

Minutes of the Meeting of the General Services Committee held on 10 October 2023 at 6.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Andrew Jefferies (Chair), John Kent (Vice-Chair), Deborah Arnold, Kairen Raper, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman and Lee Watson (Substitute) (substitute for Lynn Worrall)
- Apologies:** Councillor Lynn Worrall
- In attendance:** Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Steven Mair, Interim Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer
Patrick McDermott, Chief of Staff to the Thurrock Commissioners
Elizabeth Roy, Senior HR Business Partner
Elaine Sheridan, Electoral Services Manager
Nicole Wood, ECC Best Value Commissioner
Greg Hayes, Tile Hill Recruitment Consultants
Anthony Lewis, Tile Hill Recruitment Consultants
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

19. Public Minutes

Public Minutes of the General Services Committee held on the 24 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

20. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

21. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest made.

At 6.02pm, the meeting went into exempt session.

22. Shortlisting - Assistant Chief Executive, Executive Director of Place, Chief Financial Officer and Executive Director of Corporate Services (Monitoring Officer)

Exempt session.

23. Exempt Minutes

Exempt Minutes of the General Services Committee held on the 24 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

24. Post Election Report - 4 May 2023

At 6.58pm, Jackie Hinchliffe, Liz Roy and Tile Hill left the meeting.

At 6.58pm, the meeting reconvened into public session.

At 6.58pm, Asmat Hussain, Steven Mair and Elaine Sheridan joined the meeting.

The report presented shared with General Services Committee the outcome and review of Elections for the Council by thirds, which took place on the 4 May 2023.

The following points were raised:

- Member referred to paragraph 2.6, confirmation was given that the 8 Inspectors were staff of the returning officer.
- Member referred to paragraph 3.2, 51 people refused ballot papers and questioned whether this figure could be broken down into wards as this would be useful to understand the reasoning. (see action point 1)
- Member referred to paragraph 3.7, 218 voter authority certificates applications received and questioned how this compared to other local authorities close to Thurrock. Electoral Services Manager stated that a lot of local authorities had found the number to be lower than expected.
- Member referred to paragraph 6.1, questioned whether the complaints regarding intimidation and fly posting were in the same ward. It was confirmed the fly posting occurred in the Stanford le Hope area with details not being to hand for the intimidation complaint. The Monitoring Officer confirmed the process undertaken in this instance.
- Member noted from results of the survey that 100% respondents answered they had enjoyed their day.
- Member stated the ID Data had limited value.
- Members stated that it was disappointing that some electors were unable to vote.
- Member praised the work undertaken by the elections team.
- Member questioned the overall cost for the election to which the Electoral Services Manager stated this was contained within the budget set for the election. (see action point 2)
- Member requested that a post election report be provided after every election.
- Member requested information on Postal Vote Amendments to enable members to help residents and provide support for those already on postal vote and for those residents not able to use IT. Electoral Services Manager would like to arrange to meet with group leaders and

independent members to share the information coming from the Elections Act. Understand what help could be provided, help those who were digitally challenged, communications and what would help assist members working with the elections team. (see action point 3)

- Members agreed it was important to reach out to those residents who were not digitally engaged but wanted to vote.
- Member referred to the Voter Authority Certificate and how he had assisted residents and was amazed on the quick service.
- The Electoral Services Manager stated measures were already in place to reach out to residents, such as Local Area Coordinators assisting residents, help line, contact centre and having the option of a postal vote.

Actions:

1. Electoral Services Manager to check whether this information could be broken down into ward level and whether this information was available on the web site.
2. Electoral Services Manager to share overall costings for the election.
3. Electoral Services Manager to liaise with group leaders and independent members.

RESOLVED

The General Services Committee noted that a high-level report with data and general information be taken to General Services Committee for noting and comments.

25. Polling District and Places Review 2023

The report presented to the detailed plans for a statutory review of polling districts and polling places within Thurrock.

The following points were raised:

- Member stated there was a need to move away from temporary polling stations.
- Member questioned when the boundary review would be undertaken and how permanent those polling stations would be if the boundary review took place in 2025/26.
- Member raised concern that a lot of money could be spent creating new permanent polling stations, which would then need to be changed based on the consequences of the boundary review. Members were informed as part of the consultation proposed to remove temporary polling stations which were inadequate and more expensive than using existing buildings. There was no intention to add costs but to make this more efficient and accessible for residents within the boundary currently constituted.
- Member referred to Polling District Y, Grays Thurrock Ward, for a consultation on moving the polling station back to Stanley Lazell Hall which would then be in the centre of the ward. (see action point 1)

- The Monitoring Officer advised for a further recommendation to be added that once the consultation had concluded a report would be tabled to full council.

Actions:

1. Electoral Services Manager to look at the proposals following the meeting.

RESOLVED

1. **General Services Committee noted the report and plans outlined within the report.**
2. **Once the consultation had concluded a report would be tabled to full council.**

At 7.23pm, Elaine Sheridan left the meeting.

26. Employment Matter - Finance Department Restructure - to follow

The report presented set out the process and timescale for implementation, the wider outcome of the consultation and other related matters in relation to the structure of the finance department.

Members noted the report and agreed the recommendation.

RESOLVED

General Services Committee agreed the addition of an Assistant Director post within the revised structure of the Finance Department.

The public recording of this meeting can be found from the following link:

[General Services Committee - Tuesday 10 October 2023, 6:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

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