
**CONSULTATION WITH THE DISTRICT CHAMBERS OF TRADE
AND BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVE ORGANISATIONS
(Minute 359/02)**

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members on the views of businesses and their representatives on consultation with Rochford District Council and makes recommendations to take account of their feedback.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the meeting on the 23rd July Members resolved that representatives of the business community and a sample of non-represented businesses be asked their views on how the Council should consult with them, and a report be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee. Members asked that the consultation should include how they might be represented on the Local Strategic Partnership
- 2.2 Officers have undertaken discussions with the Chambers of Trade and Commerce and Federation of Small Business at their regular meeting with Rochford District Council Officers on the 6th August 2002.
- 2.3 The largest 50 companies in the area were surveyed to ascertain their views on consultation with the Council and whether they would like to be consulted on the Community Strategy.

3 RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 3.1 **Consultation with the Chambers of Trade, Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses**
- 3.2 Representatives felt that the Council should consult regularly with them on issues which would affect the business community, and issues in their respective areas of Rochford, Hockley and Rayleigh. The group felt that if they were being asked to give feedback to the Council they should have sufficient time to do so.
- 3.3 The group appreciated the type of 'round table' discussions, which took place in the regular meetings with Rochford District Council Officers and the Chambers/Federation of Small Businesses. This they felt should be maintained.
- 3.4 In addition they felt it would be useful to have one point of contact with the Council, agreeing that this should be the Economic Development Officer, who would then field any issues to the relevant Rochford

District Council departments and be responsible for following them up and informing of progress.

- 3.5 All representatives were keen to ensure that any consultation was taken account of in the development of policy in the council and not paid 'lip service' to.
- 3.6 **Consultation with businesses not represented by the Chambers and Federation of Small Business**
- 3.7 The survey received a disappointing 24% (12 replies) response from those businesses contacted. The responses were split in terms of consulting with Rochford District Council. Half said they would want to be consulted, 5 said not and one did not reply to this particular question. This, therefore, shows no conclusive outcome.
- 3.8 In terms of developing the Community Strategy most did not want to be involved. Where they did, this was in being consulted or being part of a working group or conference. The issues they felt most important for the Community Strategy to address were transport, environmental issues and regeneration. A number of comments were made about the airport being important for local businesses.
- 3.9 The feedback on the representation of businesses on the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) was also split, between those preferring to be represented by businesses and those wishing to be represented by membership organisations such as the Chambers of Trade and Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

4 OFFICER COMMENT

- 4.1 The business representative organisations were keen to take on a consultative role with the Council as long as it is taken seriously, with their views taken into account and adequate time given for consideration and feedback on issues. To demonstrate this the Council may wish to consider developing a consultation protocol with businesses in the same way it has done with the Parish and Town Councils.
- 4.2 The survey sample return of independent businesses was small, however the split in views is likely to reflect that in the business community. The Policy and Finance Committee on the 10th September resolved to include two business representatives on the LSP Steering Group, one being a Chamber/Federation of Small Businesses representative, the other an independent business representative. There are only four businesses interested in fulfilling this role from the sample received, including one of the largest employers in the District.

Given this low level of feedback, Members may wish to reconsider re-allocating the independent business place on the LSP and invite another Chamber/Federation of Small Businesses representative instead. Alternatively, Members might like to consider inviting the respondee for one of the largest businesses in the District on to the Steering Group, given their importance locally.

5 RECOMMENDATION

It is proposed that the Committee considers the following and **recommends** accordingly:-

- (1) That a formalised consultation protocol with representatives of the Chambers of Trade, Commerce and Federation of Small Businesses be developed.
- (2) That the large employer be invited to join the Local Strategic Partnership or that the business place on the Local Strategic Partnership be reallocated to a Chamber or Federation of Small Businesses representative, given the responses received. (CEX)

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

For further information please contact Helen Drye on:-

Tel:- 01702 318167
E-Mail:- helen.drye@rochford.gov.uk