
EAST OF ENGLAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE - ROCHFORD COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP (Min 364)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the Council's decision not to continue with membership of the East of England Local Government Conference (EELGC), this report asks Members to reconsider their decision, particularly in light of the transfer of regional planning responsibilities from SERPLAN to the East of England from 1 April 2001.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 As part of a comprehensive review of the Council's subscription portfolio during the 1999/2000 financial year, Members concluded that there was insufficient justification to continue to subscribe to the developing East Of England Local Government Conference.
- 2.2 The Council's decision has been formally communicated to the Conference, and the recently appointed Regional Director, Brian Stewart. As a result, the Regional Director attended a meeting of this Committee on 3rd October 2000 to provide Members with an opportunity to consider the justification for Membership.

3 MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 The Regional Director wrote to the Council on 13 June 2000 and made the following points about Membership:
- Rochford would be the only Council of the 54 Councils in the Region not to be a member of the Conference
 - From April 2001 the Conference becomes the Regional Planning Body for the East of England after SERPLAN (regional planning body in the South East) and SCEALA (regional planning body in East Anglia) have been wound up
 - Developing planning guidance for the East of England is crucial to the social and economic development of the Region
 - Without membership, the Council will not have an opportunity to input to the development of policies which may affect the Council's own vision and aspirations for its community
 - The Conference will shortly integrate with the Eastern, Essex and Hertfordshire Regional Employers Organisation, which currently has the same 54 Councils in its membership
 - The regional agenda is becoming more important to national and local government and the strength of the East of England Conference will come from all 54 Councils continuing to participate

- 3.2 Since the presentation on 3 October, a letter has been received from the Conference outlining the arrangements for future subscriptions. The new subscription is intended to replace the existing subscriptions to the EELGC, Regional employers Organisation and SERPLAN. The model is as follows:

- County Council - £41,386
- Unitary Council - £20,693
- District Council - £7,846

- 3.3 The letter argues that 40 of the 54 local authorities in the East of England would actually be paying less than the combined subscriptions to the three organisations, though given that Rochford does not pay a subscription to EELGC, this situation would not apply.

4 DISCUSSION

- 4.1 It is clear that the roles and responsibilities of the East of England Local Government Conference are continuing to develop and from 1 April 2001, the Conference will take responsibility for preparation of planning guidance for the Region once SERPLAN and SCEALA are wound up, and will take on the responsibilities of the Regional Employers Organisation for Local Authorities.
- 4.2 It is considered that it is important for the Council to play a part in developing strategies and initiatives to promote the future economic and social well being of the Region. The strength of any of the Region's in the UK will, to a great extent, depend on the on all local authorities being represented, and this fact has been highlighted by the Regional Director.
- 4.3 There is no doubt that, given the demise of SERPLAN and SCEALA, there would be a need for Rochford to be represented on the Conference from 1 April 2001. In the meantime, the Conference is undertaking a broad range of work intended to benefit the future development of the Region, and it is suggested that Rochford continue to play a part in the preparation of the regional agenda.
- 4.4 The Regional Employers Organisation for Local Authorities provides advice and guidance on al personnel matters relating to the management of local authorities. Rochford is a member of this organisation.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Conference is intended to consider the social, environmental and economic development of the Region. From 1 April 2001, the

Conference will take over responsibility for providing planning guidance for the East of England Region.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The membership subscription for the 2001/2002 financial year would be £7,846.
- 6.2 The membership subscription for the London and South East Regional Planning Conference (SERPLAN) in the 2000/2001 financial year is £1,040.
- 6.3 The annual fee to the Regional Employers Organisation is currently £2430.
- 6.4 Membership of the East of England LGC would therefore be an additional £4376 approximately for the 2001/2002 financial year.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The current Constitution of the East of England Conference requires the Council to give one years' notice of its intention to cease membership.

8 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub- Committee

Considers whether Rochford should rejoin the East of England Local Government Conference from 1 April 2001.(HCPI)

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Background Papers:

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