

Rochford District Council

April 2018

Review Committee Annual Report 2017/2018



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2 Glossary

CSP	Community Safety Partnership
ECC	Essex County Council
ICT	Information and Communications Technology

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3 Introduction

- 3.1 During the 2017-18 Municipal Year the Review Committee has considered a number of topics both as a whole Committee and in smaller teams reporting back to the main Committee once the team has completed its work. Details of the Reviews are outlined further on in this report.
- 3.2 In addition to the Committee's role of conducting Reviews it also has the duty to scrutinise decisions made by the Executive. As part of this role the Committee studies the Key Decisions Document on a monthly basis.

4 Investigation into the Issues Raised by the Petition Presented to Council on 25 April 2017

- 4.1 On 25 April 2017 a petition was presented at Council on the issues of using Francis Cottee Lodge to house some of the District's homeless people. At the Council meeting the matter was referred to the Review Committee in order that it could carry out an investigation into the matter and bring recommendations back to Full Council.
- 4.2 The Committee held an evidence session at the beginning of June and this was then considered at a further meeting later in the month and recommendations were made back to Council.

5 Council's Petition Process

- 5.1 At its February 2018 meeting the Committee considered a petitioner's request to look at the process of how a petition had been dealt with by the Council. The Committee decided to request that the section on petitions in the Constitution be rewritten in plain English and be submitted to the Constitution review project group for consideration.

6 Air Quality Action Plan – Call In

- 6.1 In June 2017 the Review Committee called in a decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Community relating to the Air Quality Action Plan.
- 6.2 Members had concerns that the wording on page 8 of the AQAP, 'No current exceedances of the objectives have been identified anywhere else in the District of Rochford' was misleading as not every area within the District was monitored. Other areas may have a problem but were not monitored so this statement should be amended.
- 6.3 Following detailed consideration it was recommended to the Portfolio Holder for Community that the wording on page 8 of the report be amended to make it clear that there are no other monitored exceedances within the District.

7 Housing Options Prevention Fund Policy – Call In

- 7.1 In January 2018 Members of the Committee called in a Decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Community relating to the Council's policy for its Housing Options Prevention Fund.
- 7.2 Following discussions it was agreed that the matter be referred back to the Portfolio Holder for Community with a request that the issues raised by the Committee in relation to the Housing Options Prevention Fund Policy be considered and that there be written clarification on the approach taken by the Housing Options team in respect of the Council's policy for clients served with a S21 notice and the advice being given to remain in the property until the landlord has obtained a court possession order requiring them to leave.

8 Community Safety Partnership

- 8.1 Under the Police and Justice Act 2006, every local authority is required to have a Crime and Disorder Committee with the power to scrutinise the local Community Safety Partnership (CSP), as a whole, in terms of how they are tackling crime and disorder for the benefit of the local communities. This function is undertaken by the Review Committee. Under the Act the Committee has to meet at least once a year to fulfil this function.
- 8.2 These requirements were enacted by the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009 which came into force for local authorities in England on 30 April 2009.
- 8.3 Representatives from the CSP attended the September meeting of the Committee to update Members on developments taking place.
- 8.4 At the March 2018 meeting Members were advised of the four main priorities for the next year along with updates on the CSP's activities during the year.

9 Overview of the Key Decision Document

- 9.1 During the year the Committee continued to monitor the decisions due to be made by the Executive and its Members. The Committee studied the Key Decisions Document on a monthly basis asking for further details as and when they felt it necessary.
- 9.2 The Committee has found this a useful way to explore the reasons behind decisions being made and to reduce the need to consider the call-in of a decision after it has been made.
- 9.3 During the year a number of planning decisions were added to the document and the Committee pointed out that these should have gone to the Planning Policy Sub Committee. A meeting of this Sub Committee was subsequently held where the planning documents were discussed.

10 Initial 2017/2018 Work Programme

10.1 At the June 2017 meeting the Committee Members considered the list of possible topics for the work plan and agreed the following:-

- The Planning Enforcement team would be asked to submit a report on the Enforcement of unauthorised adverts.
- The Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services would be asked to provide an interim report on what was happening with the Council's Building Control service at the November meeting of the Committee with an update and full business case being provided at a subsequent meeting.
- The Assistant Director, Environmental Services would be asked to provide a report relating to the charging for bins for new developments as these were not being applied universally which was leading to a loss of income to the Council.
- The Assistant Director, Democratic Services would be asked to attend a meeting of the Committee to report on how subjects for Member training are chosen and how the content is decided upon.
- A further report would be requested from Sanctuary Housing for November to update Members on their development program in the Rochford District.

11 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA)

11.1 As part of the Council's procedures around the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act Members of the Review Committee receive a report on any changes that are required to be made to the Council's policy and its use of RIPA during the previous year.

11.2 This report came to the Committees October 2017 meeting.

12 Other items considered by the Committee

12.1 It was agreed during 2012 that the Committee would in future be responsible for systematically scrutinising the Treasury Management Strategy in advance of this being reported to Council. The Committee received three reports during the year, in July 2017, November 2017 and February 2018.

- 12.2 At the October meeting Members received a report on Disabled Facility Grants, which was something the Committee had looked at a number of years ago. The report allowed Members to catch up on developments since the in-depth review took place.
- 12.1 At the January 2018 meeting Members received a report on how the Council would respond to an emergency and how the work taking place would prepare the Council to meet future risks. This item will be coming back to the Committee in the new Municipal year.
- 12.2 At the start of the Municipal year a request via Facebook was made to ask residents for suggestions for topics that the Committee could examine. A suggestion was received regarding the Council's use of social media and this topic came to the January meeting for discussion. This item will be coming back to the Committee in the new Municipal year.
- 12.3 During the Municipal year Members were sent a copy of a report prepared by the De Montfort University and the Municipal Journal Councillor Commission entitled 'The Voice of the Councillor'. It was decided that a project group would be formed to examine the recommendations contained in the report in more detail and to decide which of the recommendations should be supported by the Review Committee. The work of this group will continue into the next Municipal year.

13 Topics for future work programme

- 13.1 The following have been identified as possible topics for the work programme for the next Municipal Year:-
 - (a) Section 151 Officer Contract with ECC
 - (b) Enforcement of Dog Fouling
 - (c) Operation of Development Committee

14 Performance Measures

- 14.1 The Review Committee has previously agreed a set of performance measures. These are listed below with the results or comments linked to them.
 - 1. Completion of Overview and Scrutiny work programme on time.

Project	Scheduled Completion date	Actual Completion date	Reason for extension of date
Constitution Review	April 2017	-	Scope of the project
ICT / Telecoms review	To be agreed	-	

2. The percentage of Overview and Scrutiny recommendations approved/rejected/acted upon by the Executive.

The Review Committee has not submitted any reports to the Executive during this Municipal year.

3. Number of external representatives involved in Overview and Scrutiny work per annum.

During this year the Committee has heard from representatives of four different external bodies in relation to the items that have been examined.

4. Number of items on the work programme suggested by the public or in response to issues raised through surveys, comments or complaints.

Three.

5. Number of call-in notices received per annum.

Two items have been called in by the Committee this Municipal Year.

6. The number of times that the Executive states that a decision is urgent and not subject to call-In.

During the year three decisions have not been subject to call-in.