

## **Executive Board – 7 June 2007**

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive Board** held on **7 June 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr K J Gordon  
Cllr J M Pullen  
Cllr C G Seagers

Cllr D G Stansby  
Cllr M G B Starke  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr P F A Webster

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren – Chief Executive  
R J Honey – Corporate Director (Internal Services)  
G Woolhouse – Corporate Director (External Services)  
J Bostock – Principal Committee Administrator

In commencing this, the first meeting of the Executive Board, the Chairman clarified that, whilst only Executive Board Members would usually sit at the table, non-Board Members are welcome to attend to observe proceedings. If Members had questions they would like raised, they are able to consult the appropriate Board Member in advance of meetings.

### **185 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor K J Gordon declared a personal interest in the item on Large Scale Voluntary Housing Transfer – Treatment of Potential Development Sites and Playspaces by virtue of being a Member of the Rochford Housing Association Shadow Board and left the meeting during its consideration.

### **186 FORWARD PLAN**

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive, which introduced the 'Forward Plan of Key Decisions' to be taken by the Executive Board over a period.

It was noted that the anticipated date of decision on choice based lettings was 21 February 2008. It was also noted that development plan matters and those relating to other subject areas would be included in the Forward Plan as appropriate. The purpose of the Plan was to indicate matters that are coming forward for detailed consideration by Members and fall into the 'key decision' category. The Chairman confirmed that Executive Board Members should liaise with him if they consider there are key decisions that should be included on the Plan.

The Board noted the Plan, which would be updated on a regular basis to reflect a forward programme of four months.

### 187 PEER REVIEW

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on the planned peer review of the Council.

The Chief Executive confirmed that he would incorporate any adjustments to the peer review submission in a revised document and submit this to Members prior to its despatch.

#### **Resolved**

That the draft submission and timetable be sent to the Peer Review Team subject to:-

- Adjustment to paragraph 1.2 to indicate that the Council is on course to complete the transfer of its housing stock by early July.
- Adjustments to paragraphs 2.2 and 2.4 to ensure consistency in terms of geographical references to Hockley and Rochford.
- Inclusion of the young persons population in paragraph 2.7.
- Inclusion of the fact that the Chairman of the Review Committee is a Member of the opposition party in paragraph 2.12. (CE)

### 188 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive, which introduced the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter.

The Board recognised that, whilst the Authority had undertaken a lot of work on the subject of vision, it was important to be mindful that policies need to be in place to support areas of vision and that there could be value in further focus on the subject of vision. The Board concurred with the observation of the Chairman that further work would be appropriate and it was:-

#### **Resolved**

That, in the first instance, arrangements be made for the Executive Board to work collectively on the development of a more detailed vision for the District, to be followed by further work around visioning to which all Members would be invited (CE)

### 189 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MEMBERS FOR 2006/07

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on the year end performance report to Members.

The Board noted that:-

- In view of ongoing discussions on methodology, new milestones for the development of cost comparison/value for money concepts in service development and budgeting processes would be formulated by September 2007.
- Zurich Municipal would be leading a workshop on the Council's risk management systems and culture in Autumn 2007.
- Officers would liaise with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council on the possibility that a Borough Council car park may be available for the use of visitors to the Cherry Orchard Country Park.
- The electricity supplier, EDF, continued to be pushed to connect the new lighting installed to improve lighting in alleyways that are the responsibility of the District Council. Officers would consider giving appropriate publicity to this issue.
- The percentage of employees retiring early (excluding ill health retirements) was up to 0.78%.
- The indicator relating to vulnerable homeless households – average length of stay in hostels was a statutory indicator.
- There would be a report on the local development framework scheme to the next meeting of the Board.
- The average time (days) to process new benefit claims was actually up from 27.3 to 30.9 versus target of 24.
- The housing benefit overpayments recovered as a percentage of all housing benefit overpayment debt was actually up from 24.59% in 2005/06 to 32.66% for 2006/07.
- The final pie chart in Appendix A under Local Performance Indicator. Trends should indicate that the figure for declined is 27% and improved is 40%.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the previously approved content of the Performance Report to Members for 2007/08 be ratified.
- (2) That a rationalised list of outstanding actions from predecessor Committees be presented to the next Executive Board meeting as an appendix to the Quarterly Performance Report to Members
- (3) That a new Progress on Decisions list for items considered by the Executive Board be created. (CE)

### **190 LARGE SCALE VOLUNTARY HOUSING TRANSFER – TREATMENT OF POTENTIAL SITES AND PLAYSPACES**

The Board considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on the way forward proposed to deal with several small pieces of land that may have development potential and the arrangement for the transfer of one building formerly used as temporary accommodation and several playspaces on housing estates.

With regard to playspaces it was noted that, notwithstanding that the Housing Corporation would no doubt wish to be involved should an Authority have concern about a Housing Association meeting the legal requirements associated with any transfer, an ultimate recourse would be to require that land is returned to the Authority. A previous review of playspaces by the Authority had indicated that any potential for development had been minimal.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the potential development sites detailed in the report be retained by the Council and transferred to the General Fund.
- (2) That the proposals in relation to The Chestnuts, High Road, Rayleigh be noted.
- (3) That the playspaces detailed in the report be transferred to Rochford Housing Association subject to legal requirements to ensure their retention for public use and proper maintenance.

### **191 DRAFT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGIES – CASTLE POINT AND SOUTHEND**

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on draft strategies that had been circulated by the Local Strategic Partnerships of Castle Point and Southend.

#### **Resolved**

That the draft Sustainable Community Strategies for Castle Point and Southend be noted. (CE)

### **192 FRIENDS OF ESSEX CHURCHES – REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Planning and Transportation on a request for financial assistance towards the work of the Friends of Essex Churches.

It was noted that there had been one application over the last five years from a church for monies through the Listed Buildings Grant mechanism and there

would be no guarantee through any donation to this Group that any financial assistance would be applied to churches within the District.

### **Resolved**

That the Friends of Essex Churches be advised that Rochford District Council is not able to provide financial assistance to assist the operation of their organisation. (HP&T)

## **193 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The Board discussed the dates and times of future meetings. Observations made during discussion included that:-

- Late afternoon meetings could better facilitate access to officers and the officer resource and reduce overall costs.
- There had been prior understanding that Executive Board meetings would be in the evening.
- Some Council Members and many of the public worked during the day, although the make-up of an Authority does change and people undertake shift and other types of working.
- Notwithstanding that the meetings at which key decisions are made need to be identified in advance, the Board can operate in a flexible way. For instance, the Chairman only needs to give five days notice of a meeting to Board Members where non key decisions are being made and it is a matter for the Executive whether such meetings are held in public.

In the light of the commitment of various Board Members it was agreed that consideration should be given to re-scheduling Board meetings to a Wednesday evening where possible, the details of specific dates to be considered at the next meeting which would now take place on Wednesday 27 June, commencing at 7.30pm.

## **194 THE TRANSITION FROM COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT**

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on an Audit Commission consultation paper setting out how the Commission intends to manage the transition from Comprehensive Performance Assessment to the Comprehensive Area Assessment framework, which is to be in place from April 2009.

### **Resolved**

That this Council's response to the Audit Commission consultation paper be on the basis set out in the report. (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 paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**195 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S APPRAISAL**

The Board received the exempt note of the Chief Executive's appraisal.

The meeting closed at 9.29pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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