

## Council – 31 October 2023

---

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **31 October 2023** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J L Lawmon  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs S J Page

Cllr N J Booth	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs E L Brewer	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr R Milne
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr G W Myers
Cllr R P Constable	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr J E Cripps	Cllr L J Newport
Cllr A G Cross	Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I A Foster	Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr J N Gooding	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr T D Knight	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr R Lambourne	Cllr Mrs V A Wilson
Cllr R C D Linden	Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr Mrs C M Mason	

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs D L Belton and E O K Mason.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

J Stephenson	- Chief Executive
E Yule	- Strategic Director
M Hotten	- Director, Environment
N Mann	- Joint Acting Director, People & Governance
S Worthington	- Acting Service Manager, Democratic Services, BBC & RDC
H Muss	- Sustainability & Climate Officer
V Meanwell	- Democratic Services Officer
W Szyszka	- Democratic Services Officer

### **216 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 September were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **217 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr M J Steptoe declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 8 of the agenda by virtue of being a Member of Essex County Council's Planning Committee.

Council held a minute's silence to commemorate victims of the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Israel and Palestine as well as those that lost their lives in the war in Ukraine.

### **218 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE**

Council received the following announcement from the Chairman, Cllr J L Lawmon:-

"Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed Councillors,

I am honoured to stand before you tonight to share some of the activities I have been involved in, all aimed at making our district a better place to live and work.

First and foremost, I want to address the issue of the cost of living. We understand the challenges many of our residents face in their day-to-day activities. To address this, the Rochford District Council #BYYOURSIDE Cost of Living Community Event was organised to provide a platform for dialogue. RDC brought together experts, local businesses, and community leaders to offer support and advice on health and well-being and the cost of living which was open to all residents.

Rochford District Council also arranged for a Job Fair, recognising that employment is a crucial component of a stable life. This event aimed to connect job seekers with local employers, boosting our local economy and helping our residents secure a meaningful employment.

The "Forget Me Knot" event at the Megacentre was another memorable occasion. Loneliness and isolation can be challenging, and through this event, showed commitment and support ensuring no one is forgotten.

The Rayleigh Town's "Rayleigh in Bloom" initiative was a great success. It is heartening to see Rayleigh Town covered in colour flowers and greenery, making it a more beautiful place to live and visit.

The Foodbank 10-Year Anniversary was a significant milestone. Acknowledging the dedication and hard work of those involved in this vital service. It is a reminder of the importance of community support for those in need, and it inspires us to continue these efforts.

I also had the privilege of attending the Lord Lieutenant National Honours Seminar. It was a great opportunity to engage with fellow leaders and discuss how we can further serve our community and recognise those who have made exceptional contributions to our district.

"Make Your Market in Rayleigh" was an event designed to boost our local economy and support small businesses. We encourage everyone to shop locally and support our thriving marketplaces.

I would also like to extend heartfelt thanks to all of you who attended my Chairman's Quiz Night. This event was not only a night of fun and camaraderie, but also an opportunity to give back to our community. Together, we raised an impressive £850.00 for the Southend Carers – SCAFT.

Before I conclude, I would like to bring your attention to two important initiatives. The first is my Christmas Card Competition, open to all primary age children who live or attend school in our district. We want to see the creativity and talent of our young residents showcased during the festive season.

The second is our Citizen of the Year Award. This is an opportunity for us to recognise and celebrate the outstanding individuals who make a real difference in our community. I encourage all of you to nominate someone who you believe deserves this honour.

Thank you."

### **219 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND MEMBER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12, the following question was received:-

(1) From Cllr R P Constable to the Deputy Leader, Cllr M Hoy:-

"Would the Executive Lead Member for Resources, Climate Change & Economy explain why the last Climate Emergency Committee meeting was held in the middle of the afternoon thereby excluding working Councillors and members of the public from attending."

The Deputy Leader, Cllr M Hoy responded as follows:-

"Thank you, Chairman and thank you, Cllr Constable.

Traditionally, formal Council meetings at this Council have largely taken place in the evenings. However, in this case, the Climate Emergency Committee is a Committee of the Executive, rather than a full Council Committee and although, not commonly, they have in the past, along with Working Groups, taken place during the day.

In addition, I felt that given the current climate emergency, it was important that the Committee met as a matter of urgency, as the afternoon slot was the only one available within the time frame.

As the meetings are accessible through the livestream and subsequent recordings held on YouTube, and I believe that Committee had over 40 views, members of the public and Councillors have had good opportunity to see the Committee in action.

Future meetings are likely to alternate between evenings and daytimes."

Cllr R P Constable asked a supplementary question whether assurance could be given by the Deputy Leader that future meetings of the Climate Emergency Committee would take place in the evening.

The Deputy Leader, Cllr M Hoy, responded that future meetings of the Committee would be allocated in accordance with available resources.

### **220 EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN THE PERIOD 22 AUGUST TO 4 OCTOBER**

Council received the Minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between the period 22 August to 4 October and these Minutes were noted.

### **221 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL**

#### **(1) Report of the Climate Emergency Committee – Climate Emergency Progress Report**

Council received the report of the Climate Emergency Committee providing an update report on the work of the Committee.

A query was raised in relation to the 31 actions identified as listed on paragraph 3.4 on page 7.1.4 of the report, noting that 9 actions had progressed, 9 had not progressed and that no account was given for the 13 that made up the total number of 31 actions.

In response, the Executive Lead Member for Resources, Climate Change & Economy clarified that within the Sustainability Strategy on page 7.1.9 of the report, the classification of identified cases was assessed against the RAG rating. Members also noted that the outstanding 13 actions against which there was no update, had not yet begun.

A Member raised a question relating to paragraph 5.1 on page 7.1.7 of the report and the use of hydrogenated vegetable oils (HVO) requiring no conversion work to diesel engine vehicles, noting that HVO could be mixed in any proportion with ordinary diesel, and further querying why it was predicted that it would take until 2024 for the Council to begin implementing the use of HVO in the diesel fleets.

The Lead Member responded that the Council was constrained by the budget for this Municipal Year to be able to fund the HVO initiative earlier than 2024; however, should funds be made available prior to 2024, upon the agreement of Full Council, the initiative could be implemented earlier.

An update was sought relating to RDC Members visiting Parish Councils to investigate possible joint projects.

In response, Members noted that a number of Parish Councils had been contacted who had declared climate emergencies, including Rayleigh Town Council, Hullbridge Parish Council and Hawkwell Parish Council. Members were assured that further talks with Parish Councils would take place.

Members further noted that a full plan setting out the Council's path to Carbon Net Zero, including the Committee's targets within the scorecard, would be brought back to Full Council on 14 December 2023.

Officers advised Members that the existing fleet could use HVO; however, the purchase of the HVO could not be obtained from standard pumps. It was not until recently that the Council's fuel depot at South Street, Rochford, was reinstalled meaning that this option could now be considered; however, Members noted it would come at a premium of 15%. Members also noted that a business case would be brought forward comparing the cost ratio between HVO and existing arrangements, in line with Central Government guidance.

Officers further added that the Council began a project with ASELA seeking to begin bulk purchasing for all six local authorities that could bring the 15% premium down to 2/3%. At this moment in time, data was being collated from each of the six areas in South Essex with an aim for the Council to achieve bulk savings, alleviating pressure of the financial budget constraints.

The Lead Member advised Members that the Climate Emergency Committee would be considering HVO in the coming months.

### **Resolved**

That Council notes the contents of the report.

## **222 UPDATE ON THE WORK OF THE PLANNING POLICY COMMITTEE**

Council received the report of the Director, Place providing a brief update on the recent work programme of the Planning Policy Committee.

Members congratulated the Executive Lead Member for Strategic Planning, Cllr J E Cripps, for the work carried out by the Planning Policy Committee.

A question was asked whether the current administration was committed to looking at brownfield sites within the District, as a priority, in the next Local Plan.

In response, the Lead Member advised that the Council was bound by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that stated that brownfield sites needed to be optimised, which the Council remained committed to.

A Member referred to paragraph 1.16 on page 8.4 of the report and questioned whether the Leader, alongside the Council's Planning officers, would undertake contacting all interested parties that could have ownership interests with brownfield and contaminated sites to invite them to a free briefing session in order to establish if their sites could be brought forward for development.

The Lead Member responded that it was agreed during the first meeting of the Committee this Municipal Year, this would be revisited in detail. As a result, a report was produced by the Council's Planning Officers on brownfield sites that was brought back to Committee in the subsequent meeting. The Lead Member

added that the criteria for brownfield sites was complex; however, added that the Committee was committed to optimising the sites.

A reference was made to paragraph 1.15 on page 8.4 of the report that the brownfield register with an interactive map would be published on the Council's website and officers confirmed that this had been actioned.

### **Resolved**

That Council notes the contents of the report.

## **223 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE**

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

"Members, I am pleased to give you a report on the work of the Executive:-

Reports for the Executive on 16 November 2023:-

- The New Skateboard Facilities
- Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring
- Recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Reports for Full Council on 14 December 2023:-

- Officer Report on the Annual Reviews of Exempt Items
- 2024/2025 Review of Fees and Charges

Lead Members have held the fact finding discussions with Officers on the following:-

- 3G Pitches
- The next round of grand funding under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Business Improvement District opportunities
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans – unlocking Government and Active Travel England Funding with Essex County Council

Consultations:-

- New Leisure Contract with residents and SLC Consultants with stakeholders
- Budget Survey
- Members' Budget Workshop

The meeting closed at 8.53 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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

UNCONFIRMED