

Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 18 January 2006

Minutes of the meeting of the **Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee** held on **18 January 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

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| S Scrutton | - Head of Planning Services |
| A Meddle | - Team Leader (Local Plans) |
| S Worthington | - Committee Administrator |

13 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 13 and 14 December 2005 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

It was noted that Members should be provided with updates on the situation relating to fly-tipping in Ironwell Lane, on discussions between the County Council and Southend on Sea with respect to the Stock Road civic amenity and recycling centre, with copies of the communications sent to residents in conservation areas relating to trees on their properties and of the draft protocol for public speaking at Planning Services Committee meetings.

14 REVISION TO THE ROCHFORD DISTRICT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services seeking Members' approval for the Second Rochford District Local Development Scheme to be adopted and submitted.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to the supply of the document in different formats or languages, officers advised that there was legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act, that required Local Authorities to ensure that all documents they produced were as widely available as possible to all sectors of society. It was further stressed that the languages that were offered for translation of the document were those that were most commonly in use in South East Essex. It was, however, extremely rare for the Council to receive requests for documents in other languages, or indeed in Braille or large print. Full information relating to these requirements would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

In response to a supplementary question relating to the translation of documents, officers confirmed that documents were not automatically translated into all the languages listed, but were translated on demand. Information detailing the associated translation costs would also be circulated to Members of the Committee.

Responding to a Member query relating to the Local Plan, officers advised that, increasingly, the Local Plan would become post-dated by the eventual adoption of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East of England, together with updated Government Planning Policy Statements. In tandem with this, the Council's own emerging Development Plan Documents would also supersede the Local Plan. It was clear that the Local Plan would decrease in relevance over the next 3 to 4 years.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question about Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA), that there were not separate references to SEAs in the Local Development Framework, given that they would form an integral part of each Development Plan Document, and had to be included as part of the assessment of the sustainability of development sites.

Officers further advised, with respect to a Member enquiry about the three year production schedule for Local Development Documents, that the timetable outlined on page 6.15 of the report was a realistic and achievable one.

In response to a Member query relating to Government requirements for housing provision, officers confirmed that the East of England Plan identified a requirement for housing in the Rochford District of 4,600 units for the period 2001 – 2021. Officers further advised that, with respect to this requirement for housing, 1 flat equated to 1 unit.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to omissions from this updated version of the Local Development Scheme, officers confirmed that area action plans would be considered at a later date, that landscape character appraisals had been omitted as the Council did not currently have sufficient in-house capacity to carry out this work, but would like to look at achieving this in the future, and that 2 conservation appraisals had been commissioned this year, with further appraisals specified for next year, but that Government advice stipulated that there was no requirement to include these in the Local Development Scheme. Officers further advised that these appraisals, once produced, would be brought before Members for consideration.

In response to a Member enquiry relating to parking standards, officers advised that the Government's proposed Planning Policy Statement 3 contained different guidelines on parking standards. A report on this Statement would be considered at the next meeting of the Environmental Services Committee.

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee

- (1) That the revised Local Development Scheme for the Rochford District be agreed for submission to GO-East, in accordance with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to carry out minor amendments to the revised Local Development Scheme to ensure consistency and correctness. (HPS)

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

The Committee considered the report of the Head of Planning Services seeking Members' approval for the deposit version of the Statement of Community Involvement.

It was noted that the volume of consultation responses to the Statement of Community Involvement had been very low. Members expressed particular disappointment at the lack of comments from the Highways Agency.

Responding to a Member enquiry relating to consultation with 23 organisations that had traditionally been under-represented in planning decision-making, officers advised that this consultation process was legally required by virtue of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and related Government Planning Policy Statements. Community involvement was clearly central to the development of the Local Development Framework documents. The Government would undoubtedly call in any documents for further examination if such consultation was proven not to have taken place. In response to a supplementary query relating to whether there were representatives from these 23 organisations within the Rochford District, officers confirmed that only those organisations that had responded to the consultation would be listed in the SCI document.

In concluding the debate, Members concurred that there would be merit in including the Citizens' Advice Bureau in the SCI document.

Recommended to the Environmental Services Committee

- (1) That the Statement of Community Involvement for the Rochford District be adopted with a view to submission to GO-East, to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning Services to carry out minor amendments to the SCI to ensure consistency and correctness following public consultation in line with the requirements of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. (HPS)

The meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

Chairman

Date