
REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE - 15 APRIL 2008

1 REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE NEW POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

- 1.1 At its meeting on 15 April 2008 the Review Committee approved a final report on its review of the operation of the new political decision making structure, which included recommendations for consideration by the Executive Board.
- 1.2 A copy of the final report, as approved by the Review Committee, is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.3 The Committee noted that the report recommendations were linked to each other and should be viewed as a comprehensive whole rather than individually.
- 1.4 It is proposed that the Executive Board considers the final report, which has recommendations to the Board as follows:-
 - (1) That future Area Committee meetings should be held quarterly, with provision made in the timetable for special meetings if required.
 - (2) That a procedure is established that enables any questions received immediately after an Area Committee meeting to be dealt with by Ward Councillors or Area Committee Chairmen as appropriate, rather than wait for the next Area Committee meeting.
 - (3) That agenda items, where practicable, need to be in the same cycle at all Area Committees and, where possible, a written report be included with the Agenda to aid understanding.
 - (4) That the following changes to the Area Committee Agendas are made:-
 - The Community Forum is moved to the start of the meeting to include updates from the police and County Highways or other public agencies as appropriate.
 - The use of the term “spotlight issues” is removed and instead details of the purpose of any Agenda items are included on the Agenda (e.g. whether for public consultation, decision, information etc.).
 - The update should be split into two sections to separate the updates on questions from members of the public from the update on matters raised during the formal part of the meeting.
 - The update containing responses to public questions should be issued at the time of Agenda despatch for information only and should not be a formal agenda item.

- The update on matters raised during the formal part of the meeting should be an agenda item, with the expectation that comments are on an “exception” basis.
- (5) That a facility be introduced to hold an Area Committee meeting to conduct formal business without a Community Forum, or vice versa, when it is appropriate to do so.
 - (6) That the rules to ask public questions through the Community Forum part of the meeting at Area Committees, contained in appendix 2 of this report, be adopted.
 - (7) That the annual officer training and development programme should include elements around presentations, public speaking and answering questions to assist those officers who will be attending Area Committees and meeting the public.
 - (8) That additional methods of publicising the Area Committee meetings are explored for the next Municipal year i.e. public advertising, the production of information leaflets and through Rochford District Matters.
 - (9) That a feasibility study of the costs and benefits of providing transport to allow the public with mobility problems or lack of access to public transport to attend Area Committee meetings be explored.
 - (10) That the provision of a budget allocation for each Area Committee, to allow them to decide which local issues need supporting, be examined in more detail by the Review Committee during the next municipal year.
 - (11) That the role profile, attached at appendix 3, for Parish/Town Councillors who are Members of the Area Committees is adopted and sent to the Parish/Town Councils when they are asked for nominations for next years Area Committees.
 - (12) That the guidance for District Members on Area Committees, attached at appendix 4, is adopted.
 - (13) That details of the risk to the Council (such as legal, budgetary and timescales) of taking/not taking the action is included with the Forward Plan to allow Members and the public to assess the importance of the topics contained in the plan.
 - (14) That a copy of the Forward Plan is sent to all Members on a monthly basis once it has been updated. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)

- (15) That there be a standing item on the Executive Board meeting agenda for Area Committee Chairmen to report back on the Area Committee meetings.
- (16) That signing sheets are introduced for the public attendees of the Area Committees in order that their views can be sought regarding possible changes etc. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)
- (17) That a sound system be introduced at all Area Committee meetings and that all speakers, whether Members, officers or the public, use the equipment provided. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)
- (18) That all Council divisions:-
- Co-ordinate public consultations to avoid timing clashes.
 - Ensure that all consultees are contacted at the same time.

(Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)