

Council – 26 October 2010

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **26 October 2010** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr D G Stansby
Vice-Chairman: Cllr S P Smith

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J E McPherson
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr A C Priest
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr M Hoy	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins
Cllr M Maddocks	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M R Carter, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs J Dillnutt, T E Goodwin, A J Humphries, T Livings, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley and Mrs C A Weston.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	– Chief Executive
G Woolhouse	– Deputy Chief Executive
A Bugeja	– Head of Legal, Estates and Member Services
Y Woodward	– Head of Finance
J Bostock	– Member Services Manager

271 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 July 2010 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 14 October 2010 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

272 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN/PRESENTATIONS

The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman had attended seventy eight civic engagements since May.

The Chairman was pleased to welcome Cllr John Buchanan, the Chairman of the Essex Association of Local Councils, who was in attendance for the award to Hockley Parish Council for achieving re-accreditation of Quality Parish

status. The award was received by Cllr Roy Martin, Vice-Chairman of Hockley Parish Council and Mr Paul Stanley, Clerk of the Parish Council.

273 MEMBER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 12.2, questions had been received from Cllr C I Black as follows:-

(a) Of the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation:-

‘Can you please advise me of the approximate number of ongoing planning enforcement cases to date, the number of officers in the Planning Enforcement Team, and whether they are full or part-time?’

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr K H Hudson, responded as follows:-

“At present there are two officers working full-time on enforcement matters, although other development management officers deal with some enforcement cases and should be further available to do so once work around the Local Development Framework is completed. As a snapshot, at the end of September 2010 there were 466 cases with 241 having been resolved over the year – 108 complied with, 36 not expedient to pursue and 97 where there had been no actionable breach”.

By way of supplementary question, Cllr C I Black asked what could be done to reduce the figure of 466. Cllr K H Hudson confirmed that it is important enforcement matters are pursued and that the officer resource freed up once work around the Local Development Framework had been completed would be a help in terms of reducing the number of cases.

(b) Of the Portfolio Holder for the Environment:-

‘Do you believe that the Members of the Executive had adequate oversight of the tendering arrangements for the New Materials Recovery Facility contract?’

The Portfolio Holder, Cllr M J Steptoe, responded as follows:-

“Yes. My predecessor did agree with officers the scope of the new service, in terms of the materials to be processed, prior to the advertisement in the EU Journal in February. Subsequently in May, when I took up my new appointment, I was kept fully informed of developments.”

By way of supplementary question, Cllr C I Black asked if this meant that the Portfolio Holder had oversight but, possibly, not the Executive as a whole. It was confirmed that, as a reply could not conveniently be given orally, a written answer would be circulated later to Cllr C I Black.

274 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council received the minutes of all Executive and Committee meetings held between the period of 17 July to 15 October 2010. It was noted that the final meeting during the period in question had been the Executive on 8 October.

275 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES TO COUNCIL

(1) Appointment to Rochford Housing Association Board

Council considered a report relating to the appointment of Cllr M Maddocks to the Rochford Housing Association Board by the Portfolio Holder for Overall Strategy and Policy Direction pending confirmation by Full Council.

On a motion, moved by Cllr T G Cutmore and seconded by Cllr P A Capon, it was:-

Resolved

That the appointment of Cllr M Maddocks to the Rochford Housing Association Board be confirmed. (HLEMS)

276 REPORT ON URGENT DECISIONS

Pursuant to Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15(f), Council noted a report on decisions that had been taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call-in/referral.

277 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 Leader’s report since the summer recess. The new Coalition Government has now been in power for nearly 6 months, and whilst things are slowly becoming clearer in a number of areas, there is still a considerable amount of detail to be filled in. The Comprehensive Spending Review of last week gave us some headlines and an indication of the broad parameters that we need to work within, with the announcement of an overall cut in local authority funding of 28% over a 4 year period, in effect, around 7% each year. I suspect, however, that reality will not be that simple and the likely financial position will not become clear until we receive details of our provisional grant settlement in December. We have to consider that the Chancellor’s headline announcements do not cover how matters such as pension revaluation, the transfer of concessionary fares to County and the loss of investment income are to be factored in. I believe that, overall, we could be looking at a reduction in potential budgetary spend of around 10 – 12% in the next fiscal year. If that does turn out to be the case, and only as more detailed information becomes available will we know whether that is so, the 2011/2012 budgetary setting process may result in us having to make some difficult choices.

This Autumn has seen a range of events taking place. In September we had the Rayleigh Arts Festival in and around Rayleigh Town Centre. At the beginning of this month we had the Young Entrepreneurs Awards event at the Freight House. All four of our secondary schools competed in that event, the winning team coming from King Edmund School. It was a real pleasure to see the talent, creativity, confidence and ability that the teenagers taking part displayed. They were a real credit to their schools and to our community. They give me real confidence in the future of our local economy, watch out Lord Sugar. That event was followed by the Rochford District Sports Awards, again held at the Freight House. I didn't attend that event, but I know from attending in past years and from colleagues who did attend that they were amazed at the level of sporting talent that exists in the District and also the huge level of commitment that really comes out at events such as that. Last week we held one of our business breakfast events, focussing on low cost, low carbon marketing solutions. Again it was well supported by our business community, with 80 plus in attendance. This week we have the Rochford Arts Trail, which in its second year is now supported by 60 plus artists, as opposed to around 15 last year. I mention all of these different activities to emphasise the extent of the work that the Council does and also as a demonstration of the pivotal role that we play in the community; a fact that we should not lose sight of as we go through our budget process.

Members and officers are to be congratulated on the Council being awarded its Member Development Charter. We were visited by an assessment team earlier this month and, on the basis of the evidence supplied and their observations and interviews with Members and officers, they were extremely impressed by the Member Training and Development Programme that we offer, to the extent that we are likely to become a reference site for other District Councils, which is again a demonstration of the good work that goes on in the Authority, much of which is unsung.

Since my last Leader's report to the Council in July, the Executive has met on four occasions, two of them in private and confidential sessions to discuss the contract for the Materials Recovery Facility, which is the subject of a Member question on the agenda this evening.

The other two meetings have primarily focussed on performance and budget updates to ensure that we remain on track in terms of delivering the key elements of the Council's agreed programme. We have had updates on our revenue budget and capital programme positions and considered a report on shared services work across Essex. We have also considered a request to dispose of a parcel of land owned by the Council in Rayleigh, which we decided to retain.

Since the last Council, my colleagues on the Executive have considered such matters as the Council's Corporate Information Security Policy, the Urban Tree Planting Scheme, the 2009 Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LABGI) Allocation spend, consultations on proposed amendments to the Licensing Act 2003, proposals for a local referendum to veto excessive

Council Tax increases, and changes to the Local Government Finance Formula Grant Distribution.

As always, I will be happy to take any questions from Members in respect of the work of the Executive. I am sure my Executive Colleagues will be happy to contribute where appropriate”.

The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Cllr C I Black, observed that the previous Government had expected local authorities to be involved with a host of initiatives and that he hoped the new Government would not pressurise authorities to pursue new initiatives purely for ‘box ticking’ purposes.

It was confirmed that the likely reduction in potential budgetary spend of around 10-12% in the next financial year would be after inflation.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.

Chairman

Date

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