

## Review Committee – 16 November 2010

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **16 November 2010** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr M Maddocks

Cllr Mrs P Aves

Cllr K A Gibbs

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

Cllr T Livings

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill

Cllr P F A Webster

### OFFICERS PRESENT

P Gowers - Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
M Power - Committee Administrator

### ALSO PRESENT

John Buchanan (Chairman, Essex Association of Local Councils)

Joy Darby (Chief Executive Officer, Essex Association of Local Councils)

### 289 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2010 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

### 290 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn, Mrs J R Lumley and M Maddocks each declared a personal interest in item 5 of the Agenda by virtue of being Members of Parish/Town Councils that were affiliated to the Essex Association of Local Councils.

### 291 THE ESSEX ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS (EALC)

The Committee heard from Cllr John Buchanan, Chairman and Mrs Joy Darby, Chief Executive Officer on the role and responsibilities of the District Associations of the EALC.

In response to Member questions, the following responses were provided:-

- In respect of the training programme run by the EALC, Essex County Council (ECC) provides a bursary for training clerks of small Parish/Town Councils and nationally there is also a small bursary for training clerks. From 1 April 2011 EALC will be providing a bursary to small Councils towards training their Councillors. The EALC makes a charge of around £60 per delegate for a full day's training. The content of training courses is based around the national training programme devised by Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs). The EALC also

provides training packs and offers the option of peripatetic training.

- The cost of the Certificate in Local Council Administration training programme for Clerks (CiLCA) is met largely through an ECC bursary.
- To achieve the nationally accredited Quality Council status, Councils must demonstrate that they provide a good quality service to the community, their clerk must be qualified, two thirds of their Members must be elected, the Council must have a good website and it must produce a quarterly newsletter for residents of the Parish or contribute to a community newsletter. The Council's accounts must be in good order and available to the public and public participation must be built in to all Council meetings. Six Parish/Town Councils in the Rochford District have achieved Quality Council status and re-accreditation takes place every four years.
- Many Parish/Town Councils choose to attain Quality Council status as it demonstrates good practice and indicates that the Council is delivering services to the community to a national standard. It shows that the Council has the potential capability of delivering services in partnership with the principal authority. Councils that have achieved Quality Council status can include this as part of any grant applications they make.
- If requested, the EALC will offer advice to Parish/Town Councils about the availability of grants and how to access funding applications. Many projects undertaken by Parish/Town Councils are funded through grants that are not available to principal authorities.
- The District Associations of the EALC work independently and provide support for EALC Member Councils in their area. They are also responsible for the liaison with the Principal Authority.
- The EALC executive body is made up of elected Members and clerks, with two representatives from each District or Borough. It is felt that clerk representation at this level is beneficial in terms of input into the direction the Association will be taking. It is a matter for each District Association to decide who will represent it on the EALC and there is no set term of office for District Association representatives to the EALC. The EALC Chairman can remain in post for a maximum of 4 years.
- The EALC's primary source of income is from District Association membership fees, but there is also a core grant from Essex County Council and trading income from offering training courses and EALC publications to Association Members and organisations.
- There is an undertaking from ECC that core funding will continue in 2011/12. If this funding is reduced in future, economy measures will be introduced. Due to a reduction in EALC income over the past 2 years certain economy measures have already been taken, including reduced

working hours for staff, the loss of the post of Assistant Chief Executive, as well as cutting, where possible, paper and postage by providing information on the website and encouraging Member Councils to receive news electronically. Subscription levels have been increased for 2011/12 and training course income has increased slightly recently.

- A newly formed Parish/Town Council would fund its start-up and development activities from its precept, which is set by the relevant District/Borough Council.
- The EALC Chief Executive is a Member of the Institute of Local Council Management. A budget is allocated for training EALC staff, who can then deliver training courses to Members. Legal advice is also available to Member Councils.
- The EALC does not pay a fee to the National Association of Local Councils (NALC); a proportion of the subscriptions collected by the EALC from the Member Parish/Town Councils is passed on to the NALC. The amount payable to the NALC is based on the size of the electorate of each County. The NALC website is a useful resource for Councils, providing legal advice and information. The NALC receives funding also from Central Government.
- It is the decision of the individual Parish/Town Council to determine who it appoints as a clerk and whether it imposes any requirements on that clerk to undertake relevant training. Employment packs can be made available to Councils by the EALC.
- There is no statutory requirement for the District Associations to be consulted on planning matters; individual Parish/Town Councils in the area would be consulted.

### **292 THE FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee reviewed the Forward Plan.

#### **22/10 Cherry Orchard Country Park – Review of Capital Scheme**

It was requested that the Head of Environmental Services attend the Review Committee meeting on 7 December 2010 to provide further information on the process of consultation undertaken on the above capital scheme.

It was observed that there could be merit in some adjustment to the layout of the Forward Plan to show a clear linear progression for each item.

The meeting closed at 9.02 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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