

Policy & Finance Committee – 16 June 2005

Minutes of the meeting of the **Policy & Finance Committee** held on **16 June 2005** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D Merrick

Cllr C A Hungate
Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr Mrs M A Starke

Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr J Thomass
Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING

Cllrs R A Amner, Mrs R Brown, T Livings and Mrs M S Vince.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs C I Black and Mrs H L A Glynn.

SUBSTITUTES

Cllr R A Oatham.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive
R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)
S Scrutton - Head of Planning Services
S Rom - Economic Development Officer
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

ALSO PRESENT

S Beioley - Director of the Tourism Company

233 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

234 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor C G Seagers declared a personal interest in the item on the Tourism Study by virtue of being the Council's representative on the Crouch Harbour Authority and a multiple user of the Essex Marina.

235 TOURISM STUDY

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Executive on the Stage 1 report produced by the Tourism Company. Steve Beioley of the Tourism Company introduced the report by way of a power-point presentation clarifying the main points.

Responding to questions, Mr Beioley/officers advised that:-

- The Stage 1 report represented an initial assessment aimed at helping the Authority to begin to consider where it may wish to go on tourism. Any projects identified within the Study were purely illustrative at this stage.
- High costs can be associated with tourist information centres (£70,000–£80,000 per annum) and there is often merit in allying the introduction of a centre with a project at the point when capacity is appropriate. In this context it could well be appropriate to include the factoring in of a visitor centre within the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Park project once its potential begins to be realised.
- Although not identified in the Stage 1 report, churches of historic interest can be seen as an attraction that could feature in, for example, heritage trails.
- When an event such as a heritage day is held, it makes sense to build on such projects in terms of developing activity for existing residents and attracting interest from further afield.
- If there is clear enthusiasm for expanding water recreation activities, then there would be merit in examining strengths associated with the River Crouch estuary. For example, developing more landing facilities or boat hire and considering the possibilities for improved public access.
- The type of woodland adventure park identified in the Stage 1 report was run by a commercial lifestyle business with green credentials. They were usually year-round operations.
- It would be worth considering the possibilities for joint working on tourism with the County Council and other county-wide agencies.
- Direct grants are not available for the introduction of bed and breakfast businesses. Themed packages can be developed to attract this type of business.
- The Council's mobile unit is already used to relay information about the District at various festivals and fairs.

During debate, reference was made to the need to remain mindful of existing residents when considering various options. Reference was also made to the value of ensuring that the Council's specialist officers in areas such as planning and woodlands inputted into any options that are developed, as appropriate. It was recognised nonetheless that reports such as the Stage 1 Study were of value in facilitating an understanding of external viewpoints about the District.

Specific reference was made to the various initiatives associated with the windmill at Rayleigh, which already featured in National Trust documentation, and to the infrastructure/signage aspects of some potential options. Reference was also made to the possible attraction of developing specialist weeks for, say, artists.

It was noted that a number of Option 2 activities could be introduced with minimal resource implications and that it was often relatively large projects that were most capable of attracting significant grant funding. It was also noted that, if committed to developing a tourism strategy, the Authority would need to ensure an appropriate fit with other strategic documents, such as the Local Development Framework, the Community Plan and the Economic Development Strategy and remain mindful of its implications across the range of the Council activities.

There was consensus that, whilst remaining mindful of maintaining engagement with residents and the possibilities for future introduction of option 3 type projects, it would be appropriate for the Tourism Company to now develop an Action Plan on the basis of the option 2 approach detailed in the report.

Resolved

- (1) That, whilst remaining mindful of maintaining engagement with residents and the possibilities for future introduction of option 3 type projects, the Tourism Company now develop an Action Plan on the basis of the option 2 approach detailed in the report.
- (2) That, in the meantime, Members come forward with any additional items that they would like to see in the Action Plan and start to consider linkages between options 2 and 3 and the type of projects that may ally to option 3.
- (3) That progress be reviewed by this Committee at the first meeting in the next cycle. (CE)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

236 LOCAL PLANS SECTION – STAFFING

The Committee considered the exempt report of the Head of Planning Services relating to a staffing matter within the Local Plans Section.

Resolved

That Post 22610 be amended to Assistant Planner (Planning Policy) as detailed in the exempt report. (HPS)

237 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL

The Committee received the exempt note of the Chief Executive's appraisal.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.

Chairman

Date