

## **POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL**

### **30 SEPTEMBER 2008**

*Present :-* Councillor Julie Young (Chairman)  
Councillors Nick Barlow, Mike Hardy and Justin Knight  
*Substitute Members :-* councillor Lewis for Councillor Kevin Bentley  
councillor Maclean for Councillor Beverly Davies

#### **13. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting on 30 September 2008 were confirmed as a correct record.

#### **14. Town Centre Management Arrangements**

The Panel received a briefing paper setting out the current position regarding Town Centre Management arrangements and the progress of the consensus-building process with key partners in the business community.

Nigel Myers, Enterprise Manager, attended the meeting to assist members in their discussions.

Mr Myers acknowledged the importance of retail in the Colchester economy and it was hoped to create 2,000 new jobs in this sector by 2021. The rejection of the Business Improvement District initiative had resulted in the decision to close Colchester Town Partnership, as a result of which the responsibility for the Christmas lights and Colchester in Bloom had reverted to the Borough Council. It was explained that the reference to a fund raising event in paragraph 6.3 of the report would take place on 21 November 2008, not 14 November, as indicated.

Ron Levy, on behalf of the Colchester Retail and Business Association (CORBA), addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5 (1), explaining that CORBA had participated in recent meetings facilitated by the Enterprise Manager which had been productive and laid good foundations for the future. He supported the objectives identified in the report, particularly that of increasing the footfall to attract more people to the town centre.

Paul Bentham, the Manager of the Red Lion Shopping Centre, attended the meeting and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. Paul explained that he had recently been appointed in Colchester following a period at Luton's Arndale Centre. He had an ambitious 4 – 6 year plan to build on the existing good mix of independent and national stores and to improve on Colchester's current status as a Regional destination centre.

Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Business, attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel.

*RESOLVED* that the arrangements put in place to deliver the Christmas lights and Colchester in Bloom, together with the work being undertaken to build a business

consensus in the town following the closure of the Colchester Town Partnership be noted.

## **15. Home/Remote Working Policy**

The Panel considered a report by Georgina Blakemore, WWW Programme Manager, on the details of the draft Home / Remote Working Policy which had been formulated to enable and support managers in the implementation of flexible working practices as part of the Way We Work Change Programme.

The Policy included:

- A statement on home/remote working;
- The objectives;
- Guidance on the assessment of the suitability of posts for home/remote working;
- The Council's health and safety obligations;
- Variation of terms of conditions to reflect the change of working practices;
- Management responsibilities;
- Information and data security and
- Insurance/liabilities.

In addition a Guidance document had been compiled to support the policy, strategy and best practice as well as being a comprehensive guide to working flexibly.

Georgina explained that the former Enterprise and Communities service area were piloting flexible working within the organisation and, with 30 team members had managed to reduce their workstation requirements to 15. Georgina circulated to Panel members an example of a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) which had proved beneficial for staff involved in travel, such as Museum staff travelling between Ipswich and Colchester. She also displayed a tablet laptop which was being used by Building Inspectors and a digital pen as piloted by the Food Safety Team.

Jessica Douglas, Strategic HR Manager, attended the Panel to assist members in their discussions relating particularly to customer service issues, health and safety implications and security consequences.

Nigel Myers, Enterprise Manager and one of the team members involved in the Flexible Working pilot, attended the meeting and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. He felt home working required a high degree of organisation and motivation. He had initially been concerned about the reduced personal contact with his own team members but concluded that the project had empowered team members to make decisions on their own initiative. His team members had indicated a clear preference in favour of home working.

The Panel gave particular consideration to the following issues:

- The measures necessary to prevent feelings of isolation and loss of team dynamics;

- The mechanisms used, such as objective setting, to ensure performance is not adversely affected;
- The impact on traffic in terms of reduced car journeys by staff;
- Cost implications.

RECOMMENDED that the contents of the Home / Remote Working Policy be endorsed.

## 16. Work Programme 2008/09

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Corporate Management giving details of the work programme for 2008/09 which had been updated to reflect the areas of work identified by the Panel at its previous meeting.

In addition Cabinet had agreed that the Panel be requested to investigate the following issues by means of the setting up of Task and Finish Groups:

- Night – Time economy;
- 20 mph Speed Limits and
- Certain issues relating to the Mayoralty.

Cabinet also noted that this Panel had agreed to set up a Project Board / Liaison Group on Historic Town Centre Improvement, comprising both Borough and County Council members.

This was an ongoing piece of work to which Project Manager was being recruited and appointed.

RESOLVED that the revised Work Programme for 2008/09 be noted and the following arrangements be agreed in respect of the three Task and Finish Groups:

(i) Night-time Economy Group –

- An officer to be appointed to project manage the work of the Group,
- Membership to consist of one councillor from each of the political Groups (likely to be Naish, Davies, Barlow and an Independent to be confirmed),
- Other members to be one or two young persons / students (possibly from the University and the Institute) and Adrian Coombs, Colchester Police;

(ii) 20 mph speed limit –

- Membership to be determined at a later date pending the outcome of a technical report to the next meeting of the Panel;

(iii) Certain issues relating to the mayoralty –

- Membership to consist of one Councillor from each of the political groups with a mix of Councillors in terms of years of service,
- Investigation to be in the context of the current Mayoral 'structure',

- Issues identified as requiring investigation are:

Updating of the Gifts and Regalia Books,  
Bulk purchase / setting up a cellar book of wine for mayoral functions,  
Regalia insurance cover and the purchase of replica regalia,  
Setting up of a Mayoral Support Group.