

NEW LOCAL PLAN – EARLY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS AND SURVEY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to consider the Consultation Statement that has been produced as a summary for the early engagement programme that the Council has undertaken to better inform the new Local Plan. The early engagement programme gave an opportunity for residents and businesses to express their views on the issues and opportunities for meeting the future needs of the district. The ideas raised at this stage will be used, where appropriate, to inform the next stages of the new Local Plan process. The programme of consultation took place between 24 May and 24 October 2016.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Rochford District Council is at the early stages of reviewing its current local development plan. As part of this review the Council has undertaken a programme of engagement at the pre-Issues and Options stage, prior to statutory requirements for consultation. The aim of this programme was to inform residents and businesses of the role both they and their local Parish/Town Council can have in the plan-making process, as well as to gain insight into their ideas about the issues and opportunities affecting future development and infrastructure delivery across the district. Workshops were held at the parish level, which helped to ensure that all local communities were given an opportunity to express their views.
- 2.2 The Council also held a survey to complement the programme of workshops and to provide those who were unaware or unable to attend the workshops with an opportunity to express their ideas. The structure of the workshops and survey were designed to reach out to as wide an audience as possible, ensuring that local communities have greater ownership over the plan-making process, and are more able to shape the places where they live.

3 EARLY ENGAGEMENT ON NEW LOCAL PLAN

- 3.1 The programme of early engagement has provided the Council with a more up-to-date knowledge base of the planning-related issues affecting residents of the district. The ideas gathered from this exercise will help to ensure that the issues and opportunities brought forward in the next stages of the new Local Plan process are greater attuned to residents' needs, wherever possible. It is important to note, however, that this programme of early engagement is not a statutory requirement and has been undertaken to help inform the next stages of the new Local Plan process. Community engagement within the plan-making process is one of the core aims of the Statement of Community Involvement (2016), which was adopted in July 2016.

- 3.2 The programme of early engagement with local communities commenced on 24 May 2016 with 12 work shops being held across the district until 19 October 2016. The survey (available both online and in hard copy) was open between 10 September and 24 October 2016 to enable those who were unable to attend the later workshops time to comment.
- 3.3 Opportunities for engagement have been publicised in various ways, including written notification letters and emails to those on the Council's mailing list. In addition, newspaper adverts and notices on the Council's website and social media accounts helped to publicise the opportunities available for residents to get involved. The Council produced a poster to notify residents of the survey, and these were put up in strategic locations across the district (including leisure centres, libraries, train stations and doctors' practices). In addition, an article was published in school newsletters, on social media, in local newspapers and rolling banners were utilised in the Council reception areas. The poster directed residents to either pick up a paper copy from their local library or Council office, or to complete the form online at www.rochford.gov.uk/cee.
- 3.4 The responses received from both forms of engagement are included as an appendix to this report (Appendix A, which will be circulated to Members under separate cover). These have been given an initial response by a planning officer and, where appropriate, will be used to inform the forthcoming Issues and Options Document.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The programme of early engagement has provided the Council with valuable information about how residents and businesses view the issues and opportunities for meeting future needs across the district.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Costs incurred during the consultation process have been incorporated into existing budgets.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The programme of early engagement with local communities was undertaken in addition to formal statutory stages required by the national legislation. The Council has no statutory requirement to carry out consultation at this stage.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Consultation at the parish level has led to a more community-led and local approach. This has allowed residents and businesses to express ideas at both the local and more strategic, district-wide level.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS TO COUNCIL**

- (1) That the content of the Early Engagement Programme Consultation Statement, as set out in Appendix A, be agreed.



Matthew Thomas

Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services

For further information please contact Xavier Preston or Daniel Goodman on:-

Phone: 01702 318191

01702 318191

Email: xavier.preston@rochford.gov.uk

daniel.goodman2@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.