

## Extraordinary Council – 1 July 2014

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Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **1 July 2014** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Lumley  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn

Cllr C I Black	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr J C Burton	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr J H Gibson	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr T E Mountain
Cllr Mrs A V Hale	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr J Hayter	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr Mrs M H Spencer
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr J L Lawmon	Cllr Mrs C A Weston
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon and Mrs T J Capon.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

A Dave – Chief Executive  
A Bugeja – Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services  
S Scrutton – Head of Planning and Transportation  
L Bliss – Senior Corporate Communications Officer  
J Bostock – Member Services Manager

### **136 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Mrs J A Mockford declared an other pecuniary interest in the Blue Badge aspect of the off street parking order item by virtue of being a Blue Badge holder and left the meeting whilst that aspect was under consideration.

Cllr J R F Mason declared a non pecuniary interest in the item on the proposed modifications to the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan.

Cllr T E Mountain declared an other pecuniary interest in the Blue Badge aspect of the off street parking order item by virtue of his spouse being a Blue Badge holder and left the meeting whilst that aspect was under consideration.

Cllr Mrs C M Mason declared a non pecuniary Interest in the item on the proposed modifications to the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan.

### **137 PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE LONDON SOUTHEND AIRPORT AND ENVIRONS JOINT AREA ACTION PLAN**

The Portfolio Holder for Planning, Cllr K J Gordon, presented the report on amendments to the Joint Area Action Plan and the associated addendum produced in the light of comments by the Inspector prior to public consultation.

Specific reference was made to the employment possibilities that would flow from Plan adoption.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the proposed policy modifications to the Joint Area Action Plan document and amendments to the proposals map be approved.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, to approve any required changes to the implementation section of the Plan.
- (3) That public consultation be carried out on the proposed modifications prior to submitting these to the Inspector for consideration in the preparation of his final report. (HPT)

### **138 ROCHFORD OFF STREET PARKING ORDER**

The Portfolio Holder for Enterprise, Cllr M J Steptoe, presented the report on responses received to the consultation on the revised Parking Order.

With regard to Blue Badge holders the Leader of the Council, Cllr T G Cutmore, observed that report proposals accorded with guidance from the Department of Transport. It would be important to ensure that appropriate signage was in place clearly stating the position for Blue Badge holders.

The Leader of the UKIP Group, Cllr J Hayter, commented that an exception should remain for Blue Badge holders in receipt of the higher rate Disability Living Allowance. Department of Transport guidance only indicated that Authorities may be in breach of the Equalities Act 2010 if an exception is made, not that they will.

A motion that revisions to the tariff charge for Blue Badge holders be agreed on the basis of the introduction of a concession equal to the time paid for beyond that printed on the car parking ticket with a minimum concessionary extension of one hour was moved by Cllr M Hoy and seconded by Cllr Mrs D Hoy.

In favour of the motion, reference was made to the time that individuals with, say, walking difficulties often required when undertaking a shopping trip. There could be a need for a number of trips to and from a vehicle. Reference was also made to the significant levels of disability associated with eligibility for a Blue Badge and to the motion not being about the introduction of a free parking arrangement but the provision of a suitable time facility to reflect the needs of disabled persons.

Against the motion it was observed that a key issue for Blue Badge holders was the availability of parking places at appropriate locations. Any concession could be viewed as providing an element of free parking. The proposals appeared to be in line with the views of charities representing disabled transport groups.

The motion was lost on a show of hands.

A motion that the proposal for Blue Badge holders as set out in the report be accepted was moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr M J Steptoe. On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 17.4, a recorded vote was taken on the motion as follows:-

For (23): Cllrs T G Cutmore, R R Dray, Mrs H L A Glynn, K J Gordon, J D Griffin, Mrs A V Hale, B T Hazlewood, K H Hudson, J L Lawmon, Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, Mrs J R Lumley, M Maddocks, Mrs J E McPherson, D Merrick, Mrs C E Roe, C G Seagers, S P Smith, Mrs M H Spencer, D J Sperring, M J Steptoe, I H Ward, Mrs C A Weston and Mrs B J Wilkins.

Against (9): Cllrs C I Black, J C Burton, J H Gibson, J Hayter, N J Hookway, Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy, Mrs C M Mason, J R F Mason.

The motion was declared carried and it was:-

### **Resolved**

That the revisions to the tariff change for Blue Badge holders detailed in the report, and the introduction of a one hour concession beyond the expiry time printed on their ticket, be agreed. (HPT)

Motions that Saturday afternoon charging be not introduced at this time, that the Council increases parking charges in accordance with the proposals set out in the report and that the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise be provided with reports on a regular basis to determine whether there is a need to amend the Council's car park charges and operating conditions were moved by Cllr M J Steptoe and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore.

By way of explanation, Cllr M J Steptoe reminded Members that it had been agreed to introduce charges on Saturday afternoons in the Council's car parks as part of the budget setting for 2014/15. The income had been estimated at

between £62,500 and £65,000 and was considered to be essential if the Council was to avoid lowering standards of service.

There was an awareness of just how unpopular the introduction of car park charges on Saturday afternoons would be with residents and, especially, retail businesses.

With this subject falling in the realm of the Enterprise portfolio, Cllr M J Steptoe had encouraged officers to try and find an alternative method to help balance the books.

For 2013/14, the Government introduced the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, whereby the national Council Tax Benefit scheme was replaced by a scheme of council tax discounts set and administered by the local authority. The funding for the discounts was based on 90% of the cost of the benefit scheme and the scheme transferred all the financial risk for estimating and demand to the local authority. To manage the financial risk, a contingency budget of £100,000 was put into the 2013/14 budget and was reduced to £60,000 for 2014/15. The contingency budget was fully funded by the Government New Burdens Grant for 2014/15.

Following the closure of the 2013/14 accounts, which had demonstrated that the Council's forecasts were extremely accurate, and the continuing reduction in demand as unemployment reduces, it could be considered appropriate to remove the contingency as an expenditure item in the budget. This would result in a saving of £60,000 which could cover the lost income for not introducing Saturday afternoon charges.

With regard to the motion on not introducing Saturday afternoon parking charges at this time the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr C I Black, observed that, whilst this could be seen as good news, some Members did not think its introduction had been necessary in any event. There was a sense that parking charges were being seen as a 'cash cow'. Even the Chairman of M & Co had corresponded with Members setting out concern at the introduction of Saturday afternoon charges in Rayleigh.

The Leader of the Green and Rochford District Residents Group, Cllr J R F Mason, referred to paper work considered by the Council at its meeting on 28 January 2014, which identified a figure of £500.000 in the General Fund reserve by 2019/20 on the basis of it being prudent to build up balances to provide resilience against further, more severe cuts. Such a reserve could be viewed as too prudent given that, at this point in time, there was no evidence that the Council would be facing more, increased austerity requirements. In that context a premise around needing to increase car park charges was flawed. Whilst the maintenance of Saturday afternoon charging was a positive, arguably there should be no increase to any of the other tariffs without appropriate evidence. Reference was made to a BBC programme identifying that 54% of people are using their cars less as a result of increases in parking charges. If this applied to the Rochford District then deciding on a tariff increase could be seen as premature.

A Member referred to an understanding that, since the question of tariff increases had last been considered by the Council, the now Portfolio Holder for Planning had managed to lever monies from the County Council in relation to verge cutting. The risk implications element of the report only focused on Saturday afternoon charging.

Reference was made to the fact that Saturday afternoon charging had originally been introduced as a special arrangement when the Authority was cash rich on the basis that the arrangement could be changed if the financial position changed. It was also observed that:-

- Retailers had made it clear to some Members that the Saturday afternoon charging issue affected business.
- Whilst Rayleigh car park usage may be high on Saturday mornings, some of this could be associated with parents delivering and collecting children to football matches and shopping in the interim.
- Inclusion of the proviso 'at this time' in the motion was of concern.

The Leader of the UKIP Group, Cllr J Hayter, referred to the importance of preserving front line services, one of which could be seen as car parking. There had been much media interest in this subject and concerns from council tax and business rate payers that increased charges could impact on employers and employees. It was notably cheaper to park for the purpose of shopping in the facilities of neighbouring Authorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Cllr S P Smith, referred to the extensive and careful nature of the Council's budget process. The Council ran a number of services, all of which had implications for the livelihoods of residents. It was important to ensure that the Council was both well run and financed and the term 'cash cow' was not appropriate. Some information now available was not available at the time of budget setting.

A Member observed that the Council was three months into the financial year without having raised the monies that had been felt appropriate through Saturday afternoon charging. Members should be mindful that all car parks would be affected, not just those in Rayleigh. In that the overall daily rate may stay the same, increases are more likely to impact on shoppers than employees.

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

For (22): Cllrs T G Cutmore, R R Dray, Mrs H L A Glynn, J D Griffin, B T Hazlewood, K H Hudson, J L Lawmon, Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, Mrs J R Lumley, M Maddocks, Mrs J E McPherson, D Merrick, Mrs J A Mockford, Mrs C E Roe, C G Seagers, S P Smith, Mrs M H Spencer, D J Sperring, M J Steptoe, I H Ward, Mrs C A Weston and Mrs B J Wilkins.

Against (10): Cllrs C I Black, J C Burton, J H Gibson, J Hayter,  
N J Hookway, Mrs D Hoy, M Hoy, Mrs C M Mason,  
J R F Mason and T E Mountain.

Abstain (2): Cllrs K J Gordon and Mrs A V Hale.

The motion was declared carried. The two other motions were carried on a show of hands and it was:-

### **Resolved**

- (1) That Saturday afternoon charging in the Council's car parks be not adopted at this time.
- (2) That the remaining proposed changes to the Parking Order set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report, including the tariff revisions and adjustments to the charging period in Old Ship Lane, Rochford, be agreed.
- (3) That the Portfolio Holder for Enterprise be provided with a comprehensive report on a rolling six month basis in order to be able to determine whether there is a need to amend Council car park charges and operating conditions. (HPT)

**(Note:** Cllr K J Gordon wished it to be recorded that he was against the above decisions, which could be considered as interrelated.)

The meeting closed at 8.29pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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