
ROCHFORD PARISH COUNCIL: 2004 VISION STATEMENT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report brings to Members' attention the Vision Statement now produced by Rochford Parish Council and provides a commentary as to whether and how the items contained within it align with our own aims and aspirations.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Parish Council has now produced its own Vision Statement which it has sent to all key partners and interested organisations. Whilst not including any specific actions, indication of resources, or timeframes around its vision, the Parish should be strongly commended for producing a document which outlines the key matters it wishes to see brought forward and addressed over a period. A summary of the Parish's key aspirations, together with a commentary of how they align with our own aims and aspirations, is outlined below.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 In summary, the Parish Council's vision is of a vibrant township, in which the present trends for securing employment are maintained but where new opportunities can present themselves through the development of the town and its immediate hinterland. This embraces the regeneration of the town centre, the market place, West Street, the new developments in Roche Close, the enlargement of the facilities of the Rocheway College campus and a proposal for recycling provision. The vision extends to cover the river complex, London Southend Airport and other proposals to encourage tourism.
- 3.2 The inter-related aspects of the local economy, the local environment and the social needs of the people of Rochford have not been overlooked.
- 3.3 To these ends:
- (i) Rochford Parish Council aims to achieve Quality Parish Status as soon as feasible and will pursue these aims within a set framework.
 - (ii) The Parish Council appreciates that challenges will occur through new Regional Planning Guidance but would expect any future proposals to reflect the value of the Rochford Parish Council's positive contributions.
 - (iii) The Parish Council is committed to work positively with all of the partners necessary to secure this vision for Rochford and at the same time engage, consult and inform the parishioners, the organisations and other stakeholders who live and work in the Parish.

3.4 In detail, the Strategy covers the following areas:

- (i) The future of Rochford Town.
- (ii) The Future of Rochford Market Square.
- (iii) Regeneration of Roche Close Rocheway.
- (iv) Healthy Living Centre.
- (v) The development of Rochford's River's History.
- (vi) Heritage and Living Museums.
- (vii) London Southend Airport.
- (viii) Recycling

The Future of Rochford Town

3.5 Whilst recognising that within the Thames Gateway South Essex strategic framework document, Rochford town is highlighted for Arts and Crafts, the Parish feel it is important that in future Rochford is recognised as a town with a particular focus on a variety of specialist shops, businesses and offices. It feels this would benefit the local economy so that the town would not be so reliant on the employment provided through the District Council and the Health Services.

Officer Comment

3.6 The Thames Gateway South Essex reference to Rochford town as a centre for Arts and Crafts is in line with our own policies within the Rochford District Local Plan. The emphasis is on increasing wealth and investment in the town through a mixture of uses. The proposed new supermarket represents a key strand of this but the creation of a niche market around "Arts and Crafts" would, it is suggested, also have a positive impact on the local community. The Tourism Study the District Council has commissioned should also help to contribute to this issue in terms of determining whether the town has any tourism or "visitor" potential.

The Future of the Market Square

3.7 The Parish Council consider that the Georgian building, Connaught House, in the Square has the potential to be used more imaginatively. The Parish feel the Spar Building and the library also have potential for regeneration in the context of the Market Square.

Office Comment

- 3.8 The statements expressed by the Parish Council are in line with the general planning and regeneration policies of the District Council. However, the key issues in securing delivery will be the ownerships and the availability of resources to carry out any proposals. The Parish Council suggest that the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) Market Town Regeneration Fund be used, although no figures are quoted. From an officer viewpoint, with EEDA a main funder and board member of the Thames Gateway South Essex partnership, it is more probable that the Thames Gateway South Essex partnership route may be the most appropriate mechanism for seeking funding support. For funding to be forthcoming, detailed proposals would need to be worked up and costed; and even then might not be approved.

Regeneration of the Roche Close

- 3.9 The Parish Council indicate their support of the proposed new in-town supermarket, flatted accommodation and new facilities on the hospital site Development of Rochford's Rivers.

Officer Comment

- 3.10 The Parish Council's support of these schemes is in line with the Council's own policies and the planning decisions taken to date.

Rocheway – a Healthy Living Centre

- 3.11 The Parish Council's belief that the current Adult Education College at Rocheway could provide even more community facilities and be developed as a Healthy Living Centre with youth and sports facilities added to it.

Officer Comment

- 3.12 There are currently no policies in any of the District Council's strategic documents suggesting that Rocheway should be developed as a Healthy Living Centre. Given that the site is owned by the County Council, the prime movers in progressing such initiative would need to be the County and the Primary Care Trust. If increased usage and development of the site was progressed, then access, traffic generation and matters relating to the Council's Green Belt boundary would need to be taken into account.

Development of Rochford's Rivers

- 3.13 The Parish Council indicate their support for the development of the Crouch and Roach Management plan and promoting the increased use of the river down stream from Rochford town for leisure use.

Officer Comments

- 3.14 As a principal partner in the continued production of the Crouch and Roach Management Plan, the District Council will need to consider the Plan's findings and where appropriate, incorporate those findings and proposed actions into its own key strategies and plans.

History, Heritage and Living Museums

- 3.15 The Parish Council believes that the whole of the south east corner of Essex has a wealth of past history and believes this should be embodied in a central museum to include contributions from all over Rochford District. The Parish suggests the old brickworks site in Cherry Orchard Way and Connaught House in Rochford Square could be developed as living museums of local history.

Officer Comment

- 3.16 Whilst the principle of drawing on Rochford's heritage is supported, there are no specific proposals in any of the District Council's current strategies and action plans to support the Parish Council's specific proposals in relation to the old brickworks site and Connaught House. No costings are given by the Parish in respect of either proposal and it is considered that the capital and revenue associated with both proposals costs could be major barriers to their realisation.

London Southend Airport

- 3.17 The Parish supports the principle of the future development of the airport, subject to safeguards in connection with the environment, noise, etc. The Parish value the airport and its adjacent industrial estate as a provider of generalist and specialist employment, and recognise its potential for tourism

Officer Comment

- 3.18 The Parish Council's support is very much in line with District Council policy.

Recycling

- 3.19 The Parish Council suggest that an amenity site dealing with all recyclables is established on Purdey's Industrial estate.

Officer Comment

- 3.20 The current policies within the Local Plan would not preclude this proposal.

4 RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that Committee notes the suggestions made by the Parish under their Vision Statement and **RESOLVES**

That in any review of its own strategies and Action Plans, the District Council considers the suggestions made in the Vision.

Paul Warren

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Background Papers:-

None

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