

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 July 2021 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 12 July 2021 at 5.00pm

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

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

Councillor John Kent
Councillor Sara Muldowney
Councillor Fraser Massey, Chair Lower Thames Crossing Task Force
Councillor Alex Anderson, Chair Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being livestreamed onto the Council's website.

11. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

13. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Coxshall declared a non-pecuniary interest relating to Item 21 as his partner was a Board Member for Thames Freeport.

14. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by outlining the next steps in the roadmap out of COVID lockdown and explained that the Prime Minister announced this week that COVID rules would move towards guidance and encouragement. He explained that 60% of the population now had two vaccines, which had weakened the link between COVID cases and hospitalisations. He urged residents to take personal responsibility regarding COVID and stated that even though case numbers remained low in Thurrock, they were on the rise. He stated that in the past seven days 4799 COVID tests had been carried out

in Thurrock, which was an increase on the week before. He described how in the previous week there had been 12 cases in people aged 15-18; 60 cases in people aged 18-49; 2 cases in people aged 50-59; 1 case in people aged 60-69; and 0 cases in people aged 70+. He stated that all case numbers per age group had decreased from the previous week, other than cases in people aged 15-18. He summarised and highlighted that cases in Thurrock were currently 45.3 per 100,000 and Thurrock were 144th out of 149 unitary authorities in regards to COVID cases.

The Leader moved on and explained that, along with the Deputy Mayor, he had recently raised the flag to celebrate the NHS' 73rd birthday. He thanked all NHS staff for their hard work during the pandemic and felt it had been good to meet paramedics and ambulance crew members during the ceremony to discuss their experiences. He moved on and stated that he felt the agenda for the evenings meeting would be exciting, as it covered numerous regeneration projects, including the Towns Fund and new underpass. He explained that work was nearly complete on the new Civic Offices building and planning permission was being sought for the old State Cinema. He stated that if planning permission was granted the State Cinema would become the largest high street Wetherspoons in the UK. He explained that new homes would also be built on the old Civic Offices site, which would provide good town centre housing for people.

The Leader stated that on Friday Thurrock would be raising the flag to remember the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, during which 800 Bosnian Muslims tragically lost their lives. He stated that many survivors of the massacre were flown to the UK for medical treatment, and many relocated permanently to Thurrock. The Leader summarised with the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It update and highlighted that since April 2020 927 potholes had been filled; 31 fly-tips had been cleared; 4615 tonnes of waste had been cleared; and 763 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued. He urged residents to report missed bin collections, or other issues, using the Council's website as this meant the issue could be sent directly to the relevant team for them to action. The Leader summarised and wished England the best of luck in the Euro 2020 semi-final against Denmark.

15. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Hebb highlighted that officers had recently undertaken work to quantify the carbon footprint of assets, following the Council's motion to declare a climate emergency. He stated that the Rockfire Portfolio had generated 516,000 Megawatts of electricity in 2020, which was enough to power 178,000 homes for approximately one year. He stated that this was over double the number of homes in Thurrock, which meant the energy produced could power Thurrock for two years. He added that the Portfolio had also avoided 220,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere, which equated to removing approximately 71,000 petrol or diesel cars off the road for one year. He felt that the Portfolio had made a good environmental contribution and had had a positive impact. He stated that

although the investment approach was now being wound down, the Portfolio had earned approximately £100m for Thurrock Council and had made a positive environmental impact. He stated that the investment approach had helped increase reserves, improve services, and reduce carbon, and had managed to withstand a global pandemic.

Councillor Johnson stated that Thurrock had recently undergone an OFSTED inspection regarding vulnerable children. He explained that only verbal feedback had currently been received, but there was an overall positive message. He stated that there had been some learning points to take on board, which would provide the route to enhancing the service. He felt proud that Children's Social Care had gone from an OFSTED rating of 'needs improvement' to 'good', and commented that the team were now working hard to improve the rating to 'outstanding'. He explained that the draft outcome letter would be received on 14 July, to which Thurrock would then make comments, with the final letter being received in early August. He summarised and thanked the government for continuing to provide free school meals during the summer holidays, and highlighted that meals would also be provided to funded activity centres too.

16. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

17. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader stated that two questions had been submitted by non-Executive Members.

The first question was asked by Councillor Muldowney and read "Chadwell residents have had no opportunity to make their views known to Cabinet ahead of their decision on Item 12 tonight. Will the relevant Cabinet Member agree to consult with local residents before selling off the green fields opposite Cole Avenue?" Councillor Coxshall responded and explained that the land in question was farmland and would be offered as a sale to the farmer, to allow him to continue farming the land. He stated that there was currently no public access to the site, and Thurrock were not planning on selling the land for development, but were selling the land to increase investment. He felt that Thurrock Council should not own pubs, restaurants or farmland, and stated that the funds generated from the sale of these assets would be used to improve services, for example fixing potholes, and maintaining parks.

Councillor Muldowney thanked Councillor Coxshall for his answer and felt pleased to hear that the land would not be sold for development. She highlighted that once the land had been sold to the farmer, it would then be his decision as to what to do with the land, and continued use as farmland could not be guaranteed. She then queried what consultation had been undertaken prior to the decision to sell the land. Councillor Coxshall

responded that as the land was not an operational asset, consultation was not required. He commented that the farmer already farmed the land in question, and would continue to do so. He stated that all Members would have a chance to decide which areas in Thurrock were developed as part of the Local Plan process and the call for sites.

Councillor J Kent arrived at the meeting at 7.22pm.

The second question was then asked by Councillor J Kent and read “back in January 2017, as the Leader of the Council, you said; “central to the future of Grays is the re-provision of a new, modern and fit for purpose theatre.” You went on to say; “to be very clear - Thameside will remain open until new provision is available.” Do you stand by that promise? The Leader responded that lots had changed since 2017, particularly with the onset of COVID, which had moved the Council into a budget deficit. He stated that Thurrock were therefore considering how services were delivered in future, and explained that the Thameside building was fifty years old and not currently fit for purpose. He stated that the building included many services, not limited to the theatre, and would require lots of capital investment to keep running. He added that Thurrock had also made a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, and Thameside did not meet this goal. He explained that Thurrock would continue to analyse its operational model over the coming months and would work with vendors to try and move operations to different buildings. He felt that a small theatre was no longer what was needed, and Thurrock would look into what could be provided across the borough. He summarised and stated that Thurrock would work with external partners to regenerate the cultural offer across Thurrock.

Councillor Kent thanked the Leader for his response and felt that Thameside was much more than a sum of its parts, as it was the cultural heart of Thurrock and included the library, museum, and theatre. He felt that it provided the cultural energy for Thurrock and urged Cabinet to look into ways of keeping it running, for example by using arts organisations or community enterprises. The Leader replied and stated that conversations were currently ongoing with a number of external partners, as well as with members of the Production Corridor, as part of a wider arts agenda across the south east. He stated that work would continue with partners to reform the service and make Thameside a centre that works for 2021 and in future.

Councillor Muldowney and Councillor Kent left the meeting – 7.26pm.

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

The Leader stated that Councillor Anderson as Chair of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee was attending the meeting to provide feedback on Item 23. Other than those items already contained within the agenda, no items had been referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an overview and scrutiny committee.

19. Lower Thames Crossing Task Force Update Report (Decision: 110566)

Councillor Massey, as Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, introduced the report and stated that it covered meetings held between February and March 2021. He stated that in February, Highways England had attended the Task Force and given a detailed presentation on green infrastructure, biodiversity, and woodlands, and the Task Force had expressed their concerns over proposals. He explained that Highways England had also presented on Public Rights of Way, and the Task Force had queried whether these could be opened before route opening. Councillor Massey explained that they were still waiting on an answer to this question, but felt it was good to see increased engagement from Highways England. He urged Members to read the minutes from this meeting, which could be viewed at: [Agenda for Lower Thames Crossing Task Force on Monday, 15th February, 2021, 6.00 pm | Thurrock Council](#). He stated that the Task Force had also considered the government's Energy White Paper at February's meeting and looked into how changes to electric vehicle policies could impact the Lower Thames Crossing scheme. He mentioned that the Task Force had also received updates on the Hatch mitigation document, and explained that discussions were ongoing regarding this.

Councillor Massey then outlined March's Task Force meeting, during which three technical papers had been presented on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Health Impact Assessment (HIA); and CO2 emissions. He commented that Highways England were currently revising the EIA and Thurrock were making comments, as well as comparing the new version to the first version submitted at Development Consent Order (DCO). He stated that Thurrock were also following the same process for the HIA, and felt that although progress was being made on this document, the Task Force still had concerns regarding data, methodology and results. He stated that the Task Force had also looked into CO2 emissions and how these could be mitigated, including by using Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) targets and willow tree planting for carbon offsetting. Councillor Massey summarised and stated that Highways England would be launching a new consultation on 14 July, which would run until 8 September. He explained that the consultation would be undertaken both virtually and in-person, if guidelines allowed, and urged all Members and residents to take part.

Councillor Coxshall thanked Councillor Massey for his presentation, and felt that the Task Force updates were helpful in allowing Cabinet to understand their work. He asked if the Task Force had felt that Highways England engagement had improved since their management structure changes had occurred. Councillor Massey agreed that engagement had improved recently, and felt reports were more detailed and more information was being provided. The Leader felt it was good to see more engagement with Highways England.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the work of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

Councillor Massey left the meeting at 7.36pm.

20. 2020/21 Financial Outturn Report (Decision: 110567)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that it provided a rear view look at the 2020/21 financial year, and stated that even though it had been difficult year due to COVID, Thurrock had managed to balance the budget. He stated this was partly due to £14m in government support, as well as the use of reserves, and £100m from investments into solar and wind farms. He stated that although it had been a difficult year for Thurrock, they had fared better than other Councils such as Slough and Croydon who had been financially mismanaged. He explained that as the Council had not invested in property, investments had continued to pay out throughout the pandemic and therefore £14.8m had been spent on protecting the vulnerable during COVID. He thanked officers, private industry, and the voluntary sector for their help during the pandemic, as well as support from central government which had helped to bridge the funding gap. He explained that during the pandemic Thurrock had not utilised its general reserves, and had continued to earn income from investments. He thanked teams across the Council, particularly public health, social care, communities, and environment and highways for their hard work during the pandemic, as well as the finance team. He stated that £92m had been spent on capital projects during this time, and the Council still planned to spend £200m on upcoming projects in future, particularly to develop concepts to reduce traffic from Lakeside in West Thurrock and Chafford Hundred. He felt that although the task ahead was large, it was important to recognise and thank officers for their hard work so far.

The Leader echoed Councillor Hebb's comments and thanked officers and the voluntary sector for their hard work throughout the pandemic. He added that although £14m had been gifted from central government, not all of this had been spent yet, and this would continue to help with the effects of the pandemic. He added that Thurrock had worked hard to deliver food parcels to those who had needed them during the height of lockdown, and felt pleased that in some cases it had taken less than four hours from a resident reporting they needed a food parcel to it being delivered to them. He felt pleased to see that Thurrock continued to fight the pandemic, and stated that grants were still incoming.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted that the General Fund next expenditure had been met within the overall budget envelope, and the General Fund Balance had been maintained at £11m.

2. Noted that the balance remaining on the Housing Revenue Account

Reserve had been maintained at £2.175m.

3. Noted that there was a total of £92.125m in capital expenditure, and some of the key projects had been set out in section 5.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

21. Asset Review and Disposals (Decision: 110568)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that work had begun on this report in 2017 when he had been tasked with looking at all Council owned assets and had developed the 3Rs policy of release, retain and reuse. He stated that the asset review was not just about buildings, but was centred on delivering good services, and being transparent with residents. He explained that Thurrock worked to speak with tenants, land owners and neighbours of those assets affected by the review, and Members would always announce interests regarding these assets to ensure maximum transparency. He stated that many of the buildings due to be disposed of were decades old and not fit for purpose, particularly when trying to deliver carbon neutral buildings. He explained that the Council would use the money made from the sale of assets to reinvest into services, and improve services for residents. He thanked the Chief Executive and the assets team for their hard work on the project.

Councillor Huelin echoed comments made by Councillor Coxshall and felt that the report not only reviewed buildings, but also began a conversation into reviewing services. She highlighted point 6.6.2 of the report and felt that although it was not economically viable to retain the building, the hot meal delivery service would continue, but from another building that was fit for purpose. She also highlighted the arts offer in Thurrock and stated that during the height of COVID, the Thameside team had worked hard to provide virtual engagement for residents, and felt that this highlighted how COVID had changed the arts offer. She explained that the arts had become more important during the pandemic, and felt that there were numerous other venues across the borough that could promote the arts, which was not limited to the Thameside. She added that proposals would be brought forward to Cabinet that would highlight the new arts strategy, and this report would open conversations with partners to build offers.

Councillor Coxshall added that he understood the importance of arts and culture for Thurrock, and this was outlined in the Council's 'work, live, play' strategy, which would be discussed throughout the agenda. He stated that there were numerous other cultural hubs across the borough, such as the Opera House in Purfleet, the heritage hubs in Tilbury, and the leisure hubs in Grays. The Leader added that under regulations introduced in 2010, community interest groups could make a bid for the Thameside building. Councillor Spillman felt that the report highlighted that all options were still on the table, and up for discussion. He felt excited to see the changes being made in Grays, and felt it was developing from a shopping space to a leisure and entertainment space. He explained that the report would start a wider

conversation into the arts offer, and development in Grays, such as the beach, would improve the area.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Declared the operational properties in 6.6 surplus to requirements, and would receive a report back, where applicable, on the future of the sites and any alternative delivery considerations.

2. Approved the immediate release and declared surplus the properties shown in Appendix 1.

3. Delegated authority of the disposal to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Leader and the completion of a delegated authority decision report.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

22. 2021/22 Capital Programme Update (Decision: 110569)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that this had been reviewed since the pandemic and £12m of capital projects had been deferred, and £19m of capital projects had been cancelled. He stated that this would reduce the MRP requirement and reduce the finance needed for the capital programme. He stated that although COVID had impacted on some capital projects, the introduction of the Freeport at the end of the year would increase investment opportunities. Councillor Hebb then highlighted that two projects had been reviewed and given priority. He stated that the first priority project would be the Grays South Underpass, which required a further £11m of investment and would ensure the Council's ambitions were realised. He stated that the second priority project was the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project, which would begin again after some delay. He stated that a recent audit had been undertaken, and this had found that the project could be completed in phases, but would need to go through planning permission before going to tender. He explained that the plans for the station had changed to benefit residents based on local community feedback, and that the station project had been ready to go for six months. He urged the Planning Committee to not delay the station plans, when brought before their Committee.

Councillor Coxshall felt pleased to see funding was being committed to Stanford-le-Hope station ensure the project's completion. The Leader agreed and added it was also good to see the project could be completed in phases. The Leader stated that it had been five years since the first tranche of money had been allocated to the Grays South Underpass, and felt pleased that it was now close to being delivered.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the outturn position on the 2020/21 Capital Programme and the current Authorised Capital Expenditure between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

2. Noted the outcome of the review of the Capital Programme and the funding associated with projects that are not expected to progress.

3. Approved the proposed capital virements to reallocate capital funding with the programme to Grays South and the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange.

4. Approved the proposal to address further financial risk within the existing capital programme.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

23. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals (Decision: 110570)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that the Council currently faced a choice to either increase taxation for residents in future, or reform services and reduce the size of the Council. Councillor Hebb explained that reform of services would bring about a larger change, as council tax receipts would reduce due to the impact of COVID, and the outstanding tax bill would be rolled forward into the next financial year. He added that currently a number of services would not earn due to the pandemic, and therefore numerous difficult decisions had to be made. He mentioned that in previous years £100m earned in investments would have helped to balance the budgets, but due to new rules against Council investments, Thurrock could no longer undertake this approach.

Councillor Hebb explained that the future plan would be to reform services and change delivery, for example by focussing on the core services offered by the Council. He stated that Thurrock would look into the sale of assets, and how some services could be undertaken in different surroundings. He added that some services offered by the Council were discretionary and could not be offered post-COVID, and this would mean some non-critical posts, particularly relating to capital projects, could not be maintained. He explained that staff structures would therefore be reformed and projects would not be taken forward. He explained that these proposals would be put to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments and feedback, to promote openness and authenticity. He added that officers would also be looking to income generation, for example through house building. Councillor Hebb summarised and stated that tough decisions would need to be made, but it would produce a more sustainable council, and would reduce the deficit to approximately £3.7m.

Councillor Spillman felt that the poor narrative surrounding the investment

approach had not helped confidence in the scheme, and this had reduced the Council's income by £100m. He felt that officers had done a good job on the investment strategy, and Thurrock had not made the same mistakes as other councils who had invested in property. He thanked the Corporate Director of Resource and Place Delivery for his hard work on the budget and the investment strategy, and added that it would be good to see future income from the Freeport, which would benefit both the Council and residents. Councillor Hebb echoed Councillor Spillman's comments and added that the investment strategy had also helped Thurrock work towards their carbon neutral goal. He felt that the investment strategy had also made Thurrock more entrepreneurial, and although investments could no longer continue, Thurrock would continue to look at all income options.

The Leader stated that Thurrock would need to embrace change in the future and become smarter in regards to ways of working. He felt that lots of tough decisions would need to be made in the future, particularly surrounding reshaping services. He stated that the Freeport would help improve tax receipts in future, and would increase confidence in Thurrock.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Noted and commented on the financial forecasts included within the report.**
- 2. Noted the ongoing work of officers and will receive a further report in September.**
- 3. Recommended that the proposals set out in Appendix 1 be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and be referred back to Cabinet in September 2021.**

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

24. Housing Delivery Approach (Decision: 110571)

Councillor Spillman introduced the report and stated that it would begin a new phase of housing delivery, which would benefit Thurrock and neighbouring boroughs. He explained that housing delivery had been difficult during COVID, but Thurrock had maintained their ambitious projects. He commented that initial discussions had been positive, and numerous housing delivery methods had been discussed, such as joint ventures with partners, and through Thurrock Regenerations Ltd. He stated that the approach would include both social housing and affordable homes, and felt this was supported by the government and Secretary of State for Housing. He added that work would also be undertaken on homelessness, and he thanked the outgoing directors and previous Portfolio Holder for their hard work on this issue.

Councillor Coxshall added that a recent White Paper from the Secretary of

State had declared the housing market broken, and planning reform needed to be implemented. He explained that this had been delayed due to COVID, but would be implemented in future and would help to deliver affordable housing in Thurrock, as well as Thurrock's 'live, work, play' agenda.

The Leader added that he had recently attended the virtual Local Government Association conference, where they had had discussions regarding affordable rent and social housing. He stated that Thurrock would work hard to attract builders and property developers to Thurrock, particularly building different types of homes, such as modular homes.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported the approach to Housing Delivery as set out in the report.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

25. Town Funds: Update and Next Steps (Decision: 110572)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that the Council were currently waiting on the green light from the government to move forward with the business case, which should be received shortly. He explained that post-Brexit the government had offered £25m in investment to the 100 most in need towns, which included Tilbury and Grays. He explained that the money would be used in Grays to fund: a new jetty, which would capitalise on tourists travelling to the area for the London Resort; a new river activity centre; a new promenade; and development of Grays beach park to include a new restaurant and outdoor entertainment area. He described how the new river activity centre would become a new home for the Thurrock Sea Cadets and would include areas for canoeing and kayaking. He explained that the money would be used in Tilbury to fund: an £8m new youth centre; a new community centre; a new jetty; and new play equipment and sports pitches in parks. He added that these projects had to be delivered by 2025 otherwise the money would need to be returned to the government.

Councillor Mayes felt it was good to see regeneration in Tilbury, including the new youth centre. He stated that he had spoken to local residents who were excited for the centre and felt it would transform young people's lives in Tilbury. Councillor Coxshall echoed these comments and thanked the regeneration team for their hard work on the Towns Fund. The Leader felt that these projects would benefit both towns, particularly with the development of beaches, and would make them destinations. He also felt it was good to see a new river activity centre, which would help young people and adults in Thurrock.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the opportunity, risks, obligations and implications outlined the

report and its appendices. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to agree the final terms of the Town Deal and to subsequently enter into any agreements required to secure the grant funding, including committing the Council to becoming the Accountable Body.

2. Confirmed support for the projects proposed in the TIPs and approved in principle the commitment of the Council assets and resources set out in Appendix 4, subject to viable business cases being developed and formal consideration once this has been completed.

3. Approved the proposed governance structure for the future stages of the Town Deal.

4. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to commence procurement exercises and award tenders to secure external support to develop and deliver the projects.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

26. Approval of Naming & Numbering of Streets and Highway Assets Policy

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that it was a statutory duty of Thurrock Council to name and number streets in the borough. He explained that currently there was no policy or framework in place, and the new proposed policy would help officers to develop best practice. He stated that the only substantive change in the proposed policy would be to introduce the opportunity to name streets after people. He felt this would increase civic pride, and would give residents the opportunity to suggest people who had influenced the borough, or the wider UK.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the above named policy and processes contained therein for implementation.

27. Highways Street Lighting Central Management System (Decision: 110573)

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that the proposal would help the highways team manage and maintain the 21,000 street lights across Thurrock. He stated that it would also reduce the number of residents

reporting broken street lights, as all street lights would now be monitored remotely, and the system would be able to identify broken light columns. He added that this would produce a financial saving, as well as reducing the Council's carbon footprint. He clarified that this report did not introduce part night lighting across the borough. He explained that conversations were currently taking place with officers to dim lights in certain areas, but this would be minimal and experts had ascertained that the proposed dimness would not be detectable by the human eye.

Councillor Hebb thanked Councillor Maney for the report and felt that it would increase preventative maintenance of lighting columns, and would help to identify failures quicker. The Leader added that the highways team spent a lot of time maintaining street lights, and the new central management system would make their job easier and quicker, as well as reducing their carbon footprint.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the commencement of the tender process and subsequent award of a contract to install a Central Management System for Highways Street lighting.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

28. Procurement of Energy for Thurrock Council (Decision: 110574)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it sought the renewal and procurement of energy contracts for the next four years.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Authorised the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery to:

a. Enter into a gas, electricity and water contracts through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) frameworks.

b. Seek procurement approval on the open market and award under alternative frameworks if suitable options become available, subject to compliance with the relevant procurement rules, in order to secure the continued purchase of gas, electricity and water for a further period of four years until the end of September 2025.

c. Review and select the best cost options for zero carbon electricity sources, should the default cost neutral option not be available.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

29. Thurrock Better Care Fund Section 75 Agreement (Decision: 110575)

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that it sought to renew the Better Care Fund, which pooled resources and focussed on the health and wellbeing of residents. She stated that the Better Care Fund reduced the rate residents needed to enter care homes and reduced the need for hospitalisations, by using a joined up approach to adult social care. She summarised and stated that the contributions to funding needed the agreement of Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported and considered the continuation of Better Care Fund arrangements and plans in place for 2021/22, and approved the Section 75 Agreement as set out in the paper.

2. Delegated authority for the 2021/22 Section 75 Agreements and Better Care Fund plans to be agreed by the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities.

3. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities, to agree annual Section 75 Agreements and Better Care Fund plans and proposals for applicable periods as required, effective from 2021/22.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

30. Thames Freeport Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) to government (Decision: 110576)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and explained that the next steps would be to move to sign off the FBC in summer 2021, allowing the first Freeport in the UK to open in Thurrock by the end of the year, depending on government approval. He explained that the Freeport would bring in between £200m and £300m to the Council by 2030, and would allow for investment across the borough in areas such as new parks and leisure centres. He stated that Thurrock were also in conversation with partners to transform the petrol storage in Thurrock to hydrogen storage, which would benefit Thurrock residents for generations to come, by making Thurrock London's hydrogen storage hub. He added that this report moved the project forward and would ensure the growth of opportunities in Thurrock.

Councillor Hebb felt that the Freeport would be the biggest innovation in Thurrock, surpassing the investment seen since the introduction of Lakeside, and the London Gateway. He mentioned that it would also help to improve

neighbouring boroughs along the estuary and Members would continue to campaign for ideas, such as connecting the Freeport to the Stanford-le-Hope Industrial Park. Councillor Coxshall agreed with Councillor Hebb's comments and felt that all Members needed to sell the Freeport, as well as helping external partners, such as the ports, sell themselves. He stated that the Freeport would bring approximately 25,000 jobs into Thurrock, as well as an additional £300m in business rates. The Leader summarised and thanked the Chief Executive for her hard work on the project. He added that many other projects were also in the pipeline, such as the South East Essex Park which would run from Brentwood to Rochford and increase blue and green infrastructure in Essex.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported in principle the development and submission of the OBC (July 2021) and the FBC (Autumn 2021) to government.

2. Endorsed the continued engagement of officers with partners to develop the OBC and FBC, and delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning, and External Relationships, as well as the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, and Monitoring Office, to sign-off and agree to the formal arrangements for the Council's role in the Freeport's governance structure and enter into appropriate arrangements.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

31. Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass - Project Progress (Decision: 110577)

The Leader stated that there was an exempt appendix to the report, and Members should only discuss this if Cabinet agreed to enter into an exempt session. He added that Councillor Anderson had also attended the Cabinet meeting to discuss the outcome from discussions of the report from the Planning, Transport and Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had taken place the previous night.

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it was good to see the Chair of PTR had attended the meeting, and felt it was good to see Cabinet being challenged by the scrutiny function. He explained that the report presented good news as the project moved from phase three to phase four, in the eight phase strategy. He described how Cabinet had chosen the design last year, and this had been improved since then as the underpass had been widened, and additional opportunities for shops had been included in the designs. He stated that the Council planned to invest £37m into the scheme, £23m of which had been discussed earlier as capital project investment, and this would help to rejuvenate Grays high street and connect

Grays South with Grays North, which had been divided by the railway line almost 100 years ago.

Councillor Anderson explained that the report had been discussed at the previous night's PTR O&S Committee, and they had debated the three recommendations in great detail. He explained that recommendation 1 had been agreed, but the wording had changed from 'endorsed project next steps' to 'noted project next steps'. He stated that recommendation 2 regarding delegated authority had also been agreed, but Members wanted to see regular briefing notes brought before the Committee. He added that Members had not approved recommendation 3 as they had believed not information had been provided regarding a detailed cost plan. He commented that Members had not expressed dissatisfaction with the project progress, but had felt unable to make a decision due to the lack of information. Councillor Anderson noted that an exempt appendix had been included in the Cabinet papers, and this had not been made available to the Committee. He felt that this appendix might have been useful for the Committee to see.

Councillor Coxshall responded and stated that Cabinet would consider in future allowing access to exempt information for overview and scrutiny committees, or holding private and closed briefing sessions for scrutiny members.

The Leader stated that based on the comments made at PTR Overview and Scrutiny Committee, an addition would be made to recommendation 2 outlining that regular briefing notes would be brought before the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Endorsed the next steps in the programme for the project.**
- 2. Delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, the procurement for the next contract stages set out in the programme. Regular briefing notes on project progress would be provided to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.**
- 3. Approved the latest iteration of the cost plan appended to this report, including paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9, and noted the efforts made to continue to drive cost efficiency.**

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

- 32. Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass - Land Assembly (Decision: 110578)**

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it provided delegated authority for the Council to use compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) if necessary. He clarified that Thurrock did not want to use these powers, and hoped agreement would be reached with the shop owners and land owners through conversation. The Leader added that the Council would work with businesses in the area to ensure they survived and thrived. He stated that the Council would try and avoid using CPO powers where necessary as these could prolong the process, increase stress for landowners, and cost lots of money in legal fees.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Resolved that the Council use its compulsory purchase powers pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire all land and rights to deliver the scheme, and to issue appropriate notices as required to acquire land required to deliver the scheme.**
- 2. Noted that the regeneration team is progressing negotiations to acquire the land interests required by private treaty, and delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, to approve and enter into agreements with the owners and/or occupiers of the land so as to facilitate acquisition.**
- 3. Noted the progress on the land referencing exercise, and if required, delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Affairs, and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance, to issue requisitions for information pursuant to section 5A of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 to persons who have a potential legal interest in or who occupy the area in respect of which compulsory purchase powers are proposed to be used.**
- 4. Authorised the regeneration team, under the direction of the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery to undertake the work needed to prepare for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order(s) (CPO) together with the supporting documentation and proceed to make the CPOs.**
- 5. Resolved that any land acquired by the Council by private treaty within the area shown red on the plan at Appendix1 that would be required in order to facilitate the Scheme, shall be acquired for planning purposes pursuant to section 227 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.**
- 6. Noted that pursuant section 203 and 204 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, land acquired under sections 226 or 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 may then be developed and used in accordance with planning permission for the proposed scheme**

notwithstanding any interference with any subsisting interests, rights or restrictions (subject to the payment of compensation calculated in accordance with sections 7 and 10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965.

7. In the event that Blight Notices under section 150 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 are served upon the Council, delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Affairs, and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance to acquire land or reject the Blight Notices as appropriate.

8. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director, Resources and Place Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director for Law and Governance to grant any internal approvals necessary in order to allow the scheme to progress.

9. Approved the appropriation of the Council's current landholdings described in this report for the planning purpose to facilitate the scheme including:

- (i) Undertaking the required Advertising of the intention to appropriate land currently used as public open space and;
 - a. In the event that any objections are received, reporting the content and consideration of those objections to a future meeting of Cabinet;
 - b. In the event that no objections are received, to continue with the appropriation with no further report to Cabinet.
- (ii) Noted that it is necessary to use Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to facilitate the development and improvement of the land as will form part of the planning permission in order for any and all private rights and restrictions that affect the land to be overridden.
- (iii) Authorised Officers to take such necessary administrative and accounting steps to give effect to the appropriation (including settling claims for compensation arising out of the extinguishment of any rights in the appropriated land pursuant to Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

The meeting finished at 9.25 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**