

The Executive – 9 November 2022

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **9 November 2022** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr S E Wootton
Vice Chairman: Cllr Mrs C E Roe

Cllr Mrs D L Belton
Cllr D S Efde
Cllr D J Sperring

Cllr I H Ward
Cllr M J Webb
Cllr A L Williams

OFFICERS PRESENT

J Stephenson	- Chief Executive Officer
E Yule	- Strategic Director
S Summers	- Strategic Director
P Barnes	- Director of Assets & Investments
P Drane	- Director of Place
A Hunkin	- Interim Director of People & Governance
T Lilley	- Director of Communities & Health
N Lucas	- Assistant Director, Resources
M Hotten	- Director of Environment
M Harwood-White	- Corporate Manager, Regeneration Capital Programme
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer
C Cox	- Principal Accountant
D Goodman	- Team Leader, Strategic Planning
W Szyszka	- Democratic Services Officer

219 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

220 QUARTER 2 2022/23 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE UPDATE REPORT

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Resources setting out the forecast revenue and capital budget positions as at end of Quarter 2 2022/23.

The Leader advised the Executive that Rochford District Council did not have any borrowing, avoiding expensive loan and interest repayments, and that the Council did not have investments which avoided the associated risks. The Council was visionary in recognising financial challenges facing local government, i.e., the excellent partnership arrangements with Brentwood Borough Council and the creation of a #OneTeam Strategic Partnership and shared services approach and the consequent cost benefits. The Council needed to press ahead with cost efficiencies by maximising use of the Council's assets.

The Leader concluded that the Council had a long-standing proven history of prudent and responsible financial management and that would continue to be the continuing theme of the administration, despite current challenges.

Resolved

- (1) That the Quarter 2 2022/23 revenue budget and capital position set out in Sections 3 and 4 of the report and detailed in Appendices 1 to 4 be noted.
- (2) That the half year performance update at Section 5 and Appendix 5 be noted. (ADR)

221 COST OF LIVING UPDATE

The Executive considered the report of the Director of Communities and Health providing an oversight of the work being undertaken by officers in order to respond to the crisis and ensure that the Council was supporting residents, businesses and staff.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities & Health thanked officers for their hard work on the report.

Officers advised that a working group had been set up involving partners and had tasked two task and finish groups with work on developing a communications plan and data collection. A dashboard showing the impact of the cost of living crisis would be brought to the Executive for review. This would be implemented, and the Executive would be presented with the dashboard that would provide detail not currently covered by the action plan.

Officers added that of the cost of living grant of £5,000 approved at the last Full Council meeting was being handled by RRAVS on behalf of the Council; there had already been approaches from residents. Additional financial support was also available.

Officers advised that the Council was working on a digital campaign on the cost of living crisis with the strapline "By Your Side". The campaign would share information and vital messages to residents in a timely manner and was also aimed at removing any stigma associated with the crisis and to offer support for those who had never found themselves in financial difficulties as well as those who needed more support in the longer-term.

The Leader emphasised that the Executive remained committed to receiving reports on the cost of living crisis a monthly basis. He added that at the last meeting of Full Council Members were involved in a useful debate that reflected concerns raised by the Council in order to tackle the cost of living crisis.

A Member asked whether the Rochford District Council (RDC) website contained an easy-press button on the front page.

Officers responded that the website included an easy-press button for residents to navigate to relatable content more easily.

Resolved

That the current version of the joint Cost of Living Action Plan for Rochford and Brentwood, as agreed by the Executive on 27 September 2022, be noted.
(DCH)

222 COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES AND PROPOSALS

The Chief Executive addressed the Executive and made the following statement:-

“Thank you, Chairman.

I am addressing the meeting as the Chief Executive Officer to request that Item 9 is withdrawn from the agenda this evening and considered at a future meeting.

The reason for this is it has become evident that there are a number of questions and areas in the report that require further information to reassure Members ahead of any decision being taken.

Officers will work with Members with the intention of bringing back an updated report at the earliest for December’s Executive.

I apologise to all for any inconvenience this may cause, but it is important that Members have all the information at hand and time to digest the information prior to a decision being taken.

Based on the number of questions I have received ahead of tonight’s meeting; I feel this is the case.

So, with regret, I propose that this item be withdrawn from tonight’s agenda and considered at a future meeting of the Executive once additional and relevant information has been added and Members have been engaged further.”

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive Officer for the statement and commented that:-

“With the best intentions, in a measure to get through the governance process in order to proceed with what is essentially a significant concept an opportunity for Rochford District Council, some key aspects of engagement and scrutiny have not yet taken place, and I believe it is right an proper to defer this item, so this process can happen.

Members, is this agreed?”

Resolved

That Item 9 be deferred to a future meeting of the Executive. (ADAC)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

223 REGENERATION STRATEGY 2022-2040

The Executive considered the report of the Assistant Director, Assets and Commercial setting out details of the emerging vision for a regeneration strategy to support the Council's strategic regeneration ambition and delivery of the Business Plan objectives.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure stated that he was pleased to be a part of a forward thinking Council that is proactive in reaching out to the community and exploring opportunities for growth and prosperity. The Portfolio Holder continued that it was vital for the Council to take the lead to stimulate regeneration and that the Council proposed to develop a Regeneration Strategy to support the strategic regeneration ambition and deliver the RDC's Business Plan Objectives.

The Portfolio Holder added that the vision for the Regeneration Strategy demonstrated the Council's appetite for taking a proactive role in the regeneration of its assets. The primary objective was to support the delivery of the Council's social purpose.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that the Council would ensure that the Regeneration Strategy was community driven, providing positive outcomes. The Portfolio Holder welcomed working with the Executive Members in the draft of the strategy as this was a wide-ranging and important issue for the District.

The Executive were also advised that a draft report of the Regeneration Strategy would be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for review and scrutiny.

Resolved

That the emerging vision for a Regeneration Strategy to support the Council's strategic regeneration ambition and delivery of the Business Plan objectives be noted. (ADAC)

224 SECTION 106 QUARTERLY BRIEFING: OCTOBER 2022

The Executive considered the report of the Director of Place providing details of the position on Section 106 contributions as of 1 October 2022.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning advised that RDC did not directly monitor Section 106 (S106) contributions that were payable to Essex County Council (ECC). All S106s set out which contributions were payable to RDC and ECC, but in all instances, ECC was legally the appropriate body for receiving contributions that related to County matters, i.e., education, transport or sustainable travel.

The Portfolio Holder further advised that RDC did not handle these contributions at any stage as they were directly transferred from the developer to ECC that were then spent by ECC on appropriate capital projects agreed by ECC's internal governance.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that RDC would periodically request monitoring information from ECC to include a list of all contributions due or held by ECC, including their purpose and any refund date. The Portfolio Holder advised that this information would be requested and included in a future report.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that other than making representations to ECC, RDC had no ability to directly determine how or when these contributions were spent; however, this also applied to ECC who could not determine how or when contributions were spent by RDC.

The Portfolio Holder for Climate and Economy thanked the officers and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning for providing the report in a user friendly format.

A Member queried why some money was indefinite and some had a timescale on it.

In response, officers advised that some agreements contained a clawback clause that meant that after a certain period the developer had a right to have the money refunded back to them if it was not allocated to be spent. Developers can choose to have the clause included in the draft of the agreement; however, some developers could feel less inclined to include the clause due to the purpose and nature of the development itself.

Resolved

That the position on Section 106 contributions as at 1 October 2022 be noted.
(DP)

225 LOCAL PLAN TRANSPORT ASSESSMENT

The Executive considered the report of the Director of Place setting out two options for progressing work on the Local Plan Transport Assessment.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning advised that the modelling work would be undertaken by Jacobs UK Limited who were a 50% shareholder in Ringway Jacobs. The Portfolio Holder added that ECC had a long term contract with Ringway Jacobs that facilitated works being done by Jacobs UK Limited, which was a national consultancy that had projects beyond local authority contracts.

The Portfolio Holder further advised that Jacobs' modelling had successfully supported Local Plans in Chelmsford, Colchester, Tendring and Braintree; however, it was noted that regardless of which consultancy was used, ECC was the highway authority and would need to endorse the assessment

undertaken. The Portfolio Holder advised that ECC would use Jacobs to undertake assessment of any third party consultant's work and therefore using a third party consultant would never be fully independent of Jacob's involvement.

The Portfolio Holder clarified that the advantage of using Jacobs directly was the lower cost and timescales involved in being able to access their existing South Essex model and the need for no assessment of that third party consultancy's work.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that there could be advantages in using a third party consultancy as it could bring two expert opinions forward, which would result in less reliance on a single option.

Cllr I H Ward moved a Motion, seconded by Cllr D S Efde, that Option B be pursued as set out in this report.

This was unanimously agreed.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services, Legal & IT supported pursuing Option B and spoke in its favour and added that this would give the Council the opportunity to review another option without being obliged to rely on ECC.

Resolved

- (1) (1)That the Executive resolves to pursue Option B, as set out in this report, and authorise a drawdown of up to £200,000 from the Local Development Framework Reserve to fund the assessment noting that Option B may incur additional cost.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, to manage the delivery of the assessment reporting into the Planning Policy Committee. (DP)

The meeting closed at 8.14 pm.

Chairman

Date

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