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## ROCHFORD COMMUNITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the feedback received on the draft Community Strategy for Rochford District for Members consideration and comment in respect of the draft strategy.

### 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Members may recall that the draft strategy was considered at the meeting of 30<sup>th</sup> October 2003 and that comment on the draft was deferred pending further feedback on the public consultation taking place (min. 490/03).
- 2.2 This report presents an analysis of the findings of the public consultation. The public consultation principally took two forms; questionnaires returned via Rochford District Matters and through the various roadshows which took place. Some 603 responded via this mechanism. A more detailed report showing all of the results from this is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.3 In addition a more formal consultation panel was recruited jointly with Castle Point Borough Council and the Castle Point and Rochford Primary Care Trust. This has been used to provide a statistically robust set of responses to the Community Strategy consultation. The resulting report from the Panel is attached – Appendix B.

### 3 COMMUNITY CONSULTATION RESULTS

- 3.1 The consultation comprised the following questions:-
- What is good about where you live?
  - What needs improving?
  - Your three priorities for action
  - If the Partnership could achieve one thing over the next three years what would you like it to be?
- 3.2 Residents generally like the District due to its quietness and rural nature with parks, countryside, open spaces and woodland among the top comments. Shops and schools, both primary and secondary also score highly. Community spirit, friendly atmosphere and the people also rank highly for making the District a good place to live. The town centre enhancements that have been carried out in recent years are also mentioned positively, particularly with regard to Rayleigh.
- 3.3 By far the highest ranking comment for what needs improving was a need for more for young people to do and places for them to go. Improved public transport and policing are issues high on the residents agenda with many

feeling that a more visible presence would reduce youth nuisance, litter, graffiti and vandalism. Comments were made with regard to the variety of shops in the centres generally and also the poor state of some of the shops in Hockley and Rochford in particular. Parking ranks highly as in need of improving with a variety of comments around car park charges and parking in residential areas along with the poor state of the roads and pavements. Another high ranking issue is the amount of building and new development that is allowed around the District, with comments mainly around the lack of infrastructure and amenities to cope with it.

- 3.4 When asked to consider priorities, it is clear that there is a very strong desire to see more visible policing in both the rural areas and the towns. Activities to occupy young people also comes out strongly. Traffic features highly here with many of the comments being about congestion along the main routes through the District. There is a strong desire to see a clean and tidy District with many feeling that there is a need to further develop a pride in the District.
- 3.5 When asked what one thing the Partnership should focus on, the comments strongly reflect the previous answers with more police and more visible policing coming top, followed by more for the youth.

#### **4 CONSULTATION PANEL RESULTS**

- 4.1 Postal questionnaires were sent to a total of 10,000 residents across the Rochford and Castle Point District's - residents were randomly selected from the Electoral Register. Feedback was received from a total of 565 people within the Rochford District.
- 4.2 The results strongly reflect the community consultation results with a high proportion of residents being satisfied with their area. Residents' views on parks and open spaces are again rated very favourably. Local facilities such as shops and health facilities are also ranked very highly with community spirit appearing as a positive for living in the District.
- 4.3 The main improvement needs identified by the panel are road systems and traffic congestion, and over a third of panel members considered less crime and vandalism, better sports and leisure facilities, better job opportunities, health facilities and public transport to be areas that could be better. A low percentage of the panel considered that they would like to see a higher police presence, though this was not a suggested option on the questionnaire. It is considered that a higher proportion may have selected it if it had been.
- 4.4 Significantly, almost all of the panel reported feeling safe in their area during the day and a high proportion also during the night.
- 4.5 Health services formed a section of the questionnaire and these were generally seen as quite positive, though provision of NHS Dentists is seen as poor along with District nursing services and Health Visiting services.

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**5 SUMMARY OF RESPONSES - MAIN CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 It is clear that residents like living in the District primarily due to the natural aspects such as open spaces and rural nature.
- 5.2 Areas for improvement are very similar, with the main issues being transport and policing concerns. Youth issues were the major concern brought out in the community consultation, though it should be noted that the Panel questionnaire was more specific in the answers required and did not address youth issues - whereas the community consultation gave residents more of a free hand.
- 5.3 Both forms of consultation attracted a good response and the results complement each other.

**6 COMMENTS**

The Council may now like to formally give its views as a consultee as to what it feels should be the main priorities that should be addressed through the Community Strategy. Clearly, the Council itself, through its own strategies and plans has a range of priorities already in place. However, the consultation allows for the Council to give a view, particularly on the priorities it considers should be addressed in those areas where it is not the main driving force and where the main responsibilities may rest with one or more of the other partners.

**7 RISK IMPLICATIONS****7.1 Strategic Risk**

The Community Strategy is seen as a key element of Comprehensive Performance Assessment.

**7.2 Reputation Risk**

Conclusions drawn from the consultations will need to be considered along with how actions could be delivered. Non delivery of actions could affect the reputation of the Authority.

**7.3 Regulatory Risk**

The Community Strategy needs to be completed and acted upon as this is a legal requirement.

**8 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Community Strategy includes a theme of "Feeling Safe" which incorporates potential actions to deal with crime and disorder.

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**9 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Community Strategy will incorporate Local Agenda 21 Strategy issues.

**10 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Once the Community Strategy has been completed and an action plan drawn up, it may incur a resource implication for the Authority and these will need to be considered as part of the budget making process.

**11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The production of the Community Strategy is a requirement of the Local Government Act 2000.

**12 PARISH IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 The Parish and Town Councils are represented on the LSP Steering Group.

**13 RECOMMENDATION**

- 13.1 It is proposed that the Council **RESOLVES**

To give its views on the key priorities which should now be addressed through the Community Strategy, given the feedback now reported on the consultation exercise.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

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**Background Papers:**

Draft Community Strategy

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