

HIGHWAYS LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENT UPDATE REPORT: APRIL - JUNE 2005

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report is to update Members on progress with respect to the Highways Local Service Agreement (LSA) between Essex County Council and Rochford District Council for the period from April to June 2005, as required in the Agreement.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Highways Local Service Agreement has been introduced following the termination of the District / Borough Highway Agency Agreements as of 1 April 2005. It outlines the way that Essex County Council (ECC) and the District / Borough Councils should work and co-operate with each other to deliver the common goal of providing services to the public.
- 2.2 As Rochford was never an Agency District, very little will change with respect to the working arrangements between ECC and the District Council.
- 2.3 This report highlights some of the work that has been undertaken this quarter with regard to our working together.

3 Brief Explanation of the Highways LSA

- 3.1 The Highways LSA is the basis for improved service delivery and partnership working across the two tiers of local government. Although the Highways LSA in Rochford is yet to be formally signed, we are continuing to work closely with each other and in the spirit of the LSA.
- 3.2 Following the end of the agency agreements for highway functions with District and Borough Councils on 1 April 2005, there was a need for an agreement to reassure them of continued service and co-operation. This has been forthcoming within the Highways LSA document. As Rochford has always been a Direct District with good working relations between the two Councils, it is felt very little will change under this new agreement. In fact, Rochford is being looked on by others as a good example of how they, too, can work well together.
- 3.3 There are many aims and objectives identified in the Highways LSA document recognising a need for a strong interface with those District/Borough Council functions which have a significant bearing on the Highways and Transportation service. This report details such cases where we have been doing this.

- 3.4 A notable difference with the introduction of the Highways LSA is the split between County and Local roads, together with their respective budgets and the decision making processes involved in each. This is discussed later in this report.
- 3.5 The Highways LSA has given the chance to all District and Borough Councils to adopt 'Local Customised Arrangements'.
- 3.6 Rochford has chosen to:
- continue undertaking the role of verge grass cutting with ECC contribution.
- 3.7 Other arrangements are:
- to arrange the landscaping sponsorship and works on roundabouts and verges in liaison with ECC and;
 - ECC to provide the District Council with access to the CONFIRM reporting system, when available.

4 Rochford District Council (RDC) and Essex County Council Communication

- 4.1 It is felt that communication has always been good between the two Councils and this is intended to continue under the Highways LSA. Good relationships have been formed between District Members and officers and ECC Officers to deliver the common goal of service to the public. An open invitation is made to all Members to visit the ECC Rochford team now located in Basildon where they would always receive a warm welcome.
- 4.2 Below are some good examples of this good working relationship this quarter:
- ECC officer attendance at RDC Environmental Services Committee meetings;
 - Site meetings with ECC and RDC officers;
 - Attendance by officers from ECC and RDC at the Traffic Liaison meeting and the Quarterly Liaison meeting held at the South Area Office;
 - ECC Sutton Ford Bridge Presentation to RDC Members and officers;
 - Monthly management team meetings between ECC and RDC;
 - Major ECC involvement with the RDC Websters Way Enhancement scheme involving meetings and office work;
 - Joint working with various officers to provide solutions to issues raised by the public;

- ECC investigations from RDC generated concerns;
- Production of numerous reports.;
- Regular and open liaison with RDC Parking Enforcement Department on issues such as residents' parking, signs, lines, Traffic Regulation Orders and reporting of traffic problems;
- Weekly visits by ECC Development Control Officer to RDC offices to review current planning applications with informal advice given by ECC;
- Officer support from ECC at informal hearings and public inquiries regarding planning appeals

5 Reports and Decisions put to RDC

- 5.1 The Highways LSA outlines procedures for decision making which has a clear split between County and Local roads. As the working relationship has not changed significantly between RDC and ECC, we have continued with the existing tried and tested methods. We aim to obtain the approval of Rochford Members regardless of the County or Local road classification.

5.2 Down Hall Road Zebra Crossing

A good example of our working arrangements is the Down Hall Road zebra crossing which is on a County Route. ECC initially obtained local County and District Member approval for the scheme before progressing any further. The following consultation exercise received objections from local residents. After considering their objections and working closely with the local District Member, we put the decision, in report format, to the vote under the democratic process of the Rochford District Environmental Services Committee, attended by an ECC officer. We are currently in the process of implementing the scheme, together with some major footway, kerb and carriageway improvements.

5.3 Rochford District Highway Maintenance and Capital Programme 2005/2006

This report detailed the highway budget for 2005/06 indicating the split between County and Local Roads and asked Members to note its contents. This split is, however, only indicative and may be amended between road classifications in order to deliver the highway maintenance duty. An ECC officer was in attendance at the Committee meeting to answer questions.

5.4 Locally Determined Programme 2005/06

This report asked Members to approve the programme for 2005/06 and note items for 2006/07. An ECC officer was in attendance at the Committee meeting to answer questions.

5.5 The ECC Maintenance Initiative in Rochford District

This report detailed the ECC Maintenance Initiative proposal and the proposed schemes for Rochford District. It asked Members to support the Initiative and the schemes. An ECC officer was in attendance at the Committee meeting to answer questions.

5.6 North Street, Rochford – Proposed No Waiting at Any Time

This report asked Rochford Members to approve the No Waiting proposals associated with the development off North Street, Rochford. An ECC officer was in attendance at the Committee meeting to answer questions.

5.7 ECC Public Rights of Way (PROW) 5 Year Rolling Maintenance Plan

This report detailed the ECC South Area Pilot Scheme for implanting the PROW 5 year rolling maintenance plan across the County. A follow up report will follow.

5.8 Member and Officer Update Reports from the Sutton Road Scheme in Rochford

This essential maintenance scheme required a full road closure for a period of 8 weeks from February through to April. Advanced advertising was undertaken comprising press releases, door to door visits, 40,000 leaflets distributed locally and regular updates to Members and officers of both County and Rochford District Councils, together with local businesses, Parish Councils and Statutory Undertakers. Our consultation resulted in BT bringing forward their proposed works to remove existing columns and place their cables underground, thus removing the need for a future closure. EDF Energy also took advantage of the scheme by undertaking 2 separate minor works schemes that would also have otherwise created future disruption.

5.9 Greensward Lane Speed Limit Proposal Report

Following RDC and public requests for a reduction in the speed limits on Greensward Lane and Ashingdon Road, a study and report was undertaken and presented to County and District Members for their approval prior to installation. The outcome of the study was the reduction in speed limits on these roads and also for short lengths on Canewdon Road and Lower Road. This became operational on 13 June.

6 Co-locating of Rochford, Basildon and Castle Point Districts

- 6.1** On 1 April 2005, the ECC Agency Agreements with some District Councils were terminated resulting in all previous employees of these Councils being transferred into the employment of ECC. This in turn created the situation whereby the Area Offices had to find new, larger offices. After searching for

suitable premises, the South Area Office relocated to a new office within the Festival Business Park in Basildon.

- 6.2 The merging of staff from the Rochford, Castle Point and Basildon teams created the opportunity to use the wide variety of skills for the benefit of the entire South Area. It has enabled numerous other benefits including restructuring to enable better use of resources, enhanced opportunities for staff, better in-house service, one location for the public, consistent decision making across Area and lower overheads.
- 6.3 Although the Rochford Team are no longer located in the heart of the district, we are still continuing to deliver the same service and maintaining our physical presence on the ground. We have adapted our working practices so that site visits are better planned rather than ad-hoc as they were previously. This practice has created improved internal communication as anyone undertaking a site visit will ask others if there is anything they can visit whilst on site.
- 6.4 Although not as easy now that the office is in Basildon, Rochford District Members are more than welcome to visit us whenever they please.

7 Recommendation

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

That the content of the report be noted.

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Background Papers:-

None

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