

The Executive – 13 June 2022

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **13 June 2022** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S E Wootton
Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs C E Roe

Cllr D S Efde
Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I H Ward

Cllr M J Webb
Cllr A L Williams

OTHERS PRESENT

Cllr S A Wilson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs D L Belton.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Stephenson	- Chief Executive Officer
A Hutchings	- Strategic Director
S Summers	- Strategic Director
M Harwood-White	- Assistant Director, Assets and Commercial
M Hotten	- Assistant Director, Place and Environment
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic
N Lucas	- Assistant Director, Resources
W Szyszka	- Democratic Services Officer
H Lock	- Democratic Services Officer

106 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

107 ECONOMIC GROWTH STRATEGY 2022 – 2025

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place and Environment setting out the details of the Economic Growth Strategy 2022 - 2025 which included feedback received from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee following the pre-scrutiny of the report.

The Leader welcomed Cllr S A Wilson as the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to present the Executive with the proposed recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee following the pre-scrutiny of this report.

Cllr S A Wilson advised that the figures in Recommendation 1.2 on page 7.13 of the Addendum to the Report were indicative and that Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee argued that more budget should be dedicated to training and emerging projects instead of promotion materials and branding.

A Member highlighted that in previous years, £5,000 was deducted from the £10,000 budget dedicated for promotion materials and branding which resulted in complaints that no sufficient money was spent to upscale branding and promotional objectives in favour of the district. It was also queried by Members whether the budget reduction presented in Recommendation 1.2 posed a similar issue.

During the debate, Members opposed reducing the budget for promotional materials and branding from £10,000 to £5,000 and expressed that £5,000 was an insufficient sum to be spent across Rochford, Hockley and Rayleigh. Members also agreed that the budget earmarked to invest in skills and training should be increased to £10,000. Another Member highlighted that there was a sufficient sum in the budget and shared concerns raised by Members regarding decreasing the branding and promotion materials budget.

Officers confirmed that the breakdown of budgets was indicative and was not a reflection of the definitive sums to be spent per area. Budget was available to address each area in more detail; however, final decisions on the budgets were not yet being affirmed.

Regarding Recommendation 1.3 of the Addendum, Cllr S A Wilson expressed that there were no clear KPIs within the report and high-level KPIs should be reflected to present the progress and objectives of the strategy.

In response to a Member query regarding the timescales of which KPIs would be reported back to Members, officers clarified that KPIs were indicated within the implementation plan that underpinned the strategy document. Officers suggested that the implementation plan should be the key reporting document to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis. Indications of KPIs that would arise from standard objective matters, e.g., business growth; number of businesses; and key infrastructural projects completed within a timeframe would be included within the implementation plan; however, traditionally KPIs were subject to separate reporting.

A Member expressed that as the strategy progressed, officers would be able to determine how satisfied they were with the progress of the plan and address any issues that could arise during the implementation, which would be perceived as a fairer way of understanding the development of the strategy.

Members agreed that there should be a regular reporting system in place that would ensure Members remained informed on the outcomes and the progress of those outcomes for an effective delivery of the strategy.

Cllr S A Wilson highlighted that Recommendation 1.4 of the Addendum focused on ensuring that the local economy continued to prosper and that local

businesses were encouraged to participate in procurement processes to meet this objective.

A Member expressed concern regarding this Recommendation expressing that smaller companies that apply for jobs were unsuccessful during the tendering process due to a vast array of requirements that the smaller companies were unable to meet. This would indicate that smaller, local companies were less likely to put bids for larger jobs due to requirements that were better suited to larger companies, despite their suitability to deliver jobs.

The Leader commented that forms of tender were designed to appeal to all companies to allow for a fair tendering process.

Officers clarified that the levels of value within the proposal was below the requirement of having to undergo a full procurement exercise and other procurement processes would be executed. Companies were not expected to undergo a full procurement process for a sum of c.£10,000.

Officers further advised that the sums spent on printing, marketing and designing for the economic development work were prohibitive with the tendering process consisting of evaluating 3 separate quotations.

Cllr S A Wilson expressed that Members of the Overview & Scrutiny would like to encourage the use of Google Businesses alongside Rochford Local as highlighted in Recommendation 1.5 of the Addendum. This was welcomed by the Executive.

Cllr S A Wilson advised Members that Recommendation 1.6 focused on sharing resources and knowledge with Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) to successfully deliver the strategy. This was welcomed by the Executive.

Speaking on Recommendation 1.7 of the Addendum, officers commented that the Rochford District had better infrastructure compared to the neighbouring areas and requested that the wording remained as per the original report. Officers also highlighted that the documents were aimed at potential stakeholders and investors, thus it was imperative that positive adjectives were used in connotation with the District to welcome investment.

During the debate, some Members agreed that the word “fantastic” should remain in its original context in light of the fact that Rochford had excellent rail links, road links and an airport within its district.

Some Members expressed a dislike in the word “fantastic” and suggested an amendment to the Recommendation to instead include “to continue to encourage development”.

A Member offered a further amendment to the Recommendation that made a reference to Rochford District Council’s Membership of the Association for South East Local Authorities (ASELA) which was agreed by the Executive.

Members expressed that Recommendation 1.8 was restrictive as it implies sole consideration of Chelmsford City Council and suggested that other areas should also be explored.

The Leader thanked Members and staff for their hard work for the Holy Trinity Faire alluding to the notion that Rayleigh High Street should be used as an example of a prospering High Street.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Economic Development Strategy be approved, as set out in the last Appendix.
- (2) That delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director, Place and Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Climate & Economy, to make any necessary minor amendments to the draft Economic Development Strategy in advance of publication.
- (3) On paragraph 6.1 of the report it is noted that the appropriate sums within the £63k budget be spent as agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Climate & Economy and:-
 - (a) That the £5,000 earmarked to invest in skills training initiatives be increased, and;
 - (b) That the contingency be increased from £5,000 to give greater opportunity for emerging projects to be taken forward.
- (4) That there be clear SMART, measurable KPIs reported to the Executive quarterly.
- (5) That the procurement of marketing and promotion should be local and with local schools and businesses where possible and in accordance with the Council's financial and procurement rules.
- (6) Encourage businesses to use Google Business as well as Rochford Local.
- (7) Work with Brentwood Borough Council to develop skills and capacity around economic development to deliver the strategy.
- (8) Consider innovative ways to regenerate the High Street and in particular whether we can learn lessons from another council, e.g., Chelmsford City Council, which can be applied in the District.
- (9) That reference to the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) be included on page 7.7 of the report. (ADPE)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

108 LOCAL PLAN TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Place and Environment which sought agreement to commission a Local Plan Transport Assessment.

Officers advised that the Council was progressing with the Local Plan and was in the critical stage of decision making that would determine future progress of the strategy.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning added that scoping of the Transport Assessment was vital to be able to successfully deliver objectives, particularly with regarding the costs and funding availability.

A Member queried how the Transport Assessment would ensure that the District continued to co-operate with neighbouring authorities and expressed concern with regard to the Council utilising Ringway Jacobs.

Officers advised that the South Essex Data contained information from other authorities, e.g., Southend City Council or Basildon Borough Council and there would not be compartmentalisation of networking, ensuring connectivity. Officers further advised that Ringway Jacobs were the Essex County Council's (ECC) partner for carrying out ECC's statutory highways projects and it was imperative that support of the statutory highways' authority was sufficiently robust; however, risks would be mitigated as Members would oversee the progress of the works and provided informed feedback. Officers added that Jacobs were profound and cost-effective and could ensure that the work would be delivered to a good standard. Reports on the progress would be fed back to the Executive; however, regularity of this reporting could not be confirmed due to the varied nature of work involved.

Another Member expressed that this was a suitable avenue for the Council to explore to ensure that the deliverables were met.

Officers also clarified that the progress of the work would come initially to the Planning Policy Committee and then reported to the Executive afterwards.

The Executive acknowledged questions received from Cllr J E Cripps which would be included in the deliberations of the Planning Policy Committee and requested that Cllr J E Cripps be given an interim response.

Resolved

- (1) That a Local Plan Transport Assessment be commissioned using an allocation of up to £200,000 from the dedicated LDF reserve.

- (2) That the Assistant Director, Place and Environment, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, be delegated authority to oversee the delivery of the Local Plan Transport Assessment and report on its progress to the Executive. (ADPE)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

The meeting closed at 20.36 pm.

Chairman

Date

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