

Council – 20 December 2007

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **20 December 2007** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr K A Gibbs
Vice-Chairman: Cllr J E Grey

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr A J Humphries
Cllr C I Black	Cllr J R F Mason
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr T E Goodwin	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr Mrs C A Weston
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs J Dillnutt, Mrs S A Harper, T Livings, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, D Merrick, R A Oatham, P R Robinson and C G Seagers

OFFICERS PRESENT

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

436 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2007 and the Extraordinary meeting held on the 5 December 2007 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

The leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, Councillor C I Black, wished to extend thanks to officers for their work in addressing the question raised at the Council meeting on 30 October relating to planning appeal procedure.

437 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Council joined the Chairman in extending thanks to the officers involved in achieving a substantial Big Lottery Funding Award which would facilitate free play activities for young people. Thanks were also extended to the officers

involved in utilising the Council's mobile display unit to publicise energy efficiency.

438 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council noted the Minutes of Executive Board and Committee meetings held between 31 October and 10 December 2007.

439 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AND COMMITTEES

(1) Report of the Executive Board – 7 November 2007

Council considered the report of the Executive Board on the confirmation of an appointee and substitute to attend Board meetings of the South Essex Primary Care Trust.

Resolved

That the appointment of Councillor K J Gordon (Councillor K A Gibbs to substitute) to attend Board meetings of the South Essex Primary Care Trust be confirmed. (HICS)

(2) Report of the Licensing Committee – 23 November 2007

Council considered the report to the Licensing Committee on the Statement of Licensing Policy.

Resolved

That the Statement of Licensing Policy for the period 7 January 2008 – 6 January 2011 be approved. (HES)

440 REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Council received the following report from the Chairman of the Executive Board:-

“This is now my third report to Full Council as the Chairman of the Executive Board and Leader of the Council.

Since my last report in October, we convened earlier this month as a Council to agree the way forward on new contracts for refuse collection and waste recycling, grounds maintenance and street cleansing. I was pleased by the unanimous decision taken at that meeting and the all party support that was given to the way forward. The Council has long recognised the need for ‘step change’, as it is called, particularly in relation to recycling, and it was extremely satisfying to see the work put in by Members and staff over a long and sustained period reach a successful conclusion. Again, I place on record my thanks to all concerned and particularly Cllr. Michael Starke and on the officer front, Alan Lovett, Jeremy Bourne and latterly, Richard Evans.

Since the October Council meeting, the Executive Board has met on four occasions. We've received reports on our mid-year performance, which continues to show positive progress across a range of areas, and on our half yearly budget position, both in revenue and capital terms. We've endorsed recommendations coming forward from the Local Development Framework Sub-Committee around the Core Strategy and the Local Development Scheme. The intention is to have a new revised Core Strategy out for consultation May/June 2008.

We've taken decisions to progress our plans both in connection with the expansion of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park, including authority to use Compulsory Purchase Order powers if necessary, and the Rochford Cemetery Extension. We've made strong objections to the proposed closure of the Chase Post Office in Rayleigh and it is pleasing to see that both the local MP and the County Council support our position. It cannot be right that a key facility serving our local community should be subject to closure proposals, particularly given that not that long ago we as a Council were given reassurances as to the value of that post office, at a time when it was closed for a temporary period.

We've agreed to Joint Liaison working arrangements with our neighbouring Councils, Southend and Castle Point, which can only be good for our local communities. We need to build up our working relationships with them, focussing on areas of common interest. Certainly, in the context of Thames Gateway South Essex, spatial planning and joint infrastructure, it is important we work together as local authorities for the benefit of the whole area. In Government speak, I believe it is called the "Place Shaping" agenda!!

We've developed our Peer Review Action Plan, in response to the Peer Review Inspection in the summer, and have recently considered our Access to Services Strategy, which will undoubtedly be an area of considerable focus over the next few years, as we strive to meet the ever changing demands of our communities and their increasing expectations. As the Access to Services report again demonstrates, our residents are largely satisfied with the services we provide and our main contact points, certainly when compared to other authorities. However, we cannot afford to be complacent in this respect and we need to be proactive and stay ahead of the game. I now look forward to the working up of the many access initiatives we've now set in progress and considering the detail of their implementation.

We've looked at a raft of reports from other bodies – including the draft Regional Economic Strategy, the Strategic Planning for Health Consultation, the emerging National Performance Indicators set, and a Pathfinder Trust proposal for schools in Rochford. We've also looked at the changes in legislation around Community Safety and the implications for the District's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. All in all, the agendas of those around us continue to change and we need to continue to respond to those changes.

We've considered issues such as the consultation on proposed changes to the Government's Local Authority Business Grant Incentive scheme and more locally, issues such as residents parking schemes, which we've concluded are really not appropriate for any area of the District at this time and thus could be considered a non-priority.

It's been a busy couple of months and I am pleased with the overall progress we seem to be making as a Council working on behalf of its local communities. Early in the New Year we will all be busy finalising our budget for next year and continuing to grapple with issues such as the national concessionary fares scheme, which is a clear example of this Government not thinking through the consequences of a national initiative, to the detriment of those of us working for councils at the local level. Meanwhile, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I will be happy to take any member queries or questions on the work of the Executive Board."

Responding to a question on joint infrastructure the Leader confirmed that work with neighbouring Councils would no doubt include consideration of infrastructure deficit. It was observed that it was pleasing to see that the new contract for recycling would bring step change to recycling levels. Members and officers should be thanked for their works on contracts.

Reference was made to the fact that, despite the strong representation highlighted in the Leader's report, a decision had been taken to close the Chase Post Office, Rayleigh.

Council agreed that it was of great concern that there should be closure of a facility for which there is clear social need. Closure would be contrary to the concept of access to services and to previous commitments made to the Authority and local Members of Parliament. Specific reference was made to the fact that the Chase building had seen high levels of investment to ensure that it was fit for all sectors of the community and able to provide much needed goods. There was not another Post Office within two miles.

On a motion, moved by Councillor K H Hudson and seconded by Councillor T G Cutmore, it was unanimously:-

Resolved

That the Council protest to Government in the strongest possible terms about the closure of the Chase Post Office, Rayleigh and the way consultation had been dealt with. (CE)

441 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2008/09

Council considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on determining the tax base for each individual Parish or Town Council area within the District.

Resolved

- (1) That the method of calculation of the Council 's Tax Base for the year 2008/2009, as set out in the report, be agreed.
- (2) That pursuant to the officer report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 the amount calculated by the Rochford District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2008/09 shall be in the following parts:-

ASHINGDON	1226.38
BARLING MAGNA	630.36
CANEWDON	556.47
FOULNESS ISLAND	64.93
GREAT WAKERING	1990.14
HAWKWELL	4541.76
HOCKLEY	3850.68
HULLBRIDGE	2391.12
PAGLESHAM	104.91
RAWRETH	431.40
RAYLEIGH	12319.26
ROCHFORD	2926.93
STAMBRIDGE	236.94
SUTTON	52.83
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	31324.11

Prior to the closure of the meeting the Chairman extended best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The meeting closed at 7.58 pm.

Chairman

Date

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