

Council – 29 July 2008

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **29 July 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J E Grey

Vice Chairman: Cllr A J Humphries

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr M Maddocks
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 D G Stansby
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

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs H L A Glynn, J R F Mason, J M Pullen, C G Seagers and S P Smith

OFFICERS PRESENT

R J Honey - Corporate Director (Internal Services)
G Woolhouse - Corporate Director (External Services)
S Fowler - Head of Information and Customer Services
Y Woodward - Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management
J Bostock - Committee Services Manager

241 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 13 May 2008 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 26 June 2008 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

242 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

A high number of engagements had been attended by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. Of the 41 attended by the Chairman, the following had been of particular note:-

- Royal Anglian Regiments, Beating Retreat and Reception
- Boy's Brigade Duke of Edinburgh Awards at Hawkwell Baptist Church

- The High Sheriff's garden party
- The King Edmund's School awards
- The 85th anniversary of the Royal British Legion at Rayleigh

Specific reference was made to the success of the recent Chairman's Garden Party in terms of raising funds for the Chairman's Charity and to the forthcoming Chairman's Charity Golf Day on 10 September 2008.

243 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council noted the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between 14 May and 21 July 2008.

244 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 speech to the Council in this municipal year. Since the elections, the focus of work has been mainly on 3 specific areas. Firstly, and most importantly, there has been the work around the kerbside recycling rollout, which started last week. Given members', residents' and the local press interest in this topic, I will ask Cllr Michael Starke, as portfolio holder for the Environment, to give an update on the latest position in due course.

Much work has also been taken up by the external independent inspection by the Audit Commission under the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) regime. The inspection took place over two weeks in June and I am confident that we have demonstrated to the Inspectors that we are a Council with a good track record of improvement and solid achievements, to the benefit of our residents. We will not have the official announcement on our reassessment until October. However I believe we are a 'can-do' Council, confident in its ability and able to deliver to our residents the services that they expect. We are not afraid to make big decisions - the housing stock transfer and kerbside recycling rollout demonstrate that. We also have to accept that in taking these decisions there will be issues and teething problems which we have to address and overcome. The important thing is that we tackle these and learn from our experiences. As I said, the kerbside recycling scheme is a case in point and Cllr Starke will provide details later.

The third area of focus has been around planning and work related to the Local Development Framework. Specifically, the options developed jointly with Southend Borough Council around London Southend Airport and its environs are now at consultation. I believe the airport and the area around it is a key ingredient to the future prosperity of the District and it will be interesting to see what the consultation responses reveal.

The members of the new Executive have also been busy since May picking up their portfolios and taking decisions within their remit. Some of the key decisions taken relate to progressing the small business initiative, for which we as a Council have set aside £20,000, the work on progressing the District's Heritage offer, and the £20,000 set aside for initiatives around Young People. You will all have seen the key decisions around these areas and had the opportunity to challenge where you have concerns. I am pleased too that the Review Committee have already taken the opportunity to invite portfolio holders to the Committee to discuss some of the decisions scheduled to be taken. That is a very welcome development. I will be happy to take any questions from members in respect of the work of the Executive over the past couple of months."

The Leader thanked Councillor C I Black for suggesting some areas of historical interest within the District that could be aligned to the Council's Heritage offer (Darwin's Ship and involvement in forthcoming Darwin Day celebrations, the existence of a Saxon burial mound in West Rayleigh and the Martyr's Memorial in Rayleigh High Street at which the laying of a wreath annually might be appropriate). Consideration would be given to the suggestions.

Councillor M G B Starke, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, gave the following update on the position with regard to the new recycling scheme:-

"We are now in the second week of our new recycling scheme. Whilst on the whole it has gone very well, I am aware that there have been a number of difficulties.

These have centred upon the delivery of information packs and, in a few cases, the delivery of the new bins themselves. I would apologise unreservedly for the problems this has caused our residents.

The implementation of this scheme was carefully planned both by our officers and our partners SITA. We have both put in considerable resources into ensuring that the new scheme was introduced as smoothly as possible.

Prior to the introduction of the scheme we did publish two special editions of Recycling News, articles in Rochford District Matters and send personally addressed letters to residents asking them to identify difficulties with bin storage. We received over 1300 replies to these questionnaires that required follow up assessments and site visits.

Between the 18 and 25 July we received over 5000 telephone calls and e-mails. These covered general enquiries though to specific concerns about missing information packs – In the region of 1300, and the non delivery of bins.

Inevitably with 70,000 bins to organise there were some that did not arrive in time. SITA provided extra staff to undertake this work which extended over the weekend.

Officers took the decision for SITA to deliver the information packs over a one week period, starting on 14 July to minimise confusion. With hindsight it may have been more appropriate to have undertaken this task over a longer period.

Last week I met with senior management of SITA to discuss progress and sought assurances that appropriate resources were in place. Officers are working with SITA to address all of the issues raised.

During the first full week of the new scheme we collected 311 tonnes of compostable material, which is an outstanding success when you consider that we only collected 120 tonnes from the District wide scheme for the whole of May.

During the first two days of this week's collection we collected 101 tonnes of dry recyclables', which contrast to 390 tonnes for the month of May.

SITA have in the order of 400 calls to follow up about missing bins, but on past experience they know that a number of these will be duplicate requests. As of last Friday we are now posting out missing information packs to residents who contact the Council. We are working with SITA to address these issues as soon as possible.

In conclusion I would like to express my appreciation to our residents who have embraced this new scheme so enthusiastically and helped us to achieve such excellent results in such a short time."

In delivering the update, Councillor Starke wished to emphasise that both he and officers extended sincere apologies to those residents that had been let down by problems associated with scheme launch.

Responding to questions, Councillor Starke advised that:-

- There is constant communication with SITA, who have brought in additional resources to help deal with the implementation.
- There had been a limited instance of bins being delivered in an inappropriate manner. However, issues had been addressed immediately.

It was noted that the Leader of the Council was seeking a meeting with the directors of SITA at which the value of effective partnership working would be emphasised. It was also noted that some complaints have been unfounded.

Council concurred with the observation of the Leader that, by its nature, the new scheme laid the foundation for significant levels of recycling and that grateful thanks should be extended to Councillor Starke for his hard work and contributions.

245 MOTION ON NOTICE

Council considered the report of the Proper Officer on a motion relating to eco-towns received from Councillors T G Cutmore and K H Hudson pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12.

During discussion reference was made to the high amount of green belt within the District, which included areas of flood plain. Reference was also made to the fact that definitions associated with eco-towns suggested a minimum of 5,000 dwellings, which is above the figure identified by the Council's own housing needs study. It was observed that, notwithstanding the inappropriateness of eco-towns, there can be good features of ecology.

The motion was agreed and it was:-

Resolved

That Rochford District Council is opposed to the concept of eco-towns, as proposed by central Government, which are not supported by Council core strategies and relevant housing needs studies.

The eco-town concept as presented by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is flawed both technically and democratically. It is outside of the existing regional planning framework and is a policy imposition by central Government not subject to local accountability.

There is nothing inherent in the concept that could deliver a greener future as compared with ensuring that the proposed 126,000 Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) dwellings for Essex deliver sustainable living.

Any sustainable proposal must be underpinned by local job and infrastructure funding to fundamentally support the concept. (CE)

246 ANNUAL REPORT 2007/08

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the draft Annual Report for 2007/08.

It was noted that the final report would include some formatting suggestions made by the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Councillor P F A Webster, aimed at ensuring that the document was easy to read.

Resolved

That, subject to any changes arising from the audit of the accounts, the Annual Report 2007/08 be agreed for publication as set out in the report. (HFAPM)

247 INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL REPORT

Council considered the report of the Head of Information and Customer Services containing the recommendations of the reconvened Independent Remuneration Panel.

Responding to questions, the Head of Information and Customer Services advised on the process for recruiting to the Independent Remuneration Panel and confirmed that, whilst the recommendations of a Panel are not binding, the Council would need to refer to them if making changes. It was also confirmed that the Panel's proposals would represent a £50,000 budget increase and that the Panel is cognisant of prevailing remuneration rates across the County when developing recommendations.

During discussion of the Panel's recommendations, a Member referred to the lower levels of remuneration in place in earlier years and to the difficulty of seeing the benefit of the proposed increases. Higher levels of remuneration also highlighted the possibility that savings could be achieved if executive arrangements were not in place.

In favour of the Panel's proposals, reference was made to their appropriateness in terms of reflecting the new political structure. Whilst it is important that the Council is very careful when considering the expenditure of public monies, it is right that levels of remuneration at Rochford reflect the prevailing rates across the County. Reference was also made to the fact that the new structure is in its early stages and that there would inevitably be a period of 'bedding in'.

Resolved

That the amendments to the Remuneration Scheme for 2008/09 as proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel be adopted. (HICS)

Note: Councillors C I Black, Mrs J Dilnutt, C R Lumley and R A Oatham wished to be recorded as voting against the above decision. Cllr D G Stansby wished to be recorded as abstaining.

The meeting closed at 8.22 pm.

Chairman

Date

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