

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 June 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Sue Gray (Mayor), Cathy Kent (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Russell Cherry, Colin Churchman, Mark Coxshall, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Garry Hague, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Jane Potheary, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice (from 7.10pm), Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Deborah Stewart, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Clare Baldwin, Terry Brookes, Robert Gledhill, James Halden, Terence Hipsey, Martin Kerin, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Andrew Roast and Michael Stone

In attendance: Reverend Darren Barlow, Mayor's Chaplain
David Bull, Interim Chief Executive & Director of Planning and Transportation
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
Mike Heath, Head of Environment
Jackie Hinchliffe, Head of HR, OD & Transformation
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications
Fiona Taylor, Head of Legal and Democratic Services
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Stephanie Cox, Senior Democratic Services Officer

The Mayor informed all present that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

The Mayor commemorated the seven Thurrock men who lost their lives in June 100 years ago during World War One, and advised that at each Council meeting there would be a Roll of Honour to commemorate the sacrifice made by Thurrock residents 100 years ago.

Councillor Speight arrived at the meeting at 7.02pm.

The Mayor reminded Members of appropriate conduct at Full Council meetings and advised that guidance had also been circulated by Democratic Services.

The Mayor then welcomed Mr David Bull to the meeting, as it was his first meeting in the position of Interim Chief Executive,

Before the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Reverend Barlow to lead those present in prayer.

15. Minutes

The Mayor reported that an amended version of the minutes had been circulated to Members, published online and tabled at the meeting for Members approval.

The Minutes of Annual Council, held on 27 May 2015, were approved as a correct record.

Councillor S. Little highlighted that the minutes stated that Members appointed to the Corporate Parenting Committee required a DBS check to be undertaken before they could sit on the Committee, and questioned whether this had been done.

In response the Interim Chief Executive advised that he believed this had been completed, however he asked officers to check and confirm outside of the meeting.

16. Items of Urgent Business

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

17. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Ojetola declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 12, 'School Capital Programme Update', as he was a governor at the Gateway Academy.

18. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council

The Mayor announced that since being elected Mayor she had the privilege of attending a number of events.

Members were informed that she had attended a BBC Symphony Orchestra event with school children from across the borough at the High House backstage centre High in Purfleet, and that schools had worked very hard with pupils who had learnt about Holst, Beethoven, Mozart and all the classic composers.

Councillor G. Rice arrived at the meeting at 7.10pm.

The Chamber were advised that the Rotary Club had received over 400 entries for the Thurrock Cycle Marathon where riders could undertake a 7 mile or 21 mile bike ride, which had raised considerable sums of money for charity and involved riders of all ages and abilities.

The Mayor further highlighted that the Thurrock Gurkha and Nepalese Community had held a Charity night for the earthquake victims in Nepal and raised £3,000 towards a new classroom in a small village.

The Leader of the Council reported that there had recently been a meeting held at East Thurrock United's ground in Corringham where around 200 people had attended to have their say about the possibility of creating a Parish Council for the area, and specifically what to do about the condition of the roads.

The Leader of the Council further reported that when it was time for the Council to decide whether or not a Parish Council should be created, the question that needed to be asked by Members by law was not to do with the roads, but first and foremost was whether or not a Parish Council would enhance community cohesion on the Frost Estate.

The Chamber were advised that the Leader of the Council had said he would try to arrange a coming together of minds from the various interested parties so that the issues could be discussed and an amicable agreement reached. He observed that the joining together of diaries was unlikely to be easy but that he felt it would be the best way forward.

Members were advised that the Mayor had agreed to hold an extraordinary meeting of Council in August with standing orders suspended to discuss the Frost Estate Parish Council proposal, in order to allow all interested parties to have their say and be heard directly by all 49 Councillors who would ultimately decide.

The Leader remarked that it would give the Council an additional four weeks to ensure as many people as possible were involved in the discussions whilst also allowing Thurrock Council enough time to make its decision on a Parish Council before the September deadline.

Councillor Stewart remarked that she had not received any correspondence regarding potential dates of a meeting with residents and asked if she had been missed of the list, to which the Leader of the Council explained that an invitation had not yet been circulated as he felt it was important to coordinate a suitable date with residents first.

RESOLVED:

That an extraordinary meeting of the Council be convened during August in order to consider the proposal to create a Frost Estate Parish Council.

19. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock>.

20. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the requisite notice had not been given by any councillors or members of the public that they wished to present a petition at the meeting.

21. 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.

22. 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.

The Leader of the Council informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following change:

- for Councillor Gerrish to be appointed as a member of the Licensing Committee to replace Councillor Brookes.

Councillor Hebb, on behalf of the Leader of the Conservative Group, informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following changes:

- for Councillor Ojetola to be appointed as a member of the Standards and Audit Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall.
- for Councillor Ojetola to be appointed as a member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall.
- for Councillor B. Little to be appointed to the vacancy on the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- for Councillor Coxshall to be appointed as a member of the Essex Fire Authority to replace Councillor Halden.

There was a brief discussion on whether there was a vacancy on the Health and Wellbeing Board which could be appointed to, during which the Interim

Chief Executive advised that this would be checked following the meeting but it was understood there was one vacancy that could be filled.

It was confirmed by the Leader of the UKIP Group and Councillor Ray that no changes to appointments were to be made.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Gerrish be appointed as a member of the Licensing Committee to replace Councillor Brookes.**
- 2. That Councillor Ojetola be appointed as a member of the Standards and Audit Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall.**
- 3. That Councillor Ojetola be appointed as a member of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall.**
- 4. That Councillor B. Little be appointed to the vacancy on the Health and Wellbeing Board.**
- 5. That Councillor Coxshall be appointed as a member of the Essex Fire Authority to replace Councillor Halden.**

Addendum to the Minutes:

Subsequent to the meeting it was clarified that Councillor Ojetola should have also been appointed as Chair of the Standards and Audit Committee, following his replacement of Councillor Coxshall as Member and Chair of the Committee.

Group Leaders were consulted and for clarity it was agreed for Councillor Ojetola to be appointed as the Chair of the Standards and Audit Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall, ahead of the Standards and Audit Committee meeting scheduled for July which was expected to be held prior to the next meeting of Full Council.

- 6. That Councillor Ojetola be appointed as Chair of the Standards and Audit Committee to replace Councillor Coxshall.**
- 23. The Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 - Appointment and Dismissal of Senior Officers**

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, briefly introduced the report which proposed amendments to the Council's Procedure Rules regarding the disciplining and dismissing of senior officers in accordance with the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 which came into force on 11 May 2015.

Councillor Hebb welcomed the changes which enabled accountability and the process to be dealt with swiftly if required.

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

RESOLVED:

That Council approve the modifications to Council Procedure Rules (Chapter 10 – Officer Employment Procedure Rules of the Constitution) in relation to the appointment and dismissal of senior officers.

24. Housing Revenue Account - Housing Development Programme Phase 2

Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, introduced the report which provided an update on the Council's ambition to deliver 1,000 new homes in the next five years. In introducing the report the Cabinet Member highlighted progress on the Belmont Road and Seabrooke Rise sites and progress against delivery of the HAPPI (Housing for an Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation) standard, which included:

- 160 new homes were expected to be completed under Phase 1 of the Programme by 2016/17.
- That the Calcutta Road site in Tilbury was being progressed as a second HAPPI scheme.
- £4.57 million of Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) funding had been secured to build new homes in Chadwell St. Mary and South Ockendon.
- Under Phase 2 of the programme approximately 333 new homes were expected to be completed by 2018/19 in order to build around 700 new homes in the next five years.

Councillor Ojetola thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and remarked that it was positive news schemes were going ahead in order to meet the Council's house building target of delivering 1,000 new homes over the next 5 years. He questioned whether a number of paragraphs had been mistakenly included in the report and asked for clarification regarding the discussions to increase the £4.57 million of funding specified.

Councillor Worrall remarked that she looked forward to working with Councillor Ojetola in his capacity as Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing, and apologised that paragraphs 3.4 and the first section of 3.5 should have been removed from the report before publication.

Councillor Worrall reported that £4.57 million of funding had already been secured but that negotiations were ongoing to increase the amount in order to deliver more homes in Thurrock.

Councillor B. Rice welcomed the investment in Chadwell-St-Mary and observed that she was looking forward to the Defoe Fields development of bungalows. She commended the work of the Director of Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Housing in the progress so far, and felt that construction of

bungalows and HAPPI homes would free up under-occupied family homes for others.

Councillor B. Rice further thanked the Director of Housing for her attendance at three meetings of the Chadwell St. Mary Community Forum, as she felt that strong community engagement had helped local residents shape the type of properties being developed in the area.

Councillor Ray commended the Portfolio Holder for her report but remarked that it was important that Thurrock delivered the quality of build that residents aspired to in order to create a sense of pride and confidence where people lived.

Councillor Worrall agreed that it was important to examine where to build, the type of properties and build style and explained that through community consultation it had been identified that Thurrock had a shortage of 1 and 2 bedroom properties.

Councillor S. Little questioned how many people had applied to build under the self-build scheme, in response the Cabinet Member for Housing explained that as of yet no residents had applied to build under the scheme which was a new requirement introduced by recent government legislation.

Councillor Johnson commended that bungalows were being built in Chadwell St. Mary and asked what type of properties would be constructed in South Ockendon. He further requested clarification as to whether the £4.57 million of funding would be used to construct more homes or units of better quality.

In response the Cabinet Member for Housing advised that Members could view a map online which detailed the type and location of properties being constructed under the scheme and that the funding was being used to build a greater number of dwellings.

Councillor Redsell observed that increasingly more residents wished to move into bungalows and questioned whether the Council was working with the private sector to deliver more of this type of property, which the Cabinet Member for Housing assured Members was the case.

The Cabinet Member for Housing commended the work that was being undertaken in Thurrock to help residents get on the property ladder and called for all Members to read an article that had been published in The Guardian that day which highlighted that the ground-breaking scheme was receiving national praise.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. Note the additional resources which have been obtained to assist with the funding of the second phase of HRA housing development sites which are now ready to be committed as part of the new build development programme within the HRA development reserve and borrowing cap.**
- 2. Agree that the second phase of the HRA housing development programme be included in the Housing Capital programme.**

25. School Capital Programme Update

Councillor J. Kent, Cabinet Member for Finance and Education, introduced the report which sought approval for the re-commissioning of Knightsmead School and provided an update on other projects in order to deliver sufficient pupil places for the 2015 and 2016 academic years.

Councillor Coxshall asked for assurances that the Tilbury Pioneer Academy would be progressed at pace as the project had stalled in recent years and questioned whether the budget was fixed.

Councillor J. Kent assured Members that the necessary work would be undertaken to get the site open as quickly as possible, and reported that the project had stalled due to a combination of issues that included the contractor, the type of material used and proposed designs.

Councillor Ojetola highlighted a number of contractual issues that had been examined by the Standards and Audit Committee, following which Councillor J. Kent assured Members that he had no reason to believe any improper practices had occurred since this case.

Councillor J. Kent moved the recommendations as printed in the report, which was seconded by Councillor B. Rice.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. For Council to amend Cabinets decision made on the 9th April 2014 to return the Knightsmead site transferred to Housing by giving this site back to Education so that additional school places in the Aveley/South Ockendon area can be provided.**
- 2. To approve a £2.5M budget for the re-commissioning of Knightsmead School and the provision of a link building to Somers Heath School to be funded from the School' Basic Need capital funding 2015/16 & 2016/17.**

- 3. Approve the commencement of the procurement process in accordance with Council & EU procurement procedures to appoint Specialist Project Teams, for the School Improvement Programme and appoint the Principal Contractors to take forward the proposed schemes.**
- 4. That authority be delegated to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to enter into any form of agreement following the award of the agreements arising from 1.3 above in compliance with the Council's procurement regulations.**
- 5. Council notes updates on Capital Programme Schemes for 2014/15 & 2015/16.**
- 6. Council notes temporary accommodation and the re-modelling of school accommodation to build in capacity to meet increase in demand for pupil places from September 2015.**

26. Appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service

The Mayor reported that the General Services Committee had met the previous day to advise on the appointment of the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, and as a result the report had been marked as 'to follow' and published online as a supplementary agenda item.

The Mayor advised that the report had been circulated electronically to all Members and a copy tabled at the meeting.

Councillor J. Kent, Leader of the Council, introduced the report which recommended the appointment of Lyn Carpenter as Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Thurrock Council, subject to agreement on a start date and DBS check.

The Leader of the Council reported that the General Services Committee had met the previous day to interview five candidates and was pleased to recommend Lyn Carpenter to the position, who was currently the Bi-Borough Director of Environment, Leisure and Residents Service for both the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea.

Councillor Hebb welcomed the swift appointment of Lyn Carpenter and recalled that through the Annual Pay Policy Statement in March 2015 Full Council had agreed for the recruitment of appointments over £100,000 to be agreed by Council.

Councillor Hebb further observed that the recommendation did not include details regarding the salary of the position and proposed an amendment so that the recommendation could include this information in order to demonstrate value for money for Thurrock Council taxpayers.

The Leader of the Council informed Members that the salary range had been agreed by all Group Leaders but offered to report back to Members on what the exact salary would be, which would also be published online.

The Interim Chief Executive clarified the new recommendation, which was agreed by all Members, and read as follows:

That Lyn Carpenter be appointed as the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Thurrock Council, subject to agreement on a start date, DBS check and informing Members on the final salary offered.

Councillor J. Kent moved the revised recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Coxshall.

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

RESOLVED:

That Lyn Carpenter be appointed as the Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of Thurrock Council, subject to agreement on a start date, DBS check and informing Members on the final salary offered.

27. Appointment of Monitoring Officer

The Mayor advised that the report had also originally been marked as 'to follow', published online as a supplementary agenda item, circulated to all Members by email and tabled at the meeting.

The Mayor advised that the report requested confirmation to appoint Mr David Lawson to the post of Monitoring Officer at Thurrock Council following interviews held on the 16th June 2015.

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

RESOLVED:

That David Lawson be appointed as Monitoring Officer of Thurrock Council.

28. Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy

Councillor J. Kent, Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy, introduced the report and, in doing so, highlighted the following key points regarding communication:

- That effective communication – both with internal officers and front-facing with residents – was important at a time when the Council

had to make challenging decisions regarding budget cuts and reducing the services it provided.

- That over the coming months the Council would need to increase its communications to speak face-to-face with as many people as possible in order to explain the changes that were anticipated.
- That a “core minimum” service was being planned for that was “capacity focused” and digital.
- He recognised that not all residents were familiar with computers and technology, and therefore it was important not to solely rely on offering a digital service.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy reported that a balanced budget had been achieved for a fifth year in a row and that further funding had been identified in order to help change the way the Council works, with some finances from reserves to mitigate the impact of proposed cuts to some services – such as the environment.

In relation to the financial challenges faced by the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Strategy made the following observations:

- That in the case of the Environment service the budget cuts had been too deep and too quick; in response additional funding was being put back into the service in order to ease the transition.
- He reiterated that it did not mean cuts would not come, rather cuts would be delayed and the money would need to be replaced in the various reserves.
- That Thurrock’s external auditors noted that “Thurrock is facing significant financial challenges over the next three to four years” and that “external funding sources are reducing and are subject to change and uncertainty”.
- That five years ago Thurrock Council’s budget was £124 million, since then additional responsibility had been taken on in Public Health, that had totalled £8 million, and Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation responsibilities had been brought back in-house – totalling an additional £3 million.
- That in 2010 this equated to a budget total of £134 million.
- It was reported that the budget set in February 2014 was for around £109 million, and that with further cuts anticipated, the Council was expected to have a budget in 2018/19 in the range of £80 million.
- It was estimated that the cumulative cuts from 2010 would be in the region of £105 million by 2017/18.
- That refreshed corporate priorities had been agreed earlier in the year which reflected the need to change the way communities were supported and services delivered, which included greater partnership and, in some cases, using commissioning arrangements with the community and business sectors.

The Chamber were advised that Thurrock was highly commended in the prestigious MJ Awards category of 'Best Achieving Council' for its leadership role.

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

- Councillor Hebb asked the Cabinet Member to publish a breakdown of labour costs, to include a full list of the number of staff employed on a permanent, fixed term, agency and temporary basis.

The Cabinet Member advised that this was a matter that could be examined in more detail by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, of which Councillor Hebb was Chair.

- Councillor S. Little questioned whether any new Council properties had been purchased in the past year, and felt that it was important the Council continued to make improvements to its assets.

The Cabinet Member reported that details of the properties purchased were documented in Cabinet Minutes.

- Councillor Redsell questioned what was being done to look after assets in Thurrock to prevent properties from falling into a state of disrepair.

The Cabinet Member provided assurances that Council assets were being maintained and asked the Member to clarify which asset she was referring to.

- Councillor B. Rice congratulated the Portfolio Holder and the finance team for their good work in managing the budget since 2010, which had faced cumulative savings of £83.2 million. She observed that with the challenging budget reductions faced by the authority, the Council had a responsibility to communicate effectively with residents.
- Councillor Johnson expressed a view that the additional funding that had been found to mitigate the impact of savings on services such as libraries and the environment had not materialised by magic and instead was down to strategy, which he felt could be enhanced by the adoption of a zero based budgeting process. He felt that government cuts had proven that local authorities historically had not been spending money wisely.
- The Cabinet Member observed that prior to 2010 the Council's budget had been overspent.

29. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions had been submitted to the Leader and a further three questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

As apologies had been received from Councillor Brookes, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, Councillor Redsell confirmed that she wished to withdraw both her questions that had been submitted to him for a response.

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be found at Appendix A to these Minutes.

30. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

Councillor Ojetola provided an update on the work of Impulse Leisure, during which Members were advised of the following key points:

- That Thurrock Council had committed to spend up to £1,500,000 on replacements to maintain Belhus Park Pool which secured its future and included roof and boiler replacement.
- Impulse Leisure had replaced Belhus Park gym kit, added new resistance equipment in the gym, improved the décor and air conditioning and committed to extending the gym and studio before Christmas 2015.
- The Council were seeking to progress outstanding maintenance items at Blackshots and the Civic Hall, which had been delayed due to staff shortage since September 2014.
- Negotiations between the Council and Impulse Leisure continued regarding the future arrangements for providing the well utilised leisure service in the future.
- It was reported that Impulse Leisure had made a surplus during the previous year which was being spent on service improvements.
- That Impulse Leisure has made significant business improvements and efficiencies, coupled with sensible investments to improve financial robustness.
- That Impulse Leisure continued to increase the already substantial work they had achieved in order to increase physical activity levels within the community with the aim of improving health and wellbeing.

Councillor Ojetola thanked Mr Mike Baden, Mr Derek Stanton and the other trustees for their work, which included ex-trustees Tony Fish and Lynn Worrall, and welcomed Councillor Okunade as the other Council representative on Impulse Leisure. He further advised all Members that they were welcome to attend the AGM in August.

31. Minutes of Committees

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

32. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

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

Councillor S. Little highlighted Members attention to a motion that had been submitted by Councillor Halden on 23 July 2014 which called for the Council to reaffirm its commitment to the principles of Corporate Parenting in terms of making the service budget as transparent and accountable to members as possible via appropriate reports. She felt that the motion had not been fulfilled and requested officers and the Portfolio Holder to ensure this was resolved in future.

In the absence of Councillor Okunade, Cabinet Member for Children's Social Care, the Leader of the Council suggested Councillor S. Little discuss this matter during Corporate Parenting pre-meetings with officers in order to achieve the correct and appropriate balance.

33. To consider motions from Members in the order in which they were submitted

No motions had been submitted for debate.

The meeting finished at 8.39 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**