

## Executive Board – 23 April 2008

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Minutes of the meeting of the **Executive Board** held on **23 April 2008** when there were present:-

Chairman: Cllr T G Cutmore  
Vice-Chairman: Cllr K H Hudson

Cllr K J Gordon  
Cllr J M Pullen  
Cllr C G Seagers  
Cllr D G Stansby

Cllr M G B Starke  
Cllr Mrs M J Webster  
Cllr P F A Webster

### OFFICERS PRESENT

P Warren - Chief Executive  
G Woolhouse - Corporate Director (External Services)  
A Bugeja - Head of Legal Services  
S Fowler - Head of Information & Customer Services  
R Evans - Head of Environmental Services  
J Bourne - Head of Community Services  
S Scrutton - Head of Planning & Transportation  
J Bostock - Committee Services Manager

### 145 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 146 REPORT OF THE REVIEW COMMITTEE ON OPERATION OF NEW POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The Board considered the final report and recommendations of the Review Committee following its review of the operation of the new political decision making structure.

During discussion reference was made to the fact that Area Committees are a relatively new feature of the Council's political decision-making structure, the working of which is likely to take a couple of years to 'bed in'. In this regard and with a view to maintaining public engagement it was felt that there should be no change in their frequency (approximately six weeks between meetings) and the arrangements in respect of public questions, agenda layout, the Community Forum, the update document and spotlight issues. It was also felt that there should be no in detail examination of the provision of an Area Committee budget allocation by the Review Committee during the next municipal year.

In discussing access to meetings it was felt that, given arrangements could be considered if it is known that individuals with mobility problems wish to attend a meeting and that any formal provision could be both complicated and set a precedent for meetings, no further action should be taken with regard to a feasibility study of the costs and benefits of providing public transport to allow

the public with mobility problems or lack of access to public transport to attend Area Committee meetings.

It was noted that, whilst an invite had been extended to the Chairman of the Review Committee to attend the meeting, this had been at short notice and pointed to the value of introducing a standard practice whereby, when the Board is considering the report of a Committee, the Chairman of that Committee is invited to attend the meeting for that item. It was also noted that the availability of a hearing loop at meetings can depend on the nature of a venue.

The Board expressed gratitude to the Review Committee for all the work undertaken by that Committee in its review of the political decision-making structure.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That, given Area Committees are a relatively new feature of the Council's political structure, the working of which is likely to take a couple of years to 'bed in', there should be no change at this stage to their frequency and the arrangements in respect of public questions, agenda layout, the Community Forum, the update document and spotlight issues. There should also be no in detail examination of the provision of an Area Committee budget allocation by the Review Committee during the next municipal year (Review Committee report recommendations (1), (2), (4), (6) and (10) refer).
- (2) That agenda items, where practicable, need to be in the same cycle at all Area Committees and, where possible, a written report be included with the Agenda to aid understanding.
- (3) That a facility be introduced to hold an Area Committee meeting to conduct formal business without a Community Forum, or vice versa, when it is appropriate to do so.
- (4) That the annual officer training and development programme should include elements around presentations, public speaking and answering questions to assist those officers who will be attending Area Committees and meeting the public.
- (5) That additional methods of publicising the Area Committee meetings are explored for the next Municipal year i.e. public advertising, the production of information leaflets and through Rochford District Matters.
- (6) That, given arrangements could be considered if it is known that individuals with mobility problems wish to attend a meeting and that any formal provision could be both complicated and set a precedent for all meetings, no further action be taken with regard to a feasibility study of the costs and benefits of providing public transport to allow the

public with mobility problems or lack of access to public transport to attend Area Committee meetings.

- (7) That the role profile, attached at appendix 3, for Parish/Town Councillors who are Members of the Area Committees is adopted and sent to the Parish/Town Councils when they are asked for nominations for next year's Area Committees.
- (8) That the guidance for District Members on Area Committees, attached at appendix 4, is adopted.
- (9) That details of the risk to the Council (such as legal, budgetary and timescales) of taking/not taking the action is included with the Forward Plan to allow Members and the public to assess the importance of the topics contained in the plan.
- (10) That there be a standing item on the Executive Board meeting agenda for Area Committee Chairmen to report back on the Area Committee meetings.
- (11) That practice be introduced whereby, when the Executive Board is considering the report of a Committee, the Chairman of that Committee is invited to attend the meeting for that item. (HICS)

### **147 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CPA) - DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT**

The Board considered the report of the Corporate Director (External Services) on the Draft CPA Self-Assessment.

It was noted that work was continuing on the Assessment document to assimilate recent observations made by the Review Committee and the Improvement Panel. Adjustments were not fundamental but about the refinement of content and they would continue up until the deadline for document despatch to the Audit Commission.

Reference was made to the value of information being set out so that it is customer facing. For instance, with Showcase 7 (Southend Road Car Park) the changes introduced by virtue of addressing the built environment could be placed ahead of byelaw implementation.

The Board concurred with the observation of the Chairman that officers should be commended for all their work on the Self-Assessment document.

**Recommended** to Full Council that the draft CPA Self-Assessment document be endorsed on the basis of continued amendment. (CD(ES))

### 148 PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL'S POLITICAL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURE

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on the Council's political decision-making structure.

In endorsing proposals Members recognised that they built on the structure already in place, introducing appropriate levels of accountability and enabling the public to identify who is making decisions.

It was observed that the Council had previously recognised that 'not change' was not an option and that, given proposals reflected a model that would have to be in place statutorily by 2010, there would be merit in the Council being able to experience and work to requirements as soon as practicable.

The Board concurred with the Chairman that thanks should be extended to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Internal Services) for their work in developing the proposals.

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

**Recommended** to Full Council that:-

(1) From May 2008:-

- (a) The Council moves to a stronger leadership model of governance with the Leader appointed for a period of 4 years and with the Leader taking over responsibility for member appointments to the Executive Board. All other chairmanship/deputy chairmanship appointments to remain with Full Council, with the exception of the Area Committee Chairmen, who will be appointed at Annual Council but on the basis of the votes from those Members only within the wards covered by that Area Committee.
- (b) The Executive Board be changed to 8 Members, each with responsibility for specific portfolios around:-
  - Overall strategy and policy (to rest with the Leader)
  - Service Development /Improvement and Performance Management (to rest with the Deputy Leader)
  - Environment including Parks, Open Spaces and Woodlands, Recycling, Street Scene and the new contracts.
  - Finance and Resources
  - Leisure, Tourism, Heritage, the Arts, Culture and Business
  - Planning and Transportation

- Council Tax Collection, Benefits and Strategic Housing Functions
  - Young Persons, Adult Services, Community Care & Well-being, Health and Community Safety
- (c) In the light of (a) and (b) above, the Area Committee Chairmen will no longer be members of the Executive Board.
- (d) In the light of (a) and (b) above, the Member Champion roles be reduced to two to cover the areas of Risk and Business Continuity and E-Govt and Website development only.
- (2) Subject to the changes outlined in (1) above being agreed, a revised Constitution incorporating these changes is reported into Annual Council in May for consideration and approval. (CE)

### **149 ACCESS TO SERVICES UPDATE**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Information & Customer Services which contained an update on progress on the Access to Services Strategy.

Pursuant to Contract Procedure Rules the Chief Executive reported that, whilst The Tribal Group had not submitted the lowest tender for consultancy services in respect of access to services, it had been appointed on the basis of its specialist expertise.

During discussion it was noted that much of the work on access to services involved opportunity cost. For example, the welcome pack for new residents was a development of one already in existence. Consultancy costs had been funded through the building capacity fund and all activity had been within budget.

It was observed that it may be the case that any customer complaints are more likely for high profile services, particularly where there is raised public expectation.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That the work carried out to date to implement the Access to Services Strategy be noted.
- (2) That the complaints statistics for January to March 2008 be noted.
- (3) That the full business case for the transformation of the frontline customer service be considered by the Executive Board in June 2008. (HICS)

### **150 PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MEMBERS ON KEY PROJECTS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2008**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management showing progress against key policies and actions for 2007/08 up to 31 March 2008.

#### **Resolved**

That the progress against key projects for the fourth quarter of 2007/08 be noted. (HFAPM)

### **151 PERFORMANCE REPORT TO MEMBERS ON KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2008**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Finance, Audit & Performance Management on statistical performance data for 2007/08 up to 31 March 2008.

#### **Resolved**

That the performance achieved for the key indicators for the fourth quarter of 2007/08 be noted. (HFAPM)

### **152 GRANTS TO OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Board considered the report of the Chief Executive on applications to be considered for financial assistance in 2008/09.

It was recognised, if possible, the grants to Outside Organisations Sub-Committee should be re-established prior to the Annual Council meeting.

#### **Resolved**

That the Grants to Outside Organisations Sub-Committee be re-established prior to Annual Council with the same membership as previously (Cllrs T G Cutmore (Chairman), K J Gordon, Mrs H L A Glynn, R A Oatham and Mrs M J Webster) and that authority be delegated to the Sub-Committee to determine the grants to be made for 2008/09. (CE)

### **153 SWEYNE PARK EXTENSION – YOUTH FOOTBALL PITCHES**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Community Services which provided an update on the development of youth football pitches at the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre and sought a decision on pitch bookings.

It was noted that this matter had been discussed at the last meeting of the West Area Committee where no conclusion had been reached.

The Board recognised that all the interested football clubs were well respected. It was felt that it would be appropriate for the approach taken to be

as inclusive as possible. In terms of achieving a facility that would be available to a number of community organisations such as scout groups and ensuring the effective management of what is a new facility, it was agreed the pitches should be operated as part of the Council's grounds maintenance contract.

### **Resolved**

That the new football pitches to the rear of Rayleigh Leisure Centre be operated as part of the Council's grounds maintenance contract. (HCS)

### **154 PROPOSED HOCKLEY WAR MEMORIAL**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Legal Services on an application from Hockley Parish Council to erect a war memorial on the highway in front of Woodlands Parade, Southend Road, Hockley.

### **Resolved**

That approval be granted for the erection of the war memorial, subject to Hockley Parish Council entering into an agreement with the District Council as outlined in the report and on such other terms and conditions as the Head of Legal Services deems appropriate. (HLS)

### **155 VALIDATION OF PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Planning & Transportation on responses received to consultation on the draft local checklist of documents to be submitted with planning applications.

Responding to questions, officers advised that:-

- Should any further changes be proposed to the local checklist these would be reported to Members.
- To minimise potential difficulties for applicants the requirement for hard copies of an application had been reduced to three copies (the Government's minimum requirement). Reception areas had the facility to print off plans.
- Access to services activity had helped inform the mechanisms available for the submission of planning applications. The Government was undertaking a review of local authority development control processes.
- Legislation did not preclude an applicant from deciding that they would like additional permissions once a consent was granted.
- Enforcement action is taken in any cases where it is identified that developers have gone beyond the approved plan relating to a permission, albeit that a developer may try to regularise the position by submitting a further application.

**Resolved**

That the planning application validation local checklist be adopted. (HPT)

**156 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2008/09**

The Board considered the report of the Head of Information & Customer Services on the adoption of a timetable of meetings for the 2008/09 municipal year.

It was recognised that the timetable would need some review in relation to area committees to facilitate the decision on frequency made earlier in the meeting.

**Resolved**

That the timetable of meetings for 2008/09, as set out in the appendix to the report, be approved subject to recognition that there will need to be some review in relation to area committees to facilitate the decision on frequency made earlier in the meeting. (HICS)

**EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Resolved** that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the remaining business on the grounds that exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 would be disclosed.

**157 LAND TO THE SOUTH OF CHERRY ORCHARD JUBILEE COUNTRY PARK**

The Board considered the exempt report of the Head of Environmental Services on land to the south of Cherry Orchard Jubilee Country Park.

It was noted that further funding towards the Park project was being sought from additional Government grant monies available to Thames Gateway South Essex.

Responding to questions, officers advised on the situation with regard to a club to the east of the site and the current position with regard to ensuring that appropriate measures to protect wildlife, including badgers, are included as part of the development of the detailed park scheme.

**Resolved**

That the Head of Legal Services be authorised to negotiate terms to secure the proposal set out in the exempt report. (HES)



## Executive Board – 23 April 2008

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The meeting closed at 8.45 pm.

Chairman .....

Date .....

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