March	Ethical Governance Health Check
April	Revised Corporate Plan
May	Implementation of New Political Structure(?)
June	Closure of Accounts Performance Plan
June/July	Conclusion of activity to facilitate Housing Transfer
July	Peer Review
Sept	Preparation of submission to CPA Assessment Panel
Oct	CPA Assessment Panel
Nov	Award new contracts re refuse and recycling, street cleansing and grounds maintenance LDF Core Strategy Inquiry
Feb 08	Inspectors report on LDF Core Strategy Investors in People Re-inspection
March 08	New Community Strategy agreed by LSP
April 08	New contracts commence
Spring 08	CPA re-inspection(?)

(?) Details yet to be finalised