
TOWN AND PARISH COUNCILS

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To receive comments and suggestions from the Town and Parish Councils to assist the overall service delivery within Rochford District.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the Policy and Finance Committee held on 8 July Members agreed
- (1) That officers meet with parishes in the early stages of the Budget Strategy to identify emerging issues and to exchange information.
 - (2) That following this meeting, Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee invite representatives of the Town and Parish Councils to a meeting to ensure there is mutual understanding of Parish and District Council budget issues and short and long term objectives.
- 2.2 Representatives of parishes met with Roger Crofts (Corporate Director, Finance & External Services) and Dave Deeks (Head of Financial Services) on 8 October to broadly consider what information parishes already received from the District and what issues were seen as a problem and therefore requiring attention.
- 2.3 Representatives were advised that written submissions were preferred and a deadline given of 10 November.
- 2.4 Issues arising from the meeting of 8 October, which are not covered in the Parish submissions, were as follows:
- (1) Dave Deeks offered to attend a meeting of the Parishes after Council agrees the Council Tax and budgets to explain decisions taken.
 - (2) Parishes were requested to send a summary of their budget making papers when they notify us of their precept.

To make the most use of this information it was stressed that it needed to be in an objective format, i.e. to show the cost of services that are to be delivered rather than just show staffing as 'x' and premises as 'y'. In addition all earmarked balances should be clearly shown. On this issue a letter has been received from Rochford Parish Council saying, "Whilst Members are quite willing to provide a copy of the annual accounts to the District Council, together with Minutes of meetings,

both of which are already in the public domain. The Parish Council resolved that they could not agree to Councillors/staff using their valuable time dealing with requests for information, which do not fall within a statutory requirement.

- (3) Although the total budget for all the parishes is around £760,000 and is relatively small, compared to that of the total District Council budget, it was pointed out that this was for discretionary services, an area where the District Council has increasing problem in funding.
- (4) Although the quality Parish and Town Council scheme has attractions, the resource implications of implementation of the scheme would be significant.

3 CONSIDERATION

3.1 The following submissions have been received.

Rayleigh Town Council

- The possibility of being able to purchase manpower/technical support from District Council officers.
- Parish Liaison Officer to enable effective exchanges of information, advice and support on new legislation etc.
- Partnership Working operating on a two-way discussion basis.
- Detailed information on Parish budget figures being forwarded to Rochford District Council.
- Police Community Support Officers funding would only be considered if the officers remained in the area for which funding had been provided.

Hockley Parish Council

- Consultation with meaningful timescales to respond was seen as very important.
- Dissemination of information prior to taking decisions that affect Parish Councils.
- A far more robust approach to planning enforcement is required.

Rawreth Parish Council

- Currently developing a Parish plan and therefore will identify future issues to discuss with the District Council.
- Not in favour of supporting Police Community Support Officers from the Parish budget.
- Care has to be taken for any transfer of responsibility from District to Parish. The resource implications of both the Parish precept and the

management of items transferred are considerable. (e.g. Parish Clerk contracted for 4 to 5 hours per week for Parish matters).

Stambridge Parish Council

- Allowing Parishes enough time to respond to consultations, avoid recess periods and to make sure such information is updated.
- Would like to ask if assistance can be given towards the installation of 3 street lighting columns outside the school, which is sited on a sharp bend.

4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Strategic Risk

Services are maximised by joint planning and co-operation.

4.2 Resource Risk

The resource implications of any proposals will have to be assessed by both the District Council and the Parishes concerned.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that the Committee RESOLVES

To consider the issues raised by the Town and Parish Councils.

Dave Deeks

Head of Financial Services

Background Papers:

None

For further information please contact Dave Deeks on:-

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