
ROCHFORD ECONOMIC AUDIT (MIN118/98)

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are invited to consider the report of an audit of the economy of Rochford District which has been carried out by consultants. Since the recent passage of the Local Government Act 2000 local authorities have a statutory obligation to seek the well being of their area which includes its economic development.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following on from the Council's decision to undertake an economic audit of the District, the consultants, Public and Corporate Economic Consultants, were commissioned following a competitive tendering process to carry out the work, which has also been part funded by Essex Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Essex County Council.
- 2.2 The audit has now been completed and a copy of the full report will be placed in the Members' room. Attached to this report is a summary of the full report and the key action points recommended by the consultants.(Appendix 1)

3 DETAILED CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The consultants' report provides a considerable amount of information which needs to be considered in the context of the Council's emerging Local Plan.
- 3.2 The consultants' report draws attention to the relative success of advanced manufacturing locally. Members may wish to consider what further assistance, if any, the Council might be able to give as Planning Authority in terms of the supply of land and premises ,since there is evidence that expanding firms have been forced to relocate outside the District because of the limited availability of industrial land and premises.
- 3.3 The construction industry is highlighted as a major provider of jobs in small firms locally. Members may wish to examine in more detail the implications of this dependence as far as the future development of the Rochford economy is concerned so that any assistance that the Council and its partners can give is tailored to meet the needs of local businesses. It is suggested these issues should be taken up through the South East Essex Economic Strategy and with other agencies including Essex County Council, the Essex Learning and Skills Council, which takes over the responsibilities of Essex TEC in April 2001, and the East Of England Development Agency (EEDA).

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- 3.4 One key area highlighted in the report is the relatively low levels of skills among the resident population of Rochford as measured by NVQ levels achieved. It is suggested that the report should form the basis for discussions on the future skills needs of the area with local academic institutions including the South East Essex Economic Strategy; Essex County Council; the Essex Learning and Skills Council; the Castle Point and Rochford Adult Community College; SEEVI College, Anglia Polytechnic University and local secondary schools.

4 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Improved job opportunities brought about by enhanced economic development may have a positive effect in reducing crime and disorder in the District.

5 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Enhanced economic activity in the District may be beneficial for the environment since unused or underused buildings will be brought back into use.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The total cost of the audit has been £12000 of which Essex TEC provided £5000 and Essex County Council £2000; the balance of £5000 has been paid by the District Council. There will be resource implications in taking forward the audit's recommendations and individual initiatives together with any specific resource costs, will be brought forward as appropriate for Members' consideration

7 PARISH IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There will be implications for all parishes as economic development is a District wide service.

8 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 It is proposed that the Sub-Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the consultants' report be referred to the Planning Policy Sub-Committee which is responsible for consideration of the new Local Plan.
 - (2) That the suggested actions in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 above be endorsed.

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- (3) That Officers complete their work on a draft economic strategy for the District ,based on the consultants' report, for consideration at a future meeting. (CEX)

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