

REPORT OF URGENT ACTION: EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND: BUSINESS THEMES AND CHAMPIONS PROJECT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Members of urgent action taken under the procedure agreed by Council on 25th July 2000. (Minute 254/00)

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 This report outlines for Members' information Rochford's involvement in a bid for funds from the European Social Fund for a business support project. The reason for urgency was that the submission date for bids was Thursday 8th March.
- 2.2 Through the development work on the South East Essex Economic Strategy which Rochford has undertaken alongside private businesses, training organisations, voluntary groups, other public sector agencies, Castle Point and Southend Councils, a gap in the provision of support to local businesses was identified. This relates to business themes and champions for which a bid has now been made to the European Social Fund (ESF).
- 2.3 The intention of the bid is to establish a project which puts new and developing businesses in the area in touch with a 'champion' who will act as a mentor to the new business. Evidence suggests that businesspeople are more likely to be influenced positively by speaking to businesspeople who have experience relevant to their circumstances rather than more conventional sources of business advice.
- 2.4 The bid involved no commitment of money or additional resources from the Council. The Council's contribution was in terms of "support in kind".
- 2.5 The bid is fully consistent with the Council's commitment to the South East Essex Economic Strategy.

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