

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 19 April 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **19 April 2006** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr P A Capon
Vice-Chairman: Cllr J M Pullen

Cllr J E Grey
Cllr Mrs S A Harper
Cllr R A Oatham

Cllr P K Savill
Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	- Head of Planning & Transportation Services
A Meddle	- Team Leader (Planning Policy)
S Hollingworth	- Planning Policy Assistant
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

144 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

145 PROGRESS ON DECISIONS

The Committee received the Schedule relating to Progress on Decisions.

146 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI) FOR THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation Services seeking Members' approval for modifications to the draft version of the SCI to take into account the results of a consultation exercise conducted in accordance with the requirements of Regulation 26 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to a possible public inquiry, officers advised that there might be the possibility of appealing against the Inspector's decision if Members considered the Inspector's findings unreasonable. It would, however, be extremely difficult to do this; Planning Policy Statement 12 clearly stated that Local Authorities could not query the Inspector's conclusions, but could, however, seek clarification of any point that was unclear.

In response to a further query relating to public consultation, officers confirmed that there would be a formal, 6-week consultation that would

commence after the Council's SCI had been submitted to GO-East. Officers had taken note of representations made to the first consultation phase and had incorporated some of the issues raised into the SCI. It was hoped that this would minimise the instances of further representations being made by the same parties during the next formal round of consultation.

Responding to a Member question relating to costs, officers advised that there was a need to explore a wide variety of methods for engaging the public during the course of preparing the development plan documents. Some methods, such as placing a copy of a draft document, together with a feedback form, on the Council's website would be cost effective. There would, however, be costs associated with, for example, taking the Council's mobile unit around the District. It was further noted that the development plan document relating to allocations would require detailed consultation with the public and could well necessitate the input of a consultant, such as the Rural Community Council of Essex, which would inevitably lead to higher costs.

The Council would undertake an informal community consultation during the autumn on the core strategy options, which could potentially include public meetings, with associated costs. The Council was, however, still in receipt of a planning delivery grant and it was anticipated that these monies would enable the Authority to move through the local development framework process over the next two/three years without impacting on the core budget, but the situation would need to be closely monitored.

Members expressed concern about the costs that would be incurred in the event of the Council employing consultants on specific elements of community engagement. Officers advised that, where possible, the Authority would call upon the expertise of specialist County officers rather than employing consultants. It was, however, noted that officers were working on a report for Council that would identify the broad expenditure for the 2006/07 planning delivery grant, which would include an element relating to expenditure on public consultation.

In response to a Member query relating to any possible minor amendments to the SCI, officers advised that it has been standard practice for the lead officer to work with the Leader of the Council on minor amendments to similar documents. Any amendments, however, that resulted in a change in meaning to the document were always brought back to Committee for consideration.

Officers confirmed, in answer to a further Member question relating to deadlines, that the Council was on target to adopt the SCI within the timescale outlined in the Local Development Scheme.

Recommended to Council

- (1) That the proposed modifications be made to the Statement of Community Involvement for the Rochford District and that the modified version of the SCI be adopted as the deposit version for submission to

GO-East and formal public consultation, to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, as set out more particularly in Regulations 28 and 29 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) Regulations, 2004.

- (2) That the Council carries out the relevant requirements to prepare for the Public Inquiry including the employment of a programme officer and arranging the appointment of a Planning Inspector.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning & Transportation Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to carry out minor amendments to the SCI to ensure consistency and correctness. (HPTS)

147 MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of Head of Planning and Transportation Services providing Members with amendments made to the Rochford District Local Development Scheme as a requirement of GO-East to avoid their intervention and call-in.

Recommended to Council

That the changes made to the Rochford District Local Development Scheme be agreed and that the document be published and distributed in due course. (HPTS)

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Chairman

Date