
OUR TOWNS AND CITIES: THE FUTURE – THE URBAN WHITE PAPER

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a first introduction to the contents of the urban white paper published by the Government in November 2000. A copy of the white paper has been placed in the Members Room.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 In November 2000, the Government finally published their long awaited urban white paper entitled 'Our Towns and Cities: the future'. The launch of this white paper coincided with the launch of the rural white paper 'Our Countryside: the future'.
- 2.2 The white paper is the first document in over twenty years that attempts to pull together government policies and strategies for urban areas.
- 2.3 The white paper follows the report of the Urban Task Force, published in June last year, which set out a range of policies to deliver an urban renaissance. A package of fiscal measures, drawing on the recommendations of the task force, has also been announced by the Chancellor to encourage regeneration.

3 KEY POINTS

- 3.1 The Government's vision is of towns, cities and suburbs which offer a high quality of life and opportunity for all. In particular the Government wants to see:
- **people shaping the future** of their community, supported by strong and truly representative local leaders;
 - people living in **attractive, well kept towns and cities** which use space and buildings well;
 - good design and planning which makes it practical to live in a **more environmentally sustainable** way, with less noise, pollution and traffic congestion;
 - towns and cities able to **create and share prosperity**, investing to help all their citizens reach their full potential; and
 - **good quality services** – health, education, housing, transport, finance, shopping, leisure and protection from crime – that meet the needs of people and businesses wherever they are.

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- 3.2 The intention is that the urban renaissance will benefit everyone, making towns and cities vibrant and successful, and at the same time protecting the countryside from development pressure.

- 3.3 A summary of the white paper is attached as an appendix to this report.

4 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It is too early to get a true feel of the implications of the white paper for Rochford. Certainly, there are significant elements of the document which will inform the process of the preparation of the next Local Plan. However, the breadth of the proposals and their implications for local authority service delivery goes well beyond land-use planning policies. There is no doubt that emerging community plans, revised crime and disorder strategies and so on will need to take close account of the contents of the white paper.

- 4.2 One issue is clear; local councils are expected to be at the heart of delivering the called for 'urban renaissance'. This may be a real opportunity for local councils to take the lead in revitalisation schemes, something that has been happening in Rochford District. However, if taking the lead means providing the resources, then clearly the ability to make progress will be significantly restricted.

5 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Tackling crime in urban areas is one of the key elements of the white paper.

6 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 One of the central themes of the white paper relates to improving the environment of towns and cities.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

The Government intends that Parish Councils will play a greater role in working with the Principal Authorities on delivery of services.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 At this stage, it is not possible to be clear about the resource implications for the authority. The Government has indicated that there will be new fiscal arrangements to encourage regeneration, but it is not yet possible to say whether these new arrangements will benefit districts like Rochford.

9 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub Committee **RECOMMENDS:**

That the summary of the white paper 'Our Towns and Cities: the future' be noted and that further reports be brought to appropriate committees as the individual elements of the proposals outlined in the document are developed by the Government. (HPS)

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