

Council – 28 October 2008

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **28 October 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J E Grey
Vice Chairman: Cllr A Humphries

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|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Cllr Mrs P Aves | Cllr M Maddocks |
| Cllr C I Black | Cllr Mrs J A Mockford |
| Cllr Mrs L A Butcher | Cllr J M Pullen |
| Cllr P A Capon | Cllr P R Robinson |
| Cllr Mrs T J Capon | Cllr C G Seagers |
| Cllr M R Carter | Cllr S P Smith |
| Cllr J P Cottis | Cllr M G B Starke |
| Cllr T G Cutmore | Cllr M J Steptoe |
| Cllr K A Gibbs | Cllr J Thomass |
| Cllr K J Gordon | Cllr Mrs M J Webster |
| Cllr K H Hudson | Cllr P F A Webster |
| Cllr T Livings | Cllr Mrs C A Weston |
| Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill | Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins |

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs J Dillnutt, H L A Glynn, T E Goodwin, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, J R F Mason, D Merrick, R A Oatham and D G Stansby.

OFFICERS PRESENT

| | |
|-------------|--|
| P Warren | - Chief Executive |
| R J Honey | - Corporate Director (Internal Services) |
| G Woolhouse | - Corporate Director (External Services) |
| J Bostock | - Committee Services Manager |

ALSO PRESENT

I Davidson and J Surridge of the Audit Commission.

302 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2008 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 15 October 2008 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

303 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Engagements

Notable engagements had included:-

- The local Rochford District Sports Award Ceremony held at the Freight House, Rochford.
- Celebration of the Territorial Army reaching its 100th year at Chelmsford Cathedral.
- The Annual Justices service at Chelmsford Cathedral.

Design, Heritage and Conservation Awards – 2008

The Chairman was pleased to present the District Council's Design, Heritage and Conservation Awards. The awards had been established to enable the Council to recognise developments and schemes of high quality that made a positive contribution to the appearance and character of the District.

The overall winning scheme and winner of the residential development category was the modern take on a medieval house built by Mr Adrian Chapman on the site of Colwood in Ashingdon.

The other winning schemes/developments were:-

| Category | Scheme/Development |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| None residential | St Nicholas' Primary School |
| Environmental Improvement | Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park |
| Listed Building | 35–39 West Street, Rochford |
| Development or Renovation within a Conservation Area | Rochford Hospital |

304 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council noted the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between 21 July and 20 October 2008.

305 REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 2 OCTOBER 2008

Council considered the report of the Standards Committee on Member attendance at planning related training sessions and licensing training.

Resolved

- (1) That attendance at two planning training sessions totalling 4 hours a year, or the making of alternative training arrangements with officers if unable to attend scheduled sessions, be a mandatory requirement of membership of the Development Control Committee in the next municipal year.

- (2) That it be mandatory that Members of the Licensing Committee receive appropriate licensing training prior to participating in Licensing hearings in the next municipal year.
- (3) That further information be provided relating to how the mandatory requirement that Members attend two planning-related training sessions and that Licensing Committee Members receive appropriate training be implemented, taking into account the availability of training, and enforced. (HICS)

306 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 my first opportunity to welcome all Members to the first proper Full Council meeting of the Autumn cycle. It also gives me the opportunity to welcome Mr Jonathon Surridge and Mr Ian Davidson, from the Audit Commission, who over the years has become a familiar face to this Authority. Ian is now the Commission’s lead in Essex on Comprehensive Area Assessment and hopefully tonight he will give us a further insight as to how that new assessment regime will work; as well as give us his views on our recent Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) result.

I will say more on our ‘Good’ CPA rating later on the agenda. The key thing occupying my mind at present, and the focus of much work, particularly over the summer months, has been the preparation of the Preferred Options report of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy. I was extremely pleased that the Extraordinary Council earlier this month agreed the document for consultation. My thanks go particularly to Cllr Hudson, as Executive Member for Planning & Transportation, and the officer team, led by Shaun Scrutton, for all the hard work they have already put in. However, the journey has only just begun and it is extremely important that we maintain our momentum.

Already, as most Members are aware, we are seeing developers suggesting major areas for development in the District. It is important that we as elected Members retain the initiative and determine where development, however much it concerns us, goes; rather than find the developers doing it for us.

Since my last speech in July, the Executive has started to focus on the budget process. We’ve been looking at our performance as an Authority in the first quarter of this year, looking at our capital programme and monitoring the budget. I am pleased to report that the figures coming back around our kerbside recycling scheme remain very high; thanks to the contribution of our residents. Attention is already turning to our budget for next year and the first Member awayday at the end of November. I would urge any Member who has a query in connection with the budget process or has any suggestions to make in connection with next year’s budget to contact the relevant officers – that is Yvonne Woodward and her team. As always, I would encourage all

Member involvement in the November budget Member awayday and it is important that as much detail as possible is available for that session. If you have any ideas, talk to officers and get some basic details fleshed out and the ideas costed.

Over the summer, members of the Executive have been busy and taken decisions on items as diverse as Urban Street Planting, Sponsorship of roundabouts, the Economic Development Strategy, the Government's proposal around free swimming, Chamber of Trade Funding, Taxi Tariffs and the ICT Strategy.

I will be happy to take any questions from Members in respect of the work of the Executive since the last Council meeting. I am sure my Executive colleagues will be happy to contribute where appropriate".

Responding to questions, the Leader advised on various grants being actively sought to assist the Council in funding its initiatives in the context of a difficult economic climate. The Council was always open to suggestions for the promotion of local business. Specific reference was made to a recent continental market event at the Square, Rochford which had promoted local produce and assisted local shop keepers. A suggestion that, in view of the impact its recent activities have had on trade in Rayleigh Town Centre, the utility company be approached on the possibility of sponsorship should be taken forward.

307 MOTION ON NOTICE

Council considered the report of the Proper Officer on a motion relating to Ghurkha rights, received from Councillors T G Cutmore and P A Capon.

Members concurred with the observation of the Leader that it would be appropriate to include the seeking of support from the Town/Parish Councils. It was noted that there are Ghurkha training facilities within the District.

Resolved

That this Council notes that Ghurkhas have played an active front line part in the British army's activities in times of war and peace for nearly 200 years. In this period approximately 300,000 have fought alongside United Kingdom soldiers, with 45,000 of them being killed or wounded.

This Council notes that the Government announced in September 2004 a change of immigration rules that allowed Ghurkhas, who had served in the British army, to settle in the United Kingdom with their families.

This Council notes with concern, however, that this offer has only been extended to cover those who had served at least four years and had been discharged after 1st July 1997.

This Council believes that, given the exceptional service they have given to the United Kingdom, Ghurkhas and their families should be given fast track eligibility for either the right to remain or citizenship.

Therefore this Council:-

Urges Rochford District Members of Parliament to support Early Day Motions that seek to extend Gurkha rights.

Asks the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Local Government Association and the Town/Parish Councils within the District asking them, in turn, to lobby the Government on this matter.

Asks the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister, demanding that all retired Ghurkhas who fought in the British Army get the right to citizenship, as well as a fair deal on pensions.

**308 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
(CPA)/COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA)**

(1) Audit Commission Presentation

Council received a presentation from Mr Ian Davidson and Mr Jonathan Surridge of the Audit Commission on the assessment of Rochford District Council as a “good” Council following the recent CPA inspection and the latest position with regard to CAA, the new regulatory system.

The CPA aspect of the presentation covered the actual scores leading to the “good” rating, key findings in terms of performance and areas for improvement. It concluded with congratulations to Members, officers and partners for all the hard work that had led to the assessment.

The CAA aspect of the presentation covered CAA objectives, outcomes and improvements that would need to be delivered and time scales.

Members noted how partnership working could enhance overall effectiveness and that, from a statistical perspective, once residents moved to the District they usually remained for a significant period.

At the conclusion of the presentation Council concurred with the observation of the Chairman that officers should be thanked for all their work on the CPA process.

(2) Report on Detailed Contents

Council considered the report of the Chief Executive on the detailed contents of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment report.

It was noted that the “good” rating would undoubtedly enhance the Council’s reputation and placed it in a good position as all authorities moved into the new CAA regime of assessment.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the CPA Report 2008 and the Council's assessment as a "good" authority be noted.
- (2) That the work now underway in relation to action planning around those areas highlighted for further work in the report be recognised.
(CE)

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

309 TENDER FOR ELECTRICAL REWIRING

Pursuant to Rule 6 of the contract procedure rules Council received and noted the exempt report of the Head of Legal Services on the acceptance of a tender for an electrical rewiring contract.

310 CONTINUATION OF TERM OF OFFICE

Council considered the exempt report of the Head of Information and Customer Services on the granting of approval to the continuation of a term of office.

It was noted that the Member identified in the report had been able to continue working with constituents.

Resolved

That the term of office of the Member identified in the exempt report be extended until the meeting of Council on 26 February 2009 or until they are able to resume attendance at meetings if this is sooner. (HICS)

The meeting closed at 9.05 pm.

Chairman

Date

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