

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 30 November 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Mayor), Tunde Ojetola (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Pothecary, David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara 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, Leslie Gamester, Roy Jones and Gerald Rice

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

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.

76. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 26 October 2016 were approved as a correct record.

77. Items of Urgent Business

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

78. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 17: Motion submitted by Councillor Gerrish as she was a member on the Advisory Board for Thameside Children's Centre.

Councillor Piccolo declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 17: Motion submitted by Councillor Gerrish as he was the Chair of the Stanford Children's Centre Advisory Board.

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

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

The Mayor recommended that Jonathan Catton's tremendous contribution to Thurrock be marked by having a memorial plaque dedicated to him placed at Thurrock Museum.

The Mayor then reminded Members that a 'Give a Gift' tree had been placed by the Council at Intu Lakeside with the help and support of Marc Myers and his colleagues. The tree was decorated with hundreds of gift labels which allowed people to buy much needed gifts for children cared for by our Fostering Service and encouraged all to participate in this wonderful initiative.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, made no announcements.

80. 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.

At 7.33pm the Mayor requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to receive the remaining questions from members of the public. Members voted in favour of this.

81. 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.

82. 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.

83. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished to change any appointments previously made to Committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Council Chamber he had no further changes to make.

Councillor Snell, Leader of the UKIP Group, informed the Council Chamber he had no further changes to make.

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

84. Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's & Adult Social Care

Councillor S Little presented the report and stated that she had great pleasure in doing so and that she would be reporting separately on Adult Social Care first and then Children's Social Care.

Councillor S Little summarised the extremely complex challenges being faced by Adult Social Care:

- An aging population with people living for more years.
- A greater number of years in poorer health.
- An increase in complexity of cases.
- An insufficient capacity within the NHS.
- A health and care system had been established to react rather than prevent.
- The difficulty in recruitment and the retention of staff.

A Transformation Programme called "Living Well in Thurrock" had been established to use the resources available to the best effect and the programme would consist of the following three elements:

- Stronger Communities
- Built Environment
- Adult Social Care and Health Infrastructure

Councillor S Little referred to the two domiciliary care services that had been brought back in-house that had created a number of problems and had led to an extremely stretched in-house service.

Councillor S Little stated her passion for Children's Services having been a member on Corporate Parenting Committee and a member on the Fostering Panel.

Councillor S Little summarised the key areas of concern:

- The instability of social care workforce with a proportion of agency staff.
- The inconsistent service for looked after children.
- The need to do more to increase the number of local in-house foster carers.
- The Management oversight to be improved.
- The organisation's use of management information and quality assurance had been poor and required improvement.

Councillor S Little then summarised the key areas of strength:

- That Child Sexual Exploitation had been well understood and addressed across the service.
- The effective cross party political scrutiny.
- The reduction in the number of days taken for children to be placed for adoption.
- The support and intervention for teenagers.
- The work on the multi-agency safeguarding hub.
- The number of unaccompanied asylum children had been reduced.

Councillor Snell thanked Councillor S Little for the report and thanked Officers for the fantastic work that had been undertaken to keep these services going.

Councillor Snell stated that the report appeared to have skipped over the pressures and difficulties that Adult Social Care was currently facing and felt that this crisis was due to the Conservative Party's actions and asked that Councillor S Little writes to her MPs. He also suggested that 5 per cent of the foreign aid budget be given back to help the residents of this borough.

Councillor S Little stated that there had been concerns over critical care when she had taken over as Portfolio Holder but confirmed that this had been overcome and that the budget had been managed far better and that the service was where they wanted it. Councillor S Little would be happy to write to her MPs but stated that the 2 per cent precept had already been agreed and that maybe the Government was a victim of their own success because since 2010, when the Conservatives had taken power, people were living longer.

Councillor V Holloway stated that she would have liked to have seen an update on Public Health in the report and asked Councillor S Little what she thought the key items of Public Health were. Councillor S Little stated that if Councillor V Holloway had attended the last Full Council she would have heard Councillor Halden's Portfolio Holder report which covered this item.

Councillor Duffin asked if the Government would match the social care funding with the wage increase announced last week. Councillor S Little replied that was really a question for Government and that the 2 per cent precept had already been agreed.

Councillor Okunade asked the Portfolio Holder would the Government proposal for social care reform lead to more children being at risk, to which Councillor S Little stated no.

Councillor B Rice stated the service was in crisis and asked the Portfolio Holder to explain to members and residents how she intended to resolve this crisis. Councillor S Little stated that she was satisfied with timings of patients coming out of hospital and that the domiciliary care was in place.

Councillor S Little stated that the next tendering process for new domiciliary care would ensure that the right services were offered.

At 7.59pm the Mayor requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate the remaining questions from members. Members voted in favour of this.

Councillor Potheary thanked Councillor S Little for the report and stated that the text of the report was different to what was being discussed tonight and that the report was very gloomy and down beat. Councillor Potheary asked the Portfolio Holder whether cuts would be made to residents on mental health care packages and social care charges going up for older people. Councillor Little stated that mental health care checks would be undertaken when children came into care. Councillor S Little stated that discussions had taken place with officers, the budget had been looked at and that they would not put residents' lives at risk.

Councillor Spillman stated that the report was grim and was this not the time for the Council to publicly announce that it could not do what was needed to be done with the amount of money available. Councillor S Little stated that the Council was managing and was coping with the budget.

Councillor Gerrish stated that if the Portfolio Holder was coping with the budget how much would she likely to be overspent on the budget this year and would this be based on not having sufficient funding or should it be perceived that the service was being poorly run. Councillor S Little stated the service was not being poorly run and had been impressed with the work that officers do. Councillor S Little stated that the budget was £100,000 overspent which was due to two very complex cases that required significant funding.

Councillor J Kent paid tribute to all the members of staff who work in Adult and Children's Social Care who worked in some very difficult situations to look after the elderly, vulnerable and looked after children. Councillor J Kent asked the Portfolio Holder when she would be stepping up to the plate and start to put in place some solutions to make sure that the crisis did not turn into an absolute disaster. Councillor S Little stated as a responsible person for this portfolio she would ensure that nobody would be put at risk and emphasised that the report was transparent to what was actually happening.

85. Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Councillor Coxshall stated he was happy to be presenting his first Portfolio Holder report for regeneration, planning and assets and how proud he was of the direction of the department had changed and outlined the key areas to his report:

- Grays South Master Plan, to link the River front and the Grays station crossing redevelopment, would be joining together to create a wider plan and news on the funding for this should be known before Christmas.
- To deliver a local plan with real engagement – a plan to engage with all residents to ensure it had the full backing of all.
- Implement an Asset Review for all Council assets to make sure they are categorised into one of the following: retain them, re-use them or release them, to maximise the money for the services of this Council.
- For Tilbury the masterplan for the Civic Square and the wider area had been developed, consulted on and now agreed for implementation. A further wider masterplan would be drawn up with the aim of ensuring that the Port of Tilbury expansion brought wider benefits to the local community.
- Have a good principle of “More for Less” which will be delivered with an aim of delivering an underspend for this financial year; there is already an underspend of £20,000.
- A tremendous increase of jobs with companies such as Amazon and UPS moving into the area which could create 2000 jobs that would result in those that want a job to have a job.

Councillor J Kent thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and enjoyed the delivery of his statement with particular reference to the “good rate of investment gained over the last five years”. Councillor J Kent asked the Portfolio Holder if the administration would be looking to use compulsory purchase order powers to land bank parcels of land brought for future sale or development. Councillor Coxshall agreed that this was a serious issue and hoped that CPO did not have to be used.

Councillor Smith agreed that it was good news regarding the future projects and job vacancies and thanked officers for all the hard work. Councillor Smith asked the Portfolio Holder for his reassurances that infrastructure, schools and GP hubs would be high priorities and also when the maps for brown and green fill sites would be available.

Councillor Coxshall stated that £60 million had already been invested on road improvement with £150 million spent on Junction 30; with four schools being opened in the borough and three new schools proposed for 2017; four new Living Together hubs had already been proposed.

Councillor Piccolo asked what plans were in place to relocate industrial developments located in residential areas where HGVs were causing havoc on local roads with noise and pollution and what incentives would be available to relocate to a more suitable location. Councillor Coxshall stated this was happening over and over again in the borough and that a Policy was in place for when growth happens and houses expanded onto brown fill sites. Councillor Coxshall stated that good news may come out of Option 2 of the Local Plan which is announced next year.

Councillor Duffin asked the Portfolio Holder for a date when the green and brown fill sites maps would be available for sharing with the residents of Thurrock. Councillor Coxshall stated that full maps and a consultation will be undertaken next year to ensure that the planning enquiry was watertight and that the statutory process was followed.

Councillor Ojetola enquired if the Portfolio Holder could work with the Government, Highways England and the Portfolio Holder for Highways on the east face slip road off the A13 to reduce the impact of traffic. Councillor Coxshall stated no growth bid for this had been in Options 1, 2 or 3 and how the east face slips would make a major difference to access to and from the Lakeside basin.

Councillor Allen asked the Portfolio Holder what plans were in place for improving the A1089 following the expansion of the logistic park in Tilbury. Councillor Coxshall stated that a larger master plan was required to engage with residents on what was required and to get involved when the master plan comes out in Option 2.

86. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 5 questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and 9 questions to Cabinet Members.

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

At 8.57pm the Mayor announced that time according to the constitution had run out and that the questions not dealt with would receive a written response.

87. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

The Mayor informed the Chambers that no reports had been received.

88. Minutes of Committees

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

89. 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.

90. Motion submitted by Councillor Duffin

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

This Council supports the need to reduce and eliminate fuel poverty for Thurrock residents who struggle to heat their homes. Council requests that Cabinet investigate what options, including creating a fuel poverty grant that may exist for the Council to support the community by working with residents and providers.

Councillor Duffin introduced the Motion and in doing so requested for Cabinet to move forward with this with the three main factors affecting fuel poverty being:

- Low Incomes
- Poor Energy Efficiency
- High Fuel Prices

Decisions being taken by Government have had a massive increase on fuel bills and on average future bills were being predicted to increase a further £51 based only on the green tariff. The green tariff comes from investments such as the investments the Council make in the solar farm in Swindon and questioned what the Council should be spending this money on.

Councillor Duffin stated that:

- 7.4 per cent of households in Thurrock were affected by fuel poverty.
- 82 per cent of households in Thurrock were concerned about paying fuel bills over the winter.

With this being such a serious issue, Councillor Duffin called on Cabinet to act on this if the Motion was agreed and would take any profits made and put this to deal with the fuel poverty in Thurrock.

Councillor B Rice stated that she would be supporting this very important motion especially in the case of the residents of Thurrock. Councillor B Rice stated that there were schemes available to residents which they should be made aware of. In addition to the Motion, Councillor B Rice would like Cabinet to take on board and get this information out to residents.

Councillor Gledhill stated he would be supporting this motion and agreed that the schemes were very confusing and that the focus would be getting this information out to residents. Residents on benefits would also be advised of what schemes they can apply for. Councillor Gledhill stated that he did not agree on moving money from the solar farm investment into a fund helping people in fuel poverty although a fund for people in fuel poverty would not be

ruled out. Investments need to be made to prevent services from being delivered or increases to Council Taxes.

Councillor B Little stated he would be supporting this motion and that prepayment cards to manage fuel poverty had in the past been introduced to prevent fuel debt. Unfortunately over time the costs to top up these cards had increased and those residents were the most vulnerable and now paying the highest tariffs. This Council needed to continue to support the most vulnerable.

Councillor Hebb stated that the new launched Thurrock News email updates could concentrate on the communicating of these sign postings and services to residents and will arrange for Officers to do this for the December edition.

Councillor Aker asked that when Cabinet discuss this item could they look at approving a grant for residents who are given temporary heaters that they are also given a temporary grant to pay for heaters as well.

Councillor Duffin summed up by thanking Members for their support.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

91. Motion submitted by Councillor Gerrish

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

Members of Council tonight oppose the proposed closure of Children's Centres currently under consultation. They provide a vital service to all our communities. The proposed closures of Beacon (Chafford Hundred), East Tilbury, Stanford le Hope and Aveley Children's Centres will leave some communities entirely without a centre. This will have a severe and detrimental impact on local families. The Members' of Council tonight call on Cabinet to acknowledge the importance of these vital community services and to not proceed with the proposed closures.

Councillor Gerrish introduced the report and in doing so explained that the Conservative administration were due to close four Thurrock Children Centres in April 2017. The centres under threat were Aveley, Chafford Hundred, East Tilbury and Stanford le Hope alongside additional outreach cuts. The centres undertook a huge amount of work with parents. With the final decision being made by Cabinet in January 2017, the Motion had been brought to this Council for Members to express their views and comments. It was the role of a strong opposition to point out to the administration that they were due to make a huge mistake and to help them correct it by sending a message from the community to halt the plans to close these Children Centres.

Following debate and discussion between Members it was the consensus amongst the Labour Party Members that the decision to close the four children centres would:

- Take away vital services.
- Would impact on the Looked after Children that used these Centres.
- All communities should be able to access these services.
- Further debate and a genuine consultation needed to take place.
- Consultation was misleading.
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been misinformed.
- Not a good move for the Council.
- Staff at the Children's Centres deserved more backing not sacking.
- Perplexed by some of the comments of the Conservative members.

The following Labour Members spoke during the debate: Councillors Kerin, Potheary, Okunade, J Kent, Fish and Gerrish.

Consensus comments received by Members from the UKIP Party included:

- Why was the decision limited only to Cabinet.
- Decision should be made between all Members.
- Further debates needed to take place.
- Vital consultations needed to be undertaken.
- That both children and parents will suffer.
- If paying high rents for these centres, what other high rents are the Council being ripped off on.
- Plans need to be in place for the transition period.
- Main concern should be that of the children.
- Communication not clearly working.
- Item should have come as an agenda item to Full Council.

The following UKIP Members spoke during the debate: Councillors Spillman, Duffin, Wheeler, Smith and Snell.

The common responses from the Administration in defence to the decision to close the four children service centres included:

- Impressed by the Portfolio Holder's savings.
- Proposals would improve the services which would therefore improve the outcome.
- Savings would be made from not paying extortionate rents.
- More thought should be about the services available not the buildings and assets.
- Services would be more joined up.
- Labour members should be ashamed to the alarm they have caused residents with raising this Motion.
- No opposition member asked questions neither at Overview and Scrutiny nor at Cabinet.
- Upgrading the system will extend the age range which had been set by Ofsted.

- Questioned what Labour and UKIP would have done under the same financial constraints.
- Deliver “More for Less” and improve the service.
- Services will be better for the 21st century.

The following Conservative Members spoke during the debate: Councillors Halden, Kelly, Hague, Watkins, B Little, Collins, Coxshall, Hebb, Gledhill, MacPherson and Maney.

At 9.20pm the Mayor requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate the remaining questions from members. Members voted in favour of this.

Councillor Fish, as seconder to the Motion, stated he had some sympathy with the administration with having to force through cuts that had been imposed on Councils from Central Government and how the administration were trying to put the best possible gloss on the proposal. Councillor Fish summarised the proposed cuts to admin and management staff and how these would affect the front line services and how the administration had not been convincing enough that the proposed proposals would work.

Councillor Gerrish summed up by thanking Members for their discussions and debate on this Motion and would now leave it for Members to decide on whether this was a deliberate act of malice against the community or a dangerously naive act on part of the Portfolio Holder. Councillor Gerrish stated that the Children’s Centres delivered vital services to children and their parents. The process had not been open and conclusive enough and that it was an absolute disgrace that we were now at this point and that members should take note of the fact that they have been put on notice that these cuts would be coming to their communities.

Councillor Gerrish’s message to Cabinet was that members did not support the cuts with the Cabinet having got the proposals wrong on this occasion and to go away and think again.

Councillor Gerrish requested that a requisition vote be undertaken.

The Mayor called a requisition vote on Councillor Gerrish’s Motion.

Upon being put to the vote the following members voted in favour: Councillors Aker, Baldwin, Duffin, Fish, Gerrish, C Holloway, V Holloway, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Okunade, Potheary, B Rice, Sammons, Sheridan, Spillman, Stone and Wheeler **(19)**.

The following members voted against: Councillors Cherry, Churchman, Collins, Coxshall, Gledhill, Hague, Halden, Hamilton, Hebb, Kelly, S Little, B Little, MacPherson, Maney, Ojetola, Piccolo, Potter, Redsell, Stewart, Tolson and Watkins **(21)**.

The following members voted to abstain: Councillors Allen, C Baker, J Baker, Smith and Snell **(5)**.

The Mayor declared the Motion Lost.

The Mayor wished Members a Happy Christmas and Happy New Year.

The meeting finished at 10.01pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**