

REPORT TO RYE TOWN COUNCIL (RDC) – OCTOBER 2006  
COUNCILLOR S.H.SOUSTER

Review of RDC Committee Structure

Approved by Cabinet this afternoon.

The current decision-making and Overview and Scrutiny Structure consists of Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Resources and Services), Planning, including a Sub-Committee, Licencing and General Purposes and Standards. A total of 7 main and 1 Sub. The Council has evolved over the years with much use of task and finish working parties (task specific) sub-committees; recently there has been 5. Non-councillors with the appropriate expertise can be invited onto these. I believe these to be a successful way to operate, and give non-executive and minority group members an opportunity to contribute.

The revised committee Structure includes those ad-hoc working groups, together with an Improvement and Resources Sub-Committee. The Overview and Scrutiny role has been reduced to one committee with the addition of an Audit Committee.

I was not opposed to most of the changes, but I did speak against the loss of the two specific Overview and Scrutiny Committees at the Cabinet meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> September 2006. I thought this clear distinction was relevant and, as a member of the Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee as there was always adequate business.

Allocation of seats in the new Committee Structure

This allocation of seats depends on the political balance of the Council.

Although, during the life of the Council there have been a number of by-elections with one pending, all seats have been retained, so the political balance remains unchanged.

What has altered the numbers, but not significantly, has been the defections.

A while ago the Lib-dems lost to one of the Conservatives and one to Independent, and recently the two Labour councillors from Bexhill have gone Independent.

This leaves the Independents just one short of the main opposition group, with the Labour group ceasing to exist. This means that as the only Labour councillor I can only be allocated committee seats by the full Council. I could obviously say more on this but it is perhaps best left alone.

Waste Collection and Recycling

I can now report that both contracts associated with the above have now been let.

1. The Waste Recycling Communication Contract  
This has gone to Enviro Comms.

Work is in the preparation stage of the most important part of explaining and educating residents of the changes that will take place next year.

2. Waste Management Services Contract

This has been awarded to Verdant Group PLC.

This company has an impressive record with recycling rates of 40% already achieved elsewhere. This contract will commence in April 2007.

Last week I attended a Members Support Seminar at Rushcliffe Borough Council, Nottingham, where the local council has been awarded Beacon Status in their recycling by attaining a recycling and composting rate rise from 9.7% to 50% in just three years, and this is without including bottle recycling. RDC's present rate is 15%. The presentations were most instructive and should assist RDC as they implement this change of service.

I do not intend to go further at present because professionals have been engaged for this purpose, only to note:-

1. Change is not appreciated usually, especially as the present system has a customer satisfaction rate of 94%.
2. The status quo is not an option for two primary reasons.
  - 2.1 Landfill locally is not available after 2008, so separation and recycling will have to be done.
  - 2.2 Central Government is imposing recycling targets that are expected to be met. (**Agenda Item 70 Municipal Waste Management** I would urge you to approach a member to become involved).

The Derelict Cottages 8 – 26 Fishmarket Road

I am still receiving complaints about the appearance of these properties. A Section 215 Enforcement Notice was issued in August stating the requirements to remedy the condition of the properties. These are quite specific and owners have until 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2006 to comply.

A similar notice has been issued to 26A and 26B (27A) ordering the land at the rear of the properties to be cleared of vegetation. Action must be taken before 29<sup>th</sup> November 2006 to comply.

53 Cinque Ports Street Rye, (ex Central Garage Site). Planning Application RR/2006/1991/P

**It is interesting to compare this application with that of the previous application RR/2003/542P, which was approved.**

This building, had it proceeded and it was only days away from the building contract being let, would have housed a Library, Hastings College, Rother Homes and RDC (Help Point) with 3 -1 bedroomed flats. In other words, mainly business with little residential.

The present application will house a Library and RDC (Help Point) with 10 flats with a total of 13 bedrooms.

At the recent Planning Meeting expressions of concern were considered from both the Rye Conservation Society (Design) and English heritage (Design, Material and Archaeology). (Archaeology and concerns about the Town Wall were addressed last time at a cost of around £13k – what has changed?)

Perhaps, more importantly, were the concerns about lack of parking with the number of residents proposed.

Since the previous application, which had just **3 bedrooms** the Rameslie Development has been built just a short distance away with a total of **20 bedrooms** with just **5 garages**. Were there objections then?

**The Planning Application was deferred.**

#### Gypsy and Traveller Caravans and Site

The East Sussex Travellers' Strategy was discussed at the Services Overview and Strategy Committee on 25th September 2006,. Following a presentation by County Councillor Tidy responsible portfolio holder, and Ms. Trudy Guigan, Traveller Liaison Officer.

Council is now expected to include within its Local Development Framework, adequate provision for travellers. The draft strategy is out for consultation, hence Agenda Item 69 tonight.

There are currently 5 traveller sites in East Sussex, owned by the Council and managed under contract.

It is admitted that finding additional sites is always difficult, nevertheless, adequate provision is required, because of the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which is a key consideration as to whether the Sussex Police will exercise their powers to evict.

I would recommend that this Council does involve itself in this matter.

#### Delegating of Functions from the District Council

It has long been this Council's aim to move towards this objective, and far from prevaricating, as claimed, it has always been know that the mechanism exists to approach this in an orderly manner and within the legal framework that exists at present. The key to this is the Quality Status that the Town Clerk has achieved for us, and a Local Action Plan or Town Plan requiring the involvement of the community, of which RDC will need to take note.

The call for this devolvement has come most recently from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Ruth Kelly).

One authority has gone as far as appointing a Cabinet member for Resources and Town and Parish Council Empowerment.

At the RDC Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2006 during the debate on Public Conveniences, having stated categorically that the conveniences in Rye must not be closed under any circumstances, it allowed me to take up the point made by Rye Town Council and Seddlescombe Parish Council that this transfer should be part of a package of functions and services, rather than on an ad-hoc basis, and it was resolved '**as other services are considered for devolvement to Town and Parish Councils, public conveniences be considered within this framework**'.

The Town Council should now consult with the District Council to determine a way forward. I will expect Democracy for Rye to play a full part in this.

**CLLR. S.H.SOUSTER**

Rye Ward  
2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006

**ROTHER DISTRICT COUNCIL  
SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (25.9.06)  
AGENDA ITEM 5.3 PUBLIC CONVENIENCES**

Firstly the remaining 4 public conveniences in Rye cannot be closed under any circumstances. Rye is an extremely busy tourist town. RDC's Tourism Officer will confirm just how busy, and this proposal excludes residents, who also benefit. This matter must be resolved. **I believe this Council's present policy in pursuit of devolved services is wrong.**

We should not be tackling each service separately, but creating a package of services which RDC would be happy for the lower tier of local government to accept, and determining a way forward. In the submissions by Rye Town Council (p.68) and Sedlescombe (p.69) this point has been made. As both have been granted Quality Town/Parish status, a mechanism exists to achieve a managed handover within the Town/Parish Action Plan.

For example:-

1. How much time and effort was spent in resolving the TIC service in Rye?
2. Now the same procedure is being pursued with the public conveniences.
3. Next, it will be on who takes Street Trading and Clean Communities Enforcement.

It is time RDC stopped this piece-meal approach, and included this in a Cabinet Portfolio. This would determine what services could be included, then, along with the Town and Parish Councils, consider what resources would be required to achieve an agreed transfer of services.

Finally, Town Council seats are being won in Rye by candidates making unrealistic claims, which are well outside the legal framework in demanding the return of all services, and assets that they claim were taken away following the Local Government Act of 1972. This obviously sounds attractive to the electorate.

I believe what I have proposed is an initiative that is realistic, legally possible and achievable.

**CLLR. S.H.SOUSTER**  
30<sup>th</sup> September 2006