

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 June 2018 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 18 June at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Barry Johnson, Susan Little and Aaron Watkins

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Place
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Lucy Tricker, 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.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 March 2018 were approved as a correct record.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by discussing the seventieth anniversary of the Empire Windrush arriving at Tilbury, and how this was the birth of multiculturalism in the borough. He went on to say that when Tilbury Docks opened in 1886 this opened Thurrock to the world. He told Members that on 27 June between 1-6pm at the London Cruise Terminal there would be a celebration of the Empire Windrush, which he hoped many would attend.

Councillor Gledhill updated Members on the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It Scheme. In doing so, Members heard how this past month 600 hundred tonnes of rubbish

had been cleared from the borough, including rubbish in waste bins. He continued by stating that 300 incidents of fly-tipping had been cleared, and that the Council are trying hard to tackle rubbish that has been dropped, as well as rubbish that has been blown from bins. In addition, the Leader mentioned that 99.2% of potholes had been filled, and although this had not reached the 100% target, this was an improvement on the previous month, with an additional two major potholes filled. In addition to this, 400 hectares of grass had also been cut across Thurrock which equated to all of the world cup pitches six times over. He further commented on how the adverse weather had made grass cutting difficult over the past few months, but there was a review taking place to look at schedules and the allocation of staff resources.

The Leader then commented on the problem of HGV's parking overnight in Manor Way Industrial Estate, confirming that Officers have visited the site on four separate occasions over the past two months, and issued 121 Fixed Penalty Notices and other disciplinary actions. On the last visit on the 8 June, Councillor Gledhill established that no HGV's had been parked on the Industrial Estate, but that there would be ongoing meetings with Officers to tackle the problem in other areas. He thanked the Environment Team for their hard work and congratulated them on helping solve the issue.

He stated that Officers had received a briefing note reminding them of the process for dealing with unauthorised encampment. He went on to say that he would be meeting with the Police Superintendent to discuss the matter further, but that it was up to residents to report incidents and receive an incident number so the Council could take complaints of unauthorised encampments further.

The Leader then welcomed Councillor Johnson and Councillor Collins to the Cabinet and discussed his new role as Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour. He noted that this issue had been the most important for residents on the doorstep during elections, and this was why he has decided to take on the position. He also pointed out that he would not be responsible for overseeing police operations to reduce anti-social behaviour, but that he would liaise closely with them to discuss resources given.

5. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on policy, budget or other issues.

6. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

7. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader of the Council advised that there had been two questions received, but confirmed with the Cabinet that they were happy for the questions to be heard after the report had been discussed.

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

Councillor Gledhill advised that there was one report which had been referred by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but this would be discussed later during the meeting.

9. Developing Our Free School Programme - Land Disposal (Decision 110469)

Councillor Halden presented the report and began by discussing the need for new school places within the borough, and the desire to build big, so that there would be enough school places to deliver choice, and therefore competition. He underlined the need for secondary schools in Thurrock, and stated that the Council had received £60million from the government to be able to meet this need. The report outlined two potential sites to build free schools on, the first being a 1200 place school with the South West Essex Trust, and William Edwards Academy, which is known as Orsett Heath. The second site is known as Treetops, which is a 140 place special educational needs school in Grays. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health noted that there was also a potential third site at Brandon Groves which was proving to be logistically problematic, so Officers and Members would continue to identify more suitable land.

Councillor Halden's stated that 720 new 'good' or better school places had already been created in Thurrock, with an extra 900 places available at the new Harris Riverside Academy. He also stated that in July's Cabinet meeting a site for Thames Park School, which would give another 900 new places, would also be considered. In total, Councillor Halden estimated that 3,900 'good' or better school places would be created over the next few years.

Councillor Halden moved on to address public concerns over the use of the rugby pitches at the Orsett Heath site. He assured Members that he was working closely with Thurrock Rugby Club, and other community users, to ensure all pitches are retained for community use, and that he had received a joint statement from the Club and School Trust establishing that they were working together for the benefit of both parties. Members were reminded that William Edwards was an 'outstanding' sports academy, and Councillor Halden felt that working together with the Rugby Club would be valuable.

Councillor Coxshall then observed that it was important to build infrastructure before houses, and this is what the Council was trying to achieve. He cited the examples that 10 new schools had been built in 10 years; that 4 new medical centres were being built; and that the A13 widening project was now underway. He believed that William Edwards was a model sports education school, and that their expansion into Orsett Heath Free School could bring an end to children travelling across Thurrock to attend the best school for their needs.

Councillor Gerrish was invited to ask his question which was: was consultation undertaken with Portfolio Holders with regard to the current usage of the Orsett Heath site, ahead of the publication of the report.

Councillor Halden replied that discussion had been undertaken between Portfolio Holders and Officers before the report. Councillor Gerrish responded that no one was disputing the need for 'good' schools in Thurrock, but that the process for identifying sites to release has to be reconsidered. He added that Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 5 June had found lots of issues with the report, for example the apparent lack of community engagement. He believed that consultation needed to be in the public eye, and asked whether the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health would support Corporate Overview & Scrutiny's recommendation that there should be pre-consultation in the future, and assessments should be carried out before reports are published.

Councillor Halden responded that the decision will go through three stages of consultation which are: (i) it will go to the Department of Education to determine the need for the school; (ii) it will go to statutory consultation; (iii) and will finally have consultation when it goes through planning applications. He assured Councillor Gerrish that following the joint statement from the Rugby Club and William Edwards, he was satisfied that there would be enhanced provision for both, and the Rugby Club would not lose out. Councillor Coxshall finally commented that the bid was public knowledge, and the site was identified and made public when the bid went in.

Councillor Duffin was then invited to read his question which was: has Thurrock Council given consideration to replacing the grounds leased to the Rugby Club; which they need to remain as an RFU accredited community rugby club; as the land is designated to train youth groups including under seven's and under thirteen's.

The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health responded that the land leased by the Rugby Club was only occasionally used and was rented from the Council. He stated that he was satisfied with the statement from the Rugby Club and the Education Trust, and that it was the obligation of the Council to provide school places.

Councillor Duffin asked Councillor Halden to reconsider his position, as this proposal was only discovered by the Rugby Club on Tuesday afternoon, and that they had received no consultation beforehand. He asked if there could be consultation before any more Cabinet reports on the issue, and asked if Councillor Halden could guarantee two pitches to Thurrock Rugby Club. The Portfolio Holder for Education and Health responded that the site had been approved since 2016, and this was now the implementation stage. He stated that there cannot be consultation until Cabinet had made a decision. He reaffirmed that the Council were working with the Rugby Club on the onward process, and that William Edwards was an 'outstanding' specialist sports school. He also reaffirmed that he felt comforted by the fact there was a joint statement between the Club and William Edwards on the retained pitches for community use. He went on to say that there would be statutory consultation and further consultation at the planning stage.

Councillor Hebb stated that it was the key intention of the paper to future-proof students who are going onto secondary school by pre-empting future need. He felt that if this was not approved there would be a crisis within five to ten years as there would not be enough secondary school places within

Thurrock. He also felt that collaboration between a school and a sports club was not a new or radical idea and felt it was great there was already a joint statement between the two bodies, which could lead to a real partnership.

Councillor Coxshall agreed with Councillor Hebb that he felt glad for the joint statement, and that this was an opportunity for the two to work together, as well as with the Council.

Councillor Gledhill asked a question regarding whether the number of houses being built in the area had been taken into account when discussing building new schools. He wanted to ensure the Council was pre-emptive and could offer market choice when parents were enrolling children in schools. He also felt that Thurrock was lucky to have an 'outstanding' sports school that wanted to expand and had the available land to be able to do so.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Noted the Free Schools Programme progress to date and the partnership working with the ESFA**
- 2. Approved the disposal of the Treetops site and the Orsett Heath site to the Department of Education (acting through the ESFA) for the purposes of building and establishing new Free Schools on each of the sites**
- 3. Authorised the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Health, and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to dispose of (i) the Treetops site and (ii) the Orsett Heath site, if required, at negotiated value or rent, taking into account, as outlined in section 8 of the Report, the need to provide new school places, subject to obtaining the consent of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government if required in either case**
- 4. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Place in consultation with the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Assistant Director of Law and Governance, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Health and the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to agree heads of terms for the disposal of the identified sites to the DfE/ESFA and to take all necessary steps to complete transactions.**
- 5. Requested Officers to urgently bring forward papers to address the Thames Park Free School and the Reach 2 Free School for September Cabinet.**

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

10. Lower Thames Crossing Update (Decision 110470)

Councillor Smith introduced the report for Members and advised that this was a report from the Lower Thames Crossing Taskforce. He discussed that he had been meeting with senior Officers to discuss the next step for the Taskforce, which was the Mitigation Schedule, to be released on Monday. He highlighted that the Taskforce had been constantly challenging Highways England to provide a Health Impact Assessment, which they had finally secured in April. He also stated that the Taskforce needed to go further, and requested that Cabinet support the Taskforce to contact the Mayor of London, the Secretary of State for Transport, and the MP's for Thurrock ahead of statutory consultation. He also wanted to ask Cabinet support for the Taskforce to contact Gravesham, Dartford and Medway authorities, to be able to invite them to Taskforce meetings, so Thurrock's voices could be heard by a wider audience.

Councillor Coxshall asked if the Taskforce could present recommendations to Cabinet rather than an update, to which Councillor Smith replied that he had been working with Officers for some time, and his question would be answered by the Mitigation Schedule which would be released at the Taskforce briefing on Monday. Councillor Coxshall then asked how the Taskforce are moving forward with Highways England as other authorities appeared very proactive, and enquired how we were adding value, rather than simply asking for evidence. Councillor Smith answered that he would defer making a statement until after the mitigation schedule was released on Monday.

The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that in February the Taskforce had received £380,000 and asked whether the Lower Thames Crossing Taskforce had considered how they might want to use the money. Councillor Smith replied that he would again defer answering until the release of the mitigation schedule.

Councillor Gledhill commented that he felt it was good to see the expansion of the Taskforce inviting other authorities and central government. He wanted to ensure that Cabinet played a role and were made aware of the outcome of those discussions.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

1. Noted the work of the Taskforce.

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

11. Fly Tipping in Alleyways (Decision 110471)

Councillor Watkins introduced the report which outlined the procedure for fly-tipping in private alleyways. He began by thanking the Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee for their work and extensive consultation with residents which had a good response rate. He also stated that in July a paper would go to Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to discuss the household waste centre and fly-tipping. He also identified that the Community Engagement Development Fund (CEDF) grant, which was a funding solution to help residents clean up fly tipping in their alleyways, was now closed, but would reopen next year. He believed that this had worked well to help solve the problem and urged residents to apply for the grant when it reopened. He also stated that communications between the Council and residents had increased and asked for Cabinet to note the recommendations and to take into account the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations.

Councillor Gledhill started discussions by reemphasizing Councillor Watkins point that fly-tipping was unnecessary as Thurrock had an excellent waste disposal system, and was expensive for residents and the Council to clear. He also stated that it was good to see this problem was being taken seriously, and that the Officers and Members were helping residents to receive the CEDF grant. He also reminded residents of the importance of reporting fly-tipping, as Council staff can only take action if they know it has occurred. He also drew the Members' attention to the point that fly tipping offenders would be prosecuted if they fly tip on private or public land. The Leader then moved on to briefly outline the little known issue relating to fly tipping and the problems it can cause builders, as they cannot gain entrance to houses through back accesses, which can lead to a loss in revenue.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Noted and commented on the recommendations of the Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee found below:**

Committee recommendation: That in instances where fly tipping in alleyways is identified, officers follow the following sequential approach:

- I. Signposting of concerned residents to funding opportunities such as the Community Environment Development Fun, to assist in target hardening or other measures such as gating to reduce the instances of fly-tipping in alleyways**
- II. Formally request that the occupiers of adjacent premises clear up their alleyway if concerns about non-hazardous alleyway accumulations persist.**

- III. Offer a paid service to clean up alleyways accumulations on a cost recovery basis where the steps above do not result in fly tipping being removed
- IV. As a last resort, pursue enforcement action to ensure the removal of potentially hazardous accumulations against the occupiers of adjacent properties and to charge occupiers accordingly.
- V. To communicate this sequential approach to residents and provide information to facilitate resident organization, awareness of an participation in community initiatives to combat fly tipped alleyways.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

12. 2017/18 Financial Outturn

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and started by saying that the administration would have a balanced budget for the next four years, until 2021. He stated this reconciled years of overspend, and that within the first year they had achieved £10million in savings, which had been achieved through a three year programme of bottom up reviews and external audits. The Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance commented that this safeguarded services that residents use for four years, which provided greater security. He also mentioned that review should continue to deliver a quality service to residents.

Councillor Hebb stated that up to 90% of children within the borough now have access to outstanding services. In addition to this, after a £12.5million investment into the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It scheme there was now a new bin collection fleet which had turned Key Performance Indicators around and increased plant reliability. In addition to this, he commented that following the investment in filling potholes, the borough had now won awards regarding the material and technology used to fill potholes.

The Deputy Leader highlighted some of the challenges the Council had faced, including the demand placed on Children's Services. He also felt that despite these challenges the Council had managed to help young, vulnerable people through initiatives like the Care Leaver's Council Tax Exemption Scheme. He also drew attention to the redevelopment of Grays, which included two new schools, health centres, and the widening of the A13; in addition to 350 new affordable homes, which will rise to over 1000 new affordable homes within the next few years. He also introduced the #lifsladder scheme and Debt Summit which would help people to climb the ladder and grow local communities.

Councillor Coxshall added to Councillor Hebb's statement by discussing the £1million private investment into Grays Shopping Centre, and the fact that over the next 4/5 years, Grays would see £40 million investment to improve facilities and turn Grays into a place to go.

Councillor Halden echoed the comments made by Councillor Hebb, and said how important it was for care leavers to get on the housing ladder. He stated that £128,000 had already been saved by the Council through the Headstart on Housing Scheme. Councillor Watkins then discussed how the new fleet of bin lorries were helping communities already. He also felt it was great to see local school children getting involved by naming the lorries and helped to teach them about the importance of recycling. He also felt the Debt Summit and #lifescalder schemes were great as they could show how saved money could be spent effectively.

Councillor Johnson then added to the discussion by saying how he felt it was good that the Council had a programme of self-sufficiency, and the fact that the Housing Revenue Account was maintained. He then asked if the work regarding the Housing Revenue Account could be reported back to Cabinet.

Councillor Gledhill said that he felt excited to see the new private investment into Grays Shopping Centre and was looking forward to seeing the plans. He then congratulated Members on their hard work regarding the redevelopment of Grays. He went on to say that the Council had been gifted £70million from central government for new schools within the borough. In addition to this, the balanced budget allowed the Council to spend money on new projects such as the A13 widening, new schools, and medical centres.

Councillor Hebb concluded that he felt proud of the balanced budget and was looking forward to what we be produced at the upcoming Debt Summit.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Noted that the General Fund net expenditure had been met within the overall budget envelope and the General Fund Balance had been increased by £3.000m to £11.000m**
- 2. Noted that the balance on the Housing Revenue Account Reserve had been maintained at £2.175m**
- 3. Noted that there was a total of £377.258m in capital expenditure and some of the key projects have been set out in section 5.**

13. Appointments to Outside Bodies, Statutory and other Panels

Councillor Gledhill introduced the report by stating that it was the Cabinet's responsibility to appoint Members to outside bodies. He went on to say that all membership was to remain the same, as listed in the previous Appointments to Outside Bodies Report, except for a few notable which were: Councillor Deborah Huelin to Impulse Leisure Board and Thurrock Sports Council; Councillors Luke Spillman and Gerard Rice to Local Government Association; Councillor Gledhill to South East Local Enterprise and Partnership Strategic Board and Accountability Board; and Councillor Sue MacPherson to Thurrock Arts Council.

RESOLVED that Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the nominations to Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels**

The meeting finished at 8.24pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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