

Council – 18 December 2008

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **18 December 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr J E Grey
Vice Chairman: Cllr A J Humphries

Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr K A Gibbs	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr T E Goodwin	Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr T Livings	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr C J Lumley	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr Mrs J R Lumley	Cllr P F A Webster
Cllr M Maddocks	Cllr Mrs B J Wilkins
Cllr J R F Mason	

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, Mrs L A Butcher, M R Carter, Mrs L M Cox, Mrs J Dillnutt, K J Gordon, K H Hudson, Mrs G A Lucas-Gill, D Merrick, M J Steptoe and Mrs C A Weston.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive
R J Honey - Corporate Director (Internal Services)
Y Woodward - Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management
J Bostock - Committee Services Manager

369 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

370 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Many engagements had been attended over the recent period, including carol services.

The Chairman advised that a letter of condolence was being issued to the family of Lieutenant Aaron Lewis of 29 Commando Royal Artillery who had sadly died whilst on active service in Afghanistan. Funeral details were awaited.

The Chairman had attended the funeral of Mr Edward Fitzgerald. During his career Mr Fitzgerald had been Clerk to the former Rayleigh Urban District Council.

371 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETING

Council noted the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between 20 October 2008 and 8 December 2008.

372 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

(1) Report of the Executive – 10 December 2008

Council considered the report of the Executive relating to the adoption of the remuneration scheme proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2009/10.

Resolved

- (1) That the remuneration scheme proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel for 2009/10 be adopted.
- (2) That the level of allowance available to Members of the Independent Remuneration Panel be aligned with the allowance for the Independent Members of the Standards Committee with effect from 1 April 2009. (HICS)

(2) Report of the Standards Committee – 11 December 2008

Council considered the report of the Standards Committee on the implementation of mandatory training.

Members concurred with the observation of the Leader that, given all Members serve on the Development Control Committee and are able to represent their Wards in debate, the question arose as to whether mandatory training proposals meant that such representation could be lost.

The Corporate Director (Internal Services) advised that, in practice, removal from the Committee could preclude participation in a vote rather than attendance/speaking at a meeting. The Council had a custom whereby non-voting Members of a Committee can visit and speak at meetings.

It was felt that it would be appropriate to specify in arrangements that any Member who is removed from the Development Control Committee by virtue of a mandatory training requirement should be able to speak (but not vote) at meetings. Council agreed a motion, moved by Councillor C I Black and seconded by Councillor P A Capon in this regard, and it was:-

Resolved

That the detailed application of the arrangements for mandatory training for Members of the Development Control and Licensing Committees be as set out in paragraphs 3.3 to 3.10 of the officer report, subject to any removal from the Development Control Committee being on the basis that the Member concerned will be able to visit and speak (but not vote) at meetings of that Committee. (HICS)

373 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

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

“Since my last speech to Members in October, I am pleased to report that we are still making progress on a number of fronts. As of last evening, the consultation period on the Core Strategy Preferred Options came to an end. We appear to have had around 450 representations registered on this key document, although at the time of finalising this speech some responses are still being registered and processed.

Recently, our Food Inspection Services were inspected by the Food Standards Agency and the initial feedback has been extremely positive. We now await the finalised report.

We’ve also just received information from the Audit Commission comparing our performance with other Councils, focussing particularly on the last financial year – 2007/2008. That shows we improved our performance in 63% of our measurable performance indicators over the past three years, compared to an average of around 58% for all Districts. In the last financial year alone, our performance improvement in measured indicators was 64%, compared to a District average of around 58%. In fact, last year 41% of our measured performance indicators were in the top quartile, compared to a District average of 33%. These are impressive figures for a small Council which spends less per head than most of our colleagues in Essex.

If this were not enough, Members will know that an independent survey by the Halifax has found Rochford District to be the 7th best place to live in Britain, after looking at some 408 Councils nationally!

I think this all demonstrates how well the Council is doing and builds on the Audit Commission Comprehensive Performance Assessment that we are officially a ‘Good’ Council.

Whilst we can never be complacent I think it is only appropriate, on receipt of such truly staggering information, for all Members and Officers to pat themselves on the back for a job well done.

While I am quoting statistics, and by way of an update on our kerbside recycling scheme, I am pleased to report that I understand that we are

continuing to achieve recycling rates at over 60% in contrast to the 19% achieved last year. Here a big thank you must go to our residents who have shown real enthusiasm for the scheme.

The Executive has formally met on 3 occasions in November and December. We've continued to receive reports on our performance this year, we've considered our capital strategy and, in advance of the November Member budget away-day, looked at the Medium Term Financial Strategy and received a position update. Clearly, our expenditure and income levels will remain in key focus until we agree our budget and Council Tax level for 2009/10 and our revised Medium Term Financial Strategy. May I, at this point, thank all Members who attended the first Members' awayday last month. I think it was a worthwhile and informative exercise for all of us who attended and something which I believe makes the whole budget setting process that much more understandable and easier to progress through its various stages. I would encourage all Members to attend the next budget away-day on 17th January when, hopefully, we can make real progress in bringing all the budget issues together and agreeing a way forward, prior to the budget setting Council meeting on 27 January 2009.

At the Executive in early November we took a decision to allow free car parking on the last four Saturday mornings before Christmas. That was in addition to the free Saturday afternoon, all day Sunday and evening parking throughout the year we already enjoy. From the feedback I've received, I have no doubt that in the current financial climate this has proved to be a good decision and, I note, one that has been copied by neighbouring authorities.

We've agreed to a new Chain of Office in discussions involving the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. I've now approved the final design. The new Chain should be available for the start of the new municipal year in May 2009.

The Executive has also considered and agreed two important reports in relation to housing in the District. Firstly, we signed off our Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which is seen as a key background document by Government in the production of any Housing Strategy. It assessed the housing needs of the area. We also considered and approved our Housing Strategy covering the period 2008-2011.

We've agreed to a new Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy for the Council, following on from the work that the Review Committee carried out last year, and have agreed to set up a Member advisory group under Cllr Michael Starke to finalise the details of the design for Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.

At our meeting last week, we also considered the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel on Members' remuneration and concurred with their recommendations.

So, all in all, it's been a productive couple of months. Before concluding, I would like to take this opportunity as Leader, through the Chairman, to wish all Members and Officers a very merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

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

In response to questions it was noted than an element of the Local Authority Business Grant Incentive Award had been applied to Chamber of Trade initiatives. It was also noted that the local utility company had been approached on the possibility of sponsorship given the impact its recent activities had had on trade in Rayleigh Town Centre.

374 SETTING THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2009/10

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

With regard to chargeable dwellings, it was noted that there had been a marginal increase in empty properties and decrease in anticipated new builds on the previous year.

During consideration of this item the Chairman of the Audit Committee, Councillor J Thomass, wished to extend thanks to the accountancy staff for their work on the Council's behalf.

Reference was made to the possibility that a future finance related training course could include an element on the background to Council Tax base calculations.

Resolved

- (1) That the method of calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2009/2010, as set out in the report, be agreed.
- (2) That pursuant to this report and in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended) the amount calculated by the Rochford District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2009/10 shall be in the following parts:-

ASHINGDON	1224.44
BARLING MAGNA	629.54
CANEWDON	543.00
FOULNESS ISLAND	62.70
GREAT WAKERING	2004.64

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HAWKWELL	4560.70
HOCKLEY	3820.83
HULLBRIDGE	2376.74
PAGLESHAM	98.43
RAWRETH	431.31
RAYLEIGH	12250.05
ROCHFORD	2933.33
STAMBRIDGE	234.53
SUTTON	54.58
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	31224.82
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The meeting closed at 8.01 pm.

Chairman

Date

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