

ROCHFORD FARMERS MARKET (Min 32/00)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members may recall approving the establishment of a Farmers' Market in the Rochford Town Centre for a trial period of three months over the summer of this year (Minute 87, Environmental Health Sub-Committee - 12 January 2000).
- 1.2 The trial Farmers' Markets have now been held. This report provides feedback on the success of the Markets, and suggests that the market be continued.
- 1.3 The Rochford Farmers Market is a Local Agenda 21 project. This is a discretionary service.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The aim of the Rochford Farmers' Market is to promote sustainable development within the Rochford area. Benefits associated with the Farmers' Markets in Rochford include:

Economic: The Farmers' Market is designed to attract business into the town centre, with spin-off benefits to other traders. It is also a way of encouraging consumers to buy local produce, support local business, and provide best value for good quality food.

Social: Farmers' Markets can help attract media and public attention to rural development issues, and convey an educational awareness message to the public about where and how their food is produced. The St.AR Project Planning for Real exercise also identified that there are a lack of food outlets in Rochford, and the Farmers Market also addresses this need.

Environmental: Farmers' Markets can reduce the transportation of goods, therefore using less "food miles", less fossil fuels, and less road space. In addition, packaging is minimal, and produce isn't stored in warehouses, so less is wasted. Farmers' Markets also tend to encourage more organic production and so less pesticide and herbicide use (due to consumer demand).

3 EVALUATION

- 3.1 The two Farmers' Markets that have taken place had huge support from the public with several hundred attending each (the third market had not taken place at the time of writing this report). The markets have also had good support from producers, including stalls selling honey, poultry, beef, eggs, pickles, jams, apple juice, vegetables, milk, ice-cream, organic seedlings and plants, strawberries, mushrooms and

soups. It is hoped that, if the market were to continue, more local (Rochford District) producers would be encouraged to grow and sell at the market.

- 3.2 A survey of businesses in the Town Centre has taken place to assess the impact of the Farmers' Market on trade. Twenty one businesses responded to the survey, which took place after the second market. The results are attached (refer to Appendix One). In summary, at the June market, 4 businesses noticed an increase in trade, 15 thought there was no noticeable difference, and 2 said there was a decrease in trade. At the July market, 5 businesses noticed an increase in trade, 14 thought there was no noticeable difference, and 2 said there was a decrease.
- 3.3 In addition, a survey has been developed to hand out to members of the community at the third Market, to monitor public opinion. The results of this will be presented at the meeting.
- 3.4 It is considered that there is sufficient support within the Rochford Community for the Farmers' Market to continue. In addition, many of the local businesses support the initiative to encourage more people into the Town Centre.
- 3.5 While it is considered that there is sufficient support for the market to continue, Members may wish to consider whether or not it is necessary for Rochford District Council to continue running it. It is possible that other organisations could be approached to undertake the administration required.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 See above.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Women's Institute Hall costs £50 to hire. This cost is recovered from the stall holders (producers).
- 5.2 Staff time in setting up the market was considerable. However, now it is established, it takes approximately half a day a month to organise producers, ensure media and publicity, and deal with enquiries. In addition, one member of staff must be present on market day to open the hall, assist producers, collect money, deal with any questions and problems, clear up and lock the Hall.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Environmental Health – the producers are required to comply with the same environmental standards as other retailers. Producers have all

been given a contact in the Rochford District Council Environmental Health Department, if they have any questions. The Environmental Health department have also been given the names of all the producers and have contacted a number of them.

- 6.2 Trading Standards – Essex County Council Trading Standards Department have been made aware of the market, and producers have been given the Department's contact details for queries and further information.

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Rochford Parish Council were kept informed of the development of the market, and have assisted in advertising it. In addition, a Parish Councillor has been available to assist in the kitchen on market days.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RECOMMENDS**
- (1) That a monthly Farmers' Market in Rochford Town Centre be established
 - (2) That officers approach other appropriate organisations with a view to handing over administration of the market. (HCPI)

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Background Papers:

None

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