

Council – 22 October 2013

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **22 October 2013** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr R R Dray	Cllr T E Mountain
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr J D Griffin	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs A V Hale	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr B T Hazlewood	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr Mrs D Hoy	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr Mrs C A Weston

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, Mrs H L A Glynn, T E Goodwin, Mrs J R Lumley, Mrs C M Mason, J R F Mason, D Merrick, Mrs J A Mockford and D J Sperring.

OFFICERS PRESENT

A Dave	-	Chief Executive
P Warren	-	Chief Executive (retiring)
A Bugeja	-	Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services
Y Woodward	-	Head of Finance
J Bourne	-	Head of Community Services
J Bostock	-	Member Services Manager

Members stood in silence in memory of former District Council Chairman and Councillor Peter Webster who had recently passed away.

The Chairman welcomed Father David Oulton who led in prayers.

206 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mr A Dave and Mr P Warren each declared interests in the item on the Chief Executive role – Managing the Transition, which was presented by the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services.

207 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman had been honoured to have attended many engagements since the last Full Council meeting, both within and outside the District.

Specific reference was made to calendars designed and produced by Stambridge Parish Cllr George Ioannou, the sale proceeds of which would be donated to the Chairman's charities.

The Chairman invited the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration, Business Liaison and Tourism, Cllr M J Steptoe, to present Council Environmental Awareness Business Awards to representatives of Cura Passion for Ales in the UK and Power Hygiene and Safety Products Limited.

208 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council received the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between the period 31 July to 11 October 2013.

209 REPORT OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

The report of the Licensing Committee on the Statement of Licensing Policy (Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013) stood deferred in view of an unexpected delay in secondary legislation by the Home Office.

210 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

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

"This is the first Full Council meeting since the summer recess and so can I start by formally welcoming Amar Dave to his first Council meeting. It is a real pleasure to have you with us and I am sure you will enjoy your time here at the Council and make a real contribution as the Authority continues to move forward and meet the challenges that it faces. I can promise you that life will not be dull!

As Members are aware, in September we had the two planning inquiries into the Allocations Plan and the Hockley Action Area Plan. The Inspector has now written with his provisional findings and I am pleased to report that, subject to relatively few changes to both, he considers that both documents are sound and should proceed. We will now work on the changes requested as we continue on what is still a lengthy process before work on both documents can be said to be totally completed.

The Rochford Area Action Plan has completed its pre submission consultation stage and will now be sent to the Department for Communities and Local Government in November for processing to the Inquiry stage. That is anticipated in the early part of 2014. I am also pleased to report that the paperwork around the Development Management DPD and the Joint Area Action Plan is now almost complete and those plans too will shortly be sent to the DCLG, again for processing to the Inquiry stage.

We've had the Arts Festival in Rayleigh and the Arts Trail in Rochford. From the feedback I've had, both were well received and well supported, which is extremely good to hear. The walking tour associated with the Arts Trail proved really popular with local businesses in terms of the number of people who took part and thus came into their shops. I've heard that people came from as far away as Cheltenham to participate.

In excess of five hundred people attended our second Apple Day event at the Cherry Orchard Country Park at the end of September. I must express my appreciation to the Friends of Cherry Orchard who organised the event and to the Council staff involved who made it such a great success.

More recently we have launched a campaign in conjunction with the Chewing Gum Action Group and Defra to tackle the problem of chewing gum litter. The 'Bin it Your Way' aims to raise awareness of the problem and to target the 16 to 34 age group.

A few weeks ago the Police and Crime Commissioner held his second public meeting in the District, this time in Rayleigh. It was interesting to hear from him on a range of police and community safety issues. Our own Portfolio Holder covering Community Safety, Cllr Jo McPherson, gave an update on the work of the local Community Safety Partnership and the local District Commander gave an outline of the key crime issues in the District. It was pleasing to hear how relatively safe from crime and disorder the District is.

Last week we held one of our business breakfast events at the Freight House. The event focussed on the Med Tech campus proposal and on the Essex superfast broadband project. It was a well attended event, with over 100 businesses present.

Tomorrow night we have the Castle Point and Rochford Sports Awards at the Mill. The guest speaker is Chloe Rogers, a member of the London 2012 bronze medal award winning hockey team. I understand from the feedback I've received that nominations are up this year and again the standard is extremely high.

It is also that time of year when we start to particularly focus on next year's budget and rolling forward the Medium Term Financial Strategy. I don't think I need to remind anyone that things will again be very tight. Our first Member Budget Awayday is scheduled for 30 November, so I would encourage you all to attend. We will be at a different venue this year, the Holiday Inn at the Airport.

Since my last Leader's report in July, there have been two meetings of the Executive. September's meeting looked at a range of issues, from the first quarter performance reports to the voluntary grants process for 2014/15. A new telephone system for the Council was agreed, as was an extension to the Waste Management and Street Cleansing Contracts. The latter followed on from work undertaken by the Review Committee, whose Chairman attended to present their findings, which included some significant savings. October's

meeting looked at the Pooling of Business Rates with other Councils in Essex and the County Council's proposals in connection with part night time street lighting. October's meeting also saw a decision taken in connection with the new Grounds Maintenance Contract, which will commence in December.

Since the last Council meeting, Executive colleagues have taken decisions on matters such as responses to consultations on the New Homes Bonus and Growth Fund and the use of Capital Receipts, Hackney Carriage Licensing Conditions relating to Disabled Vehicles, Wireless Broadband, the Play Space Refurbishment Programme 2013/14 and our Climate Change Commitment.

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

Responding to a question on the Allocations Document the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transport and Heritage, Cllr K H Hudson, advised that the schedule of changes was being submitted to the Inspector. If the Inspector is content, proposals would come before Full Council at a meeting being scheduled for 21 November 2013. There could then be a further six week public consultation period in advance of further submissions to the Inspector. If the Inspector then responds within the anticipated timescale of by 7 February 2014, a further report would be presented to the Council meeting scheduled for 25 February 2014. It would be inappropriate to identify costs associated with schemes such as the Fairglen Michelin Farm Site and relocation of the Rawreth Industrial Estate prior to final decisions by the Council. It may prove possible for the Council to utilise a central Government fund in relation to the Fairglen Michelin Farm Site. Notwithstanding that, Section 106 and/or Community Infrastructure Levy monies may be appropriate. Members would be advised of the precise position as soon as possible.

211 REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS

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

In response to a question on part-light street lighting, it was confirmed that all comments received by the Executive had been forwarded to Essex County Council. A map setting out the detail of proposals had yet to be received from the County Council. Once received, copies would be provided to Members. The County Council had intimated that the process provided for further suggestions to be made following receipt of the map.

212 COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

Council considered the report of the Head of Community Services setting out proposals for technical changes to council tax discounts and exemptions.

Responding to a question the Head of Community Services advised it was difficult to anticipate how many people may claim that properties are occupied if they are affected by the 50% empty homes premium. Reducing the number of empty homes in the District would link into the New Homes Bonus incentive so that there would be a financial benefit to the Council for every empty home reduced on the council tax base.

Resolved that with effect from 1 April 2014:-

- (1) The Council Tax discount for unoccupied and furnished properties (Second Homes) be reduced from 10% to nil (Class A and Class B of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012).
- (2) The Council Tax discount for vacant properties which are in need of major repair be reduced from 100% for 12 months to 50% for 12 months (Class D of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012).
- (3) The Council Tax discount for empty and unfurnished dwellings be reduced from 100% for up to six months to 100% for up to one month (Class C of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012). This discount will only apply immediately following a period when the property was occupied for a minimum of 6 weeks. It will also be restricted to a maximum of two awards in any one financial year.
- (4) A Council Tax premium be introduced to be set at 50% and charged in addition to the 100% Council Tax charge for existing properties which have been empty and substantially unfurnished for two years or more (Section 11B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992).

213 DIVERSION OF FOOTPATH 36, LONDON SOUTHEND AIRPORT

Council considered the report of the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services on responses received to the published Order and the next stage of the statutory process for diversion of Footpath 36 at London Southend Airport.

Responding to a question, the Head of Service confirmed that the costs associated with the Footpath Diversion Order would be met by the airport company.

Resolved

That the Public Path Diversion Order for Footpath 36 made on 12 April 2013 be confirmed and referred to the Secretary of State for determination.
(HLEMS)

214 CHIEF EXECUTIVE ROLE – MANAGING THE TRANSITION

Council considered a report on the handover process in relation to the Chief Executive post, presented by the Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services.

Responding to questions the Leader of the Council, Cllr T G Cutmore, confirmed that a transition period, whereby the retiring Chief Executive was available to the new appointee for a period, had always been the intention and reflected good corporate practice. A high degree of role assimilation was a feature for any new Chief Executive. The resource implications of report proposals had already been provided for. It would be inappropriate for the Council's Appointments Sub-Committee to set precise parameters in relation to a handover process.

It was noted that the retiring Chief Executive was relinquishing his role on a number of pan-Essex bodies. The new Chief Executive would be involved with a number of bodies whose aims related to the work of the District Council. On a show of hands it was:-

Resolved

That Mr Paul Warren be offered 'gardening leave' as and when appropriate as part of the handover process, to ensure as smooth a transition as possible.
(CE)

Note: Cllr C I Black wished to be recorded as voting against this decision.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chairman

Date

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