

## Extraordinary Council – 14 February 2013

---

Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **14 February 2013** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J A Mockford  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr T E Mountain
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr M Maddocks	Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs P Aves, P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, M R Carter, Mrs H L A Glynn, T E Goodwin, J D Griffin, Mrs A V Hale, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, D Merrick, R D Pointer, D J Sperring, M J Steptoe and P F A Webster.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	- Chief Executive
Y Woodward	- Head of Finance
N Khan	- Principal Solicitor
S Worthington	- Committee Administrator

### **30 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX FOR 2013/14**

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance on the level of Council Tax for 2013/14.

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:-

“Chairman and, through you, Councillors, members of the public and press.

This is my ninth budget as Leader of this Conservative administration and comes at a time of continued austerity for the country as a whole, which the Government now says will continue until 2018.

There are major changes to the way that local government will be funded from 2013/14 onwards, with the implementation of a Rates Retention Scheme. The Government’s extensive finance changes from April 2013 also includes the introduction of the new Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Both of these provide challenges to the Council in terms of delivering economic and jobs

growth, supporting residents affected by the changes to benefits and the importance of the accurate forecasting of economic growth.

The New Homes Bonus, which is a Government initiative to encourage more homes, was introduced in 2011/12. The Council received a New Homes Bonus of just over £266,000 in 2012/13 and we will be getting £4440,000 next year. However, this “Bonus” is being funded by top slicing the pot of money available for Local Government and thus will become an increasingly important source of income over the next few years.

The local government finance settlement was announced in December, far too late in my opinion. The settlement continues to reflect the unprecedented economic circumstances faced by the nation. The Government’s priority is to take the action needed to tackle the deficit and put the public finances back on a sustainable footing. This has involved tough decisions throughout the public sector but is particularly hitting Local Authorities. Rochford District Council’s grant was reduced by 16.2% in 2011 and reduced by a further 11.1% in 2012/13. A further reduction of £483,000, or 13.5%, will be made for 2013/14. This is offset in part by the increase in New Homes Bonus, representing an overall reduction of £308,000, or 8%. The total grant, including New Homes Bonus, awarded for 2013/14 is £3.52m. To put this into perspective, delivery of statutory services alone is estimated to cost approximately £9.6m.

I would, at this point, like to thank all Members and officers for their participation in this year’s budget process and for helping to identify ways to meet the budget gap. These include:-

- New Grounds Maintenance contract arrangements and specifications.
- Expansion of the sale of fire wood.
- A revised charging framework for collecting bulky waste and an increase in the range of materials collected.

We continue to be successful in generating income by providing services to partners and other Councils, such as:-

- Payroll services to Castle Point Borough Council
- Arboricultural and playground inspection services to the Rochford Housing Association
- The Legal Services and Building Control partnerships
- Grounds maintenance services to Parish Councils and Essex County Council
- Providing domestic abuse work for other Authorities.

Our ICT contract has been let in partnership with three other Authorities, providing estimated savings of £0.6m up to 2016/17.

The Government announced a further Council Tax freeze grant for 2013/14, but based on only a 1% increase for two years compared to 2.5% in the previous two years. They also said that any Council Tax increase of more than 2% would trigger a referendum, giving residents the opportunity to veto the increase. This Council gave serious consideration as to whether or not to accept the grant and freeze Council Tax for a third year. However, the overall financial impact of accepting that offer would have been too great and thus the Council has reluctantly agreed to apply an increase of 1.969% on the average Band D Council Tax in order to continue to protect the delivery of services. This equates to an increase of less than 8 pence per week.

Rochford District Council has a clear set of priorities – making a difference to our community, environment and local economy. Despite the challenges faced, we have continued to uphold these priorities and have not let services slip. Our achievements over the past year include:-

- Our recycling scheme being recognised again, with the team behind the scheme being shortlisted for a National Recycling Award.
- Receiving a Gold Award from the RSPCA for our outstanding work in the field of animal welfare by ensuring animals are looked after in emergency situations, as well as the Silver Stray Dogs Footprint and Silver Animal Welfare Principles Footprint.
- The Rayleigh Windmill being shortlisted for an Essex Wedding Award in 'Wedding Venue of the Year' Heritage Category, having become immensely popular since it became licensed for weddings, naming ceremonies and renewal of vows ceremonies.
- Successfully defending a legal claim against our Core Strategy, which sets out how the area will develop over the next 15 years.

Rochford District Council contributed to the hugely successful London Olympic and Paralympic Games last summer when on Friday, 6 July, 30,000 people lined the streets of Rayleigh to celebrate the torch visiting the District as part of its 70 day journey around the country. This event was organised by the District Council, in conjunction with Rayleigh Police, with volunteers from the Authority and across the District acting as stewards to ensure the event passed smoothly and safely.

Our ninth Wild Woods Day in June 2012 was another special event, as it hosted the Rochford leg of 'Sparks Will Fly' – the county-wide cultural celebration of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, involving every District and Borough in Essex.

## Extraordinary Council – 14 February 2013

---

The results of a Peer Review carried out in November concluded that Rochford District Council has a strong and effective senior management and political leadership, as well as a strong track record in areas such as waste and recycling. We were really pleased when we received Gold status from the Investors in People scheme in 2010, so it is fantastic news that peers from other Local Authorities have confirmed that Rochford is not only a great place to work, but the Council is effective and efficient in the way it serves its residents. The Peer Review recommendations provide a good framework against which to decide changes to the way we do things that will benefit our residents both now and in the future.

London Southend Airport is expanding and continues to present a huge potential for local economic growth. In a recent survey Easyjet passengers rated the airport the highest throughout their European network. In addition, the Joint Area Action Plan with Southend Borough Council has been approved and will shortly be out for pre submission consultation. It will help to promote the development of the District as a travel and employment hub.

The Localism Act was given Royal assent in November 2011 and continues to present challenges with implications still emerging, with the community right to challenge and the community right to buy.

In our budget we are increasing the resources to support delivery of our economic development strategy as we recognise our role in leading the District in growing its economy. Economic regeneration and growing the wealth of our communities is important to us.

We have also put in place arrangements to help residents affected by the Government's reduction in benefit expenditure. From April there will be changes to the way Council Tax Benefit is funded and administered. Councils will no longer be fully funded by central Government, but will be given a reduced amount of money to fund a local Council Tax Support Scheme. A new scheme has been developed and approved by Rochford District Council in partnership with other Essex Authorities.

The breakdown of annual Council Tax for a Band D property will be:-

Essex County Council	£1,086.75
Police & Crime Commissioner for Essex	£141.48
Essex Fire & Rescue Authority	£66.42
Average Town / Parish Councils	£39.15
Rochford District Council	£205.11

The total average Council Tax for a Band D property for 2013/14 will be £1,538.91, an increase of £10.69 (0.7%).

In conclusion, although Rochford District Council, and indeed the rest of the UK, is still suffering from the effects of the economic downturn, we remain committed to providing excellent services to our residents and partners. With this in mind we will be doing all we can “to make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best quality of life for all who live, work and visit here”.

Chairman, I commend the Council Tax for Members’ approval.

Thank you, Chairman.”

Particular reference was made to the work of officers on a difficult budget process. The Council was performing well, despite straitened finances.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2013/14 (excluding Parish and Town precepts) be £5,869,664.
- (2) That the total for gross expenditure of the District, together with the Parish and Town precepts, be £33,886,550.
- (3) That the total of income for the District Council be £26,896,641.
- (4) That the Council Tax requirement of the District Council, together with the Parish and Town Councils, be £6,989,909.
- (5) That the basic amount of Council Tax (including Parish and Town precepts) be £244.26 for the year. This being the Council Tax requirement £6,989,909 divided by the Council Tax base 28,617.06.
- (6) That the total of sums payable into the general fund in respect of re-distributed business rates and Government grant, together with Council Tax Support Funding and adjustments from the collection fund, be £4,211,329.
- (7) That the total of Parish and Town precepts included within the above is £1,120,245.
- (8) That the basic rate of Council Tax relating to the District Council without Parish and Town precepts is £205.11, which is a 1.969% increase.
- (9) That the total tax for both District and Parishes be as set out in the Schedule, which is included as **appendix B**. These sums are calculated as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items related.

## Extraordinary Council – 14 February 2013

---

- (10) That the sums given above for Band D, but now shown in the particular valuations bands A-H be as set out in the schedule shown as **appendix C**.
- (11) That the precepts issued to the Council in respect of Essex County Council, Essex County Fire & Rescue Service Authority and Essex Police Authority for each valuation band A-H, be as set out in the schedule as shown, as **appendix D**.
- (12) That the total Council Tax for the area for each valuation band A-H be as set out in **appendix E**. These are the amounts set as Council Tax for the year 2013/14. (HF)

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.