

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 December 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Mike Fletcher, Garry Hague, John Kent, Angela Lawrence and Elizabeth Rigby

In attendance: Jahur Ali, Recreation and Leisure Manager
Gary Crooks, ERDF Business Manager
Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager
Gavin Dennett, Environmental Health and Trading Standards Manager
Grant Greatrex, Sport and Leisure Policy Development Manager
Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection
Daren Spring, Assistant Director – Street Scene & Leisure
Stephen Taylor, Strategic Lead of Economic Development
Cheryl Wells, Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager
Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin, Essex Police
Acting Superintendent Richard Melton, Essex Police
David McHendry, Knight Kavanagh & Page
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's online webcast channel.

72. Minutes

The minutes of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 1 October 2020 were approved as a correct record.

73. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

Democratic Services announced that Appendix to Item 7 in the agenda was not complete. An updated version had been sent to Members prior to the meeting and would be available on-line.

74. Declaration of Interests

There were no items of urgent business.

Democratic Services announced that Appendix to Item 7 in the agenda was not complete. An updated version had been sent to Members prior to the meeting and would be available on-line.

75. Thurrock Active Place Strategy

Leigh Nicholson, Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection introduced the report that identified as part of the preparation of the new Local Plan the Council commissioned the Thurrock Active Place Strategy (APS), a suite of studies to act as an up to date evidence base and to help inform future decision-making processes. The Local Plan, once adopted, would replace the currently adopted Core Strategy and Policies for Management of Development and would become the statutory planning document for Thurrock.

The APS consisted of four discrete strands covering Open Space and Play areas; Indoor and Built Sports Facilities; Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport; and an Active Travel Strategy, each of which included a separate assessment of current provision and a strategy report setting out strategic recommendations and targeted specific actions for how each could be improved/increased/ delivered over the Local Plan period.

The APS had not only been developed within the context of the Council's Corporate Plan and vision for Health and Wellbeing, but also within the context of consultation with key partners who would share the responsibility for the delivery of the strategic outcomes.

Knight Kavanagh & Page were invited to present. This presentation can be found on-line from the following link:

<https://thurrockintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=133&MIId=5794&Ver=4>

Councillor Redsell thanked officers for the report but stated the Council had been in the same place a few years ago and it had been a shame this had not moved forward and hoped this could now move forward and questioned whether all the key parties had been picked up and spoken to. Councillor Redsell also questioned whether it was quality rather than quantity going forward and also asked about the cycle paths in Thurrock. David McHendry stated he had met Councillor Redsell before as part of the Friends of Blackshots and that engagement had been undertaken with as many organisations that could be identified by the Council. One of the challenges had been that the process had started some while ago and this was now the refreshed position.

Councillor Fletcher thanked officers for the report and raised concern on the lack of activities in the report being identified for the use by elderly residents and questioned how this was going to be addressed. Councillor Fletcher also noted that there had been no mention in the report of Public Health or any of the aged charities and questioned whether these had been consulted. David McHendry stated that Public Health had been an integral part of the team in terms of the delivery of this project. In regards to the elderly population, the wording of activity space could accommodate any program and should be looked that where those activities would be held. That the walking and cycling infrastructure formed part of the active travel where it had been identified that

routes need to be updated and improved across Thurrock. Councillor Fletcher suggested that the element for activities for elderly people needed to be drawn out more clearly.

Councillor Lawrence thanked officers for the in-depth report but questioned whether this was actually going to happen and what the timescales would be. David McHendry stated the challenge was now for the Council to deliver in partnership with their partners and stakeholders.

Councillor J Kent stated the report was a useful document as a baseline that told us where we were now and had some useful stats which provided a good opportunity to measure the progress made over the year and had identified these as highly valued. These needed to be preserved and investments made into them whilst encouraging residents to take ownership and improving them. Councillor J Kent stated his disappointment with the report that on active travel there had not been sufficient information as to where the Council was now. David McHendry stated it was very difficult to measure how many people were using an informal network and that the active travel study had been built on the previous cycling strategy. Councillor J Kent stated he understood how difficult it might be to get a sense of how many people were using the cycle paths but when a lot of money had been spent monitoring car journeys it would not have been beyond the Council to physically count the number of users and not particularly difficult to measure the miles of cycle paths and to be able to map these. All of this information was helpful to set a baseline of data and to enable better facilities to be provided. Councillor Redsell agreed with Councillor J Kent that the Council would know the number of paths there were as the Council had put them in. David McHendry stated that document contained a strong evidence base and had covered off the terms of the active travel in regards to the amount of provision the Council had with 150km of public footpaths, 17km of bridleways and 293km of cycle ways and 87km of those were traffic free.

Councillor Rigby referred to the open spaces and the quality in-value percentages and questioned what criteria was used to set those. David McHendry stated those were the standards used within the PPG17 guidance document with the value rating and scoring would be picked up through the consultation work. Councillor Rigby questioned how Thurrock figures rated against national figures. David McHendry stated there were no national figures and stated that Thurrock had its own challenges in terms of the quality of its open space sites in comparison to other similar studies undertaken.

Councillor Hague thanked officers for the presentation and stated that this should not just be a tick box exercise but to take those strategic observations and recommendations and putting those into a delivery plan. Leigh Nicholson referred Members to page 31 of the agenda which referred to the Local Plan and how this study would work with other studies to build up that picture so when growth was made in the borough this was supported by the right infrastructure upfront.

Councillor Fletcher referred to travel to work and requested that the highlights be summarised and for the report to be used by all the departments of the Council to ensure they were talking to each other and to ensure that green spaces were maintained.

Councillor Redsell stated this was a good report but the report had to have a broad range of sports and activities but had to be actioned as soon as possible.

Councillor Lawrence asked for clarification on when items came to planning whether this would be part of S106 money or when in Thurrock, builders would be told what the criteria was and questioned what they could do for the borough without this money coming out of the S106 monies. Leigh Nicholson stated this allowed conversations to take place between landowners, developers and communities about what facilities were needed at a strategic level and to see what was required to support that growth.

RESOLVED

That the Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the content and recommendations contained within this report.

76. Council Funded Police Update Report

Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager, provided background to the Council funded additional Essex Police Officers, deployed as part of the Town Centre Team (TCT) within Community Policing in Thurrock. The Council recognised that anti-social behaviour had always been a key priority for residents, and in January 2019, the Leader, within his Portfolio Holder Report announced that revenue surplus funding of £750,000 be committed to provide additional Police Officers recognising resident concerns and their request to have an increased visible Police presence.

Since that commitment, in March 2019 the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner also announced additional Police Officers and the introduction of Town Centre Police Officers patrolling our borough, with effect from July 2019 when seven Officers were introduced in Grays, South Ockendon and Stanford Le Hope. The Council funded additional four officers who commenced in January 2020.

Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin, Essex Police and Acting Superintendent Richard Melton, Essex Police briefed Members on the key points within the report providing an outline of the activities and successes of the officers and the impact on the Police Public Perception Survey.

The Chair thanked Essex Police for their briefing and noted the good work being undertaken by the enforcement officers in Thurrock.

Councillor Lawrence thanked Essex Police for the briefing and for all the hard work being undertaken by the Police in Thurrock and how pleasing it was to

see Police out in the borough which gave residents confidence and safe. Councillor Lawrence stated that she had seen a lot of incidents on social media of burglaries where animals were being stolen and asked for an update of this in Thurrock. Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin stated that they had not seen a large increase of burglaries and incidents were not being reported on a regular basis in Thurrock. Although there had been a high profile case in Basildon this had not been seen in Thurrock.

Councillor J Kent echoed the thanks already made for the work being undertaken by the Police Officers for work being undertaken in this very tough year and the extra work that they have had to carry out.

Councillor J Kent asked for clarification on the Council's contribution to Police Officers that £750,000 of funding had been put aside, over three years for the funding of four extra Police Officers which would have been over and above if the Council had not put that money in. Councillor J Kent asked for clarification on the costings as each Police Officer would be costing £62,000 per year. Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin stated that wages would not be the main contributor as additionally there would be other contributions around funding of officers around training costs and equipment. Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin would be happy to share that information outside the meeting if appropriate and necessary.

Councillor J Kent had concerns over the £750,000 funding that came from the revenue surplus and referred to the cabinet meeting scheduled for next week where it was looking for agreement to defer or cancel all revenue surpluses. Councillor J Kent questioned whether this £750,000 was going to be allocated in one payment or yearly so that some reassurances could be given that this funding would not be withdrawn and therefore the four Police Officers would also not be withdrawn. Michelle Cunningham stated the funding was over four years, with the initial plan being over three years, but with the introduction of the town centre seven it had reduced the number of Police Officers to four and had been extended to four years. With the additional Police Officers continuing to be funded from the reserve within the members surplus. So all accounted for at present and agreed that the £750,000 came in one payment. Councillor J Kent stated that this was some comfort that this was from last year's surplus but raised concerns that the report had been based on three years but to be told this evening this was over four years.

RESOLVED that the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- 1. Note the positive approach taken by this team to community engagement.**
- 2. Promote the work of Town Centre officers to their residents to improve public confidence in local policing and encourage reporting of concerns.**

At 8.21pm, Acting Chief Inspector Paul Austin, Essex Police and Acting Superintendent Richard Melton, Essex Police left the meeting.

77. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2021/22

Jahur Ali, Recreation and Leisure Services Manager, presented the report. The Appendix shown in the agenda had set out the fees and charges in relation to services within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Environment and Highways directorate. The fees and charges in relation to services within the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee from the Place directorate had been omitted from the agenda to which Jahur Ali stated there had been a few increases and would provide details. The fees and charges that were charged fell into three categories – statutory – regulatory and discretionary. There was one increase within the statutory area which was the COMAH emergency planning charge which had three charges in that area. Two of those charges were being recommended for removal and the remaining charge to be increased to allow re-charges to cover the staff member costs who undertaking that service.

There were 74 increases within the discretionary charge related to services the Council provided. The anticipation would be to make sure that all discretionary services broke even and became cost neutral. Members were referred to the following areas of interest - outdoor sports and open spaces – with proposals to increase the fees and charges between 4% and 5%. This was one area that was not cost neutral at this time but a lot of work was being undertaken to try and reduce those costs with it potentially taking Thurrock three years to become cost neutral in those areas. Other areas to have small increases were allotments from 4% between £2.50 and £5.00 and burials with a 1% to 3% increase between £2 and £56. There were other areas that were statutory charges which had been set by government legislation. That out of the 551 items within this overview and scrutiny remit only 75 had been increased with the overall majority of the charges not changing.

These charges would take effect from the 5 April 2021 unless otherwise stated. In preparing the proposed fees and charges, directorates had worked within the charging framework and commercial principles set out in Section three of the report. Also taken into account was the effect that Covid-19 had and would continue to have on services, residents and the local economy.

Councillor Redsell questioned the proposed increase in burials to which Jahur Ali stated this had been increased in line with inflation and that a benchmark exercise had been undertaken with neighbouring boroughs and Thurrock was in line with those. Councillor Redsell stated that she felt this increase was inappropriate at this time.

Councillor Fletcher questioned whether the members of the committee this evening were being expected to note or challenge the report. Jahur Ali confirmed that the fees and charges were being presented to members this evening and Daren Spring stated this was part of the committee's role to scrutinise the report and to comment accordingly.

Councillor J Kent agreed that all would like to see cost neutral if possible but stated he could not agree those above inflation increases. That the Council should be encouraging sport, exercise and healthy activities not making it more difficult by increasing the charges.

Jahur Ali mentioned the support for sports clubs and groups provided by the Council. Over £50,000 had been secured for local clubs and were supported to apply to Sport England, ECB grants and other discretionary grants to which Councillor Redsell confirmed clubs mentioned had received support.

Members had a discussion on recommendation 2 in regards to the director delegated authority being sought via Cabinet to allow Fees and Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to commercial requirements. Members stated their disagreement with this and agreed the recommendation should be refused and reworded.

Jahur Ali confirmed that any new charges being brought in would need to follow the process of being presented at this committee. The director delegated authority was for charges that happened in year and for these items that needed urgent decision.

The Chair referred Members to the recommendations to which Members agreed to recommendation 1 and disagreed with recommendation 2 and have therefore reworded to reflect their comments.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised fees, including those no longer applicable; and comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**
- 2. That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that director delegated authority would be sought via Cabinet to allow Fees and Charges to be varied within a financial year in response to commercial requirements. The Cleaner Greener and Safer Committee considered this recommendation and ask Cabinet to refuse this recommendation as the committee were not in agreement.**

78. Establishment of the Climate Emergency Taskforce

Stephen Taylor, Strategic Lead of Economic Development and Gary Crooks, ERDF Business Manager, presented the report that set out the collaborative approach to tackling climate change utilising the recently established Climate Change Partnership and Officer Groups and proposed that climate objectives be considered within an economic development and green growth context. Members were updated on the approach and the activities that had taken

place so far to address the requirements that had been set out in the motion proposed to Council.

The Chair thanked Officers for the good report and hoped that this could now make a difference in the borough and referred to her motion on planting a wood in Thurrock and how primary school children were being encouraged to plant trees.

Councillor Lawrence also agreed on the importance of trees and how hedgerows were being planted in Kent and hoped that this initiative could be used in Thurrock to help with pollution. Councillor Lawrence stated that other areas, such as the escalation of pollution within the borough particularly on the A13, should be considered as part of this report. Stephen Taylor stated that the partnership group had decided that the first place to start would be looking at emissions from the Local Authority and then to look at emissions across the borough as a whole and what the Council could do to influence businesses and others to help reduce overall emissions. In regards to the air quality around the A13, work was being undertaken by colleagues elsewhere in the Council. Stephen Taylor agreed with Councillors Redsell and Lawrence comments on the importance of trees and hedgerow and stated that was on the partnership group's radar. Councillor Redsell thanked officers for the comments and stated the move forward to using river taxis was being addressed to get vehicles off the road. Councillor Hague stated that Thurrock was an industrial area with busy motorways going through the borough and asked what realistically would need to be undertaken to offset those levels. Councillor Redsell stated that Thurrock had already planted approximately 1000 trees and Daren Spring stated that where trees had been taken out over the last few years had been replaced with new ones and the planting of new trees over the coming years would continue but was unsure how many trees would need to be planted to offset the emissions. Gary Crooks stated that a climate change officer groups had been set up with colleagues from all directorates who met monthly to consider ways to support the partnership group and to reduce Council emissions. Tree planting had been considered by that group. Councillor Redsell questioned what Member involvement was in that group to which Gary Crooks stated there were two groups, climate change partnership group with a cross party membership with the support from officers to address issues and another supporting officer group that would support the work coming out of the climate change partnership group.

Councillor J Kent welcomed the approach of the report and it was noted that work was following the approach recommended by the Carbon Trust with the six meetings and their themes looking right. Councillor J Kent was pleased that there was now an officer group looking at climate change but asked that group to report publically to ensure members were aware of what was discussed and asked where this group fits in with the broader Council strategy for example the report on the "facilitating the roll out of electric charging points" to Cabinet next week. Councillor J Kent also questioned what the first steps would be towards getting the Council to net zero emissions. Stephen Taylor stated the officer group would undertake the role in understanding what other directorates were working on and joining things up and report back to

the partnership group so Members of that group would be fully aware of what was happening.

Councillor Rigby questioned what education programmes were being ran by the Council that were aimed at residents to encourage the planting of trees and hedgerows. Gary Crooks stated there were pockets of activity to educate both schools and residents but stated this could form-part of a strategy which could be followed, picked up and developed.

Councillor Lawrence asked that residents be notified of any areas of tree planting being worked on as she was sure there would be lot of volunteers and questioned whether local farmers had been contacted regarding the planting of hedgerow around field borders. Gary Crooks agreed with the comments and the benefits of hedges and hedgerows in regards to both air quality and carbon prospective.

Gary Hague stated for the Council to be serious about climate change he challenged the officer group to conclude on what the carbon emissions were in the borough in regards to industry and traffic and then how many trees and what other areas could be addressed to offset the carbon emissions as planting trees and hedgerows was good but this was only tinkering around the edges. Councillor Redsell stated it was important that residents were aware of that was happening to encourage them to do more.

Councillor Fletcher stated that he would like to add a new recommendation to this report to ask the Climate Change Partnership Group to benchmark and baseline what the carbon omission situation is now so that a clear idea could be given to what the Council would be dealing with.

Councillor Rigby referred to the carbon emissions in regards to car usage and questioned how much had the fine for idling of engines impacted on the level of carbon emissions since it had been introduced. Gary Crooks stated it was impossible to measure on a car-by-car, street-by-street basis on the measure and the affects.

Gary Crooks referred to previous questions around the Council's ambition around the carbon reduction activities and stated there were a lot of potential projects that could be proposed as part of the process and the first thing would be to benchmark and baseline the current situation and then carbon pathways would be produced to get to zero emissions. That Thurrock was very well placed to capitalise putting in the technologies to reduce Thurrock emissions.

Stephen Taylor stated the work programme set the baseline and decarbonisation pathways would be developed with a range of measures that could be considered by Members who would be able to see the impact of those measures and what timescales they would take to be implemented against the costs and benefits.

RESOLVED

1. **That the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and commented on the approach and activity being taken to address the requirements set out in the Council motion to declare a climate emergency.**
2. **That the Climate Change Partnership Group to benchmark and baseline what the carbon omission situation was now so that a clear idea could be given to what the Council would be dealing with.**

79. Environmental Health Jurisdiction : DP World Distribution Park

Gavin Dennett, Strategic Lead Public Protection, presented the report following the request from the Corporation that their jurisdiction for Environmental Health matters at London Gateway be extended beyond the immediate area of the dock to include the Distribution Park currently being developed, as indicated on the map in Appendix 1. Members were provided with details of this proposal and its implications for Thurrock Council and to consult Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to seeking a decision from Cabinet on this matter.

Gavin Dennett made Members aware that recommendation should reference the Assistant Director Law and Governance rather than Head of Legal.

As there were no questions, Members were asked to agree the recommendation.

RESOLVED that Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the content and proposed recommendation to Cabinet as follows:

Cabinet authorise the Director of Place, in conjunction with the Assistant Director Law and Governance and Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour, to enter into a formal agreement on behalf of Thurrock Council with the Corporation of London to transfer jurisdiction for Environmental Health Matters pertaining to enforcement of food law within the DP World Distribution Park from Thurrock Council to the Corporation of London.

80. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme.

The meeting finished at 9.23 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**