

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 30 September 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Sue Hooper, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Pothecary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day, Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Chris Baker and Cathy Kent

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
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 was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's Youtube channel.

141. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Extraordinary Council held on the 8 July 2020 were approved as a correct record.

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142. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

143. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor announced that Reverend Canon Darren Barlow had been appointed to the role of his chaplain.

The Mayor stated that it had been unprecedented times and hoped that everyone and their families were well and it was encouraging to see Thurrock had one of the lowest infection rates in the country and thanked all those that had complied with the advice that was being given in regards to limiting the spread of COVID-19.

The Mayor stated he had attended very few engagements since July and had continued to make donations to small local organisations that were helping ease some of the pressure on the national services that were feeling the pressure. The Mayor stated he was looking for ways to raise money for his chosen charity, G1FT, in these current restricted times and hoped to make some announcements shortly.

The Mayor paid tribute to Barry Palmer, a past mayor of Thurrock who had sadly passed away on the 16 July this year. The Mayor had attended his funeral where he paid his respects and acknowledged the fine work that he had carried out during his time as a Councillor. Members were asked to observe a minute silence in his memory.

The Leader also paid tribute to Barry Palmer and stated this was a great loss to Thurrock and particularly those East Tilbury residents who he had served for many years.

The Leader provided Members with a Coronavirus Update that over recent weeks nationally we had seen an increase in activity around coronavirus and it had been made clear we were not out of the woods yet. Unlike other areas of the country, Thurrock's infection rate remained low, which was why it was even more important for all to keep playing their part in Thurrock. The Leader stated that it was thanks to residents' sacrifice and dedication that the infection rate had been brought down before and stated that Thurrock had got what it takes to do it again. That the new restrictions announced by the Prime Minister were not as stringent as those introduced in March but stated that if we did not follow those guidelines we would expect more restrictions to get the virus under control. The Leader encouraged residents of Thurrock to continue to play their part by downloading the NHS COVID-19 App and continue to comply with the requirements of self-isolating should they test positive or show signs of the coronavirus. The Leader also asked residents to treat those mask exempt residents with kindness and respect.

The Leader stated over the last two months the Government had announced two reforms which would give local authorities greater autonomy and better opportunities to deliver significant growth which would benefit all residents. With the first planning reform outlined in a white paper published at the start of August which would streamline the planning process, cut red tape and harness new technology to ensure that vital homes and infrastructure could be delivered more quickly and in a way that benefitted local residents. With the current cumbersome planning laws it was high time for reform so Thurrock

welcomed this proposal and encouraged all to look at the consultation. Secondly the reform to local government which would see local authorities getting more devolved powers from Westminster. In many ways here in South Essex, Thurrock had been ahead of the game forming the Association of South Essex Local Authorities three years ago to work together more collaborative across the South Essex Councils with this work already resulting in millions of pounds of Government money being invested into digital infrastructure improvements and assisting with strategic planning.

South Essex was the economic powerhouse and it provided a home to more than half the people in Essex in an area that covered roughly a fifth of the county but for decades had suffered an infrastructure deficit and stated that it was the right thing to do to go unitary to break away from Essex and be masters of our own fate. The Leader stated that South Essex worked and it had worked for the whole nation with a natural economic corridor encompassing three international ports, an international airport and home to more than 1,700 manufacturing businesses. With Thurrock already writing to the Government outlining their plans for South Essex which would contribute an additional £15 billion to the national economy by 2050. Thurrock had asked the Government to give the funding and powers needed to unlock the regions enormous economic potential. That Thurrock were looking at the best way we could work together to ensure a significant positive impact on residents' lives in the future and that some powers were devolved from Westminster to the South Essex.

The Leader announced that over the past few weeks, Thurrock had successfully secured two High Court interim injunctions to protect greenbelt land north and south of the Buckles Lane site from further unauthorised development which had been an on-going issue but were now at the point to start and to move forward with further action. That a scaffolding company had been fined which had been blighting the lives of residents in Aveley by moving their lorries outside of permitted hours and stated that any businesses that were blighting the lives of Thurrock residents would be brought to an end if the Council had powers to do so under the planning regulations. The Leader thanked residents for reporting this kind of activity and encouraged everyone to let the Council know if they were being affected by out of hours HGV and lorry movements or other issues impacting their quality of life.

The Leader stated investments had been made to the Council's foster carers by taking the Thurrock based carers out of council tax to encourage those to foster in the borough rather than foster through private agencies and would have their council tax reduced and encouraged carers to come forward and take advantage of the fantastic move forward for Thurrock and to help those that need to be fostered to stay in Thurrock.

The Leader provided an update on Clean It, Cut It, Fill It and that since the start of April 2020, Thurrock Council had:

- Filled 1,592 potholes

- Cleared 1,379 tonnes of litter from our streets
- Cleared 704 fly-tips
- Issued 1,652 fixed penalty notices for anti-social behaviour like spitting, littering and dropping cigarette ends
- 77 x £400 fixed penalty notices issue for fly-tipping
- 30 court cases for littering have already been successfully prosecuted but there are 125 more in the pipeline to be sent to Legal at the end of this month. A considerable number of offenders have requested extensions due to the pandemic and lockdown.

Councillor J Kent paid tribute to Barry Palmer who had served Thurrock for many years, stating he was a kind, generous and funny man who would be solely missed and passed his sincere condolences to his wife and children.

145. 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.co.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

146. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, one requisition of notice had been given to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Allen presented a petition on behalf of residents who were being affected by an alleyway being used for unacceptable behaviour such as a toilet, drug use, use by motorbikes and calling for full closure of the alleyway at the bottom of Central Avenue, Tilbury, Essex, RM18 7RX.

147. Petitions Update Report

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

148. 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 by Committees and Outside Bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Chamber he had the following changes to make:

For Councillor Spillman to be removed from the General Services Committee.

For Councillor Johnson to be removed from the Standards and Audit Committee.

For Councillor Mayes to be removed from the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force.

For Councillor Spillman to be removed from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

For Councillor Hague to be removed from the Impulse Leisure outside body and offered out to any Member who wished to sit on this panel.

The Leader offered the vacant seat on the Corporate Parenting Committee to the Thurrock Independent Group to fill.

Councillor Fish arrived into the chamber at 7.34pm.

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

Councillor Byrne, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group informed the Chamber he had the following change to make:

For Councillor Smith to be added to the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Councillor Massey and Councillor Allen informed the Chamber they had no changes to make.

149. Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2019/20 - Serious Youth Violence and Vulnerability

Councillor Mayes, Portfolio Holder for Health and Air Quality, presented the annual health report that considered the issue of Violence and Vulnerability in young people and how a public health approach could be used to improve outcomes for Thurrock residents. Councillor Mayes thanked the Director of Public Health, Ian Wake, and his team for this fantastic report. Members were referred to the four steps of the public health approach to violence which were (1) surveillance to identify the nature of the problem (2) identify the risk and preventative factors (3) develops and evaluates interventions to reduce the risk factors and improve protective factors and (4) implementation and scaling up of success.

Councillor Mayes stated the report aimed to deliver the first three steps and then to the point of implementation. Members were referred to the Public Health Approach in tackling serious violence and gang related activity and their characteristics, the methodology used as a framework in the understanding the issue of violence and vulnerability in Thurrock and proposed that multi-agency action was required to address this. The report also considered issues in detail on the context of the public health approach.

Councillor J Kent thanked the portfolio holder for the report and stated that the report was a fantastic piece of work that had been presented to the Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July. Councillor J Kent stated that when precious resources against violence and youth crime were required these should be at the head of the queue and made a plea that the recommendations be agreed with sufficient resources to see them succeed.

Councillor Kerin asked the portfolio holder to outline what he was doing to protect those children in care from gang related activities. Councillor Halden stated that a Gang Officer and the expansion of the Youth Offending Service was resourced and was already in place and secure. That investment to have additional adolescence mental health workers in schools and investments made into INSPIRE to ensure young people had a route into employment rather than into criminality. A task force was in place looking at employment and housing and how support structures could be put in place. That mental health and vulnerability health streams were being resourced and an update would be provided at the next Health and Wellbeing Board.

Councillor Ralph questioned with the changes in COVID with more children at home had the Council sought to employ more child psychologists in Thurrock. Councillor Halden stated that more work was being put into intervention with a psychologist team already in Thurrock but did not want an over clinical model that focused on medical intervention it was the preventative work that was required.

Councillor Redsell thanked the portfolio holder for the report and the brilliant work undertaken but stated it was vital to get to the children earlier say at primary school age.

Councillor Anderson stated the report had been successfully presented at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee with good debate and discussion.

Councillor Massey echoed the comments already made that this was a fantastic report and it was good that issues were being tackled earlier before they became bigger problems.

Councillor Holloway also echoed the comments that this was a fantastic report prepared by Ian Wake and his team, and had a clear pathway going forward and hoped that the Portfolio Holder would ensure the recommendations were taken forward.

Councillor Okunade thanked Ian Wake for the detailed report and with the report being presented at the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July where members had found the report very useful and felt that this was the right way forward in particular the setting up of the locality based disciplinary panel. Councillor Okunade asked for assurance that the recommendations would be implemented and asked when this would take place. Councillor Mayes stated this report would be taken very seriously for the benefit of the young people of Thurrock and that costings around the

recommendations would take place and would endeavour to do everything possible. Councillor Mayes assured members that these recommendations would not be shelved, things may not happen straight away but there were things that could be done now and built upon.

Councillor Little firstly thanked Ian Wake for the report which were always so inclusive. Councillor Little reminded Members that they were in a unique position within their communities and it was vital that every Member played their part if they were to recognise something happening particularly with children or gang related. Members were reminded about the gang related training was available and encouraged all to sign up for it.

Councillor Spillman stated it was pleasing to see a wide range and challenging approach being undertaken by the Council to deal with these issues and thanked the portfolio holders and Ian Wake for the report and hoped that the recommendations came to fruition.

Councillor Mayes thanked Members for their questions and stated although the report may have been a difficult read it was a very important report.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Council noted and commented on the content and recommendations contained within the report.**
- 2. That Council considered how the findings and recommendations contained within the report can best be implemented and used to influence broader council strategy in this area.**

At 8.36pm, Councillor Churchman left the meeting.

150. Report of the Cabinet Member for Central Services and Communities

Councillor Huelin was delighted to present her wide and very varied portfolio holder report from April 2019 to March 2020 for central services and communities. Some of the areas that Councillor Huelin covered in her speech were:

- The introduction of the Consultation Portal with over 3,000 users registered to 'have their say' online.
- The Community Environmental Development Fund had gone from strength to strength with almost 40 projects being supported over the last four years.
- Thurrock had a very diverse community and grateful to CVS for their support and facilitating conversations around racism and inequality.
- The Collaborative Community Paper would be presented to overview and scrutiny shortly.
- Opening of the new Aveley Hub – used and shared by the community with the the digital offer developed during lockdown, the service would continue to be modernised with membership to The Libraries

Consortium and the implementation of a new Library Management System.

- With 95% of household registered to “My Account” to report a variety of issues 24/7.
- Communications had improved resident engagement through social media channels.
- The Right First Time training had successfully been rolled out to all council employees to ensure residents had a right first time experience and where not, complaints were dealt with effectively.
- Information Technology Team undertake the work to ensure that 2700 staff, 160,000 residents and 49 members could communicate with each other, pay bills and report issues.
- That £4 million Government grants would be managed to improve internet speeds across the borough with Full Fibre Network.
- Updates being made to My Account to allow residents to report more on-line.
- Thurrock Council had carried on through COVID-19 and had shown that the Council was ahead of the curve. With IT working to ensure staff could work remotely and theatre and enforcement officers organising and distributing emergency food parcels to shielding residents. Library staff helped to coordinate the COVID centre with Stronger Together and CVS and Councillor Huelin thanked everyone who helped.
- Within days the Thurrock Community Coronavirus Action had been set up to help vulnerable residents with over 500 volunteers to help isolating residents.
- The Arts and Cultural Team worked with local artists and CVS on local COVID projects to promote health and wellbeing.

Councillor Abbas thanked Councillor Huelin for the report and thanked all staff and volunteers for their help and support. Councillor Abbas asked what progress had been made in regards to a memorial in memory of the 39 lives lost at the terrible incident in West Thurrock last October. Councillor Huelin stated this was under discussion, that a collaborative consultation would be undertaken with the community and residents and would provide an update to Members.

Councillor Abbas questioned whether any funding had been allocated to digitise the museum records and articles of value. Councillor Huelin confirmed there was funding and all items were being digitalised but stated that this would be a very long slow process as there were items that were over 50 years old and had to be handled very carefully and trying to understand the ownership of some of items would take time.

Councillor Abbas asked how confident the portfolio holder was in securing funding from the Arts Council in the next bidding round. Councillor Huelin stated the collaborative community had come together to support this and that the last six months had helped the Council to evidence their case and felt that the Council was in the best place to get the funding this time.

Councillor Redsell thanked the portfolio holder for getting the libraries open for residents as they meant so much to people.

Councillor Gerrish asked the portfolio holder what objectives had been set this year to ensure that communities were properly supported to recover from the affects that COVID had on them. Councillor Huelin stated the work was being undertaken very closely with voluntary services such as CVS who had already started to under consultations and surveys on voluntary groups to gauge how they had been affected. Councillor Huelin and Councillor Halden would work together with the community and faith groups and analyse the feedback together as they were aware that mental health illness issues may be different to what they were before COVID and would need to be taken into consideration, understand them and use cultural and arts and the voluntary sector to help support those individuals.

Councillor J Kent referred to the communications digital by default and stated some residents may suffer from digital exclusion or digital isolation especially some of Thurrock's elderly residents and asked what assessment had the portfolio holder undertaken of the number of people, including those elderly residents, who may be suffering from digital exclusion. Councillor Huelin stated the Council had always been accountable to include all residents with 95% of residents on-line and 10% of residents that needed to be looked after. Councillor Huelin stated that most residents had a telephone which they could use to phone the call centre, speak to a member of staff and seek the help they need. Libraries were also a good means of internet access for those residents what did not have this facility at home.

Councillor Byrne stated his support for this report.

Councillor Massey thanked the portfolio holder for the detailed report and stated that it was important and good to see that the Council's IT technology had been upgraded and questioned following the success of Phase 1 of the implementation of Microsoft 365 platform whether there were any further phases to come. Councillor Huelin stated the IT department were continually looking how to upgrade technology for better experiences for all users. Members were reminded that this was a new way of working with new means of technology and staff were doing their best.

Councillor Allen thanked the portfolio holder for the report and thanked all those involved in the distribution of the emergency food boxes to residents and to ensure that all residents, including the elderly, where included in Council's communications.

Councillor Worrall questioned where a copy of the statutory report of the Equality Act 2010 could be found as these reports had not been presented at Council meetings for any endorsement. Councillor Huelin stated that all equality, diversity and collaborative community papers had been delayed. That the consultation had been carried out with the papers ready to be presented to overview and scrutiny committee.

Councillor Holloway welcomed the on-line offer of thousands of books available to residents and asked for confirmation that no library would close and that if libraries were moved to hubs they would not be downsized with the quality and range of book taken into account. Councillor Huelin stated this Administration had stated that they would always strive to maintain library services but could not promise where they would be as times changed with possible changes to buildings and libraries being moved into hubs. Councillor Huelin stated this was a community led initiative and referred to the The Libraries Consortium where there would be over six million books available.

Councillor Huelin offered to answer any further questions outside of the meeting.

Councillor Huelin summed up by stating that during the year the corporate transformation programme had focused on digital transformation and agreed that this had stood the Council in good stead over the last six months. Taking all the work undertaken the services had ended the year with a record 74% of services achieving target.

151. Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Air Quality

Councillor Mayes stated that it had been a privilege to have become the portfolio holder report for health and air quality. That those two areas helped recognise the relationship between supporting people to make healthier lifestyles choices and how air quality had an impact on resident's health and wellbeing. Councillor Mayes stated that there were links between his portfolio and that of Councillor Halden, portfolio holder for adults and social care and would continue to work together. That the lockdown of COVID-19 could never have been predicted and that key workers continued to work to provide vital services and thanked every person who played there part either by staying at home or as key workers.

In Thurrock, the Council continued to deliver services to residents as much as possible with restrictions in place, with the Council and community services coming together to deliver 596 essential food packages during lockdown. Councillor Mayes praised the work undertaken by the Public Health Team during the pandemic and established outbreak control plans to protect Thurrock's residents. A lot of positive work on mental health had been undertaken but further work was required to ensure residents got the support that they needed and as part of that a Mental Health Steering Group would be established to discuss those needs. That work continued with health and third party sectors to adopt any new challenges that COVID-19 would bring.

Councillor Mayes was pleased to announce that construction work would commence in November 2020 on the Integrated Medical Centre in Corringham. That the Integrated Medical Centres would direct the appropriate health care that residents require as not everyone would need to see a general practitioner and would free up vital appointments for those that did. That a paper was presented to the Cleaner Greener Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier in the year to refresh the Air Quality and Health

Strategy and although this was still Councillor Mayes aim this would not be the right time due to COVID to refresh the model. That work continued with schools on the anti-idling campaign and encouraged all to switch off engines when in an idle position to reduce pollution. Councillor Mayes reminded residents of Tilbury that the dust issue had not been forgotten with the Council taking this very seriously and actively engaging with the environmental agency and encouraged residents to continually report issues to the environmental agency.

Councillor Holloway paid tribute to the fantastic work of the Public Health Team, Council and NHS Staff and Care Providers who ensured that Thurrock was one of the lowest affected areas and for looking after Thurrock's residents. Councillor Holloway referred to the difficulties of accessing COVID-19 testing nationally and questioned what processes were in place locally for residents of Thurrock to get them back to work and back to learning. Councillor Mayes stated the testing capacity was dedicated by the national scheme and that two lighthouse labs were opened last week which had created 75000 more capacity for testing across the country but with Thurrock prevalence of COVID quite low and work would continue with officers and partners to ensure that those residents who need a test got tested.

Councillor Holloway questioned what Councillor Mayes was doing personally to make sure that Thurrock's test and trace was not left to nationally and that Thurrock were being heard. Councillor Mayes stated that private testing had been commissioned to alleviate testing for staffing in care sectors. That work was being undertaken with officers and partners on how provision could be increased and that more testing would become more available over the coming weeks.

Councillor Ralph thanked everyone in the Public Health Teams that and worked during the pandemic and welcomed the changes being made to mental health and the COVID test centres that had been put up in Corringham.

Councillor Allen raised his concern on the red dust problem in Tilbury.

Councillor J Kent paid tribute to all those people working for the Council and those working in the wider economy who had done so much good work during the pandemic. Councillor J Kent stated that most general practitioners were not undertaking routinely face to face consultations at this time and were being held over the telephone. Councillor J Kent stated that it was becoming increasingly difficult for residents to get appointments with general practitioners or even get through to the surgery on the telephone to make an appointment and asked Councillor Mayes if he was aware of this problem and what could be done, working with colleagues in health, to give residents better access and better chances of speaking to a general practitioner. Councillor Mayes stated that he had spoken with the five clinical commissioning group chairs and face to face appointments had been raised and that face to face appointments would be made available for the most vulnerable and mental health patients but felt that it was a fine balance to make sure that face to face

appointments were undertaken when needed and to use the telephone or teams for other appointments.

Councillor Byrne questioned whether the hubs would close just as the general practitioner surgeries had closed if there was another pandemic. Councillor Mayes stated they would provide a better integrated medical care and would help residents get the right service.

Councillor Massey referred to the idling enforcement and referred to the level crossing in his ward where a lot of idling took place and stated that commercial operations were guilty of that and suggested that the Council could in the future work with commercial partners to educate them to turn off their engines at level crossings which would help everyone in the area. Councillor Mayes agreed and would speak with partners.

Councillor Worrall raised her concern on the red filings and dark dust that continued to blight her jacuzzi and items in her garden in Tilbury and stated this was not acceptable nor healthy for residents to live like this and asked Councillor Mayes to now please sort out the air quality. Councillor Mayes agreed that this was not acceptable and the Council had a duty of care and that the environmental agency were the enforcement agency. That work continued with the environment agency with a steering group now being set up.

At 8.52pm, Councillor J Kent called Point of Order in relation to Council Procedure Rules, Paragraph 3.8 (b), the time allowed to introduce the report and receive questions on each report and questioned whether the Mayor would consider extra time to ensure that all had the opportunity to speak. The Mayor stated that extra time had been allowed for Members to speak and confirmed that the order of questions being asked.

At 8.54pm, Councillor Coxshall, called Point of Order, asking for confirmation on the order of questions to ensure that all had the opportunity to speak.

152. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that one question to the Leader had been received and 11 questions to Cabinet Members.

As the item fell due to time limit of the meeting Councillor J Kent withdrew question 7, Councillor Worrall withdrew question 8, Councillor Kerin resubmitted question 9 for October Council and Councillor Holloway withdrew questions 10 and 11.

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

153. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

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

154. Minutes of Committees

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

155. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

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

156. Motion submitted by Councillor Redsell

Councillor Redsell deferred the following motion:

Members hereby remember those who have lost their lives due to COVID-19 during this pandemic. Furthermore this chamber agrees that the Council should consider the creation of a permanent memorial to local residents, with the intention that it could be a place for family and friends to reflect. Members would also request that Cabinet consider options for a Thurrock memorial and bring forward a future report on this.

The meeting finished at 9.33 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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