

Council – 29 October 2002

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **29 October 2002** when there were present:

Cllr R S Allen (Chairman)
Cllr R A Amner (Vice-Chairman)

Mrs L Barber	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs M D McCarthy
Cllr Mrs R Brown	Cllr G A Mockford
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr C R Morgan
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr R G S Choppen	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr D F Flack	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr K A Gibbs	Cllr Mrs M A Starke
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr A J Humphries	Cllr Mrs M S Vince
Cllr C A Hungate	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr Mrs L Hungate	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr C C Langlands	Cllr Mrs M A Weir
Cllr T Livings	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins
Cllr Mrs E Marlow	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs T E Goodwin, C J Lumley and Mrs J R Lumley.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren – Chief Executive
J Honey – Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration)
R Crofts – Corporate Director (Finance and External Services)
S Fowler – Head of Administrative and Member Services
J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

519 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 July 2002 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

520 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM CHAIRMAN

Prior to formal presentations/announcements, the Chairman and Group Leaders each wished to pay tribute to former Councillor P D Stebbing, who had recently died. During the tributes, particular reference was made to the integrity, wit and honour which had been defining aspects of Councillor Stebbing's personality.

The Chairman was pleased to receive the presentation of a gift from Michelle Farrant and Gwin Morgan of the Essex Wildlife Trust, an acknowledgement of the Council having been a Corporate Member of the Trust over a ten year period.

In referring to attendance at recent events, the Chairman wished to extend thanks for all the assistance and support given by his Vice Chairman. Particular reference was made to the success of the most recent charity fund-raising night and to the valuable contribution made by Councillors in attendance.

521 ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chief Executive announced that, on the morning of 28 October, travellers had moved on to Council land at the Freight House, Rochford. The Head of Legal Services had arranged an expedited hearing for a Possession Order to be heard in the County Court on the morning of Wednesday 30 October.

During debate on the making of appropriate representations to Government, reference was made to the high level of costs which could often be associated with damage to occupied land, for which there was no redress. Reference was also made to previous work undertaken by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and the District Council aimed at identifying a permanent travellers site and to the potential value of this being revisited in the future.

Resolved

- (1) That Rochford District Council makes representations to the Government to strengthen the law to provide redress for the damage, distress, fly tipping and general vandalism that occurs when sites are occupied by certain sections of the travelling community.
- (2) That the Government be requested to seek to introduce legislation, as a matter of priority, to permit landowners repossession of their land with the minimum of expense and delay when occupied by residential trespassers. (HHHCC)

522 COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS

Council received the Minutes of Committees and considered Committee reports as follows:-

Committee	Date	Minute Number
(1) Planning Services	29 August 2002	384-388
(2) Community Services	3 September 2002	389-394
(3) Environmental Services	5 September 2002	395-406
(4) Policy & Finance	10 September 2002	407-422
(5) Community Overview & Scrutiny	17 September 2002	423-430
(6) Environment Overview & Scrutiny	19 September 2002	431-439

Public Speaking at the Planning Services Committee (Minute 435/02)

Council considered the report of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee on public speaking at the Planning Services Committee.

A motion that public speaking be introduced at Planning meetings on the basis of the proposals reported to the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee was moved by Councillor C I Black and seconded by Councillor Mrs M A Weir.

In favour of the motion, reference was made to its fit with the advice of the Audit Commission and the practice of some other Councils, including the County. Concerns which had been raised about a public speaking facility should not be seen as so significant as to prevent its introduction. Given that Planning Services Committee Members made decisions based on evidence available at meetings, there should be an opportunity for Members of the public with genuine concerns to speak. It would be incorrect to assume that the public are unable to make comment based on planning grounds. The introduction of speaking would also bring Planning Services more in line with other Council Committees for which there is provision for public questions. It was observed that the speed at which a high level of business had been transacted at recent planning meetings indicated that there was room to include public speaking without adversely impacting on business throughput.

Against the motion, reference was made to the nature of the planning decision making process which meant that decisions had to be made in accordance with prevailing planning law, not on the basis of the emotions of those involved. A public speaking facility may lead to people investing time and energy to contributing, only to find that no account can be taken of their views. Reference was also made to the

possibility that a public speaking facility could be used by some as an opportunity for self publicity. It was noted that there remained a facility within the Council's planning protocol for Parish Councils to speak at meetings of the Planning Services Committee and observed that the public could communicate views to the Parishes. The public could also lobby Members of the Planning Services Committee prior to meetings. Statistically, the Council's Planning Service could be seen as efficient. The introduction of public speaking may have an adverse impact in terms of the maintenance of effective business throughput.

The motion was lost on a show of hands.

Note: Councillors C I Black, D F Flack, C R Morgan, Mrs M S Vince and Mrs M A Weir each wished it to be recorded that they had voted in favour of the motion.

Committee	Date	Minute Number
(7) Finance & Procedures Overview and Scrutiny	24 September 2002	440-446
(8) Planning Services	26 September 2002	447-451
(9) Community Services	1 October 2002	452-462
(10) Environmental Services	2 October 2002	463-469
(11) Policy & Finance	3 October 2002	470-483
(12) Community Over & Scrutiny	15 October 2002	484-489
(13) Environment Overview & Scrutiny	17 October 2002	490-500
(14) Finance Procedures Overview and Scrutiny	22 October 2002	501-511

IEG 2002 Statement (Minute 507/02)

Council considered the report of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee on submission of the IEG Statement to the office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

Council endorsed the proposed statement. Responding to a Member question relating to the Overview and Scrutiny/Call-in Process Officers advised that:-

- The recent Overview and Scrutiny Member Training sessions had covered the nature and extent of both Overview and Scrutiny (including Call-in) in some detail.

- It was intended to distribute a survey to all Members early in the New Year to ascertain views on the working of the new political structure so that a report can be submitted to Full Council prior to the next Municipal Year.
- The Standards Committee was charged with responsibility for determining competency training for Councillors.
- The Council's Monitoring Officer would be reporting to a future meeting of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee on arrangements for dealing with call-in.

Resolved

That the IEG Statement be approved for submission to the office of the Deputy Prime Minister. (CDLP&A)

Committee	Date	Minute Number
(15) Planning Services	23 October 2002	512-518

523 MOTION ON NOTICE

The Proper Officer reported that, pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12, the following Motion had been received from Councillors P F A Webster; T G Cutmore; R A Amner; Mrs L Barber; Mrs R Brown; R G S Choppen; K A Gibbs; T E Goodwin; J E Grey; A J Humphries; C A Hungate; Mrs L Hungate; C C Langlands; G A Mockford; P K Savill; S P Smith; M G B Starke; Mrs M J Webster and Mrs B J Wilkins:-

"Rochford District Council supports the campaign for the doorstep recycling Services to every home by 2010, with Central Government providing fully the resources for such schemes. Benefits would include jobs locally; reduced pressure for landfill sites and incinerators; benefits to the environment via further cuts in emissions of greenhouse gases and a reduction in the demand for raw materials, so encouraging sustainable and local waste management."

In presenting the motion, Councillor P F A Webster referred to financial estimates which indicated that, should the Council extend current recycling arrangements across the District, there would be a revenue cost of approximately £450,000 per annum and a capital cost of £300,000.

During debate it was recognised that, notwithstanding that all Members would be in favour of further developing recycling, there were different views on the associated mechanisms, particularly around funding.

It was observed that recycling was likely to increase where facilities are made available. The Council had already managed to make significant in-roads in recycling, both by its own activity through the recycling of paper and the introduction of kerbside collection rounds.

Some Members felt that local taxation was an appropriate funding mechanism and that, in terms of the total number of residents, financial estimates for scheme introduction across the District were not particularly significant. Costs should certainly reduce over time. Other Members commented that recycling should be seen from a national perspective and that effective change could only be achieved via Government direction and policy, particularly when market stimulation is appropriate, as is the case with the recycling of business packaging. Reference was made to the impact that increases in Council Tax could have on those faced with financial difficulties and to the different nature of Central Government taxation, which was means tested. Reference was also made to the Council's ongoing concern that recent increases in Council Tax could be directly associated with Government service directives, rather than increased Council costs.

On a requisition pursuant of Council Procedure Rule 16.4, a recorded vote was taken on the motion as follows:-

For(34): Councillors R S Allen, R A Amner, Mrs L Barber, C I Black, Mrs R Brown, P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, R T S Choppen; T G Cutmore; K A Gibbs, Mrs H L A Glynn, J E Grey, H A Humphries, C A Hungate, Mrs L Hungate, C C Langlands, C Livings, Mrs E Marlow, J R F Mason, Mrs M D McCarthy, G A Mockford, C R Morgan, R A Oatham, J M Pullen, C G Seagers, S P Smith, Mrs M A Starke, M G B Starke, J Thomass, Mrs M S Vince, Mrs M J Webster, P F A Webster, Mrs M A Weir, Mrs B J Wilkins

Against(0)

Abstentions(1): Councillor D F Flack

Resolved

That the Motion be agreed. (CD(F&ES))

524 THAMES GATEWAY – SOUTH ESSEX STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive on the development of the emerging Thames Gateway – South Essex

Strategic Framework, which would outline the vision and objectives for the Thames Gateway over the next 20 years.

In discussing progress on framework development, the following observations were made:-

- The comments in report paragraph 3.16 relating to environmental enhancement/heritage recognition and tackling key eyesores were particular worthy of support.
- It is important to be mindful that the Gateway project is the largest regeneration project in Europe. Whilst Rochford District may be on the geographical periphery, it is important to maximise the opportunities which will come with this.
- It was good news that monies had already been identified for the Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park. In terms of leisure/cultural development, there would be value in remaining mindful of the possibilities for identifying a further site or sites with the potential that had been offered by Blatches Farm.
- Whilst there were often differing views about the way forward, the London Southend Airport could be seen as a key element of strategy and should be prioritised as a short to medium term rather than medium to long term infrastructure scheme.
- It could be recognised that the Gateway Project had significant region-wide implications and that there was minimal publicly available information relating to some Government plans for rail/road/airport infrastructure. Given that there will always be vested interests looking for development opportunities, it would be important to ensure that the facility for input from democratic bodies was sufficient to enable control of the agenda where necessary, particularly for countryside preservation purposes.

Responding to Member questions, the Chief Executive confirmed that the Gateway Project presented both opportunities and problems. The strategy was a key opportunity to look 20 years ahead, with the next 12 months being a critical development stage. There was likely to be significant debate around housing, planning and transportation issues and the District would need to continue to ensure its views are heard. Members noted that there was particular concern that the Rochford outer-bypass route may be re-introduced within the context of the Gateway framework. Whilst improved access to areas was important, all options needed to be considered. The outcome of current deliberations on the Government's Airports Consultation document and other major transport infrastructure issues would no doubt influence the County's views on the Gateway Project.

Resolved

That progress made to date on the development of a Strategic Framework document for the Thames Gateway, South Essex area, be noted, and that the above observations be taken into account at the next Gateway Board Meeting when a draft framework document would be discussed. (CE)

525 STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Council considered the report of the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) on membership of the Standards Committee following the resignation of one of the two independent Members.

Resolved

- (1) That membership of the Standards Committee comprise:-
 - Five Members of the Council
 - One Parish Councillor who is not a District Councillor
 - Three Independent Members.

- (2) That the Council record its thanks to Mr Owen Richards for his voluntary service as an Independent member. (CD(LP&A))

The Meeting closed at 9.18pm

Chairman

Date