

## Council – 25 October 2022

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Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **25 October 2022** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr M J Steptoe  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs J E McPherson

Cllr Mrs D L Belton	Cllr Mrs C M Mason
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr R Milne
Cllr Mrs T L Carter	Cllr G W Myers
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr J E Newport
Cllr R P Constable	Cllr L J Newport
Cllr J E Cripps	Cllr Mrs C E Roe
Cllr A G Cross	Cllr D W Sharp
Cllr D S Efde	Cllr Mrs L Shaw
Cllr A H Eves	Cllr D J Sperring
Cllr I A Foster	Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman
Cllr Mrs E P Gadsdon	Cllr C M Stanley
Cllr J N Gooding	Cllr I H Ward
Cllr Mrs J R Gooding	Cllr M J Webb
Cllr Ms T D Knight	Cllr A L Williams
Cllr R Lambourne	Cllr V A Wilson
Cllr J L Lawmon	Cllr S A Wilson
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	Cllr S E Wootton
Cllr J R F Mason	

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M Hoy and M G Wilkinson.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

J Stephenson	- Joint Chief Executive
S Summers	- Strategic Director
E Yule	- Strategic Director
P Barnes	- Director of Assets & Investment
S Bennett	- Director of Customer & Data Insight
M Hotten	- Director of Environment
T Lilley	- Director of Communities & Health
A Law	- Assistant Director, Legal & Democratic
S Worthington	- Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer
D Goodman	- Team Leader, Strategic Planning & Economic Development

### **208 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 209 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Chairman made the following announcement:-

“Members, since our last meeting in July so much has happened and changed. Three prime ministers; four chancellors and maybe another one to come and so many changes to the Cabinet I have lost track – and who knows what the next few months will bring.

The very sad loss of our sovereign Queen Elizabeth II and a new king, King Charles III.

I, for one, am still trying to get the words right for the national anthem. I had the honour and privilege of reading out the proclamation for the new King. As I am sure, putting together all the requirements for Operation London Bridge was not an easy task and was also done at a very short notice.

I would like to say a few words to those who went above and beyond the call of duty in organising everything.

Holly, Sonia and Weronika all worked on the civic side of things making all the arrangements, Anna dealt with the Communications side, Jim worked on setting up the road closure and Valerie worked hard on the printing and of course Colin who was responsible for making sure I was at the right place at the right time. Indeed, one day there were three or four church services in various places around South Essex.

It all started when Holly contacted me on Thursday lunchtime as things were starting to happen as I was waiting in my office thinking I am up to date with all my emails and was going to have a quiet weekend.

The officers worked behind the scenes getting everything organised but what you may now know is how long and how much work it takes.

I know how much time the team had to put in and some were starting as early as 6.30am and still answering emails up until 10.00pm.

I would like to give them all my personal thanks and I am sure that you will agree with me that we have some outstanding officers.

I would like to make a presentation to the officers – Holly and Sonia who are here this evening and the other officers who have been unable to attend will get a surprise tomorrow.

Sadly, Colin is leaving us tomorrow, so I would like to thank him, and I am sure that other past Chairmen will join me in thanking him for making sure that we are always on time.

I feel Rochford has much to offer and I have visited voluntary organisations and businesses to lend my support and raise awareness for the wonderful facilities available in our district.

I was privileged to wave off our ambitious colleagues from both Brentwood and Rochford embarking on the Three Peaks' Challenge, a 24-mile route and 5200ft of ascent. I would like to ask you to join me in celebrating their impressive fundraising and formidable effort of over £11,000.00 for Cardiomyopathy UK, Parkinson's UK, Hopefield Animal Sanctuary, Saint Francis Hospice, along with my own chosen charities, Trust Links and Achievement Through Football.

A lot of hard work and training went into this challenge, and I want to thank all of the staff that supported the charities – it is much appreciated.

Thank you, Members.”

### **210 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD BETWEEN THE PERIOD 14 JULY 2022 TO 14 OCTOBER 2022**

Council received the Minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between the period 14 July 2022 to 14 October 2022 and these Minutes were noted.

### **211 STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT 2022 UPDATE**

Council considered the report of the Director of Place summarising proposed updates to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement that sought formal adoption of the Statement.

A Member raised concern with regard to the pre-application guidance detailed at paragraph 3.3 on page 8.48 of Appendix B, noting that some residents would not be given the opportunity to benefit from this service as outlined by the exclusion criteria specifying that pre-application advice would not be provided to householder or small-scale development applications.

Cllr Mrs D L Belton moved a Motion to amend wording included in the first sentence of paragraph 3.3 in Appendix B to the report to replace the word 'excluding' with 'including'. This was seconded by Cllr I H Ward.

A Member spoke in support of the amendment noting that it would ensure that all residents within the District benefit from this type of support.

The Motion unanimously agreed.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the contents of the Statement of Community Involvement Feedback Report at Appendix A be noted.
- (2) That the Statement of Community Involvement at Appendix B be adopted.

(36 Members voted in favour, 0 against and 1 Member abstained.)

- (3) That in paragraph 3.3 in Appendix B the word ‘excluding’ be changed to ‘including’: “pre-application advice is available for all types of development including householder applications and applications for small scale developments such as one house.” (DP)

(This was unanimously agreed.)

### 212 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

Council received the following report from the Leader on the work of the Executive:-

“Members, the meeting has already received the Minutes of the Executive since our last Full Council meeting on 26 July 2022. I am happy to provide an update, for information purposes, on business dealt with by the Executive since then.”

At its meeting on 27 September the Executive:-

- Approved the draft Litter Strategy 2022-25 and delegated authority to the Director of Environment, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, to oversee the design and layout of the document and make minor changes to the Litter Strategy in advance of publication.
- Noted the Quarter 1 2022/23 revenue budget and capital position as set out in the report and appendices.
- Noted the progress being made to deliver and finalise the draft Sustainability Strategy.

At its meeting on 11 October the Executive:-

- Resolved to investigate if existing staff can be upskilled to take on the outstanding roles within the #OneTeam Transformation Programme and to adopt an appropriate methodology to log and track issues that pose risks for the Council.
- Noted the health check review of the Asset Delivery Programme and the recommendations contained therein.
- Resolved that, going forward with the ADP, consideration of the impact of our carbon footprint be given when buying in services and procuring goods. That a risk register/issues log be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on a regular basis and that the Executive ensures that the programme continues to be vision led and forward-thinking.

- Reviewed and noted the current version of the joint Cost of Living Action plan for Rochford & Brentwood.

Portfolio Holder decisions that have been taken that have:-

- Approved a policy for distributing discretionary energy rebate payments using the funding available from Government for this purpose.
- Approved a policy for awarding Covid Additional Relief Fund (CARF) to rated businesses in the Rochford District Council area.
- Agreed that Rochford District Council enters into an agreement to transfer the freehold interest in the land and to transfer the bus shelters currently within the Council's ownership to Essex County Council. Authority was delegated to the Assistant Director, Assets & Commercial, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure, to negotiate the final detail of the Collaboration Agreement to enact the transfer of the freehold interest of land and the bus shelters to the County Council.
- Agreed to publish the Modern Slavery Act 2015 Transparency Statement for the year 2022/23.
- Agreed that a grant of up to £5000 be made to the Paglesham Parish Council to fund activities associated with the HMS Beagle anchor to create a permanent monument in the village.
- Agreed that car parking charges in all Council car parks are suspended on the Saturdays during December prior to Christmas – the dates are 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>.
- Approved the Food Safety and Health & Safety Service Plans for 2022/23.

### **213 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND MEMBER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12, the following questions on notice had been received:-

- (1) From Cllr Mrs J R Gooding to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure:-

'Please can the Portfolio Holder/Leader outline any recent or planned investments made by Fusion at Clements Hall, especially facilities for disabled users.'

The Portfolio Holder for Housing Assets & Leisure, Cllr M J Webb responded as follows:-

"Chairman, during the pandemic, the Council supported its leisure provider to protect local jobs and to secure future investment in our leisure facilities.

The Council was forward thinking, recognising that once we emerged from the pandemic, access to high quality local leisure facilities would be even more vital to support the physical and mental well-being of our residents.

Chairman, I am pleased to confirm that Fusion Lifestyle earlier this year invested in new state of the art gym equipment, spin bikes, the sauna and a new studio floor at Clements Hall Leisure Centre. Additional investment was also made by Fusion Lifestyle in the plant room to service the swimming pools. The main sports hall floor is also due to be replaced by end of 2022.

Additionally, Fusion Lifestyle have investment at Rayleigh Leisure Centre which now has also brand-new gym equipment.

This gym equipment at both sites is accessible as part of the strategy to offer an inclusive leisure service.

This investment totals nearly £1m, c.£600k at Clements Hall Leisure Centre and c.£300k at Rayleigh Leisure Centre and is a clear demonstration of the Council's commitment to the health and wellbeing of our residents.

(2) From Cllr J L Lawmon to the Leader:-

'I welcome the fact that the Mill Hall in Rayleigh has reopened, but can the Leader please give an insight into his vision and also reassurance on the sustainability for this important community facility.'

The Leader, Cllr S E Wootton responded as follows:-

'Thank you, Cllr Lawmon for your question and I am pleased to be able to respond.

Until recently, the Mill Hall was part of the Council's Asset Delivery Programme. The commercial case for the ADP continues to be strong, but with the Mill Hall, I accept that there was very strong community resistance to the Council's proposals and any plans to redevelop the wider site will not happen.

Because of its community value, it was appropriate to separate this building from the ADP and give focus on how it can operate cost effectively.

Structurally, I am assured that the building is sound. That said, the Mill Hall needs substantial capital investment and the revenue costs of maintaining these premises are considerable.

But, Cllr Lawmon, like you, I am delighted the Mill Hall has re-opened and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Assets Team for all their hard work in making this happen.

It is pleasing that there has been early interest in hiring space both during the week and at weekends.

The ongoing operation of this building will be a commercial challenge, but I am personally determined and committed to do my best to make it succeed.

As for the vision, we are in the midst of reviewing the Expressions of Interest which recently came forward, to use all or part of the premises for a broad range of events and leisure activities. Discussions are ongoing and it is too early to give an outcome.

As for the other possible uses, I would like to see it operated as a multi-use truly community building where we have a Rochford Council reception area for the public to visit as well as some offices and meeting rooms, a cafeteria, Citizens Advice, Essex Police, businesses facilities and NHS uses.

Particularly, I would like to see us explore opportunities to showcase the tapestry and promote the rich heritage of the Rayleigh and Rochford district and engage with Essex County Council to explore possibilities for Adult Education.

Any other ideas would be gratefully received.

As for sustainability is concerned, the phrase 'use it or lose it' comes to mind.

(3) From Cllr Mrs L Shaw to the Leader:-

'Given concerns which have been widely reported in the media about finances in Thurrock Council, can the Leader please provide reassurance that there is financial resilience within Rochford District Council.'

The Leader, Cllr Simon Wootton, responded as follows:-

"Thank you for your question, Cllr Shaw. Members will be well aware of the recent media reports concerning Thurrock Council's finances, and while it is not my position to comment on these specifically, I would like to provide reassurance to Members on the financial resilience of Rochford District Council, and the steps that myself and the Executive are taking to ensure that this continues into the future.

Firstly, I want to make quite clear the excellent relationship between members of this Administration and officers within Rochford District Council which is totally open, transparent and tested through scrutiny and evidenced by long-standing reputation and outcomes of doing the best for residents and businesses within our community.

Members should note that Rochford District Council has an excellent track record of delivering sound financial management over the past few years. As an authority, we have maintained a clean external audit opinion on the quality of our financial statements, as well as a positive opinion on the Value for Money services that we deliver as an authority.

We have agreed a balanced budget each February and contained our spending within budget year on year, without relying on any external

borrowing, and the consequence that brings with ongoing interest costs. Neither do we lend as an Authority, thus avoiding the consequences of risk through possible default.

Unlike some Councils, rather than embark on potentially risky investment schemes, we continue to implement innovative ways of delivering better outcomes for our residents through initiatives such as our OneTeam Partnership with Brentwood Borough Council, our Connect digital programme, improving productivity through effective process management, managing our assets by disposing of buildings surplus to our needs or no longer fit for purpose, thus avoiding unnecessary costs, and our simpler Council Tax Support scheme.

In common with all Local Authorities, Rochford Council will face a challenging financial outlook over the coming year and beyond – to a large part this is caused by factors outside of our direct control, notably the wider economic situation and high levels of inflation that we face currently. We are not immune to those factors.

Whilst we hold sufficient reserves to enable us to weather any short-term shocks, and also continue to invest in our communities, it is nevertheless our responsibility as a Council to face up to these financial challenges, to ensure we can balance our books going forward.

The Executive continues to consider all possible options for service delivery as we work on our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and this will involve making some tough choices but rest assured that we will not take any decisions without a full consideration of any risks involved.

However, ultimately, the greater risks are that if we take no action now, we will not be able to ensure the financial resilience of the Council in future, so it is incumbent on all of us, especially this Conservative Administration to responsibly engage with this challenge pro-actively, and that, colleagues, is what we are committed to do.”

(4) From Cllr Mrs T L Carter to the Leader:-

‘Can the Leader please clarify the arrangements in place for Rochford District Council to work with the NHS to accommodate the NHS breast screening unit within the District.’

The Leader, Cllr S E Wootton, responded as follows:-

“Thank you, Cllr Carter for your question. Before I answer it, can I take this opportunity to formally welcome you to the Conservative Group. In making your decision to “walk the floor”, you said that “it is a pleasure to be part of a well organised party and part of a Group that conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner.” You also said, “that they have the best vision for all the people in our community.” Welcome.



Turning now to answer your question, Chairman, I met with colleagues in the NHS to reaffirm this Council's commitment to supporting the NHS Breast Screening Programme in the District.

We fully support the NHS Breast Screening Unit's efforts to deliver a comprehensive screening programme across the District in the fight against breast cancer.

Rochford District Council has been clear in its offer to the NHS for the Unit to be placed on any Council owned site of the NHS' choosing, subject to the site meeting the NHS' accessibility and electrical supply requirements, free of charge.

Currently, the unit is in our Southend Road car park in Hockley, offered free of charge which has been in use by our residents since May 2022."

(5) From Cllr J E Newport to the Leader/Deputy Leader:-

'Could either the Leader or Deputy Leader tell us how many FTE and PTE vacancies there currently are at Rochford District Council?'

The Leader, Cllr S E Wootton, responded as follows:-

"Currently, against budget forecast there are 21 vacancies, 17 of which are full-time vacancies and 3 part-time vacancies."

(6) From Cllr A G Cross to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure:-

'We acknowledge that the re-commissioning and six-month appraisal of the potential for the Mill Arts & Events Centre is underway, and some aesthetic improvements have been completed. Will the Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure tell Council the outline plans for the next phase of the refurbishment, in particular the scoping, the assessment and the costings.'

The Portfolio Holder for Housing, Assets & Leisure, Cllr M J Webb responded as follows:-

"Chairman, I am delighted to see the improvements completed recently to the Mill Arts & Events Centre.

Members will note the new carpet, decoration to the reception area and main hall as well as the external render to the front of the building also being redecorated. The main hall floor has been sanded and polished. We have also installed a hearing loop.

I also encourage Members to view the Rochford District Heritage tapestry in the reception area.

I am delighted to see many groups that used the halls before the pandemic now returning and also new groups booking the facility.

I would like to thank our Leisure Team and our Asset Team for their tireless work to reopen the building – I am sure you will agree they have done a fantastic job in a very short time.

In July, a report to the Executive set out that the Council would enter into a Community Expression of Interest process, seeking expressions of interest (EOI) from potential community partners. The process has been well received by the community and I was pleased to meet with so many groups and individuals as part of the process.

A further report will come before the Executive in December setting out the outcome of this process and the investment this Council will make into the building to support its long-term sustainability.”

(7) From Cllr D Sharp to the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning:-

‘The new Local Plan presents the Council with its biggest challenge. It is now 4.5 years since the previous consultation (Issues and Options), but the Planning Policy Committee are few and far between. Will the Portfolio Holder commit to holding regular all Councillor briefings on the progress of the Local Plan?’

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Planning, Cllr I H Ward responded as follows:-

“The latest consultation stage on the Council’s new Local Plan was not held 4.5 years ago but rather one year ago. This stage was called the Spatial Options stage and feedback from this stage has and will continue to be reported into the Planning Policy Committee.

On the subject of Member briefings on the Local Plan, these have been provided in a range of settings since this consultation ended, including at the Planning Policy Committee, at Member training sessions and particularly at a dedicated all-Member briefing held on 23 June 2022. Progress on the Local Plan will continue to be monitored through the Planning Policy Committee and further Member briefings will be held, including dedicated sessions such as that which took place on 23 June, when there are key outcomes to report of where the Council is approaching an important decision-making stage.”

(8) From Cllr Roger Constable to the Portfolio Holder for Environment:-

‘I was pleased to hear that the Council successfully prosecuted an individual for a dark smoke offence recently with a fine higher than any penalty for an offence of this kind before. Now that the litter strategy has been agreed and the contract with Norse is underway, can we expect Rochford District Council to take the same strong approach to fly tippers in the area?’

The Portfolio Holder for Environment, Cllr D J Sperring responded as follows:-

“The answer is yes. Undertaking enforcement on fly tipping and littering is one of the key pillars of the new litter strategy to demonstrate that it will not be tolerated by this Council across the District.

However, as a Council, we will always prosecute fly-tippers where it is proportional and practicable to do so, and have previously prosecuted an individual for persistent fly-tipping, with the successful prosecution finding his guilty and receiving a 200 hour unpaid work through a 12-month Community Order.

More commonly, fixed penalty notices are issued, with 6 having been served in 2022 so far. At the moment, early payment of these notices results in a £200 fine. I am proposed that this Council sets the fine for fly-tipping at the maximum £400 that the legislation will allow, without any reduction for early payment, to send a clear message that this Council is tough on fly-tipping.”

### 214 MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 13, the following Motions on Notice had been received:-

(1) Proposed by Cllr J E Newport and Cllr C M Stanley:-

‘Fireworks are used by people throughout the year to mark various events like Bonfire Night, Diwali, and various New Year celebrations. Great public displays, such as the annual Rayleigh Lions display at King George's Park, bring much enjoyment to many people. However, rising amounts of private displays and irresponsible use have led to many residents contacting Councillors in support of an RSPCA public awareness campaign aimed at ensuring people can enjoy fireworks responsibly whilst minimising the risk to animal welfare, horses, farm animals, wildlife and residents.

This Council notes that:-

Fireworks can be legally used on any day between the hours of 7am and 11pm, with extensions in place until on Bon Fire Night, New Year's Eve, Diwali and Chinese New Year.

There are four categories of fireworks in the UK; the first three categories are available to buy, carry, or use (on private property) to any member of the public aged 18 or over.

Fireworks release smoke into the atmosphere, reducing air quality, as well as toxins such as lead and mercury in most instances.

The unpredictable, loud, and high intensity that many fireworks make can cause fear and anxieties, especially within people, horses, and dogs.

Used irresponsibly, fireworks can cause damage to property and do significant harm to people and animals. They also pose a fire risk.

NHS England state that over the 2018 bonfire night and the Hindu festival Diwali period, more than 35,000 people went to NHS.uk for advice on how to treat burns and scalds – a “significant jump.”

This Council resolves to:-

Write to the UK Government urging them to introduce legislation to limit the maximum noise level of fireworks to 90dB for those sold to the public for private displays

Write to local suppliers of fireworks to encourage them to stock ‘quieter’ fireworks for public display

Encourage large retailers to follow the lead of Sainsburys in withdrawing the sale of fireworks to the public, especially in convenience stores

Ensure all public firework displays within Rochford District to be advertised in advance of the event, with appropriate advertising for the size of the display, allowing residents to take precautions for people in their care and pets.

Actively promote the RSPCA's public awareness campaign about the impact of fireworks on animal welfare and vulnerable people – including the precautions that can be taken to mitigate risks.’

Cllr J E Newport moved a Motion to change the word ‘ensure’ to ‘encourage’. In the penultimate paragraph of the Motion on Notice. This was seconded by Cllr C M Stanley.

A Member spoke in support of the amendment and endorsed the Motion on Notice.

The amendment was unanimously agreed.

The Motion on Notice, as amended, was moved by Cllr J E Newport and seconded by Cllr C M Stanley.

The Portfolio Holder for Communities & Health thanked Cllr J E Newport and Cllr C M Stanley for bringing this Motion on Notice to Council’s attention.

The Portfolio Holder advised that Essex County Council (ECC) provided a list to Rochford District Council (RDC) detailing licensed firework events in the area that were regulated by ECC as opposed to RDC. As a Council, RDC was unable to enforce a requirement on event organisers to advertise firework events on private land. Events that were organised on Council land would allow RDC to control the event more closely and officers would advertise

these events on the Council's website for residents' awareness. Members noted that some event organisers would complete event management plans to be scrutinised by the Safety Advisory Group.

In relation to the RSPCA campaign, the Portfolio Holder advised that the Council could support the campaign and pledge to lobby the government; however, private events were outside of the Council's scope.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that he was sympathetic to the Motion, but found it unfeasible for the Council to formalise a Motion, actions of which the Council was unable to enforce.

The Portfolio Holder moved a Motion to amend the Motion on Notice and that its contents be noted and that government be lobbied regarding the points raised in the Motion on Notice. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs L Shaw.

Speaking to the amendment, Cllr J E Newport highlighted that the Motion on Notice sought to encourage organisers of events to notify the Council, in light of the fact that the Council had no legal power to obligate residents to advertise firework events.

The Motion to amend the Motion on Notice was carried on a show of hands.

(22 Members voted in favour, 14 against and 1 Member abstained.)

The Motion, as amended, was noted by the Council. (DCH)

(Note: Cllr J E Newport wished it to be recorded that he was against the noting of the Motion on Notice, as amended.)

(2) Proposed by Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman and Cllr A L Williams:-

'There is a cost-of-living crisis in the UK resulting in unprecedented pressures on people, many who are already in poverty. And this winter, despite the support given by the Government, hundreds if not thousands of Rochford residents will be forced to make tough decisions about when and what they eat and when they can afford to heat their home.

Charities have warned that low-income families and individuals are already being forced to choose between falling behind on bills, going without essentials or taking on expensive debt.

The Government has already announced some measures of help, including:

- From 1 st October Energy Price Guarantee came into force meaning that a 'typical' household will pay no more than £2500 a year on their energy bill but it is understood that this will be reviewed and only run until April 2023. However, this is an average so if a family uses more energy their bills could be higher.

- council tax rebate. (£150.00 for qualifying households.)
- £400 grant to help with the cost of energy bills through the Energy Bill Support Scheme.
- All pensioner households will receive an extra £300.
- People with disabilities will receive an extra £150.
- The Household Support Fund helps households who are not eligible for other kinds of help or need further support.

But the reality is that for most residents, this support barely covers the increases.

We propose by this Motion that the Council pledges support for the work being undertaken to address some of these pressures and, in particular, around the creation of 'warm spaces/hubs.'

'Warm Hubs' – What are they?

Sometimes referred to as 'Warm Spaces', 'Warm Hubs' are organised and run by local groups; some may already be in existence.

They are heated, safe spaces where residents are invited to join a regular, inclusive community run event. Residents are given the opportunity to get and stay warm and talk to other residents over a hot drink and maybe a snack.

There might also be opportunities to receive practical tips and advice on saving energy costs and keeping safe and warm at home: how to alleviate food and fuel poverty. It can also be a place where residents can obtain information on where to access more specialist advice.

Why do we need Warm Hubs?

RDC – A Response

It seems inevitable that RDC will need to think about doing more to help its residents and to continue to deliver its commitment to:-

'Support, promote, develop and enable Rochford District's voluntary sector in providing effective services to meet the needs of local people.'

To this end RDC will create a 'directory' of all organisations providing 'Hubs' for our residents.

Organisations that register are added to this directory which could be advertised through RDC. There is also an opportunity to investigate how RRAVS (Rayleigh and Rochford & District Association for Voluntary Service) can support.

These organisations can be from the Voluntary, Community or Faith Sectors.

### Conclusion

‘Warm Hubs’ are not, nor should ever be, a permanent solution to cost of living pressures. But under current circumstances and until the economic outlook improves, or further measures are put into place by Government, we should be showing our commitment to help our residents access the essential and basic requirements of warmth.

### Funding

Following the example of many other District Councils it is proposed by this Motion that the option of offering grants to voluntary organisations to help with costs is established by the Council. A small grants scheme will supplement any potential funding from Essex County Council.

This Motion proposes that the Council operates a similar grant funding process setting aside a fund of £5000, from the Council’s general fund account, which would award up to £500 to successful applicants.’

Cllr J E Newport moved an amendment to the Motion that the penultimate paragraph be amended, “following example of many other District Councils, it is proposed by this Motion that the option of offering grants to voluntary organisations, registered charities, unincorporated club associations and small community groups, community interest companies and Parish and Town Councils to help with costs is established by the Council. A small grants scheme will supplement any potential funding from Essex County Council” and to add “Rochford District Council will provide grants in line with the guidance issued by the EALC for the community and Winter Warmth and Welcome Spaces fund.” This was seconded by Cllr C M Stanley.

A number of Members spoke against the amendment as concerns were raised with regard to voting on legal guidance that not all Members were familiar with. Members expressed further concerns stating that the amendment to the original Motion caused doubt due to its over-complexity.

The Leader endorsed the original Motion on Notice and thanked Rochford District Residents, in particular Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman, for bringing this Motion forward. The Leader supported the original Motion and spoke favourably of setting aside £5000 towards the grant funding process.

The amendment to the Motion was lost on a show of hands.

(9 Members voted in favour, 25 Members voted against, and 3 Members abstained.)

The original Motion was moved by Cllr Mrs D P Squires-Coleman and seconded by Cllr A L Williams.

(36 Members voted in favour, 0 Members voted against and 1 Member abstained.)

The Motion was carried. (DCH)

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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