

## Council – 21 February 2017

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Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **21 February 2017** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston

Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr J C Burton	Cllr E O K 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 D S Efde	Cllr T E Mountain
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 C M Stanley
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr Mrs T R Hughes	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr G J Ioannou	Cllr M J Webb
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	Cllr S A Wilson

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

**Apologies** for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher, N L Cooper, R R Dray, A H Eves, J E Newport and R A Oatham.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

S Scrutton	- Managing Director
N Khan	- Executive Director
J Bostock	- Assistant Director, Democratic Services
R Manning	- Section 151 Officer
S Worthington	- Democratic Services Officer

### **25 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **26 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman announced that the Vice-Chairman was recovering well and hoping to be up and about again within the next few weeks.

The Chairman was presented with a copy of the Gideon's Bible by a representative from the Gideon's Society.

### 27 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council received the Minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between the period 26 November 2016 to 3 February 2017.

### 28 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

#### (1) Treasury Management Strategy Statement

The Chairman of the Review Committee presented the report of the Review Committee with recommendations relating to the treasury management strategy statement and annual investment strategy.

#### Resolved

- (1) That the treasury management strategy statement and annual investment strategy, including the investments instruments, indicators, limits and delegations contained within the report be noted.
- (2) That the capital expenditure forecasts be noted.
- (3) That the minimum revenue provision policy for 2017/18 be noted.
- (4) That the authorised limit for external debt, as set out in the report, be noted. (S151O)

### 29 REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS

Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny procedure 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.

### 30 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

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

“This is the fourth ordinary Council meeting for the 2016/17 Municipal Year since Annual Council and I would like to welcome all Members.

Since the meeting on 13 December matters that my colleagues and I on the Executive have been dealing with include:-

- A response to the London Mayor’s Consultation on a Draft Vision for the City;
- A response to Basildon Borough Council’s Consultation on New and Alternative Sites;

- A response to Southend Borough Council's 2016 Revised Proposed Submission Draft of the Southend Central Area Action Plan;
- A response to Essex County Council and Southend Borough Council's Main Modifications Consultation for Draft Waste Local Plan;
- Caravan Site Fee Policy & Licensing Fees.

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."

### 31 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2017/18

Council considered the report of the Section 151 Officer seeking authorisation on setting Council Tax for the year 2017/18 for the District Council and agreeing the full Council Tax for Rochford District, which included Essex County Council, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, Essex Fire Service and Town and Parish Council precepts.

The S151 Officer confirmed that the final Local Government Finance Settlement had now been received and had resulted in no changes to the figures contained within the report.

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:-

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

This is my thirteenth budget as Leader of this Conservative Administration. The budget pressures under which Local Government operates have intensified and this Authority continues to look closely at opportunities for savings and most importantly at how we can increase revenue. This is not only in response to cuts in levels of grant and spending power, but also to significant costs increases arising from demographic pressures.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG) funding will be 100% withdrawn from 2018/19. This follows historic cuts of 54% in 2016/17 from £1.241m being received in 2015/16. Worse still, there will be a £0.63m payment requirement by 2019/20. This means that Rochford District Council must take control of its financial position and become self sustaining by 2021. Along with the impact of demographic changes and inflation pressures, there will be a budget gap of around £2.1m by 2021. This must be met through savings plans, revenue growth and potential funding options.

Looking to the future, we have a business plan that sets the high level priorities that the Council will work towards in the next three years. Its themes give a focus on capital investment and provide a clear direction to inform the better use of Council resources to deliver priorities. Our priorities are to:-

- become financially self-sufficient;
- use early intervention to manage demand on our services;
- maximise our assets; and
- enable communities.

Despite the challenges faced, we have continued to deliver excellent services to our residents. Our achievements over the past year include:-

- Successfully setting up a new Local Authority Trading Company to help generate income and make us less reliant on Government funding. Green Gateway Trading Limited was set up in December 2016 and its subsidiary, Green Gateway Trading (GM) Limited, has just been awarded its first contract by an external organisation – it will be carrying out grounds maintenance works for Barling Magna Parish Council.
- Rochford's eighth Art Trail, delivered in partnership with local artists exhibiting a diverse and exciting selection of art, craft and design in the town's shops, cafés and businesses.
- Rayleigh Windmill has once again been accredited as a Quality Assured Visitor Attraction by Visit England. For the eighth year in a row the iconic building has secured the prestigious Visit England seal of approval.
- Our 13<sup>th</sup> annual Wild Woods Day, which took place on 4 June at Hockley Woods and attracted over 4,000 visitors who had a chance to try their hand at activities including axe throwing, bush craft, and tent building.
- Hosting a Parish and Town Council summit in January to enable closer working and focus on issues which affect all the Authorities.
- Continuing to provide local businesses with advice and support, including hosting various Business and Skills Summit events.
- Awarding grants totalling £35,000 to a range of community initiatives around the District.
- Receiving a public health grant of £26,500, the majority of which was allocated for health and wellbeing support in the community.
- For the sixth year, holding the 'Young Entrepreneurs' event in partnership with Enterprise in Education, when local schools took part in a special challenge to prove they had the skills to succeed in the world of work.
- Being one of just 28 national partnerships chosen to become one of the Government's network of homeless prevention 'trailblazers'. This has helped secure funding which will benefit some of the District's most vulnerable people.

- Being third in the country (out of more than 350 Authorities) for recycling – with a recycling rate of 66%.
- A £20 million funding boost from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership for a new business park, which will be located in the Rochford District.

As a responsible Council we will continue to look at areas where costs can be reduced or income generated. However, in 2017/18 there is a need to increase Council Tax by 1.95% to help fund the huge financial strain that the District is currently facing. This equates to an increase of 8p per household per week.

The proposal is to set Rochford District Council's Council Tax, for a Band D property, at £217.17 per year. The breakdown of annual Council Tax for a Band D property would be:-

Essex County Council	£1,163.70
Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex	£157.05
Essex Fire and Rescue Authority	£69.03
Average Town/Parish Councils	£44.39
Rochford District Council	£217.17

The total average Council Tax for a Band D property for 2017/18 would be £1651.34 - an increase of £47.34 (approximately 2.95%).

In conclusion, although these are still difficult financial times, Rochford District Council remains committed to providing excellent services to our residents and partners. With this in mind we will be doing all we can to deliver innovative and high quality services.

Chairman, I commend the Rochford District Council Tax for Members' approval.

Thank you Chairman."

The Leader of the Green and Rochford District Residents Group thanked the S151 Officer and his team for all their hard work. He noted that this Authority was getting closer to a £1 per week increase in the entire Council Tax charge (including Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority, Essex Police Crime Commissioner and Rochford District Council), although he did accept that this was currently being constrained. He stressed that it was his belief that it was inevitable in future that Council Tax would have to rise above the current Government cap and that the Government would have to re-consider the

capping issue. He also drew attention to the fact that although third tier Councils were not currently capped this could change in future if their precepts continued to rise. He also noted that the Council was the third in the country in respect of its level of recycling, however the cost of recycling was increasing; net costs were currently £1.4 million and had increased by around £200k this year. He confirmed his support of a rise in Council Tax for 2017/18 in the context of required expenditure on the Homelessness Reduction Bill.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group queried how the public health grant would be spent. The Portfolio Holder for Community advised that there was expenditure associated with projects coming forward from the Parishes, with £500 allocated for each Parish-based plan and the possibility of increased funding for any worthy projects. Officers confirmed that a detailed written response would be provided outside the meeting on public health grant spend.

The Leader of the UKIP Group emphasised the importance of making it clear to residents that the rise in District Council Tax was as a result of cuts in Central Government funding.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Council was in a reasonable financial position. Non domestic rates would be coming under the District Council, although it was as yet unknown whether this would be beneficial or detrimental. The airport was thriving, with a major new business park coming forward; Rochford District was a good place to live and to conduct business.

On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken on the report recommendations as follows:-

For (33) Cllrs C I Black, J C Burton, M R Carter, Mrs I Cassar, T G Cutmore, D S Efde, 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, E O K Mason, J R F Mason, D Merrick, R Milne, T E Mountain, Mrs C E Roe, Mrs L Shaw, S P Smith, D J Sperring, C M Stanley, 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**

- (1) That the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 (excluding Parish and Town precepts) be £6,700,702.

- (2) That the Council Tax requirement of the District Council, together with the Parish and Town Council's be £8,070,436.
- (3) That the basic amount of Council Tax (including Parish and Town Precepts) be £261.56 for the year. This being the Council Tax requirement £8,070,436 divided by the Council Tax base 30,855.2.
- (4) That the total of the sums payable into the general fund in respect of redistributed Business rates and Government grant, including New Homes Bonus, New Transition Grant and adjustments from the collection fund, be £3,158,043.
- (5) That the total of Parish and Town precepts included within the above be £1,369,734.
- (6) That the basic rate of Council Tax relating to the District Council without Parish and Town precepts be £217.17, which is a 1.95% increase.
- (7) That the total tax for both District and Parishes be as set out in the schedule set out in appendix B to the officer report. 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 relate.
- (8) That the sums given above for Band D but now shown in the particular valuations bands A-H be as set out in appendix C to the officer report.
- (9) That the precepts issued to the Council in respect of Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority and Police and Crime Commissioner for each valuation band A-H be as set out in appendix D to the officer report.
- (10) That the total Council Tax for the area for each valuation band A-H is as set out in appendix E to the officer report. These are the amounts set as Council Tax for the year 2017/18. (S151O)

The meeting closed at 8.08 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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