

Council – 14 July 2020

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **14 July 2020** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr R R Dray
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs C A Weston

Cllr Mrs D L Belton	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr J C Burton	Cllr R Milne
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr C C Cannell	Cllr Mrs C A Pavelin
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr Mrs T L Carter	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr P J Shaw
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr N J Hookway	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr G J Ioannou	Cllr M J Webb
Cllr M J Lucas-Gill	Cllr M G Wilkinson
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr Mrs C M Mason	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr Mrs J E McPherson	Cllr S E Wootton

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Mrs D Hoy.

OFFICERS PRESENT

S Scrutton	- Managing Director
A Hutchings	- Strategic Director
M Harwood-White	- Assistant Director, Assets and Commercial
M Hotten	- Assistant Director, Place and Environment
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal and Democratic
N Lucas	- Assistant Director, Resources
L Moss	- Assistant Director, People and Communities
D Tribe	- Assistant Director, Transformation and Customer
A Parkman	- Community Safety Officer
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic and Corporate Services Officer
M Power	- Democratic Services Officer

97 MINUTES

It was noted that the Minutes of the Annual Meeting would be amended to include details of Members who had given apologies for absence.

The Leader of the Green Group referred to the second paragraph of page three of the Minutes. He moved a Motion, seconded by the Leader of Rochford District Residents Group, that the statement made by Cllr M J

Steptoe regarding his resignation as Leader of the Council should be included in the Minutes. The Chairman advised that the Minutes provided a summary rather than a verbatim report of discussion.

In support of the Motion, the Leader of the Rochford District Residents Group stated that the Minutes had included a comprehensive record of this item, including the statement of the new Leader, and yet a significant aspect had been left out.

On a requisition pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 17.4 a recorded vote was taken to amend the Minutes of the meeting of 9 July 2020, as follows:-

For (13) Cllrs C C Cannell; Mrs T L Carter; A H Eves; N J Hookway; M Hoy; G J Ioannou, Mrs C M Mason; Mrs J E McPherson; J E Newport; C M Stanley; M J Steptoe; M G Wilkinson; S A Wilson

Against (21) Cllrs Mrs D L Belton; J C Burton; M R Carter; R R Dray; D S Efde; Mrs J R Gooding; K H Hudson; M J Lucas-Gill; Mrs J R Lumley; D Merrick; R Milne; Mrs C A Pavelin; Mrs C E Roe; Mrs L Shaw; P J Shaw; S P Smith; D J Sperring; I H Ward; M J Webb; A L Williams; S E Wootton

Abstain (2) Cllrs Mrs L A Butcher, Mrs C A Weston

The Motion was declared lost and it was:

Resolved

That the Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 9 July 2020 be agreed as a correct record, subject to including the apologies for absence, and would be signed by the Chairman in due course. (ADLD)

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Members each declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 13 of the Agenda, CCTV Working Group: Cllr G J Ioannou by virtue of being Chairman of Rochford Chamber of Trade; Cllrs R Milne, J E Newport and I H Ward by virtue of membership of Rayleigh Town Council and of its Community Safety Group, which was considering the possibility of CCTV in Rayleigh; and Cllr Mrs J R Lumley by virtue of being Chairman of Rayleigh Town Council and a member of its Community Safety Group.

99 BUSINESS FROM LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The following issues were raised in respect of the Council meeting of 18 February 2020:

- When would the Monitoring Officer's annual report be issued?

The Chairman advised that an update would be provided outside of the meeting.

- An update on the response to the EU Settlement Scheme motion would be provided outside of the meeting.

These updates would be provided to all Members.

100 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN THE PERIOD 5 FEBRUARY 2020 TO 30 JUNE 2020

Council received the Minutes of the Executive and Committee meetings held during the period 5 February to 30 June 2020.

101 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

(1) Report of the Review Committee: Treasury Management Annual Review 2019/20

Council considered the report of the Review Committee on the Treasury Management Annual Review 2019/20.

Resolved

That the contents of the Treasury Management Annual Review 2019/20 be noted. (ADR)

(2) Report of the Review Committee: Carbon Neutral by 2030

Council considered the report of the Review Committee on Carbon Neutral by 2030.

The Leader of the Green Group felt that the review did not go far enough and should have included targets and had oversight by the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Leader or Deputy Leader.

Cllr Mrs J E McPherson, as Chairman of the Carbon Neutral Working Group, thanked all the Members of the group for their work and advised that the Portfolio Holder for Environment had attended all of the meetings of the group to provide oversight. She extended an invitation to Members of the Green Group to join the Working Group, which would continue to meet.

The Assistant Director, Place & Environment confirmed that the Working Group would have input into the Council's Asset Development Programme and that there had been conversations between the Assistant Director, Assets and Commercial and the Working Group on this subject; these discussions would be ongoing.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Carbon Neutral policy and action plan be approved.
- (3) That an Annual report of Green House Gas (GHG) emissions be prepared to show what the Council's carbon footprint is.
- (4) That all Council reports include a section on the effect the decision will have on the GHG emissions of the Council.
- (5) That a revised procurement strategy be prepared taking into account the issues mentioned in this report.
- (6) That the limitations around the current planning regulations be noted.
- (7) That the revised Local Plan takes into account the Government's Environment Bill.
- (8) That the opportunities of working in partnership with Southend Borough Council and the other Essex Authorities to reduce Rochford District Council's carbon footprint be explored.
- (9) That the potential costs of a Carbon Reduction Officer, or other possible arrangements such as partnership working, to deliver the initiatives in the proposed action plan be investigated. Once quantified, any request for additional resource to be considered as part of the budget setting process for 2021/22.
- (10) That the Review Committee receives an annual update on carbon neutral by 2030. (ADP&E)

(33 Members voted for the Motion, 0 voted against and 3 abstained.)

(Note: Cllr M Hoy wished it to be recorded that he had abstained from voting on the above recommendations.)

Resolved

- (2) That the draft Disposable Plastic Policy and action plan be approved. (ADPE)

(34 Members voted for the Motion, 0 voted against and 2 abstained.)

102 REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS

Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny procedure Rule 15(g), Council received and noted a report on decisions that had been taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call in.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

103 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 second ordinary Council meeting of the 2020/21 Municipal Year and my first as Leader of the Council. I would like to welcome all Members.

Since the last meeting on 19 May, the Executive has met twice. At its meeting on 17 June, considerations included:

- Clarification and confirmation of the amount received from central government to assist with the Coronavirus situation and how it has been allocated.
- Approval of the provisional outturn position against the 2019/20 revenue budget and transfer from Business Rate Smoothing reserves.
- Approval of the transfer from the Pensions reserve and revenue carry forward requests.
- Approval of earmarked reserves, including those rolled forward as grant funded and ring-fenced projects.
- Approval of capital project carry forwards for outstanding schemes at the end of 2019/20 into 2020/21 for completion.
- Agreed a spending plan for the Council's Reopening High Streets Safely Grant Funding Agreement.

Other matters that my Executive colleagues and I have dealt with include:-

- Agreement of a formal response to be submitted in respect of the Bradwell B Consultation on proposals for a new nuclear power station.
- Approval of the Environmental Health Service Plan for 2020/21, to comply with The Food Law Code of Practice.

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.'

As requested by Members, an updated position detailing the amount of funding received from central government to assist with the Coronavirus situation and how it had been allocated would be circulated to all Members after the meeting.

In response to a question on a possible application to Essex County Council for grant funding to investigate making improvements to cycle paths in the District, the Assistant Director, Place and Environment advised that he had been in discussion on the strategic view of the cycle paths in the district. An update would be provided to all Members after the meeting.

In response to a Member question, the Portfolio Holder for Finance confirmed that none of the £50,000 Leader's fund had been used in response to the Covid-19 emergency.

A Member stated that he had applied for funding in March 2020 from the Leader's fund and had been advised to wait until the 2020/21 financial year. He requested that the current situation for applications to the fund be provided. The Leader responded that every effort was being made to continue with 'business as normal' but that the focus of the Council had been on other matters recently.

104 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13, the following motions had been received.

It was noted that there were two Motions deferred from the Council meeting on 28 February 2020, as follows:-

From Cllrs C C Cannell and J E Newport:-

Motion to increase support for RSPCA firework campaigning

This Motion had been withdrawn prior to the meeting.

From Cllrs J E Newport, C M Stanley and C C Cannell.

Motion to produce a tree planting strategy to increase considerably the tree cover within the District.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stated that the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Assistant Director, Place and Environment had offered to work in conjunction with Members to achieve the aims of this Motion and they were happy therefore to withdraw the Motion. The Portfolio Holder for Environment confirmed that the Carbon Neutral by 2030 Working Group had acknowledged the role tree planting could play in the reduction of carbon and

had identified that there was an opportunity to plant further trees within the District's open spaces. He would welcome input from all Members of the Council and encourage Members to attend Working Group meetings to further contribute to this important work.

From Cllrs M G Wilkinson, A H Eves and G J Ioannou

Motion on notice to amend the system of recording the results of voting as contained within Part 4 of the Constitution of the Council

"That paragraph 17.3 of the Constitution be replaced with the following:

Unless a recorded vote is demanded under Rule 17.4, the Chairman will take the vote by a show of hands and the numbers of those voting for or against a Motion or abstaining from voting will be recorded in the minutes."

Members agreed that this should apply equally to remote meetings and should take effect immediately. The Motion was moved by Cllr M G Wilkinson and seconded by Cllr A H Eves.

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

For (36) Cllrs Mrs D L Belton, J C Burton; Mrs L A Butcher; C C Cannell; M R Carter; Mrs T L Carter; R R Dray; D S Efde; A H Eves; Mrs J R Gooding; N J Hookway; M Hoy; K H Hudson; G J Ioannou; M J Lucas-Gill; Mrs J R Lumley; Mrs C M Mason; Mrs J E McPherson; D Merrick; R Milne; J E Newport; Mrs C A Pavelin; Mrs C E Roe; Mrs L Shaw; P J Shaw; S P Smith; D J Sperring; C M Stanley; M J Steptoe; I H Ward; M J Webb; Mrs C A Weston; M G Wilkinson; A L Williams; S A Wilson; S E Wootton

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

The Motion was declared carried and it was:

Resolved

That paragraph 17.3 of the Constitution be replaced with the following:

'Unless a recorded vote is demanded under Rule 17.4, the Chairman will take the vote by a show of hands and the numbers of those voting for or against a motion or abstaining from voting will be recorded in the minutes.' (ADLD)

From Cllrs M J Steptoe and Mrs C E Roe

“That this Council fully supports the campaign and calls on the PFCC and the Chief Constable to re-open the public/front desk at Rayleigh Police Station and for beat officers to hold regular bi-weekly meetings for the public to attend at key venues in the District.”

The Motion was moved by Cllr M J Steptoe and seconded by Cllr Mrs C E Roe. Speaking to the Motion, Cllr M J Steptoe advised that there was an expectation by the public that the front desk of the police station be open, but that the closest police stations that were open were in Southend and Basildon. He felt that if the Rayleigh station were to be re-opened, it would not necessarily need to be staffed by front line police but by civilians or volunteers. There could be a trial period when reasons for visiting the station would be monitored and the station did not necessarily need to be open all day; this would be dependent on the staffing situation.

One of the main advantages of re-opening the front desk would be to give confidence and reassurance to residents, as well as providing a signposting service to the public. However, it was pointed out that the focus of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner had been on having officers on the street as opposed to staffing a building.

In response to concern raised in respect of volunteers being used to fulfil front line duties, it was noted there was already an established system of Police Support Volunteers and it was a way of allowing people to serve in their community.

One Member commented that during the pandemic lockdown, there had been a noticeable increase in officers on the street and the Police were holding live Q&A sessions on social media, which had been well received.

There was the advantage also of receiving intelligence from the public about local issues and local crime.

Although in support of the Motion, a Member stated that it was likely to be difficult to achieve this. He asked what contact had been made with the local police commander regarding bi-weekly meetings and the Police resources that would be needed to staff this. Cllr M J Steptoe had discussed with the local Chief Inspector the possibility of increasing the number of public facing meetings with the Police, part of a larger campaign being brought forward to the station itself. There would be liaison with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable on how this could be achieved.

Resolved

That this Council fully supports the campaign and calls on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable to re-open the public/front desk at Rayleigh Police Station and for beat officers to hold regular bi-weekly

meetings for the public to attend at key venues in the District. (ADPC)

(34 Members voted for the Motion, 0 voted against and 0 abstained.)

From Cllrs Mrs J E McPherson and Mrs J R Gooding

Last year our Government led the way by being the first national government to declare an environment and Climate Emergency aiming to be carbon neutral by 2050.

Our own authority has set up a Carbon Neutral Working Group specifically to identify how we can reduce our carbon footprint and aim to become carbon neutral.

We now have the emerging 'Environment Bill' which will bring into UK law environmental protections and recovery.

The Environment Bill will put the environment at the centre of policy making. It will make sure that we have a cleaner, greener and more resilient country for the next generation. This will provide new developments that enhance biodiversity and create new green spaces for local communities to enjoy.

- This Council is currently working on preparing a new Local Plan. I propose that the Environment Bill is at the centre of this new plan.
- That this Council lobbies the Secretary of State to ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Advisory Service adopts the aims of the Environment Bill within their policy framework.

The Motion was moved by Cllr Mrs J E McPherson and seconded by Cllr Mrs J R Gooding.

The Leader of the Green Group felt that this Motion was much stronger than recommendation 7 in the Item 8(2) report of the Review Committee Carbon Neutral by 2030 Working Group, as it took into account the Government's Environment Bill.

The Leader of Rochford District Residents Group stated that the passing of the Environment Bill had been delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic and was not due to be considered by parliament until later in the year; there was no guarantee that the Bill would be passed. She moved an amendment to the Motion, seconded by Cllr Mrs J E McPherson, to amend the wording of the second recommendation to 'the aims of the Environment Bill are at the centre of this new plan'.

In response to a question, the Assistant Director, Place and Environment advised that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) would have the most weight in a situation where its aims did not coincide with the Council's

Local Plan. The Environment Bill would make close reference to the NPPF and would be used to shape the Council's planning policy.

Council voted on the amendment to the Motion.

Cllr C C Cannell raised a point of order that at past meetings of Council when amendments had been made to a Motion, there was no subsequent vote on the substantive Motion; the amended Motion went through as the substantive Motion straight away. The Monitoring Officer clarified that where there was an amendment to a Motion proposed, this must be voted on first. If the amendment was carried, the Motion as amended would take the place of the original Motion and become the substantive Motion. The Chairman would read out the Motion, as amended, which would then be put to the vote. Further clarification on this point could be provided outside of the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning responded to the Motion as follows: 'We expect the Government to shortly publish a Planning White Paper to set out its ideas and proposals for the future of the planning system. The Council's response to this White Paper will make clear its desire to see environmental sustainability placed at the heart of the planning system. In practice this will mean taking measures to ensure that new homes and commercial buildings minimise their use of carbon, not just in construction but throughout their lifetime, which is where modular build could be promoted, together with ensuring that areas of environmental value are afforded the strongest possible protection through the planning system'.

A vote was taken on the Motion as amended and it was:-

Resolved

- (1) That the Government's Environment Bill be at the centre of the Council's new Local Plan.
- (2) That this Council lobbies the Secretary of State to ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Advisory Service adopts the aims of the Environment Bill within its policy framework. (ADPE)

(34 Members voted for the Motion, 0 against and 1 abstained.)

In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Members voted to continue with the meeting past 2½ hours.

From Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding, Mrs C E Roe and M J Steptoe

Inconsiderate parking on footways and grass verges is both anti-social and potentially dangerous for pedestrians and motorists alike. Furthermore, grass verges become churned up and look unsightly and incur costs to repair as a result.

Rochford District Council is seeking to identify with partners, including Essex County Council Highways and the South Essex Parking Partnership, to explore ways in which traffic regulations can be put in place, and enforcement resource can be made available, in order to lessen the problem throughout the Rochford District.

The Motion was moved by Cllr Mrs J R Gooding and seconded by Cllr M J Steptoe.

In support of the Motion, Cllr M J Steptoe stated that there were many areas within the District with narrow footpaths and roads with a footpath on one side only, which made it impossible for a pushchair or wheelchair to remain on the footpath if there were cars parked on the footpath. The issue of inconsiderate parking on footpaths also affected grass cutting.

A Member stated that in some parts of London it was illegal to park on the footway and asked if it would be possible to introduce a byelaw locally to prevent this issue. A Member advised that the South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP) was looking into the options for addressing the situation, including allowing local authorities to introduce a civil offence to prevent cars parking on the pavement.

In response to a question regarding enforcement, it would be explored with SEPP whether photographic evidence submitted by members of the public of cars parking on a footpath would be acceptable, or whether this had to come from an enforcement officer. Members would be kept informed.

It was added that SEPP were looking to have a camera vehicle, which would provide wardens with the registration number of the car parked on the footpath, to enable a parking ticket to be issued.

An option to combat this problem that was used in parts of London would be to have hedgerows planted along the verges. This had the added advantage of absorbing carbon. It was noted, however, that a vast number of the green hedges were also sight lines at junctions and that the cost of maintaining additional hedges would fall to the Council.

Resolved

That Rochford District Council seeks to identify with partners, including Essex County Council Highways and the South Essex Parking Partnership, to explore ways in which traffic regulations can be put in place, and enforcement resource can be made available, in order to lessen the problem throughout the Rochford District. (ADAC)

(26 Members voted for the Motion, 1 against and 1 abstained.)

105 BILLY CHIP SCHEME

The Portfolio Holder for Community provided a verbal update.

'Council Officers have looked into the Billy Chip scheme along with another proposal our partners CHESS and Chelmsford City Council were considering introducing, called the 'tap and give' scheme. This alternative scheme allowed the public to 'tap and give' through an organisation called Greater Change, who use all the funds to pay for items that are needed to break the cycle of homelessness.

Both schemes have positives, but to date neither Chelmsford nor Rochford have sought to implement either scheme. This will be reviewed in the future, but the main reason for this is that one positive outcome of the Coronavirus period has been the strength of the government desire to keep rough sleepers off the street and in accommodation.

In Rochford district, the Housing Team picked up 10 rough sleepers through the emergency Coronavirus Public Health guidance and all of these were accommodated and remain in accommodation.

Although the Housing Team was aware of one entrenched rough sleeper, the others that were supported came under the new public health emergency definition of rough sleeper and were not entrenched rough sleepers, but hidden homeless, for example those sleeping on a sofa that were staying with friends and family.

Because of this progress, the urgency of developing either the Billy Chip scheme or the 'tap and give' scheme has not been so pressing, as all the known rough sleepers in our district are housed. This is not to say that in future others may become visible on our streets and we will then need to consider these schemes, but I hope that schemes like this will continue to be less needed as we succeed in our commitment to end rough sleeping locally.'

Resolved

That the update be noted. (ADPC)

106 CCTV WORKING GROUP

(Cllrs A L Williams, G J Ioannou and Mrs J E McPherson each declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of being Chairman of Rochford Parish Council, Chairman of the Rochford Chamber of Trade and Vice-Chairman of Rochford Parish Council respectively.)

Council received an update on the initial findings of the CCTV Member Working Group considering whether there was a case for the introduction of a publicly monitored system in locations across the Rochford District.

A Member of the Working Group emphasised how much the technology and quality of CCTV systems had improved in recent years. The Portfolio Holder for Community was thanked for running a cross-party approach to the

Working Group. It was noted that mobile CCTV units could be moved around the district, as problems occur in an area. The need for this facility would differ from parish to parish, although the two primary areas were Rayleigh and Rochford and the Working Group would work with Members of Parish and Town Councils in these areas to best meet the needs of residents. The Chambers of Trade in Rochford and Rayleigh would be involved in discussions with the Working Group to provide input from businesses in the District.

In response to a question, the Portfolio Holder for Community advised that the Community Safety Officer would liaise with the Police to identify crime 'hot spots' in the area and this could inform where any mobile camera units were sited. It was noted that while the Police would not be able to provide funding, the Parish/Town Councils could be asked to contribute.

It was noted that as well as the reduction and detection of crime and disorder, assistance in providing the Police with evidence to use in court cases was a benefit of installing CCTV systems.

A Member asked whether it was worth taking on the legal responsibilities attached to having CCTV if it was not felt that it reduced crime significantly. The Portfolio Holder for Community responded that while it was difficult to discern the actual benefits of having CCTV, it did provide public reassurance. Most residents felt it would be a good use of public money as it would make them feel safer.

Resolved

- (1) That the work undertaken by the CCTV Working Group to date be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that further work was required to scope the location/number/specification of any proposed cameras and their associated cost. (ADPC)

The meeting closed at 11.07 pm.

Chairman

Date

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