

Minutes



Council Meeting

18th June 2007

Present:

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
J E Abbott	Yes	E R Lynch	Yes
M J Banthorpe	Yes	M Lynch	Yes
Miss L Barlow	Yes	D Mann	Yes
J Baugh	Apologies	T McArdle	Yes
Mrs J C Beavis	Yes	N G McCrea	Yes
D L Bebb	Yes	J McKee	Yes
K E Bigden	Yes	H J Messenger	Yes
E Bishop	Yes	A M Meyer	Yes
R J Bolton	Yes	R G S Mitchell	Yes
G Butland	Yes	Mrs J M Money	Apologies
J C Collar	Yes	Lady Newton (Chairman)	Yes
Ms C J Denise	Yes	J P O'Reilly-Cicconi	Yes
M Dunn	Yes	Mrs R O'Shea	Apologies
Mrs E Edey	Yes	Mrs J A Pell	Apologies
J G J Elliott	Apologies	R Ramage	Apologies
Dr R L Evans	Yes	D M Reid	Yes
A V E Everard	Yes	D E A Rice	Yes
J H G Finbow	Apologies	W Rose	Yes
Ms L B Flint	Apologies	Mrs C Sandbrook	Yes
T J W Foster	Yes	Mrs W D Scattergood	Yes
Mrs B A Gage	Yes	Mrs J W Schmitt	Yes
M G Gage	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
Mrs M E Galione (Vice-Chairman)	Yes	Mrs L Shepherd	Yes
J E B Gyford	Yes	Mrs G A Spray	Yes
N R H O Harley	Yes	F Swallow	Yes
Mrs S A Howell	Apologies	Miss M Thorogood	Yes
P J Hughes	Yes	S M Walsh	Yes
D L Hume	Apologies	R G Walters	Yes
M C M Lager	Yes	R N Wilkins	Yes
S J Lambourne	Apologies	T S Wilkinson	Apologies

The Chairman welcomed all Councillors and members of the public and press to the meeting. She drew their attention to the evacuation procedure in case of an emergency and of the need for Members to use the microphones.

13 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (1) **Braintree Wildlife Advisory Group.** The Chairman congratulated a group of pupils from Ridgewell School for winning a competition set by the Advisory Group with the aim of finding existing projects that have helped wildlife and improved biodiversity. Pupils from the School had transformed a patch of brambles at the back of the School into a nature garden. The School had chosen to spend the prize money on mini cameras which would assist the pupils in their wildlife studies. The Chairman then presented the School with the mini cameras.
- (2) **Chairman's Charities.** The Chairman announced that her chosen charities for the forthcoming civic year would be
 - Young Carers
 - Coggeshall Prentice Youth Work Trust
 - Riding for the Disabled (Twinstead)
- (3) **Essex County Council Emergency Planning Unit.** The Chairman announced that this unit had been awarded Beacon Status and in recognition of its multi-agency working the Beacon sponsors had agreed that partner authorities could use the Beacon Logo until March 2009 providing it met certain criteria.
- (4) **Chairman's engagements May and June 2007.** The Chairman outlined details of the engagements she had undertaken since taking up office last month.

14 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Abbott declared a personal interest in minute number 19 - a statement he would be making which concerned the Council's waste policies. This matter had been discussed by Rivenhall Parish Council of which he is a Member. Councillor Abbott remained in the meeting during consideration of this item.

Councillor Miss Thorogood declared a personal interest in the recommendation from the Cabinet concerning Minute 18(1) – the proposed Section 25 Loan to Greenfields Community Housing (GCH) as she is a Member of the (GCH) Community Gateway Group. Councillor Thorogood remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.

15 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 21st May 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16 **QUESTION TIME**

The Chairman welcomed Michael Haslam and invited him to make his statement. Mr Haslam expressed concern at the decision of the Council to reduce the number of Planning Committee meetings in order to save money and standardise decision making. He asked if it was democratic and if it would reflect the public's needs and

interests. He felt this decision would damage the role and involvement of non-Cabinet Members.

In responding the Leader explained that the changes made at the AGM were not aimed at saving money. He stated that the old Area Committees had spent very little time dealing with non-planning issues e.g. those affecting the well-being of the area like anti-social behaviour. The leader explained that although planning applications were important they affected a minority of people in the District.

Ward Members and Members of the public would have the same opportunities to make representations to the new Planning Committee and at the same time the new Local Committees would have greater opportunities to consider the many issues affecting the local areas. In addition they would have a locality budget to allocate on local projects. He commented that the new Committees and processes needed to be given time to bed down but gave an undertaking that he would review the way things were working after a reasonable time and if necessary make changes.

17 **CORPORATE ACTION IMPROVEMENT AND PERFORMANCE PLAN 2006 - 2007**

INFORMATION: Councillor Lager, Cabinet Member for Resources and Performance, presented the above report which he explained also formed the Council's Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/07. He outlined the main sections of the report referring to the improvements made in the areas of Development Control and Housing Benefit applications. He also referred to best value indicator 3 regarding customer satisfaction. He reported that the Council had shown a dip in the levels of customer satisfaction in line with trends nationally.

During discussion Councillor Gyford asked for clarification on how the Council planned to move from existing levels of satisfaction of 55% to a target of over 70%.

Councillor Abbott referred to the Capital Programme and asked for assurances that replacement of the pavilion/changing rooms at the Silver Street Playing Fields in Silver End was in the programme.

Councillor E Lynch referred to the area on affordable housing and asked the Cabinet Member for a definition of "Affordable Housing".

In responding Councillor Lager stated that he felt the Council could make progress in improving the level of customer satisfaction by dealing with the perception of Council services and advertising its successes, this would improve public perception and see an immediate improvement in customer satisfaction.

Councillor Lager confirmed that a review of sporting facilities was built into the Community Halls project. If it was determined that replacement of the pavilion at Silver End was a priority then as Councillor Butland had stated this was already funded and would be dealt with swiftly.

Councillor Lager stated that his definition of affordable housing is housing which is affordable.

Councillor Lager referred to the recommendations from Cabinet at its meeting on 4th June 2007 and asked that authority be given to the Leader to make any minor changes required in the lead up to publication of the final document.

DECISION:

- (1) That the Corporate Performance Plan and Corporate Action Plan be approved for publication.
- (2) That the Leader of the Council be authorised to approve any minor alterations to the above documents prior to publication.
- (3) That both Plans be communicated to all Members, partners, stakeholders and the public when complete.

18 **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES– PUBLIC SESSION**

- (1) Cabinet – 4th June 2007

DECISION: That, subject to approval by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), the Council approve an additional loan of up to £1.5m to GCH under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988, subject to the terms and conditions as detailed in the Cabinet report

- (2) Standards Committee – 13th June 2007

DECISION:

- (a) That the guidance for Members setting out their responsibilities when appointed as Council representatives on external bodies, as set out in the Standards Committee report, be adopted; and
- (b) That details contained in the formatted questionnaire be supplied to each relevant Member appointed as a Council representative on an external body.

19 **STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS**

It was noted that the statement by Councillor E Lynch had been withdrawn.

Statement by Councillor Abbott regarding the Council's waste and recycling policy – the full statement can be found on the Council's web site as an annex to these minutes.

Councillor Abbott referred to the development of the Waste Strategy and the Waste Plan for Essex and highlighted that in the past extensive public consultations undertaken in the County had previously rejected waste incineration but supported a move towards the highest levels of recycling and composting. He expressed concern that despite this Essex County Council was now seriously considering the implementation of waste incineration with Rivenhall Airfield being modelled as a site for waste burning.

Councillor Abbott stated that this Council along with the other districts and boroughs in Essex are involved in joint working with the County Council and so far this Council had

not objected to these developments and the local communities that could be affected had not been consulted.

Councillor Abbott highlighted the likely impact of the proposed Rivenhall site which he stated would generate over 400 Heavy Goods Vehicle movements a day with travel from far afield. He referred to the progress being made citing the award of consent for a 60 acre waste development on Rivenhall Airfield by the County Council in March this year.

Councillor Abbott also expressed concern about the impact of pollution from such a site with hundreds of thousands of tonnes of waste per year including paper, cardboard and plastics being burnt. He stated that this was not green technology, but was unsustainable, burning non renewable resources such as plastics. He feared that it could lock the Councils affected into burning waste for decades to come, irrespective of the reductions in packaging, electrical component recycling and other welcome developments that are starting to reduce waste at source.

Councillor Abbott quoted from a number of green organisations including Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Zero Waste Alliance and WRAP [Waste & Resources Action Programme], that were all opposed to incineration.

Councillor Abbott emphasised that the most important message to get across to the public is – Reduce Reuse Recycle – and in that order. He urged the Council to reject the incineration route and follow the decision of Chelmsford Borough Council.

Councillor Butland congratulated Councillor Abbott for using the opportunity afforded to Councillors in giving notice of their intention to make a statement. He referred back to the last Cabinet meeting when it had been agreed that himself, Councillor Walters and Group Leaders would meet with the County Council's Cabinet Member for waste to discuss the matter. Following this meeting a full report would be considered by Cabinet at its meeting scheduled for 16th July 2007 and subsequently by Council on 31st July 2007. He felt this process would enable all Members to be in possession of the facts and Council to make an informed decision.

20 **QUESTION TIME**

(1) Statements by the Leader/Cabinet Members

INFORMATION: The following statements were made: -

Councillor Butland referred to the launch of the locality pilots at the Discovery Centre. He reminded Council of the progress being made and highlighted the Witham Library Project/One Stop Shop, the joint Community project with the County Council and Radio 5 Live and the development of the Great Notley Country Park as examples of recent successes.

Councillor Butland referred to a letter that he had received from Go East setting out the anticipated delay in the timetable for approving the East of England Plan to the autumn. This would have a knock on impact on this Council's Local Development Plan.

The Leader referred to the small grants available through the High Sheriff of Essex award scheme. He urged Councillors and Community Groups to pass on the information and to support applications being made from within the District. These awards were for small schemes up to £1,000 and applications had to be submitted by 1st December 2007 and awards would be made by 5th March 2008.

The Leader was delighted to announce that he had been involved in the official opening of the all weather pitch at Spinks Lane. He stated that these facilities funded by the Council and a grant from the Football Foundation provide excellent facilities and will complement the hard work and dedication of many volunteers who freely give their time to support many local sports in Witham.

Councillor Walters, Cabinet Member for Environment, reported on the full day of activities undertaken at Weavers Park on 5th June to mark World Environment Day. He outlined the main activities and the fact that with 30 stands and 9 schools involved an estimated 3000 people attended. He thanked the many staff and Councillors involved for their hard work in making this event a big success.

Councillor Harley, Cabinet Member for Enterprise and Infrastructure, referred to minute 13 of the Cabinet meeting on 4th June. He advised Members that the two references to "West of Stansted" and West of the airport should read "East of Stansted" and "East of the Airport". He highlighted the main issues referred to in the Cabinet minutes and urged all Members to read the consultation paper and to submit their own responses.

(2) Oral Questions

Members were invited to ask any questions of the Leader on non-operational matters and the following questions were asked: -

Councillor Dr Evans expressed concern at the poor condition of the Memorial Gardens in Witham and asked if the Leader would agree to a site inspection as the first step in looking to improve the Gardens?

Councillor Butland agreed that the Gardens required some attention and he would ask officers to look into this.

Councillor Dr Evans asked whether the bird of prey stolen from the Great Notley Country Park was insured and if it would be replaced.

Councillor Butland expressed concern at the loss of the sculpture which was a true landmark and confirmed that it would be replaced.

Councillor Shelton congratulated the Cabinet Member and officers for the excellent work in promoting World Environment Day. He asked if a similar event could be organised District Wide ?

Councillor Walters informed Councillor Shelton that he would talk with officers about if and how such an event might be taken around the District.

Councillor Mrs Sandbrook asked what plans existed to inform and support local businesses to fulfil their responsibilities to implement green travel plans.

Councillor Butland advised Councillor Sandbrook that the Council had started to build its own green travel plan. Questions to applicants and developers were now built into the planning process but he agreed this was a matter that should be considered. He would ask officers to consider this and explain what we have planned.

Councillor Collar expressed concern at the flooding caused to a number of residents in Steeple Bumpstead due to recent heavy rain. He asked what support the Council could offer in collecting carpets and damaged household goods without charging residents.

Councillor Butland extended his sympathy to these and any other residents affected by recent flooding. He agreed to look at this issue and would ask officers to deal with this as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Hughes asked if Councillor Walters would make available the minutes of Essex County Council's joint waste meeting.

Councillor Walters stated that this was a public meeting and the minutes would be made available on the web site.

Councillor Abbott asked the Leader if, how and when the Council would move to ensure that the policies and plans within the Local Plan, the Sustainable Energy Strategy and the Nottingham Declaration were making a difference on the ground. He expressed frustration that the recent halls refurbishment and the swimming pools development had no renewable energy provision built into the projects.

Councillor Butland stated that one of the benefits of a single planning committee would be that it would enable Members to take a consistent approach in dealing with such matters. However, he agreed that the Council needed to move up a gear in delivering improvements arising from these policies.

Councillor McArdle asked what action the Council was taking to ensure that the no smoking ban did not leave the District with a greater litter problem.

Councillor Mrs Schmitt advised that enforcement officers were undertaking inspections at key town centre locations before and after the ban and would be able to identify if the situation worsened. The Council would also use its mobile vehicle to promote and educate the public.

(3) Chairmen's Statements

INFORMATION: No statements were made.

(4) Minutes of Meetings in Public Session

The Leader referred to the Cabinet Minutes of 4th June and in particular minute 20 where Councillor Mitchell had raised the issue of a review by the Carbon Trust. He asked the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee if the Committee would consider taking this project under its wing. The Chairman of the Committee agreed to place a suitable item on the agenda of the next meeting scheduled for 25th July 2007.

21 BUSINESS OF EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no reports under this item.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

DECISION: That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act.

(ITEMS IN PRIVATE SESSION)

22 STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS (In Private Session)

INFORMATION: There was nothing to report under this item.

23 QUESTION TIME (In Private Session)

INFORMATION: There was nothing to report under this item.

24 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS – PRIVATE SESSION

INFORMATION: There was nothing to report under this item.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.30pm.

Lady Newton
(Chairman)