

MINUTES of the meeting of Council held on 24 July 2013 at 7.00pm.

Present: Councillors Tony Fish (Mayor), Wendy Curtis (Deputy Mayor), Phil Anderson, Clare Baldwin, Lynn Carr, Mark Coxshall, Charles Curtis, Angie Gaywood, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Sue Gray, Yash Gupta, Garry Hague, James Halden, Diana Hale, Shane Hebb, Terence Hipsey, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Charlie Key, Aaron Kiely, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Val Morris-Cook (from 8.13 pm), Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Maureen Pearce, John Purkiss, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Michael Revell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice (from 8.18 pm), Andrew Roast, Andy Smith, Philip Smith, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Simon Wootton and Lynn Worrall.

Apologies: Councillors Martin Healy, Suzanne MacPherson and Ben Maney.

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gerard Rice and Val Morris-Cook, who would be late to the meeting as they were both working outside the borough.

In attendance: Reverend Darren Barlow – Mayor’s Chaplain

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.

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

31. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting, held on 19 June 2013, were approved as a correct record.

32. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

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

33. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Cathy Kent declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 17, Motion 1, as she had been appointed as one of the Council's representatives on Essex Fire Authority.

34. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed the Chamber that by the end of July he would have carried out 98 engagements since he began his Mayoral year.

The Mayor informed Members that he had been privileged to attend a fantastic range of cultural events including contemporary dance, opera, jazz, classical music, and adaptations of Shakespeare. Furthermore, the Mayor announced that he had witnessed budding choral talent at the infant and junior musical festivals, together with performances by some of the many choirs in Thurrock.

The Mayor advised that he was proud that there were such gifted people in the Borough and that such a thriving cultural diversity existed that encompassed all ages and walks of life.

The Mayor informed the Chamber that he also had the pleasure of a ride on the back of a motorised trike to the Annual Bike Show at Purfleet Heritage Centre which was a first for him and, he understood, a first for any Mayor of Thurrock.

The Leader of the Council was then invited to make any announcements he wished to make. The Leader advised the Chamber that he had no announcements to make at this time.

35. 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/thurrock/>

36. 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 one councillor that they wished to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Wendy Curtis addressed the Council and presented a petition on behalf of local residents regarding a request for a water ring main in Buckles Lane, South Ockendon.

Councillor Redsell addressed the Council and presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Blackshots Lane (Leisure Centre end going towards Wentworth Place), who had expressed a wish for yellow lines

in the vicinity to alleviate problems for residents due to inconsiderate parking in this area.

Councillor Hague addressed the Council and presented a petition on behalf of local residents, which called on London Gateway to install appropriate sound mitigation measures at North Stifford to offset the impact of the significant additional lorry and vehicle movements on the A13 with their new port development.

37. 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.

38. 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.

Each of the Group Leaders informed the Mayor that they did not wish to make any changes to the appointments previously made.

39. THURROCK HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD – MEMBERSHIP

The Leader of the Council introduced a report, which requested the Council to agree to the proposed change in the membership of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Upon being put to the vote, Members indicated their agreement to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Council agree to an additional member of the opposition group becoming a member of Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Board.**
- 2. That Councillor Redsell be appointed as a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board.**
- 3. That the Council agree the amended Terms of Reference for the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

40. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSON UNDER THE LOCALISM ACT 2011

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services, and Monitoring Officer, submitted a report which sought approval for the appointment of two independent persons under the Localism Act 2011.

Upon being put to the vote, Members indicated their agreement to the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Council establishes an additional Independent Person for the purposes of the Localism Act 2011 to ensure sufficient reserve coverage in the event of non- availability or conflict of interest issues.**
- 2. That Fiona Fairweather and Fola Onaeko be appointed as the Council's independent persons for the purposes of section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 (subject to satisfactory references) to commence from 1 August 2013 to the date of the Annual General Council.**
- 3. That the Council agrees an additional allowance of £500 per annum to undertake this role and the Council's Members Allowance Scheme is amended to reflect this change.**

41. REPORTS FROM CABINET MEMBERS

The Mayor informed Members that the report of the Leader of the Council did not include the education aspect of his portfolio and that this was scheduled to be reported to the Council later in the year.

Members received a report from Councillor John Kent, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Education, and were then invited to put questions.

Members questioned the Portfolio Holder and received responses on the following matters:

- Councillor Anderson advised Members that whilst there may be disagreement on points of detail with regard to the Council's finances, he acknowledged that, compared to some, Thurrock had taken its part in what was a difficult period of austerity. He advised that whilst there were clearly challenges, there were also areas where people could be proud with how the Council had responded. Councillor Anderson congratulated the Council on the increasing breadth of shared services but in spite of this advised that he had heard from other council's that they sometimes found a degree of reluctance in engaging with

Thurrock. He asked the Leader if he could confirm that the Council continue to make efforts to engage positively with a wide range of local authorities to find the best partners to share services with, and, to confirm that the Council would not go for a fully shared management approach with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

The Leader acknowledged that Members agreed on ninety percent of issues in the Chamber and thanked Councillor Anderson for the way in which he and his Group had engaged in the budget setting process. With regard to the sharing of services, the Leader advised that the Council was now providing legal support to Brentwood Borough Council and that Westminster City Council were now buying some legal services from the Council in the area of property. The Leader informed Members that the Council would continue to talk to other authorities where it made sense to do so for both authorities. He informed Members that any sharing arrangement with other local authorities would be considered on a case by case basis.

- Councillor Johnson informed the Chamber that several building companies in the Borough were owed money by the Council for work they had done, in one case the amount reported was £250,000. He asked the Leader when payment would be made or an acknowledgement that made that the debt existed. Furthermore, he also requested clarification of the Leader's remarks in the local press about there being "winners and losers" and asked if his response suggested that the latest method of making savings was not to pay bills.

The Leader informed Members that there has not been any reluctance on the part of the Council to engage with any of these companies or acknowledge that there was a debt. It was reported that that this was a very complicated issue that had been further complicated by the fact that services were procured by Europa with the funding coming from the Council. Members were informed that the Council had an obligation to ensure that it received full value for money. With regard to the comment regarding "winners and losers", the Leader advised that the Council had discovered that, on occasion, it had been charged almost 50% more by some companies than others for identical work and that this needed to be addressed and could not go unchallenged. The Leader advised that he was hopeful that the outstanding cases would be resolved quickly and that he was confident that once the services currently undertaken by Europa had been bought back in house, things would run more smoothly.

- Councillor Gledhill noted that the Leader had said for the third year running, the Council had come in on budget. He outlined

that from the report and looking in the Council's budget book, there had been overspends, such as £3 million in Children's Social Care, £2.9 million in corporate growth and savings and £100,000 in Legal Services, and that other savings had been used to offset this. He asked if it was the case that, rather than coming in on budget, the Administration had kept spending money but not to the plans that had been set by the Council.

The Leader advised the Chamber that a budget envelope had been set at the start of the year and this had been monitored each month to identify pressures and take action to address those pressures, which meant viring funds from other areas of the authority and bringing forward new savings. He added that when this was done, the Council comes in on budget and when it was not done an overspend would result.

- Councillor Gaywood advised the Chamber that she had been give a leaflet by a resident of Stifford Clays from the Thurrock Conservatives which mentioned that pot holes were not being dealt with. She asked if the Leader could remind the Chamber what had been agreed in the budget with regard to pot holes.

The Leader informed Members that an extra £60,000 was agreed for dealing with pot holes. He added that the Council could get better value for money if that service was retendered or brought back in house. It was reported that the work to fill potholes had been procured through Europa but that this added an unnecessary level of bureaucracy between the authority and the pot hole and that this had to go.

- Councillor Barbara Rice offered her congratulations to the Leader for achieving £8m in reserves and a balanced budget for 3 years, whilst at the same time making savings that amounted to £62 million.

42. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

43. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

The Mayor informed Members that Councillor Charles Curtis had circulated a report prior to the start of the meeting to update the Council on his work with the Veolia North Thames Funding Trust.

Councillor Ojetola informed Members of his work with the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education and highlighted the importance of this body as there a diverse community in the Borough, which covered a wide range of religious groups. He advised Members

of the functions of SACRE and that they were required to publish an Annual Report, which he would arrange to be circulated to all Members by the end of the evening.

Councillor Little informed Members of her work with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, which included a discussion of the new charters for the protection of rural Britain, the consultation for the proposed Thames Crossing, the widening of the A13 in Thurrock and hospice building, including the proposal for Little Haven Hospice.

Councillor Purkiss informed Members that the Thurrock Thameside Nature Park in Mucking was going from strength to strength, with plenty of events being organised during the summer. It was reported that the Trust continued to contribute £25,000 a quarter for the upkeep and ongoing expansion of the park.

45. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

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

46. MOTIONS UPDATE REPORT

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

48. 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 Wendy Curtis and seconded by Councillor Cathy Kent.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Motion.

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

RESOLVED:

This Council calls upon Essex and Suffolk Water Company to provide a Water Ring Main to service the Buckles Lane, South Ockendon area. This is to ensure the appropriate water pressure is available to the Fire Service in the event of another fire.

Motion 2

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Barbara Rice and seconded by Councillor Hebb.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Motion.

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

RESOLVED:

Thurrock Council Welcomes the transfer of Public Health functions to this council and notes that, despite promises that funding would be at 2012/13 levels, the public health grant awarded for 2013/14 includes a funding cut of 12.7% - or £1.124m. The Council calls on the Department of Health to fully restore the level of Public Health Grant funding to £8.541m.

Motion 3

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Okunade.

A number of Members spoke in respect of the Motion and covered the following points:

- the Council would have to fund the project before submitting claims for funding to be returned if the work undertaken was successful.
- that any funding from the government could be returned over a number of years.
- the Council would not have to find additional funding but instead would be entitled to claim back up 40% if success could be demonstrated.
- that the scheme had been misunderstood by the proposer of the Motion.
- the scheme was about spending less money not more.
- £200 million was being offered nationally by the government for this.

Upon being put to the vote, 24 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 21 voted against, whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion to be carried.

RESOLVED:

Whilst welcoming the principles behind the Troubled Families Project, Thurrock Council feels that the project should have been fully funded.

Councils are expected to fund 60% of this project whilst facing year on year cuts to their operating budgets and to fund this initiative will mean that another service provided to our residents will have to be cut to fund this Government plan.

We ask that the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles MP, and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny Alexander MP, to ask that this important project is fully funded by the Government.

Motion 4

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Wootton and seconded by Councillor Revell. The Motion read:

“This council notes its grave concerns at recent failures in the refuse collection service, which residents of Thurrock pay for and reasonably expect to be delivered in a reliable and efficient manner.

The last significant change implemented by the previous administration provided savings of £2.1 million each year and worked extremely well. By contrast the changes implemented in June 2013 have led to six weeks of mass disruption to communities, and the costly attempts to resolve the situation have so far failed. This is totally unacceptable.

We call on the Leader to urgently review the processes used to manage the latest change, and to appoint a new Cabinet member for Environment with the skills and competencies necessary to lead a recovery of the situation.”

A number of Members spoke in respect of the Motion and covered the following points:

- postcards notifying residents of changes to collection days were not received by some residents or were incorrect in some cases
- whilst told to expect “teething problems” collections had been missed on an average of 100 roads each day and some Members were receiving a high volume of complaints from residents, not only from within their Ward but in some cases, from other parts of the Borough
- there had been no improvement in 8 weeks
- the backlog of collections was being dealt with through diverting other teams, using staff who would normally have been engaged in grass cutting and the use of Saturday working and Members queried the costs of this additional work
- the problems experienced were not restricted to isolated areas

- the process had been mismanaged and the Cabinet Member should be accountable for this
- the motion was unnecessary, unpleasant and personal and the last paragraph out to have been taken out
- the Motion was not a personal attack but the Cabinet Member had to be held to account
- brown bins in parts of Little Thurrock Blackshots had not been collected for 7 weeks
- the changes made to the collection service were not about cuts from government but by efficiency savings
- Members thanked offers for their responses in cases when there had been problems, including at weekends
- the last major change in collection took 12 weeks to work
- it was acknowledged that the changes had not gone as smoothly as the Cabinet Member would have liked
- staff had not been called away from grass cutting duties, as one Member had said
- the number of complaints for the previous week had reduced by 50% since the end of June
- the last major change in waste collection had seen the Council supported by consultants costing £800,000
- there was no complacency as the service was being reviewed and changes were being made and changing the team dealing with this would not be beneficial now
- the Leader of the Council had confidence in the team dealing with this and that if he didn't he would have made changes before now

Upon being put to the vote, 19 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 24 voted against and 2 abstained, whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion to be lost.

The meeting finished at 9.19 pm.

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**