

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 25 July 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Barbara Rice (Mayor), Terry Piccolo (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Tim Aker, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Clare Baldwin, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Shinnick, Peter Smith, Luke Spillman, Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors James Baker, Russell Cherry, Colin Churchman, Angela Lawrence, Sue MacPherson, Sue Sammons and Pauline Tolson

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sharon Bayliss, Director of Commercial Services
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Andrew Millard, Assistant Director - Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Ian Wake, Director of Public Health
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Detlev Munster, Assistant Director - Property & Development
Jonathon Wilson, Chief Accountant, Finance
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy 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.

The Mayor invited Reverend Canon Darren Barlow to lead those present in prayer.

Councillor J Kent enquired how Councillor Baker was following the incident that took place in Ockendon last week. Councillor Spillman stated Councillor Baker and former Councillor Chris Baker were recovering well from the shock of the injuries suffered from this incident and thanked Members for their concern.

31. Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 27 June 2018 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor Redsell commented on Page 31 of the Appendix A to the Council Minutes the word Beckshill should read Bexhill.

32. Items of Urgent Business

No items of urgent business were received.

33. Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests were received.

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

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

The Mayor announced as part of her Charity the Community Chest Charity was Giving for Thurrock she announced their 3 fund raising events and encouraged members to attend.

Afternoon Tea with the Mayor to be held on the 14 September 2018 where invited guests would be asked to wear either a hat or a fascinator.

A Charity Ball to be held on the 16 November 2018 at the Orsett Hall.

A Civic Dinner to be held on the 12 April 2019 at the Civic Hall which will be a grand black and white ball.

The Mayor stated she contributed each month to the Pay Day Giving Scheme and encouraged all members to sign up so members could start to Give for Thurrock in Thurrock.

The Mayor announced a "Giving for Thurrock Day" to be held on the last Friday of March each year to have a day of raising funds for small charities in Thurrock and for the good of Thurrock residents to come together as a community.

The Mayor sadly announced the passing of former Councillor Diane Revell who would be remembered for her contributions to the Council and in the Chamber and had sent condolences to her family.

Councillor Gledhill extended his condolences and stated it had been a great loss when Diane Revell had retired and it was an even greater loss now.

Councillor Gerrish reflected on regular Member stories told of their high regard of Diane Revell and extended the Labour Group's condolences.

Councillor Little spoke of her memories and admiration for Diane Revell and how this had been a sad time.

Councillor Redsell echoed comments made by other Members and how Diane Revell had been passionate and gave good advice when the Mayor's seat was passed to her from Diane Revell.

The Mayor thanked Members for their kind words.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, stated Cabinet had allocated £250K to tackle anti-social behaviour in the borough with action being taken to let those offenders know that this behaviour would not be tolerated. Anti-social behaviour in the borough was a whole community issue requiring a multi-agency approach to help prevention and enforcement. The Leader highlighted:

- A funded specialist anti-social behaviour officer will now work alongside the existing housing anti-social behaviour team.
- CCTV would be improved on the Garrison Estate and Derwent Parade.
- Youth Club developments made to help youths at risk to be diverted from bad behaviour.
- Community Events to reassure residents and to create a united community to encourage issues to be reported.
- Funding for the Report It Campaign to encourage residents to report anti-social behaviour and crime on-line.
- Thurrock Council to equip Essex Police with equipment to track down those users that use quad and motor bikes inappropriately in the borough as part of the bike nuisance operation Sacrifice.
- Funding for Thurrock Council and Essex Police to undertake high visibility operations to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Funding for Essex Police to undertake high visibility operations to tackle gang related issues as part of the Raptor operation.

The Leader stated improvements had been made of both schools and general practitioners across the year and highlighted:

- 94% of Thurrock schools now rated good or outstanding.

- Work continued with the Education Skills Funding Agency to create 3500 new school places.
- Increase of health sessions would be offered for families across the borough and the Children's Centres and through the Brighter Future Service.
- Significant improvement to standards as rated good in general practitioner surgeries had improved from 2 to 21.
- Plans are progressing for the new 4 Integrated Medical Centres.

The Leader thanked and congratulated the Planning Team in achieving 4th position out of 339 Local Planning Authorities in the National Planning Performance results.

The Coalhouse Fort had recently been awarded the Green Flag for the 8th year running as a fantastic park in Thurrock which would be promoted as part of the Discover Thurrock Campaign.

The Clean It Cut It Fill It update since April 2018 - 1108 pot holes had been filled, 408 acres of grass cut, 737 tonnes of waste collected, 425 fly tips cleared, 1004 penalty notices issued for offences of littering.

Councillor Gledhill stated Agenda Item 10 Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) had been withdrawn from the agenda due to the Government announcement of the National Policy Framework. That Officers would look at the potential impacts and the report would be presented back at the best possible opportunity. Councillor Gledhill encouraged Members to bring any questions to the attention of Group Leaders to be considered at a later date. Work will continue with the consultation of Thurrock residents which was vital for the project to move forward.

The Leader updated Members on the anti-social behaviour question raised at June 2018 Full Council that an Essex Police raid has taken place at Grays Park on the 30 June where drugs were ceased and arrests made. This was an ongoing operation to halt these behaviours

35. 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 at these minutes.

36. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, the requisite notice had been given by 3 Members who wished to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Hebb presented a petition on behalf of St Joseph's School in Stanford le Hope in relation to Highways matters.

Councillor Jefferies presented a petition on behalf of Bruyns Court and Deveron Gardens in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour.

Councillor J Kent presented a petition on behalf of Elm Road Park in relation to the decision to sell the land.

37. Petition Update Report

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council Meetings and Council Offices.

38. 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 Chamber he wished to make the following changes:

For Councillor Redsell to be appointed as member of the Licensing Committee to replace Councillor Kelly.

For Councillor Redsell to be appointed as member of the Police Fire and Crime Panel to replace Councillor Anderson.

For Councillor Redsell to be appointed as member of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor Maney.

Councillor Gerrish, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Chamber he had no changes.

Councillor Spillman, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group, informed the Chamber he had no changes.

39. Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2)

Item was withdrawn at the meeting.

40. Report of the Cabinet Member for Central Services

Councillor Collins, Portfolio Holder for Central Services, presented his Portfolio Holder report and stated it was a privilege to be presenting his first report. Councillor Collins thanked Councillor Huelin for her help and support and appreciated the help provided by Members and Officers. Councillor Collins updated Members on the following achievements:

- Changes to the digital strategy with the completion of a number of technology projects and application upgrades formed part of the overall Council Digital Strategy
- Newly refurbished customer services face to face and reception area, to reflect key principles in the Customer Services and Digital Strategies to help residents self-serve online while continuing to provide support for the most vulnerable
- Continued transformation in the digital interaction with residents via other Council's web portal
- 100% of new benefit claims are made online
- 11,400 followers on Twitter
- 4,410 followers on Facebook
- 13,000 subscribers of e-newsletters which includes Business Buzz and Thurrock Careers
- Reversing an agency level of 85% to a permanent officer level of more than 85% by October 2018
- The shared legal service with the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham had been discontinued from March 2018
- The Council's quality performance had been recognised externally with the reaccreditation of the Customer Contact Association in June 2018.

Councillor Collins stated Members should encourage residents to report issues on line.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Portfolio Holder and welcomed Councillor Collins to his new role. Councillor Gerrish questioned whether there was a problem with communications and the way consultations had been undertaken particularly for the selling of the land at the Thurrock Rugby Ground. Councillor Collins stated work continued on improving communications and this was work in progress.

Councillor Okunade thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and questioned whether there were any underlying problems with the increase of upheld complaints. Councillor Collins agreed to provide a written response as this information was not to hand.

Councillor Redsell stated it would be good practice to continue to publish a contact number of the Council for those residents with no access to IT equipment. Councillor Collins stated this had been taken on board and a contact number would be added to the Council's web site.

Councillor Worrall was pleased the Equality and Diversity scheme had been refreshed and questioned whether a report would be presented at Council. Councillor Collins stated work was being undertaken on this report and would be presented as soon as possible.

Councillor J Kent questioned the cost of the new reception area and why no key spends over £500 appear on the Council's web site. Councillor Collins

stated this information was not to hand and would provide a draft written response.

Councillor Collins thanked Members for their comments and the Council had come a long way with making changes to services but still had a long way to go with 2018/19 being the year of bedding of those new services. This year's objective was to get the Council's services delivered to resident's right first time.

41. Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented his Portfolio Report and stated it was a privilege and a pleasure to announce the services provided by Thurrock Council would be safe for the next 4 years with Thurrock Council having a balanced budget since 2016. Councillor Hebb updated Members on some of those services:

- Weekly Bin Collections
- Improved Grass Cutting
- Street Cleaning
- Pot Hole Filling
- Protect the Elderly
- Council Tax Exemptions
- Affordable Housing
- Saving Hospital facilities
- Clean It Cut It Fill It

Councillor Hebb stated the General Fund Budget had been increased by 38%, from £8m to £11m. The Administration had overseen spending of ear-marked reserves which funded projects such as school building and other capital plans with the review of reserves to ensure the Council did not sit on Council tax payers money for no reason. The work would start with the Fair Debt Summit in September 2018 and Members and Head Teachers from the borough would be invited.

Councillor Hebb stated the Council Spending Review the concentrated on reviewing bottom-up services was working.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and highlighted the need for the Council to earn external income and questioned what were the biggest, newest opportunities to generate revenue that are currently being explored by the Council. Councillor Hebb stated one of the commercial teams was the Fraud Team who also worked outside the Council where a return of £24.5 million had been generated over past years. Achieving a 2 to 1 return that would enable monies to pay for current services and help the Council to reinvest.

Councillor Spillman stated the sustainability was being achieved by taking money out of pockets of residents by increasing council tax. Councillor Spillman asked for guarantees no further increase in budgets to further

increase council tax. Councillor Hebb stated a motion on the Council Spending Review had been agreed with the ambition to reduce tax burden on residents. A review looking at bottom-up services was currently being undertaken and once complete would be presented where discussions could take place.

Councillor Duffin stated he had supported the Council Spending Review Motion but questioned when Members would see progress and the long term investments. Councillor Hebb stated the Investigation Strategy had been agreed unanimously and the Council's Spending Review agreed and discussed across party. Cabinet continued to look at investments and discussions would take place.

Councillor Jefferies asked what further assurances could be given that the Council's finances are in a safer place. Councillor Hebb stated a Peer and an External Audit Review had taken place where the Council's pathway had been outlined and developed. With this year's initial audit report expected to announce an unqualified position on the Council's financial health.

Councillor G Rice stated on the street cleaning item and suggested Councillor Hebb visited Chadwell St Mary to look at the issue of overgrown weeds and blocked gullies particularly along the A1306. Councillor Hebb stated he was aware of the issue and would contact Councillor G Rice with regards to visiting the sites.

Councillor Hebb thanked Members for their questions and comments. Extended thanks were also given to the finance team who had played a fantastic role and thanked opposition parties for their contributions.

42. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 1 question to the Leader had been received, 1 question to the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and 9 questions to Cabinet Members.

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

43. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

Councillor Abbas updated Members on his recent visit to the Citizens Advice Bureau where he had been provided with a briefing and been introduced to volunteers and employers. Following the Thurrock Citizen Advice Bureau merge with Basildon in April 2018 the annual funding had been cut significantly from £150k to £50k. Some external funding had been provided by various outside organisations. With these cuts it was becoming harder for them to manage and there were concerns the budgets had been cut but rents would be increased in 2019/20. Due to these cuts 8 to 9 residents are turned away each day, with the Citizens Advice Bureau Chief Executive having

concerns over the funding. Councillor Abbas had also been invited to attend the Board in Basildon on the 8 August.

Councillor G Rice attended an Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood Defence Committee where it been announced work on the proposed lock gate in Tilbury would start in early 2019.

Councillor G Rice stated Officers had engaged with Anglian Water with regards to Ottawa Road, Christchurch Road and Quebec Road who had experienced flooding and surface water flooding.

44. Minutes of Committees

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

45. Motion Update Report

Members received an information report updating the progress in respect of Motions received at Council.

Councillor Duffin stated he was disappointed with the response provided to his Motion presented at June Council with regards to Thurrock Council looking into contacting all sports teams/clubs. Councillor Duffin stated the response had been against everything the Motion was about and requested further action.

46. Motion 1 Submitted by Councillor Spillman

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

Council requests that Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee urgently consider adding to it work programme at its next meeting on 2 October 2018 research into the feasibility of installing sprinkler systems in every high-rise tower block in Thurrock considering the extensive body of evidence highlighting the risks of not having sprinkler systems in such high-rise buildings.

Councillor Spillman stated the Motion had been presented in light of the tragedy at Grenfell Tower and with the agreement of all parties this work should be undertaken.

Councillor Johnson stated a proactive approach had taken place on the housing stock following the tragedy with a feasibility study being undertaken in late 2017. The Council was compliant and would continue to be so. Councillor Johnson questioned why Councillor Spillman, as deputy chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had not raised this as an item on the committee work programme.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for this Motion and as previous portfolio holder for housing a considerable amount of work had already been undertaken following the tragedy. Councillor Gledhill also stated the item could have been raised as an item on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

Councillor Spillman stated the reason for presenting at Council had been Cabinet had previously ignored recommendations made by overview and scrutiny committees and felt it was an important item that required discussion. Councillor Spillman requested the Mayor moved to the vote.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

47. Motion 2 Submitted by Councillor Smith

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

Thurrock Council considers going further than their statutory duty regarding publication of Traffic Restriction Orders (TRO) by publishing them on the Council's social media and contacting residents through email where possible as well as the currently required public notices on lamp posts and in the local press.

Councillor Spillman stated that in Aveley only 6 residents had responded to a consultation on the proposed painting of yellow lines on every corner. This proved poor engagement and consultation had to be improved.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for this Motion as it could change the current process. With the right way forward was to reach out to residents electronically and through social media.

Councillor Smith thanked the Leader for his comments and it was important the communication was right to take the Council into the 21st Century.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

48. Motion 3 Submitted by Councillor Redsell

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

This chamber recognises the valuable contribution that trees make to our local environment and calls on Cabinet and/or officers

- *Where practicable to consult Members prior to the removal of trees from local authority land within their respective wards, and*
- *Where possible in accordance with the current budget to replace within a reasonable period all trees felled from local authority land including public areas; and*
- *To investigate availability of funding sources for the 2019-20 budgets to enable the Council to purchase replacement trees*

Councillor Redsell stated that the Motion was long overdue and the Council should do more in future budgets for tree planting funds. This would improve cleaner air and encourage wild life. Trees should be replaced as they are felled and Members be informed of any such felling. Thurrock had some very old trees and there should be some provision for the next generation to enjoy.

Councillor Rigby fully supported this Motion and understood some trees had to be felled but where possible these should be replanted. Trees played a vital part in the environment not only for the shelter for wild life but they made the borough look good and bring some wellbeing into the borough.

Councillor Duffin stated his support for the Motion and commented on the amount of paper used to produce agendas for committees. Councillor Duffin suggested where 1 tree was felled 2 are replanted.

Councillor Coxshall stated this was a fantastic Motion and agreed with Councillor Duffin's suggested where 1 tree was felled 2 are replanted. Councillor Coxshall referred Members to the Avenues in Stifford Clays where all the trees had been felled and requested Stifford Clays be addressed first.

Councillor J Kent stated his support for the Motion and it was the best thing to do but questioned why the Council were proposing to dig up the six acre park in Elm Road.

Councillor Maney stated this was an important motion that gave commitment the Council cared. On average 35 trees were lost each year and with no current policy in place to replace them. That funding be added to the budget would ensure these trees could be replaced and give back what the residents want.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for the Motion and this would be a good way forward and to look at possible funding externally.

Councillor Watkins stated his support for the Motion and agreed communication with Members could be improved and would be addressed at the Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Hamilton suggested a sponsor a tree scheme.

Councillor Redsell thanked Members for their support but informed them the tree plaques had recently been stolen from the trees at Blackshots which had been disrespectful and upsetting.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

49. Motion 4 Submitted by Councillor Gerrish

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

Thurrock Council calls for our asset disposal process to include an emphasis on:

- *The importance of informal discussions with current occupiers of land and local residents.*
- *Consultation with ward councillors.*
- *Identification of multiple suitable sites to provide genuine choice.*
- *A more open and inclusive decision-making process.*

Councillor Gerrish stated the Motion was relative to the disposal of land where residents were only being made aware of consultations at committees. That a review should be undertaken to ensure every opportunity was given for proper consultations and proper notification be given.

Councillor Duffin stated his support for the Motion and expressed his frustration as a member of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Cabinet seem to be ignoring any recommendations that came out of overview and scrutiny committees. It would appear Cabinet do as they pleased and all other members are ignored.

Councillor Halden stated there should have been a consultation of ward members and had apologised for this. Councillor Halden stated sometimes decisions made would not be good for everyone but decisions had to be made for the greater good and major investments be made for school places.

Councillor Hebb stated the Motion was sound and respected the changes as it was important children get the best start in schools.

Councillor Fletcher stated the consultation and discussions should be taking place as early as possible in the process and the Administration appeared to be doing as they say and other Members can shut up.

Councillor Halden called Point of Order as he had not told the Opposition to "shut up". There were 2 legally binding processes for Members and the Community to have their say.

Councillor Spillman stated it was the tone and stubbornness of Cabinet Members that would make the Overview and Scrutiny and Council meetings redundant and the Administration should be looking at ways to interact more with the other groups.

Councillor G Rice stated his support for the Motion and as a member of the Thurrock Planning Committee he was aware of planning applications being refused and those pieces of land could be used as alternatives for future school developments.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for the Motion and hoped it was universal across the chamber. Policies would be written into the asset disposal process and discussions would take place on everything the Council undertake. Councillor Gledhill stated Councillor Halden had already apologised for there not being a consultation of ward members.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

The Mayor wished Members an enjoyable summer.

The meeting finished at 9.29 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**

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