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**MINUTES OF THE SERVICE DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY COMMITTEE HELD ON  
MONDAY 7 OCTOBER 2013 AT 7.00 P.M. IN THE ESSEX HALL, TOWN HALL,  
CLACTON-ON-SEA**

**Present:** Councillors Page (Chairman), D R Mayzes (Vice-Chairman), Aldis, R Callender, Colbourne, Cossens, Simons and Talbot.

**Also Present:** Councillor Halliday (Leader of the Council).

**In Attendance:** Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney) and Democratic Services Officer (Janey Nice).

**7. CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chairman of the Committee (Councillor Page) welcomed the Leader of the Council (Councillor Halliday) to the meeting and informed the Committee he thought it was important they all heard Councillor Halliday's vision for the future of the Committee and its way forward.

**8. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were none.

**9. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 4 June 2013, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**10. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

**11. OVERVIEW – VERBAL PRESENTATION BY THE LEADER**

Councillor Halliday gave the background of what the Council had done to date during which, he said, were difficult circumstances. He informed the Committee that the Council had achieved a balanced budget with £5.5 million in savings and that all of the staff restructuring had been completed, which made the organisation fit for the future. He went on to say that the popular free parking for residents scheme would be extended for a further year. He added that the Town and sea front improvements had been well received and that the recent Air Show had been bigger and better this year compared to last year and he was happy to confirm that the Air Show would go ahead next year.

Councillor Halliday said a major achievement had been the £36 million awarded towards the Sea Defence Scheme and that Tendring had been rated the best Council landlord in the country by the Council's own tenants. He said that, looking at Jaywick, some of the poorer properties now looked better and that a policy for planning in Jaywick in the new Local Plan and a flood risk assessment should help to improve housing in that area.

Councillor Halliday said that the Fundamental Service Reviews (FSR) had highlighted the need to look at office accommodation in seeing how the Council used its buildings and how to raise capital receipts. He added that the Local Plan had been presented to Cabinet at its last meeting on 4 October 2013 and garden and house sizes needed to be looked at as the houses in this country tended to be the smallest in Europe. He said that he wanted to see the Council's Housing Programme to be local housing for local people

and perhaps it would be a good idea to invite some Housing Association Landlords to come before the Service Development and Delivery Committee for scrutiny.

Councillor Halliday said he believed that education was a key area the Council could influence as it was important to improve the outlook and potential for children. He reminded the Committee that Cabinet had looked at the Home to Schools Transport consultation by the County Council as an urgent item at its meeting held last week.

Councillor Halliday went on to say that the perception by the public of what the Council was like, was important and that he was proud that this local authority was a much more forward looking Council and that it was intended that £3 billion would be put into local areas over the next three to four years. He said that Peter Jones, the Chairman of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was appreciative that the funding was going out to local areas and said it was important that this was continued.

Councillor Halliday said that affordable excellence was necessary, with office rationalisation being key to providing this. However, he said, funding was going to be difficult in the future with the Government changing the way in which it funded Local Authorities, and looking to top-slicing the housing subsidy. He said that this Council had been fortunate in that it had not used the housing subsidy to assist the revenue budget as other Councils had been doing which could potentially put them in a difficult situation in the future if the subsidy was top-sliced by Central Government. He said that, in the current financial year, the new homes bonus was 6%, Council Tax was 36% retained business rates was 24% and Government Grant was 36%, however by 2017/18 the Government Grant would be cut to 24%, the Council Tax would be at 36%, new homes bonus would be at 14% with the retained business rates being 26%. He said that the Council needed to maximise business rates with improving business growth, that solar farms were becoming more prevalent along with wind turbines and the Council needed to look at business rates for those renewable energy sources.

The role of scrutiny, he said, was as a critical friend with the Cabinet and scrutiny committees working closely together with scrutiny as much about outside bodies as internal Council matters.

Councillor Halliday then looked at the list the Chairman of the Committee had prepared as potential topics for examination by a Member Working Party with possibilities of looking at getting Assisted Area Status for example with perhaps asking Hutchinson Ports to be scrutinised by a Committee, another idea, as previously mentioned, would be to getting Housing Association landlords in before the Committee to be scrutinised as to the way they worked.

During questions from Members concern was raised that Hutchinson Ports seemed to be reluctant to move forward with expanding at Harwich Bathside Bay and appeared to be keen to move forward in other areas. Eco burials was mentioned as having potential for income for the Council as the site at Wrabness had proved, with perhaps the possibility of a Pet Cemetery being made available to residents.

The Chairman thanked the Leader of the Council for attending the meeting of the Committee and indicating where the Committee could be of help to the Cabinet.

## **12. OVERVIEW – VERBAL PRESENTATION BY THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman talked about how he would like to see it move forward and that he wanted it to develop and deliver strategies and said that he had visited other Councils to see how they had run their scrutiny committees. He said he wanted to split future agendas into two parts, the first part to include an item for scrutiny, with the second part to discuss developing a strategy on the way forward. He said he wanted to encourage Members to develop ideas, not only from members of the Committee but from all Members,

particularly backbenchers who may welcome new challenges. These Members would then report back to the Committee with their findings or conclusions reached.

The Chairman said he was keen to look at the issue of call-ins and shared with Members, the process used by Essex County Council (ECC) in dealing with call-ins, including mediation as an early means of resolution. It was suggested that, if adopted, the informal mediation meeting should take place within five working days of the call-in and that the meeting would be chaired by the Chairman, or Vice-Chairman, of the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In the event that mediation did not resolve the issue, the 15 working days to hold a formal Committee meeting would, he said, start the day after the mediation meeting to allow time for a convenient date to be arranged and all paperwork to be readied. He said that by holding a mediation meeting between the callers-in, the decision-maker and Officers, it could mean that clarification or a simple change of wording would suffice to allow the call-in to be withdrawn which would mean saving money by cancelling the formal meeting of the Committee. Once the mediation meeting had been held, and if the call-in was withdrawn, Members would be informed as to what had occurred at the mediation meeting.

Councillor Halliday said if the Committee made a formal recommendation to Cabinet then the necessary change to the Constitution could occur. He said that the Constitution Working Party had been considering changing the call-in rules of three callers-being needed if it concerned a ward matter where only the Ward Member could instigate the call-in process.

On discussing this matter, the Committee was generally in support of the change to hold an informal meeting to try and do away with the need for a formal Committee meeting, however Members were more cautious over the number of callers-in being reduced to one caller-in for a ward matter.

It was **AGREED** that **CABINET** be asked to note that:

The Council's Officers be asked to prepare a draft informal call-in process – in line with what had previously been discussed - and to bring it back to the Service Development and Delivery Committee in order that it could make an informed recommendation to Cabinet.

### **13. SCRUTINY – TOPICS FOR CONSIDERATION BY A WORKING PARTY**

The Chairman introduced a list of 16 potential items for the Committee to consider scrutinising and asked if any Members wished to undertake initial work on any of these.

The Chairman proposed that Members who had expressed an interest in pursuing this work, carry out initial research and bring to the Committee's next meeting, scheduled for 11 November 2013, any proposals to take the scrutiny work forward.

Councillor Halliday suggested that one potential area of work for consideration could be that the Air Show be further extended along the Tendring coastline to Dovercourt with a secondary event. He said the Air Show would then cover a much larger part of the District and that perhaps the Committee could investigate this to see if this was feasible.

The Chairman asked the Committee to look at his list of suggestions to see whether Members would like to take these forward, with the intention of reporting back to the Committee at its scheduled meeting on 11 November 2013. This list would then be put out to other Members not on the Committee to see if they would like to work with a working party in taking the work forward.

A Member said that the Power Boat event at Harwich had been very popular when it was held, with the Harwich and Dovercourt beaches being packed with spectators. The air

race from Great Oakley airfield, he said, had also been popular and it showed that Tendring had the potential of becoming a very good area with facilities for different sports.

The Democratic Services Manager (Colin Sweeney) informed the Committee that effective scrutiny came about as a result of Members getting involved and doing the work and that a greater emphasis was being placed upon local authorities' scrutiny functions to consider efficiencies and the potential for income generation, given the current financial climate. He said that Officers were there to facilitate the work that Members were doing and to give support where needed. It was also important, he said, that the Committee become more robust and work more closely with Cabinet in assisting in its policy development role.

The following Members (in the order listed) expressed a willingness to undertake those areas of work on the circulated list, subject to a decision being taken at the next meeting as to the likelihood that these could be properly scrutinised and concluded:

<u>Item No. and Matter</u>	<u>Councillor</u>
15. Development of a Pet Cemetery and Crematorium service	Talbot
16. Development of an eco-burial facility	Talbot
10. Accessibility of Council Services for those with disabilities	Colbourne
13. Improving recycling rates – what else can the Council do to Increase recycling and what is best practice elsewhere?	Cossens
11. Council services: engaging with younger people – Best Practice Review	D R Mayzes
9. How can planning facilitate business growth?	Simons

The Chairman suggested that it might be appropriate to ask the Housing, Benefits and Revenues and Sports Facilities Portfolio Holder (Councillor P B Honeywood) to attend a meeting of the Committee to talk about housing issues and Councillor Halliday agreed to ask the Portfolio Holder to attend a meeting.

Councillor Halliday said it was important that planning looked forward and worked with inward investment as it had occurred that regenerations ideas had come forward but when they had come up before Planning they were then refused.

The Chairman, on summing up, agreed that the Committee had plenty of ideas to work with reports to be presented at the next meeting on Monday 11 November 2013 and looked forward to seeing what the Committee members had achieved.

#### **14. FORWARD PLAN**

The Committee noted the new items relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee contained in Forward Plan Number 144.

#### **15. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman went through the agenda items for the next three meetings of the Service Development and Delivery Committee and the Committee members noted the items to be discussed.

#### **16. ANY OTHER ITEMS THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT**

There were none.

The meeting was declared closed at 8.48 p.m.

Chairman