

## **Council - 27 January 2005**

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Minutes of the meeting of **Council** held on **27 January 2005** when there were present:-

Cllr Mrs R Brown (Chairman)  
Cllr P F A Webster (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr C I Black	Cllr G A Mockford
Cllr Mrs L A Butcher	Cllr R A Oatham
Cllr R G S Choppen	Cllr J M Pullen
Cllr T G Cutmore	Cllr P R Robinson
Cllr K A Gibbs	Cllr P K Savill
Cllr T E Goodwin	Cllr C G Seagers
Cllr J E Grey	Cllr S P Smith
Cllr K H Hudson	Cllr D G Stansby
Cllr A J Humphries	Cllr J Thomass
Cllr C A Hungate	Cllr M S Vince
Cllr T Livings	Cllr Mrs M J Webster
Cllr D Merrick	Cllr Mrs C A Weston

### **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs R A Amner, P A Capon, Mrs T J Capon, Mrs H L A Glynn, K J Gordon, Mrs S A Harper, Mrs L Hungate, C J Lumley, Mrs J R Lumley, J R F Mason, Mrs M A Starke, M G B Starke and Mrs B J Wilkins.

### **OFFICERS PRESENT**

P Warren - Chief Executive  
R J Honey - Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration)  
R Crofts - Corporate Director (Finance & External Services)  
D Deeks - Head of Financial Services  
Y Woodward - Accountancy Manager  
J Bostock - Principal Committee Administrator

### **29 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 December 2004 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **30 BUDGET STRATEGY 2005/06**

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services on the Budget Strategy 2005/06.

In presenting the report, the Head of Financial Services advised that the Government had now announced the final settlement which represented a reduction of £10,700 on the provisional settlement figure identified in the report.

The Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) advised that the budget strategy had been compiled in a robust manner and accorded with legal requirements. Specific mention was made of the merits that could be associated with setting a five-year budget in terms of being able to react well to change. The Council had worked on the basis of a three-year budget and latterly a five year budget for a number of years, and it was of note that the Government was consulting on whether a three year budgetary approach should be compulsory for all authorities. The various significant factors facing the Council, as identified in the report, suggested that it would be inappropriate for officers to suggest any radical changes to the Council's five year budget strategy at this point in time.

The Leader of the Council referred to the value of the Members' Away Day in strategy development. It was disappointing that the final settlement figure was £10,700 below the provisional figure, particularly in the context of the various points set out at paragraph 5.1 of the report. The holding back of monies under the floors and ceilings adjustment was of particular note. It could be observed that in the previous two years over £200,000 per year and, for 2005/06, £138,000 had been held back by the Government in favour of authorities in other parts of the country. The strategy could be compared favourably with the strategies of neighbouring authorities.

Specific reference was made to the car parking strategy, as detailed in report paragraphs 8.8 to 8.16. It was confirmed that there would be further consultation with the various business representatives as part of the formal notification process.

During debate reference was made to the fact that, historically, the District had received poor financial support from the Government. Notwithstanding this, the Council had continued to manage its resources well and provide residents with a high standard of service.

With specific regard to the schedule of fees and charges Council agreed a motion, moved by Cllr S P Smith and seconded by Cllr J Thomass, that the charge per hour for using the Civic Suite projection equipment be reduced to £10 for 2005/06 with a view to encouraging its use by the community.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the revised estimates for 2004/05, as detailed in the report, be agreed.

- (2) That the core estimates for 2005/06, as detailed in the report, be agreed.
- (3) That the Council Tax for Rochford District Council be at 4.95%.
- (4) That the priorities and non-priorities for 2005/06, as detailed in the report, be agreed.
- (5) That, subject to the 2005/06 charge for the use of Civic Suite projection equipment being set at £10.00, the schedule of fees and charges, as detailed in the report, be agreed.
- (6) That the Capital Programme, as detailed in the report, be agreed.
- (7) That the statement on Prudential Borrowing be noted. (HFS)

### 31 MEMBER QUESTION

Pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 11.2, the following question of the Chairman of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee have been received from C I Black:-

'At tonight's meeting there are expected to be substantial increases in car parking charges, but no alteration in the means of paying.

Bearing in mind the motion passed in Minute 212/2000, moved by yourself and voted for by Councillors Amner, Mrs Brown, Capon, Cutmore, Grey, Mrs Hungate, Livings, Mockford, Smith, Starke and Mr and Mrs Webster which stated:

*... "That Council further notes that the Conservative Group will implement pay-on-exit car parking in Webster's Way car park as soon as possible."*

and the Conservative leaflet that stated:

*"Residents throughout Rayleigh want pay-on-exit car parking in Webster's Way now. We have had over 1400 replies from houses in Rayleigh - and over 70% want this system...."*

*Yet Liberal councillors have refused to meet residents' wishes. Rayleigh Conservatives believe people should have what they want - not be arrogantly disregarded by the Liberals. At the December Council meeting, Conservative Councillors publicly promised to put pay-on-exit car parking into Webster's Way."*

The Conservatives have a massive majority on the Council - partly through making promises like this - and it would have been simple for you to have brought in pay-on-exit car parking if you really wanted to.

Tonight would have been an appropriate night to agree the funding. From your informed position as Chairman of Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and mover of the motion, do you not agree that those 1400 households deserve an apology?'

Responding to the question the Chairman of the Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cllr P F A Webster, indicated that it seemed extraordinary for it to have taken a period of five years for such a question to have been raised and for the questioner to omit to include the Liberal Democrat Councillors that voted for the motion passed under Minute 212. Reference was also made to a possibility that forthcoming elections may be a factor behind the question.

It could be suggested that there are sensible reasons why the Council had not implemented pay-on-exit parking in Webster Way. Firstly, the volume of traffic has substantially increased since 2000 which would result in more delays if there was pay-on-exit parking. Throughput would also be less (even with the present system there is a demand for more car parking facilities in Rayleigh). Secondly, fewer cars able to park in Websters Way would mean a lower Council income. If this was so, would Cllr Black want an increase in Council Tax or a reduction in other services provided by the Council?

Cllr Webster indicated that, over the last four years or more he had not received a letter, telephone call or a meeting request from any resident complaining that the Council had not introduced pay-on-exit parking. Residents who like the advantages of pay-on-exit parking will also accept the disadvantages. If Cllr Black believed that residents in Websters Way wanted the introduction of pay-on-exit parking he could have introduced a motion in that regard. Asking the question seemed an inappropriate use of time and it was perhaps significant that there had been no indication of support from other Liberal Democrat Members.

In response Cllr C I Black commented that he did not know if he or anyone else would be standing in the forthcoming elections and that the Conservative Members identified within the original question were now in the majority group on the Council. It was not a question of whether or not the Liberal Democrats supported pay-on-exit parking, but that a pledge had been made three years ago.

By way of final reply Cllr Webster observed that such questions were not getting the Council anywhere and that it remained noticeable that only one Member was raising them.

### **32 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT AND ANNUAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2005/06**

Council considered the report of the Head of Financial Services on the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy 2005/06.

Responding to questions on investment strategy, the Head of Financial Services advised that Sector Treasury Services was part of the Capita Group and very experienced in advising a number of major organisations. Whilst there could never be complete guarantees that something unexpected will not happen as a result of advice, the approach was all about both minimising risk by investing only in the highest rated organisations and getting competitive rates of interest based on market judgements at the time.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy, including the limits contained within the report, be agreed.
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) undertake Prudential Borrowing as outlined in the report.
- (3) That the Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for external debt, as laid down in the report, be agreed and that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) within the total limit for any individual year to effect movement between the separately agreed limits for borrowing and other long term liabilities.
- (4) That the revised criteria for counterparties be agreed and that authority be delegated to the Corporate Director (Finance & External Services) to add and remove counterparties in line with this criteria. (HFS)

The meeting closed at 8.27pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....