

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 December 2015 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-in is Friday 18 December 2015 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors John Kent (Chair), Barbara Rice (Vice-Chair), Oliver Gerrish, Victoria Holloway, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Gerard Rice, Richard Speight and Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services
Roger Harris, Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning
Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance
Matthew Essex, Head of Regeneration
Andrew Millard, Head of Planning & Growth
Ann Osola, Head of Highways
Richard Parkin, Head of Housing and Interim Head of Environment
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications
Stephen Taylor, Programmes and Projects Manager
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer
Daniel Toohey, Principal Solicitor - Contracts & Procurement
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer
Stephanie Cox, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

76. Apologies

The Leader of the Council advised that the Chief Executive, Lyn Carpenter, was unable to attend the meeting as she was conducting a Peer Review.

77. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 11 November 2015, were approved as a correct record.

78. Items of Urgent Business

The Leader of the Council advised that one item of urgent business had been received in relation to the Fobbing Bus Service. The report was circulated to Members and published online prior to the meeting where the report was tabled.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the report would be taken after Item 6, Briefings on Policy and Other Issues.

79. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 16, 'Thameside Complex Stage 2 Report', as she was a member of TRUST which occupied offices within the Thameside Complex.

80. Statements by the Leader

There were no statements made by the Leader.

81. Mid-Year Corporate Progress and Performance Report 2015/16

Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which combined the performance against the corporate scorecard with progress against the related deliverables as outlined in the Corporate Priority Activity Plan 2015/16. Members were informed that at the mid-year point, 82% of these indicators were either meeting or within an acceptable tolerance of their target and 96% of deliverables were progressing in line with projected timelines or within tolerance.

Councillor B. Rice advised that the Adult Social Care service now had a full team of Local Area Coordinators, which provided added value across the entire Public Sector, and reported that they had been shortlisted for the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) 'Team of the Year.'

Councillor B. Rice further reported other achievements of the service which included the introduction of 'Quickheart' and the Well Homes Initiative that had provided health checks and advice to over 560 homes.

Councillor Okunade thanked the Portfolio Holder for a comprehensive report and highlighted that through dedicated Engagement Coordinators positive work had started with care leavers to get them into education, employment or training, and that she was confident this would yield good outcomes in future.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Cabinet comments on and notes the performance at this mid-year stage and identifies, where necessary, any further areas of concern on which to focus action.**
- 2. That Cabinet recommends the report to Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee.**

82. Fobbing Bus Service (Decision: 01104338)

Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, introduced the report which was a response to the motion unanimously agreed at Full Council on 25 November 2015, which read as follows:

“That we ask Cabinet, at its next meeting, to immediately fund an alteration to the bus route to serve Fobbing over the winter months.”

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member highlighted the following key points:

- That the available budget to deliver subsidised bus services was now at zero due to the challenging financial cuts imposed on local government.
- That he had met with residents and consultations undertaken online and with Overview and Scrutiny, following which he did not believe it possible to provide no such services.
- That a revised number 11 bus service serving Horndon-on-the-Hill and Fobbing, would deliver some savings going forward.
- That depending on the success of tendering process and the Car Parking Services plan the bus service could be supported in the interim by utilising income that had been generated.

Councillor J. Kent asked the Cabinet Member which of the two routes was preferable among local residents as he noted that Cabinet had to choose between either the westbound route, running from Corringham, Fobbing and Basildon (Option A) or the eastbound route running between Fobbing, Corringham, Stanford-le-Hope, Grays and Lakeside (Option B).

In response the Cabinet Member explained that, following discussions with residents and local Ward Councillors, Option A was identified as the preferred solution to enable residents to access Basildon Hospital and shopping facilities.

Councillor G. Rice welcomed the news that the local bus service could be supported in the interim to enable elderly and vulnerable residents to access the hospital and shopping.

Councillor J. Kent expressed his disappointment at the increasingly inaccurate reporting by some sections of the local media that the 374 bus service would be re-routed through Fobbing, which he explained was never an option.

Councillor J. Kent further observed that Councillor Stewart’s motion was well-timed and thanked officers and members on their work to reinstate the bus service. He explained that Local Councillors had lobbied hard on behalf of residents and now called upon residents to use the service as the Council needed evidence that the service was well-utilised in order to make a case to fund services in future.

Councillor J. Kent reported that this case was very much an exception and that going forward it would not be possible to take such ad-hoc decisions.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations, which included Option A, whereupon the Chair declared these to be carried.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Agrees to fund bus service route 14, for three days a week over the Christmas season and New Year, from 15th December to 31st March 2016, and indicates a preference for the service to be run in accordance with:**

Option A: Westbound between Corringham, Fobbing and Basildon costing £10,000

- 2. Agrees to investigate provision of a bus service for Fobbing and Horndon on the Hill from April 2016.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

83. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

84. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions were submitted.

85. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader of the Council informed Members that one matter had been referred to the Cabinet by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee, in relation to 'Call-In to Cabinet Decision 01104415 – Housing Estate Regeneration'.

85.1 Call-In to Cabinet Decision 01104415 - Housing Estate Regeneration

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, briefly set out the background to the call-in that Councillors Ojetola, Coxshall and Halden made to a Cabinet decision regarding Housing Estate Regeneration of the Seabrooke Rise Estate in Grays.

The report set out the discussion the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee made at the meeting held on the 30 November 2015, which considered the call-in.

Councillor Worrall advised that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had debated the matter at length and resolved that the original Cabinet decision was sound.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet note that the call-in was rejected.

86. Shaping the Council and Budget Update (Decision: 01104428)

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report which set out budget pressures in 2015/16 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) with a need to meet an estimated budget gap of over £28.8 million for the four years between 2016/17 and 2019/20.

In introducing the report the Leader of the Council made the following key observations:

- That the Serco contract had now been successfully transferred back to the Council and welcomed back all the staff affected.
- That £3 million would now be brought back to the Council through the transfer of the Serco contract, although there were issues surrounding Pensions that would not be fully understood until March 2016.
- That there were a number of key issues following the publication of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review, which included that the Council would now have the power to raise an additional 2% through Council Tax to fund Adult Social Care, though it was not clear how this impacted upon the Council Tax referendum limit which was expected to be announced before Christmas.

Councillor B. Rice informed Members that the Adult Social Care Service were currently requesting two growth bids; £1 million to meet the cost of the minimum wage within care provider contracts and £1 million to meet demand growth.

Councillor B. Rice further reported that she had issued a Joint Statement with The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) along with the NHS Confederation, the care Provider Alliance, and the Care and Support Alliance, calling for 'urgent' talks with Treasury and other Whitehall Departments in the face of a mounting crisis in the care of older and disabled people. She felt that the sector was being squeezed too hard and that the most vulnerable people would suffer and questioned what had happened to the £6 billion which had been earmarked for the full implementation of the Care Act.

Councillor G. Rice reported that he had attended a meeting of the Essex Crime Panel where the Police and Crime Commissioner had confirmed that Tilbury and Ockendon Police Stations would close, with the Corringham Police Station sold off, and that he could not provide assurances that there would not be a further reduction of Police Staff with the increasing cuts.

Councillor J. Kent highlighted that the present Police cuts were just in response to the current spending round, and the Chancellor was expected to announce further cuts during the next spending review, and therefore it was increasingly likely that Essex Police would increase the police precept by 2%.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Cabinet note that the 2015/16 operational budget pressures have been mitigated, subject to no further pressures over the winter, but that the Serco pension liability remains;**
- 2. That Cabinet receive a report in January outlining actions for the Serco pension liability and sets out the proposed 2016/17 budget for consideration by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny;**
- 3. That Cabinet note the headlines from the Comprehensive Spending Review and receive further updates as detail is released; and**
- 4. That Cabinet note the potential impact on service budgets should the deficit forecasts be allocated on a pro rata basis.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

87. Local Council Tax Scheme 2016/17 (Decision: 01104429)

Councillor V. Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which detailed the design of the Local Council Tax Scheme for 2016/17 and the results of the public consultation.

The Cabinet Member advised Members that it was proposed to continue with the existing discount scheme for a further year, with the only change in line with new Welfare Reform legislation that set the maximum claim period at 4 weeks.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the LCTS scheme for Thurrock Council is maintained with the inclusion of a reduction in the period an award can be backdated to four weeks. This reduction is in line with welfare reform legislation changes to Housing Benefit from 1 April 2016. The 2016/17 Scheme will now contain the following elements:**
 - The first £25 per week of earned income will be disregarded when calculating levels of council tax support.**
 - The maximum capital limit is to be set at £6,000. This means anyone who has savings over £6,000 may not receive support with their council tax.**

- **For working age claimants, the maximum support that will be allowed will be 75% of their full council tax bill.**
- **Child benefit and child maintenance received will not be included as income in the calculation of council tax support.**
- **The maximum period a claim for LCTS can be backdated when a customer provides good cause for not claiming earlier is four weeks.**
- **There is a full disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

88. Borrowing And Investment Performance And Policy 2015/16 Mid-Year Report (Decision 01104430)

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report which reviewed the borrowing and investment activity and reported on the forecast outturn position for 2015/16.

Members were advised that good use was being made of the minimum revenue provision and investments which had delivered £4 million of savings to the Thurrock taxpayer.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the results of Treasury Management activities undertaken in the first half of 2015/16.

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

89. 2015/16 Capital Monitoring Report (Decision 01104431)

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report which detailed a number of additional projects to the 2015/16 Capital Programme, along with the associated funding, and provided an update on the current position of the school capital programme in order to set out the latest forecasted outturn position.

Councillor G. Rice remarked that Thurrock had kept its Street Lighting switched on due to well managed budgets and projects, whereas across Essex other local authorities had switched their street lights off much to the disappointment of residents.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet agrees:

- 1. To note that the General Fund capital programme is projected to have unused resources of £20.766m as at 31 March 2016. This funding will be carried forward to 2016/17 to fund schemes currently under development.**
- 2. To note the progress on the schools capital programme including the use of temporary accommodation and the remodelling of school accommodation to meet the increase in demand for pupil places from January 2016.**
- 3. To approve the virements within the Children's service, totalling £0.2m, which will realign project budgets with projected costs;**
- 4. To note that the Housing Revenue Account capital programme is projected to have no unused resources in 2015/16.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

90. Thurrock Local Plan: Monitoring, Timescales and Engagement Strategy (Decision 01104432)

Councillor Speight, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, introduced the report which detailed a number of changes to the Local Plan monitoring and sought approval for a revised Local Plan timetable.

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member emphasised that it was important to engage with local residents and business in order to shape the Local Plan as the document would determine Thurrock's geography and policy, and therefore the Council's ability to determine planning applications.

Councillor G. Rice welcomed the report and the proposed timetable, which he felt was important as otherwise there would be little way forward for the authority to defend greenbelt land when determining planning applications.

Councillor J. Kent remarked that not having a secure Local Plan would leave Thurrock open to speculative planning applications being submitted by developers.

Councillor Gerrish felt that this was an essential process to undertake with the local community so that issues important to residents could be lobbied on.

Councillor Worrall felt that Thurrock engaged well with the local community and cited a recent example where residents in Tilbury wanted information

online regarding the development of the Civic Square which had been swiftly acted upon by officers.

Councillor B. Rice remarked that it was important residents were consulted in order to advise on the difference between different types of land, such as brownfield and greenbelt, so that residents could make an informed judgement to shape the Borough.

Councillor Speight summed up the report, and in doing so, stated that the community and council needed to drive the way in developing a robust local plan for the Borough and for residents to understand the system so planning applications could be determined in line with resident's priorities.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the revised timetable set out in the Local Development Scheme – December 2015.**
- 2. Grant delegated authority to the Head of Planning and Growth in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Planning and Transportation to amend the Local Development Scheme if required.**
- 3. Endorse Phase 1 of the Local Plan Engagement Strategy.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

91. Implications of the Housing & Planning Bill and Welfare Reform Bill 2015 on HRA Services and Affordable Housing Programme (Decision 01104433)

Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report which presented the financial implications of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan due to recent budget announcements and key policy changes through the government's introduction of the Housing and Planning Bill and Welfare Reform Bill 2015.

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member highlighted the following key points:

- That Thurrock had been working hard to secure good, affordable homes for local people and she was committed to the continuation of the Transforming Homes Programme.
- That the imposed 1% rent reduction would result in a £14.6 shortfall over the 4 year period from 2016/17 to 2019/20 and a £218 million shortfall over a 30 year period.

- That she was concerned with the introduction of a £30,000 income cap which would require households with a combined income of over £30,000 a year to pay full market rents in order to subsidise affordable housing elsewhere in the Country.
- That she would provide an update to Full Council in January 2016 regarding the application to the Secretary of State for an exemption.

Councillor G. Rice felt that it was unfair that hardworking residents with a combined household income of £30,000 per annum should be penalised.

Councillor B. Rice questioned how much per week of the 1% reduction would affect the delivery of the Transforming Homes programme to which the Cabinet Member advised that the average weekly impact to tenants not in receipt of benefits was £1.74 per week in 2016/17 and £6.99 by 2019/20. However the Cabinet Member reported that many residents would prefer to have new bathrooms and kitchens installed for £1.74 a week.

Councillor J. Kent observed that with rates of homelessness on the rise he was frustrated with the impact of reforms which would make lives more difficult for those who were struggling. He expressed his dismay that under the proposals Thurrock would have to sell off its much needed Council housing stock in order for the funds to be handed back to the Treasury so that they could cut the benefit bill.

Councillor Worrall proposed an amendment to recommendation 1.3 which was agreed unanimously by Members and read as follows:

- 1.3 Note that the application to the Secretary of state for an exemption is progressing and *that a report will be referred to Full Council in January 2016 to report on progress.*

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the setting affordable rents for Seabrooke Rise and Derry Avenue and the rest of the HRA affordable housing programme at 70% of market rent in line with the recommendations from Housing Overview and Scrutiny on 30th November 2015.**
- 2. Approve extension the of Transforming Homes programme by up to 1 year for internal improvements (1,000 homes) and up to 3 years for external improvements (5,000 homes), where the asset supports delayed completion in accordance with the recommendations from Housing Overview and Scrutiny on 30th November 2015.**
- 3. Note that the application to the Secretary of state for an exemption is progressing and that a report will be referred to Full Council in January 2016 to report on progress.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

92. Thameside Complex Stage 2 Report (Decision 01104434)

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report which set out the results of the second stage options appraisal, which included findings from the cross-party Task and Finish Group report on the Thameside Complex, and considered options for theatre provision in more detail.

In introducing the report the Leader of the Council stated that he was committed to having a dedicated Civic Theatre and it was important residents and Arts Organisations, such as Thurrock Arts, were consulted and involved in the process.

Councillor B. Rice welcomed the paper and remarked that she looked forward to further developments.

Councillor Potheary asked what the next stages were in terms of consultation with residents, to which the Leader of the Council emphasised that it was vital that talks with the community continued.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the long term aspiration to build a new theatre in Grays with flexible, adaptable accommodation more suited to modern needs and with the potential to generate a higher income to support the service and reduce the level of subsidy payable by the Council.**
- 2. Support the undertaking of further work to develop costed proposals for the new theatre and the other services in the Thameside Complex funded through existing budgets.**
- 3. Agree that, while work to develop and implement the preferred option identified through the appraisal continues, the Thameside Complex should remain open and efforts to maximise income generation from effective use of the building in the short and medium term should continue.**
- 4. Acknowledge the impact that keeping the existing building open has on the assumptions which underpin the MTFs and the likely requirement for continuing capital expenditure to address health and safety requirements, maintain service levels and to secure commercial income.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

93. MFD (Multi-Functional Devices) Reprourement (Decision 01104435)

Councillor V. Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which explained that a procurement exercise needed to be undertaken in order to identify a provider to supply the Council with replacement MFD units when the existing units came to the end of their contracted terms.

Councillor Gerrish remarked that it was important to note that in driving forward back-office efficiencies the Council saved money, and welcomed opportunities to continually drive down costs to further back-office functions in future.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approve the carrying out of a procurement process to identify a new MFD provider;**
- 2. On the basis of Option 2 as set out within this report, delegate authority to Director of Planning and Transportation to agree & award a new contract.**
- 3. Authorise the Director of Planning and Transportation to award a contract to a provider for a Discovery Assessment, should it be necessary to contract separately for such an assessment.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

94. Re-Procurement of the Housing Concierge Contract (Decision 01104436)

Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report which set out the proposals for the re-procurement of the Housing concierge contract which would operate at the Chadwell St Mary High Rise tenanted blocks in Godman Road, Chadwell St Mary and at one of the Extra Care facilities, located at Piggs Corner Sheltered Housing Scheme, Southend Road, Grays.

Members were advised that local residents valued the scheme which was part of the 'Invest to Stay' scheme.

Councillor B. Rice observed that this was a good example of Adult Social Care and Housing working well together in order to release costs from the Adult Social Care Service.

Councillor G. Rice explained that residents of Chadwell St Mary were delighted with the service.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Agree the proposed process for re-procurement of the Housing concierge contract for a period of up to 5 years (3 years plus 1+1 year periods, subject to performance and funding).**
- 2. Approve delegation to award to the Interim Director of Housing in consultation with the Portfolio holder in order to ensure service continuity.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

95. Car Parking Services (Decision 01104337)

Councillor Potheary, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, introduced the report which recommended a number of investments in order to improve parking provision, which included the creation of new car parks in Purfleet, South Ockendon and Grays Beach, and proposed an increase in income in order to fund the improvements.

Councillor V. Holloway welcomed the proposed improvements to car parking provision by Purfleet train station and the continued Residents Scheme, as residents in the area experienced difficulties with vehicles parking on pavements.

Councillor Gerrish, as local Ward Councillor, also welcomed the proposed improvements in Purfleet and explained that the income generated was key to delivering transport improvements across the service.

Councillor Worrall observed that the hard-standing improvements to Grays Beach Car Park would be welcomed by residents which would alleviate pressure on spaces taken by commuters. She further reported parking difficulties that residents experienced along Dock Road, Tilbury and asked whether any measures could be implemented in that location to alleviate the problem.

Councillor Okunade felt that it was beneficial to offer additional car parking in order to help local residents.

Councillor Potheary observed that commuters were often willing to pay for parking if it was not prohibitively expensive, and that she would speak to the Head of Highways and Transportation regarding Councillor Worrall's request but that it was important communities were consulted to identify which parking measures they preferred.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Approves new car parks (subject to planning permission), with approximately 87 spaces, for commuters at Purfleet railway station and in Tamarisk Road, Ockendon, that are opened before the end of the financial year with charges shown in appendix 2.**
- 2. Approves an extension to Grays Beach car park (subject to planning permission), with approximately 80 additional spaces, to support commuters and visitors to the area and is opened before the end of the financial year with charges shown in appendix 2.**
- 3. Confirms free shopper parking at Council owned car parks and on-street parking bays, for all Saturdays in December 2015 and approves delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with relevant Portfolio Holder, to carry out this arrangement on an annual basis.**
- 4. Confirms that 'on street' parking charges are frozen for another year but approves the implementation of the revised Thurrock Council 'off street' parking fees and other charges, included at appendix 2 of this report.**
- 5. Approves the implementation of operational changes set out in paragraphs 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5. which confirms that residents parking will remain free.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

The Leader of the Council advised all those present that the meeting was the last meeting of Cabinet in 2015, thanked officers and Members for all their hard work and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

The meeting finished at 8.22 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk