

Annual Council – 23 May 2023

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **23 May 2023** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe

Cllr Mrs D L Belton	Cllr R C D Linden
Cllr N J Booth	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr Mrs E L Brewer	Cllr E O K Mason
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr R Milne
Cllr R P Constable	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr J E Cripps	Cllr L J Newport
Cllr A G Cross	Cllr Mrs S J Page
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I A Foster	Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr J N Gooding	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr R Lambourne	Cllr Mrs V A Wilson
Cllr J L Lawmon	Cllr S E Wootton

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Stephenson	- Chief Executive
S Summers	- Strategic Director
S Bennett	- Director of Customer & Data Insight
G Campbell	- Director of Policy & Delivery
M Hotten	- Director of Environment
A Hunkin	- Interim Director of People & Governance
T Lilley	- Director of Communities & Health
T Willis	- Interim Director of Resources
N Mann	- Service Manager, People & Organisational Development
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer
V Meanwell	- Democratic Services Officer
J Jakes	- Corporate Services Officer

97 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2023/24

Cllr M Hoy moved a Motion seconded by Cllr Mrs C M Mason that Cllr J L Lawmon be elected as Chairman of the Council.

Resolved

That Cllr J L Lawmon be elected Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

(22 voted in favour of the Motion, 0 against and 13 abstained)

Cllr J L Lawmon made the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Chairman.

98 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL FOR 2023/24

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding moved a Motion seconded by Cllr J E Newport that Cllr Mrs S J Page be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Council.

Resolved

That Cllr Mrs S J Page be elected Vice-Chairman of the Council for the ensuing year.

(22 voted in favour of the Motion, 0 against and 13 abstained)

Cllr Mrs S J Page made the Statutory Declaration of Acceptance of Office as Vice-Chairman.

99 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN'S CHAPLAIN FOR 2023/24

The Chairman would advise Council of his Chaplain in due course.

100 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs T D Knight, Mrs J E McPherson, G W Myers and D W Sharp.

101 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 15 and 21 February 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

102 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Cllr J L Lawmon advised that he would announce details of his chosen charity in due course.

103 ELECTION OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Cllr J E Newport moved a Motion seconded by Cllr M Hoy that Cllr J R F Mason be appointed as Leader of the Council.

Resolved

That Cllr J R F Mason be appointed as Leader for a 4-year period or until his term of office ends with effect from the 2023/24 municipal year.

(22 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 0 against and 13 abstained.)

Cllr J R F Mason made the following statement:-

“Thank you, Chairman. On a personal note may I say that it is such an honour to be chosen to serve the Council and Residents in this role. On behalf of The Council I wish to thank Councillor Simon Wootton for his service as Leader to the Council and Rochford District.

For the next part I am speaking on behalf of the 4 Groups which will be working together in a Joint Administration for Rochford District Council.

Independent and Green
Liberal Democrats
Rochford District Independents
Rochford District Residents

Over the last 2 weeks, assisted by Jonathan Stephenson, Emily Yule and Steve Summers on technical matters, The Group Leaders have worked very diligently together to create an agreement which is referred to as The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). I am sure that the Late Councillor Chris Black who shared this ambition would have been very proud of such an achievement.

This agreed MOU has as a matter of courtesy been provided to the Leaders of those Groups which are not part of the Joint Administration including Councillor Jo McPherson. I am going to refer to the most important parts of this now but a full copy will be circulated to all Members of The Council with The Minutes of this Annual Council.

The groups will work together in the spirit of trust, fairness and mutual co-operation for the benefit of the residents of Rochford. This includes a commitment to acting in good faith, to maintaining constructive dialogue, to being open to alternative views, and to being inclusive in sharing information with each other. Democracy sits at the heart of this working together arrangement, with politically representative decision-making and meaningful public engagement. Openness and transparency will be a priority of the joint administration.

This working arrangement will avoid creating unnecessary bureaucracy and enable the engagement of all councillors, allowing for proper debate on issues where there is genuine disagreement whilst facilitating the rapid progress of Council business where consensus exists. The joint administration is committed to implementing a committee system style of governance from May 2024, subject to the approval of the Council. During the 2023-24 municipal year the joint administration will continue to operate the Leader and Executive form of governance but it will be preparing for transition to a Committee Governance.

By collective discussion and agreement the Executive will be made up as follows:

Deputy Leaders of the Council: Cllr Michael Hoy and Cllr James Newport
Executive Lead Members: Cllr Jim Cripps; Cllr Adrian Eves; Cllr Julie Gooding;
Cllr Lisa Newport; Cllr Chris Stanley; Cllr Arthur Williams; Cllr Vilma Wilson.

Allocation of 'Lead Members' for specific functions will replace the portfolio holder system. There will be no delegated decision-making authority to the Lead Members and all decisions will be made collectively by the Executive.

As I said earlier, the full copy of the MOU will accompany the Minutes.”

104 DISTRICT AND PARISH COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

Council received the results of the District and Parish Council elections held on 4 May 2023.

105 NOTICE OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The Proper Officer had received details of the membership of the political groups as set out at appendix 1 to these Minutes.

106 APPOINTMENT OF THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES 2023/24

Council considered the report of the Interim Director of People & Governance on the discharge of business during the 2023/24 Municipal Year.

Cllr Mrs D L Belton moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs C M Mason, that the Armed Forces Covenant Champion be a joint role and this was carried on a show of hands.

Resolved

- (1) That Committees be constituted as set out in appendix 1 to the report.

(33 voted for, 0 against and 1 abstained.)

- (2) That Members be appointed to serve on Committees for the 2023/24 Municipal Year as set out in appendix 2 to the Minutes.

(This was unanimously approved.)

- (3) That the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees be appointed as set out in appendix 2 to the Minutes.

(33 voted for, 0 against and 1 abstained.)

- (4) That Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher and S A Wilson be appointed as Joint Armed Forces Covenant Champions for the 2023/24 Municipal Year. (IDPG)

(32 Members voted in favour, 0 against and 3 abstained).

107 COUNCIL MEETINGS

Resolved

That meetings of Council be scheduled on 28 June 2023, 18 July 2023, 31 October 2023, 14 December 2023, 13 February 2024 and 20 February 2024. (IDPG)

Cllr Mrs C M Mason moved a Motion without notice, seconded by Cllr S E Wootton, that items 15 and 16 be considered next and this was carried on a show of hands.

108 DESIGNATION OF STATUTORY ROLE – MONITORING OFFICER

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive asking Council to designate the role of Monitoring Officer.

Cllr J L Lawmon moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr D S Efde, that the recommendations set out in the report be approved and this was unanimously agreed.

Resolved

- (1) That Emily Yule be designated as the Monitoring Officer for the Council.
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer makes any necessary subsequent changes to the Council's Constitution. (IDPG)

109 ADOPTION OF COMMITTEE STYLE OF GOVERNANCE

Council considered the report of the Strategic Director proposing that the Council changes its style of governance from the Leader and Executive model to a Committee system.

Cllr I H Ward made the following statement:

"I would ask this Council to consider with caution what they are about to embark on in voting to return to a Committee system of Local Government. I myself have had no experience of this, but have asked the advice of those Councillors who were Members prior to 2007 what their experience was, and I feel it appropriate to share that advice with you newer Members.

First and foremost, the concept that the Committee system will be more democratic may not be the case as perceived. The officers will prepare the agendas and the reports to give direction for the Committees to decide, whilst

the Committee Chairman will have no real decision-making powers. There will be no real accountability as all Committees will be amorphous and by their very nature unaccountable.

The workload for Members will increase, as the necessity for decision-making makes that essential. Through the experiences of previous Members I have spoken with, this extra workload rarely produces the outcomes required at a pace that is often required, with more decisions being delayed due to calendar problems in fixing suitable Committee dates.

The scenario we will witness will be less Member control of the Council and far greater officer control of the Council's agendas, direction and steering regarding decisions to be made. If the Committee system is adopted as it is likely to be this evening, the officers, often by necessity and default, due to time constraints, will need to rush agreements through the various Committees often with scant scrutiny by Members who are often worn out by paperwork and continuous Council meetings every evening. This is the future you will embark on, where you will agree to anything to get home and get a good night's sleep and because of that you will delegate the officers to run the Council, as that will be an easy option for all concerned.

I have worked over the last couple of years with many of the officers since the OneTeam was established and I have the utmost respect for both their integrity and ability, but Members need to go into this decision with their eyes wide open as to the potential outcomes, which may not be as they would hope, but whatever the outcome I will still continue to be an active Member of this Council advocating on behalf of my residents."

In response to a Member question relating to the composition of the Constitution Working Group, officers advised that although this did not have to be pro rata it was important that there was representation on it from all the political groups. A report with further details would come to the next Council meeting.

Officers confirmed, in response to a Member question as to whether recommendation 1 would lock the Council into a Committee system from the 2024/25 municipal year, that this would come into effect in May 2024. A cross party Working Group would look at a potential Committee structure and would report back to the Council with further details.

Cllr Mrs D L Belton made the point that the first recommendation appeared premature when Council did not currently have the details of any proposed Committee structure and asked why this decision could not wait until such details were provided to Members. Cllr S E Wootton further asked whether it was possible to adjust the Constitution so that this decision could be made by Full Council, rather than Annual Council.

The Interim Director of People & Governance confirmed that it was for Annual

Council to determine the structure of committees and terms of reference; it would, however, be possible to change the Constitution, if that was deemed appropriate, in order for these changes to be made by Full Council, rather than Annual Council.

In response to a question around cost comparisons between an Executive style of governance and a committee system of governance, officers agreed that cost comparisons would be an important element of the work to be undertaken, should the decision be taken to adopt a committee structure.

Cllr Mrs C M Mason emphasised that reviewing the Constitution was a lengthy process; a decent amount of time was necessary to undertake work with a detailed, considered approach.

Cllr M Hoy made reference to the fact that, with the current number of different political groups represented on the Council, a committee system would give more Councillors more say and would be more democratic. It was important to receive all input on the proposal, but positive and negative. He moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr J R F Mason, that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Cllr J R F Mason made the point that he had had experience of both systems of governance and of being on the Council with no overall control; there had been no overall control on the Council during his early years on the Council, at which time there had also been a Committee system. The new administration had had to give serious thought to how to run the Council with a joint administration and no overall control and he believed it would be easier with a committee system, which had been the case many years. He had been a single Member during his first 6-7 years on the Council and had been able to have involvement in a wide range of issues under a committee system which would not have been the case had an Executive system been in place. The advantages of the committee system were set out in the executive summary of the report and he would be happy to answer questions and give evidence to the Working Group on his experience as a Member under a committee system and under an Executive system.

Cllr S E Wootton expressed the view that the committee system could be a good idea for councils with no overall control; however, he would want to see more details and the cost implications involved as there was a risk that a committee system might be more expensive than the current Executive model of governance; he would want to understand in more detail the potential implications of recommendation 3.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee system model of governance is adopted by Rochford District Council with effect from the Annual Council meeting in May 2024.

On a requisition to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken as follows:-

For (24) Cllrs N J Booth; Mrs E L Brewer; J E Cripps; A G Cross; D S Efde; A H Eves; J N Gooding, Mrs J R Gooding; M Hoy; R Lambourne; J L Lawmon; R C D Linden; Mrs C M Mason; E O K Mason; J R F Mason; R Milne; J E Newport, L J Newport; Mrs S J Page; Mrs D P Squires-Coleman; C M Stanley; A L Williams; S A Wilson; Mrs V A Wilson

Against (0)

Abstain (11) Cllrs Mrs D L Belton; Mrs L A Butcher; M R Carter; R P Constable; I A Foster; Mrs E P Gadsdon; Mrs L Shaw; D J Sperring; M J Steptoe; I H Ward; S E Wootton

- (2) That the Constitution Working Group is instructed to consider and make recommendations to Full Council on the composition and terms of reference of committees by December 2023.

On a requisition to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken as follows:-

For (34) Cllrs D L Belton; N J Booth; Mrs E L Brewer; Mrs L A Butcher; M R Carter; J E Cripps; A G Cross; D S Efde; A H Eves; I A Foster; Mrs E P Gadsdon; J N Gooding, Mrs J R Gooding; M Hoy; R Lambourne; J L Lawmon; R C D Linden; Mrs C M Mason; E O K Mason; J R F Mason; R Milne; J E Newport, L J Newport; Mrs S J Page; Mrs L Shaw; D J Sperring; Mrs D P Squires-Coleman; C M Stanley; M J Steptoe; I H Ward; A L Williams; S A Wilson; Mrs V A Wilson; S E Wootton

Against (0)

Abstain (1) Cllr R P Constable

- (3) That the Independent Remuneration Panel is instructed to review the Scheme of Members' Allowances in light of the revised model of governance and make recommendations to Full Council by December 2023.

On a requisition to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken as follows:-

For (35) Cllrs D L Belton; N J Booth; Mrs E L Brewer; Mrs L A Butcher; M R Carter; R P Constable; J E Cripps; A G Cross; D S Efde; A H Eves; I A Foster; Mrs E P Gadsdon; J N Gooding, Mrs J R

Gooding; M Hoy; R Lambourne; J L Lawmon; R C D Linden; Mrs C M Mason; E O K Mason; J R F Mason; R Milne; J E Newport, L J Newport; Mrs S J Page; Mrs L Shaw; D J Sperring; Mrs D P Squires-Coleman; C M Stanley; M J Steptoe; I H Ward; A L Williams; S A Wilson; Mrs V A Wilson; S E Wootton

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

- (4) That the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Constitution Working Group, redrafts the Council's Constitution to fit a committee system of governance and presents the revised Constitution to Full Council for adoption by March 2024.

On a requisition to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken as follows:-

For (25) Cllrs N J Booth; Mrs E L Brewer; J E Cripps; A G Cross; D S Efde; A H Eves; J N Gooding, Mrs J R Gooding; M Hoy; R Lambourne; J L Lawmon; R C D Linden; Mrs C M Mason; E O K Mason; J R F Mason; R Milne; J E Newport, L J Newport; Mrs S J Page; Mrs D P Squires-Coleman; C M Stanley; M J Steptoe; A L Williams; S A Wilson; Mrs V A Wilson

Against (0)

Abstain (10) Cllrs Mrs D L Belton; Mrs L A Butcher; M R Carter; R P Constable; I A Foster; Mrs E P Gadsdon; Mrs L Shaw; D J Sperring; I H Ward; S E Wootton

The remaining item of business, item 14, relating to the appointment of representatives to outside bodies and other forums 2023/24 would be deferred to the next meeting of Council, given that the meeting had already lasted for the maximum 2½ hours permitted by the Council's Constitution.

The meeting closed at 10.03 pm.

Chairman

Date

If you would like these minutes in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

1 MEMBERSHIP OF GROUPS

- 1.1 The Proper Officer has been advised of the division of Members of the Council into political groups and the appointment of the Leaders and Deputy Leaders (where appointed) as follows:-

Conservative Group

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr M R Carter
Cllr R P Constable
Cllr D S Efde
Cllr I A Foster
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon
Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr I H Ward
Cllr S E Wootton

Leader: Cllr S E Wootton
Deputy Leader: Cllr Mrs D L Belton

Liberal Democrat Group

Cllr Mrs E L Brewer
Cllr J E Cripps
Cllr A G Cross
Cllr R C D Linden
Cllr R Milne
Cllr J E Newport
Cllr Mrs S J Page
Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr C M Stanley

Leader: Cllr J E Newport
Deputy Leader: Cllr C M Stanley

Rochford District Residents Group

Cllr N J Booth
Cllr A H Eves
Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr E O K Mason
Cllr J R F Mason

Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman
Cllr Mrs V A Wilson

Leader: Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Deputy Leader: Cllr Mrs V A Wilson

Independent & Green Group

Cllr M Hoy
Cllr T D Knight
Cllr R Lambourne
Cllr L J Newport
Cllr S A Wilson

Leader: Cllr M Hoy
Deputy Leader: Cllr S A Wilson

Rochford District Independents Group

Cllr J N Gooding
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Cllr J L Lawmon

Leader: Cllr Mrs J R Gooding
Deputy Leader: Cllr J N Gooding

Independent Conservatives Group

Cllr G W Myers
Cllr A L Williams

Leader: Cllr A L Williams
Deputy Leader: Cllr G W Myers

COMMITTEE	APPOINTEES
<p>Audit (11)</p> <p>(13 voted for Cllr Mrs L A Butcher and 22 voted for Cllr R Milne)</p> <p>(13 voted for Cllr Mrs L A Butcher and 22 voted for Cllr S A Wilson)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr R Milne Vice-Chairman: Cllr S A Wilson</p> <p>Cllr N J Booth Cllr Mrs L A Butcher Cllr M R Carter Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon Cllr J N Gooding Cllr R C D Linden Cllr D W Sharp Cllr A L Williams Cllr Mrs V A Wilson</p>
<p>Chief Officer Appointments Committee (9)</p> <p>(22 voted for Cllr J E Newport and 3 abstained)</p> <p>(26 voted for Cllr Mrs J R Gooding and 9 abstained)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr J E Newport Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs J R Gooding</p> <p>Cllr Mrs D L Belton Cllr Mrs E L Brewer Cllr I A Foster Cllr E O K Mason Cllr L J Newport Cllr Mrs V A Wilson Cllr S E Wootton</p>

COMMITTEE	APPOINTEES
<p>Development Committee (13)</p> <p>(23 voted for Cllr A H Eves, 10 voted for Cllr Mrs L Shaw, and 2 abstained)</p> <p>(13 voted for Cllr D S Efde and 22 voted for Cllr Mrs V A Wilson)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr A H Eves Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs V A Wilson</p> <p>Cllr Mrs E L Brewer Cllr R P Constable Cllr D S Efde Cllr T D Knight Cllr J L Lawmon Cllr R C D Linden Cllr G W Myers Cllr Mrs L Shaw Cllr C M Stanley Cllr I H Ward Cllr S A Wilson</p>
<p>Licensing & Appeals (15)</p> <p>(13 voted for Cllr D S Efde and 22 voted for Cllr R Lambourne)</p> <p>(22 voted for Cllr A G Cross and 13 voted for Cllr Mrs L Shaw)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr R Lambourne Vice-Chairman: Cllr A G Cross</p> <p>Cllr N J Booth Cllr R P Constable Cllr D S Efde Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon Cllr J L Lawmon Cllr Mrs J E McPherson Cllr R Milne Cllr Mrs L Shaw Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman Cllr C M Stanley Cllr I H Ward Cllr A L Williams Cllr S A Wilson</p>

COMMITTEE	APPOINTEES
<p>Overview & Scrutiny (15)</p> <p>(11 voted for Cllr Mrs D L Belton, 23 voted for Cllr Mrs J E McPherson and 1 abstained)</p> <p>(22 voted for Cllr N J Booth and 13 voted for Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson Vice-Chairman: Cllr N J Booth</p> <p>Cllr Mrs D S Belton Cllr A G Cross Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon Cllr J N Gooding Cllr R Lambourne Cllr E O K Mason Cllr Mrs C M Mason Cllr R Milne Cllr G W Myers Cllr Mrs S J Page Cllr D J Sperring Cllr I H Ward Cllr S E Wootton</p>
<p>Planning Policy Committee (7)</p> <p>(33 voted for Cllr J E Cripps and 2 abstained)</p> <p>(33 voted for Cllr M J Steptoe and 2 abstained)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr J E Cripps Vice-Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe</p> <p>Cllr A H Eves Cllr I A Foster Cllr M Hoy Cllr J E Newport Cllr I H Ward</p>
<p>Standards (8)</p> <p>(13 voted for Cllr D J Sperring and 22 voted for Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman)</p> <p>(28 voted for Cllr R C D Linden and 5 abstained)</p>	<p>Chairman: Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman Vice-Chairman: Cllr R C D Linden</p> <p>Cllr M R Carter Cllr J L Lawmon Cllr Mrs C M Mason Cllr L J Newport Cllr D W Sharp Cllr D J Sperring</p>

COMMITTEE	APPOINTEES
Statutory Officer Personnel Committee (9) (32 voted for Cllr Mrs C M Mason and 3 abstained) (32 voted for Cllr S E Wootton and 3 abstained)	Chairman: Cllr Mrs C M Mason Vice-Chairman: S E Wootton Cllr Mrs D L Belton Cllr Mrs E L Brewer Cllr I A Foster Cllr Mrs J R Gooding Cllr J R F Mason Cllr Mrs S J Page Cllr S A Wilson

Joint Administration of Rochford District Council

Memorandum of Understanding

23 May 2023

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Following the District elections on 4 May 2023, the following groups have agreed to form a joint administration at Rochford District Council (the “Council”):
- Independent and Green
 - Liberal Democrats
 - Rochford District Independent
 - Rochford District Residents
- 1.2 This Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) sets out how the groups intend to jointly achieve their priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan 2023-2024 document (tbc).
- 1.3 This MOU is not a legally binding document but is nonetheless a statement of serious intent agreed voluntarily by the above named groups, which sets out the commitment that they will each bring to the running of the joint administration.

2. Guiding principles of the joint administration

- 2.1 The groups will work together in the spirit of trust, fairness and mutual co-operation for the benefit of the residents of Rochford. This includes a commitment to acting in good faith, to maintaining constructive dialogue, to being open to alternative views, and to being inclusive in sharing information with each other.
- 2.2 Democracy sits at the heart of this working together arrangement, with politically representative decision-making and meaningful public engagement. Openness and transparency will be a priority of the joint administration.
- 2.3 This working arrangement will avoid creating unnecessary bureaucracy and enable the engagement of all councillors, allowing for proper debate on issues where there is genuine disagreement whilst facilitating the rapid progress of Council business where consensus exists.

3. Working arrangements

Governance

- 3.1 The joint administration is committed to implementing a committee system style of governance from May 2024, subject to the approval of the Council.
- 3.2 During the 2023-24 municipal year the joint administration will continue to operate the Leader and Executive form of governance. Cllr John Mason is nominated by the joint administration for the position of Leader of the Council. Cllr Michael Hoy and Cllr James Newport are nominated by the joint administration as Deputy Leaders of the Council – this is an appointment by the Leader of the Council.
- 3.3 The Leader, once elected, will select up to nine councillors (a minimum of one from each member group) to form the Executive, in agreement with the other Group Leaders. The Executive will be formed of councillors from all of the groups forming the joint administration. An Executive place will be offered by the Leader to councillor who is not part of the MOU, on an individual basis, in agreement with the other Group Leaders.
- 3.4 The Leader will allocate 'Lead Members' for specific functions, in place of the portfolio holder system. There will be no delegated decision-making authority to the Lead Members and all decisions will be made collectively by the Executive. (A role description will be prepared for Lead Members).
- 3.5 The Executive may, but is not required to, refer any decision it considers to be highly significant or controversial to the Full Council for debate before taking that decision. (A forward plan of key decisions will be agreed by the joint administration to identify decisions that will be referred to council ahead of an Executive decision.)
- 3.6 Cllr Jack Lawmon is nominated by the joint administration for the position of Chairman of the Council. Cllr Sarah Jane Page is nominated by the joint administration for the position of Vice-Chairman of the Council.
- 3.7 The joint administration will support the appointment of a non-administration councillor to the position of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be a member of the administration, in line with the convention of the Council. The Executive will proactively identify decisions for pre-scrutiny and will engage fully with the scrutiny process, giving due regard to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations. The Chair of Scrutiny will also be invited to attend all Executive Meetings.

Group Leader Meetings

- 3.8 The Leaders and Deputy Leaders from each of the member groups will be invited to a regular monthly meeting facilitated by the Chief Executive, to help develop joint working and to consider issues of strategic importance. This will include considering the forward plan of the Executive. Other senior council officers will attend this meeting at the request of the group leaders or their deputies or the Chief Executive.

Information Sharing

- 3.9 All member groups will share information with each other as required for the effective operation of the joint administration. The working arrangement will operate on the presumption of openness and all members of the Council will have access to all information, unless restricted by regulation or the constitution (for example information protected by the GDPR).

Press and media

- 3.10 All press releases issued by the joint administration will be signed-off collectively by the group leaders. Typically, the Leader of the Council will act as the spokesperson for the joint administration in response to media enquiries.
- 3.11 All members will follow the Council's press and media protocols and will take advice from the Communications Team before issuing statements on behalf of the Council.

4. Strategic Priorities

- 4.1 The Council's current business plan ends in 2023. The joint administration will develop a strategic plan for the period 2023-2024 with the support of the Corporate Leadership Team.
- 4.2 The strategic plan will include the joint priorities of the member groups, which will be agreed in the week following the Annual Council meeting.

5. Review of this MOU

- 5.1 This MOU will remain in place until the next district elections in 2024 unless brought to an earlier end in accordance with clause 5.4 below.
- 5.2 The operation of this MOU will be reviewed periodically by the group leaders and they may amend this MOU by collective agreement at any time, provided that each has the support of their respective group.
- 5.3 In the event of a dispute arising between the groups, the group leaders will seek to resolve the dispute in the first instance. The Chief Executive and Monitoring Officer may assist with the informal resolution.

- 5.4 As a last resort, any of the member groups may withdraw from this MOU having given no less than two months' notice to the remaining parties.

Agreed by:Independent and Green Group

Cllr M Hoy (Group Leader)
Cllr Ms T D Knight
Cllr R Lambourne
Cllr Mrs L J Newport
Cllr S A Wilson

Liberal Democrats Group

Cllr J E Newport (Group Leader)
Cllr E L Brewer
Cllr J E Cripps
Cllr A G Cross
Cllr R C D Linden
Cllr R Milne
Cllr S J Page
Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr C M Stanley

Rochford District Independent Group

Cllr Mrs J R Gooding (Group Leader)
Cllr J N Gooding
Cllr J L Lawmon

Rochford District Residents Group

Cllr Mrs C M Mason (Group Leader)
Cllr N J Booth
Cllr A H Eves
Cllr E O K Mason
Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman
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