

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 September 2016 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Cathy Kent (Mayor), Tunde Ojetola (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Russell Cherry, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Oliver Gerrish (arrived 7.07), Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Clifford Holloway, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Sue MacPherson, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Deborah Stewart, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler

**Apologies:** Councillors James Baker, Clare Baldwin, Leslie Gamester, Victoria Holloway, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Ben Maney and David Potter.

**In attendance:** Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive  
Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place  
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health  
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT  
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation  
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services  
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service  
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer  
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

### **42. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 27 July 2016 were approved as a correct record.

### **43. Items of Urgent Business**

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

#### **44. Declaration of Interests**

Councillor Cherry declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 12: Members Questions as he was a member of Essex Police.

#### **45. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council**

Firstly, the Mayor invited all those present to reflect and remember Thurrock's fallen of World War One.

The Mayor announced the sad loss of Jonathan Catton who had spent nearly 30 years of his life working for Thurrock Council.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, echoed the sad news of Jonathan Catton and stated that he would be a true loss to the borough.

The Leader gave members an update on the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It campaign and the number of road defects that had been repaired.

On the spot fines would now be enforced by environment officers for any persons littering in the borough.

The Leader announced that Councillor Hague had stepped down as Deputy Leader of the Council and from his Portfolio for Business due to the ill health of his wife. The Leader thanked Councillor Hague for the experience and knowledge that he had brought to the borough and announced that Councillor Hebb would now become the Deputy Leader of the Council.

Councillor MacPherson would now join the Cabinet as Portfolio Holder to cover Public Protection and Communities.

In line with the Constitution the Leader stated that he would notify the Chief Executive of these changes.

#### **46. 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> and are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

Mr Westall was unavailable to attend Full Council therefore his question was withdrawn and a written response will be provided as soon as practicable.

#### **47. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors**

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme no notices of petitions had been received.

**48. Petitions Update Report**

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council Meetings and Council Officers over the past six months.

**49. 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, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Council Chamber that he wished to make the following change:

- For Councillor Watkins to replace Councillor MacPherson on the Fire Authority.

Councillor Snell, Leader of the UKIP Group, informed the Council Chamber that he wished to make the following change:

- For Councillor Spillman to replace Councillor Sheridan on the Arts Council.

Councillor Kent, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Council Chamber he had no changes to make.

**50. Thurrock Local Plan: Issues and Options (Stage 1) Report of Public Consultation**

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report which provided members with a summary of the presentations made in response to the Issues and Options (Stage 1) Consultation Document and the public consultation. Councillor Coxshall stated that a large number of comments had been received from residents through the “Pants and Top” initiative and he read out some of those comments.

For the plan to go forward into Stage 2 and 3, residents’ comments would still be required which would give residents the opportunity to have their say on the way forward in the next 20 years.

Councillor Coxshall thanked the officers for their hard work and the previous administration for starting the Thurrock Local Plan.

Councillor Snell stated that requests for brown field site and green belt maps had not been made available and recommended an amendment to Recommendation 1.3 to read:

*That delegated authority to amend timescales is granted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration in consultation with the Corporate Director of*

*Environment and Place to amend the Thurrock Local Development Scheme when required.*

Councillor Jones seconded the amended recommendation.

The Mayor called a vote on Councillor Snell's amendment.

Following a clear majority in favour, the Mayor declared the amended recommendation carried.

Councillor J Kent stated he would be supporting the recommendations and that the engagement with residents was vital. His concern was from other authorities and developers requesting to build on Thurrock green belt. Councillor J Kent asked for the Leader's reassurance that he will defend Thurrock Council's position and wishes on housing.

Councillor G Rice stated that assurances should be made to ensure that DP World and the Port of Tilbury are fully supported and given sufficient land for their expansions. Councillor G Rice stated that he had heard the reason that Marks and Spencers had withdrawn their application from the trade park was because of lack of housing.

Councillor Gledhill had concerns that businesses would not come to the borough if there was insufficient housing and assured Members that due consideration would be given to any requests from other local councils.

Councillor Spillman stated the Local Plan had been a disaster in Castle Point Council due to political disagreements and appealed for consensus on Thurrock's Plan.

Councillor Halden stated that the health infrastructure in the borough required to be a big part of the plan and that the Council had to be at that stage that it was building the Thurrock that was needed.

Councillor Duffin stated that he would vote against the recommendations as ground plans had not been provided to make a properly informed decision.

Councillor B Rice thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and stated that it was essential that residents are consulted and that the consultation should be undertaken in a sensitive way with Thurrock residents in mind.

Councillor Coxshall stated the decision on providing maps would be made available in Option 2 and that there were 3 options that require consultation. The approval of Option 1 was required first.

It was also vital that residents' involvement was required to ensure that housing would be available in time for when the younger population of Thurrock needed it in the future.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations as amended.

Upon being put to the vote, 27 Members were in favour of the Amendment with 1 Member voted against and 10 Members abstained.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That Council noted progress on the preparation of the Thurrock Local Plan.**
- 2. That the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) Report of Consultation be approved by Council for publication.**
- 3. That delegated authority to amend timescales is granted to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration in consultation with the Corporate Director of Environment and Place to amend the Thurrock Local Development Scheme when required.**

### **51. Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance**

Councillor Hebb presented the report for the forthcoming 12 months and stated that it was a pleasure to be presenting this report tonight as Cabinet Member for Finance and that the finance management plan echoed the ethos:

- Chart the course for the next 30 years through the Council Spending Review to enable the right services that operate well.
- Pro-revenue Growth that means selling our services to other councils and other organisations.
- The Council to focus on the right things such as Clean It, Cut It, Fill It.

Councillor Hebb stated that Thurrock was a unique place and that Thurrock should be benchmarked as the best unitary in the land.

There would be improvements on IT security and virus threats. Councillor Hebb stated that a virus had been sent to Thurrock and the Council had been protected by an officer who identified the piece of spam mail that resulted in it being resolved.

Councillor Jones thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report and congratulated him on his new post of Deputy Leader. Councillor Jones asked the Portfolio Holder for clarification on the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It agenda and its financial implications. Councillor Hebb stated that Clean It, Cut It, Fill It was absolutely the best thing to be done and was right for Thurrock. He stated that the cost of this initiative could be fulfilled at present but he was attending a budget meeting tomorrow to identify further savings to further strengthen its financial position.

Councillor Gerrish asked the Portfolio Holder if he agreed with his own financial plan taking into account the increase of council tax by 4 per cent in coming years. Councillor Hebb stated it was actually nice to have a financial

plan and with regard to the savings over the 3 month budget period that if the leader of the Labour Party had bothered to turn up to the Comprehensive Spending Review Meeting on Monday he would have known that we had identified everything over the next three years and the proposals were being shaped and presented. Based on that Councillor Hebb stated that he was happy with his plan and would be happy to deliver the proposals of the plan to the residents of Thurrock.

Councillor Spillman stated his concerns on the consultation on the council tax support scheme and how this increase would affect the lower paid families in Thurrock. Councillor Hebb reconfirmed that the council tax support scheme was a national recognised scheme and with regards to any instances of compassionate collections where this had not been fulfilled for Thurrock residents, councillors should make direct contact with Councillor Hebb.

Councillor B Rice thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and asked how the demand in social care was to be reduced when the census states an increase for social care in Thurrock and what the effects of future cuts would mean. Councillor Hebb stated that plans were underway and that Councillor Sue Little was an excellent advocate for Children's Services and had been working with the Corporate Director of Children's Services to address such challenges.

Councillor Duffin stated that the 15 per cent budget reduction could send out the wrong message to residents of Thurrock and clarification was required to explain the Council's actions to them. Councillor Hebb explained that the Revenue Support Grant had been forever eroding and decreasing in the previous parliament and the parliament that was coming. Councillor Hebb stated that they were expecting a 15 to 20 per cent reduction over time and that the key point was what was to be done with the 80 or 85 per cent that was left and could this be looked at differently to what has happened in the past in the interest of the public.

Councillor MacPherson asked the Portfolio Holder to provide more details of the signing off process of the solar farm in Swindon. Councillor Hebb stated that this was signed off on the 19 May 2016 one week before the Conservatives took over the administration.

## **52. Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chambers that three questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and 10 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee were received.

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

Due to the lack of time the Mayor stated that the questions not dealt with those members would receive a written response as soon as practicable.

Councillor Gledhill called Point of Order at 8.34pm stating that not all Members may be aware that questions not dealt with could be withdrawn and resubmitted for the October Council.

Councillor Spillman stated that he wished to withdraw his question and resubmit for October Council.

Councillor Smith stated that he wished to withdraw his question and resubmit for October Council.

Councillor Cherry stated that he wished to withdraw his question and resubmit for October Council.

**53. Minutes of Committees**

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

**54. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year**

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

**55. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

There were no reports from Members representing the Council on outside bodies.

**57. Motion submitted by Councillor Aker**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Aker and seconded by Councillor Duffin. The Motion read as follows:

*Thurrock Council calls on the government to make unauthorised traveller pitches and unauthorised events a criminal offence.*

Councillor Aker introduced the Motion and in doing so explained that the Motion was submitted in the summer following the incidents that had occurred on the Manorway and it reflected the number of queries and comments received from residents.

The aim was to wake up other local authorities to make them aware of what needs to be done and that changes in extending the principles would tighten up the current legislation.

Councillor Aker stated that this needed to be a national priority with a letter going to Government to focus on the lack of action being taken on policies on traveller sites.

Councillor C Holloway stated he would be against this Motion and confirmed that there was legislation already in place to deal with this and thanked the Leader of the Council for actions taken so far.

Councillor G Rice stated that he would support the Motion and that action should be taken by Government to address this. Councillor G Rice further stated that Thurrock had taken its fair share of travellers and that the Leader should reinforce that message.

Councillor Piccolo stated that the UKIP MP should lobby in parliament for the law to be changed and there was not a national appetite for revised legislation.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the Motion was a disgrace with the attitude of the Motion in picking on one group of people. He continued to say that this was not for Thurrock and was embarrassed by the Motion.

Councillor Gledhill stated that he would not be supporting the Motion and confirmed what Councillor C Holloway stated that powers were in place but these needed to be tightened and enforced properly. He also felt that the phrase 'any unauthorised events' would be open to a wide interpretation and was not suitable.

Councillor Cherry stated that he would be supporting the Motion as travellers should be expected to pay their way and should abide by the rules of Thurrock.

Councillor Duffin supported the Motion and stated that if the law changed further action could be taken and may deter other travellers breaking the law if they knew about the new laws.

Councillor Aker requested an alteration to the Motion to read:

*Thurrock Council calls on the government to make unauthorised traveller pitches a criminal offence*

Councillor Duffin seconded the Altered Motion.

The Mayor called a vote on Councillor Aker's Altered Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, 24 Members were in favour of the Altered Motion with 15 Members voted against.

Councillor Aker thanked the Chambers for agreeing to the Motion Alteration and for the input and debate by Members.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion as altered.

Following a clear majority in favour, the Mayor declared the Altered Motion carried.



## **58. Motion submitted by Councillor Jones**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Snell. The Motion read as follows:

*We call on Thurrock Council to write to the secretary of State to express many residents' views that in its present state the police service contact number 101 is not fit for purpose.*

Councillor Jones introduced the Motion and in doing so stated that the current 101 police service contact number was not fit for purpose and that residents were losing the trust of the Police. That the service needed to be addressed and response times had to be improved.

Council Gledhill stated that the 101 service had been designed to take the pressure off the 999 service and that operators were known to give incorrect advice to residents by directing them to the Council instead of the Police.

Councillor Cherry defended the Essex Police in stating that the cut backs in resources and the non-presence of police on the street had resulted in more 101 calls being made. He highlighted that the 101 service was designed to report historic events and not urgent requests that required immediate action. Councillor Cherry stated that if residents rang 101 or 999 the waiting time would probably be the same length of time.

Councillor Potheary echoed Councillor Gledhill and Councillor Cherry's concerns and would be supporting the Motion. In Councillor Potheary's time as Portfolio Holder residents were encouraged to consistently report incidents using the 101 service so that data could be recorded and monitored.

Councillor G Rice stated that the Conservative Government had made the cuts to the Police Service and that the Police Crime Commissioner had shut down police stations in the borough which had been vital community assets.

Councillor Redsell stated she would be supporting the Motion as residents were losing the trust of the police and that the police should be getting smarter in dealing with incidents. The 101 service was the only method for some elderly residents to use to contact the police.

Councillor Watkins stated that not everyone had access to IT to enable them to report incidents on-line and that the crime statistics for the borough were down.

Councillor Spillman stated that 1 in 5 crimes were not being recorded correctly and that the statistics were being made worse by the 101 service. Councillor Spillman stated he would be supporting the Motion.

*9.15pm – Members agreed to standing orders by finishing Full Council at 9.30pm.*

Councillor B Rice stated she would be supporting the Motion and that crime was on the increase in the borough with evidence from the social care survey that residents do not feel safe.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the National Crime Survey was important and that it was pro-active to ask residents for their comments and that targeting of crime needed to be done in Thurrock.

Councillor Hamilton stated that Thurrock needed to think about the crime levels for the future to encourage local businesses and new residents to the area.

Councillor Snell stated that the Chamber appeared to be split with one side looking at national statistics whilst the other was more concerned with Thurrock statistics. He firmly believed the Chamber was there to represent Thurrock residents. He stated that residents need to have the trust of the police otherwise the service will fall apart and to ensure that residents do not take matters into their own hands. The service needed to be addressed to ensure this trust was maintained.

Councillor Jones summed up that residents need to feel safe and that law and order must be implemented and sustained within the community.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion.

**58. Motion submitted by Councillor Duffin**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Duffin and seconded by Councillor Aker.

Councillor Duffin stated that residents had the right to know about the balance budget settings and why council taxes had been increased compared to the services received. Residents should be aware that these changes were not being imposed by Thurrock but from Westminster.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion.

**59. Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Kerin.

Councillor J Kent stated that Grays Beach was a jewel in the crown for Thurrock but sadly had not worked this year with the café, toilets and baby changing facilities not having been open. In addition, the flood that had taken place had closed most of the play equipment. Councillor J Kent asked that the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake an investigation to ensure that Grays Beach be open next summer.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion.

The Mayor announced two charity events that she encouraged members to support. The first was the Mayor's Afternoon Tea to be held on the 13 October 2016 at the High House Production Park and the Blue Light Ball on the 3 March 2017 to be held at the Civic Hall.

**The meeting finished at 9.29pm**

Approved as a true and correct record

**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**