

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 8 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 20 February 2017.

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Sue MacPherson and Pauline Tolson

Apologies: Councillors Deborah Huelin, Brian Little and Susan Little

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

89. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 11 January 2017, were approved as a correct record.

90. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

91. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

92. Statements by the Leader

The Leader addressed Cabinet Members and in doing so announced that Andrew Percy MP had confirmed the Council had secured a funding grant of £10.8 million for the regeneration of Grays Town Centre. Councillor Gledhill stated this was fantastic news for the borough.

He continued by informing Members that since 2010 the Council had received just under £1 billion from investment from Government funding and grants.

Councillor Gledhill discussed Clean it, Cut it, Fill it and explained due to the time of year and current weather, less open spaces were being cut, however since the beginning of issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for littering and dog fouling, 649 fines had been issued. The Leader commented that more was required to stop littering.

93. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There was no update on Policy or other issues. The budget was discussed later in the meeting.

94. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

95. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader of the Council advised that no questions had been submitted from Non-Executive Members.

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

The Leader of the Council informed Members that no matters had been referred to the Cabinet by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

97. Capital Programme (Decision 01104403)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services presented the report and in doing so informed Members that the new capital proposals set out the schemes for 2017/2018. He continued to highlight the reason the government continued to invest in Thurrock was due to its ability to grow and develop, such as the recent £10.8 million for Grays Town Centre.

Councillor Hebb commented that during his IT update at Full Council he gave details of the different systems and how if IT failed then the Council was unable to provide a service to its customers. Therefore, these proposals sought to build stability to manage plans were in place for such situations in addition to the reciprocal disaster recovery system that has been implemented with Southend Borough Council.

The Portfolio Holder touched on the topic of delegation, notifying Cabinet Members that discussions had been held at the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Committee agreed to leave delegations as they currently were used, however requested a review be undertaken in the new municipal year.

Councillor Halden thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report. He commented that he was pleased to see the Council was continuing to invest in schools

within the borough such as the Gateway Learning Academy who took on Tilbury Manor Primary School and turned it around. He continued by mentioning the Health Hub now had business cases behind the funding to ensure they could offer the best service for residents.

Councillor Tolson remarked that within the Environment directorate a Capital Bid for £70,000 had been placed for a 3 month trial of 'big belly bins' across the borough.

The Leader stated the trial of the new bins was one of the ways the Administration was working smarter. The bins were able to hold up to 8 times more rubbish and would generate an email to waste collectors when it was required to be emptied.

He continued by notifying Members that he was going to write to the Secretary of State in relation to camera enforcement, as legalisation had not been enacted for Councils to carry out such enforcement.

RESOLVED The Cabinet recommends that the Council:

- 1. Approves the new capital programme proposals as set out in appendix 1;**
- 2. Approves a budget of up to £2m to develop business cases on those future and aspirational schemes set out in appendix 2; and**
- 3. Approves the delegations set out in section 6;**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

98. Council Spending Review - Draft General Fund Budget (Decision 01104404)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report to the Cabinet highlighting the following:

- The report had been produced based on the principles established via the Council Spending Review (CSR) process, which had been in place since June 2016 and was due for completion;
- Cabinet agreed a 3 month pilot in 2016 of its Clean It, Cut It, Fill It initiative which completed at the end of October 2016. Cabinet had since agreed to extend the trial pilot until the end of that financial year;
- The proposals for the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) in 2017/18, had been considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committees

He continued to inform Members that the borough provided education at a national best and even had the potential of offering a Grammar School. He

stated that the Council was looking ahead and had robust plans in place to ensure that positive changes happened.

Councillor Hebb thanked the Leader of the UKIP party for the suggestions and engagement of his party. He further thanked Officers for all of their contributions.

During discussions Cabinet Members were notified the report was asking them to agree a 1.98% general council tax increase and 3% increase in council tax for the Adult Social Care precept.

Members were also informed that Service Reviews were to be undertaken, into what services the Council should offer and how to offer such services, if not already doing so. The Portfolio Holder commented that for £1.10 per week for band D properties, the Council could continue with Clean it, Cut it, Fill it for another year, giving residents a borough to be proud of.

Councillor Halden remarked that the budget was positive and the changes suggested did not require major funds to be spent. He continued by highlighting the key worker scheme, which was due to be presented to the Cabinet and Clean it, Cut it, Fill it which was now about to continue into the next financial year, without impacting on the budget.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health commented on the Adult Social Care precept and advised Members that last year 24,000 people attended Accident and Emergency who required little or no medical attention.

Councillor Coxshall welcomed the report and mentioned that he was pleased to see that the Council was looking at ways to do 'more for less' and offering better services for residents.

The Leader thanked the UKIP party for their input and attending the Council Spending Review meetings. He continued by stating the Cabinet had made sure everything in relation to the budget, was out in the open and were still seeking alternative ways to generate funds.

RESOLVED That Cabinet recommends:

- 1. That Council, following engagement from Corporate Overview & Scrutiny and Council Spending Review forums:**
 - **Agrees a 3% council tax increase for the Adult Social Care precept; and**
 - **Agrees a 1.98% general council tax increase;**
- 2. Note the inclusion of £1m in the 2017/18 base budget for making permanent Thurrock Council's Clean It, Cut it, Fill It programme following success through the 2016/17 pilot;**

3. **Note that growth of £5.4m has been built into Children's Social Care budget for 2017/18;**
4. **Note that should the 3% ASC precept be agreed that, along with the Adult Social Care Support Grant, there will be £2.4m additional funding allocated to Adult Social Care;**
5. **That direction on any allocation to the CAB will be announced at Council; and**
6. **Note the council tax base and collection fund balances and allocations, set out in section 7 of the report.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

99. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2017-18 (Decision 01104405)

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal Services, Councillor Hebb, addressed Members informing them the report outlined the Fees and Charges for Services for 2017/2018 and unless stated the charges would take effect from April 2017.

He continued by stating the Council needed to focus on creating more revenue as this would lead to greater independence and an increase in business would mean more could be done for local residents.

During discussions Members were notified that the Director for Commercial Services was to complete a review of all services, which would later be presented to Cabinet. He also stated that he felt residents should not be given the opportunity of early repayment discount when issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) for dropping litter.

Councillor Tolson clarified that in relation to dog fouling FPN, fines could be as much £75 and Officers were continuing to look into this.

The Leader mentioned that he was to write to the Government seeking that they scrap statutory fee levels. He continued that it should be up to each Local Authority to set their own Service Charges, as certain statutory services may not require as much in the way of funding, leading to a generation of investment which could improve the borough in the long term.

RESOLVED That Cabinet:

1. **Agree the proposed fees and charges as detailed in Appendix 1 including those no longer applicable as per Appendix 2.**
2. **Noted the feedback from all Overview and Scrutiny Committees in Appendix 3.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

100. Treasury Management Strategy (Decision 01104406)

Councillor Hebb, presented the report to Members explaining the Treasury Management Strategy and Annual MRP Statement was essentially the Council's cash flow process. He continued by stating the report highlighted the borrowing and investment of money, which in turn would fund front line services and provide a return on investment principles.

The Cabinet Member commented that borrowing for capital and investment purposes, for a return on investment principles had its benefits.

It was discussed that as long as investments and returns were clear, then business ideas where borrowing was included could be taken into consideration, with all ideas being given a degree of scrutiny.

Members were notified that a history of borrowing had left the Council with a £29 million debt from lender option borrower options (LOBOs). The early repayment of this debt had been reviewed and would cost as much, if not more, than the current interest the Council was currently paying.

Councillor Halden echoed the Cabinet Members concerns with regards to borrowing, commenting that he had no doubt at the time of the original decision it was felt it was a good idea, however he did not want the Council in the same situation in the next three years.

RESOLVED That the Cabinet recommends that the Council:

- 1. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2017/18;**
- 2. Approve the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1; and**
- 3. Note the revised 2016/17 and 2017/18 Treasury Management projections as set out in paragraph 2.33.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

101. HRA Business Plan and Budgets 2017-18 (Decision 01104407)

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Gledhill, introduced the report explaining to Members it outlined a significant shift in the way some housing services were funded. He continued that he was a strong believer that you pay for what you get and get what you pay for and that there was no such thing as a free service.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing explained the report had been presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on two occasions and stated that consultation was key and informed Cabinet that housing tenants in Thurrock were paying £130 per year in their rents to provide services for 12% of people who require it.

Councillor Gledhill thanked the Housing Tenant Representative on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for her valuable input on the item. He questioned if it was fair that a resident in Ockendon was paying for the lift repairs in a high rise in Tilbury.

The Leader mentioned he had been working closely with officers to assess the state of the Councils housing stock and that following a number of visits could confirm that a stock condition survey has been commissioned.

He continued to inform Members that the Council would be writing to all residents who could qualify for free loft installation and giving them the information on how to apply for it. This in turn could save the Council money.

It was mentioned that the time it was taking to bring void properties back into service was impacting on possible income being received, however the Leader stated that good quality housing supply should come first.

Councillor Tolson enquired if there were already service charges with the housing service. The Leader confirmed there were already charges, such as care taker services, that were currently in place.

It was questioned if there was a timescale to have void properties back into the housing stock. Councillor Gledhill stated that number of void properties changed daily and Officers worked to a 30 day deadline. It was explained some homes took longer depending on the maintenance required.

Councillor MacPherson queried if there were any future plans for new builds in the borough. The Leader confirmed that plans were still ongoing; however with the 1% reductions in rents it could be difficult. He continued by explaining if residents paid for the services they were receiving, it would free up potential funds within the HRA to be able to continue building new homes.

The Leader stated that a Senior Officer would be attending each complex to explain the system. He confirmed that he would attend as many of these briefings that he could.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the assumptions included in the HRA Business Plan be noted.**
- 2. That the budgets for 2017/18 be agreed.**

3. **That the HRA New Build programme maximises the use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts in place of Homes and Communities Agency funding.**
4. **That growth for revenue repairs and capital investment is agreed.**
5. **That a 3% increase to all existing tenant charges is agreed in line with the Council's increases to Fees and Charges.**
6. **That tenants receiving certain housing management services be consulted on the phased introduction of service charges, which are currently only levied on leaseholders, with a final report back to Cabinet in April.**
7. **That tenants are consulted on the phased extension of the inclusive Sheltered Support Charge to all tenants with a final report back to Cabinet in April.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

102. Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities (Decision 01104408)

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal Services addressed Cabinet Members informing them a review of the current vision and priorities had been completed and the proposed new vision and priorities reflected the aspiration and uniqueness of Thurrock. He continued that feedback from recent consultations had given some opinions from residents of what they feel to be the most important issues for Thurrock.

Councillor Hebb commented that since the previous vision and priorities Thurrock had grown and developed and so the vision had to be revised as to how Thurrock could and should be. This would include striving for quality, driving local economics and education and thriving to work together, to create partnerships within the borough.

Councillor Halden welcomed the report and mentioned that Thurrock had a record low unemployment rate and that by encouraging children and giving them the best opportunities would enable them to have access to the right job for them. He commented that he hoped the vision and priorities would be agreed at Full Council, as the previous ones were, even though at the time the Conservative group did not agree with all of them.

Councillor Coxshall remarked that he was pleased to see the private sector investing into Thurrock and agreed it was time to move the vision forward.

The Leader commented that big investors looked to Thurrock and when they saw the proposed vision this would be what they will base their views on. He continued that he hoped the vision would be agreed at Full Council in the same way in which the previous one was.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Cabinet agree that the proposed new vision and priorities replace the existing vision and priorities and Community Strategy as part of the Policy Framework; and**
- 2. Cabinet recommend the above (1.), in line with the Constitution Chapter 3, Part 3, to Full Council in February for ratification and adoption from 1 April 2017.**

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

The meeting finished at 8.15 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**