

Extraordinary Council – 25 January 2011

Minutes of the meeting of **Extraordinary Council** held on **25 January 2011** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D G Stansby
Vice-Chairman: Cllr S P Smith

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr C I Black	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr T E Goodwin	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr C J Lumley	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, Mrs J Dillnutt, K A Gibbs, Mrs H L A Glynn, A J Humphries, T Livings, Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, A C Priest, P R Robinson and Mrs C A Weston

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	– Chief Executive
G Woolhouse	– Deputy Chief Executive
A Bugeja	– Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services
Y Woodward	– Head of Finance
C Watkins	– Financial Services Manager/Chief Accountant
J Bostock	– Member Services Manager

25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors M R Carter and T E Goodwin each declared prejudicial interests in the report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 where it related to the Taxi Voucher Scheme by virtue of their employment and took no part in the decision thereon.

Cllr Mrs J R Lumley declared a personal interest in the report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 where it related to grants to voluntary organisations by virtue of being a Trustee of two organisations identified.

26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2011/12 – 2015/16

Note: Cllr T G Cutmore declared a personal interest in this item by virtue of being Chairman of Groundwork South Essex.

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance on the integrated five year Medium Term Financial Strategy starting in 2011/12. The report included an assurance from the Head of Service, as Section 151 Officer, on the robustness of the estimates for the purposes of the calculations and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserve. It was noted that it would be appropriate to include an increase in the budget for parking income of £100,000 following review of parking policies and practices as a key budgetary change for 2011/12.

By way of general observation the Leader of the Council referred to it being pleasing that, with Government support, there can be a Council Tax freeze for 2011/12 – something of particular importance to the elderly and vulnerable. The Council was faced with some difficult decisions and a focus of the budget needed to be on maintaining services to residents wherever possible. It was regrettable that the Government settlement meant consideration had had to be given to the budget for voluntary sector grants. It will be important for the Council to continue to support the voluntary sector in obtaining funding from external sources. The Council's officer volunteer scheme would continue to be available to the sector. It was pleasing that the Council's standards were recognised by awards in areas such as business and recycling. Residents should again be congratulated for their achievements in recycling.

Responding to a question on Area Committee proposals the Leader confirmed that, under the new proposals, Panels would consist of all Ward Members for the appropriate area.

It was observed that there had been detailed Member level discussions prior to the development of recommendations. All Authorities were faced with financial challenges. It was also observed that consideration could perhaps be given as to whether, from a cost perspective, Member budget away days should be held at the Civic Suite. It was recognised that it would be appropriate to continue to seek grants for flood prevention works where these are available. It was noted that a number of Parish Councils were discussing the position in relation to the Great Wakering Leisure Centre.

Council agreed a motion, moved by Cllr C I Black and seconded by Cllr T G Cutmore, that parking policy and practices be considered by Full Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the Executive's recommendations on the future of Area Committees be agreed as follows:-
 - (a) That there be four regular community forum meetings held annually, two in the West and two in the East of the District. Ward

Members to be expected to attend the appropriate meetings so that their electorate may have this additional opportunity to converse with them. Representatives of the Police, Fire and Health Services to be asked to attend, as well as Essex County Council Members and Officers. There will be an open invitation to Parish/Town Councillors.

- (b) That meetings be chaired by the Leader of the Council who will request the attendance of one or more Portfolio Holder, as deemed appropriate by the Leader. The Chief Executive, or exceptionally his representative, will also attend all meetings.
 - (c) That the dates of meetings will be included in the Council calendar and published accordingly.
 - (d) That it is accepted that there may be times when public attention is drawn to a specific subject but timing does not correspond with scheduled meetings. Should this occur, an additional meeting/s will be arranged in the format utilised for scheduled meetings.
 - (e) That none of these arrangements will affect the present system of public consultation and the presentations given by the Council, which in the recent past have included subjects such as recycling and The Local Development Framework. (HLEMS)
- (2) That the Executive's recommendations on the Remuneration Scheme be agreed as follows:-
- (a) That the Remuneration Scheme for 2011/12 proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel be adopted.
 - (b) That, for the future, the Independent Remuneration Panel is convened every four years unless there is a need to implement a new or amended Members' Allowance scheme in relation to a change to the structure of the Council.
 - (c) That the level of the basic and Special Responsibility Allowances be adjusted each Municipal Year in line with the local government staff annual pay award.
 - (d) That Childcare and Carer's Allowances and Travelling Expenses be increased annually in line with the increase in the Retail Price Index as advised by the Council's Head of Finance.
 - (e) That, Subsistence/Meals on Trains Allowances remain linked to the rates payable to District Council officers, which reflect national arrangements.

- (f) That the Independent Remuneration Panel reviews the Parish/Town Council remuneration schemes every four years in tandem with the District Council review, on the basis that Parish/Town Councils could continue to base their basic allowance and other aspects on a percentage of the Rochford District Council basic allowance, pending the next review. (HLEMS)
- (3) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/12 to 2015/16, including the proposals contained within the report to meet the 2011/12 £1.4m Budget Gap, be agreed with the following key budgetary changes for 2011/12:-
 - (a) Total salary budget of £6.591m.
 - (b) New budgets totalling £58,000 for income from staff parking and vending machine charges.
 - (c) Budget for grants to voluntary organisations to be amalgamated and set at £90,000.
 - (d) Reduction in budget of £4,500 for discretionary NNDR relief.
 - (e) Removal of budgets for the Taxi Voucher, Handy Person and Gardening Services.
 - (f) Reduction of £18,000 in the cost of Democratic Services.
 - (g) Reduction of £13,000 in the cost of the Pest Control Service.
 - (h) Reduction of £40,000 for the cost of the Great Wakering Leisure Centre either from alternative management arrangements, including transfer of ownership or, if no alternatives, closure of the facility.
 - (i) Reduction of £15,000 for the cost of providing public conveniences either from alternative management arrangements including transfer of ownership or, if no alternatives, possibly closing some facilities.
 - (j) Reduction of £17,000 in office accommodation costs by not using Acacia House as council offices.
 - (k) Increase in budget for parking income of £100,000 following review of parking policies and practices by Full Council.
- (4) That the core estimates for 2011/12, as shown in the Draft Budget Book appended to the report, be agreed.
- (5) That the 2011/12 Council Tax for Rochford District Council remains unchanged at £201.15 for a Band D property.

- (6) That the schedule of fees and charges for 2011/12, appended to the report, be agreed.
- (7) That, subject to Full Council undertaking the review of parking policies and practices, decisions on in year changes to discretionary fees and charges be delegated to the Executive.
- (8) That the Capital Programme, as appended to the report, be agreed.
- (9) That any interim revaluations of the Pension Scheme are reported to Members and that, at the next triennial revaluation of the Scheme, the Council aims to reduce the deficit recovery period to 20 years or less.
- (10) That the progress in meeting the 2011/12 Budget Gap is reported to the Executive on a quarterly basis. (HF)

27 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT, ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION POLICY STATEMENT 2011/12

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance on the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for borrowing and investment for 2011/12.

Responding to questions the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources indicated that there were no concerns about the track record of the Council's external treasury advisor.

Members concurred with the observation of the Leader that the proposals set out in the report were sensible. The Council's Finance Team was thanked and congratulated for its work.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, including the limits contained within the report, be agreed.
- (2) That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2011/12 and adjustments to the Minimum Revenue Provision Policies for 2007/08 and 2008/09, as detailed in the report, be agreed.
- (3) That the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt, as detailed in the report, be agreed and that authority be delegated to the Head of Finance, within the total limit for any individual year, to effect movement between the separately agreed limits for borrowing and other long-term liabilities. (HF)

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The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Chairman

Date

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