

Review Committee – 9 September 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **9 September 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston

Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Cllr M Maddocks

Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr M J Steptoe

VISITING MEMBERS

Cllrs C I Black and D Merrick.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr T Livings.

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Bourne	-	Head of Community Services
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

259 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

260 THE FORWARD PLAN

The Committee considered the Forward Plan.

The Chairman requested that Item 19/08 'Approval of the new Housing Strategy' on the Forward Plan be reviewed before it went to the Executive.

Item 17/07 Choice-Based Lettings (CBL) – the way forward

The Head of Community Services updated the meeting. Rochford District Council was liaising in this respect with other authorities in the Thames Gateway South Essex sub-region (TGSE). The other authorities in the TGSE were at different stages in terms of establishing a CBL scheme. Thurrock Borough Council and Basildon District Council both currently had their own systems in place. Southend Borough Council had bought in a system.

Although it was the Government's preference that a CBL scheme be adopted on a sub-regional basis, Rochford District Council had various options. It could 'bolt on' to Southend Council's system; this option was being investigated in terms of cost. A further option was the adoption of a similar system to that used by Basildon Council. Rochford District Council was currently implementing its new IT system for the administration of housing

allocations and homelessness, which would then be linked with any future CBL module.

In response to Member questions, the following was advised:-

- The 2010 implementation deadline was still on course to be achieved with implementation of any new system, to include the staff training element.
- A meeting with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) representatives had taken place. However, they did not comment on individual schemes.
- The Head of Community Services would discuss ways of acquainting Members with details of the mechanics of how the CBL scheme would work in practice.
- Provision for cross-border movement of tenants among the five TGSE authorities was still being discussed.

Item 11/08 The Public Open Spaces Refurbishment Programme

A report would be brought to the Review Committee's October meeting. There was a budget allocation of £50,000 for routine upgrading, which would include access and footpaths: a public consultation would take place in this respect. In addition, a sum of £75,000 had been allocated this year specifically for Swayne Park football pitches, subject to a successful planning application. The pitches were still on target to be in use by September 2009.

Members requested that additional information be brought to the next meeting of the Review Committee regarding which of the District's public spaces would be upgraded and what was planned in terms of upgrading for each of the areas in question.

It was noted that in addition to consultation with Parish Councils, there would be also be public consultation on the refurbishment programme.

Item 12/08 Potential of shared service working – Revenues & Benefits

The Head of Community Services updated the meeting on this item. Although it was not planned to share Revenues & Benefits services fully with another local authority, there were potential efficiencies and benefits to be found in joint working. Rochford District Council was in discussion with Castle Point Borough Council about the potential that existed for joint working, and a meeting between the Councils was scheduled for 23 September. The meeting would be used to discuss a wide range of issues around how each authority currently works, what IT systems they have in place, their performance levels etc and whether there was any potential in investigating the possibility of joint working in any specific areas of the operation.

Rochford's priority was to maintain its existing high level of Revenues & Benefits service, whilst exploring possibilities of further efficiencies in working practice.

Resolved

That Portfolio Holders provide an update, prior to a decision being made, in respect of the following items on the Forward Plan:-

11/08 The Public Open Spaces Refurbishment Programme

19/08 Approval of the new Housing Strategy

261 WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACT UPDATE

Cllr M G B Starke, Executive Portfolio Holder for the Environment, gave a verbal update on the implementation of the new recycling scheme.

The recycling figure for August 2008, after one full month of operation, was 71%, with a total of 2546 tonnes collected and 2821 tonnes recycled. This compared with a figure of approximately 20% in August 2007. Cllr Starke provided the following figures: compostable green and food recycled waste: 984 tonnes in August this year compared with 97 tonnes in August 2007; co-mingled dry recycling waste: 837 tonnes this year, compared with 403 tonnes recorded in August 2007. Landfill volumes had dropped from 2323 tonnes in August 2007 to just 725 tonnes in August this year. These figures did not include recycling at bring banks or Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) figures. The figures would be improved further once recycling is extended to include flats and caravan parks. Residents were congratulated on their support of the new system, which had been a major contributory factor in the success seen to date.

It was reported that the Government had set Councils the following recycling targets: 40% by 2010; 45% by 2015 and 50% by 2020. Rochford District Council had signed up to the County Council's Waste Strategy, which set Councils an aspirational recycling target of 60% by 2020.

Cllr Starke recognised that, at the outset of the new recycling scheme, there had been some issues association with some residents not receiving bins of information packs. These issues had now been addressed.

In response to questions from Members, the following was noted:-

- The contractor had been made aware of complaints from residents that bins were sometimes not put back in the correct place.
- The Council regarded the £100 fixed penalty under the Environmental Act as a 'last resort' option for the very small percentage of people who repeatedly reoffended. It was not intended to be used to catch the

unwary or forgetful resident. Cllr Starke confirmed that any such penalty would not be issued without his knowledge.

- All residents who were on the old 'assisted pull-out' scheme as well as those who had requested assistance under the new scheme, had been accommodated. Residents who were considered to be either too old or frail to implement the system had been excepted from the scheme and had been put on a weekly collection of a grey bin containing all rubbish.
- Following a complaint of spillage of liquid on to the road from a recycling lorry compacting the contents of the green bin waste, the solution to the problem was to use a hose to discharge the liquid directly down the drains wherever possible. The contractor had issued instructions to this effect to its drivers and the situation would be monitored.
- To combat the problem of grey bins being overfilled, residents could use the old style blue box or, alternatively, put cardboard next to the bin and it will be taken away. In respect of the possibility of a second grey bin being issued, as this was outside the terms of the current contract, discussions would have to take place with the contractor.
- Cllr Starke outlined the disposal arrangements for all categories of recyclable waste that was collected under the new scheme, as follows:-

Green and food waste is compacted, weighed and then transported to a facility in St Ives in Huntingdon. Here it is turned into compost in a matter of weeks and is then sieved and used as fertilizer on fields and farms in the Fenlands. The Head of Environmental Services, the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for the Environment had visited the St Ives operation 3 weeks previously.

The remainder of the recycling is sent to the Materials Recycling Facility (MRF) in Tilbury. The paper collected is weighed and sent to Madrid and the metals are processed in the UK. The glass is crushed and used in road making aggregate and the plastic is recycled to make other items. The MRF is happy that Councillors visit the facility.

- Although the Council is a collection authority and not a disposal authority, it has a great interest in what happens to the waste it collects.
- It was suggested that the above information on disposal arrangements be included in Rochford District Matters. A press release had been issued to explain how the Council's waste is disposed of.
- Tetrapac items were not collected under the current scheme although there were a number of tetrapac bring banks located in the District. It was hoped that the MRF would get a tetrapac facility, which would mean that tetrapac could be introduced into the recycling system.

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- Recycling in schools remained on the agenda and was a project for the future.
- Once the domestic recycling scheme was running smoothly, business waste recycling could be further investigated. The contractor has wide experience of commercial waste. It was noted, however, that the Council would not be eligible for finance in respect of the collection of business waste as the business rates (NNDR) collected went to central Government. Discussions in this respect were taking place with Essex County Council and small businesses in the District.
- The possibility of including domestic batteries in the recycling continued to be investigated. the contractor would be able to accommodate this but the facility to recycle did not yet exist at the MRF.
- The additional cost incurred of collecting co-mingled recyclable items is offset by the increased levels of recycling. The recycling target set by the County Council for Rochford District Council for 2008/09 is 32%.

The meeting closed at 9.21 pm.

Chairman

Date

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