

Council – 28 July 2009

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **28 July 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr A J Humphries
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr T Livings	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, M R Carter, Mrs L M Cox, T E Goodwin, R A Oatham, P R Robinson, C G Seagers, Mrs C A Weston and Mrs B J Wilkins.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	- Chief Executive
R J Honey	- Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse	- Corporate Director (External Services)
Y Woodward	- Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management
J Bostock	- Committee Services Manager

189 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 19 May 2009 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 30 June 2009 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

190 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman had both had a very busy two month period attending fetes/fairs and other community events.

191 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council noted the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between 20 May 2009 and 20 July 2009.

192 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

(1) Report of the Standards Committee – 9 June 2009

Council considered the report of the Standards Committee containing recommendations relating to the Code of Conduct for Planning Matters.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, Cllr K H Hudson, extended congratulations to the Standards Committee and the Head of Legal Services for their work in developing amendments to the Code of Conduct. As Portfolio Holder, Cllr Hudson was mindful of both the background to the proposed amendments and to a concept raised by the Council's Head of Planning and Transportation on the move from a process of development control to a process of development management. The concept was something that the Portfolio Holder believed would add value to the planning process and involve Members at a much earlier stage, working constructively with applicants to shape proposals with outcomes in mind.

The circumstances presented an opportunity for the Council to thoroughly overhaul the Code of Conduct from base to apex, taking account of all salient factors and avoiding a piecemeal approach.

During discussion it was noted that the proposed amendments to the Code had been developed by the Standards Committee as a whole. It was also noted that, in terms of pro-rata criteria, a Sub-Committee of six appointees should comprise five Conservatives and one Liberal Democrat.

Reference was made to the value of ensuring that documents such as the Code of Conduct are easily understood by residents. Reference was also made to the fact that all Members are able to visit Sub-Committee meetings.

On a motion, moved by Cllr K H Hudson and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore, it was:-

Resolved

That a Sub-Committee comprising the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Development Control Committee, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation and three other Members (to be confirmed by the Group Leaders) be convened for the purposes of reviewing and modifying the Council's Code of Conduct for Planning Matters in the light of the existing Code, the recommendations made by the Standards Committee taking account of the Local Government Association 'Probity in Planning' paper and the concept raised by the Head of Planning and Transportation in relation to moving from a process of development control to development management. (HPT)

193 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

Council received the following report from the Leader on the work of the Executive:-

“What with the changeover to the new Council year, it is a while now since I presented my last report as Leader to a meeting of Full Council...23 April in fact.

Since my last report in April, we have of course had the publication of the Place Survey. This national survey, conducted by independent pollsters, asked a broad range of questions to local residents relating to their levels of satisfaction with the local area. The survey clearly showed Rochford is rated very highly in a number of areas by its residents.

It revealed that the District Council scored highly nationally in giving its residents value for money and in the way in which it dealt with residents' enquiries respectfully and considerately.

When it comes to being a cleaner greener place to live, the survey noted that Rochford residents are particularly satisfied with doorstep recycling, refuse collection and local household waste recycling centres which enable them to recycle more than 50% of their rubbish, as well as public land being kept clear of litter and refuse. Incidentally, for exceeding our Local Area Agreement recycling target last year, the County has recently awarded us over £70,000 additional funding.

The survey indicated that local people are satisfied with their local area as a place to live and they feel they belong in their local neighbourhood. The perception of crime is low with respondents saying they don't feel there is a particular problem with drunk and rowdy behaviour or drug use and drug dealing.

The respondents rated the police and local public services amongst the best when it came to listening to their views on, and dealing with, anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area.

With the area boasting some beautiful parks and open spaces such as Hockley Woods, Sweyne Park and Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park it is no surprise that residents were satisfied with parks and open spaces; they also said they were satisfied with local sport and leisure facilities. Thus, there is a lot of good news in the survey for the District and also the work of the Council as the local authority.

However, we as a Council cannot be complacent and there are points that we do need to look at and address. For example, the survey indicated that residents feel they have not been sufficiently involved in decisions in their local area and also feel unable to influence these decisions. Clearly, it is hoped that over time the three Local Area Committees will help to address

this. We will also need to look at other mechanisms, particularly in the partnership arena, to help answer these perceptions.

Volunteering is another area where, nationally, our score was very disappointing and, whilst we've started to work with the Voluntary and Community sector on this, we will need to step up a gear if the next survey is to see a major increase in this area.

In service delivery terms, our recycling scheme goes from strength to strength. The unaudited figures were 72% for April, 68% for May and 69% for June. Contamination remains a worrying problem with over 130 tonnes last month and, as well as providing detailed advice to residents, we are now having to implement measures to ensure that the actions of a minority do not spoil the excellent efforts of the majority.

As Members will be aware, work is progressing at pace on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. A special meeting of Full Council is now scheduled for 9 September, when it is hoped that the Council will approve the submission version of the Core Strategy prior to it going out on its last round for public comment/objection.

Since the start of the new Municipal Year, the Executive has considered our post Comprehensive Performance Assessment Improvement Plan and the progress already made as we prepare for life under the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) regime which, depending on who is elected to Government in due course, could be a very short lifespan indeed.

We have looked at our performance, in project and service terms and from a financial monitoring standpoint, and I am pleased to say as Leader that we continue to make good progress in all our key areas. We have re-looked at our Medium Term Financial Strategy in terms of bridging the budgetary gap and made a number of decisions to ensure we remain on track.

We have agreed to extend our Information Communication Technology contract for a further two years whilst we look at the possible opportunities that might then be available, and we have also approved the need to make further changes to the organisational structure over time to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and continues to progress our Access to Services work.

The longer term financial predictions mean that we remain unlikely to ever have enough resources to do all that we wish to do and, thus, it is important for us to continue to shape the organisation so that, not only do we stay within our budget framework, but deliver quality services and ensure a smooth transition to respond to changes in demand and legislation as well as deal with issues such as succession planning within the workforce.

Over the last few months we have undertaken a number of measures in response to the economic recession. We are progressing our 'Shop at my

Local' campaign and are planning to launch that with the Local Chambers shortly.

I have to state that our most recent business breakfast, which we held jointly with the Federation of Small Businesses and Business Link and which focussed on the recession, was our most successful yet in terms of attendance, with well over 100 present.

We will continue to work with our local business community as appropriate to ensure that we do what we can to help them through these tough times.

As always, I will be happy to take any questions from Members in respect of the work of the Executive since the April Council meeting. I am sure my Executive colleagues will be happy to contribute where appropriate."

There was some discussion around the Place Survey. It could be recognised that there are areas within the survey on which residents had a balanced view. Interpretation can be a question of perception. Compared with the majority of Councils involved in this national survey, Rochford District had come out well. Reference was made to the recent separate survey undertaken by the Halifax that had identified Rochford as the seventh best District in Great Britain in terms of quality of life.

There was specific reference to how, over the years, fewer individuals seemed to be coming forward and volunteering for roles in groups/bodies that are active within the community. It may be of value to consider if a specific campaign for volunteers, or even the amalgamation of some groups, would be appropriate. Whilst publicity for Area Committees is important, it was recognised that residents may only want to attend if they feel a need.

194 ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the draft Annual Report 2008/09 and associated performance indicators.

Responding to questions, the Head of Finance Audit and Performance Management advised that information within the first table under the 'What Rochford District Council Spent' heading of the draft Annual Report could be reviewed to:-

- Further identify items for inclusion under the 'Making a Difference to our People' column.
- Include an indication of the reasons for the expenditure associated with the items under the 'Making a Difference to our Local Economy' column within that column.

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It was agreed that the 'Delivering Value for Money' section was particularly useful in demonstrating the work undertaken to achieve savings, value for money being something that residents had identified as important through the Place Survey.

Resolved

That, subject to a review of the information within the first table under the 'What Rochford District Council Spent' heading and changes arising from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report be agreed for publication. (HFAPM)

The meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

Chairman

Date

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