

# POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL

## 10 AUGUST 2009

*Present :-* Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)  
Councillors Nick Barlow, Nigel Chapman,  
Mike Hardy, Justin Knight and Jill Tod

### 6. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

**Councillor Nigel Chapman and Councillor Julie Young (in respect of being a member of the Board of Colchester Borough Homes) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

**Councillor Julie Young (in respect of his-her membership of Essex County Council) declared a personal interest in the following item pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 7(3)**

### 7. Colchester Tree Policy

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Life Opportunities inviting the Panel to review the draft Colchester Tree Policy. Bob Penny, Parks and Recreation Manager, and Ian Baalham, Parks and Recreation Officer, attended to assist the Panel.

The draft Tree Policy was currently undergoing a period of public consultation. The period of public consultation had been extended to September 2009. The views of Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Homes were particularly significant and Panel members had raised the need to respond with these organisations. The Panel considered that it should review the draft policy again once comments had been received from these organisations.

In addition, the Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- Whether the policy had been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment. The policy may have a particular impact on the elderly or those with disabilities, especially those who were housebound or had visual impairments. The Panel asked whether the policy could be more flexible to allow exceptions, depending on the circumstances of the individual?

- The practicality of the policy. Officers stressed that the intention of the policy was to set good arboricultural standards which would set a framework for service delivery and a consistent approach to issues relating to trees.
- The arrangements for the funding of future maintenance work on trees, particularly given the expansion in tree planting in recent years. In the light of current economic climate with low interest rates, the Panel queried whether commuted sums were a practical way of ensuring funding was available in future. Officers clarified that commuted sums were linked to the Retail Price Index rather than to interest rates.
- Policy 08 on Customer Service needed to include references to the service to be provided to Councillors.

*RESOLVED* that:-

- (a) The contents of the draft Tree Policy be noted and the issues highlighted above be taken into consideration in future drafts of the policy.
- (b) The draft Tree Policy be resubmitted to the Panel once the consultation was complete, so it could take account of the comments received from Essex County Council and Colchester Borough Homes in particular.

## **8. Historic Town Centre Improvements**

The Panel received an update on the Historic Town Centre Improvements from Howard Davies, Town Centre Project Manager. He stressed the achievements made in the Quick Wins programme, further details of which were given in the briefing note in the agenda. The Panel was particularly pleased to note that works on the Essex and Suffolk Fire Office were now underway.

Work on the Implementation Plan would be commencing very shortly. This would look at the whole range of issues impacting on the town centre, rather than concentrating on highways issues which had tended to dominate previous studies. The importance of cross party support for this work was stressed. There would be a period of public consultation in November 2009, although the detailed arrangements for this were yet to be finalised. A further, more detailed update would be provided to the Panel at its meeting on 9 November 2009.

*RESOLVED* that the progress on the Historic Town Centre Improvements be noted.

## **9. Work Programme 2009/10**

The Panel considered a report from the Head of Corporate Management setting out the current situation regarding the Panel's work programme for 2009/10 and including an update on the 20 mph Task and Finish Group together with the notes of the Mayoralty Task and Finish Group meeting on 7 July 2009 and the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group meetings on 22 June 2009 and 9 July 2009.

### **(a) Mayoralty Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Lewis attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. A number of recommendations of the Civic Committee from its final meeting on 7 February 2007 had not been carried forward. The issue of a cellar book had been misunderstood. The proposal had not been for the maintenance of a wine cellar, but for a ledger to record the amount of wine used at each event. This would be a useful audit tool and would help monitor the cost of individual civic events. In respect of the Regalia Book, it was suggested that the Town Hall Guide could be made more comprehensive and extended to include information about the Regalia. Councillor Lewis invited the Panel to consider recommending to Cabinet reconvening the Civic Sub-Committee.

The Panel noted the conclusions of the Mayoralty Task and Finish Group and also Councillor Lewis' comments. The Panel considered that each of the political groups should be given the opportunity to consider the conclusions of the Task and Finish Group and that the Panel should resume consideration of the issue once this had taken place.

### **(b) Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group**

Nick Chilvers addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). He stressed the importance of the public consultation to be undertaken by the Task and Finish Group. This needed to be properly funded and he sought clarification on the following points:-

- Would views be sought on more than one option?
- Would consultation documents be sent to town and parish councils, residents associations, civic and conservation societies and Friends of the Earth?
- Would views be sought from Colchester Borough Homes and housing associations?

- How would views from local residents be sought? Would the Panel be approving the consultation methods? Would opinions be sought or would the consultation rely on closed questions?
- Would there be public meetings and would the Task and Finish Group be going out into the community to seek views?
- Would the financial costs of the various options be put in the public domain before a recommendation was made to Cabinet.

In response, Councillor J. Young indicated that the Panel understood the importance of the public element of the work of the Task and Finish Group. The consultation needed to be thorough and wide ranging and it would include a public meeting. Councillor Barlow, in his capacity as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, explained that that he would ensure Mr Chilver's queries were considered by the meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 17 August 2009.

The Panel noted the notes of the meetings of the Task and Finish Group on 22 June and 6 July 2009. The timetable had been amended since the meeting of 6 July, but the work of the Panel continued to progress well.

### **(c) 20 mph Speed Limit**

Pam Donnelly, Executive Director, provided an update on the work of the 20 mph Speed Limit Task and Finish Group. There had been a mixed response to the consultation. Essex County Council had indicated that it did not view the introduction of 20 mph speed limits as a priority for its highways budget. Therefore if the Council wished to pursue this it would need to find other sources of funding. However discussions with the County Council were ongoing and they had indicated they were willing to look at individual schemes.

Essex Police had indicated they would not support a blanket introduction of a 20 mph speed limit as it would not have the resources to enforce this. However it would support a 20 mph speed limit in particularly vulnerable areas, such as around schools.

The Panel noted that monthly meetings had now been scheduled for the Task and Finish Group.

### **(d) Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group**

It was reported that the draft conclusions of the Night Time Economy Task and Finish Group would be reported to the next meeting of the Panel.

*RESOLVED* that:-

(a) The progress on the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal, 20 mph Speed Limit and Night Time Economy Task and Finish Groups be noted;

(b) The conclusions of the Mayoralty Task and Finish Group be considered by each of the political groups and the Panel resume consideration of conclusions of the Mayoralty Task and Finish Group at its meeting on 9 November 2009.

(c) Subject to the change above, the contents of the Panel's Work Programme be approved.