

MINUTES of the meeting of Council held on 22 January 2014 at 7.00pm

Present: Councillors Wendy Curtis (Deputy Mayor), Phil Anderson, Lynn Carr, Mark Coxshall, Charles Curtis, Angie Gaywood, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill (until 8.32p.m.), Sue Gray, Yash Gupta, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Terry Hipsey, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent (until 8.44 p.m.), John Kent, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Suzanne MacPherson, Ben Maney, Val Morris-Cook, Tunde Ojetola (from 7.03pm), Bukky Okunade, Maureen Pearce, John Purkiss, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Michael Revell, Andrew Roast, Susan Shinnick, Andy Smith, Philip Smith, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Simon Wootton and Lynn Worrall.

Apologies: Tony Fish (Mayor), Clare Baldwin, Martin Healy, Wendy Herd, Barry Palmer, Barbara Rice and Gerard Rice.

Before the start of the Meeting, the Deputy Mayor advised all present that the Mayor was unable to attend the meeting due to illness and that she would therefore preside over the meeting.

In addition, the Chamber was advised that the meeting was being recorded and that the recording would be made available on the Council's website.

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

92. MINUTES

The minutes of the extraordinary Council meeting held on 4 November 2013 and the Council meeting held on 27 November 2013 were approved as a correct record.

93. ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

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

94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Wendy Curtis declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 6, Questions from Members of the Public, in that she was a member of the Mardyke Woods Project Advisory Group.

During the course of Item 15, Questions from Members, Councillor J. Kent declared a non-pecuniary interest, in that he held the position of Honorary Life Member of Grays Athletic Supporters Trust.

95. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor informed Members that she had no announcements to make and invited the Leader of the Council to make any announcements he wished to make.

The Leader advised the Chamber that he had no announcements to make at this time.

96. 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>.

97. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Deputy Mayor invited Councillor Redsell to address the Chamber, having made a request to do so prior to the start of the meeting.

Councillor Redsell informed Members that over 300 people had attended the funeral of Mr. Stan Franks and that a fly past had taken place. She thanked all those who had helped with the funeral and mentioned that contributions were still being received.

98. 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.

99. 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.

100. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES, STATUTORY AND OTHER PANELS

The Deputy 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 the Chamber that he would like the Council to appoint Councillor Shinnick as a substitute of the Housing

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to replace Councillor Charles Curtis.

The Leader further informed the Chamber that he would like the Council to appoint Councillor Gray as a substitute member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to fill the vacancy on the committee.

Both Councillor Anderson and Councillor Purkiss informed the Deputy Mayor that they did not wish to make any changes to the appointments previously made.

Members indicated their agreement to the nominations made.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Shinnick be appointed as a substitute member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to replace Councillor Charles Curtis.**
- 2. That Councillor Gray be appointed as a substitute member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

101. DEBATE OF A PETITION CONTAINING 1500 VERIFIED SIGNATURES

The Deputy Mayor informed the Chamber that a petition had been submitted to Development Management titled 'Save Corringham Greenbelt – we the undersigned object to any development on green belt land' and that as the petition had reached the threshold of 1,500 verified signatures, it had qualified to be debated by the Council.

Members were informed that the signatures had been checked and verified by Democratic Services using the electoral register.

The Deputy Mayor informed Members that the front cover of the petition had referred to the proposed development on green belt land to the North and South of Southend Road and east of Lampits Hill and reminded Members that they could not debate the individual planning applications that the petition related to as they were to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee, whereupon members of the public and ward councillors would have the opportunity to speak.

The Deputy Mayor invited Mr. Kabul Sandu, the Lead Petitioner to speak on the petition.

During his address to the Chamber, Mr Sandu requested that the Council advise, recommend and urge the Planning Committee to reject both applications in the Corringham greenbelt for the following reasons:

- That the land had been identified as green belt land and that the national framework policy stated that local authorities should avoid inappropriate building on green belt land.
- The site had not been identified in the Council's Core Strategy for development, however a number of brown field sites in the borough had been.
- The infrastructure would be unable to sustain more than a 20% increase in local population and overcrowding would affect the whole community, increase in traffic would have a negative impact on the boroughs highway network and local hospitals and doctors surgeries would experience an increase in pressure on their services which would lead to delays in waiting times.
- An increase in population in the area would worsen the parking in the local area and also impact on the current lack of emergency services in place, i.e. police station.
- Flooding in the area would be made worse by concreting over the greenbelt.

Members welcomed the opportunity to debate the petition and congratulated local residents for their efforts, noting that this was the first such petition to be debated by the Council.

A number of Members from all sides of the Chamber spoke and expressed their support for the petition, many of whom made reference to the aforementioned sites not being identified in the Council's Core Strategy for development.

It was acknowledged that although regulations provided some exceptions to allow for development in the green belt, some sites did not fall into the categories.

A Member expressed concern that the presentation provided and the consultation undertaken by the applicant was not thorough and that clear advice had not been provided to residents.

Members agreed that there was a necessity to increase the number of homes in the borough, in response to both the targets set by the Government and the creation of jobs in the area, but recognised the need to protect areas of green belt land in Thurrock.

It was felt that if development of the green belt was allowed this would affect regeneration of brown field sites that had been identified for development in the Borough.

Members felt that it should be made clear that Thurrock was open for business, provided that development was in line with the plans that had been agreed.

The Deputy Mayor, proposed that:

“The Petition be referred to the Planning Committee and be taken into consideration when the Planning Committee is called upon to determine the relevant planning applications and that the Council agrees to consider this in any future decision that relates to the Green Belt.”

This was duly seconded by Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Petition be referred to the Planning Committee and be taken into consideration when the Planning Committee is called upon to determine the relevant planning applications and that the Council agrees to consider this in any future decision that relates to the Green Belt.

102. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2014/15

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which requested Members set the Council Tax Base for 2014/15.

Councillor Gledhill drew Members’ attention to the increase in the number of homes that had been built in the Borough in the last year. He advised the Council that this indicated that Thurrock was “open for business” and open to development where appropriate.

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

RESOLVED:

That Council approve the following resolutions to set the Council Tax base for 2014/15:

- (a) that the report of the Head of Corporate Finance for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2014/15 be approved.**

- (b) that pursuant to the Head of Corporate Finance report and in accordance with the relevant regulations, the amount calculated by Thurrock Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2014/15 shall be 46,444.**

103. DETERMINATION OF THE COLLECTION FUND BALANCE 2013/14

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which requested Members agree the estimated balance on the Council Tax Collection Fund and to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to finalise the estimated balance on the Business Rates Collection Fund.

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

RESOLVED:

1.1 That the Council:

- (a) Determines the estimated 31 March 2014 balance of Thurrock Council's Council Tax Collection Fund to be a surplus of £1,343,104 (before distribution to major precepting authorities).**

- (b) Allocates the surplus to the three main precepting bodies in proportion to their precepts for 2013/14 as follows:**

1.1.1. Thurrock Council £1,133,556;

1.1.2. Essex Police Authority £142,602; and

1.1.3. Essex Fire Authority £66,947.

- 1.2 That the Council notes that there are still changes being made to the accounting treatment of business rates and delegates the S151 Officer to finalise the estimate for budget purposes.**

104. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS, POLLING PLACES AND POLLING STATIONS 2013/14

The Deputy Mayor introduced the report, which requested Members to consider and approve the recommendations of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive in relation to the Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 That the existing arrangements for Aveley and Uplands be confirmed.**
- 1.2 That the existing arrangements for Belhus Ward polling districts E1 and E2 be confirmed.**
- 1.3 That the existing arrangements for Belhus Ward, polling district F be confirmed with a requirement to source a new polling place for 2015.**
- 1.4 That Chestnut Farm on South Road be confirmed as the polling place for Polling District G in Belhus Ward.**
- 1.5 That, in the event that Chestnut Farm is not available, the Ockendon Guide and Scout Hall in Tamarisk Road be confirmed as the polling place for Polling District G in Belhus Ward.**
- 1.6 That the existing arrangements for Chadwell St Mary be confirmed.**
- 1.7 That the existing arrangements for Chafford and North Stifford, polling district L and N be confirmed.**
- 1.8 That Chafford Gorge Nature Centre be confirmed as the polling place for Chafford and North Stifford, polling district M.**
- 1.9 That the existing arrangements for Corringham and Fobbing, polling districts O and Q be confirmed.**
- 1.10 That the decision in respect of the location of the polling place for polling district P, Corringham and Fobbing, be delegated to the Returning Officer following consultation with Group Leaders.**
- 1.11 That the existing arrangements for East Tilbury be confirmed.**
- 1.12 That the existing arrangements for Grays Riverside be confirmed.**
- 1.13 That the existing arrangements for Grays Thurrock be confirmed.**

- 1.14 That the existing arrangements for Little Thurrock Blackshots be confirmed.**
- 1.15 That the existing arrangements for Little Thurrock Rectory be confirmed.**
- 1.16 That the existing arrangements for Ockendon be confirmed.**
- 1.17 That the existing arrangements for Orsett be confirmed.**
- 1.18 That the existing arrangements for South Chafford be confirmed.**
- 1.19 That the existing arrangements for Stanford East and Corringham Town be confirmed.**
- 1.20 That the existing arrangements for Stanford le Hope West be confirmed.**
- 1.21 That the existing arrangements for Stifford Clays be confirmed.**
- 1.22 That the existing arrangements for The Homesteads, polling district AV, AW be confirmed.**
- 1.23 That Gable Hall School be confirmed as the polling place for The Homesteads, polling district AX.**
- 1.24 That the existing arrangements for The Homesteads, AY be confirmed.**
- 1.25 That the existing arrangements for Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park, polling districts BA and AZ be confirmed.**
- 1.26 That the polling place for Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park, polling district BB be confirmed as the Sunshine Centre.**
- 1.27 That the existing arrangements for Tilbury St Chads be confirmed.**
- 1.28 That the existing arrangements for West Thurrock and South Stifford be confirmed.**

105. REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT

Members received a report from Councillor Holloway, Portfolio Holder for Environment, and were then invited to put questions.

The report of the Cabinet Member was set out on pages 89 to 94 of the Agenda. Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Wootton welcomed the report and was pleased that the decision was taken to rationalise the waste collection service in order to make cost savings. He asked the Cabinet Member for the project's budgeted contingency costs and for her to acknowledge that the implementation process was not as smooth as anticipated and to confirm whether the actual costs for the project were within budget.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that there was a contingency budget and that the total amount spent had been £150,100. Councillor Holloway advised that she was confident that the Waste Collection Service and Environment Department would meet their budget targets.

- Councillor Anderson informed Members that there had been cross party agreement over the previous two years regarding the development of low energy street lighting as a potential cost saving and which would also reduce carbon dioxide omissions and contribute to the environment and asked what progress had been made.

The Cabinet Member advised the Chamber that street lighting came under the remit of the Regeneration, Highways and Transportation portfolio and was therefore unable to respond.

- Councillor Gledhill expressed concern in relation to poorly parked vehicles that caused disruption to waste collection routes and questioned what the Council would be doing to find suitable alternative parking for residents.

The Cabinet Member advised that she would work closely with the Cabinet Member for Public Protection on these parking issues, whilst also looking at the wider issue of resident parking by speaking to residents.

- Councillor C. Curtis asked the Cabinet Member to provide examples of how her portfolio had been proactively involved in linking sport and leisure to health and wellbeing.

The Cabinet Member informed members that she had been working with Thurrock Coalition and Partners with a focus on disability sport in Thurrock since the Sports Disability Conference held in May. Members were informed that this helped to improve information regarding accessibility of sports and activities, such as netball, cricket, football, archery, lawn bowls and social events. Councillor Holloway took the opportunity to thank Councillor

Liddiard and all parties for their dedicated work to achieve this in Thurrock.

- Councillor Gaywood questioned what measures the Cabinet Member felt could be installed to reduce the amount of parked vehicles preventing bin collections in the borough.

The Cabinet Member informed Members that there had been a press release advising the public that if they continued to block roads and access, a leaflet would be left on their car windscreen and leaflets would also be distributed to local residents. It was noted that not only the waste collection service would benefit from clear roads, but also the emergency services and other large vehicles.

- Councillor Redsell recognised that waste collection dates were being adhered to, however she expressed concern that Cleaner and Greener Teams did not go into some garaged areas to clean up rubbish that had been dropped. Councillor Redsell asked if the Cabinet member could follow this up.

The Cabinet Member informed members that the level of street cleansing was excellent, however, she would highlight the concerns to officers.

- Councillor Revell asked the Cabinet Member to explain how and why the waste contract savings were achieved.

The Cabinet Member advised Members that last year, she had acknowledged that the previous administration had brought the waste contract back in-house due to poor performance. It was reported that there were no recommendations for measures of success for this contract, unlike the key performance indicators that were now in place to measure its success. Members were informed that the savings to date had been made under the current administration and were in excess of £6m. It was further reported that savings of over £300,000 had been achieved as a result of most recent changes rollout

- Councillor Ojetola informed Members that assurance had been given that the repairs to Grays Beach would be undertaken during off peak season and expressed concern that this had not be detailed in the report. He asked for an assurance that Grays Beach was up and running and also whether the site was expected to win any awards this year.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that Grays Beach had not been applied for any awards this year due to the fire and the need to increase its standards. The Cabinet Member advised Members that she believed that Grays Beach was a real gem for the

Borough and that she was sure that the Council would apply for and win Green Flag status in the future.

106. REPORT FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR CENTRAL SERVICES

Members received a report from Councillor Phil Smith, Portfolio Holder for Central Services, and were then invited to put questions.

The report of the Cabinet Member was set out on pages 95 to 112 of the Agenda. Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Anderson informed Members that there had been one internal audit report during the year on the housing capital programme for kitchens and bathrooms which had been given a red rating. The Cabinet Member was asked what issues were highlighted in the report, what the recommendations were and whether these had been followed up.

The Cabinet Member advised that the programme highlighted had been through the scrutiny processes and that it had been noted that some invoices received from a contractor were incorrect. It was reported that actions had subsequently been put in place to ensure that all invoices were checked and the correct amounts paid. Members were further informed that the contractor in question had been removed as a supplier.

- Councillor Gledhill expressed concern that last year, there were more complaints received in respect of Council Tax than all other authorities in Essex combined. He asked the Cabinet Member to outline what actions, if any, had been taken to learn from these complaints.

The Cabinet Member advised Members that he had the statistics in front of him and that the number of complaints received was less than the previous year. He again asked the Councillor to provide the figures he had quoted from, as these did not appear in the Council's books.

- Councillor Johnson recognised that Central Services provided essential support and performance monitoring to large areas of the Council, including the management of strategic partnerships, and it would therefore provide the main indicator for potential savings and how they could be implemented. Councillor Johnson expressed concern that the report only indicated some performance headlines and did not provide an overall picture of the Council's performance. Councillor Johnson made reference to the performance report presented at Cabinet on 8 January 2014, which stated 64% of Council's performance headlines were

reaching their targets, and questioned whether this was acceptable and asked what the Cabinet Member intended to do about this.

The Cabinet Member informed Members that monthly and quarterly performance reports were presented to Cabinet which showed an improvement in key performance. However, due to the key performance indicators being challenging to officers, they were not expected to reach 100%.

- Councillor Hebb informed Members that, since the Administration had taken control of the council, the number of staff on zero hour contracts had increased by nearly 300%, from 70 in 2010 to 190 in 2013. He asked if the Portfolio Holder could outline how this fit into his party's mantra that these types of contracts were terrible and should be banned, and, what their response to the performance in respect of zero hour contracts would be.

The Cabinet Member informed Members that 18 staff were on zero hour contracts and that the Leader of the Council had previously provided an answer to why some staff were on zero hour contracts.

- Prior to asking her question, Councillor Tolson provided Members with some background information in that in November 2012, there were two large fly tips in Stanford-Le-Hope and it had taken over a year for the Council to identify the two landowners. The Council were charged separate fees for each identification of landowner. Councillor Tolson asked whether it would be possible for the Council to load the data from the Land Registry onto its own system, rather than keep paying for it.

The Cabinet Member welcomed the suggestion and felt that this was something that the Council should be looking at, however, he was concerned that it may not be possible due to data protection issues.

107. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

108. REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Worrall informed the Chamber that the deadline for submitting nominations for the Civic Awards was approaching and that the judging would take place on the 13 February, with the Awards Ceremony being held on 21 February at the National Skills Academy.

Members were advised that attendance at the event would be free and asked those who wished to attend to contact the Communications Team.

Councillor Worrall took the opportunity to thank Intu Lakeside, the headline sponsor for the event, for their support.

109. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

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

110. MOTIONS UPDATE REPORT

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

111. MOTIONS

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

Motion 1

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

Councillor Hebb introduced his motion and advised Members that residents and businesses in Stanford-le-Hope had recently experienced significant flooding underneath the railway line in Wharf Road and that this had caused untold problems and a major level of disruption to business profitability, emergency service access, and the ability for people to commute to school and workplaces..

Councillor Tolson expressed concern that the area underneath the railway line in Wharf Road experienced regular flooding and that there was no contractor to service the pump whereby previously it had been routinely maintained. She was further concerned that the underpass was not lit and she suggested that Thurrock Council designate an officer to deal with these issues.

Councillor A. Smith informed Members that the Council had taken action and that a new monitoring system had been installed, however the clearing of ditches surrounding the area was the responsibility of Network Rail.

Councillor Hipsey spoke to second the Motion and in doing so, advised Members of the problems with the water pump and felt that the Council should urge the owners of the land to replace this.

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

RESOLVED:

Thurrock Council seeks to address the following concerns of residents and businesses in Stanford-le-Hope following their recent experience of significant flooding underneath the railway line in Wharf Road, and formally requests that DP World and Network Rail engage in a process to manage the following issues:

- 1. General accessibility and emergency plans to be looked at to minimise the isolation of residents and businesses, with particular regard to emergency services, school and workplace commutes etc.**
- 2. Free and direct access be re-established to the pumping plant for Thurrock Council to complete any required works as quickly as possible.**

Motion 2

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Halden and seconded by Councillor Tolson.

In speaking to the Motion, Councillor Halden expressed concern that a road or bridge connection with Canvey would bring no benefit to Thurrock and would be uneconomical especially when other areas of the highway network required development, such as the widening of the A13.

Councillor Tolson spoke to second the Motion. She informed the Chamber that it was important for Thurrock's highway network to remain congestion free to enable businesses to thrive and that the forthcoming changes to the A13 and the Manorway and the increase in port related traffic would in itself put significant pressure on Thurrock's Roads, in particular around Stanford-le-Hope and Corringham, and a link to Canvey would place further pressures on the network.

A number of Members spoke in support of the motion and, during the course of debate, raised the following points:

- concern regarding the potential increase in pollution and noise, together with the potential of further lorry movements in addition to those generated by the port.
- the Council must continue to protect residents from the impact of any new roads in the Borough, including the proposed link from Canvey

- a fear that the proposed link and Option C for an additional Thames crossing went hand in hand
- the proposed link may be of benefit if traffic went east and away from the Borough
- junctions that have been put in place have not been sized for the additional traffic that would be generated

The Deputy Mayor enquired whether Members wished to suspend the standing order governing the end of the meeting, in order to allow this to continue beyond 9.30 pm.

A Member queried whether this was possible within the final 15 minutes of the meeting, whereupon the Chief Executive clarified that standing orders could be suspended at any point up to 2 ½ hours after the start of the meeting.

At 9.25 pm, the Leader of the Council proposed that standing orders be suspended to allow the meeting to continue for an additional 15 minutes. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Morris-Cook.

Members indicated their agreement to the proposal.

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

RESOLVED:

Thurrock Council objects to any bid for a road/bridge connecting Canvey and East Thurrock, and pledges to use any appropriate resources to challenge this.

Motion 3

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

During debate, a number of Members spoke in support of the motion highlighting the excellent work of the Food Bank and the valuable role that it played, particularly for those in short term crisis. It was noted that many local churches were also involved in collecting food to distribute to those in need of help.

A Member informed the Chamber that they had tried to research the issue of £22 million being refused and advised that there were two views as to where this funding would come from, and, whether it was actually new funding. The Member concluded that the Government should be asked about their decision and to explain this.

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

RESOLVED:

In recognition of the wonderful support and much needed food provided by Thurrock Foodbank to our families and residents in need, particularly over the Christmas period, this Council resolves to write to the Thurrock Foodbank to thank and congratulate them.

Furthermore, Thurrock Council calls upon Government to reconsider its decision to refuse the £22 million European Union funding available to help with the costs of running UK food banks.

The meeting finished at 9.42pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

MAYOR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Victoria Freeman, telephone 01375 652205,
or alternatively e-mail VEFreeman@thurrock.gov.uk**