

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 21 June 2021 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader), Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Allen Mayes and Luke Spillman

Apologies: Councillor Ben Maney

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, and live-streamed onto the Council's webcast channel.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

4. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by welcoming everyone to the first Cabinet meeting of the 2021/22 municipal year. He stated that this was the first meeting since March, and the first face-to-face meeting since 2020. He explained that due to the Forward Plan, the first municipal Cabinet meeting was typically shorter than others, but felt that the coming year would be exciting, with many new projects planned and underway.

The Leader then explained that in the last two weeks new play equipment had launched in two of the borough's parks thanks to the Towns Fund scheme. He explained that new equipment had been unveiled at Grays Beach Riverside Park thanks to £750,000 from the Grays Town Fund Board, which meant that younger residents could now enjoy a new ship and castle, and the parkour outdoor sports, health and fitness area. He added that a new splash pad area,

which had been funded by the Council, was also due to open this summer. He highlighted that residents in Tilbury could also enjoy a new outdoor gym, parkour equipment and running track at Daisy Field Park, which was one of many projects across the town to be boosted by fast-tracked funding from the Tilbury Towns Fund Board. He felt that these projects would continue to regenerate Tilbury and Grays, as the government and Council to invest in Thurrock.

The Leader stated that there were also numerous other projects underway across the borough, which included the new planning permission application to convert the old State Cinema in Grays into a pub. He stated that the plans had now been submitted, and felt that the re-development would open and preserve an iconic building in Grays, whilst creating a new hospitality venue. He explained that work was also progressing on the Civic Offices, with the majority of outside cladding now complete. He felt that this project would stimulate growth and redevelopment in Grays, whilst creating a new landmark and town centre housing. The Leader added that new bus stops were also being installed throughout the borough due to an investment of £1.2million, to try and encourage residents to utilise public transport. He stated that the smaller bus stops had now been installed, and the larger, electronic bus stops would be installed soon. The Leader explained that work was also progressing on the Manorway, with one side of the road completed and work underway on the west-bound carriageway. He described how this work would create a quieter road surface for HGVs and other traffic utilising the road for DP World London Gateway. The Leader stated that plans were also moving ahead on the Thames Freeport project, after a successful ASELA-backed bid, with Thurrock Council acting as the lead authority supporting the development of the Outline Business Case. He stated that the Freeport would create more than 25,000 new jobs, and would develop 1,700 acres of land with technologically advanced green business.

The Leader moved on and stated that central government would be making an announcement regarding the lockdown roadmap next week, and highlighted that everybody could play their part in preventing the spread of the virus. He urged residents to get twice-weekly COVID tests, which would help ensure lockdown restrictions are lifted as soon as possible, and keep families, friends, and communities in Thurrock safe. He explained that COVID numbers in Thurrock were currently low, with only 8.6 people per 100,000 testing positive last week, meaning Thurrock had one of the lowest COVID rates in the country. He added that the Delta variant, which had originated in India, was spreading across several areas of the country, and could pose a threat as it was far more transmissible than other strains. He stated that there had been a small number of Delta variant cases in Thurrock, and the Council were working hard to ensure it did not take hold and spread. He explained that the Council were carefully monitoring cases to ensure that testing took place to identify the Delta variant, and that advice was given to those who tested positive, as well as finding and advising their potential contacts. He summarised and stated that 30 residents had tested positive this week, with 3,923 PCR tests carried out; and a 7 day positive rate of 17.2. He stated that Thurrock was currently ranked 120 out of 149 local authorities in terms of

COVID rates, and 139,019 vaccines had been administered: 86,700 first doses and 52,319 second doses.

5. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on policy, budget and other issues.

6. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

7. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions had been submitted by Non-Executive Members.

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

Other than those items already contained in the agenda, no items had been referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an overview and scrutiny committee.

9. Appointments to Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Leader introduced the report and stated that it was a statutory duty for Cabinet to nominate Members to sit on outside bodies, and the majority would be as written in Appendix 1. He named some changes which included:

1. Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee – Councillor Collins
2. Essex Pension Advisory Board – Councillor Duffin
3. Opportunity South Essex – Councillor Coxshall
4. SELEP Strategic Board – Councillor Coxshall
5. SELEP Accountability Board – Councillor Coxshall
6. Thurrock Arts Council – Councillor Watson
7. Thurrock Sports Council – Councillor Jeffries
8. ASELA – Councillor Coxshall

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the nominations to Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels.

10. End of Year (Month 12) Corporate Performance Report 2020/21

Councillor Duffin introduced the report and stated that it presented the annual Key Performance Indicator (KPI) results for 2020/21, and showed the impact that COVID-19 had had on some services, as well as service achievements. He explained that the report had been to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee yesterday and feedback had shown Members wished to see more

information for some KPIs. He thanked Councillor Huelin for her work as Portfolio Holder last year, and Councillor Gerrish for his hard work as Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny last year.

Councillor Duffin highlighted page 34 of the agenda and stated that since March 2020, 4000 potholes had been filled in, 700 of those in March 2021. He understood that residents could get frustrated, but urged residents to continue reporting potholes online, as this ensured they could be inspected and fixed quicker. He also congratulated the education department, as Thurrock had seen a 5% increase in residents receiving their first place school preference. He also thanked residents for donating approximately two thousand Christmas presents to the borough's Looked After Children, as he felt this would have made a huge difference to their festive period. He then thanked central government for their continued support to borough residents, for example with the furlough scheme throughout the pandemic, as well as for the Tilbury and Grays Town Fund Boards. He summarised and stated that the past year had been challenging due to COVID-19, but service delivery had continued and positive signs could be seen throughout the report.

Councillor Hebb echoed Councillor Duffin's comments and thanked Councillor Gerrish for his hard work as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He felt Councillor Gerrish had left a good legacy, particularly with his work on the scrutiny review. He explained that as part of the scrutiny review, he had attended last night's meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the Work Programme. He highlighted the KPI on page 42 of the agenda relating to collection rates for council tax. He stated that this had only decreased by 1% since the start of the pandemic, and felt this was testament to resident's who continued to strive to pay their bills in difficult times. He added this figure was also helped by the government's furlough and support schemes, which had ensured people continued to get paid when their place of work had been closed. He also highlighted the work of the revenue and collection's department who operated a scheme of compassionate collections, in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau. He stated that he would therefore work with the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a piece of work regarding compassionate collections to ensure the system continued to benefit resident's, and to listen to any suggestions or feedback from the scrutiny committee to improve the service. He felt that although this KPI had not met its target, it was a pleasing outturn as it showed residents had been supported, and with the ongoing Corporate Overview and Scrutiny work, they would continue to be supported in future.

Councillor Huelin thanked Thurrock's staff and senior officers for their hard work throughout the pandemic, as she felt they had ensured KPIs remained high even during a difficult year. She also thanked the voluntary sector for their support to the Council during COVID and hoped that the flexibility and trust shown throughout the pandemic would continue. Councillor Spillman thanked all outgoing housing officers, including Roger Harris and Carol Hinvest for their hard work throughout the pandemic, as well as the outgoing Housing Portfolio Holder, Councillor Barry Johnson. He stated that during the pandemic, 100% of reported rough sleepers had been housed, and felt the

housing team should be proud of this figure. He stated that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were also pleased with this statistic. Councillor Coxshall also congratulated all local businesses that survived and flourished throughout the pandemic. He stated that although 1000 Thurrock jobs had been lost because of COVID-19, businesses had proven they were resilient and would continue to grow once the pandemic was over.

The Leader again thanked officers and residents for their hard work and support throughout the pandemic, and felt everyone had been resilient and tried their best. He stated that COVID-19 had almost been an overnight situation for council officers, as they had made the switch to home-based working, and felt this had been managed well. He then highlighted page 34 of the agenda, and felt that officers and residents should be proud of the list of achievements. He stated that 4000 potholes filled in 2020/21 was a good achievement, and although Thurrock was not pothole free, it was now better than it was last year. He added that a 5% increase in parents receiving their first place preference school was also good, but could still be improved upon.

The Leader also thanked Councillor Gerrish for his hard work as Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny, and wished the new Chair well in her current role. He then highlighted page 41 of the agenda and the KPI relating to payment of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN). He stated that the target had been 70%, and only 49% of FPNs had been paid on time. He explained that he would speak to officers to ensure the payment rate was increased, whilst still remaining sympathetic and compassionate. He urged residents to not drop litter, cigarette butts, or fly-tip to avoid receiving FPNs. Councillor Hebb added that this KPI had also been discussed during last night's Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting, and felt that there had been unanimity in the approach to this KPI.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators, in particular those areas which were off target and the impact of COVID-19.

2. Identified any areas which required additional consideration during 2021/22.

The meeting finished at 7.26 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**