

ROCHFORD DISTRICT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2003-2007

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report outlines the draft Economic Development Strategy for Rochford for the period 2003/07 for Members' consideration.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Production of an Economic Development Strategy is a statutory requirement of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Its importance is reiterated in the Local Government Act 2000, and in the Corporate Governance requirement and annual audit letters.
- 2.2 The Strategy recognises that Rochford District Council, whilst having an important role in economic development, the district cannot work in isolation, and is dependent upon the many partners involved in this area of work locally, county-wide and regionally.

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Local Authorities have a long history of involvement in economic development, with some of the first initiatives being set up in 1899 in Luton. Before the Second World War, most welfare provision was funded through local rates. However, as economic development has risen through the national political agenda, the number of agencies and policies have multiplied. There are two main aspects to the role of local government in economic development as described by the Audit Commission.
- 3.2 **Delivering economic development services** –delivering a range of services to help employers grow and helping local people benefit from the employment opportunities development can offer.
- 3.2.1 **Working across departments and agencies** –leading partnership activity to generate a vision of their area in order to ensure that the response to local economic change is coherent and based on good evidence, and that services are delivered effectively. This approach tries to ensure that all the Councils' activities such as planning and development control support the development of a thriving economy.
- 3.3 The aims of the Rochford District Council Economic Development Strategy link to the Corporate Objectives of the Council and incorporate

both aspects of Economic Development identified by the Audit Commission.

3.4 The aim of the Councils Economic Development Strategy is to:

‘work with partners to maximise the economic wellbeing of businesses in the area, making the district a better place to live and work’

3.5 There are seven key objectives for Economic Development, identified below:

1. Work in partnership to support the needs of the business community in the area.
2. Work with partners to develop the skills of the local workforce to meet the needs of businesses now and in the future, to maintain low levels of unemployment in the district and encourage jobs that add value to the local economy.
3. Support town centre and industrial estate enhancement initiatives aimed at improving the environment ensuring they area economically prosperous and competitive.
4. Work with partners to ensure that businesses, including rural businesses, have access to quality and effective business support initiatives locally.
5. Facilitate appropriate local transport and infrastructure developments which balance businesses needs whilst respecting local environmental constraints.
6. Develop tourism and heritage initiatives which provide new local employment and wealth generation opportunities, and visitor attractions aimed at improving access to recreation facilities and preserving the districts’ heritage for future generations.
7. Taking advantage of inward investment opportunities to secure the future economic prosperity of the district.

3.6 These can be found in more detail in the draft Economic Development Strategy in Appendix 1.

3.7 Details of the actions to achieve these objectives and their resource and partnership implications can be found in Appendix 2.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 As the Strategy states partnership involvement is fundamental to the success and implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.
- 4.2 It is therefore proposed to seek the view of partners, including the business community, on the draft Strategy and report the final version to members by October 2003.

5 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 5.1 The Councils' Annual Audit Letter from PKF states that the Economic Development Strategy 'needs a performance monitoring framework to be set up to gauge achievement of SMART objectives'. It is proposed that performance towards achievement of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan should be reported bi-annually to Corporate Management Board through the Service Action Plan process, and annually to Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.2 Performance measures that can be benchmarked with neighbouring local authorities via the Essex Economic Partnership are being investigated for submission with the finalised strategy in October 2003.

6 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Consultation has taken place with the business community on crime and disorder. This is reflected in the economic development strategy actions.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Environmental considerations affecting businesses and the economy are reflected in the strategy.

8 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The resource implications of the Strategy are identified in the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan 2003/07.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An Economic Development Strategy is a requirement of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

10 RECOMMENDATION

10.1 It is proposed that the Committee **recommends** to the Council

(1) That, subject to Members comments, the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2003/07 is agreed for consultation purposes.

(2) That, subject to (1) above, the views of the business community on the Draft Economic Development Strategy 2003/07 are sought and reported back to Committee with a finalised version by October 2003.

(CE)

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Background Papers:

Audit Commission – A lifes' work 1999

Rochford Economic Audit 2000

Rochford Managed workspace report

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