

BEACON COUNCIL SCHEME: CONSULTATION ON ROUND 4 THEMES

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek Members' views on suggestions for the Round 4 Programme.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils has now produced a consultation paper seeking Councils' views on themes the Panel should recommend to Ministers for future rounds of the Beacon Council initiative. The Beacon Council scheme was launched in 1999 to raise standards in local government by identifying excellent performing councils in specific themes chosen annually by Ministers. The scheme was seen as a way of helping to spread best practice across authorities. Comments are required by 19th November, 2001.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The themes chosen to date are outlined below.

Beacon Themes in Round 1

- Dealing with Waste
- Helping Care Leavers
- Helping to Raise Standards by Tackling School Failure
- Improving Housing and Council Tax Benefit Administration
- Improving Housing Maintenance
- Preventing Local Shopping and Town Centre Crime and Disorder
- Streamlining Planning Decisions for Business

Beacon Themes in Round 2

- Accessible services
- Competitiveness and Enterprise
- Foster Care
- Independent Living for Older People
- Local Health Strategies
- Maintaining a Quality Environment
- Regeneration through Culture, Sport & Tourism
- Raising Attainment in Education

- Tackling Vehicle Crime
- Tackling Youth Drug Misuse
- Town Centre Regeneration

Beacon themes in Round 3

- Adoption
- Better Access and Mobility
- Community Legal Services
- Crime Reduction in Rural Areas
- Fostering Business Growth
- Improving Urban Green Spaces
- Libraries as a Community Resource
- Neighbourhood Renewal (In Urban and Rural Areas)
- Promoting Racial Equality
- Tackling Fuel Poverty
- Transition in Education

3.2 The Panel are now looking for suggestions for Round 4 and beyond. In particular, they are looking for themes which concentrate on:-

- Issues which local people consider important
- Tangible benefits for local people and local communities
- Services where Councils can display innovations that will be of value to other councils
- Areas where the beacon scheme can deliver real improvements.

3.3 The Advisory Panel is keen on receiving suggestions from Authorities for themes:-

- where you would like to learn from others or have best practice to share
- which recognise and represent the diversity of Councils
- which reinforce current or recent initiatives.

3.4 The Advisory Board also advise that repeating a theme should not necessarily be ruled out, as it could be helpful if best practice has significantly developed since the theme was first run.

3.5 To encourage feedback on potential themes for Round 4 and beyond, the Advisory Panel have put forward the following list for consideration, whilst acknowledging that it is not tied to the themes suggested.

Themes to Consider for Round 4

Anti Social Behaviour - a wide spread problem that destroys lives and shatters communities

Delivering Effective Social Services - that provide care and support to a wide variety of people, helping them to live better and more fulfilling lives.

Encouraging Healthy and Safe Living/Promoting Healthy Communities – local authorities are in a key position to influence the wider determinants of ill health and the causes of health inequalities.

Housing Renewal in the Private Sector – most unfit and poor condition housing in England is privately owned, local authorities have an important role to play in improving conditions in this sector.

ICT & Social Exclusion – lack of access to ICTs leads to or reinforces disadvantage at a number of levels.

Lifelong Learning – is the key to prosperity for individuals, businesses and the nation, helping to promote a fair society, active citizenship and economic growth.

Mental Health – a key health priority requiring a multi-agency approach.

Reducing the Impact of Street Works – surveys by the People’s Panel have identified the disruption caused by serial excavation of street and pavements by various agencies is an issue with which the public is most dissatisfied.

Services for Older People – local authorities need to respond to the needs of older people by providing services directly working in partnership with other organisations and listening to older people.

3.6 Officer Comments

The consultation about suggested themes is welcome, as officers consider that many of the themes chosen to date do not necessarily fall within the key service areas and initiatives applicable to relatively small, town/country District authorities such as Rochford. Certainly, the majority of themes promoted to date are more appropriate to the larger and more urban authorities, particularly Unitary Authorities and County Councils. Members might like to suggest possible themes for consideration. From an officer viewpoint, themes around Leisure and Health promotion, recycling and refuse collection; the management of parks, open spaces, woodlands; and planning and building control

decisions in respect of householders would be appropriate suggestions.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Nothing at this stage, although both the submission of a bid and subsequent actions should the bid prove successful, would require resourcing.

5 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Sub-Committee considers and **RECOMMENDS** appropriate themes for Round 4 and beyond in relation to the Beacon Council initiative. (CEx)

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Background Papers:

DTLR publication – The Advisory Panel on Beacon Councils

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