

The Executive – 15 April 2009

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **15 April 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr Mrs T J Capon
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr P F A Webster

VISITING

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley, Chairman of the Review Committee

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr M G B Starke.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Internal Services)
R Evans	-	Head of Environmental Services
J Bostock	-	Committee Services Manager

86 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87 REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE ON THE OPERATION OF THE POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

The Executive considered the report of the Review Committee on its review of the operation of the political decision making structure. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Mrs J R Lumley, was in attendance to present the report and respond to questions as appropriate.

It was noted that:-

- In developing recommendations in respect of Area Committees, the Review Committee had been aware of the Highways Localism Agenda. It was not the case that the Committee felt there should be fewer meetings per se, rather that there should be provision for special meetings if required. In terms of the transaction of business at meetings/interaction with the public, the Committee had recognised the value of consistency of practice across the areas.
- For the next municipal year and given the change in legislation, it would be appropriate for the Constitution to identify that the Review Committee picks up review/scrutiny activity in respect of crime and

disorder matters. Whilst there can be arguments for and against the hiring of services such as sound equipment, hiring can be beneficial in terms of being able to have appropriate levels of technological expertise available as and when required, rather than developing a specialist staff resource with associated training/cover requirements. Whilst the emphasis is on reaching out to the community, there has been some rationalisation of the list of appropriate venues over time.

- The proposed training course in chairing public meetings to be offered to Area Committee Chairmen/Vice Chairmen, combined with meetings between the Chairmen and Lead Officers, should assist in the development of a consistent approach across areas.

During discussion it was observed that the likely input required from Area Committees on the roads maintenance expenditure aspect of localism, combined with 'road ranger' activity, pointed to the value of retaining the frequency of Area Committee meetings.

Acknowledging the sentiments behind recommendations on Ward Councillor availability, it was felt that general expectations associated with the role of Councillor should mean that there is not a need for specific focus on availability in advance of Area Committee meetings. For Councillors with full time work commitments, it may be difficult to attend in advance of a scheduled start time. In such cases, Councillors may be available at the close of a meeting. There could be merit in the Area Committee Chairman inviting each Committee Member to briefly identify themselves and their Ward at the commencement of a meeting.

It was recognised that the input of individual Councillors at meetings may depend on their level of knowledge and the officer expertise available. In terms of their remit, Portfolio Holders are often likely to be in a position to respond to questions. It was also recognised that a number of recommendations related to areas over which the Review Committee can initiate work of its own volition. In the context of a finite resource, a strength of the Review Committee is its ability to identify service areas for review/scrutiny of its own choosing across the ambit of the Council's activities.

Reference was made to current arrangements for the introduction of Advisory Groups as considered appropriate. It was felt that the concept of Executive Support Members should be seen in the context of the size of the Authority (Rochford being relatively small), available resources and existing practices relating to cover. At the current time, a Portfolio Holder will consult the Leader if they consider there are any issues of coverage. Non Executive Members are always welcome to express an interest in the role of Portfolio Holder with a view to developing an understanding of what is involved.

In terms of the size of the Review Committee it was felt that, notwithstanding that the importance of the role of Members serving on the Committee needs to be recognised, there should be no change to the number of appointees or the term of office relating to appointments. The nature of Review Committee

work meant that appointees needed to be able to develop an indepth understanding of review topics and assimilate detailed information in advance of meetings. Lengthened terms of office could restrict opportunities. It was observed that the Committee has the facility to co-opt non Committee Members to project teams as considered appropriate.

The Chairman extended thanks to Cllr Mrs J R Lumley and her Review Committee colleagues for all their work in developing the report.

Resolved

- (1) That, given likely work activity associated within the highways localism agenda, the current frequency of Area Committee meetings be retained.
- (2) That the possibility of using additional microphones for the Members of the Area Committee and the introduction of a hearing loop be explored, costs to be identified prior to a final decision.
- (3) That alternative room layouts be explored for Area Committee venues to ensure that members of the public are able to see, hear and follow proceedings.
- (4) That, in view of the expectations already associated with the role of Councillor, there is no need to pursue report recommendations (4) and (5).
- (5) That, following appointment, the Area Committee Chairmen meet with the Lead Officers for the Area Committees and their deputies in order to promote a consistency of approach and plan what topics they would like to be presented to the meetings, and that an aide memoire be provided for each meeting.
- (6) That, subject to recognising the value of a consistent approach across the areas, existing arrangements in respect of Area Committee agendas and public questions be retained (report recommendations 8 and 9 refer).
- (7) That answers provided to members of the public at Area Committees should be in plain English and free from technical jargon.
- (8) That, given the Review Committee is itself able to initiate work on areas identified as considered appropriate, there is no need to pursue report recommendations 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 and 19. The existence of legislation meaning that it will be appropriate for the Constitution to identify that the Review Committee picks up review/scrutiny activity in respect of Crime and Disorder matters in the next Municipal Year is acknowledged.

- (9) That report recommendation 13 is noted, Portfolio Holders being able to utilise Advisory Groups for policy development as considered appropriate.
- (10) That, in the context of the size of the Authority, available resources and existing practices relating to cover, there is no need to pursue report recommendation 14 (Executive Support Members).
- (11) That a summary, in plain English, of the decision to be made be included in the Key Decision column of the Forward Plan.
- (12) That, notwithstanding that the importance of the role of Members serving on the Review Committee should be recognised, there be no change to the number of appointees or the term of office relating to appointments to the Committee. The Review Committee has the facility to co-opt non Committee Members to Project Teams as considered appropriate (report recommendations 20 and 21 refer). (HICS).

88 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2009

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on key projects for the period January to March 2009.

It was noted that the Sustainable Community Strategy would be formally launched with partners at the Local Strategic Partnership Assembly on 20 April 2009.

Resolved

That the progress against Key Projects for the fourth quarter of 2008/09 be noted. (HFAPM)

89 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON KEY INDICATORS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2009

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on key performance indicators for the period January to March 2009.

It was noted that a report was to be submitted to the Audit Committee on 29 April 2009 on the outcome of a value for money review undertaken in respect of the handyman and gardening services funded by the Council. It was also noted that officers were closely monitoring the missed bins indicator with the contractor and that Rayleigh Windmill was being utilised for wedding bookings.

Resolved

That the progress against Key Performance Indicators for the fourth quarter of 2008/09 be noted. (HFAPM)

90 INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT BETWEEN ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL AND ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL TO SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE ESSEX WASTE STRATEGY (FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE 20/08)

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Environmental Services on approval of a Service Delivery Plan for refuse and recycling services within Rochford District and entering into an Inter Authority agreement with Essex County Council.

Members concurred with the observation of the Chairman that the timing of the Inter Authority agreement was key and something that should be determined by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment in consultation with the Head of Environmental Services.

Resolved

- (1) That the Service Delivery Plan for Refuse and Recycling Services in Rochford for 2009/10 – 2014/15, as shown at Appendix A of the report, be approved.
- (2) That the Council enter into the Inter Authority Agreement with Essex County Council on the basis detailed in the report, the timing to be determined by the Portfolio Holder for the Environment in consultation with the Head of Environmental Services.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment to agree minor amendments to the Inter Authority Agreement with the aim of finalising it once it has been taken through all District and Borough Councils' governance processes for consideration and approval. (HES)

91 DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN FOR NHS SOUTH EAST ESSEX 2009-2014

The Executive considered the report of the Chief Executive on responding to the draft Strategic Plan.

Resolved

That the officer comments outlined in the report be this Council's formal response to the draft Strategic Plan. (CE)

92 THE END OF AN EERA; WHAT FUTURE FOR REGIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARRANGEMENTS IN THE EAST OF ENGLAND?

The Executive considered the report of the Chief Executive on responding to the East of England Regional Assembly consultation document 'The End of an EERA'.

Members were unanimous in observing that the proposals within the consultation document were undemocratic. Particular reference was made to the minimal statistical likelihood of an Authority such as Rochford being able to have a seat on the Leaders' Board referred to in the documentation.

Resolved

That, given the undemocratic nature of the proposals, the East of England Regional Assembly be advised that this Authority cannot support any part of the consultation document. (CE)

93 EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

The Executive considered the report of the Chief Executive on the introduction of an employer supported volunteer programme on a voluntary basis.

Whilst recognising the value of the Authority being able to maximise contributions to the community, it was felt that it would be useful to have a further report on possibilities in the context of being able to assist voluntary organisations against resource considerations.

Reference was made to how there can be occasions when voluntary organisations experiencing temporary difficulties welcome the input of officer expertise.

Resolved

That a final decision on this item be deferred pending a further report on possibilities in the context of being able to assist voluntary organisations against resource considerations. (CE)

94 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2009/10

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services on the timetable of meetings for the 2009/10 municipal year.

Resolved

That the timetable of meetings for 2009/10, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved. (HICS)

The meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Chairman

Date

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