

## Extraordinary Council – 19 February 2009

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Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **19 February 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J E Grey

Vice Chairman: Cllr A Humphries

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr M Maddocks
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr Mrs L M Cox	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr T E Goodwin	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
Cllr C J Lumley	

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, C G Seagers and D G Stansby.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
R J Honey	-	Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse	-	Corporate Director (External Services)
Y Woodward	-	Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management
C Watkins	-	Financial Services Manager
M Power	-	Committee Administrator

### **39 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX 2009/10**

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management on the level of Council Tax for 2009/10. It was noted that Essex Police Authority had confirmed that its final precept figure was the same as the provisional figure.

The Leader of the Council made the following statement:-

“Chairman and through you, Councillors, members of the public and press,

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I am delighted to present this, my fifth budget, as Leader of this Conservative Administration.

We are, as you all well know, in the grips of a major economic downturn and, although the Council were prepared for major increases to expenditure, spending plans have had to be constrained by the effect this has had on levels of income. In particular there has been a reduction in income of nearly £700,000 in planning, building control, land charges and parking fees and also in income from our investments.

Once again, the restraint in public funding will make the financial position of all local authorities much more difficult. Although Rochford will receive just over £5million for 2009/10, which is a 2.17% increase, the Government is withholding £136,597 worth of grant from the Authority to give to councils that would otherwise have not received the minimum level of grant due.

Although the Government grant settlement was an improvement over previous years, Rochford is still the 34<sup>th</sup> lowest funded per head of the population basis in England and 2<sup>nd</sup> lowest in Essex. The increase does not even cover the inflation increases in the core estimates of about £0.5m. The Government has also made clear that there will be no extra funding to local authorities to help address the shortfalls in income as a result of the fall in the property markets and interest rates.

I am proposing an increase in the Rochford District Council element of council tax of 4.93%, equivalent to just under 18 pence per week for a householder living in a Band D rated property. This means that for a Band D property, the annual council tax relating to Rochford District Council will be £197.28 per year or £3.79 per week.

I am pleased to say that the Council will not be increasing the hourly rate for parking in the District. I believe this will encourage visitors to our town centres and help our struggling businesses in these economically troubled times. The Council will continue to offer free parking on Saturday afternoons and Sundays. We do, however, need to address a shortfall in income, so the daily charge for parking will be increased by a pound and there will also be a previously planned increase in the season ticket price.

During the current budget process, the Council has, quite rightly, considered other income streams that could be increased or introduced. Traditionally, there has been no charge to the users of the bulky waste collection service. Almost all other local authorities make a charge for this and so a charge will be introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009. On forward projections it is thought that this will bring in an estimated additional £110,000 per annum. The Council will, however, continue to make no charge for the collection of green waste unlike other Authorities who do charge. This is a service which previously cost £39.90 per annum in this authority through a private contractor.

Although Rochford, and indeed the rest of the UK, is suffering from the economic downturn, we are still committed to providing an excellent service to

our residents and partners. With this in mind we still aim “to make Rochford District the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit” and we have an overarching vision to:-

- Build on the heritage, cultural and economic strengths of our area
- Improve the quality of life for our communities, and
- Utilise our position within Thames Gateway South Essex to promote the District as the ‘green part’ of our sub region.

The Council has prioritised its services and identified its key priorities for the coming year. Before I talk about the future, however, I would just like to reflect on our achievements over the past year, which has been a very successful one for the Council.

In 2008 the Council was subject to a Comprehensive Performance Assessment. It is still a pleasure to report that we are officially a 'good' Council. There were a lot of positives in the Commission's report and it is heartening that all our hard work was recognised. In reaching their conclusion, the Audit Commission reported that the Council delivers good quality frontline services which receive high rates of public satisfaction. Residents' satisfaction with the Council as a whole rates among the top 25% of English Councils.

Despite being a relatively small authority, the Audit Commission recognised the value that the Council gains through a number of partnerships with other public sector agencies, the voluntary and community sector and also the private sector, ensuring that the residents of the District benefit from these partnership arrangements.

Other excellent news was that Rochford District has been ranked as the seventh best place to live in Great Britain. Research was independently conducted by the Halifax and the survey tracked where living standards are highest by ranking local performance across key areas including the labour market, housing market, the environment, local services, education and health. We always knew that Rochford District is a great place to live, but it is nice to hear it confirmed by an external organisation.

Last year I told you about our planned key priorities for 2008/09 and I would like to take this opportunity to update you on progress of some of these:

- The New Business Start Up initiative has developed into the Rochford in Business Start Up Competition and was launched in November. The competition offers local start up and early stage businesses the opportunity to pitch their ideas and be in with a chance of winning up to £4000 to help kick start their ventures.
- Urban tree planting has been going very well with work commencing in November 2008. Trees have already been planted in Ashingdon and Rochford.

- The new recycling scheme has been a resounding success. Following a random survey of 1000 residents, 93% of respondents said they now recycle more. We are confident that targets will be met if not exceeded since, as at the end of December 2008, we recycled or composted 10,743 tonnes of the total 24,405 tonnes of waste collected. It must be noted, however, that the new contract did not start until July so we expect the full year's figure to be much improved on this. I must offer congratulations to our residents on this, as they are the ones who recycle.
- The handyman and gardening service for which we had increased the level of funding has continued to be popular with our elderly and disabled residents.
- We are still looking to develop and take forward shared service working for our Revenue & Benefits service and the department has been in talks with Castle Point Borough Council to see how this might be progressed. As with all partnerships, however, it will be important that both parties are happy with the proposals that result.
- So far 5 weddings have taken place at Rayleigh Windmill with 3 more booked before the end of 2008/09. There are already 8 weddings booked for 2009/10 and there have been increasing amounts of enquiries so we are expecting the Windmill to be a very happy place to be next year. In addition to weddings, the Windmill will be having its own celebration as it turns 200 years old. Using a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Council and its partners will be organising a host of activities and events to celebrate this.
- One of our objectives has been to implement a Play Strategy and, with help from the £200,000 funding received last year from the Big Lottery, the Play Ranger service commenced in the summer holidays of 2008. It is planned that this initiative will continue in the summer for the next 2 years. In addition, new play equipment has been installed in various areas. The temporary ice rink was a great success with around 1,650 skaters enjoying this free facility. The ice rink was so popular that it has made a return appearance this week during the half term holiday.

So, Chairman, we work within limited budgets, but we still achieve!

Let me turn now to the next financial year.

The Council's vision is that we make the District, "the place of choice in the county to live, work and visit". We are about making a difference to our communities, the environment, the local economy and our heritage. We may be regarded as small in terms of size for a local authority but, as external inspectors have found, we are 'good'!

At this point I would usually tell you about specific new projects which we have earmarked for funding through the budget but, in light of the current financial circumstances, we will be focusing on maintaining and continuing to improve our service delivery and working on key strategies which, if we get them right, will provide the framework for our future prosperity and wellbeing.

- We will continue to develop the Access to Services Strategy in order to exceed our customers' expectations. We have recognised that there are a number of areas which we need to focus on and improve; including efficiencies in the Rochford offices reception and the Planning reception, segregation of switchboard and reception duties, extension of switchboard and reception operation hours for a trial period and a review of the advertisement of telephone numbers.
- I have already mentioned that the handyman and gardening initiative has been well used and should continue to be so.
- Levels of crime within the District have continued to reduce and are lower than in similar districts. Rochford's overall reported crime levels are down by 33% from an already low level and we have the biggest measured crime reduction in the whole of the eastern region of England. We continue to work with other agencies to promote safety in the community and, through the Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, we aim to develop initiatives, which, as well as addressing the specific issue of antisocial behaviour, will help to reduce the fear of crime within the communities which make up Rochford District.
- New national indicators will mean that Rochford is actively working towards reducing its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 30% over the next 5 years.
- The Local Development Framework work continues around the Core Strategy, Joint Area Action Plan and Town Centre studies. Much activity will be happening, particularly over the next few months, as key stages are reached.
- As well as working on the spatial planning framework we will also finalise a new economic development strategy for the District so that we are as prepared as we can be to respond to any upturn in the economy. It will complement the work being done on the core strategy, the joint area action plan, and the town centre studies. It will also act as a key document in our dialogue with regional and national bodies in the context of Thames Gateway South Essex.
- We will continue to improve our parks and open spaces through the rolling improvement programme and work towards improving the newly expanded Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.
- We will continue to press Rochford Housing Association to secure the delivery of new affordable homes in our District and pursue the decent home standard for their existing stock.
- We aim to consolidate our kerbside recycling service and maintain the impressive recycling rates now being achieved.

I must mention once again our excellent links with the voluntary sector. We give a main grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau but we also give further varying amounts of grant aid to other organisations that would possibly not be able to function without our help. These organisations are those that actively

benefit Rochford residents, particularly the elderly, the young and the disabled but all applications are considered on their own merit. We have asked all applicants to sign up to The Rochford Compact which is a local partnership agreement between voluntary and community sector and the Government to improve the relationship for mutual advantage.

Finally, I would like to talk a little about the importance of value for money, a key theme for an authority such as this Council. I mentioned last year that the government made demands on authorities to make Gershon efficiency savings and we have met our targets. Over the past 3 years we have achieved savings of nearly a million pounds which has been invested in service improvements. For next year, we have set ourselves the target of achieving reductions in overall expenditure of £780,000. This is a tough target but, in the current economic climate, it is important that the Council does its bit to reduce expenditure.

Chairman, I am proud of the way Members and Officers of this Council construct the budget process particularly in these times of economic recession. As an Authority, and one with finite capacity, resource and funds, we continue to respond positively to the requirements of our residents and communities. We can demonstrate a record of continuous improvement and a willingness to work with others as appropriate to deliver.

In conclusion, the total council tax for a Band D property will be:-

Essex County Council	£1,066.50 – an increase of 1.9%
Essex Police Authority	£128.25 – an increase of 4.9%
Essex Fire Authority	£64.62 – an increase of 3.8%
Rochford District Council	£197.28 – an increase of 4.9%
Average Parish/Town Council	£30.05 – a decrease of 3%

Total Band D average council tax will be £1,486.70 – an increase of £36.59, or 2.52%.

Chairman, I commend the council tax for Members' approval."

In response to questions, the following was noted:-

- The handyman and gardening service is aimed principally at clearing the badly overgrown gardens of elderly or disabled residents; it is not intended as a weekly maintenance service. It is anticipated that by providing this service instances of opportunistic crime will be reduced. The Council holds regular discussions regarding the service with Springboard Housing Association and a further audit review is currently being undertaken.

- There is a monthly update that details National Lottery grants awarded to organisations within the District and the Council continues to work with voluntary and community sector organisations to maximise the number of successful grant funding applications submitted.
- It was appreciated that there had been issues regarding the Council's out of hours service during the recent instances of flooding experienced in certain parts of the District. The Council has extensive information regarding weather conditions on its website, which is updated on a topical and regular basis. Although responsibility to deal with flooding rests with the householder, the Council endeavours to pass information received promptly to local radio stations and also works in close contact with Parish Councils in this regard. The Council is currently investigating ways in which communication can be channelled in the most effective way throughout all parts of the organisation.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the total for economic development is estimated at £274,400.
- (2) That the total for gross expenditure of the District together with the Parish precepts be £34,277,598.
- (3) That the total of income for the District Council be £22,087,501.
- (4) That the total net expenditure of the District Council together with the Parishes be £12,190,097.
- (5) That the total of the sums payable into the general fund in respect of redistributed non-domestic rates and Government grant, together with adjustments from the collection fund, be £5,091,795.
- (6) That the budget requirement for the year of £12,190,097 less the net income receivable of £5,091,795 which, divided by the tax base of £31,224.82 is equal to £227.33, which is the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- (7) That the total of Parish precepts included within the above is £938,269.
- (8) That the Council Tax relating to the District Council without Parish precepts is £197.28.
- (9) That the total tax for both District and Parishes be as set out in the schedule which is attached at Appendix A to these minutes. These sums are calculated as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which one or more special items relate.

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- (10) That the sums given above for Band D but now shown in the particular valuations bands A-H be as set out in the schedule attached at Appendix B to these minutes.
- (11) That the precepts issued to the Council in respect of Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority and Essex Police Authority for each valuation band A-H be set out in the schedule attached at Appendix C to these minutes.
- (12) That the total Council Tax for the area for each valuation band A-H be as set out in Appendix D to these minutes. These are the amounts set as Council Tax for the year 2009/10. (HFAPM)

The meeting closed at 8 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

If you would like these minutes in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.



Appendix A

**Total Council Tax for Parish/Town Council and Rochford District Council**

	Band D Equivalents	Parish Precept	Parish Charge	District Charge	Total Charge
Ashingdon	1,224.44	39,000	31.85	197.28	229.13
Barling	629.54	34,580	54.93	197.28	252.21
Canewdon	543.00	19,208	35.37	197.28	232.65
Foulness Island	62.70	2,700	43.06	197.28	240.34
Great Wakering	2,004.64	55,000	27.44	197.28	224.72
Hawkwell	4,560.70	129,918	28.49	197.28	225.77
Hockley	3,820.83	156,895	41.06	197.28	238.34
Hullbridge	2,376.74	81,455	34.27	197.28	231.55
Paglesham	98.43	4,000	40.64	197.28	237.92
Rawreth	431.31	10,000	23.19	197.28	220.47
Rayleigh	12,250.05	280,000	22.86	197.28	220.14
Rochford	2,933.33	110,851	37.79	197.28	235.07
Stambridge	234.53	9,300	39.65	197.28	236.93
Sutton	54.58	5,362	98.24	197.28	295.52
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	31,224.82	938,268.54			

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### Appendix B

#### District and Parish/Town Council Tax by Bands A – H

	Band D	Parish	Parish	District	Total	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND
	Equivalents	Precept	Charge	Charge	Charge	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
						6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	2
Ashingdon	1,224.44	39,000	31.85	197.28	229.13	152.75	178.21	203.67	229.13	280.05	330.97	381.88	458.26
Barling	629.54	34,580	54.93	197.28	252.21	168.14	196.16	224.19	252.21	308.26	364.30	420.35	504.42
Canewdon	543.00	19,208	35.37	197.28	232.65	155.10	180.95	206.80	232.65	284.35	336.05	387.75	465.30
Foulness Island	62.70	2,700	43.06	197.28	240.34	160.23	186.93	213.64	240.34	293.75	347.16	400.57	480.68
Great Wakering	2,004.64	55,000	27.44	197.28	224.72	149.81	174.78	199.75	224.72	274.66	324.60	374.53	449.44
Hawkwell	4,560.70	129,918	28.49	197.28	225.77	150.51	175.60	200.68	225.77	275.94	326.11	376.28	451.54
Hockley	3,820.83	156,895	41.06	197.28	238.34	158.89	185.38	211.86	238.34	291.30	344.27	397.23	476.68
Hullbridge	2,376.74	81,455	34.27	197.28	231.55	154.37	180.09	205.82	231.55	283.01	334.46	385.92	463.10
Paglesham	98.43	4,000	40.64	197.28	237.92	158.61	185.05	211.48	237.92	290.79	343.66	396.53	475.84
Rawreth	431.31	10,000	23.19	197.28	220.47	146.98	171.48	195.97	220.47	269.46	318.46	367.45	440.94
Rayleigh	12,250.05	280,000	22.86	197.28	220.14	146.76	171.22	195.68	220.14	269.06	317.98	366.90	440.28
Rochford	2,933.33	110,851	37.79	197.28	235.07	156.71	182.83	208.95	235.07	287.31	339.55	391.78	470.14
Stambridge	234.53	9,300	39.65	197.28	236.93	157.95	184.28	210.60	236.93	289.58	342.23	394.88	473.86
Sutton	54.58	5,362	98.24	197.28	295.52	197.01	229.85	262.68	295.52	361.19	426.86	492.53	591.04
	<u>31,224.82</u>	<u>938,269</u>											

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Appendix C

**Precepts for Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority and Essex Police Authority**

County Charge	Police Charge	Fire Charge	Total Charge	BAND A 6/9	BAND B 7/9	BAND C 8/9	BAND D 1	BAND E 11/9	BAND F 13/9	BAND G 15/9	BAND H 2
<b>1,066.50</b>			1,066.50	711.00	829.50	948.00	1,066.50	1,303.50	1,540.50	1,777.50	2,133.00
	<b>128.25</b>		128.25	85.50	99.75	114.00	128.25	156.75	185.25	213.75	256.50
		<b>64.62</b>	64.62	43.08	50.26	57.44	64.62	78.98	93.34	107.70	129.24

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### Appendix D

#### Total Council Tax by Bands A-H

	Band D	Parish	Parish	District	County	Fire	Police	Total	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND	BAND
	Equivalents	Precept	Charge	Charge	Charge	Charge	Charge	Charge	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
									6/9	7/9	8/9	1	11/9	13/9	15/9	2
Ashingdon	1,224.44	39,000	31.85	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,488.50	992.33	1,157.72	1,323.11	1,488.50	1,819.28	2,150.06	2,480.83	2,977.00
Barling	629.54	34,580	54.93	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,511.58	1,007.72	1,175.67	1,343.63	1,511.58	1,847.49	2,183.39	2,519.30	3,023.16
Canewdon	543.00	19,208	35.37	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,492.02	994.68	1,160.46	1,326.24	1,492.02	1,823.58	2,155.14	2,486.70	2,984.04
Foulness Island	62.70	2,700	43.06	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,499.71	999.81	1,166.44	1,333.08	1,499.71	1,832.98	2,166.25	2,499.52	2,999.42
Great Wakering	2,004.64	55,000	27.44	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,484.09	989.39	1,154.29	1,319.19	1,484.09	1,813.89	2,143.69	2,473.48	2,968.18
Hawkwell	4,560.70	129,918	28.49	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,485.14	990.09	1,155.11	1,320.12	1,485.14	1,815.17	2,145.20	2,475.23	2,970.28
Hockley	3,820.83	156,895	41.06	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,497.71	998.47	1,164.89	1,331.30	1,497.71	1,830.53	2,163.36	2,496.18	2,995.42
Hullbridge	2,376.74	81,455	34.27	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,490.92	993.95	1,159.60	1,325.26	1,490.92	1,822.24	2,153.55	2,484.87	2,981.84
Paglesham	98.43	4,000	40.64	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,497.29	998.19	1,164.56	1,330.92	1,497.29	1,830.02	2,162.75	2,495.48	2,994.58
Rawreth	431.31	10,000	23.19	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,479.84	986.56	1,150.99	1,315.41	1,479.84	1,808.69	2,137.55	2,466.40	2,959.68
Rayleigh	12,250.05	280,000	22.86	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,479.51	986.34	1,150.73	1,315.12	1,479.51	1,808.29	2,137.07	2,465.85	2,959.02
Rochford	2,933.33	110,851	37.79	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,494.44	996.29	1,162.34	1,328.39	1,494.44	1,826.54	2,158.64	2,490.73	2,988.88
Stambridge	234.53	9,300	39.65	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,496.30	997.53	1,163.79	1,330.04	1,496.30	1,828.81	2,161.32	2,493.83	2,992.60
Sutton	54.58	5,362	98.24	197.28	1,066.50	64.62	128.25	1,554.89	1,036.59	1,209.36	1,382.12	1,554.89	1,900.42	2,245.95	2,591.48	3,109.78
	<u>31,224.82</u>	<u>938,269</u>														