

**MINUTES of the meeting of Council held on 28 November 2012 at 7.00 p.m.**

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**Present:** Councillors Yash Gupta MBE (Mayor), Tony Fish (Deputy Mayor), Phil Anderson, Lynn Carr, Mark Coxshall, Charles Curtis, Wendy Curtis, Angie Gaywood, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Sue Gray, Garry Hague, James Halden, Diana Hale (to 8.49 p.m.), Martin Healy, Shane Hebb, Wendy Herd, Terence Hipsey, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Suzanne MacPherson, Ben Maney, Val Morris-Cook (to 9.23 p.m.), Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Maureen Pearce, John Purkiss, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Michael Revell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Andrew Roast, Andy Smith, Philip Smith, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Simon Wootton and Lynn Worrall (to 8.23 p.m).

**Apologies:** Councillors Clare Baldwin and Aaron Kiely

**In attendance:** Reverend Darren Barlow – Mayor's Chaplain

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Before the start of the Meeting, the Mayor advised all present that the meeting was being recorded and that the recording would be made available on the Council's website within 3 working days of the meeting.

The Mayor invited Reverend Barlow to say a few words and lead the Council in Prayer.

**83. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on 24 October 2012, were approved as a correct record.

**84. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

The Mayor informed the Council that he had not agreed to the consideration of any items of urgent business.

**85. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

**Councillor J Kent** declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of both Agenda Items 13 and 14 (particularly in regard to page 46), as he had recently become president of East Thurrock United Football Club. He advised the Council that at no time when the Senior Members Group met had he taken

part in any conversations or discussion involving this allocation and further advised Members that he would withdraw from the Chamber during the consideration of both items of business.

**Councillor Hipsey** declared a pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 13, as his employer was a supplier of goods to a business person who owned land mentioned in the report. He advised Members that he would withdraw from the Chamber during the consideration of this item of business.

**Councillor Hipsey** declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 14, as he was the Chair of the Planning Committee.

**Councillor Key** declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Items 13 and 14, as a family member currently operated a business from a site identified in the site specific allocations and policies document issues and options consultation that was undertaken in March 2012.

**Councillor Roast** declared that in respect of Agenda Item 19, he was a Director of a company that sponsored a roundabout in Thurrock.

**Councillor Speight** declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 14, as a family member was a non-remunerated secretary of East Thurrock United Football Club.

## **86. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor was pleased to announce that he had completed six months of his term of office as the Mayor of Thurrock. He thanked everyone in the Chamber, together with the people of Thurrock, for their kind support.

Members were informed that the Mayor had attended 185 events to date, many of which were community events within the Borough, and that these had included the T Festival, the Jubilee Celebrations, the Torch Relay, the Olympics and Paralympics, Black History Month and the Remembrance Day Celebrations, which started on 4 November at the Purfleet Heritage Centre and ended on 25 November at the East Tilbury Fort.

The Mayor thanked those Councillors and Council Officers who attended Remembrance Day services in different parts of the Borough and informed Members that all the services had been very well attended.

The Mayor spoke of his gratitude to the Armed Forces. He informed Members that a month ago the Grays Shopping Centre began collecting shoe boxes with food packets which were to be sent to our soldiers in Afghanistan. The Mayor supported this by donating a box and informed the Chamber that he had received an email from the front line in Afghanistan which he shared with the meeting. This read:

*“Dear Yash Gupta, Many thanks for your thoughtful welfare box which arrived this week out here in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. It has*

*been shared amongst the troops and is much appreciated. Kind Regards L/Cpl Brown, 102 Bn REME (V)”*

The Mayor chose to highlight two events he had attended on 19 November. During the morning, he attended a meeting of local faith leaders who discussed the positive role of faith in the future of Thurrock and in the evening, both the Mayor and Mayoress had the pleasure of seeing a great performance from our young musicians who were competing for the Young Musician of the Year Award. The Mayor informed Members that the fantastic musical performance was not only appreciated by the parents, teachers and Councillors in attendance, but also by the ten Mayors and Mayoresses of adjoining Boroughs.

Finally, the Mayor informed the Chamber that on 26 November he, together with a number of Members, attended the launch of the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy which was supported by Helen Grant MP, Parliamentary under secretary of State for Women’s Equality issues. The Mayor thanked those community leaders and officers who took part in this great initiative and was proud to say that Thurrock was one of the first Councils who had started this worthwhile project.

The Leader of the Council was then invited to make any announcements he wished to make.

The Leader informed Members that he wished to make one announcement and also for Councillors Gerrish and Morris-Cook to make further announcements on his behalf in respect of matters that came within their respective portfolios.

Before he began, the Leader informed Members that in view of the heavy Agenda, he wished to propose that Procedure Rule 11.1 be suspended to allow the meeting to continue to 10.30 p.m.

Members indicated their agreement to the proposal.

The Leader updated the Chamber on the budget consultation exercise that was currently underway.

It was reported that the Council needed to make savings in the region of £20 million over the next three years, with the reasons behind these identified as being:

- the cut in government funding to be absorbed, with £3 million less funding being received next year to provide services and a further £3 million less the year after that;
- new responsibilities that were being given to local authorities, such as those concerned with flooding, health and youth justice, which were seldom accompanied by the necessary funding to deliver them;
- pressures on existing services, such as in adult and children’s social care.

The Chamber were informed that the Council must do all that it could to protect front-line services and ensure that any savings that had to be made were as fair as they possibly could be. Members were informed that the Council must therefore look at new ways of working and be innovative in its thinking.

The Leader advised the Chamber that whilst each Overview and Scrutiny Committee had looked at and given their view on initial savings proposals, he was very keen for local people to be involved in the budget setting process. He announced that the "Let's Talk" initiative, which had previously been successful, was now online and that now was the time for people in Thurrock to put forward their views.

Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Social Care, informed the Chamber that a very recently inspected school, whose Ofsted report had not yet been published, had been judged as good with outstanding features, including leadership and management.

He then mentioned the recent Ofsted Annual Report. The Chamber were informed that the Council did share an ambition with Sir Michael Wilshaw, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills, that every school should be good or outstanding and this was first written into the Council's Children and young People's Plan in 2009 and was repeated in the Plan for 2013-16.

Members were informed that on the measure of the percentage of good or outstanding schools, Secondary Schools and Special Schools in Thurrock were in the top 20% in the Country. However, it was reported that Primary Schools in Thurrock were in the bottom 5%.

The Chamber were informed that primary schools had been the focus of attention since 2010, when 33% of Primary Schools were good or better, with this figure now standing at 49%. It was reported that the Council had continued to invest in school improvement at the same time as the government had disinvested.

Councillor Gerrish informed Members that the Council was already working closely with the Department for Education and Academy sponsors to deliver rapid progress in the most vulnerable schools.

It was reported that the publication of the Ofsted Annual Report had given the Council another opportunity to reflect. The Cabinet Member informed the Chamber that he had decided to invite Sir Michael Wilshaw and members of his team to come to Thurrock and examine what the Council were doing and explore what else could be done to accelerate progress.

Furthermore, the Chamber were informed that the Cabinet Member intended to organise a summit in January of head teachers and chairs of governors of all schools on the "journey towards good" to challenge what more could be

done together and to accelerate progress. It was further reported that colleagues from both the Department for Education and Ofsted would also be invited to attend.

Members were further informed that the Cabinet Member intended to put in place a cross-party panel, chaired by himself and the Director of Peoples Services, to hold to account the existing education partnership that had been in place since 2010 and to deliver the accelerated improvement in primary schools.

Finally, Councillor Gerrish drew Members' attention to the pledge cards he had placed on their desks for the 16 days of action as part of the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. He encouraged Members to compete and return the cards.

Councillor Morris-Cook, Cabinet Member for Housing, informed the Chamber that the involvement of Morrison's in the Council's repairs service would end from 31 January 2013.

It was reported that the contract with Morrison's began in August 2010 and was due to run until 2015, though it had been unable to deliver the standard of service required for Thurrock tenants.

Members were informed that the contract did not contain a clause to prevent the company from being sold without the approval of the council and that this is what had happened. Members were further informed that Morrison's repairs business had been sold to the Mears Group, who the Council had been talking to for the last couple of weeks.

The Cabinet Member then sought to blame the previous administration for the failure to add such basic contract clauses.

At this point, Councillor Anderson raised a point of order, citing Council Procedure Rule 2.4(i), which stated that announcements should not take the form of a public statement.

The Mayor agreed and advised the Cabinet Member accordingly.

The Chamber were informed that the Mears Group had agreed to end the contract early in the New Year, without additional costs to the Council.

In addition, it was reported that Mears would work with the Council through the long procurement process to ensure that the service was fit for purpose and provided residents with reliable, good quality, cost effective repairs delivered within the correct timeframes.

It was further reported that Mears had also committed to expand the use of local suppliers and to look at different ways to deliver this service.

Finally, the Chamber were informed that the Council would be seeking to engage with residents as part of the redesign of the repairs and maintenance service.

#### **87. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed on CMIS at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/cmiswebpublic/>

#### **88. PETITIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND COUNCILLORS**

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the requisite notice had not been given by any councillors or members of the public that they wished to present a petition at the meeting.

#### **89. PETITIONS UPDATE REPORT**

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council Meetings and Council Offices over the past six months.

#### **90. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES, STATUTORY AND OTHER PANELS**

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished for any changes to be made to the appointments previously made to Committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that he wished to make the following changes to the appointments previously made:

- To appoint Councillor Gaywood as a substitute member on the Essex Police and Crime Panel.
- To appoint Councillor Holloway as a substitute member of the Corporate Parenting Committee, to replace Councillor Kiely.
- To appoint Councillor Phil Smith as a substitute member of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

The Leader advised Members that he wished to clarify the appointments he had made to the Planning Committee at the last meeting of the Council and confirmed that the Labour Group substitutes on the Planning Committee were Councillors Gray, Baldwin and Okunade.

Members indicated their agreement to those appointments being made, as requested at the meeting.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That Councillor Gaywood be appointed as a substitute member on the Essex Police and Crime Panel.**

2. **That Councillor Holloway be appointed as a substitute member of the Corporate Parenting Committee, to replace Councillor Kiely.**
3. **That Councillor Phil Smith be appointed as a substitute member of the Corporate Parenting Committee.**

#### **91. APPOINTMENT TO EAST TILBURY RELIEF IN NEED CHARITY**

The Mayor introduced the report of the Chief Executive, which requested the Council to re-appoint Mr Blackbond as a trustee to the East Tilbury Relief in Need Charity, in accordance with the provisions of the governing documents of the Charity.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that he understood that Mr Blackbond had been appointed as a trustee of this Charity since 1982 and that he felt that it would be appropriate for the Mayor to write and thank him for his work. Furthermore, it was suggested that Mr Blackbond be invited to attend the Annual Meeting of the Council in May 2013 in order that Members could thank him personally.

Upon being put to the vote, the Mayor declared the recommendation contained within the report to be carried.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**That Mr John Blackbond be re-appointed as a trustee of the East Tilbury Relief in Need Charity for a term of four years.**

#### **92. JOINT MANAGEMENT**

The Leader of the Council introduced the report, which updated the Council on joint management arrangements.

Members were informed that officers had been considering the potential for joint management between Thurrock Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and that the report set out a process for moving forward on some aspects of joint management in order to make significant revenue savings for both Councils.

It was reported that all options identified had been examined to look at the savings that could be achieved, together with the less tangible costs of these. It was noted that these options ranged from doing nothing more than continuing to share a Legal Service to a having single Directors Board and even a single group of Heads of Service.

Members were informed that the proposals contained within the report had been considered and discussed with Members from all Groups and in both authorities.

It was reported that there were many back-office, policy and communication functions where sharing services made a lot of sense and whilst the proposals in the report would produce savings for the two authorities, the public-facing services such as social care, education and housing would all stay within local control.

The Leader informed Members that the proposals in the report should not mean a “London Borough of Thurrock” and represented a good deal for local council tax payers of both authorities.

The Leader thanked the Chief Executive for his hard work over the past few months.

In addition, he advised Members that the report showed that that Thurrock already worked with a number of other local authorities, such as Southend. The Leader then gave a commitment that the Council would continue to work with whomever, wherever and whenever if it made sense for Thurrock.

It was noted that the report also confirmed the Governance Guarantee, which provided Members with a high degree of comfort about the continued separation of governance structures and budgets.

The Leader of the Opposition informed the Chamber that his Group did not support a management merger with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. He advised Members that there were significant differences between the two authorities in key areas, such as:

- Being very different in terms of how education was managed within the two Boroughs, with Thurrock having its own specific challenges in that area.
- Thurrock having its own regeneration agenda that was unique in the county let alone unique in the South East of England.
- Thurrock having specific challenges around housing as had already been mentioned by the Cabinet Member for Housing earlier in the meeting,
- Looking in a very different direction out towards Essex rather than in towards London in terms of health.

Furthermore, the Members were also informed that the time was not right to dilute management through sharing posts and that the Opposition were continuing to place under close scrutiny the question of whether sharing a Chief Executive was the right idea in the long term, given the challenges in Thurrock

The Leader of the Opposition advised Members that he supported the principle of sharing services when it was right to do so. He also suggested that the Council should look to a wide range of partners, rather than towards the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.



Finally, Members were informed that individual proposals to share services needed to be scrutinised before being judged on their merits.

A number of other Members spoke and expressed their concerns in respect of recommendation 1.2, which asked the Council to agree that officers should continue to develop options for both joint management and shared services between Thurrock Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to save at least £1m across both Councils, echoing the earlier comments made by the Leader of the Opposition.

Other Members spoke in support of the recommendations in the report, commenting that the Council was working with other Boroughs and that the proposed savings identified in the report would be achieved through sharing back-office, policy and communications functions.

A request was then made for each of the recommendations in the report to be voted upon individually, the results of which were as follows:

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of recommendation 1.1, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

Upon being put to the vote, 23 Members voted in favour of recommendation 1.2 and 24 Members voted against, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be lost.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of recommendation 1.3, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of recommendation 1.4, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To continue the shared legal services structure and the joint role of Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer between Thurrock Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.**
  - 2. That officers should continue to explore options for shared services with other councils as is most appropriate for each service.**
  - 3. That the Governance Guarantee be adopted for all joint management and shared services agreements.**
- 93. ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE WITH THE LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM**

The Mayor informed Members that the report included on the Agenda had been replaced with a revised copy report that had been circulated at the meeting.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council advised Members the revised version circulated at the meeting reflected what had been agreed with the Leader of the Opposition.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That, subject to the concurrent approval of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, the Council agree to establish a 'Joint Appointments Committee' for the purpose of interviewing and making an appointment of all relevant staff at Chief Officer and Deputy Chief Officer level in respect of those posts serving both authorities jointly under any shared service or other arrangement.**
- 2. That the terms of reference for the Joint Appointments Committee be approved as set out at Appendix A to the report.**
- 3. That the Joint Appointments Committee comprise a total of eight councillors appointed, with four Members being appointed by each authority.**
- 4. That two Labour Members and two Conservative Members be nominated from Thurrock Council.**
- 5. That the venue and Chair of the Joint Appointments Committee alternate between the two authorities and that the Leader of the Council be appointed to this position by Thurrock Council.**
- 6. That Meetings of the Joint Appointments Committee be conducted in accordance with the constitutional provisions of both authorities.**
- 7. That a report be presented to the Constitution Working Group to review the joint appointment arrangements in accordance with Appendix A of this report and any recommendations be brought to the next meeting of the Council.**
- 8. That a further report be presented to a future meeting of the Council addressing the differing arrangements currently in place in both authorities for appointing the Chief Executive (Head of Paid Service), as well as the structures for dealing with issues regarding disciplinary matters, appeals, gradings and conditions.**
- 9. That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make any consequential amendments to the Council's Constitution as may be required following a review by the Constitution Working Group.**

- 10. The process identified for joint appointments in Appendix A and following any further recommendations by the Constitution Working Group shall be adopted by the Council for all future joint appointments with another Council.**

*Informative:*

*Recommendation 1.5 in the report requested that the Council approve the nominations of political groups to the Joint Appointments Committee, as received at the meeting. As there were no nominations received, the matter of appointments will be brought back to the next meeting of the Council.*

*Further to the declarations recorded at Minute No.85, Councillors J Kent and Hipsey left the meeting.*

**94. TO APPROVE FOR CONSULTATION THE “FURTHER ISSUES AND OPTIONS” SITE ALLOCATIONS AND POLICIES LOCAL PLAN**

Councillor A Smith, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways & Transportation, sought permission from the Mayor to introduce Agenda Items 13 and 14 together as the reports were very similar and he felt that this would enable Members to debate both at the same time, whilst voting upon the recommendations contained in each report separately.

The Mayor agreed to this request.

Councillor A Smith introduced Agenda Items 13 and 14, and in doing so, thanked officers for their hard work in delivering the work that had gone into both reports. In addition, he also thanked Councillors Anderson and Hague for their input.

The recommendations contained in Agenda Items 13 and 14 were proposed by Councillor A. Smith and seconded by Councillor Hague.

Councillor Hague informed Members that he was pleased to second the recommendations in each of the reports, adding that cross-party agreement was important and would lead the Council further towards implementing a planning framework to deliver regeneration in the Borough.

A number of Members from all sides of the Chamber spoke in support of the recommendations, although some concern was addressed in respect of the Sports Hub in Blackshots and the proposal to relocate East Thurrock Football Club to the Pegasus Club site.

In addition, some concern was raised over the methodology for consultation and an assurance was sought that copies of the consultation documents would be placed in libraries and housing offices. The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways & Transportation advised Members that libraries

would be used and officers would also be updating local forums on the proposals.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations contained in the report at Agenda Item 13, whereupon the Mayor declared these to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That Council agree the draft Further Issues and Options for Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan.**
- 2. That any minor drafting and formatting amendments as may be required be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Highways & Transportation.**
- 3. That the Further Issues and Options Site Allocations and Policies Local Plan be published for public consultation.**

**95. TO APPROVE FOR CONSULTATION “ISSUES AND OPTIONS” FOR THE CORE STRATEGY AND POLICIES FOR MANAGEMENT OF DEVELOPMENT LOCAL PLAN FOCUSED REVIEW – BROAD LOCATIONS AND STRATEGIC SITES**

Further to Minute No.94, where the recommendations contained in the report had been proposed by Councillor A. Smith and seconded by Councillor Hague, Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations contained in the report at Agenda Item 14.

The Mayor declared these to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That Council agree the draft document of the Issues and Options for Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development Focused Review - Broad Locations and Strategic Sites.**
- 2. That any minor drafting and formatting amendments as may be required be delegated to the Director of Planning and Transportation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Highways & Transportation.**

3. **That the Issues and Options for the Core Strategy and Management of Development Focused Review of Broad Locations and Strategic Sites Local Plan be published for public consultation.**

*Councillors J Kent and Hipsey returned to the Chamber.*

**96. REVIEW OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES UNDER THE GAMBLING ACT 2005**

Councillor Stone, as Chair of the Licensing Committee, introduced the report which requested the Council to consider and adopt a reviewed Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005.

The Mayor then invited Councillor Maney, the Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee, to second the recommendation which he duly did. Councillor Maney reserved his right to speak.

In considering the report, Members observed that the Council was changing its policy with regard to casinos and assurances were sought that vulnerable people would be protected if a casino were to come to Thurrock in the future.

In addition, Members requested that the policy should be a “living document”. Councillor Maney informed the Chamber that the revised policy sought to introduce some minor amendments to the Council’s existing policy and that this had been debated fully by the Licensing Committee, with all political groups and the non-aligned Member represented on this Committee.

In relation to a casino, Councillor Maney informed Members that unless there was a change in the law, there was no prospect of Thurrock hosting a casino as the number of casinos were limited by statute. Furthermore, Members were informed that the policy was a living document and that whilst it had to be reviewed every three years, it could be reviewed at any time.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the recommendation in the report, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Council adopts the attached Gambling Act Statement of Principles and that agree that it be take effect from 14 January 2013.**

**97. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS AND DISCRETIONARY DISCOUNTS**

Councillor Phil Smith, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report.

He informed the Members that further to meetings held by both the Task and Finish Group and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recommendations had been made for the Council to consider with regard to

agreeing and implementing the potential options available to Thurrock in the light of recent changes to legislation affecting Council Tax exemptions and discretionary discounts.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the recommendations contained in the report, whereupon the Mayor declared these to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. To apply the following exemptions/discounts to Council Tax for 2013/14:**
  - **Class A: That a 50% discount would apply for up to the 12 month statutory period.**
  - **Class C: That a 100% exemption is granted for up to 3 months.**
  - **Second homes discount: That the discount be set at 0%.**
  - **Long Term Empty Properties (properties being empty over 2 years): That the premium is set at 50%**
- 2. To approve the broad definition for Class A Council Tax exemptions as set out in Appendix C to this report**

**98. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

Councillor Phil Smith, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report.

He informed the Members that further to the meetings held by both the Task and Finish Group and the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, recommendations had been made for consideration by Council with regard to agreeing and implementing a Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTSS) for 2013/14.

Councillor Gledhill requested that an amendment be made to the last bullet point of the recommendation, to add the words "*and any additional extra entitlement attached to that*" so that this part of the recommendation would read as follows:

*"There will be a 100% disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions and any additional extra entitlement attached to that, War Widow's Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments."*

The recommendation in the report, as amended at the meeting, was proposed by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Anderson. Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the recommendation, as amended, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**1. That the LCTSS for Thurrock for 2013/14 should contain the following elements: -**

- **The first £25 per week of earned income will be disregarded when calculating levels of council tax support.**
- **The maximum capital limit is to be set at £6,000. This means anyone who has savings over £6,000 may not receive support with their Council Tax.**
- **Second adult rebate will no longer be awarded for working age claimants.**
- **For working age claimants, the maximum support that will be allowed will be 75% of the full Council Tax bill for the Banding of the property.**
- **Child Benefit and Child Maintenance received will not be included as income in the calculation Council Tax support.**
- **There will be a 100% disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions and any additional extra entitlement attached to that, War Widow's Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments.**

**99. REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CENTRAL SERVICES**

Members received a report from Councillor Phil Smith, Cabinet Member for Central Services.

The report of the Cabinet Member was set out on pages 151 to 167 of the Agenda. Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Ojetola asked the Cabinet Member what work had been done to ensure that the £1.7m of tax payers' money lost in payroll errors last year would not be repeated this year.

Councillor Smith informed the Chamber that there had not been £1.7m lost due to payroll errors and that this money could all be accounted for.

- Councillor Johnson noted that the report stated that there had been a decrease in complaints when compared to 2010/11 and that it continued to identify Council Tax as one of the areas which attracted the highest volume of complaints. Councillor Johnson asked if the Cabinet Member could provide further information regarding the actual movement in complaints

from 2008/09, specifically for Council Tax, and also provide the same figures in respect of the collection of business rates.

Councillor Smith informed Members that he would provide a written answer because he did not have the exact numbers requested with him at the meeting. He further advised the Chamber that complaints were high last year and that they had gone down and that he was of the opinion that this could partly be because the previous administration had made no efforts to collect the money that was actually owed the Council.

- Councillor Gledhill noted that in 2011/12 the collection rate was stated as being 98.6%. He asked the Cabinet Member what the collection rate would have been if £1.54m worth of Council Tax had not been written off and how that justified his last statement about the previous administration not collecting Council Tax due and payable.

Councillor Smith informed Members that the money, although written off, was still owed to the Council and that the report looked at the monies that were actually collected. He advised Councillor Gledhill that that money was accounted for separately.

- Councillor Coxshall expressed some concern over the statement made by the Cabinet Member that he was unable to progress the use of iPads in the Chamber due to security concerns and asked the Cabinet Member to explain this.

Councillor Smith informed Members that part of the problem was due to the software that the Council was running and that this cannot be adapted to install the necessary security arrangements and protocols that were required. Members were further informed that statements from the government meant that the Council could be in danger of losing the ability to use its webmail facility as this system may not be secure enough.

- Councillor Halden referred to the value for money conclusion that was included on page 155 of the report and enquired whether, considering his large portfolio, the Cabinet Member was confident that he had got oversight of value for money.

Councillor Smith informed Members that that this was the auditors' statement and that they had concluded that the Council had made proper arrangements to secure economic efficiency and effective use of its resources.

- Councillor Roast asked the Cabinet Member to comment on why compliments had decreased by 25% over the same period.

Councillor Smith advised Members that he would provide a written answer to the question.



- Councillor Hebb raised the issue of absence management and this having improved in Thurrock, together with a recent survey that showed public sector workers were paid, on average, £4,500 more than private sector workers. He asked the Cabinet Member to undertake to review, under his stewardship, the introduction of a time management system to make sure that the residents and tax payers of Thurrock could be confident the Council was managing its staff as it need to.

Councillor Smith informed Members that he was somewhat confused as to what Councillor Hebb meant by a time management system. The Chamber were informed that most employees came in at a certain time and that time was managed. He advised Members that he could not see why the Council would need to introduce a further check and a further cost to local residents.

## **100. REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

Members received a report, together with a presentation at the meeting, from Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Environment.

The report of the Cabinet Member was set out on pages 169 to 173 of the Agenda. Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Wootton commented that the green flag standard achieved for parks was commendable and was something that should be extended, he highlighted the achievements of Councillor Revell as a previous portfolio holder for this area and asked whether the Cabinet Member could set out a vision moving forward, set out new initiatives and identify what she would see as her legacy when she moved on.

Councillor Holloway recognised the achievements of the previous portfolio holder and informed the Chamber that it was important for the Environment Directorate to increase its outcomes. It was reported that a keen aim was to keep achieving what was being achieved. It was reported that the Council would be working with a new arboriculture team and that this would not only save money but would also generate an income.

Members were informed that the Directorate was looking at improvements to efficiency, for example, route rationalisation which would improve where bins were going and should save money.

As for her legacy, the Cabinet Member informed the Chamber that she had only been in post a short time and had not actually thought about it.

- Councillor Tolson asked what strategic plan was in place for cleaning up areas of fly tipping and litter from land where the registered owner could not be traced. She further asked what the Cabinet Member had done about this during her term and whether the Cabinet Member would

seriously look at this issue and put a strategy in place. Her question was accompanied by two photographs that illustrated fly tipping.

Councillor Holloway informed the Chamber that whilst the matter of fly tipping actually came under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, fly tipping was dealt with on a case by case basis and that it was extremely expensive to clear this. The Cabinet Member informed Members that she understood that the area referred to by Councillor Tolson had been cleared and that she understood this to have been cleared on previous occasions.

The Cabinet Member undertook to work with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection to ensure that fly tipping was reduced around the borough and advised that both would be happy to meet with Councillor Tolson outside of the meeting to discuss a way forward.

- Councillor Liddiard asked for an update on the refurbishment of the Belhus Sports Hub.

The Cabinet Member informed the Chamber that, on an industry standard, both Corringham and Blackshots had been highly recommended with Belhus being commended. She felt that this was due, in part, to the fact that the facility did need development. Members were informed that the Cabinet Member had been in meetings with Impulse Leisure and they would ensure that Belhus would receive the same development as the facilities at both Corringham and Blackshots had seen.

- Councillor Purkiss advised the Cabinet Member that a resident had recently approached him regarding a plastic bag that had “please recycle” written on it and that they had put this in their recycling bin only to be told by staff that they did not take waste bins like that. He asked the Cabinet Member why the waste bin was not accepted by Nordic. In addition, he also asked whether Cabinet Member could work with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection in respect of dog fouling in Gobbins Park.

The Cabinet Member advised Councillor Purkiss that she was happy to speak to the resident in more detail about the issue that had been raised. It was reported that, generally, plastic bags were not accepted by Nordic and this was because they did not know what was inside the bags themselves and that when opened, this could lead to contamination of the whole load.

With regard to the issue of dog fouling, the Cabinet Member advised that she would work with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection, as dog fouling was another blight on Thurrock.

- Councillor Hebb asked the Cabinet Member about the strategic road network, and in particular, the area of road between the border of the west side of the Borough up to the Dock Road in Tilbury, which was owned or managed by the Highways Agency. He advised of a comment that had

been said to him a number of times, in that someone could always tell when they drive into Thurrock from that direction. He asked what the Cabinet Member was doing about this problem.

The Cabinet Member advised Members that she was in frequent contact with the Highways Agency about this and other similar issues and that they were difficult to deal with and adopted the same line, despite being told that this was not acceptable. The Cabinet Member advised that she would continue to contact the Highways Agency about areas such as the one mentioned.

Councillor Holloway, together with previous Cabinet Members for this area, Councillors Revell and Morris-Cook, paid tribute to Andrew Murphy, Director of Environment, who was to leave the Council shortly and take up a new post in Australia.

#### **101. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS**

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed on CMIS at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/cmiswebpublic/>.

#### **102. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES**

Councillor Revell informed Members that he represented the Council on the Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood Defence Committee and that he had attended a meeting earlier in the day where plans for 2050 were being considered.

He advised Members that in the recent flooding there were alerts in the Eastern Region, including one in Tilbury, but he did not think that any serious problems were noted.

#### **103. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES**

The Minutes of Committees and Sub Committees, as set out in the Agenda, were received.

#### **104. MOTIONS UPDATE REPORT**

Members received an information report updating them on progress in respect of Motions resolved at Council over the past year.

#### **105. MOTIONS**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that four motions had been submitted for consideration at the meeting.

Motion 1

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Ray and seconded by Councillor Little.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**That this Council, having to face in the coming years the certainty of ever increasing its Council Tax, establish a cross-party working group to look into the feasibility of creating a Thurrock Lottery for the benefit of the residents of Thurrock**

Motion 2

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Ojetola and seconded by Councillor Key.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**This Council recognises the distress and unfair treatment of residents of Thurrock caused by unscrupulous car clampers. To that end, it welcomes the Conservative led Government's legislation outlawing rogue car clampers.**

**The Council resolves to publicise this widely to all residents of Thurrock to ensure that drivers are aware of the new rules and their rights in respect to parking, complaints and appealing against illegal clamping and calls on the new police commissioner to ensure the new rule is enforced.**

Motion 3

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor John Kent and seconded by Councillor Hague.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**Thurrock Council welcomes the Government's intention to move to Free Flow Tolling for the Purfleet to Dartford Crossing as this will significantly reduce congestion at the crossing.**

**To further cut congestion Thurrock Council calls on Government to bring forward improvements to the A13 / M25 junction and remains opposed to any new crossing in Thurrock.**

Motion 4

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Wootton and seconded by Councillor Liddiard.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

**RESOLVED:**

**This council applauds and supports the aims and objectives of the "Climate Local" scheme, and agrees to sign up to the "Climate Local Commitment".**

**The council agrees to set locally owned and determined targets and actions, aimed at both saving money and tackling climate change, and to publish these within 6 months as required by the commitment.**

**The meeting finished at 10.24 p.m.**

Approved as a true and correct record

**MAYOR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Steve Jones, telephone (01375) 652107,  
or alternatively e-mail [sjones@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:sjones@thurrock.gov.uk)**