

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 February 2016 at 7.00 pm
The deadline for call-in is Tuesday 23 February 2016 at 5.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors Bukky Okunade and Jane Potheary

In attendance:

Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
David Archibald, Interim Director of Children's Services
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Matthew Essex, Head of Regeneration and Assets
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Richard Parkin, Head of Environment
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer
Kenna-Victoria Martin, 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.

111. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 13 January 2016, were approved as a correct record.

112. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

113. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Gerrish declared a non-pecuniary interest in Item 10 Fairness Commission, in that he was a Member of the Commission.

114. Statements by the Leader

The Leader of the Council addressed the Cabinet and in doing so welcomed David Archibald as the interim Director for Children Services. He continued by

informing the Cabinet that the meeting was David Bull's last Cabinet meeting and thanked Mr Bull for all of the work he had undertaken for Thurrock within the last 4 years.

115. Corporate Performance Summary - Month 8 (up to end of November 2015)

Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which highlighted that at the end of November 2015 96% of monthly indicators were either meeting or within an acceptable tolerance of their target.

Councillor B Rice commented that Adult Social Care users in receipt of Self-Directed Support and permanent admissions to residential/ nursing homes were two items within her portfolio previously they received amber ratings; both were now at an improved green rating.

116. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

117. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader of the Council advised that no questions had been submitted.

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

The Leader of the Council informed Members that there were no matters which had been referred to the Cabinet by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

119. Fairness Commission Report (Decision 01104345)

Councillor J Kent presented the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, in doing so he informed Members that he agreed with the recommendations to bring equality into focus.

Councillor Speight mentioned that the Fairness Commission was established and tasked with progressing the work of the Task and Finish Group formed by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2013 to look at equality issues within the Borough.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration thanked the Commissioners for their hard work and stated that there was still more for the Council to do in raising awareness faced by Thurrock Residents.

He continued by welcoming the Fairness Charter and the recommendations within the report.

Councillor B Rice commented that she was surprised that her portfolio had received fewer comments from residents given the inequalities around health and the unexpected rise in some diseases.

Councillor J Kent stated that it was important to hear from residents and he confirmed that regular resident surveys would be reinstated.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet note the contents of the report and agree how the Council responds to the recommendations detailed at 3.8.

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

120. 2016/17 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budget Report (Decision 01104346)

The Leader of the Council addressed Members informing them that for the last five years the Council had been able to produce a balanced budget and, for 2016/17, this had once again been achieved

He continued that at the last Cabinet meeting, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to investigate the proposal of a 3.99% Council Tax rise. Councillor J Kent asked Councillor Snell, Vice-Chair of the Committee, if he had any comments.

Councillor Snell addressed Cabinet Members informing them the Committee had a formal discussion regarding the proposed rise in Council Tax and they had come to a unanimous cross-party decision.

The Leader informed the Cabinet that the Government had proposed a 2% Social Care Tax as well as the general rise in Council Tax, and were no longer offering the Council Tax freeze Grant

He stated that should Cabinet agree the report and therefore recommend a rise in Council Tax, Thurrock Council would still have the lowest Council Tax in Essex and one of the lowest for a Unitary authority in the country. He further commented that since 2010 Council Tax within the borough had reduced by £100 per property in real terms.

Councillor G Rice mentioned that within Environmental Services the Council had increased the budget by £1.4million; this included the decision not to charge for the collection of green bins.

He continued to inform Members in regard to bus subsidies that the Council had offered tenders for services such as the 374 bus service. There would also be bus services for Horndon on the Hill and Fobbing.

Councillor Speight welcomed the protection of the bus subsidies within the borough. He commented that he was pleased to see cross-party working when looking at the proposed Council Tax rise.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Councillor B Rice, thanked Councillor Snell for the work the Committee had completed, including supporting the work of the consultation completed by Healthwatch which received 500 responses relating to services such as Day Care for older people and Charges for Adult Social Care services.

RESOLVED:

1. **That, following the decision of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet recommend to Council a 2% Council Tax increase in respect of Adult Social Care;**
2. **That, following the decision of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet recommend to Council a 1.99% Council Tax increase in support of the general budget;**
3. **That Cabinet note the inclusion of £190k in the 2016/17 base budget towards maintaining Bus Subsidies;**
4. **That Cabinet note the inclusion of £50k in the 2016/17 base budget to provide support to the borough in managing the implications of, and responding to, the Lower Thames Crossing proposal;**
5. **That Cabinet agree to the savings proposals to Adult Social Care as set out in Appendix 3;**
6. **That Cabinet recommend to Council that delegation be granted to the Director of Finance and IT, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the authority to make the relevant submissions to government to secure the four year settlement and freedom to use capital receipts for transformation purposes if considered to be in the Council's best interest;**
7. **That Cabinet recommend to Council the proposed additions to the Capital Programme set out in Appendix 4; and**
8. **That Cabinet recommend to Council the delegations regarding additions to the Capital programme as set out in section 11**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

121. Housing Revenue Account Base Budgets and Rent Setting 2016/2017 (Decision 01104347)

Councillor J Kent, Cabinet Member for Finance, introduced the report during which he explained that further to the Government's announcement on key policy changes the following would impact on residents:

- A 1% reduction in social rents for four years would benefit less than half of Thurrock residents who were council tenants;
- The disposal of 'high value' properties - there was currently a shortage of 3/4 bedroomed houses in the borough. These properties were now

- to be sold with the proceeds passed to the Government leaving residents in need of such properties on the Councils waiting list.
- 'Pay to Stay'- the proposal would affect council tenants who were higher earners such as 2 people each earning £15,000

Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, stated that officers had met in the hope of securing a DCLG exemption to the 1% reduction to rents.

Councillor Worrall went on to say that the issue of raising rent for sheltered housing residents was discussed. She stated that when raised with government officials that they were targeting elderly residents, officers were informed that the situation had not been thought of in that way.

RESOLVED:

1. **That the changes included in the base budget for 2016/17 be agreed.**
2. **That the 1% rent reduction outlined in the Summer Budget be noted.**
3. **That a 1% increase in de-pooled service charges for 2016/17 be agreed.**
4. **That a 2.5% increase in garage rents for 2016/17 be agreed.**
5. **That a 1.5% increase in central heating charges in 2016/17 be agreed.**
6. **That a 2.5% increase in traveller's sites rents be agreed.**

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

122. Treasury Management Strategy 2016/2017 (Decision 01104348)

The Leader of Council and Cabinet Member for Finance presented the report to Members informing them that by having a Treasury Management Strategy the Council were able to strengthen resources and further enable the Council to include future borrowing within the Capital Programme.

Councillor Kent further stated that it would allow for new health facilities within the borough and the new theatre.

RESOLVED:

That the Cabinet recommend the Council:

1. **Approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2016/17 and its application to 2015/16 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2016/17 and its application to 2015/16;**
2. **Approve the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1;**

3. **Delegate the approval of any changes to the Prudential Indicators to Cabinet where required due to the delivery mechanism for affordable homes in the borough as outlined in paragraph 2.16; and**
4. **To note the revised 2015/16 and 2016/17 Treasury Management projections as set out in paragraph 2.34**

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

123. Fees and Charges 2016/2017 (Decision 01104349)

Councillor J Kent presented the item explaining that the report sought approval to revise fees and charges for the Council. He further advised that the report had been to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee from which their feedback back was noted.

He continued by stating he had concerns in relation to set fees for the Thameside Theatre and that he felt it should be up to the theatre manager's discretion to make relevant decisions in relation to advertising and discounts.

It was confirmed by Officers and the Monitoring Officer this was possible. Councillor J Kent stated that all Members should support the new theatre so when it was introduced it had a number of users and was regarded by the community.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. **Agree the proposed charges as detailed in the appendix.**
2. **Note the feedback on Fees and Charges from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Appendix 2)**

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

124. Lower Thames Crossing - Highways England's Options (Decision 01104350)

Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation introduced the report by stating that all Members and residents were supportive of the campaign against the proposed new Crossing.

He further stated that the extraordinary Planning, Transportation and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny meeting, which took place on the 9 February 2016, was valuable to residents and businesses alike in allowing them to speak in a public forum.

Councillor G Rice welcomed the report and encouraged residents to complete the Highways England online consultation.

Councillor B Rice stated she was pleased to see local Councillors working together without politics interfering. She mentioned it showed residents the benefits of community Councillors.

Councillor Worrall commented that while waiting for the announcement of the proposed crossing she never thought it would be through the middle of the borough.

The Cabinet Member for Housing further thanked David Bull Director of Planning and Transportation for all his hard work and for leaving the Council in a strong position.

The Leader stated that the case residents and the Council should be making to Highways England was that the new crossing was, in essence, a waste of money. He continued by stating the new crossing would cost in the region of £6billion, reduce traffic by only 14% and create 5,000 jobs in the area.

He further informed Members that the Council were currently working with consultants who were experts in highway schemes and were due to finish their consultation within the next few weeks.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Notes Highways England's proposals as set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.7 of this report;**
- 2. Reaffirms its policy on the Lower Thames Crossing, most recently agreed in Council on the 25 November 2015, that we should oppose any new crossing in Thurrock;**
- 3. Requests that officers prepare a draft Council Consultation Response to be agreed by Cabinet and Council in March, and informed by:**
 - a. the evidence heard at Planning, Transportation, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 9 February 2016**
 - b. expert advice on the implications for business, growth and transportation of the three options**
 - c. Dialogue with all parties interested in a Lower Thames crossing through Thurrock, including Gravesham District Council.**
- 4. Requests that up to £30k of funding be identified in 2016/17 for community information and for technical and legal studies to support Thurrock's response to the Options, to be confirmed by Council at its February meeting.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

125. Thurrock Economic Growth Strategy 2016/2021 - Refresh (Decision 01104351)

Councillor Speight, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, presented his report to Members informing them of the following:

- Thurrock's ambitious growth agenda was backed by more than £6billion of private sector investment and aims to deliver 18,500 new homes and 26,000 new jobs by 2021;
- The Thurrock Economic Development Strategy was developed to provide strategic guidance to the Council and its partners in their attempts to create the required economic conditions to achieve these ambitious goals;
- This focus remained on supporting growth within the borough and looking at the quality of work and the availability for higher valued employment;
- The Strategy further supported the Growth Hubs across the borough and;
- The promotion of Thurrock not just outside of the borough but to organisations setting up new businesses within Thurrock.

Councillor G Rice welcomed the report and mentioned he looked forward to the completion of the regeneration of Grays Town Centre.

Councillor Gerrish mentioned it was not just the growth of the borough that was needed but the types of growth, such as schools and health services which would also be required.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To acknowledge key achievements in addressing the economic challenges identified in the 2007-21 Economic Development Strategy;**
- 2. To approve the Economic Growth Strategy 2016-21 (appendix 1);**
- 3. To acknowledge the role that the Economic Growth Strategy will play in supporting the development of the Borough's Local Plan;**
- 4. To acknowledge that a detailed implementation plan will be produced identifying roles and responsibilities for the Council and its partners to ensure the most efficient and high impact approach is taken.**

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

126. Combined Authority and South East Local Enterprise Partnership Update (Decision 01104352)

Councillor J Kent, Leader of the Council, introduced the item which provided an update to a previous report where it was agreed to continue work with partners towards a devolution deal so that decisions could be made at local level.

He continued to inform Members that following a meeting with partners in greater Essex and the SELEP he was still to be convinced that a devolution including Essex County Council could enable Thurrock Council to do more than it did already with different partnerships such as with Southend-on-Sea Council.

The Leader then suggested an additional recommendation:

That Cabinet reiterate their position, which was reached a year ago, and work to produce a Thurrock/Southend devolution proposal.

Councillor Speight commented that he welcomed the Leader's recommendation.

Councillor G Rice enquired if the Council could look at funding from the European Union.

The Leader requested Officers look into the possibility of funding from Europe and asked that it be included in a future report.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To provide an update to Cabinet on the work with partners to develop a Greater Essex Devolution Bid as well as the progress on the partnerships within Thames Gateway and South Essex.**
- 2. That Cabinet reiterates their position, which was reached a year ago, and works to produce a Thurrock/Southend devolution proposal.**

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

127. Waste Disposal Contracts (Decision 01104353)

The Cabinet Member for Environment Councillor G Rice presented the report to Members and in doing so advised them Thurrock Council had four waste management and processing contracts, three coming to an end in April 2017 and one in June 2017.

He commented this was an excellent opportunity to review and determine the service delivery mechanism for waste and recycling management for the long term.

RESOLVED:

To agree delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for Environment and the Chief Executive for extension of the five current waste disposal contracts with three suppliers by up to 8 months, to the maximum value of £1 million per supplier and £2 million in total.

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

The meeting finished at 8.10 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**