

## **Council – 2 November 2011**

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Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **2 November 2011** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S P Smith  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs J A Mockford

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr T E Mountain
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr R D Pointer
Cllr Mrs A V Hale	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr M Maddocks	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr Mrs C M Mason	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs H L A Glynn, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, A C Priest and Mrs C A Weston

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	–	Chief Executive
A Bugeja	–	Head of Legal, Estates & Member Services
Y Woodward	–	Head of Finance
S Scutton	–	Head of Planning & Transportation
J Bostock	–	Member Services Manager

### **248 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2011 and the extraordinary meeting held on 31 August 2011 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

### **249 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman welcomed Cllr John Gili-Ross, Vice-Chairman of the Essex Association of Local Councils, who was in attendance for the award to Rayleigh Town Council for achieving re-accreditation of Quality Parish Status. The award was received by Cllr Peggy Corbett, Chairman of the Town Council, and Kerry Cumberland, Town Council Clerk.

The Chairman had attended a variety of events on behalf of the Council since the last meeting. Highlights had included the Veterans afternoon show. A feature of events was compliments received from residents about the work of the Council.

### 250 MEMBER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12.2, questions had been received as follows:-

#### (a) From Cllr Mrs D Hoy of the Leader of the Council

“Further to the question I asked at the meeting in June and the full answer I received could you please advise me:-

- (1) Of the income received for advertising within Rochford District Matters, how much is generated from Rochford District Council itself?
- (2) In the answer given in June it was stated that a measure of Rochford Districts Matters circulation was through the feedback received by the Council to articles and notices in it. For the record, how many communications (split by letters, emails and phone calls) were received from the public directly in relation to items in Rochford District Matters over the last financial year?”

The Leader, Cllr T G Cutmore, responded as follows:-

- “(1) In 2010/11 £26,400 of income was received. Of this £6,000 was internally generated by various departments within the Council. The remaining 77% was raised externally.
- (2) The ability to fully collate this information would require all officers across all sections and all service areas to ask at the end of every telephone call, email and letter whether the communication had emanated from the publication of Rochford District Matters. Therefore, we don't systematically collect this information as such.

However, as an example of the impact of Rochford District Matters, I would refer Members to the Rochford Art Trail. On the first day of the Trail on October 22, of the estimated 500 people who visited the town on the opening weekend, approximately 150 had the cut out map from the Autumn 2011 Rochford District Matters to guide them around.

Another example relates to weddings at the Windmill. The story advertising twenty five per cent off weddings at Rayleigh Windmill that was in the Rochford District Matters Autumn 2011 edition generated enquiries and helped this important source of income for the Council.

Also, as a result of our partner, Rochford Housing Association, publicising a grant for local groups in the Rochford District Matters

Autumn 2011 edition, they have reported a big increase in the number of applications received.

I will reiterate what I said a few months ago, Rochford District Matters helps the Council in a number of ways and readers are not usually backwards in coming forward when they want to make a point.”

**(b) From Cllr M Hoy of the Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-being, Health and Community Safety**

“With regard to the Ageing Population Strategy 2011-14:-

- (1) On page 15 the Strategy talks about ‘Support the financial security of older people’.

Current provision includes ‘Signpost those who cannot pay their bills to the Citizens Advice Bureau and similar organisations’.

The objectives for Action includes ‘Continue to support financial and income advice services, such as the Citizens Advice Bureau’.

How do you reconcile the pointing of people towards the Citizens Advice Bureau for help whilst at the same time cutting its funding by a third?

- (2) On page 16 the Strategy talks about ‘Supporting Access to mainstream services and information for older people’.

Current provision includes ‘Supporting Wyvern Community Transport Scheme’.

The objectives for Action includes ‘Continue to support community transport within the District’.

How do you reconcile this with the fact that Wyvern Community Transport received no grant for the current year, despite a specific request for £5,000, and in fact the reason given was ...‘it received funding from other sources’?”

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr Mrs J E McPherson, responded as follows:-

- “(1) Following the Council's reduction in grant from central government, the amount allocated to the voluntary sector grants pot in 2011/12 was reduced to £90,000. A cross party Member advisory group assigned the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) £60,000 of this pot – this large proportion of the total available funding is clearly in recognition of the CAB 's valuable work in our community. This amounted to a £24,700 reduction based on the grant allocated to the CAB in 2010/11, which is a lesser reduction than the 'third' quoted in this question. The

remaining funds from the voluntary grants pot were distributed to other voluntary groups providing services in the District. We continue to support the CAB. The CAB's accommodation costs are met by the Council along with allocation of parking spaces. These costs amount to approximately £35,500.

The support provided by the Council is not only financial:-

- the CAB has access to the GRANTnet funding database to which the Council subscribes.
  - a regular slot in Rochford District Matters is offered to promote its services/initiatives.
  - volunteering opportunities from the CAB have been offered through Council's staff volunteering scheme and assistance with the CAB's printing demands has been provided.
  - the CAB meets on a regular basis with officers, the Leader Cllr Cutmore and myself as Portfolio Holder for Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care and Well-Being, Health and Community Safety to offer support and look at other avenues of funding or income generating initiatives. The CAB also maintains a good working relationship with the Council's Revenues and Benefits department, sharing intelligence and good practice.
- (2) Wyvern Community Transport (WCT) is an excellent example of a voluntary group that has developed a strong sustainable approach to delivering their service. They have developed alternative income streams so they are not solely reliable on grants. This has included:-
- Winning tenders to deliver services on a contract basis.
  - Income from membership fees.
  - Expanding their service across the Castlepoint District.
  - Income from services they sell such as Midas and PATS training.

WCT clearly demonstrated that they were in a better situation than some of the other applications received last year and the grants panel rightly recognised this. Making decisions on allocating funding to voluntary groups from the £90,000 pot in 2011/12 was not easy and, yes, the fact that this group were in a better position to obtain funding from other sources was taken into account. Rochford District Council continues to provide additional support through the GRANTnet service and the offer of volunteers through the District Council staff

volunteering scheme. The 2012/13 grants round is now open and WCT has been invited to submit an application.”

The Portfolio Holder invited Cllr M Hoy to join the Member Advisory Group that was giving consideration to the award of grants for 2012/13.

By way of supplementary question, Cllr M Hoy asked if the grants pot for 2012/13 would be the same as that for 2011/12.

It was indicated that the 2012/13 grants pot would be the subject of consideration at the Full Council meeting scheduled for 13 December 2011.

### **251 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Council received the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between the period 12 July and 25 October 2011.

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

#### **(1) Core Strategy**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation, Cllr K H Hudson, was pleased to report that the Planning Inspectorate had found that Rochford District Council's Core Strategy complied with legal requirements and was sound.

The Portfolio Holder extended thanks and praise to both Members and officers for the extensive work and contributions that had been required to reach this point. It was rewarding to know that the District was no longer at risk from unlimited predatory planning applications.

Reference was made to the improvements to quality of life within the District that would emanate from aspects of the Core Strategy relating to the location and types of housing, employment development, strategic infrastructure and Town Centre enhancements. It was pleasing that uncertainty was over.

The Strategy would be brought before the meeting of Full Council scheduled for 13 December 2011 for formal adoption.

### **253 REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS**

Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15(f) Council received and noted a report on decisions that had been taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in/referral.

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

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

“Following a relatively short summer recess, it has certainly been a busy autumn. Following the Extraordinary Council meeting at the end of August when we agreed the way forward in connection with the Core Strategy, as Councillor Hudson has updated under item 8, we have now received the Inspector’s report which will be available from tomorrow morning.

The autumn is a time when we start to really focus on next year’s budget. As we found with this year’s budget, to get to a balanced budget for next year will present some difficult choices. I thought we had a useful session last evening, when Yvonne Woodward, our Head of Finance, provided a lot of the background information which we will need to take into account. The next Member session will be the Away Day on 26 November. I would urge as many Members as possible to make that date.

This autumn has also seen a range of events taking place. In mid September we had the Rayleigh Arts Festival in and around Rayleigh Town Centre. The highlight on the Saturday was an appearance from Rastamouse, who packed them in at the Mill. I hadn’t heard of Rastamouse before but he is apparently the latest big thing on CBeebies. My children are now much older, so things like that pass me by!! I know from feedback received that many people who came along enjoyed themselves and it seems that the attendance figures for the Mill on the Saturday were around 1500, which can’t be bad.

Also in September we had a Government Minister, Teresa Villiers, visit the airport and “officially” open the new train station; she followed in the footsteps of Bob Neill, another Government Minister, who “officially” opened the new control tower in July. I understand that the new terminal is now being handed over to the Airport by the contractors and it is anticipated that it will be “officially” opened in the New Year.

In September we organised a Business Breakfast at the Mill for Rochford businesses, focussing on the airport and how it’s now developing. Alastair Welch, Stobart’s Airport M.D, gave a presentation to 130 plus local businesses, which shows how much local interest there is. Certainly, the atmosphere and the feedback at the breakfast was very positive and supportive of the airport and its future.

Now that all the legal challenges against the extended airport runway have been resolved, we have recommenced work with Southend Borough Council on the Joint Area Action Plan for the airport and its environs. I note that there was some coverage around this in the local newspaper last week. However, the intention is to progress to a pre-submission draft for consultation early in the new year.

Last month we had the Rochford District Sports Awards, which were held at the Mill. I didn’t attend the event, but I know from colleagues who did attend that it was extremely well supported. Also, that they were amazed at the level of sporting talent that exists in the District and the huge level of commitment that really comes out at such events.

Last week we had the Rochford Arts Trail, which is now in its third year. The event is supported by 65 artists showcasing in 34 shops, cafes and public spaces around the town, which is a tremendous achievement when you remember that, in year one, there were only 15 artists. Early feedback indicates that the week was not only of benefit to the artists, with a number of works sold, but also helped to increase visitor numbers and spend in the town.

All the activities listed above help illustrate the extent of the work that the Council does and the pivotal role that we play in the community; important elements that we should not lose sight of as we go through our budget process.

Since my last Leader's report to the Council in July, the Executive has met on three occasions; one of them in a private and confidential session to agree the way forward on the ICT contract.

I am pleased to report that it now looks like all four authorities who participated in the ICT contracting process, that is ourselves, Castle Point, Braintree and Colchester, will all sign up with the same service provider. I hope we will all be in a position to make a joint formal announcement on this within the next couple of weeks. It will certainly be one of the first such contracts in the region and perhaps an indication of the way forward in terms of shared service provision.

The other two Executive meetings have focussed on such matters as performance updates, responding to Government consultations on Council Tax and Business Rates, agreeing a Travel Plan for the Council, looking at Air Quality Management in Rayleigh Town centre and its environs, and agreeing the process in respect of Voluntary Sector Grants for 2012-13, which will mean grant decisions will have to be made in December if we are to comply with new Government guidance. We have also approved an Ageing Population Strategy and Action Plan, the subject of a Member question earlier this evening, and looked at the County Council's Revised Draft Corporate Vision for Essex.

Since the last Council meeting, my colleagues on the Executive have considered such matters as the Olympic Torch Relay Route, the Food Safety and the Health and Safety Service Plans; our Homelessness Strategy and consultation with the Post Office.

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

Responding to a question on whether the Planning Inspector's decision on the Core Strategy would free up planning officer time for other areas, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Transportation advised that activity associated with Core Strategy matters was unlikely to reduce. There was a need for extensive

work on preferred allocations documentation and a request from the Inspector that the Strategy be the subject of review.

### **255 2013 REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCIES**

Council considered the report of the Head of Information & Customer Services on initial proposals from the Boundary Commission for England for new Parliamentary constituencies boundaries.

The Leader referred Members to counter proposals to those of the Boundary Commission developed by the Conservative Party in relation to the Eastern region. In terms of local geography, these placed the District's Hockley Central, Hockley North, Hockley West and Hullbridge Wards in a Rayleigh and Wickford Constituency and included the Southend-on-Sea Borough Wards of Milton and St. Luke's in a Rochford and Southend East Constituency. In terms of District residents, the counter proposals would minimise changes to current Member of Parliament arrangements. For the Eastern region overall, the counter proposals would mean that 71,141 fewer electors would be moved from their existing constituencies and that community links would be maintained where possible.

Observations made during discussion included that:-

- Whatever final conclusions are reached, it was always likely that there would be conflicting views when proposals relating to two constituencies are considered.
- Advances in information technology in recent years had provided residents with additional means of communicating with politicians other than just face-to-face.
- Existing postcode arrangements can confuse.
- In terms of the counter proposal for a Rochford and Southend East Constituency it could be that the nature of the Milton and St. Luke's Wards differed from that of other Wards and that the proposal was not as harmonious as that suggested by the Boundary Commission.

On a show of hands it was:-

### **Resolved**

That, at this stage, the Boundary Commission be advised that support is given to the counter proposals relating to the District developed by the Conservative Party in relation to the Eastern Region. (HICS)

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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