

Review Committee – 15 April 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the **Review Committee** held on **15 April 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley

Cllr T Livings
Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr Mrs C A Weston

VISITING MEMBER

Cllr D G Stansby.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L M Cox and Mrs H L A Glynn.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
G Woolhouse	-	Corporate Director (External Services)
P Gowers	-	Overview and Scrutiny Officer
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

137 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 MARCH 2008

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley declared a personal interest in item 5 of the agenda relating to the draft Comprehensive Performance Assessment by virtue of membership of Rayleigh, Rochford and District Association for Voluntary Service (RRAVS).

139 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT – DRAFT SELF ASSESSMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on the draft self-assessment that is being prepared for submission as part of the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA).

The Corporate Director (External Services) advised that he would welcome information or personal examples/evidence of achievements and improvements from Members of the Review Committee.

Amendments to the wording of the draft self-assessment were made on pages 6, 7 and 17 of the report.

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

- A comprehensive check would be carried out to ensure that all the relevant findings arising from the Peer Review, as well as from the Direction of Travel, Environment and Access to Services, Best Value reviews, were taken into account within the draft CPA report. A copy of the report had been sent for information to the lead Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) official on the Peer Review.
- Briefing sessions to explain the CPA process had been held for Rochford District Council staff. A CPA training session had been provided for Members, and there would be a further training session at the end of May to ensure that as many Members as possible were able to attend. Both staff and Members would be kept informed of progress.
- Further briefs would be provided for Members and Council staff nearer the time of the inspection. It was emphasised that the success of the Assessment would be dependent on the process being as honest and transparent as possible.

Resolved

That the draft self-assessment be approved for further development, subject to the following amendments:-

- The wording in the second paragraph under the heading of 'Visiting Rochford District' on page 6 of the draft should read 'a recently restored 19th century Mill', not 'a recently restored 17th century Mill'.
- The wording in the second paragraph under the heading 'Delivering our vision' on page 7 of the draft should include the Audit Committee among the Committees listed.
- The wording in the paragraph headed 'Bus Services Review' on page 17 of the draft should read 'the District Council successfully lobbied the County Council to subsidise a community bus initiative for residents at a remote caravan park'.

140 OPERATION OF THE NEW POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE REVIEW

The Committee considered the final report of the project team on the review of the operation of the new political decision making structure.

Following discussion, the following was noted:-

- The recommendations were linked to each other and should be viewed as a comprehensive whole rather than individually. Reference to this should be made within the report to Executive Board on 23 April 2008.

- The Community Forum item shown on the sample Area Committee agenda at Appendix 1 of the report (page 6.25) should be amended to read 'this is an opportunity for all Members of the Area Committee, including representatives from Essex Police, Essex County Highways and other public agencies where appropriate', to respond to questions and issues from members of the public.
- That items 4 (Essex Police Update) and 5 (Essex County Highways Update) should be removed from the sample Area Committee Agenda.
- That an item should be included on the sample Area Committee Agenda for the referral of items to the Executive Board.
- That recommendation no 6 should be moved to become recommendation no 8.
- That the wording of recommendation no 11 should be amended to read 'that the role profile, attached at appendix 3, for Parish/Town Councillors who are Members of the Area Committees is adopted'.

The Committee wished to extend its thanks to the Members who had undertaken this particular project.

Recommended to Executive Board

- (1) That future Area Committee meetings should be held quarterly, with provision made in the timetable for special meetings if required.
- (2) That a procedure is established that enables any questions received immediately after an Area Committee meeting to be dealt with by Ward Councillors or Area Committee Chairmen as appropriate, rather than wait for the next Area Committee meeting.
- (3) That agenda items, where practicable, need to be in the same cycle at all Area Committees and, where possible, a written report be included with the Agenda to aid understanding.
- (4) That the following changes to the Area Committee Agendas are made:-
 - The Community Forum is moved to the start of the meeting to include updates from the police and County Highways.
 - The use of the term 'spotlight issues' is removed and instead details of the purpose of any Agenda items are included on the Agenda, (e.g. whether for public consultation, decision, information etc).
 - The update should be split into two sections to separate the updates on questions from members of the public from the update on matters raised during the formal part of the meeting.

- The update containing responses to public questions should be issued at the time of Agenda despatch for information only and should not be a formal agenda item.
 - The update on matters raised during the formal part of the meeting should be an agenda item, with the expectation that comments are on an 'exception' basis.
- (5) That a facility be introduced to hold an Area Committee meeting to conduct formal business without a Community Forum, or vice versa, when it is appropriate to do so.
 - (6) That additional methods of publicising the Area Committee meetings are explored for the next municipal year i.e. public advertising, the production of information leaflets and through Rochford District Matters.
 - (7) That the rules to ask public questions through the Community Forum part of the meeting at Area Committees, contained in appendix 2 of this report, be adopted.
 - (8) That the annual officer training and development programme should include elements around presentations, public speaking and answering questions to assist those officers who will be attending Area Committees and meeting the public.
 - (9) That a feasibility study of the costs and benefits of providing transport to allow the public with mobility problems or lack of access to public transport to attend Area Committee meetings be explored.
 - (10) That the provision of a budget allocation for each Area Committee, to allow them to decide which local issues need supporting, be examined in more detail by the Review Committee during the next municipal year.
 - (11) That the role profile, attached at appendix 3, for Parish/Town Councillors who are Members of the Area Committees is adopted and sent to the Parish/Town Councils when they are asked for nominations for next year's Area Committees.
 - (12) That the guidance for District Members on Area Committees, attached at appendix 4, is adopted.
 - (13) That details of the risk to the Council (such as legal, budgetary and timescales) of taking/not taking the action is included with the Forward Plan to allow Members and the public to assess the importance of the topics contained in the plan.

Resolved

- (14) That the Forward Plan be added as a standing item on the Review Committee Agenda to allow Members of the Committee to indicate which

items they wish to overview and have input into prior to the scheduled Executive Board meeting.

- (15) That the following amendments are made to the sample Area Committee agenda:-
- Items 4 (Essex Police Update) and 5 (Essex County Highways Update) are removed;
 - The wording under the Community Forum item is amended to read 'this is an opportunity for all Members of the Area Committee, including representatives from Essex Police, Essex County Highways and other public agencies where appropriate'.
 - An item is included for the referral of items to the Executive Board.
- (16) That reference is made within the report to Executive Board on 23 April 2008 that as the recommendations are linked to each other, they should be viewed as a comprehensive whole rather than individually.
- (17) That recommendation no 6 in the report relating to additional methods of publicising the Area Committee meetings be moved to follow the recommendation relating to the possibility of undertaking a feasibility study of providing transport to allow the public with mobility problems or lack of access to public transport to attend Area Committees.

Recommended to the Executive Board

- (18) That a copy of the Forward Plan is sent to all Members on a monthly basis once it has been updated. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)
- (19) That there be a standing item on the Executive Board meeting agenda for Area Committee Chairmen to report back on the Area Committee meetings.
- (20) That signing sheets are introduced for the public attendees of the Area Committees in order that their views can be sought regarding possible changes etc. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)
- (21) That a sound system be introduced at all Area Committee meetings and that all speakers, whether Members, officers or the public, use the equipment provided. (Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)
- (22) That all Council divisions:-
- Co-ordinate public consultations to avoid timing clashes.
 - Ensure that all consultees are contacted at the same time.

(Note – this recommendation has already been implemented during the year.)

Recommended to the Standards Committee

(23) That a structured training programme be organised for all Councillors who are appointed to the Review Committee in order that the work of the Committee can be progressed in a timely and efficient manner.
(Note: this was agreed by the Standards Committee on 12 March 2008).

(24) That a training course on handling public meetings is offered to the Area Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to assist them in their roles. (Note: this was agreed by the Standards Committee on 12 March 2008).

141 ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee considered the draft annual report of the work carried out by the Review Committee in 2007/08 and topics for the Committee's future work programme for 2008/09.

The Committee endorsed the report with no amendment.

Resolved

That the annual report be agreed and submitted to Full Council.

The meeting closed at 9.17 pm.

Chairman

Date

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