

The Executive – 5 November 2008

Minutes of the meeting of **The Executive** held on **5 November 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore
Vice-Chairman: Cllr Mrs M J Webster

Cllr Mrs L A Butcher
Cllr Mrs T J Capon
Cllr K J Gordon

Cllr K H Hudson
Cllr M G B Starke
Cllr P F A Webster

OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive
R J Honey - Corporate Director (Internal Services)
Y Woodward - Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management
S Neville - Strategic Housing Manager
M Howlett - Senior Environmental Health Officer
J Bostock - Committee Services Manager

311 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

312 PERFORMANCE REPORT ON KEY PROJECTS FOR THE PERIOD JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2008

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on progress against key policies and actions for 2008/09 up to 30 September 2008.

It was noted that the timing of the new Rochford District Sustainable Community Strategy was dependent on the inputs received from the various partners. It was confirmed that the Economic Development Strategy had now been approved.

Resolved

That the progress against key projects for the second quarter of 2008/09 be noted. (HFAPM)

313 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Executive considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit and Performance Management on the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

It was noted that:-

- Historically, the Office of Government Commerce offered the best energy prices. Officers kept this under review.

- The increase in bank charges for corporate management was associated with the payment of commission for credit card transactions. Officers were reviewing whether it would be possible for payment arrangements to be changed so that the Authority is not responsible for the commission element.
- Housing Benefit in terms of benefits granted net of subsidy and recoveries continued to be under review.
- Notwithstanding income related to burial charges, all income streams were reducing. This and the consideration of other possible sources of income would need to be a feature of forthcoming budgetary discussions. Any income related to proposals for business start up facilities would be subject to the timescale for introducing such facilities (currently four to five years).
- There continued to be a legal requirement that authorities must not set a budget that is beyond the level of reserves available. An authority's borrowing is normally related to capital projects/capitalising.
- The estimated income associated with car parking fees for 2008/09 should be changed from £863,000 to £830,000.
- Treasury policies had been reviewed. There had been no major changes, although organisations not meeting the Council's criteria for investment had been removed. The Council had no investments in building societies.
- The cost of suspending car parking charges at all District Council car parks on each of the four Saturdays leading up to Christmas Day 2008 would be approximately £9,000.

During discussion Members concurred with the observation of the Chairman that it would be appropriate for any proposed increase in Members Allowances for 2009/10 to be in line with increases available to officers. It was recognised that discussions on next year's budget would need to include detailed consideration of possibilities and implications relating to car parking charges and other funding streams/potential sources of income. How services are publicised would also merit consideration.

The Executive agreed a motion, moved by Councillor K H Hudson and seconded by Councillor K J Gordon, relating to the suspension of car parking charges on the Saturdays leading up to Christmas Day in recognition of the difficult financial circumstances faced by residents and local shop keepers in the current financial climate.

Resolved

That the mid-year review of the 2008/09 budget which sets out the context for the 2009/10 budget process be noted, subject to:-

- (1) Recognition that discussions on next year's budget will need to include detailed consideration of possibilities and implications relating to car parking charges and other funding streams/potential sources of income. How services are publicised would also merit consideration.
- (2) A suggestion that any proposed increase in Members' Allowances for 2009/10 be in line with increases available to officers being included in budget considerations.
- (3) The suspension of car parking charges at all District Council car parks on each of the four Saturdays leading up to Christmas Day 2008 in recognition of the difficult financial circumstances faced by residents and local shopkeepers in the current financial climate.

Note: The decision to suspend car parking charges was taken as a matter of urgency and not subject to call in/referral due to the need for adequate advance publicity.

314 CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The Executive heard from the Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Councillor M G B Starke, on the formal adoption of a climate change and sustainability strategy and considered the associated report.

It was noted that:-

- Aspects such as the raising of awareness could be achieved at relatively minimal costs.
- The Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options document included reference to renewable energy (there being no plans to develop large scale projects within the District) and a code for sustainable homes.
- The Authority was already a member of the Energy Saving Trust and facilitated car sharing arrangements. Notices were placed on items such as computer terminals asking that they be switched off when not in use. Recycled paper was used at the Council's offices.
- Written information and officer advice was available on energy saving in the home. Insulation schemes were available that included a facility for Council Tax subsidy if adopted. The best of these was promoted.
- Once adopted, the proposed Strategy would be reviewed annually to ensure it was fit for purpose.

Resolved

- (1) That the Climate Change and Sustainability Strategy be adopted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Portfolio Holder for the Environment to approve the resultant action plan. (HES)

315 THE THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX STRATEGIC HOUSING MARKET ASSESSMENT AND THE THAMES GATEWAY SOUTH ESSEX SUB REGIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2008–2011

The Executive heard from the Portfolio Holder for Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions, Councillor Mrs T J Capon, on endorsing the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Regional Housing Strategy 2008–2011. The associated report was considered.

It was noted that the Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options document should refer to affordable housing provision at 35% on sites of 15 or more dwellings. It was also noted that, whilst paragraph 13.53 of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment document relating to housing demand to the north and south of the A127 could be considered a little too general, affordable housing provision by bedroom size would be on the basis of the indicative table under paragraph 13.44.

Resolved

That the Thames Gateway South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment and the Thames Gateway South Essex Sub Regional Housing Strategy 2008-2011 be endorsed, subject to recognition that the Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options document should refer to affordable housing provision at 35% on sites of 15 or more dwellings. (HCS)

316 CHAIN OF OFFICE

The Executive considered the report of the Corporate Policy and Partnerships Manager of the purchase of a new Chain of Office for the Chairman of the Council and a display cabinet.

It was noted that:-

- Experience had established that the supplier identified in the report produced work of a notably high standard to agreed timescales. The supplier provided services to other local authorities.
- Notwithstanding the need to be mindful of timeframe, it would be possible to consider alternative design options.

The Executive endorsed the principle of proceeding, with a final decision on the design of the chain being delegated to the Leader of the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the principle of purchasing a new Chain of Office for the Chairman of the Council and a cabinet to display the old Chain of Office, on the basis of the costings/timeframe set out in the report, be endorsed.

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- (2) That a final decision on the design of the Chain be delegated to the Leader of the Council. (CPPM)

The meeting closed at 9.16 pm.

Chairman

Date

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