



**MINUTES of
COUNCIL
27 JUNE 2019**

PRESENT

Chairman	Councillor R G Boyce MBE
Vice-Chairman	Councillor Mrs P A Channer, CC
Councillors	E L Bamford, Miss A M Beale, B S Beale MBE, M G Bassenger, V J Bell, R P F Dewick, M F L Durham, CC, M R Edwards, Mrs J L Fleming, A S Fluker, B E Harker, M S Heard, M W Helm, A L Hull, K W Jarvis, J V Keyes, K M H Lagan, C Mayes, C P Morley, C Morris, S P Nunn, R H Siddall, N J Skeens, W Stamp, Mrs J C Stilts, C Swain, Mrs M E Thompson and Miss S White

196. CHAIRMAN'S NOTICES

The Chairman referred to the notices printed on the agenda.

197. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor N G F Shaughnessy.

198. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillors Mrs P A Channer and M F L Durham declared a non-pecuniary interest as a Member of Essex County Council in any agenda item relating to that Authority.

Councillor Miss A M Beale and B E Harker declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 12 – Parish of Heybridge – Basin Ward – Community Governance Review as they had attended a number of public meetings in relation to the Heybridge Parish Council project.

199. MINUTES - 16 MAY 2019

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Minutes of the Statutory Annual meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2019 be received.

Minute 6 – Apologies for Absence

It was noted that reference to Councillor Jarvis should be Councillor *K W Jarvis*.

Minute 20 – Appointment of Membership of Committees of the Council

It was noted that reference to Councillor Jarvis within this Minute should be Councillor *K W Jarvis*.

RESOLVED

- (ii) That subject to the above amendments, the Minutes of the Statutory Annual meeting of the Council held on 16 May 2019 be adopted.

200. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

201. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were none.

202. MINUTE BOOK: COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE - 28 MAY 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Community Services Committee held on 28 May 2019 be adopted.

203. MINUTE BOOK: PLANNING AND LICENSING COMMITTEE - 6 JUNE 2019

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Minutes of the Planning and Licensing Committee held on 6 June 2019 be received.

Minute 128 – Appointment of Representatives on Liaison Committees / Panels

RESOLVED

- (ii) That the Terms of Reference and membership of the Bradwell Power Station Working Party be reviewed.

RESOLVED

- (iii) That subject to the above decision, the Minutes of the meeting of the Planning and Licensing Committee held on 6 June 2019 be adopted.

204. MINUTE BOOK: FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE - 11 JUNE 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance and Corporate Services Committee held on 11 June 2019 be adopted.

205. MINUTE BOOK: AUDIT COMMITTEE - 13 JUNE 2019

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 13 June 2019 be adopted.

206. MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL

The Council noted the list of Committees that had met before and since the last meeting of the Council, up until Wednesday 19 June 2019 for which Minutes had been published.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the following special meetings of Committees held on 16 May 2019 be adopted.

- Finance and Corporate Services Committee
- Community Services Committee
- Planning and Licensing Committee
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Audit Committee
- Joint Standards Committee
- Investigating and Disciplinary Committee
- North Western Area Planning Committee
- South Eastern Area Planning Committee
- Central Area Planning Committee
- District Planning Committee

207. STATEMENT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Councillor A S Fluker, the Leader of the Council (the Leader), made a Statement (attached at **APPENDIX 1** to these Minutes) setting out the Council's report and programme for the current municipal year. He then commended this to the Council.

In his response to the statement from the Leader, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor M S Heard advised that the Council's transformation programme had been supported by the independents and it was recognised that ~~this~~ the transformation¹ was

¹ Minute No. 288 (25/07/19)

well underway and the benefits it would bring. He then referred to a number of points outlined in the Leaders' speech including:

- Air quality reduction – This was something that should be supported by all Members.
- Lowering speed limits in Southminster – Councillor Heard thanked the Leader for his acknowledgement of the contribution of Councillor B S Beale to lowering speed limits in Southminster.
- Health Hub – The independents would support this and Councillor Heard agreed with the comments of the Leader in respect of it.
- Police – Reference was made to the number of additional officers promised to this District. Councillor Heard advised that he would be seeking to raise with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner the number of closed police stations on which rates were still being paid.
- Tourism – Councillor Heard referred to the development of the website and commented about the Council considering opening a Tourist Information Centre in Burnham-on-Crouch or Maldon in the future.

The Leader of the Council responded to the comment regarding opening Tourist Information Centres in the future, advising that in respect of the Council's Transformation Programme an early stage in the process involved the identification of areas where monies could be saved and one of the areas identified where savings could be made was tourism.

208. QUESTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROCEDURE RULE 6(3) OF WHICH NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN

There were none.

209. NEW COUNCIL STRUCTURE - TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Council considered the report of the Corporate Governance Working Group (CGWG) setting out recommendations on detailed arrangements to support the previously agreed principles of a new committee structure as part of the Council's Transformation Programme.

The report highlighted the work of the CGWG and the following documents were attached as appendices to the report:

- Appendix A – the Terms of Reference and operating arrangements for the new Committees.
- Appendix B – a draft Terms of Reference for the newly established District Planning Committee.
- Appendix C – a consolidated Scheme of Delegation had been produced taking into consider a number of significant issues identified by the CGWG and set out in the report.

It was noted that concisely-expressed Terms of Reference had been produced for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considering a number of further comments which were set out in the report. In respect of the Licensing Sub-Committee the CGWG were proposing that this be constituted of suitably trained Members.

When presenting the report, the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance advised Members that a report seeking review of the interim arrangements agreed for the Head of Paid Service would be brought to the next meeting of the Council and part of this report would look into the delegation of this role. In light of this the Director suggested that Members consider amending recommendation (iii) to read “that *with the exception of the element relating to the Head of Paid Service* the Council approves...”. Members were also advised that the last bullet point on page 45 of the agenda pack referred to policy I3 and this should be removed as there was no such policy.

The Leader of the Council proposed that recommendation (iii) be amended as set out by the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance. He continued advising that the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government had recently published some statutory guidance which needed to be reviewed in relation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In light of this, the Leader advised that it was appropriate to review this guidance and proposed that recommendation (iv) be withdrawn and recommendation (i) be amended to remove reference to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These proposals were duly seconded.

The Chairman outlined the proposed changes including the amendment to page 45 as highlighted by the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance. He then put these to the Council and upon a vote being taken they were agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the terms of reference and operating protocols for the new Strategy and Resources Committee, Performance, Governance and Audit Committee, and the Licensing Committee and Licensing Sub-Committee as part of the new structure and Constitution of the Council be adopted to take effect in October 2019 (as set out in Appendix A to the report, with the exception of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee);
- (ii) That subject to the amendment as detailed above, the terms of reference for the new District Planning Committee in existence from the start of the 2019 / 20 municipal year and to become part of the new structure and Constitution of the Council to be adopted to take effect in October 2019 (as set out in Appendix B to the report);
- (iii) That with the exception of the element relating to the Head of Paid Service, the consolidated Scheme of Delegation be approved, subject to further updating as required to reflect internal changes in functional responsibility, to become part of the new Constitution of the Council to be adopted to take effect in October 2019 (as set out in Appendix C to the report);
- (iv) That the conclusions of the Corporate Governance Working Group that the Licensing Committee comprises suitably trained Members to take effect in October 2019 be endorsed.

210. PARISH OF HEYBRIDGE - BASIN WARD - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

The Council considered the report of the Director of Resources, updating Members on arrangements for implementation of the outcome of the Community Governance Review for the Parish of Heybridge – Basin Ward and seeking Members' agreement on the matters to be the subject of a Reorganisation Order.

The report outlined the Council's decision in February 2019 to create a new Civil Parish and Parish Council for the area currently forming the Basin Ward of the Parish of Heybridge. A Steering Group was set up at the same time by the Council to inform the content and effect the necessary Reorganisation Order. A copy of the plan proposed to be used for the Reorganisation Order was attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The report set out the conclusions agreed by the Steering Group to be reported to the Council and the proposed timescales.

It was noted that Heybridge Parish Council had confirmed it wished to retain 12 Members which if included in the Reorganisation Order would require a separate election to fill that one additional seat.

In response to a question regarding financial implications, the Officer time required and the need to understand the costs, the Director of Resources advised that the Council had a requirement to support the Parish Council under the Community Governance Regulations which would require resources (both internal and external). Such costs needed to be recovered on a full cost recovery basis and Officers would continue to measure and monitor the time that was spent on this taking into consideration value for money.

The Leader of the Council then proposed that all the recommendations as set out in the report be agreed. This proposal was duly seconded and agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the Council notes and endorses the conclusions reached by the steering group with a view to the following matters being included in the Reorganisation Order required to implement the outcome of this Review:
 - That the number of Councillors for the new Parish Council should be seven;
 - That the name of the new Council should be Heybridge Basin Parish Council;
 - An effective date of 1 April 2020 for implementation, with the new Parish Councillors being elected in early May 2020.
- (ii) That should Heybridge Parish Council wish to retain a membership of 12 Councillors it is advised that this will require a separate election consequent upon implementation of these proposals, the cost of which will be an expense attributable to the Parish Council;
- (iii) That the Director of Resources be authorised to continue and conclude discussions with Heybridge Parish Council and representatives of the Local

Referendum Group as required in relation to budget and other administrative matters and also transfer of land and property;

- (iv) That a further report be brought back to the Council in the light of the receipt of a provisional budget with a view to its authorising the making of a Re-organisation of Community Governance Order under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to include the matters identified in (i) above together with the following:
- Arrangements for the election of the new Parish Councillors;
 - When the Order is to take effect for its various provisions;
 - The resulting membership of Heybridge Parish Council;
 - All necessary preparatory financial and administrative arrangements, including the initial precept and transfer of property.
- (v) That Officers also report back on the means of addressing the financial implications for the Council in implementing this proposal.

211. COMMERCIAL PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES - FEASIBILITY FUND

The Council considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance seeking the Council's approval for the allocation of a budget of £100,000 to be taken from New Homes Bonus income, to be utilised for feasibility studies for potential commercial projects.

The report provided background information regarding the Council's Transformation Project and the Commercial Projects Board formed to analyse and progress potential commercial projects. It was noted that pre-feasibility reports were presented to the Commercial Projects Board and those considered viable were then progressed to full feasibility studies. It was often necessary to commission professional assessment etc. in order to fully understand a potential project's viability and therefore a fund of £100,000 was requested to procure such professional services. Appendix 1 to the report set out the process flow chart.

The Leader of the Council felt that some checks and balances should be built in and he therefore proposed that recommendation (i) be amended to read "...commercial opportunities, *with £40,000 being made available immediately and the balance of £60,000 being made available subject to Council approval of the Commercial Projects Plan at its meeting on 25 July 2019*". He advised that this would allow the Council to have a Commercial Projects Plan in place and understand where Officers were proposing to spend the monies requested. The Leader then proposed an amendment to recommendation (ii) adding after £10,000 '*subject to the details being reported to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee or Strategy and Resources Committee (post October 2019)*' to enable expenditure to be tracked through Committees. These proposals were duly seconded.

A number of comments were raised by Members at this point and the following information provided by the Leader of the Council, in response:

- The Council would be seeking to agree a Commercial Projects Plan (the Plan) which would give all Members the opportunity to come up with ideas which

would then added to and looked at through the Plan. The Plan would look at project costs, feasibility, deliverability etc. along with checks and balances.

- Procurement of ~~consultations~~ consultants² would be monitored and were likely to be based around fixed prices to identify what the Council would be getting.

The Chairman then put the proposal in the name of Councillor Fluker, which upon a vote being taken was agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That a budget of £100,000 be approved and utilised for the development of commercial opportunities, with £40,000 being made available immediately and the balance of £60,000 being made available subject to Council approval of the Commercial Projects Plan at its meeting on 25 July 2019;
- (ii) That the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance be authorised, in consultation with the Commercial Projects Board to approve any spend up to £10,000, subject to the details being reported to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee or the Strategy and Resources Committee (post October 2019);
- (iii) That decisions on spend of over £10,000 be delegated to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee.

212. LOCAL AREA HIGHWAYS PANEL - REPLACEMENT REPRESENTATIVE

The Council considered the report of the Director of Service Delivery seeking a replacement representative on the Local Area Highways Panel. The reason for this request was set out in the report.

The Leader of the Council advised that since publication of the report Councillor R G Boyce had advised that he wished to stand down from this panel due to his role as Chairman of the Council. Therefore, two representatives were required, and the Leader proposed that these vacancies be filled by Councillors B E Harker and M W Helm. This proposal was duly seconded.

At this point, Councillor M S Heard, Leader of the Opposition expressed his disappointment that the Independent Group were not being represented. In response to a Member advising they wished to make an alternative proposal, the Chairman advised that the Member should vote against the current motion and if that was not agreed they could bring forward an alternative motion.

The Chairman put the proposal of Councillor Fluker which upon a vote being taken was agreed.

~~RESOLVED~~ **RESOLVED**³ that Councillors B E Harker and M W Helm be appointed as replacement representatives on the Local Area Highways Panel.

² Minute No. 288 (25/07/19)

³ Minute No. 288 (25/07/19)

213. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public 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 Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, and that this satisfies the public interest test.

214. REVIEW OF CORPORATE SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Council considered the report of the Director of Resources seeking Members' endorsement to continue or seek termination of the Council's involvement in organisations with which the Council had corporate subscriptions.

The report provided a list of external partnership organisations to which the Council had corporate subscriptions. Members were advised of the need to review these organisation memberships and the report detailed further information regarding each of the external partnership organisations.

The Leader of the Council proposed that recommendation (i) be agreed. He then proposed that recommendation (ii) be agreed on the understanding that Officers bring forward a value for money analysis of what the Council was getting from the memberships and what the organisations provided for the Council. This was duly seconded.

In response to comments and questions raised the Director of Resources provided Members with further information.

The Chairman then put the proposal in the name of the Leader of the Council to the Council and this was agreed.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the corporate subscription with the Haven Gateway Partnership be terminated.
- (ii) That corporate subscriptions with the external partnership organisations as set out in the report be maintained but are subject to further and more detailed review by 31 December 2019, results of which are to be reported to the Council and considered as part of the 2020 / 21 Budget Setting Process:
- (iii) That a value for money analysis be carried out in respect of all external partnership organisation memberships and reported to the Council.

215. FULL COUNCIL TRANSFORMATION: GATEWAY REVIEW

The Council considered the report of the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance presenting the second quarterly gateway review of the full Council Transformation Programme as agreed by the Council on 9 August 2018. The report gave assurance on the governance arrangements in place for the programme and the oversight given by the Council's Transformation Board and officer led Programme

Delivery Board. The latest Transformation Board report was attached at Appendix 1 to the report and Appendix 2 provided detail of the equality analysis undertaken. The Transformation Programme Governance and Terms of Reference were attached at Appendix 3.

The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy was set out in the report along with the forecast savings to be achieved through delivery of the Future Model.

The Council was advised that there had been two occasions where progress had slipped, and the Director of Strategy, Performance and Governance outlined the reasons for these. He reported that as of today (27 June 2019) the programme was on track with all programme staff, governance arrangements and monitoring arrangements in place.

Councillor A S Fluker, Leader of the Council, thanked the Transformation team for their hard work in delivering this project.

In response to a question regarding the reason for this item of business being excluded from the public, the Chairman and Monitoring Officer provided the Council with guidance on the Council's rules in respect of exempt items of business and clarification on the process.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

There being no further items of business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8.55 pm.

R G BOYCE MBE
CHAIRMAN

Chairman,

I stand as the Leader of the Council and the other Ward Member for Southminster.

Members you will have seen the defaced Union Flag of Armed Forces Week flying from the staff outside of the Council offices. Chairman, I would like to pay tribute those that are serving and have served in the armed forces and to those that have paid the ultimate price in serving their countries both during conflict and peace and to remind all Members that there are Armed Forces Day commemorations both at Stow Maries and the Promenade Park this weekend. I hope that you do try and support those events.

Chairman, I think it would be remiss of me, if I didn't mention the outbreak of Invasive Group A Streptococcal. Members will know, Maldon District has been linked to this outbreak of the invasive type of streptococcal. Chairman, before I go any further, can I offer my condolences and thoughts to the families and friends of those that have been affected by this outbreak. The incidents, as far as we know, are isolated and seem to be restricted to the elderly and those in contact with the community nursing programme. Public Health England, NHS England and the local CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) are taking all possible steps to contain the outbreak. I am engaged with our MP (Member of Parliament) who is in contact with the Health Secretary and is updating me on a regular basis. Members, can I remind you-that throughout this building there are hand sanitising stations which should be used regularly when transiting the building.

Chairman, our **Corporate Plan** is the most innovative and succinct in Essex. The Conservative Administration will deliver the objectives for the benefit of all residents. We will deliver a sustainable Council with a prosperous future. We will engage with residents and monitor our performance to ensure that we give best value and service. That is a pledge of this administration and it will stand firm for four years.

Chairman, we are-more than halfway through the **Full Council Transformation** programme. This is the most important project this Council has ever undertaken. Without transformation the Council would have ultimately run out of funds and ceased to exist. Transformation will deliver savings of £1.8m per annum and will ensure that our Council remains autonomous, sustainable and resistant to take over from other Councils. The project is currently running on time and to budget. The Administration is pleased to report that the project will be completed at the end of October 2019.

Air quality is becoming a massive issue in our District and this Conservative Administration will not shy away from its responsibilities and will take every opportunity to improve air quality for the benefit of residents. We are monitoring the situation in Market Hill and central Maldon and will work with others to reduce emissions through innovative traffic schemes and if necessary the Council will ask Essex County Council to create a "Low Emissions Zone" around central Maldon to prevent heavily polluting vehicles accessing the area. A Working Group is currently considering the situation.

Speeding vehicles are a massive problem throughout the District and in our villages. They harm the environment and are dangerous to pedestrians and other road users. This Administration supports a reduction in speed limits throughout the District and plans to work with Parish / Town Councils to ensure that Essex County Council responds positively to requests for 20 mile per hour zones in villages and built up areas. Councillor Beale and myself we were involved in Southminster where we have achieved this. After-achieving the 20 mile per hour speed limits Essex Police Service

implemented a Statutory Instrument to make sure that they were enforced. In Southminster it has been noticeable that motorists are respecting the speed limits.

Food waste - Through road side collections Maldon District Council residents are currently sending more than 2,200 tons of food waste to recycling centres every year. This is more per household than any other local authority in Essex. Whilst it is accepted that much of this waste is generated through the preparation of food it also has to be accepted that much of the waste is unused food and we do monitor this. To that end the Administration, in conjunction with our service provider Suez, will be running a campaign to encourage residents to buy sensibly and not waste food. The amount of food that gets thrown away which is purchased and not used is tremendous. Maldon residents are, per household, throwing away more food waste than all the other Councils in Essex. We need to speak to our customers to try and understand how we can resolve this situation.

The **Carbon footprint** of the council offices is massive. The building is environmentally inefficient, operationally out of date and restrictive. The Administration is seeking to relocate the council offices, including all our tenants to a sustainable location by 2023. Chairman it is a pledge of this Administration that this Council will be operating carbon neutral by 2027.

Delivering **commercial income** is a key part of a making our Council sustainable. To achieve that the Administration will be producing a District wide inward facing Commercial Projects Plan (CPP). The plan will be commercially driven and support the needs of residents and local businesses.

This Conservative Administration supports a new **District wide Health Hub** and is fully engaged with the Maldon Operational Group, which is there to deliver a new Health Hub. NHS (National Health Service) England has appointed a business analyst and after all these years we are now seeing some traction towards deliverability and I think we all agree that the District needs this Health Hub. We need to make that message very clear to the CCG. In the coming weeks I am meeting with the Health Secretary, Nick Hancock, and again I will plead the case on behalf of Maldon residents. I think it is worth noting that once approved the North Heybridge Garden Suburb will deliver a new doctors surgery and I am pleased to say that plans are now progressing at pace to provide a new surgery in Southminster, which will cover parts of Burnham-on-Crouch and Mayland.

Whenever I visit other Local Authorities in Essex it is extraordinary that we are one of the very few now has a current **Local Development Plan**. This Administration will ensure that the Local Development Plan delivers on all Section 106 agreements including affordable housing and public open spaces. In a timely manner we will deliver the strategic employment sites which are absolutely essential. I am working with the developers in Burnham-on-Crouch to see if we can bring forward the employment land as they are delivering the houses.

Bradwell B Power Station - planning permission has been granted in principle by the government to build a new nuclear power station at Bradwell. The delivery company Bradwell B (or as it is known BRB) is well advanced with the Generic Design Assessment of the new reactor and pre-site licensing. I have met with the Chief Executive Officer of BRB and he has confirmed that the geological and hydraulic surveys are progressing as expected. In the coming months the Administration will strengthen our Local Development Plan by developing a Bradwell

B Supplementary Planning Document – this will show what the District expects through the delivery stage, the construction phase and the long-term operating stage. It will be a document that will identify the needs of the District and its residents for the lifetime of the Power Station. In parallel with that document, Members and Officers will work together to create 'Vision 50', this document will seek to demonstrate what the District will look like both socially, environmentally and economically in the year 2050.

Over the years we have engaged quite strongly with the **Police Force**. We have had various Chief Constables-over the years and then more recently a Police Commissioner. He has been a little bit shy at talking to us in the formal surroundings but nevertheless he did come. I would like to thank the members of the Crime and Disorder Committee, who also sit as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, for the excellent work that they have done in making the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner aware of what is needed in this District. I have recently met with the Commissioner and the Chief Constable and am pleased to report that the Maldon and Chelmsford Police command is being increased by a total of 15 Officers by the end of this year and by next year another six officers. Also, the Chief Constable has recognised the needs of the larger villages and towns around us and is now going to appoint nine officers who will be dedicated to the town centres of Chelmsford, South Woodham Ferrers and Maldon, two of those Officers will be dedicated to Maldon. The Commissioner has said that-the Gypsy, Traveler and Rural Engagement Team (which is called GTETO) will increase from six to 13 officers. We know that this covers the whole of the command area which is basically the whole of Essex, but it is a lot better than what we did have, and it is noticeable that we are seeing more Police officers in the area.

Following the ongoing digitalisation of the district wide **tourist information service** and the development of the Visit Maldon website I am pleased to report that on average we are now receiving an extra 10,000 unique hits per month compared to last year. Box Office, which is the booking and advertising system on the site, is proving to be a resounding success. Sign posting to local businesses and events has increased in line with the increased activity on the site and we are getting positive feedback from both users and advertisers. We are currently averaging 30,000 unique hits on the website per month. That compares to 100,000 for Visit Essex. This is quite extraordinary bearing in mind that six years ago we never had a website. This year we are projecting somewhere between 350 – 360,000 unique hits on our website. Of course, we are still getting people ringing the Council offices who are being put through to the Tourism and Events Team and we also give advice to people coming to the front office. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jack Ellum and the Tourism and Events Team for the enormous amount of work that they have put into transforming the way we promote tourism and events in the District. They have come up with some new events for this year and we have had excellent numbers of advanced ticket sales- This year our flagship event is the Crouch Valley Festival of Food and Drink and entry is free to everybody. I think the event is going to be a resounding success, you can go along and sample all the fine produce from the District including Southminster Sizzlers! So, I would ask all the members and residents to check out the website and make the effort to visit that event.

The exceptional work of **community leaders and volunteers** often goes unrecognised. There is currently no way for the Council to recognise such service. That said the Chairman of the Council has asked me to instigate, by exception, an Alderman scheme and a Freeman scheme. Based on that request it is my intent to bring before the Council a report to consider both schemes. I use the word exception because this is what it will be, it

will be for exceptional people in exceptional circumstances and it will apply to both Councillors and those who work in the community as volunteers.

Today Chairman, we heard about little Englanders, I don't know if anybody else heard it, but it was made by Jeremy Hunt, the Foreign Secretary. Well Chairman, as far as little England's concerned there is absolutely nothing little about the aspirations of this Administration. We are here for the next four years and we will deliver what the residents voted for and what we promised and that is:

- a sustainable and prosperous Council;
- a Council that puts residents first;
- a Council that supports businesses;
- and eventually a Council with the greenest credentials in Essex.

Chairman, Members I commend my speech to the chamber. Thank you.