

## **Review Committee – 12 February 2008**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **12 February 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs S A Harper

Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn  
Cllr T Livings

Cllr J R F Mason  
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **VISITING MEMBER**

Cllr C I Black

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L M Cox and P R Robinson.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

G Woolhouse	-	Corporate Director (External Services)
S Fowler	-	Head of Information and Customer Services
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

### **56 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2008**

In respect of the question to Area Committee Chairmen relating to the Area Committees having a budget, a request had been received that a specific sum of money be recorded in the Minutes. However, the Committee agreed that it was not appropriate to do so.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **57 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllrs Mrs J R Lumley and Mrs C A Weston declared personal interests in item 7, Future Work Programme, LSVT/Choice based letting, by virtue of being Council Members to the Board of Rochford Housing Association. Mrs C A Weston declared a personal interest in item 7, Review of Council's Community Halls/Assets, by virtue of being a Member of a Parish Council that rented out a hall.

### **58 PROGRESS ON RECOMMENDATIONS EMANATING FROM 2006/07 MUNICIPAL YEAR'S PROJECTS**

The Committee received a report that detailed the progress that had been made on the recommendations emanating from the 2006/07 municipal year's

projects. It was noted that four reviews had taken place the previous year and all of the recommendations by the Review Committee had been agreed. The two items that were still marked as 'Amber' under the review of the Operation of the Planning Enforcement Service, would be completed by the end of March and an update provided at the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had offered training to Members around the issue of anti-social behaviour. The Head of Information and Customer Services confirmed that this subject would be included in the Member learning and development programme for 2008/09 and that places on the course would be offered in the usual way to parish and town councils.

The Head of Information and Customer Services confirmed that if there was an unusually high demand for a course, it could be repeated and that requests by parish and town councils for additional places on a course were accommodated wherever possible. The request that the course information relating to learning and development should indicate that parish and town councils were eligible to apply for more than one place on each course could be referred to the Standards Committee, which has responsibility for the Member learning and development programme.

The Committee wish to congratulate officers for the progress on recommendations, particularly in relation to the monitoring of the committee system.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That an update be provided at the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008 in respect of the two items marked as 'Amber' under the review of the Operation of the Planning Enforcement Service. (HICS)
- (2) That the request that the course information relating to learning and development should indicate that parish and town councils were eligible to apply for more than one place on each course be referred to the Standards Committee. (HICS)

## **59 OPERATION OF THE NEW POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE**

The Committee agreed a change to the scoping document terms of reference for this project.

### **Resolved**

That the scoping document terms of reference for the Operation of the New Political Decision Making Structure project be changed from 'To monitor the decision making of the Executive Board against the published Forward Plan and Key Policies and Actions report for 2007/08 submitted to Council on the 27 February 2007. To monitor the operation of the 3 Area Committees in

relation to their engagement with the public and other appropriate bodies' to 'To monitor the operation of the Executive Board, particularly decision making, against the published Forward Plan and Key Policies and Actions report for 2007/08 submitted to the Council on the 27 February 2007. To monitor the operation of the 3 Area Committees in relation to their engagement with the public and other appropriate bodies'.

### 60 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered a list of suggestions that had been identified by Members relating to possible suitable subjects for review in the future.

Following discussion, the following points were made:-

#### **Continuation of the monitoring of the operation of the Political Decision making structure (to include Member Champions)**

There was discussion regarding whether a review of the strategic role of Member Champions and how they interact with the Executive Board should be included as part of the continuing review of the operation of the political decision-making structure or whether it should be classed as a separate item for a review.

#### **Review of Council's Community Halls/Assets**

The Committee could examine in detail how the Council currently managed its property assets, whether there was scope for better use of these assets and what its strategy was, for example, for maximising community use of the halls, and how effective this strategy was.

#### **Role of Members on outside bodies and organisations**

Cllr Mrs H A Glynn wished it to be noted that although she was a representative on various outside bodies, the majority of these were in a personal capacity.

The former Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee had reviewed outside bodies in 2002/2003 and it was felt timely now to revisit this area. The Committee highlighted the following issues in this respect:-

- How useful membership of an outside body or organisation was in terms of both Member and officer time and to the organisation itself.
- Very few Members provided feedback via the Council's Members' Bulletin or website, a recommendation that had been made by the Finance & Procedures Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2003.

The Committee congratulated Cllr Mrs S A Harper for her feedback via the Council's Members' Bulletin on her role as Member Champion for the Local Business Community.

The Committee agreed that a copy of the recommendations from the review in 2002/2003 would provide a good starting point for a possible future review.

### **Surface Rainwater drainage systems – the ownership and maintenance of ditches in the District**

(**Note:** Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn declared a prejudicial interest in this item by virtue of her personal land interests.)

Following discussion, the following points were raised:-

- This review could be viewed as increasingly relevant due to climate change.
- Ditches in the District were primarily in private ownership or maintained by the Environment Agency. The District Council had some legal responsibility for only a small percentage of drainage systems in the District.
- If a review were to be undertaken, the issue could be approached by asking what Rochford District Council should be doing to make people aware of who was responsible for the ownership and maintenance of ditches and what their responsibilities were.
- Flooding and surface water drainage systems in new housing developments could form part of the review.
- A list detailing ownership and responsibility for each ditch and drainage system in the District would be useful to the Committee.

### **Taxi Licensing/Regulations**

(**Note:** Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn and Mrs C A Weston declared an interest in this item, by virtue of their membership of the District Council's Licensing Committee.)

Following a request by Members, the Corporate Director (External Services) agreed to ensure a report was provided back to the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008 regarding the adequacy of the Council's current licensing conditions and if/where they could be improved.

### **Review of the child and adolescent mental health provision for the District.**

A review of mental health provision being undertaken by Essex County Council had been postponed due to officer illness. Currently Rochford District Council would have to be given delegated powers by the County Council to undertake a review of this area. The law in this respect may change in April 2008 and the Overview and Scrutiny officer was asked to report to the Committee when the legal position had been clarified. Concern was

expressed, however, that even if the Council were granted extended powers, the scope of such a review may be too broad, and the possibility of undertaking a joint review with another authority was discussed. Alternatively, the focus of the review could be to gather evidence as to why a study of mental health provision in the District was needed, which would have the effect of raising the issue in the public domain.

### **Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)/Choice-based letting**

The Committee considered that a review of the LSVT of housing stock at the current time would be premature, but that it would be an important piece of work in the future.

Because Rochford District Council was obliged to implement choice-based letting by 2010, the Committee felt that it might be useful to undertake some developmental work in this area. This was an item included in the current Forward Plan and it was therefore agreed that an outline scoping document in respect of choice-based letting should be provided for the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008.

If Members had further issues they wished to be considered for the future work programme of the Committee they should contact the Chairman of the Review Committee or the Overview and Scrutiny Officer.

An area identified as a future topic for review (possibly in autumn 2008) was that of the new environmental contracts, in terms of performance and how well they fulfilled aspirations.

It was agreed that the Review Committee should review the CPA draft self-assessment submission at its meeting on 15 April 2008 and make comments, if any, prior to the Council meeting on 24 April 2008.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the topics identified as possibilities for the future work programme of the Committee be noted, with the addition of a review of the operation of the new environmental contracts to take place in the Autumn.
- (2) That a report be made to the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008 regarding the adequacy of the Council's current Taxi licensing conditions and if/where they could be improved. (HPT)
- (3) That the Committee be advised when the legal position had been clarified regarding the powers that would be available to Rochford District Council if it decided to undertake a review of the child and adolescent mental health provision for the District. (HICS)
- (4) That an outline scoping document in respect of choice-based lettings be provided at the Review Committee meeting on 11 March 2008. (HICS)

## Review Committee – 12 February 2008

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- (5) That the CPA draft self-assessment submission should be available for comment by the Review Committee at its meeting on 15 April 2008.  
(CD(ES))

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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