

Environmental Health Sub-Committee - 12 January 2000

Minutes of the Environmental Health Sub Committee

At a meeting held on 12 January 2000. Present: Councillors A Hosking (Chairman), G C Angus, P A Beckers, Mrs J E Ford, C C Langlands, V H Leach, Mrs M S Vince, Mrs M J Webster

Apologies: Councillors D M Ford and J E Grey

Substitute: Councillor R A Pearson

Advisor: Mrs J V Rigby (Rochford Hundred Association of Local Councils)

Members extended their best wishes to Councillor D M Ford and wished him a speedy recovery.

85. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 9 November 1999 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

86. GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOOD AND CROPS

The Sub-Committee considered the Report of the Head of Housing, Health and Community Care which invited Members to consider a request from Greenpeace for clarification of the Council's views on genetically modified (GM) food and crops. The Report confirmed that the Council had no statutory power to declare the District free of GM farm-scale trials or to declare it a GM-free zone.

Whilst it was reported that the Council's Leisure Contractor was satisfied that the foods they sold were GM-free, it was recognised that as GM derivatives do not have to be labelled, it was not always possible to be certain. During debate, concern was registered at the results of field scale trials as described in the attachment to a letter from Greenpeace. The Secretary of State had indicated that these trials would not pose a risk to health, but Members were concerned that they did seem to raise environmental issues and that it was still too soon to know all the environmental effects.

In reply to the specific questions posed by Greenpeace, Members agreed what the Council's position should be.

Following a Motion proposed by Councillor Mrs M S Vince and seconded by Councillor G C Angus relating to the despatch of a letter and a Motion proposed by Councillor A Hosking and seconded by Councillor Mrs M S Vince relating to communication with outside bodies, it was:-

Recommended

(1) that this Council's response to the Greenpeace enquiry should be as follows:

- The Council would require suppliers to take GM foods out of local menus where it had the power to do so.
- The Council would not consider a Motion to declare the authority free of GM farm-scale trials, as it is not the regulatory authority.
- The Sub-Committee was considering a Report to this meeting on Farmers' Markets which if recommended for acceptance would be a local initiative aimed at marketing local GM-free produce.
- The Council would not consider a Motion to declare the Authority as a GM free zone as this would be unenforceable.

(2) that a letter be sent by the Chief Executive to the Minister requesting that field scale trials should cease until the environmental impact of the trials already undertaken had properly been assessed.

(3) that this Council inform outside bodies where appropriate of the Council's position on GM foods.

(4) that organisations receiving grant funding from the Council be encouraged to ensure that any foodstuffs they supply are GM-free. (HHHCC)

87. FARMERS' MARKETS

The Sub Committee considered the Report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Initiatives which asked Members to consider holding a trial Farmers' Market within the Rochford town centre for a suggested period of three months during the summer of 2000.

Members were informed that Farmers' Markets already existed within Essex at Braintree, Brentwood and Colchester. It was usual for local producers within a radius of 30 miles to sell their goods at such a market. However, Members felt this distance would need to be extended, as there are limited crops within this District at present which would be suitable. If these markets were to continue, local farmers would be able to plan accordingly. Such a market would also attract those people with smallholdings, allotments or who were involved in things such as crafts and baking. The National Association of Farmers Markets could be invited to be involved.

Members considered that it would be essential to ensure that such a project were given wide publicity and that communication be made with local producers.

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Members were asked to provide Officers with details of potential suppliers known to them.

It was reported to Members that the Women's Institute Hall, the proposed venue for such a market, would cost £50 per day to hire, but that this should be a self-financing venture.

Members felt that this Council should liaise with other areas regarding the days on which they hold their markets. It would also be useful to encourage producers supporting those markets to get involved in any Rochford initiative.

Recommended

That a Farmers' Market be established for a trial period of three months, during the summer of 2000. (HCPI)

88. RDC - REVIEW OF EFFECTS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The Sub Committee received and noted the report of the Head of Corporate Policy and Initiatives which updated Members on the review of the environmental effects of functions carried out by this Council.

Members were informed that in Appendix 2 which showed the results of the review of Rochford District Council, any number above 12 in the far right hand column would be considered significant.

In answer to Members questions, it was confirmed that Officers had started to look at the issue of more environmentally friendly methods for staff travelling to work.

Members were in general agreement that they had a moral obligation to do the same as anything that might be asked of staff.

Recommended

That this report be noted, with a further report to follow detailing the specific areas where environmental improvements could be implemented. (HCPI)

EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the Meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of Exempt Information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

89. GLASS RECYCLING

The Sub Committee received and noted the confidential report of the Head of Housing, Health & Community Care which advised Members of increased charges for glass collection.

The meeting closed at 9.50 pm

Chairman

Date