

## **COUNCIL - 7 MAY 2009**

### **REPORT OF THE LEGAL DIRECTOR - MATTERS DEALT WITH IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE 17 OF THE SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULES (CALL-IN AND URGENCY)**

I wish to report that the Chair of the Relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee has given his consent, under Rule 17 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules, to the following issue being dealt with, on the basis that the decisions could not be reasonably deferred and therefore not subject to call-in.

### **CABINET - 19 MARCH 2009**

#### **292. ECONOMIC DOWNTURN AND PROPOSALS FOR ACTION**

Further to Minute No. 129 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member - Technical Services held on 11 March 2009 and Minute No. 107 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member - Regeneration held on 18 March 2009, the Cabinet considered the report of the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environmental Services which provided details of the implications of the economic downturn and proposals for action in the short and medium terms; and indicating that a decision on this matter was required to obtain agreement to a number of measures to assist local businesses and residents affected by the economic downturn in Sefton.

The proposal was a Key Decision but, unfortunately, had not been included in the Council's Forward Plan of Key Decisions. Consequently, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Corporate Services) has been consulted under Rule 15 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules of the Constitution, to the decision being made as a matter of urgency on the basis that it was impracticable to defer the decision until the commencement of the next Forward Plan because of the need to take a number of 'quick win' actions to address the impact of the economic downturn, particularly relating to the retail sector in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) approval be given to the following immediate action being taken to protect the Town Centres in Bootle, Southport, East Sefton, Formby and Crosby:
  - introduction of the free use of all Southport Park and Ride Services at weekends and during public holidays for a period of 12 weeks;
  - introduction of free parking on Saturdays only at Council operated car parks in Crosby from 10.30 a.m. onwards for a period of 12 weeks;
  - where possible, the introduction of barrier parking in Crosby be brought forward;
  - subject to funding support from Area Committees and Parish Councils, maps of shopping centres and parades in Formby and East Sefton be developed, and erected at these locations;

- the marketing and promotion campaign be supported as outlined in Annex A of the report;
  - consultation being carried out with retail centres not covered in Annex A; and
  - the Sefton Business Village Partnership be requested to work with property owners of vacant shops to facilitate ‘window dressing’;
- (2) in order to support major employers at risk and minimise the impact of unavoidable closures of disinvestment, the Planning and Economic Regeneration Director be authorised to:
- monitor all corporate employers in the borough and detect early warning signs requiring action;
  - establish a rapid response team with expertise in employee counselling, jobsearch, transitional employment and post-employment support operating within the Regional Response Framework; and
  - approach Jobcentre Plus with a view to signing a local employment partnership and thereafter report back to Cabinet Members and the Cabinet;
- (3) officers consult and advise businesses regularly on the problems they face and help they can access by:
- issuing a regular newsletter in conjunction with the Sefton Business Village Partnership and the Chamber and Federation of Small Businesses, to keep the business community informed of news and opportunities;
  - implementing a “Real Help for Sefton Businesses”, based on and extending the national campaign, to provide a complete picture of what help is available and from where;
  - the Finance and Information Services Director providing regular update reports on Sefton Council’s performance against its prompt payment targets; and
  - agreeing that opportunities to increase flexibility in localising procurement and increasing the competitiveness of local suppliers be explored further and reported back;
- (4) appropriate support be developed for those recently entering the labour market by Jobcentre Plus, [Sefton@work](mailto:Sefton@work) and our local independent providers be requested to assess the needs of new entrance to the labour market in Sefton and agree an immediate plan for supporting clients that complements the Regional Response Framework and makes use of local resources and opportunities;

- (5) in order to co-ordinate support services to minimise the impact of the recession on the families and communities most affected, the Council and its VCO partners review the impact of the recession on personal and community support services, with a view to assessing and mitigating the risks posed to social cohesion, and bringing forward a plan of action;
- (6) a further report be submitted in three months on the successes and outcomes of the proposals referred to above; and
- (7) it be noted that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Performance and Corporate Services) had given his consent under Rule 17 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules for call-in period to be waived in respect of these decisions because of the need to implement actions with immediate effect to address the impact of the economic downturn, particularly relating to the retail sector in the Borough.

C. J. Elwood  
Legal Director