

## Extraordinary Council – 14 February 2017

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Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **14 February 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston

Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs I Cassar	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr R Milne
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr T E Mountain
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr Mrs T R Hughes	Cllr M J Webb
Cllr G J Ioannou	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	

Members stood in silence in memory of former District Council Chairman, Richard Amner, who had recently passed away.

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J C Burton, Mrs L A Butcher, N L Cooper, E O K Mason and C M Stanley.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Scrutton	- Managing Director
N Khan	- Executive Director
J Bostock	- Assistant Director, Democratic Services
M Harwood-White	- Assistant Director, Commercial Services
M Hotten	- Assistant Director, Environmental Services
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal Services
R Manning	- Section 151 Officer
L Moss	- Assistant Director, Community and Housing Services
M Thomas	- Assistant Director, Planning and Regeneration Services
D Tribe	- Assistant Director, Customer, Revenues and Benefits Services
M Petley	- Principal Finance Officer
E Turner	- Accountant
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Officer

### 24 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 – 2021/22

Council considered the report of the Section 151 Officer on approving the integrated five year medium term financial strategy starting in 2017/18.

The Section 151 Officer emphasised that the budget presented to Council was one that balanced service expenditure against available resources, while recognising increasing financial pressures on Council finances, including for example the financial burden to the Council of homelessness. Funding had been allocated to fund new staff posts needed to bolster existing front line services and create capacity to generate new income streams with a target for many of these posts to become self-financing within three years.

He also drew particular attention to the fact that capital funding would primarily be used for maintenance; there was no major capital investment included within the proposed budget for 2017/18. Future capital projects would potentially come forward via the Investment Board. He further stressed that anticipated New Homes Bonus changes would reduce the Council's financial settlement by around £186,000, although this would only impact on the level of funding to the transformation reserves, rather than service budgets. The budget proposed an increase in Rochford District Council Tax for 2017/18 of 1.95%.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Section 151 Officer and his finance team, as well as Members, for all their hard work on producing a balanced budget for 2017/18. The proposed increase in Rochford District Council Tax would equate to a rise of 8p per band D property. Work on the draft budget had been innovative, however the Council would seek to keep Council Tax rises down in future, as far as practicable. In 2017/18 the Council would continue to provide necessary services and work with partners to address issues, such as homelessness. He commended the draft budget.

The Leader of the Green and Rochford District Residents Group endorsed the fact that the recommendations within the report were limited to 2017/18, given the longer term financial uncertainty. He expressed disappointment with the increasing reduction in New Homes Bonus funding for Local Authorities, which could result in this Authority being forced to increase its borrowing in the future. He emphasised that he did not think it appropriate for Town and Parish Councils to be put under pressure to take on responsibility for public toilets and queried whether discretionary relief would be available to any third tier Authorities who took these on in the future. He remarked that it was inevitable that the Homelessness Reduction Bill would place an increased financial burden on the Council in the next financial year. In conclusion he endorsed the proposed rise in Rochford District Council Tax for 2017/18 of 1.95%, as otherwise more of the Council's reserves would be needed to fund the Bill.

The Section 151 Officer, responding to a Member question relating to paragraph 9.3 on page 3.21 of the report in respect of decreased fees/charges for park home sites, advised that the 2016/17 fees and charges were set based on estimates of work that was needed on these sites. The decrease was as a result of estimated costs being replaced with the actual costs of works.

The Leader of the UKIP Group was disappointed that the Government was decreasing funding to Local Authorities and commented on the fact that this Council was fortunate not to have responsibility for social care.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat endorsed the proposed increase in Rochford District Council Tax for 2017/18 in the context of the Government's continued commitment to austerity measures and failure to keep promises in respect of the New Homes Bonus.

Another Member commented that the budget did not go far enough in respect of air quality monitoring; there were some very congested areas of the District, such as the centres of Hockley and Hullbridge, as well as Rawreth Lane. He also made reference to the increased car parking costs for some staff as a result of taxation in respect of the salary sacrifice scheme and stated that there would be merit in looking to assist staff on the lowest 40% salaries next year.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance commended the budget as a valid one that would allow the Council to go forward and bring forward innovative projects in future.

Cllr T G Cutmore moved a Motion relating to the recommendations detailed in paragraph 2 of the officer report, which was seconded by Cllr S P Smith and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the net revenue budget requirement be set at £9.859 million for 2017/18.
- (2) That the capital programme 2017/18 and the proposed methods of financing the capital expenditure be approved.
- (3) That the Section 151 Officer be authorised to adjust capital project budgets in 2017/18 throughout the capital programme after the 2016/17 accounts are closed and the amounts of slippage and budget carry forward required are known.
- (4) That it be noted that the proposed Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes (excluding Parish and Town Councils and precepts) for 2017/18 is £6.702 million.

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- (5) That the draft equivalent Band D tax base for the purpose of determining the Council Tax charge be 30,855 properties.

On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken on the recommendation that Rochford District Council Tax increased by 1.95% for 2017/18 as follows:-

For (34) Cllrs C I Black, M R Carter, Mrs I Cassar, T G Cutmore, R R Dray, D S Efde, A H Eves, Mrs J R Gooding, J D Griffin, B T Hazlewood, N J Hookway, Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy, Mrs T R Hughes, G J Ioannou, M J Lucas-Gill, Mrs J R Lumley, Mrs C M Mason, J R F Mason, D Merrick, R Milne, T E Mountain, J E Newport, R A Oatham, Mrs C E Roe, Mrs L Shaw, S P Smith, D J Sperring, M J Steptoe, I H Ward, M J Webb, Mrs C A Weston, A L Williams and S A Wilson.

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

The motion was declared carried and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (6) That the increase in Rochford District Council Tax for 2017/18 be 1.95%.

It was further **Resolved**

- (7) That the schedule of fees and charges for 2017/18 set out at appendix 4 to the officer report be approved.
- (8) That the General Balance be set at £1.184 million as at 1 April 2017 after the proposed drawdown of £0.032 million.
- (9) That the earmarked reserves be set as per the table in section 13.17 of the officer report.
- (10) That the 2016/17-2017/18 prudential indicators and limits, together with updated limits for 2017/18 be noted.
- (11) That the statement on the robustness of the estimates and reserves be noted.
- (12) That the summary of the Equality Impact Assessment, as set out in section 11 of the officer report be noted. (S151O)

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(Note: Cllr Mrs C M Mason wished it to be recorded that she had voted against (1) above and Cllrs Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy and S A Wilson wished it to be recorded that they had voted against (7) above).

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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