

Council – 27 October 2009

Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **27 October 2009** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr A J Humphries
Vice-Chairman: Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr Mrs P Aves	Cllr T Livings
Cllr C I Black	Cllr Mrs G A Lucas-Gill
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr C J Lumley
Cllr P A Capon	Cllr Mrs J R Lumley
Cllr Mrs T J Capon	Cllr D Merrick
Cllr M R Carter	Cllr Mrs J A Mockford
Cllr J P Cottis	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr Mrs J Dillnutt	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr Mrs H L A Glynn	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr K J Gordon	Cllr M J Steptoe
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr P F A Webster

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Mrs R Brown, Mrs L M Cox, T E Goodwin, M Maddocks, J R F Mason, P R Robinson, M G B Starke, J Thomass and Mrs C A Weston.

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren	-	Chief Executive
S Scrutton	-	Head of Planning and Transportation
A J Bugeja	-	Head of Legal and Technical Services
J Bostock	-	Committee Services Manager

ALSO PRESENT

County Cllr N Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation

267 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 July 2009 and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 9 September 2009 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

268 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Since the last meeting the Chairman and Vice-Chairman had attended more than forty successful events. Particularly notable had been:-

- The Chairman's Charity Golf Day which had raised over £1,200 for the Chairman's charity.

- The Coster Mongers Harvest Festival.
- The Taxi Drivers Charity Fund annual outing.
- The dedication of a plaque to Lt Aaron Lewis at the war memorial, Rayleigh.

269 MEMBER QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Pursuant to Council procedure rule 11.2, questions had been received from Cllr C I Black as follows:-

(1) Of the Portfolio Holder to the Environment:-

“Have any bookings been taken yet for the new sports pitches near Rayleigh Leisure Centre? If so, by which clubs and for how many hours per week? Are there any bookings for evenings?”

The Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Cllr M G B Starke, was attending an Awards ceremony in London associated with the Council having been shortlisted for a national recycling award. The Leader of the Council, Cllr T G Cutmore, responded on behalf of the Portfolio Holder as follows:-

“The ground works for the new sports pitches near Rayleigh Leisure Centre were completed in September. It is anticipated that they may be available for light usage from spring 2010, dependant upon weather conditions.

An inspection of the pitches will, therefore, be arranged in May to assess whether they can be released for such purposes and whether the turf has grown sufficiently to sustain the heavy usage that can be anticipated during the football season. The resilience of the turf will largely be dependent upon weather conditions during the interim period and it would clearly not be in our long-term interests to release this facility too early.

Bookings for all of our pitches can only be made on Saturday afternoons and on Sunday mornings and afternoons during the football season, such requests are considered in June each year. No bookings are currently taken at other times, although this can be considered should the need arise.

Under our current policy, no restriction is placed upon which clubs can book any of our sports pitches.”

(2) Of the Portfolio Holder to the Environment:-

“In September the District Council received complaints about the poor state of the Council-owned sports pitches in Rawreth. What steps have been taken to remedy the matter and what is the current situation?”

The Leader of the Council responded on behalf of the Portfolio Holder as follows:-

“Problems with the conditions of the sports pitches at Rawreth are due to the preponderance of shrinkable clay and date back to the 1980’s. As a result of complaints about the cancellation of matches due to water-logged pitches, a decision was taken to install land drainage in 2003.

Cracks form on the ground in autumn each year due to the low levels of rainfall and these are located immediately above the original land drains. These cracks can be as wide as 15 cm.

Because of these ground conditions, the pitches are subject to an increased level of inspection and contractors are employed to remedy the situation. Since September, 25 tonnes of top soil has been inserted into the cracks that have formed on these pitches and a further 10 tonnes is shortly to be utilized. 10 tonnes of soil, together with the associated labour, represents in the order of £500 of expenditure.

This situation will improve over time and the only alternative would be to put in a water irrigation system. This is clearly not a practicable solution because of the thousands of litres of water that would be required.”

The Leader confirmed that the 25 tonnes of topsoil had applied solely to the sports pitches in Rawreth.

(3) Of the Portfolio Holder to the Environment:-

“Approximately how many problems per month are reported to the District Council via the fixmystreet.com website? Does the Council have any particular procedure or protocol for dealing with them?”

The Leader of the Council responded on behalf of the Portfolio Holder as follows:-

“We receive only occasional emails from fixmystreet.com and estimate that since April we have only received five service requests.

The procedure is for these emails to be sent to our general enquiry email account information@rochford.gov.uk. This email box is checked on a daily basis and enquiries are forwarded to the appropriate department for action.”

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

“The District Council has recently agreed to allow a maximum of 53,300 aircraft movements per year at Southend Airport, which works out at an average of one movement every 6.9 minutes in daytime hours. Who proposed this figure, how was it arrived at and how will it be enforced?”

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation, Cllr K H Hudson, responded as follows:-

“The proposal for the introduction of a maximum number of aircraft movements is related to negotiations between the airport operator, Southend Borough Council and ourselves based on what could already take place under

the current leasing arrangements between Southend and the airport operators and taking account the public feedback to the Joint Area Action Plan between the two Councils. It represents the basis of a way forward and seeks to balance residents concerns against the aims and aspirations of the airport and the employment potential it offers. It should be remembered that, at its currently relatively low level of activity, the airport generates some 42,000 aircraft movements, and there are no controls over the total number of daytime flights and only minimal controls over night flights.

The negotiations between the two councils and the airport represent a potential way forward and the agreement is likely to form the basis of a series of new controls that may be attached to the lease the airport has with the Borough Council.

Southend Borough Council has recently received a planning application to extend the runway, and Rochford District Council will be consulted for its views on the planning application and will be able to make comments on the principle of the proposal and the suggested control measures. It is expected that any proposed controls emanating from the planning application and revised lease agreement will be considered by the Joint Area Action Plan Committee for inclusion in the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan in due course.

It should be noted that further controls may be negotiated as a standard part of the town and country planning process for the determination of the planning application for the runway extension, including operating hours, passenger, flight, noise and other limits and other operational controls. The precise mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement of issues such as noise and air quality will be specified as part of any relevant planning permission.”

270 COUNTY HIGHWAYS - LOCALISM

Council welcomed County Cllr Norman Hume, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, who was in attendance to answer questions on highways localism.

Cllr Hume thanked Members for their invite. The opportunity to relate information on the work of the service was welcomed.

In presenting this item Cllr Hume referred to how pleasing it was that there had been significant reductions in the numbers killed and seriously injured on roads since 2008. There had also been reduced congestion. Improvements, combined with investment in new technology, had assisted traffic flow.

Cllr Hume was aware that the condition of roads and footways (of which there was 4,500 miles across the County) is a matter of concern to the public. Overall, an additional £45M had been invested in the period up to 2008/09, with an additional £10M this year. For South Essex work was underway on a host of significant schemes at locations such Sadlers Farm, Canvey Island, Progress Road and Priory Corner. The high number of schemes would be of

tangible benefit to residents, albeit that there would be elements of disruption in the short term.

Responding to questions, Cllr Hume advised that:-

- Whilst the A12 was a Highways Agency road, the County Council had had some influence on improvements that are taking place.
- The undertaking of remedial work on the B1013 between the roundabout at the northern end and Nursery Corner would be taken back and fed into scheme prioritisation activity.
- To date, £1.6M of schemes were being delivered within the Rochford District through localism and further schemes will be added. The County Council is aware of perceptions that some areas receive under investment. However, a formula is applied to the allocation of monies and account is taken of Mori surveys commissioned to ascertain the views of the public on highway conditions. A copy of the formula could be provided to the District Council's Portfolio Holder for Planning and Transportation.
- It is disappointing and unacceptable for there to have been an occasion when monies to be provided by a developer for the provision of a pedestrian crossing had not been accessed.
- There are contrary opinions on the introduction of average speed cameras along the A127. It takes three years to establish precise injury/accident reductions associated with cameras at new locations but experience shows that there can be a 60% reduction in the number of deaths and serious injuries and a 70% reduction in collisions. The scheme will continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. A reduction in accidents can mean improved journey times.
- The County Council subsidises public transport by £7M per annum. It can be recognised that rural/remote locations have specific needs that can sometimes be met through alternatives, such as community transport schemes.
- A County Council Scrutiny Panel has considered the schemes involving the targeted/timed use of street lighting (currently in the Maldon and Uttlesford areas). Any roll-out would be subject to detailed consultation. Evidence before the Scrutiny Panel had shown that there had been no increase in crime or accidents during the pilots. There had been a slight increase in the fear of crime, particularly amongst the elderly, which was of concern and would need to be part of considerations.
- Any highway defects that are considered dangerous should be reported to the highways service immediately.

- £113,000 had been allocated for improvements to Brays Lane off the Ashingdon Road. It could be recognised that this amount would not resolve any significant problems such as road collapse, which would have to be considered separately as appropriate.
- There are a high number of automatic number plate recognition cameras in the County. Work is underway to address issues associated with average speed cameras not being suited to motor cycles. The Police patrol with this in mind.
- The theft of steel manhole covers did not seem to be a particular problem at the current time. Where possible, covers are replaced with less valuable material.

It was noted that the advent of localism meant that the loss of developer monies should not be an issue. Cllr K J Gordon wished to extend particular thanks to Cllr Hume on behalf of the Members and residents of the Rochford Ward for the repair works undertaken at the Anne Boleyn location.

The Leader of the Council and the Chairman thanked Cllr Hume for attending. Reference was made to how localism and highway infrastructure projects were of value to the District, particularly in terms of meeting the needs of the local business community and addressing safety matters.

Cllr Hume confirmed that he would be happy to attend a future meeting if considered appropriate.

271 MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Council noted the minutes of Executive and Committee meetings held between 21 July 2009 and 15 October 2009.

272 REPORTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE AND COMMITTEES

(1) Report of the Executive – 23 September 2009

Council considered the report of the Executive containing recommendations relating to outside body appointees.

Resolved

- (1) That the nomination of Cllr P R Robinson as the appointee to the Crouch Valley Scout District Executive Committee be confirmed.
- (2) That the nomination of Cllr T G Cutmore as the appointee to the Cory Environmental Trust in Rochford be confirmed. (HICS)

(2) Report of the Executive – 21 October 2009

Council considered the report of the Executive containing a recommendation relating to appointees to the Finchfield Trust.

Resolved

That the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council be appointed as trustees of the Finchfield Trust. (HLTS)

273 REPORT OF THE LEADER ON THE WORK OF THE EXECUTIVE

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

“My last report into Full Council was prior to the summer recess and since that time, which seems almost an age ago, a number of things have moved forward.

Last month we had an extraordinary meeting of the Council to agree the Rochford District Core Strategy submission document for its final round of formal consultation. That consultation is now well underway and closes on 2 November. Once the consultation period is over the document, together with all the responses received, will be sent to the Government Planning Inspectorate for consideration. They will then start their process to determine whether or not the Core Strategy is sound and legally compliant. It is anticipated that a Public Inquiry into the Strategy will be held in the summer of next year. By way of an update, at the time of writing this speech, we had received some 110 representations from 53 different respondents.

The Council has also now gone out to public consultation on the Issues and Options around Rochford Town Centre. That consultation lasts until 30 November. Again, at the time of writing, we had already received some 45 representations from 10 respondents. A good start given the relative newness around that consultation.

Since I last spoke at Full Council we have been advised by PKF, our external auditors, that we have scored 3 in our Use of Resources Assessment. This is out of a maximum of 4 and is seen as a Council that is performing well. Following on from the excellent overall results we received in the Place Survey, this is very good news indeed and reflects well on the Authority, although it is important that we are not complacent and continue to move the organisation forward, ensuring we continue to deliver quality services and are seen as securing good value for money. We now await the Audit Commission’s Organisational Assessment of us, which forms part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment process. That is due for publication on 10 December 2009. Given the feedback we have had to date, I am confident that it will show this District Council in a positive light.

Tonight Councillor Starke cannot be with us as he is attending an awards ceremony in London. We have been shortlisted for the National Recycling Awards under the category – Local Authority Target Success – along with the London Borough of Bexley, North Hertfordshire District Council, Rutland County Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. For me, whilst winning an award, if we do, will be very pleasing, the most satisfying thing about this is to think that less than 2 years ago we were the worst performing

Council in Essex in terms of recycling rates, and now we are recognised as being one of the highest performers and in for a national award. It truly is a remarkable achievement and one of which we can all be proud, recognising that it is our residents' enthusiasm for the scheme which has made it so successful.

Since the summer recess, the Executive has considered our post CPA Strategic Improvement Plan and the progress we have made in that context, which relates back to my earlier comments around our Use of Resources judgement and our likely organisational assessment. We have looked at our performance, in project and service terms and from a financial monitoring standpoint, and I am pleased to say as Leader that we continue to make good progress in most areas.

We have agreed the way forward in terms of working with Castle Point Borough Council on our Revenues and Benefits Service. We identified the main areas on which progress could be made initially and these are now being taken forward. We have considered and commented on government consultations relating to Strengthening Local Democracy and Building a Society for all Ages. At our meeting last week, we considered the Review Committee's report on Bulky Waste. We also examined a possible volunteering policy for staff to help strengthen the capacity of our local voluntary and community sector and to prepare the Council for the year of the Volunteer in 2011.

A new Economic Development Strategy was endorsed in response to the changing circumstances in which the Council finds itself and we also examined a new media protocol for the Council, to ensure that our approach to the media is as consistent as possible.

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

Council endorsed the observation of Cllr C G Seagers that thanks should be extended to Cllr M G B Starke, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, for his diligence and hard work in contributing to the vast improvement in recycling rates within the District. Thanks were also extended to other Members and officers for their contribution in this area in particular.

The meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Chairman

Date

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