



ROCHFORD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Full Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday, 19th August 2026
At The Parish Rooms, Rochford at 6.30 pm

Members Present: Cllr Leona Bryceland
Cllr Tino Callaghan
Cllr James Edmunds
Cllr Gunilla Edwards
Cllr Rodd Hubbard
Cllr Paul Nash
Cllr Laureen Shaw
Cllr Mike Steptoe
Cllr Linda Thomas
Cllr Graham Whitehead
Cllr Arthur Williams

In Attendance: Mrs Emma Terris – Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer
Mrs Laura Buckley-Hills – Admin Assistant

There were two members of the public present

- 67/26 To receive apologies for absence**
Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Cllrs Cottis, Crosbie, Edwards and Houston-Bailey. Cllr Callaghan was absent.
- 68/26 To receive any declarations of interests**
Cllr Edmunds declared an interest in items 81/26 and 82/26.
Cllr Williams declared an interest in items 78/26, 81/26 and 82/26.
Cllr Callaghan declared an interest in agenda item 81/26.
- 69/26 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**
Members agreed to defer consideration and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting until the next meeting of the Council.
- 70/26 Public Participation**
A member of the public addressed the Council regarding Coombes Farm and the potential future development of the site.

The resident advised that they understood that the relevant planning would be considered at a meeting being held in Rayleigh and expressed a strong desire to see the site protected for the benefit of Rochford and the surrounding areas. The resident suggested that, rather than the site being developed for housing, consideration should be given to an alternative use such as a nature reserve, park or recreational area. The resident advised that this could attract visitors to Rochford and provide wider economic benefits to local businesses.

Concerns were expressed regarding the infrastructure required to support further housing development, including the existing road network, traffic levels, public transport and the lack of facilities. The resident commented that traffic through Rochford was already significant and that any additional development could exacerbate this.

The resident also expressed concern that Rochford should retain its individual identity and receive an appropriate level of investment within the wider Rochford District.

The Chairman thanked the resident for their comments and advised that many Members shared the concerns expressed. However, he explained that the Town Council was a statutory consultee on relevant planning applications and was not the determining planning authority. The Town Council could submit representations and objections based on material planning considerations, but the final decision rested with the District Council as the Local Planning Authority.

Cllr Steptoe advised that Coombes Farm was understood to fall within Stambridge Parish Council's area and therefore it would need to be established whether Rochford Town Council would be formally consulted on any application. Reference was also made to the site's previous planning history and earlier legal proceedings relating to development proposals.

71/26 To receive reports from County/District Councillors (maximum of 10 minutes, Chairman only to reply)

County Councillor Report

There was no update.

District Councillor Report

Cllr Williams reported that there were significant changes taking place in relation to planning and the emerging Local Plan. Members were informed that Rochford District Council was expected to deliver approximately 700 new homes per year, with emphasis being placed not simply granting planning permission but the actual delivery of housing.

Cllr Nash asked whether the District Council could face consequences where permissions had been granted for developments but these have not been built. It was confirmed that delivery of housing targets was an important factor affecting the District Council's planning position.

Cllr Callaghan advised that a request had been submitted in relation to a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) and that a response was awaited.

72/26 Finance

54/26.1

To receive the bank reconciliations for July 2026

The bank reconciliations for July 2026 were received, agreed and signed by the Chair of Finance.

54/26.2

To receive payments for authorisation

The following payments were approved for payment:

Supplier	Total £
TBS Hygiene Ltd	£720.00
N Power	£672.72
J&P Prior	£318.10
P.F. Ahern (London) Limited	£562.23
Around Rochford	£362.00
Neatwork Services Ltd	£2,700.00
Peninsula Business	£344.49
Cloudy IT	£534.00
SSE Energy Solutions	£242.18
CouncilWise Dunmow	£1,588.80
Parabar Developments	£2,500.00
Cloudy IT	£1309.08
Starboard Systems	£576.00
Ernest Doe & Sons	£47.97
Winfield Clearance	£280.00
EDF Energy	£274.49
Kent Procurement Services	£123.22
Motia Fuel Card	£93.28
VIP Security Ltd	£1,525.20
Sky Business	£34.14
Blake Contractors	£228.68
NFU Mutual	£564.26
Gallagher Insurance	£415.62

73/26

Community Projects

Members considered arrangements for the Council's annual Christmas event.

73/26.1

Name of the Event

Members were advised that the event had historically be known as the Rochford Christmas Festival. A decision was required on the name of the event so that posters, panners and other publicity materials could be prepared.

It was also noted that existing stage banners and signage referred to the Parish Council and would need to be amended to reflect the Council's change of name to Rochford Town Council.

The Chairman proposed that the event be renamed to Rochford Christmas Lights. On being put to the vote, there were four votes in favour and 7 against and the proposal was therefore not carried.

Cllr Shaw proposed that the existing name Rochford Christmas Festival be retained. This was seconded by Cllr Williams. It

was resolved by a majority, with six votes in favour and 4 against, that the event would continue to be known as Rochford Christmas Festival.

73/26.2

Road Closure

Members considered the road closure arrangements and the fee payable. It was explained that, based on the anticipated attendance being over 1,000 people, the cost of the road closure would be £825.00.

Members questioned whether the increased anticipated attendance was particularly due to the Tractor Run and whether the organisers of the Tractor Run should therefore contribute towards additional costs. It was emphasised that the Tractor Run was a separate event and should have its own appropriate event management arrangements in place.

Members expressed concern regarding the cost of the road closure and agreed that the Clerk should contact Rochford District Council regarding the charge.

It was unanimously agreed that the Clerk would write to Rochford District Council, including the Leader of the Council, expressing the Town Council's concerns regarding the cost of the road closure charge.

Cllr Steptoe requested clarification regarding where the respective liabilities for the Town Council's event and the Tractor Run would sit as the position is unclear.

Cllr Williams proposed that the Council approve payment of the £825 road closure fee in order to enable the Christmas Festival to proceed. This was seconded by Cllr Whitehead. On being put to the vote, the proposal was carried by majority with six in favour, four against and one abstention.

It was therefore resolved to approve the £825.00 road closure fee.

73/26.3

Back Lane

Members discussed the decision not to include stalls in Back Lane as part of the current year's event.

It was agreed that an official statement should be issued that, due to increasing costs associated with the event, the Town Council had made the decision to remove the Back Lane stalls from this year's Christmas Festival and was exploring alternative arrangements.

Cllr Shaw asked for it be recorded that she did not agree with the decision to remove the Back Lane stalls.

73/26.4

Sponsorship

Members considered the sponsorship arrangements for the Christmas Festival.

Members were advised that the previous year's sponsorship letter had been issued by the Council and Councillors had approached business in the local area. Business had been offered sponsorship opportunities starting from £25.00, with sponsors able to have their logos included on posters, banners and other event publicity depending on the sponsorship package selected.

A revised, more commercially focused sponsorship letter and sponsorship packages had been prepared for consideration. Members agreed that the existing sponsorship letter and the revised letter should be combined.

The Chairman proposed that the Clerk prepares a revised sponsorship letter incorporating Members' suggestions and circulate this by email to Members. Subject to no objections being received, the letter would then be sent to larger businesses, with smaller local business also being approached in person where appropriate. This was unanimously agreed.

73/26.5

London Southend Airport

Members discussed approaching London Southend Airport for sponsorship. It was suggested that the Council should seek a more substantial contribution and ensure that the request was directed to an individual with sufficient authority to consider the application.

It was agreed that a request would be made to London Southend Airport for £1,000 sponsorship towards the Christmas Festival.

73/26.6

Rochford Chamber of Trade

Members discussed sponsorship from Rochford Chamber of Trade.

It was agreed to approach the Chamber of Trade regarding sponsorship of the first aid provision for the event.

74/26

UKSPF Fund

Members considered the potential projects to be funded from the remaining UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation.

74/26.1

Event Security Barriers

Members considered information regarding purchasing security barriers for events and the potential benefit this would provide to the Council purchasing its own equipment.

It was agreed that further investigation and quotations are obtained.

74/26.2

Hanging Baskets/Floral Displays

Members considered reintroducing hanging baskets or other floral displays within Rochford Square.

It was noted that the necessary permissions would need to be obtained before any installation.

74/26.3

Historic Rochford Sign

Members considered refurbishment of the historic Rochford sign that is located at the end of South Street on Bradley Way.

Following discussion, it was unanimously resolved to approve in principle, subject to the available UKSPF budget and necessary permissions:

1. The purchase of appropriate event/security barriers
2. Hanging baskets/floral displays for Rochford Square
3. The refurbishment of the historic Rochford sign that is located at the end of South Street.

It was agreed that officers would continue to obtain the necessary quotations and progress the proposals within the available funding.

75/26

Gas and Electricity Supply

Members considered the Council's gas and electricity supply and quotations received through Utility Aid.

The Chairman proposed that authority be delegated to the Clerk to negotiate and enter into the most advantageous gas and electricity supply contract available to the Council.

It was unanimously resolved to authorise the Clerk to negotiate and enter into the contract considered to offer the best overall terms and value for the Council.

76/26

The Rose Garden

Members considered the draft lease regarding the Rose Garden and the proposed 99-year lease.

Members discussed the length and terms of the proposed lease and the potential long-term liabilities for the Town Council. Members considered whether a freehold transfer would provide greater certainty and better reflect the Council's long-term occupation and responsibility for the area.

Cllr Whitehead highlighted the importance of ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements were in place, including fire and other risks. Cllr Hubbard raised concerns regarding aspects of the proposed lease.

Members considered that, given the proposed 99-year term lease, it would be appropriate to explore whether the District council would instead be prepared to transfer the freehold to the Town Council, potentially by way of a nominal or peppercorn transaction.

Cllr Williams proposed that the Council formally request a freehold transfer of the land. This was seconded by Cllr Steptoe. The proposal was carried by a majority, with Cllr Edwards abstaining.

It was further agreed, that while the possibility of a freehold transfer was explored, work on the proposed lease should continue so that the Council's position was protected.

It was agreed to obtain legal advice and a quotation for a full legal report on the proposed lease.

77/26

Co-Option Policy

Members received the draft Co-option Policy.

It was resolved to adopt the Co-option Policy as presented.

78/26

Planning Applications

The following planning applications were considered.

Planning Reference	26/00478/FUL
Applicant:	Mr Hales
Location:	Land Adjacent 22 Percy Cottis Road Rochford
Description:	Subdivision of existing residential plot and erection of one new single-storey dwelling, with associated parking, private amenity space, boundary treatment and alterations to the retained dwelling.
Comment:	Members objected to this application on the grounds of overdevelopment and detrimental impact upon/loss of the existing street scene.

Planning Reference	26/00540/FUL
Applicant:	Mr Halliday
Location:	31 Anne Boleyn Drive, Rochford, Essex
Description:	Double hip-to-gable roof extension and rear dormer to facilitate a loft conversion with internal alterations.
Comment:	No comment.

Planning Reference	26/00542/ADV
Applicant:	Mr M Kugathas
Location:	202 Ashingdon Road, Rochford Essex
Description:	Front fascia illuminated sign
Comment:	No comment

Planning Reference	26/005421/FUL
Applicant:	Mr M Kugathas
Location:	202 Ashingdon Road, Rochford Essex
Description:	New shop front
Comment:	No comment

Planning Reference	26/00140/OUT
Applicant:	Mr J Butcher
Location:	Land adjacent Ardleigh House, Hall Road, Rochford
Description:	Proposed development of 3.no dwellings
Comment:	Members objected to this application on the grounds of overdevelopment.

Planning Reference	26/00537/FUL
Applicant:	Public Sewer Services – Mr Gavin Greenfield
Location:	Workshop at Sutton Wharf, Rochehall Way, Rochford
Description:	Construct 2 no. buildings for use a vehicle maintenance and repair workshop within use Class B2.
Comment:	No comment

79/25

Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 30th September 2026 at 6.30 pm at The Parish Rooms, Rochford

80/25

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved: That, in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

It was further resolved to extend the meeting until the business remaining on the agenda had been concluded.

Cllrs Callaghan, Edmunds and Williams declared interests in the following confidential business and left the meeting at 8.25 pm.

Cllr Steptoe took the Chair for agenda items 81/26 and 82/26.

81/26

The Freight House

Members received an update from the Clerk regarding the proposed Community Asset Transfer of the Freight House and the District Council's expectations of the Town Council.

The Clerk advised that she together with Cllrs Steptoe and Shaw met with officers and had raised a number of significant questions regarding the proposed arrangements. At the time of the meeting, satisfactory responses to a number of those questions had not been received.

Members expressed concern about the potential financial and legal liabilities that could fall on the Town Council if it entered into a long-term lease or Community Asset Transfer without first having a comprehensive understanding of the building's condition and future maintenance requirements.

Members considered it essential that a full building survey is undertaken before the Town Council made any commitment to acquire an interest in The Freight House.

Concern was also expressed regarding the proposed landlord and tenant arrangements. Members questioned how the Town Council could reasonably be expected to take full responsibility as landlord while having limited influence over the selection of the organisation occupying or operating the building.

Members noted that ordinarily a tenant wishing to sub-let premises would be required to comply with the terms of its own lease and obtain any necessary landlord consent. Members therefore considered that the proposed relationship between the District Council, Town Council and eventual operator required greater clarity.

Cllr Shaw stated that she could not support the Town Council taking on responsibility for the property under an arrangement where an operator was not expected to pay rent or make an appropriate financial contribution.

Members considered that further discussions by correspondence would be unlikely to resolve all of the outstanding concerns and that a face-to-face meeting with senior Rochford District Council officers would be beneficial.

Cllr Steptoe considered that the Town Council should demonstrate that it was doing everything reasonably possible to secure the Freight House for the benefit of Rochford while also protecting the interests of residents.

It was suggested that quotations should be obtained from two or three suitably qualified surveys for a comprehensive survey of the building so that Members could better understand the Council's potential liabilities before making any commitment.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that:

1. The Town Council remained interested in exploring the Community Asset Transfer of The Freight House.
2. No final commitment should be made until the Council had sufficient information regarding the building's condition, legal responsibilities, financial liabilities and proposed landlord/tenant arrangements.
3. Quotations be sought from suitably qualified surveyors to undertake a full survey of The Freight House.
4. A face-to-face meeting should be requested with Rochford District Council officers to discuss the outstanding issues and expectations of the Town Council; and
5. Cllrs Steptoe, Shaw and Hubbard would represent the Town Council at the proposed meeting, together with the Clerk as appropriate.

82/26

St Mark's Hall

The Clerk presented his report regarding the current position at St Mark's Hall.

Discussion took place regarding the need to regularise the current arrangements and ensure that the Town Council's interests and public funds were appropriately protected.

Members were in agreement that any organisation occupying and operating from the premises should make an appropriate contribution by way of rent rather than continuing on a rent-free basis.

Members also considered the legal advice and quotations previously obtained in relation to the preparation and negotiation of an appropriate lease.

Following a discussion, Members agreed that:

1. The occupation of St Mark's Hall should be placed on a proper formal footing.
2. An appropriate rent should be payable under the future arrangements; and
3. Wellers Law Group LLP be appointed to undertake the necessary legal work in relation to the lease and to advise the Town Council on the arrangements.

The Clerk was authorised to liaise with Wellers Law LLP regarding the next steps.

With no further business to discuss, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 9.12 pm.