

COUNCIL

8 JULY 2009

Present :- Councillor Henry Spyvee (Mayor)
Councillor Sonia Lewis (Deputy Mayor)
Councillors Christopher Arnold, Nick Barlow,
Lyn Barton, Kevin Bentley, Mary Blandon,
Elizabeth Blundell, John Bouckley, Helen Chuah,
Barrie Cook, Nick Cope, Mark Cory,
Robert Davidson, Beverly Davies, Tina Dopson,
Andrew Ellis, Margaret Fisher, Stephen Ford,
Wyn Foster, Ray Gamble, Christopher Garnett,
Chris Hall, Mike Hardy, Dave Harris,
Pauline Hazell, Peter Higgins, Theresa Higgins,
Mike Hogg, Martin Hunt, Justin Knight,
Michael Lilley, Jackie Maclean, Jon Manning,
Richard Martin, Kim Naish, Nigel Offen,
Beverley Oxford, Gerard Oxford, Gaye Pyman,
Ann Quarrie, Lesley Scott-Boutell, Paul Smith,
Laura Sykes, Nick Taylor, Jill Tod, Anne Turrell,
Dennis Willetts, Julie Young and Tim Young

The meeting was opened with prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain, The Reverend David harper..

19. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

20. Have Your Say!

Mr McKinney addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2) to ask about the accountability of Colchester Borough Councillors and express his concern that queries he raised with Councillors were not responded to. He also enquired whether there were any plans to build more Council housing, which he considered was a better option than renting housing from housing associations. He noted that the football ground at Layer Road had yet to be sold and enquired about the costs of maintaining and securing the site. In order to attract tourism the town needed to be friendlier and cleaner. Reducing the cost of car parking would also help generate tourism and support local businesses. He advocated a trial of free car-parking. He also enquired that if the Council budget was not fully spent,

whether Council tax was lowered accordingly. Councillor Turrell Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a full written response would be sent within two weeks.

Mr Bailey addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2). He believed that more needed to be done to keep the town centre attractive. He had complained to the Council about the state of the pavements in the town centre. They had subsequently been cleaned and he urged the Council to maintain this standard of cleanliness. Concern was also expressed about the floral displays in the town centre. He noted that assurances had been given that the planters in the town centre would now be replanted, but enquired how this would be funded. He also asked why plans for an underground bus facility had been abandoned and suggested that the area around Colchester Town station could be developed as a transport interchange. Councillor Turrell Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a full written response would be sent within two weeks.

Nick Chilvers addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2). He believed that weeds in the town centre planters were undermining the Council's efforts to improve the town centre. In respect of the Visual Arts Facility he expressed concern that costs were increasing but the specification for the building was being reduced. He did not believe that the Keddies building was suitable for use as a college and should be knocked down. Super stops would not be acceptable. In relation to the suggestion that High Street be made car-free, he believed that this would result in gridlock and pollution being transferred to the main traffic routes in Colchester running through residential areas such as Cowdray Avenue and Brook Street. Councillor Turrell Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a full written response would be sent within two weeks.

Andy Hamilton addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2) to thank the Leader of the Council for the information she had provided about the subsidy provided to Shopmobility. He believe that the subsidy provided for free car parking should be added to the grant when calculating the subsidy given to Shopmobility each year. He also enquired as to when the Equality Impact Assessment would be done and when it would be made public. He noted that Samantha Drummond had been appointed to the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel and queried whether she was a suitable person to be on a Council Committee, in view of recent events. Councillor Turrell Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a full written response would be sent within two weeks.

Paula Whitney addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2) to express concern about the changes to car parking

charges. She noted that when the town centre had been closed to traffic for the Tour Series event, this had a particularly severe impact on bus users who could not access the town centre. The closures had not affected the town centre car parks which had remained open. She stressed the economic importance of bus users to the town centre, particularly to the St Botolph's area. Bus use to the town centre was currently increasing, whilst car journeys to the town centre were decreasing. She supported a car-free High Street and stressed that was different to a pedestrianised High Street. It was vital to maintain access for buses and taxis. Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services, responded and stressed that the recent changes to car-parking charges had been widely welcomed. It was important that Colchester remained competitive with other towns in the region. Pedestrians', cyclists and the bus users were valued by the administration and by local businesses and made an important contribution to the vibrancy of the town centre. The Council would look at proposals for a car free High Street.

Will Quince addressed the Council pursuant to the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 6(2) to express concern about the current portrayal of Colchester in the national media. The Conservative group had led the way in revitalising the flora and fauna in Colchester. He noted that some remedial action was now been taken and asked when residents would once again be able to see Colchester in bloom. Councillor Turrell Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, indicated that a full written response would be sent within two weeks.

It was agreed that copies of responses sent to Have Your Say! speakers at this meeting and at future Council meetings would be circulated to all councillors.

21. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor made a presentation to Wivenhoe Town Council who had reaccredited as a Quality Parish Council. Wivenhoe Town Council were represented by the Mayor and Mayoress of Wivenhoe, Councillor Neil Lodge and Mrs Shirley Lodge, and the Town Clerk, Antoinette Stinson. Mrs Joy Sheppard of Essex Association of Local Councils and Councillor John Gili-Ross of Colchester Association of Local Councils, were also in attendance. The Council expressed its congratulations to Wivenhoe Town Council on its reaccreditation.

The Mayor announced that he would be celebrating Bastille Day in Avignon on 14 July 2009 and would pass on the Council's good wishes. The Mayor also urged Councillors to respond to his invitation to the Freedom of the Borough ceremony for 16th Air Assault Brigade on 17 July 2009.

The Mayor also announced the following events:-

The Run for Fun on 17 September 2009;
The Fire Swim on 3-4 October 2009;
Charity Gala at the Mercury Theatre on 16 January 2010, for which tickets were now available.

22. Schedules of Decisions taken by Portfolio Holders

It was *RESOLVED* that the Schedule of Portfolio Holder decisions covering the period 8 April 2009 – 24 June 2009 be noted.

23. Questions to Cabinet Members and Chairmen pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 10

Questioner Subject

Response

Pre-notified Questions

Councillor Bouckley	In the interests of health and safety, what percentage of Colchester Borough Council staff absences were caused by stress, depression or anxiety during the last financial year?	Direct oral answer given by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.
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Oral Questions

Councillor Arnold	Whether the funding for twinning was under review.	Written answer to be provided by the Portfolio holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Harris	Could the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services confirm the start dates for the extension of the bulky waste special collection scheme?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services.
Councillor Bentley	The reasons why the borough was not represented at a regional conference on economic development in Cambridge on 6 July 2009, and whether the Council would be represented in future.	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Business.

Councillor Bentley	When was the decision taken to replant the planters and whether there would be flowers in the town centre summer to allow Colchester to enter Anglia in Bloom?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Naish	What alternative arrangements were in place following the enforced closure of the swimming pool at Leisure World?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Naish	Could the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services explain how successful the recent Day of Action in Berechurch was and would he provide ward councillors with a full written response on the outcomes of the day?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services and written response to be sent to ward councillors.
Councillor Willetts	Where was the alleged £10 million "black hole" in the Council accounts?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Business.
Councillor Willetts	Did the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Diversity have plans to put in good order the seven key sites for Roman heritage identified by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and could any funds recovered from Icelandic backs be used to repair the Town Wall and other heritage sites in Colchester.	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Diversity.
Councillor Willetts	Had the Council abandoned the policy of seeking sponsorship for roundabouts in Colchester, or was there another reason for disappearance of the sponsorship signs.	Written answer to be provided by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.
Councillor T. Higgins	Did the new powers allowing penalty charges to be levied for double parking and for parking in front of dropped kerbs apply in Colchester. If they did, could statistics on use be provided and if not, when would they	Written answer to be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services.

	be introduced?	
Councillor J. Young	Was the reduction in parking charges a long term strategy and would it be reviewed if income was to suffer?	Direct oral answer given by Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services.
Councillor Blundell	Would the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure give an assurance that he would look at the situation in Marks Tey as part of the review of planters and boarders?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Blundell	Could the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships state when Shopmobility and the eleven other organisations who have service level agreements with the Council in order to carry out certain agreed functions on behalf of local residents will learn whether they will receive their full funding for the 2009/10 financial year?	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Performance and Partnerships.
Councillor Davies	Following the failure of the call handling system and its back up system, and in the light of the comments of the auditors that the Council's disaster management procedures were not adequate, what action was being taken to improve procedures?	Written answer to be provided by the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Hazell	The purpose of the funding provided by Essex County Council for maintaining verges, and whether the Council should have been more circumspect in its statement on funding for the Castle Park and the Roman Circus.	Direct oral answer given by the Portfolio Holder for Communication, Customers and Leisure.
Councillor Ellis	The timescale for the appointment of a Heritage Champion.	Direct oral answer given by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy.

Councillor Cook	Could the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Diversity explain the alleged £10 million “black hole” in the Council’s accounts?	Direct oral answer given the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Diversity.
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24. Future Debate Opportunities

It was *PROPOSED* by Councillor Hunt that the proposals in the Monitoring Officer’s report entitled Future Debate Opportunities be approved and adopted subject to a *SECONDARY AMENDMENT* that the proposals be introduced for a trial period of twelve months and that there be no such debate at the meeting when the Council was considering the budget and setting Council tax.

Councillors Bentley, T. Young and G. Oxford indicated their support for the proposals.

RESOLVED that the proposals in the Monitoring Officer’s report entitled Future Debate Opportunities be approved and adopted subject to the proposals being introduced for a trial period of twelve months and that there be no such debate at the meeting when the Council was considering the budget and setting Council tax.