

LIVE: Rochford District Council - full council meeting

Updated 7:57pm Tuesday 25th February 2014 in [News By Philip Jones](#)

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Latest

- On the agenda tonight:
- Motions on notice - discussion to overturn the introduction of a Saturday afternoon parking charge
- Setting the council tax - seeking authorisation to set the council tax across the Rochford District for 2014/15
- Adoption of the allocations document - to consider the report of the government's inspector on adopting the allocations document detailing the building of 2,785 new homes across the district by 2025
- Hockley area action plan - to condor the report of the inspector on the adoption of the Hockley area action plan
- Forum for surface water flooding issues - to consider a report into the formation of a forum for considering surface water flooding issues

9:39pm

Chairman cllr Barbara Wilkins brings the meeting to a close.

Thank you for reading this evening and make sure to pick up a copy of the Echo in the coming days to read the fall out from tonight's meeting.

But for now, goodnight.

9:36pm

The lead portfolio holder of the Flood Advisory Group is agreed to be the council leader, Cllr Terry Cutmore (CON), with Cllr Keith Hudson (CON) acting as his deputy.

9:35pm

Considerations for the forum meetings would be given by parishes, residents, councillors and anyone who wishes to contribute.

Cllr Cutmore: "We need to make sure as best we can that the areas that flooded in August 2013 does not happen again - however they were extreme circumstances."

9:32pm

The motion states Essex County Council and other organisations and agencies would work closely with Rochford on local surface water management issues.

9:29pm

Now we're on to flooding and a forum for surface water flooding issues.

Head of planning Sean Scrutton invites members of the public to attend forum meetings.

9:25pm

Now we move on to the issue of council tax.

A 1.89% rise in the council's section of the council tax was approved at last week's full council meeting.

A vote is taken for matters of procedure:

The council tax is passed with only councillors Mr and Mrs Hoy voting against.

The decision sees the average Band D council tax increase by 0.47% for the financial year 2014/15.

9:19pm

Council leader Terry Cutmore (CON) addresses the meeting, highlighting the council's achievements and actions, including a figure that 75.4% of Rochford Residents are satisfied with the way the council run - this is the highest in Essex.

As the first ordinary council of the year, Mr Cutmore also recognised the BEM and MBE awarded to Rochford residents Myra Weir and Lucy Hodges respectively, in the New Year's Honours List.

9:12pm

Concerns are being raised by councillors about one side of a road being in one electoral ward, and the other side in another ward.

Representatives from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England reassure councillors that community factors and roads will be taken into account when potentially re-designing ward boundaries.

9:09pm

9:05pm

9:04pm

The council is asked to convey to their constituents to make them aware of the review process.

Initial judgements on council size will be presented in July 2014, ward boundaries will be assessed and final recommendations will be issued by February 2015.

Final judgements will take effect for elections in May 2016.

8:59pm

We move onto a less provocative issue now with electoral review.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England are making a presentation on the issue of council size and electoral boundaries.

8:55pm

The majority of the public leave dissatisfied at the night's proceedings.

8:54pm

The votes are counted:

The nays take it by 19-14.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON PARKING CHARGES WILL BE INSTATED ON APRIL 1, 2014.

8:49pm

Cllr Mountain sums up (IND): "This is an issue about accountability, and it is not appropriate to follow through with a motion that did not receive the backing of the majority of the council.

"It is entirely reasonable to move that Saturday parking charges are removed."

He calls for a recorded vote.

8:43pm

Cllr Sperring (CON): "Basildon are trying to poach customers from the district, and the council are giving them every reason to."

8:40pm

Council leader Terry Cutmore (CON): "We have supported the businesses for over ten years with Saturday parking and it has cost the public around £65,000 a year.

"We have a Rayleigh Area Action Plan that shows the town can grow.

"We have a thriving nightlife supporting the town and parking is free in the evening.

"Discount vouchers given at 'Shop at my Local' by businesses would more than cover the parking cost for residents.

"We have to balance the budget and we have always had a problem with it because we are poorly funded by central government.

"Part of our innovation fund is to support businesses so we need to keep these things available.

"No mention has been made to how to fill the gap if we do not charge on Saturdays.

"We will have to find £400,000 in years to come.

"I appreciate the cost of running a car is expensive but parking is a minor part of it.

"We have to do it, nobody wants to, but we have to do it for our budget and I believe we will still have thriving high streets in our district."

8:35pm

Cllr Black (Lib Dem): "This is an appalling decision on so many levels.

"If this was a new administration and made a mistake like this I would understand it.

"But Saturday fees would devastate the town and we must back the motion to remove the charges."

8:33pm

Cllr M Hoy (Green) also backs the motion: "I certainly feel that Saturday afternoon charges would be catastrophic for the town and district."

It seems the motion is gathering support, a vote this evening would be much tighter than the 14-7 result from the previous vote in January.

8:30pm

Cllr Mason (RDR): "I will support the motion to remove Saturday charges as I voted against any increase and introduction of charges in the first place anyway.

"We were comfortable to not increase the charges but all of a sudden they went up, what happened? What changed?"

"We can afford to have free Saturday afternoon parking if Essex County Council pay us the going rate for verge cutting."

8:26pm

Cllr Ward (CON): "I will be supporting the motion as there must be an alternative way to meet the deficit in our budget."

8:25pm

Cllr Ward (CON): "In Rayleigh we are trying to create a cooperative Town Team.

"A spot survey of Rayleigh shops showed highest takings come in the period of free parking on a Saturday afternoon.

"An average 30% of annual turnover is generated on a Saturday afternoon.

"I do not want to gamble with other people's businesses.

"The governor of the Bank of England is holding down interest rates. Any changes from this could damage the regeneration of businesses in Rayleigh and Hockley and across the district.

"Shops could lose an unknown amount of customers and it is a cost I am not willing to bear."

8:21pm

Cllr Roe (CON): "I cannot support Saturday afternoon charges, it is suicidal.

"I have never heard such outcry from residents over Saturday parking in all my years in politics.

"In relation to recent damage to our parking machines, is this a coincidence?"

8:18pm

Cllr Mountain (IND): "I would love to hear from some of the 14 members who voted in favour of the charges.

"I hope they can explain why they believe charging on a Saturday afternoon is the right thing to do or the only option.

"We should look at the big picture rather than searching for easy options.

"To that end I move that we remove Saturday parking charges from the recommendation."

More applause from the public and Cllr Sperring seconds the motion.

8:16pm

Cllr Mountain (IND) speaks: "As a council we have a huge responsibility to maintain our financial stability and tough options must be taken.

"However since the last meeting we have received a letter from Carl Watson, president of Rayleigh Chamber of Trade, stipulating we must keep free Saturday parking.

"For some imperious reason, there was a whip in place on the issue of parking.

"Had this not been in place I believe the decision would not have been taken to approve the charges.

"There is a significant leak of retail expenditure out of the district. Surely we should be incentivising people into our principle shopping areas rather than driving them away."

8:11pm

Cllr Black and Cllr Mason appeal to here the item regarding Saturday parking charges in the interest of the waiting public.

It is agreed, we will now hear from councillors who rebelled against the decision to implement Saturday afternoon charges at January's meeting.

8:06pm

We are rattling through these issues, the vote on the Hockley Area Action Plan is held with only two votes against and no abstentions.

The motion is carried, the head of planning's report on the Hockley Area Action Plan is approved.

8:05pm

Cllr Hoy (Green): "There is a view that it is important to maintain the character of Hockley.

"The residents approve of a low intervention, with a focus on improving pedestrian routes, parking.

"On the basis that the report is in favour of medium or high interventions, I shall be voting against."

8:03pm

We are now onto the Hockley Area Action Plan.

Cllr Mason (RDR): "I will not be objecting as I have not received any representations to the contrary from my residents."

8:02pm

The council vote and it is carried, there were approximately 15 votes in favour, six votes against and to abstentions.

The controversial document is accepted to calls of 'shame on you' from the public gallery.

8:00pm

Cllr Black (Lib Dem): "There has been no public meeting where the public can speak and engage with the councillors.

"Only meetings with public present."

Another round of applause from the public.

7:57pm

Cllr Hoy (Green): "It may be legal and sound but it is not in the best interests of the district so I will not vote in favour."

7:55pm

Cllr Mason (RDR): "There is a very great deal of concern still regarding the Rayleigh area of the district but things will not start for some time."

"Should residents be given the opportunity to have an open forum, face to face with councillors."

"They do not feel issues have been considered, such as flooding in Rawreth, the infrastructure in that part and also the whole of the district."

"I will not be voting in favour tonight, we have not got to the point where I can put my hand on my heart and adopt it because residents still have material concerns."

7:52pm

Cllr Black (Lib Dem): "I cannot support this document."

He gets a round of applause from the public.

7:50pm

Mr Scrutton: "The allocations document links to the core strategy and sets out the specific details of the sites listed for housing."

"The inspector approved the document and I should recommend the document to the council."

7:48pm

We go straight to item 15, the adoption of the allocation document. Sean Scrutton, head of planning speaks first.

7:46pm

A representative from Gideon's International presents council chairman Barbara Wilkins with a Gideon bible to mark the work the council does for the community.

7:41pm

We are anticipating a change in the agenda to bring the most prominent issues earlier in the meeting, one would assume this would mean the adoption of the allocation document and a discussion on Saturday parking charges.

7:38pm

Cllr Cottis declares his interest on the adoption of the allocation document due to a member of his family being a land owner of part of the land involved in the document, he will leave the meeting when the item is discussed.

7:35pm

Cllr Glynn has paid tribute to Barbara, the tea lady from meetings at the Mill Hall, her funeral will be next Tuesday at 1pm at the crematorium.

Cllr Glynn: "She gave us such lovely teas and coffees and was always there with another one if you lost your seat."

A sombre start to the evening.

7:29pm

The public gallery have been informed that it is a public meeting, but not a meeting for public contribution, clearly expecting a vocal audience this evening.

7:27pm

We're almost set. The councillors are mostly in their seats and we're just awaiting the arrival of the chairman, councillor Barbara Wilkins.

7:19pm

So far I think the public are outnumbering the councillors. With Saturday parking and the adoption of the allocation document the headline acts this evening, it's fair to say they have drawn a big crowd.

7:09pm

It is 20 minutes before proceedings kick off and already the public gallery is beginning to fill up in anticipation of a lively meeting with plenty to discuss.

7:08pm

Good evening and welcome to the Rochford District Council meeting of Tuesday, February 25.