

# **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

## **- 14 December 2004**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **14 December 2004** when there were present:-

Cllr P K Savill (Chairman)  
Cllr P A Capon (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr Mrs S A Harper  
Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr C A Hungate  
Cllr Mrs M A Starke  
Cllr M G B Starke

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr R A Oatham

### **SUBSTITUTES**

Cllr C I Black

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Scrutton	- Head of Planning Services
J Bourne	- Leisure & Contracts Manager
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

### **COUNTY COUNCIL OFFICERS PRESENT**

N McCullagh	- Area Manager, County Highways
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### **540 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19 October 2004 and 23 November 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **541 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS**

The Committee received the Schedule and noted the following:-

#### **Rochford Town Map**

The Rochford town map had now been put up on the wall of the Spar building. It was noted that it would be helpful if the finger post sign in the square could include directions to the town map.

#### **A Local Development Scheme for Rochford District**

Officers had only just received comments on the draft Local Development Scheme from the Government Office. A report would come to this

Committee in the New Year.

**Bus Routes Within Rochford District – Liaison Issues**

It had been disappointing that only one Member had been able to attend the tour of the First Bus Group control centre at Hadleigh. Feedback would be provided to them.

**Collection of Appliances (White Goods)**

Responding to a concern raised relating to the unauthorised collection of white goods by someone other than the Authority's contractor, Members were advised that officers would conduct checks that all those items listed for collection were actually collected by the contractor.

**542 RECYCLING SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) seeking Members' approval to re-constitute the Recycling Sub-Committee.

**Resolved**

That it be agreed to re-constitute the Recycling Sub-Committee, to consist of 4 Conservative Members, one Liberal Democrat Member and one non-Group Member under the terms of reference detailed in section 3 of the report. (CD(F&ES))

**543 HIGHWAYS LOCAL SERVICE AGREEMENT**

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services outlining the key elements of the draft Highways Local Service Agreement and seeking Members' views on the arrangements that will apply in Rochford.

The County officer advised that the Local Service Agreement was not a legal contract, but rather an agreement between County Highways and the District Council on the best working partnership for the 2 Authorities. The practical and legal responsibility for highway matters rested firmly with County Highways. It was, however, vital that under the new arrangements Rochford Members provided their local knowledge of highways matters, particularly with respect to local roads.

As part of the agreement, staff from Castle Point and Basildon Councils would transfer to County Highways and would work as part of the Area Manager's team. There would not, however, be room at the Rayleigh premises to accommodate the extra staff and alternative accommodation was being sought in Basildon. However, County Highways officers would continue to meet District Members within the District and the Rochford District Council

offices in Rochford and Rayleigh could be used for Members to meet County Highways officers to discuss highways concerns.

Responding to a concern relating to the work of the Road Safety Officer for the Rochford District, the County officer confirmed that there would be no change to current funding arrangements for this post and associated work. Similarly, there would be no change with respect to cycle paths, which would continue to be funded from capital funding, proposals for which would continue to come to Members of this Authority for decision, funded from the Local Transport Plan.

In response to an enquiry about the gritting of roads in winter, the County officer advised that the County Council had legal responsibility for this. During the winter roads were regularly gritted as a precautionary measure and there was no discretion about which roads were included in this regular programme. However, under the new arrangements, District Members would have an opportunity to influence any reviews of this policy. In the case of snow and ice, however, District Members should alert County Highways to any roads that they considered to be in need of gritting and, where possible, this would be done. County Highways officers would prioritise all such requests.

The County officer noted a concern expressed that, under the new arrangements, despite the funding being held by County Highways, it would be the reputation of Rochford District Council that would suffer in the event of any highways problems. However, he stressed that this was no different to the current position and that, in reality, the two Authorities enjoy a good working relationship. County Highways officers liaise regularly with the small team of engineers in Rochford District Council. Under the new arrangements, there would be a new computer system that Rochford's engineers would be able to access, which should improve communication and ultimately the service to residents.

Responding to an enquiry relating to Contract 2000, the County officer advised that a team, including engineers who had had direct experience of the problems associated with Contract 2000, were currently working on a package of new contracts to replace Contract 2000. The new contracts would incorporate lessons learnt from Contract 2000 and would be easier to control.

In response to a query relating to development control, officers confirmed that, under the local service agreement, there would be no change to current arrangements with respect to development control.

Responding to a concern relating to the provision of salt bins by Parish Councils, the County officer advised that it was the responsibility of the County Council to ensure that these were kept topped up with salt and would be legally liable.

In response to a further enquiry relating to the maintenance of new bridle

## Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee

### - 14 December 2004

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paths within the District the County officer agreed to provide Members with details of the responsibility and resources available for the future maintenance of these bridle paths.

In concluding the debate, there was a general consensus that there would be merit in Rochford District Council signing up to the local service agreement for an initial period of 12 months.

On a Motion moved by Cllr P K Savill and seconded by Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn, it was:-

#### **Recommended to Council**

- (1) That Rochford District Council should sign up to the Highways Local Service Agreement for a period of 12 months.
- (2) That the Area Manager, County Highways should provide the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee with reports on the Highways Local Service Agreement every three months. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.58 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....