

MINUTES of the meeting of the Council held on 26 March 2014 at 7.00 pm.

Present: Councillors Tony Fish (Mayor), Wendy Curtis (Deputy Mayor), Phil Anderson, Clare Baldwin, Lynn Carr, Mark Coxshall, Charles Curtis, Angie Gaywood, Oliver Gerrish, Sue Gray, Yash Gupta, James Halden, Martin Healy, Shane Hebb, Terence Hipsey, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Suzanne MacPherson, Ben Maney (to 10.29pm), Val Morris-Cook, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Maureen Pearce, John Purkiss, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Michael Revell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice (from 7.53pm), Sue Shinnick, Andy Smith, Philip Smith, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Simon Wootton and Lynn Worrall.

Apologies: Councillors Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, Andrew Roast.

In attendance: Reverend Darren Barlow – Mayor’s Chaplain
Mr. M Mason – Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police
Mr. A Prophet – Chief Superintendent, Essex Police

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 informed all in attendance that he had agreed to a request to film the meeting from Your Thurrock.

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

The Mayor welcomed the Assistant Chief Constable of Essex and the Chief Superintendent who attended the meeting in order to present information relating to the Evolve Programme.

The Mayor also welcomed representatives of WADERS (Water Assisted Disabled Exercise & Rehabilitation Scheme) and Thurrock Ladies Rugby Club.

130 MINUTES

The Minutes of the Council meeting, held on 26 February 2014, were approved as a correct record.

131 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

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

132 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Gaywood declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 12, Education Commission, as she was both Chair of Governors at Arthur Bugler Infant School and Vice-Chair of Governors at Arthur Bugler Junior School.

133 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor informed the Chamber that since February, he had continued to attend Mayoral engagements and that by the end of March he would have attended in excess of 350 engagements.

The Mayor informed Members that he had attended the flag ceremony held outside the Civic Offices to mark the centenary of the Commonwealth and had the honour of reading out a message from the Queen.

The Mayor congratulated Thurrock Open Door on winning the High Sheriff's Cup at the High Sherriff's Award ceremony for services to the community.

The Mayor made two special presentations; the first was to Mr & Mrs Shamp for their dedication to WADERS (Water Assisted Disabled Exercise & Rehabilitation Scheme), and the second was presented to Mrs Diane Howells, who represented Thurrock Ladies Rugby Club.

134 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>

135 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 been given by one councillor that they wished to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Kelly addressed the Council and presented a petition on behalf of residents of Rectory Road and surrounding areas, which called for action over HGVs using Rectory Road and Towers Road as a waiting area to get into sites and putting measures in to stop them mounting the kerb.

136 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.

137 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.

It was confirmed by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Independent Group that no changes to appointments were to be made.

The Leader of the Opposition informed the Chamber that he wished to appoint Councillor Kelly as a substitute member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to replace Councillor Carr.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Kelly be appointed as a substitute member of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to replace Councillor Carr.

138 ESSEX POLICE - EVOLVE PROGRAM

The Mayor introduced the Assistant Chief Constable for Essex, Mr Maurice Mason, and Chief Superintendent Andy Prophet, who was responsible for the Evolve Programme. The Mayor explained to the Chamber that he had allocated 30 minutes for discussion of the item and that there would be an opportunity for Members to ask questions following the presentation.

The Assistant Chief Constable provided some background information to the programme and informed Members that:

- There was a drive towards more local policing and a Local Police Commander was based in Thurrock.
- Essex Police was required to make challenging savings, and that 80% of resources were in people, and that it was inevitable that savings would need to be made in this area.
- Essex Police were working hard to maximise savings in the remaining 20% of Essex Police business.
- He was committed to protecting front line policing and was keen to devolve more resources down to local district commander level.
- Thurrock was leading the way with co-location of licensing and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) which was very positive and the essence of what Essex Police aimed to achieve going forward.

- Essex Police were keen to share the location of offices.
- Essex Police aimed to increase the numbers of the Special Constabulary.
- Essex Police had a strong record of reporting crimes and were committed to recording crimes accurately, which was confirmed by the latest inspection of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC). The inspection outlined that Essex Police had strong compliance with standards.
- Instances of crime in Thurrock were going down against the backdrop of austerity and the falling numbers in officers and that:
 - Overall crime in Thurrock had decreased by 3.9%
 - Burglary in people's homes had decreased by 12.4%
 - Theft and Vehicle Crime had reduced by 15%
 - Robbery was down by 25%
 - Instances of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) had reduced by 5.1%

Chief Superintendent Prophet, who was leading on the Evolve programme, informed Members that:

- Essex Police had undertaken a comprehensive spending review, and that there was a combined challenge of £42 million and £36 million of savings to be made. This was as a result of a combination in the reduction of funding and growth pressures on the budget, which included inflation and pay increments.
- The Evolve Programme was more than just cuts and was about an ambition to transform the way Essex Police do business in order to save costs and improved the service. This included looking at the use of IT and buildings.
- Essex Police wanted to achieve local policing and local delivery, and it was felt that this is what the public expected.
- The Evolve Programme was expected to deliver against the Police and Crime Plan and be culpable on a national scale.
- The financial challenge had seen the reduction on staff, however it was felt that Essex Police was still a large and capable organisation which provided effective Policing with:
 - 3,200 Police Officers
 - Just under 300 PCSO's
 - 1600 Police Support Staff
- Partnership working and collaboration were important, and that this could not be achieved without the support of Thurrock Council. Essex Police and Thurrock had a proud history of working in collaboration which was demonstrated by the shared front office space.
- The Police needed to be accessible in new appropriate ways, for example in order to allow residents to report crimes online.

The Mayor invited questions from Members, and stated that for ease of reference questions would first be taken from Members, following which the Assistant Chief Constable would be given the opportunity to answer.

The following questions were raised by Members:

- Councillor Gaywood commended the Assistant Chief Constable and Chief Superintendent for their passion and commitment and was pleased that with reduced funding, crime in Thurrock was still going down. She asked the following questions:
 - How Thurrock Council and Essex Police could work together to increase visibility
 - How could Essex Police build confidence with residents and ensure that crimes were being reported.
- Councillor P. Smith asked whether Essex Police had witnessed a rise in the crimes reported by residents following the installation of fencing on the Manorway. He also informed the Chamber that he had concerns that it had not been clarified whether Corringham Police Station would reopen or remain closed. He added that the age profile of residents in Stanford-le-Hope was slightly higher than other areas, and felt that residents preferred face-to-face contact rather than online reporting systems.
- Councillor Revell made reference to the correlation between the reduction in budget and that crime was reportedly reducing, yet the Police precept was increasing year on year and questioned where this money was being spent.

The Mayor invited the Assistant Chief Constable to respond to questions received so far, to which Mr Mason replied that:

- Ultimately Essex Police would have fewer staff. However visibility could be improved by a single crew policy, the pledge to increase Special Constables and by communicating via social media.
- A focussed approach was required in order to target at risk areas, rather than a general approach which would not have greatest impact.
- Local authorities and Essex Police were genuinely working together under one roof, and not paying lip service.
- He was unsure of what the impact of the fencing had on the Manorway but stated that he would investigate this matter further. However, he advised that the numbers of crimes in Thurrock had been steadily decreasing.
- It was not effective to keep Corringham Police Station open as the numbers visiting the station to report crimes was low, however he recognised that this was an emotive issue and felt that other things could be done to provide the service.

- It was clarified that funding for Essex Police had reduced year on year, and that this funding was generated from two sources. The first was the Home Office Grant, which had reduced from £114 million in 2013/14 to £110 million and then £103 million, and the second was the local police precept.
- It was emphasised that Essex Police had a history of low police precept, and that Essex was the second lowest precepting force of the 43 forces across the country, and this was something that they were proud of.

The Mayor acknowledged that a number of Members wished to ask further questions and stated that these would be taken individually, following which the Assistant Chief Constable would have the opportunity to respond. Members raised the following questions:

- Councillor Worrall welcomed the news that crime figures were down, but observed that Hate Crime had increased by 28%. This equated to 300 incidents of hate crime, 81% of which were reportedly racially motivated. She informed the Chamber that she was concerned by this and that more should be done to tackle this type of crime.
- Councillor Redsell felt that PCSO's (Police Community Support Officers) should be given more powers, and asked whether there were any plans for this.
- Councillor Healy welcomed the information on detection rates but asked whether any restorative justice or community payback was being introduced.
- Councillor Anderson welcomed opportunities to work together, but asked whether the Police were specifically happy with using non-Police buildings for the purposes of community policing, and also if they sought to utilise appropriately trained non-Police staff to support the reporting of crime in order to retain a front line and visible service.
- Councillor Ojetola was pleased that Police Officers visited schools and colleagues but asked what was being done to address other issues such as the cruising problem in Thurrock.
- Councillor Wootton congratulated the Assistant Chief Constable and his colleagues for their good work and candid presentation. He referred to the performance target to reduce overall crime levels in Thurrock by 4.1% and asked whether the Police were confident that this trend would continue.
- Councillor J. Kent stated that the cut of £78 million was a significant figure, in the same way cuts had been felt across the Public Sector. He referred to the presentation, which outlined there had been cuts of 400 Police Officers and in excess of 150 PCSO's, and questioned how low could Essex Police go in reducing these numbers but still provide an efficient and safe services for residents.
- Councillor Hipsey congratulated the Police on their crime reduction figures, but noted that there had been instances of muggings,

stabblings and murders in the local press recently. He acknowledged that prior to the election, the topic of law and order would be at the forefront of people's minds, and asked what Essex Police were doing to defend their service and raise the profile of their good work. He was also of the opinion that Corringham Police Station be kept open and felt that it was unacceptable that this front line service should close to residents.

- Councillor B. Rice questioned what the police were doing to reduce the instances of Domestic Violence in Thurrock. She also raised the issue of motorbikes and quad bikes in Orsett Heath and was disappointed in the lack of attendance of local police officers at the community meetings that had been held.
- Councillor Gupta questioned why there had been an increase in hate crime whilst other types of crime had decreased.
- Councillor Morris-Cook questioned what the Police were doing to get the confidence of communities back, and what was being done to manage congestion in Thurrock when the Dartford Bridge was closed and there was traffic around Lakeside.
- Councillor Purkiss remarked that he wanted to see more consistent use of the Mobile Policing Unit and that it should be open during evening hours more convenient for working residents.
- Councillor Ray commended the Police on their presentation, but questioned why they had reportedly spent £350,000 on marketing materials for a consultation with residents at a time of challenging spending cuts.
- Councillor G. Rice indicated that he wanted more information on what was being done to provide more effective neighbourhood policing.
- Councillor C. Curtis commended the work of Detective Sergeant John Woodley and the recent sessions held with Thurrock school children on the importance of internet safety. He felt that services such as these should be protected and that it was important to educate and work with children.

In response the Assistant Chief Constable informed Members that:

- Hate Crime encompassed racism and crimes regarding sexuality and disability. The increase of Hate Crime was of concern to Essex Police and it was felt that it was an area that was usually under-reported. It was observed that nine specialist Hate Crime Police Officers had been employed to tackle these issues and that they thoroughly monitored incident records to ensure that crimes were reported correctly.
- Serious Sexual crime had increased, and that it was positive people were coming forward to report these crimes which often went under-reported.
- PCSO's should be granted more powers, however it was felt that they should not be given the same powers as police officers as this would take them away from front line duties and increase

paperwork. It was felt that PCSO powers should be extended to better equip PCSO's to respond to local issues.

- Essex Police had the sixth most improved force in the Country for detections. There was room for improvement but that there had been 2,000 more proactive arrests.
- Essex Police were keen to work together and share buildings and resources, and praised the example of the MASH for leading the way.
- They were committed to work with schools to focus upon two key areas:
 - To work with young people at risk of offending and to change their perception
 - To increase the use of restorative justice.
- They were doing everything possible to predict where crime was going to happen and work in high risk areas.
- Despite the budget deficit, they were keen to maintain officer numbers at over 3,000 and to have no fewer than 250 PCSO's, however they were keen not to focus on numbers and instead review service delivery.
- It was noted that serious violent crime had increased, however incidents were few as Thurrock did not have a large night-time economy.
- In relation to domestic abuse the police wanted to work more with partners and see specific domestic abuse teams created which could own the investigation and future safeguarding.
- It was recognised that traffic congestion caused by Dartford Bridge and Lakeside was a problem and that they wanted to work closer with the Highways Agency to resolve this.
- It was clarified that Essex Police did not spend £350,000 on a survey; however there may have been confusion as this could have been an activity undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner, which was completely separate and independent from Essex Police.
- There were real challenges that young people faced online in Thurrock, and that there had been an increase in crimes against girls aged between 13-16 years. It was reported that Thurrock was one of the highest Boroughs for these types of crime in Essex and officers were working hard to raise awareness of this issue in schools.
- A communications plan and messaging system was required for the mobile policing unit and that local community forums could be effective at communicating this information to residents.
- The precept debate was important, and it was recognised that there was room for improvement.

The Mayor thanked the Assistant Chief Constable and Chief Superintendent Prophet for their attendance at the meeting, their

presentation and the responses they had provided to the questions that had been posed.

The Assistant Chief Constable and the Chief Superintendent left the meeting.

139 PAY: ANNUAL PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014/15

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which set out the annual Pay Policy for 2014/15 in accordance with the Localism Act 2011.

Councillor Anderson informed Members that he felt that the increment scheme needed to be addressed as the pay bill was increasing. He expressed a view that staff should not automatically receive an increment and that instead, this should be linked to performance. He also remarked that in respect of the level of pay at Senior Management Level the comparative indicators should encompass a wider area.

Councillor Key welcomed the recommendation regarding increasing apprenticeship rates and was pleased at this meaningful step, which ensured that young employees received a better deal. He acknowledged that the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a strong focus on apprenticeships and that Members shared a common ground in this area, and recognised that this is where scrutiny undertook good work. He felt that the next focus should be on encouraging, rewarding and retaining graduates.

Councillor B. Rice praised the proposal to continue paying the UK Living Wage which was positive for the lowest paid members of staff.

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:

That the Council:

- 1. Approve the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15.**
- 2. Agree the implementation of a 1% cost of living increase for Single Status pay scales.**
- 3. Agree to continue paying the UK Living Wage as a supplement for Single Status employees.**
- 4. Agree to implement the increase in the UK Living Wage to £7.65 per hour.**

5. **Confirm no pay increase for senior officers in 2014/15.**
6. **Approve an increase in apprenticeship rates to the national minimum wage after 6 months of satisfactory performance.**

140 EDUCATION COMMISSION

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council and portfolio holder for Finance and Education, introduced the report which set out the action plan for the Education Commission and the resource required to support their recommendations over the next three years.

Councillor J. Kent reported that Thurrock Education Alliance met for the first time the previous evening, and that this forum highlighted the co-operation and collaboration between the local authority and schools. It was reported that the forum rigorously challenged under-performance and to increase ambition.

Members were informed of the purpose of the Thurrock Excellence Network, which was responsible for commissioning and delivery and was directly accountable to the Thurrock Education Alliance.

The Cabinet Member recommended that the £1 million resource should be utilised to support delivery and outlined that schools themselves were leading the way on driving forward progress.

Councillor Ojetola welcomed the work that had been undertaken, and stated that for too long performance at Primary School level had been low. He informed the Chamber that, under the current Leader of the Council, the education skills in primary schools were the lowest in the whole of Essex and one of the lowest in England and that this was wrong and not what was wanted.

Councillor B. Rice commended the Education Commission Action Plan and looked forward to working with local employers to ensure that the right skills were being developed in Thurrock schools.

Councillor Gaywood stated that the latest Ofsted report outlined that leadership was improving in Thurrock Schools and that performance was increasing. She reported that 6-7 years ago there were a significant number of vacancies in Thurrock Schools and felt that now there was strong leadership and governor support. She welcomed the establishment and ambitions of the Thurrock Education Alliance.

Councillor A. Smith indicated his support for the recommendations contained in the report.

The Cabinet Member summed up the debate and in doing so made the following comments:

- That Thurrock had not failed primary school pupils and that there was a strong ambition to ensure that every school in the Borough was rated at least 'good' or 'outstanding'.
- Since taking over the Administration significant improvements had been achieved in the past 4 years. It was reported that the number of primary schools that were 'good' or 'outstanding' in Thurrock had risen from 33% in 2010 to 60% and that 80% of secondary school pupils were now receiving good or outstanding education, as opposed to 50%. However he recognised that there still were improvements to make and whilst good progress had been achieved, he would not be satisfied until the figures reached 100% of schools being classed as good or outstanding.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

- 1. Note the action plan to date (as set out in the appendix).**
- 2. Agree the Thurrock Education Alliance membership and role, and notes that a shadow Education Alliance is established as soon as possible.**
- 3. Approve the allocation of the resource to support the Education Commission recommendations and agrees that accountability for its oversight is given to the Thurrock Education Alliance.**

141 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT

Councillor Worrall, the Cabinet Member for Communities, introduced the report, which set out the Annual Equality Report, the progress that had been achieved against the equality duty, and, which demonstrated how equality considerations had been mainstreamed into the work of all directorates.

The Cabinet Member highlighted the following key points:

- The successes of the Adult Social Care Peer Review, the Local Area Coordinators working across Thurrock, Early Offer of Help and the Next Top Boss event.
- The number of people taking up apprenticeships had risen.
- The Community Hub Programme had moved on at pace and the Chadwell St. Mary hub was expected to open in due course.

- 2013 had seen countless Community Engagement events, such as T-Fest, Black History Month, International Women's Day Celebrations and the Grays Street Festival.
- The service had faced many challenges as the grant from Central Government had decreased year on year.
- The Fairness in Thurrock Overview and Scrutiny Review highlighted that there was still disadvantage in Thurrock and it was recommended that a Fairness Commission be established in order to take this forward.
- Instances of Hate Crime and violence against women and girls had increased in Thurrock but that she was continuing to work closely with the Community Safety Partnership and SERRIC (South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre) and planned to hold Essex Police to account.

Councillor Little expressed some concern that older residents were at risk of being excluded as the Council increasingly moved to digital ways of working. She also called for the high rate phone number for residents to report Housing Repairs to be lowered or, for a call back service to be introduced in order to ease the cost burden for residents.

Councillor Anderson welcomed the overall positive report but was concerned about the issue of Hate Crime and the fact that Thurrock was one of the highest Boroughs in Essex for this type of crime. He felt that the Council should be committed to tackling this crime. He also noted that in a recent survey less than 50% of staff disclosed their sexuality and religion and believed that there was more work to do in this area to enable such information to be captured and recorded.

Councillor Gupta questioned what Thurrock was doing to reduce Hate Crime and what support was offered to victims.

Councillor B. Rice congratulated the Portfolio Holder on her report, and felt that this demonstrated how she had led the equality duty to be incorporated into all services and functions of the Council.

Councillor Worrall summed up her report and responded to the questions that had been posed, as follows:

- That colleagues in Housing would investigate issues highlighted in respect of both the high cost of the telephone number to report housing repairs and call back options.
- She reassured Members that the Council was not becoming paperless, and that paper forms and assistance were available in the community hubs.
- That not every staff member wished to disclose their sexuality and region and this was personal choice. It was reported that Thurrock statistics were not dissimilar to many other organisations.

- That she was saddened to report on the Hate Crime statistics but faced this challenge and worked alongside the police, schools and the community safety partnership to raise awareness of this issue.
- She informed Members that if anyone wished to become a Crime Ambassador they could discuss this outside of the meeting.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. **Note the matters identified in the Annual Equality Report presented to Council.**
2. **Agree that the report be published to meet the requirements of S.149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010.**

142 REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR REGENERATION, HIGHWAYS & TRANSPORTATION

Councillor A. Smith introduced the report and, in doing so, outlined the responsibilities of the key areas of the Portfolio and some of the successes, which included:

- the approval of the Local Development Order for London Gateway;
- Grays Learning Campus;
- the Grays Magistrates Court and Grays South developments which would revitalise Grays Town Centre;
- the £2 million investment in Lakeside; and
- the Purfleet Regeneration Programme.

Councillor Revell raised a point of order and questioned the lack of financial information included in the report. He felt that accurate accounts should be provided in order to demonstrate how resident's money was spent in order to provide the highest level of accountability.

Following a brief debate as to whether the financial implications within the report complied with the motion agreed at Council on 23 January 2013, the Chief Executive confirmed that the report complied with the Council's Constitution but not the motion that had been agreed.

The Cabinet Member informed the Chamber that he was confident that the service would be under budget and reassured Members that he would circulate the financial information following the meeting.

Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Anderson expressed concern about the significant build up of traffic on the A13 and asked what steps were being undertaken to resolve the issue and when works were likely to start.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that this was a priority and that funding would be provided by the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership).

- Councillor Gerrish commended the work that had been achieved but relayed the concern of residents in West Thurrock in respect of transport. He recalled plans to develop a new train station in West Thurrock and asked the Cabinet Member to provide an update on this.

The Cabinet Member informed the Chamber that this should be reviewed and that he wanted to start a campaign for a new train station to be built in West Thurrock.

- Councillor Gaywood welcomed the grass verge reinforcement that had been undertaken in her ward and welcomed the road re-surfacing works that had been taking place across the Borough. She called for further Grays Town Centre regeneration to include the State Cinema, which she wanted to see open again for residents. Although she recognised that Council funding was not available she thought external funding opportunities to develop the State Cinema should be pursued.

Councillor A. Smith confirmed that he was examining all options for funding for the State Cinema.

- Councillor MacPherson questioned why the authority had paid £550 per day for a Highways Consultant which equated to £60,000 for a 6 month contract.

The Cabinet Member confirmed that the particular member of staff had undertaken a lot of good work, and that he had saved the authority a significant amount of money since he had been employed through the development of new initiatives.

- Councillor B. Rice commended the Cabinet Member for his work on leading the six large regeneration schemes across the Borough, but requested that the service continue to protect green spaces and greenbelt land.

In response the Cabinet Member stated that he was determined to keep local greenbelt and that the clear core strategy had enabled the service to refuse large planning developments.

- Councillor Tolson remarked that potholes in her ward had taken 8 weeks to fill and was concerned for the safety of cyclists and residents who could be injured whilst the potholes were on the repairs waiting list.

The Cabinet Member assured her that pot holes were a priority, however all could not be filled immediately and that there was a prioritised works list.

- Councillor Purkiss welcomed the fact that work had been undertaken to find alternative solutions to the level crossing problems in Thurrock, and observed that the level crossing in East Tilbury was a problem. He also remarked that white lines and zebra crossings were in poor condition, and felt that red tarmac should not be used on highways.

Councillor A. Smith assured Members that he was working to provide a solution to level crossings in Thurrock and that white and yellow lines were being repainted. He noted that the use of red tarmac should be avoided in future.

At 9.22pm, the Mayor proposed that Council Procedure Rule 11.1 be suspended to allow the meeting to continue beyond the 2 ½ hour time limit and enable the business on the Agenda to be completed.

Members indicated their agreement to the proposal.

143 REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND EDUCATION

Members received a report from Councillor J. Kent, Cabinet Member for Finance and Education. The report covered the Education aspect of his portfolio and Members were then invited to put questions.

Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Ojetola noted the positive work that had been done but felt that Primary School education and attainment was underperforming in comparison to Secondary Schools in Thurrock. He commented that the previous portfolio holder had been removed from their post for not delivering and enquired whether the Councillor Kent would remove himself for the same reason.

In response, the Cabinet Member emphasised that the school improvement journey had started when the previous administration had been removed and that over the past 4 years significant improvements had been achieved.

- Councillor Anderson remarked that finance implications were not contained within the report.

The Cabinet Member explained that an update on the financial position had been provided within his verbal introduction.

- Councillor Johnson recognised Primary Schools were improving, but felt that children were still equipped when they entered Secondary School education.

The Cabinet Member reiterated that the number of primary schools that were 'good' or 'outstanding' in Thurrock had risen from 33% in 2010 to 60% currently. However, he recognised that there still were improvements to make and that there was a strong ambition to improve results further. He felt that the success of Primary Schools should be celebrated, and the good work that had been achieved so far recognised. He was keen that Members support Primary Schools in their improvement journey.

- Councillor MacPherson asked when the new Pupil Referral Unit facility in Tilbury would be ready.

The Cabinet Member remarked that he had recently visited the Pupil Referral Unit and met with the new head teacher and was impressed with the improvement that had been made in a short amount of time. He assured Members that everything would be done to expedite the delivery of the new premises.

Councillor Gerrish raised a point of order in respect of the earlier comments made by Councillor Ojetola, in that it had been inferred that Councillor Gerrish had been removed from the post of Cabinet Member for Education. He informed the Chamber that this had not been the case and requested an apology and retraction from Councillor Ojetola.

Councillor Ojetola informed the Mayor that he did not wish to retract his earlier comments in this regard and neither did he wish to offer an apology to Councillor Gerrish.

In the course of summing up, the Leader of the Council highlighted the improvements that had been achieved in Education whilst Councillor Gerrish had held the portfolio and clarified that Councillor Gerrish had not been removed from this post but had instead stepped down when he had started a new job.

144 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

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

145 REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor G. Rice announced that at the meeting of the last Flood Defence Committee for the Anglian Region a 2.7% increase in contributions had been agreed. This would result in an additional £3,000 a year being paid but secured £450,000 to upgrade the Tilbury Barrier which protected the Port of Tilbury and the 12,000 residents of Tilbury.

Councillor Ojetola provided an update on the work of the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) and explained that the meeting had been inquorate for a significant period of time. He felt that SACRE would improve awareness and assist in the reduction of hate crime levels and encouraged members to liaise with schools to endorse the good work of SACRE and promote increased attendance.

The Mayor informed Members that Councillor C. Kent had submitted two written reports that had been circulated at the meeting, to update Members on the Coalhouse Fort Project and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

146 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES

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

147 MOTIONS UPDATE REPORT

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

148 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 Hipsey and seconded by Councillor Charles Curtis.

Councillor Hipsey introduced the motion and in doing so, condemned the acts of indecent exposure where individuals used the public highway to relieve themselves. He felt that this was becoming a regular occurrence along major roads in Thurrock and urged Essex Police to take action regarding this behaviour.

Members unanimously supported the motion, and during the course of the debate the following points were raised:

- It was felt that this behaviour was a particular problem with lorry drivers, who were prevented from accessing car parks and appropriate facilities at night.
- That the effects of this unseemly behaviour caused problems for residents who may walk their children to school past these sites.
- That this was a particular problem along the A128 and A13 and that this was a public health issue.
- It was acknowledged that this behaviour was difficult to control, and that with Essex Police facing spending cuts, it was felt more could be achieved in partnership working to maximise the resources available. The Portfolio Holder for Public Protection stated that she would see if Council Officers could assist in tackling the problem and issue Fixed Penalty Notices.
- Councillor Purkiss questioned whether a by-law could be introduced.

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

RESOLVED:

This elected chamber condemns the acts of indecent exposure where individuals are using the public highway to relieve themselves, which is starting become a regular occurrence seen along major trunk routes within Thurrock's boundary. Council also request the urgent assistance of Essex Police to attempt to clamp down on this ignorant disgusting behaviour.

Motion 2:

The motion, as printed on the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Anderson and seconded by Councillor Revell.

Councillor Anderson introduced the motion, as set out below:

“This council affirms its decision of 28th November 2012 not to pursue Joint Management between Thurrock Council and the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, and commits not to make any further shared management arrangements between the two authorities.”

Councillor Anderson informed the Chamber that, increasingly, services were becoming shared but that this information was not effectively communicated to Members as to which teams and officers were working between the two authorities.

Members were informed that, despite the clear decision of Council, a steady drift towards a management merger could be seen, with more officers spending more of their time in East London.

Councillor Anderson reiterated that he was against a management merger with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. In addition, he advised Members that this would also pull Thurrock away from its key partners in Essex, the Thames Gateway and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, which would make it more difficult for the Council to influence crucial decisions around investments, transport, skills training and job creation.

Councillor Anderson informed Members that he was concerned that a shared senior management would lose their focus on Thurrock, during a crucial period of change and transformation, and, that it was unworkable for political governance as the two authorities differed in nature and would most likely see a permanent Labour majority on any joint committees. It was remarked that shared services posed a risk to Thurrock's improvement journey although it was recognised that sharing services could save the Council money and improve services.

Councillor Anderson queried what the Council's vision was for the future and advised the Chamber that he wanted Thurrock to be the dynamic heart of the Thames Gateway, proud of its Essex identity and working closely with partners in South Essex to deliver efficiency and growth. He informed Members that this vision was incompatible with Thurrock increasingly looking towards London and becoming the next London Borough in all but name.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Revell.

Councillor J. Kent informed Members that the reality was that Thurrock faced in excess of £30 million in spending cuts and that sharing services saved the authority money and added capacity. He further informed Members that over £1 million had been saved to date through sharing services, with £0.5m coming from the arrangements with Barking and Dagenham alone.

Councillor Kent advised Members that there appeared to be a change of opinion from the Conservative Group, as they had previously supported the decision to share the Head of Legal Services with Barking and Dagenham, and, that he had consulted the Leader of the Opposition in respect of the decision to share Chief Executive, who felt this to be a good idea.

Councillor Kent outlined that to date the Assistant Chief Executive, Head of Policy and Director of the Environment were the only shared posts across the Senior Management Team. He informed the Chamber that a full management merger had never been on the agenda, and, as far as he was concerned, would not be.

Councillor Kent noted the resolution that had been agreed in November 2012 and that there had been agreement to continue to look for opportunities to share services or management with whoever

is most appropriate. He commented that this was very sensible but that what the motion sought to do was to rule out one possible partner and he did not know why the Council would do that.

Furthermore, Councillor Kent highlighted the recruitment and retention of senior management under the previous administration.

During the course of debate, the following points were raised:

- Councillor B. Rice observed that there was no plans for a full management merger and detailed that her service area worked in partnership with four other Clinical Commissioning Groups and joint teams with the North East London Foundation Trust.
- Councillor A. Smith confirmed that there would not be a full management merger with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
- Councillor G. Rice stated that the Council shared services with other authorities, aside from Barking and Dagenham, and proceeded to list the following shared arrangements:
 - Essex County Council (9 services)
 - Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (9 services)
 - Chelmsford Borough Council (1 service)
 - Brentwood Borough Council (1 service)
 - Havering Borough Council (2 services)
 - Birmingham City Council (shared illegal money laundering team).
 - North Kent authorities, such as Medway, Dartford, Gravesham and Swale.
- Councillor Revell remarked that Barking and Dagenham was a very different Borough to Thurrock with different demographics. He informed the Chamber that the officer dealing with the homeless was now being shared with Barking and Dagenham and that whilst he had no objection to that, he pointed out that the number of homeless people in Thurrock was very small, whereas the number in Barking was much greater so he did not know what the sharing would be in this.
- Councillor Ray expressed some concern in respect of a comment made by Councillor G Rice in respect of his party and a racist connotation. He continued to advise the Chamber that we was opposed to the motion and supported the action taken by the Leader of the Council in respect of sharing services to save money.

In the course of his summing up, Councillor Anderson advised Members that he had heard very little objection to shared services on either side of the chamber, but that the idea of moving to a joint management structure with Barking and Dagenham could significantly jeopardise the Council's shared services arrangements.

Members were informed that information provided by the Council, in response to a Freedom of Information request, made it clear that 80% of what the Council did by value was with Barking and Dagenham. He expressed concern that the Council would be putting most of its eggs in one basket.

Councillor Anderson informed Members that his group had shown the maturity to vote for specific arrangements where these were felt to be in the interests of Thurrock. He also felt that plans for shared services and joint management should be shared at full Council to keep Members fully informed of any developments.

Councillor Coxshall requested that a recorded vote be undertaken on the motion.

The Mayor informed that Chamber that five Members needed to indicate their support in order for a recorded vote to be undertaken, following which Councillors Ojetola, Johnson, Coxshall, Wootton, Redsell and J. Kent registered their agreement.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the motion as printed in the agenda. The result of the vote was:

For: Councillors Phil Anderson, Lynn Carr, Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Charlie Key, Susan Little, Suzanne MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Barry Palmer, Maureen Pearce, John Purkiss, Joycelyn Redsell, Michael Revell, Pauline Tolson and Simon Wootton. **(19)**

Against: Councillors Clare Baldwin, Charles Curtis, Wendy Curtis, Tony Fish, Angie Gaywood, Oliver Gerrish, Sue Gray, Yash Gupta, Martin Healy, Terry Hipsey, Victoria Holloway, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Steve Liddiard, Val Morris-Cook, Bukky Okunade, Robert Ray, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Shinnick, Andy Smith, Phil Smith, Richard Speight, Michael Stone and Lynn Worrall. **(25)**

Abstained: None **(0)**

The Mayor declared the motion was lost.

Councillor Maney left the Chamber at 10.29 pm.

Motion 3:

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

During the course of his introduction, Councillor Ojetola commended local businesses on their achievements in tough times, commented on the attendance of other Members at the Awards and advised that he had been proud to represent Chafford Hundred at the Awards.

Councillor A Smith informed Members that he had been proud to give out two awards and whilst he agreed with the motion, he considered the sentiments of this to be wrong.

Councillor J Kent informed Members that it was interesting that Councillor Ojetola had acknowledged the tough times that had been experienced by local businesses. He outlined what the Council had done in the past 4 years to support businesses and noted that this had been more than the Council had ever done. Councillor Kent remarked that whilst he was unable to attend the Awards, he had not actually been invited to the event and that, at £75 per ticket the event may have been beyond most Members.

Councillor Johnson informed the Chamber that he supported the motion and thought that this showed Thurrock was open for business. He also commended Central Government initiatives to support businesses, particularly in relation to start up loans.

Councillor Ojetola commended the work of local businesses and reported the good work of a Chafford Hundred resident who had won Business Woman of the Year, Sainsbury's for winning the community award and the fact that Chafford Gorges Visitor Centre and Nature Park had been nominated for three awards.

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

RESOLVED:

The Thurrock Business Awards on Friday 14 March was a unique occasion in Thurrock as numerous businesses were commended for their resilience for surviving the difficulties in the economy.

This Council hereby delightfully congratulates all businesses on their achievements whether they won or were finalists.

Motion 4:

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

Councillor Anderson paid tribute to Councillor Revell for his hard work, wisdom and experience, and in particular for his passion for Looked After Children, and, his achievements with the waste and recycling contract.

He also recognised the work of Councillor Herd for her contributions towards Health and Adult Social Care.

Councillor J. Kent paid tribute to the work of Councillor Revell and commended the work of Councillor Healy who was an advocate for small businesses in the community.

Councillors Little, Halden and Redsell also paid tribute to Councillor Revell for his hard work and dedication.

Councillor Revell responded to the tributes that had been paid.

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 would like to put on record its thanks to those Members who are standing down at the 2014 local elections for their service to Thurrock during their time in office.

The meeting finished at 22:55pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

MAYOR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Stephanie Young, telephone (01375) 652831,
or alternatively e-mail syoung@thurrock.gov.uk.**