

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 13 October 2022 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors James Halden (Mayor), Susan Little (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, George Coxshall, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Robert Gledhill, Shane Hebb, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Shinnick, Jennifer Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

**Apologies:** Councillors Chris Baker, Gary Collins, Victoria Holloway, Martin Kerin, Fraser Massey, Srikanth Panjala and Sue Sammons

**In attendance:** Ian Wake, Acting Chief Executive  
Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services  
Julie Rogers, Director of Public Realm  
Ewelina Sorbjan, Interim Director Housing  
Karen Wheeler, Director Strategy, Engagement and Growth  
Matthew Boulter, Interim Monitoring Officer  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Owen Cartey, Political Assistant

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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised the meeting was being filmed and recorded, with the recording to be made available on the Council's YouTube channel.

### **49. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 27 July 2022 were approved as a correct record.

### **50. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **51. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **52. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor**

The Mayor made the following announcements:

As this was the first meeting following the sad passing of her Majesty the Queen, the Mayor gave personal thanks to the Mayor's Chaplain, Councillors and Council Staff who had worked to ensure the mourning events for Elizabeth II and the proclamation of the new King had been an appropriate and public event. The Mayor had seen over 700 people across the events that he had supported. Also, the Council had to work together to guarantee the public can take part in equally historic events as we look forward to the coronation next year.

The Mayor welcomed all Members to the new chamber which was a modern fitting facility for the Council to undertake its business. This evening the Mace had been brought in by the Mayor's new Cadet, Cadet First Class McMahon, a tradition which many boroughs had observed and reaffirmed the Council's maritime history.

The Mayor stated that final touches would be made to the chamber in the next couple of days including IT and had been delighted that the Acting Chief Executive and the Leader had agreed with the Mayor that now was the right time for the chamber to be used to conduct democratic functions. The Mayor thanked Sheila Murphy and Ian Wake who had worked so hard to ensure the chamber was available this evening.

The Mayor referred Members to the first published names of the Roll of Honour in the agenda, those people who had help make Thurrock a truly great place and hoped they would inspire others to public service.

The Mayor concluded his announcements by stating as Chairman of Full Council he would like to hear how best to promote the rights of all 49 members in this chamber and stated if Members had further ideas they would like to be fed into the Constitution Working Group, regarding how to improve challenge and debate at full council, the Mayor would be holding an informal tea in the Mayor's Parlour between 4-6pm on the 24 October to which all members would be welcome.

### **53. To elect the Leader of the Council for a four-year term of office**

Nominations were invited for the election of the Leader of the Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Gledhill, and seconded by Councillor Jefferies, that Councillor M Coxshall be elected as Leader of the Council.

Members voted 29 in favour and 10 against, therefore Councillor M Coxshall was elected as Leader of the Council.

The Mayor then invited Councillor M Coxshall to make any announcements he wished to make as Leader of the Council:

Councillor M Coxshall thanked the former Leader, Councillor Gledhill, whilst doing the honourable thing of stepping down he would be remembered for the

launch of Clean It, Cut It, Fill It, who had won awards for Thurrock and had given the borough optimism.

Councillor M Coxshall had accepted the leadership of the Council as he believed in Thurrock's greatness to make good decisions from now onwards and be a Leader for all 49 councillors with the aim to have greater democratic accountability as part of his new administration.

Councillor M Coxshall stated that a few years ago, Councillors had approved an investment plan to try and avoid cuts to public services and this approach had worked for some time. However, concerns had been raised about the approach and the reassurances given to Cabinet now appear to have been wrong. There had been warnings that local government was broken with an out-of-date funding model with too much power withheld from elected members and the reasons for this not working would come to light during the best value inspection. Councillor M Coxshall stated the council was in great difficulty and this now had to be put right and would do his best with the help of all members to put this right. That new deep and meaningful reform to local government was required but for now action needed to be taken differently with partners in Thurrock. There would now be a new era of openness, transparency, and honesty. By defending the Council's status as a unitary council and be a leader for all 49 elected councillors, he would end the practice of councillors having to submit questions in advance to cabinet and from now on any councillor may come to cabinet to debate and question items on the cabinet agenda. He would make himself more available for press briefings and would provide monthly cabinet media briefings, to look to reform the system of overview and scrutiny and for the improvement plan to be published and subject to full council debate and vote. There would be better access and dialogue between members and officers.

Councillor M Coxshall welcomed the approach of the Acting Chief Executive and his senior team. He also welcomed the support from HMG and Essex County Council who were acting as commissioners. The focus would be to protect three core services, bin collections, street lighting and grass cutting with the need to protect our services for our constituents. He had invited leaders of the opposition parties to join him in assisting the Acting Chief Executive to help build a recovery plan with the first meeting having taken place this week.

Councillor M Coxshall stated in regard to the debt levels, work was ongoing, and he would report back.

Councillor M Coxshall concluded that he could not put right the wrong doings of previous leaders and administrations over the last 20 years, he believed and desired that all 49 councillors worked together to shape the future. He was ready to work with all members with a new chamber, new leader and a new start.

**RESOLVED**

**That Councillor M Coxshall be duly elected as Leader of the Council for a four-year term of office.**

**54. Questions from Members of the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**55. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors**

No notices of petition had been received.

**56. Petitions Update Report**

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

**57. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels**

The Mayor enquired whether there were 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 M Coxshall, stated he had the following changes to make:

1. Replace Councillor Snell with Councillor Carter as substitute on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. Replace Councillor Snell with Councillor Gledhill on the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
3. Replace Councillor Churchman with Councillor Hebb as substitute on the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
4. Replace Councillor Snell with Councillor P Arnold on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
5. Remove Councillor Arnold as Vice Chair on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
6. Appoint Councillor Rigby as Vice Chair on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
7. Nominated Councillor Massey as Chair on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
8. Nominated Councillor Byrne as Vice Chair, replacing Councillor Thandi, on the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
9. Remove Councillor Churchman from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
10. Add Councillor G Coxshall as substitute on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
11. Replace Councillor Redsell with Councillor Hebb on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
12. Replace Councillor Gledhill with Councillor Thandi on the General Services Committee.

13. Appoint Councillor M Coxshall as Chair on the General Services Committee.
14. Appoint Councillor D Arnold as Vice Chair on the General Services Committee.
15. Appoint Councillor P Arnold as Chair on the Corporate Parenting Committee.
16. Councillor Pearce to remain on the committee as a member.
17. Appoint Councillor Carter as Vice Chair, previously Chair, on the Corporate Parenting Committee.
18. Replace Councillor Snell with Councillor Collins on the Standard and Audit Committee.
19. Move Councillor Rigby as Chair, but to remain on the Standard and Audit Committee. The Chair appointment to remain vacant.
20. Replace Councillor Ononaji with Councillor Thandi as Vice Chair on the Standard and Audit Committee.
21. Appoint Councillor Carter as substitute on the Standard and Audit Committee.
22. Replace Councillor Gledhill with Councillor M Coxshall on the Governance Working Group.

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

Councillor Byrne, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group, stated he had no changes to make. Councillor Byrne stated he would make a charity donation from the allowance provided from the Vice Chair of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the Thurrock Food Bank in Corringham.

Councillor Allen stated they had no changes to make.

Members agreed to all the changes to appointments.

#### **58. Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions to the Leader had been received and 10 questions to Cabinet Members.

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

#### **59. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

No reports were presented.

#### **60. Minutes of Committees**

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

**61. 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.

**62. Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent**

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor M Coxshall. The Motion read as follows:

*Council notes that the findings of January's Corporate Peer Challenge, and its accompanying action plan, have been published on the council's website. Council believes that it is important that, to ensure members learn from the CPC process, that these documents should be presented to, both, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to Cabinet for formal adoption.*

Councillor J Kent presented his motion by stating those documents were now on the forward plan of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet and would like the motion to go straight to the vote.

Councillor M Coxshall stated this had been one of his first acts, as newly elected leader, to add these documents onto the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan. Councillor Coxshall agreed the report had to be presented as quickly as possible and with the Improvement Board Plan being presented quicker to overview and scrutiny would enable the delivery of some of those improvements coming out of that. Councillor M Coxshall also stated that any new improvements coming out of the Improvement Board Plan would be actioned as quickly as possible and hoped the newly appointed Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny would take these as urgent items.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

With the majority of Members voting in favour, the motion was carried.

**63. Motion submitted by Councillor Carter**

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Carter and seconded by Councillor Snell. The Motion read as follows:

*The Council calls for the building operationally known as C03 to be renamed as the Town Hall and to be referred to as such in all communications.*

Councillor Carter presented his motion by stating Grays had become over time a commuter town, and to build and enhance a community, there needed be a community town hall not a building called C03. The Town Hall would be at the heart of the community and a centre piece for growth and development. With significant investments to regenerate Grays it would be fitting that the Council's newest building had the name which would be more in keeping with

the community. Councillor Carter urged all members to vote in favour of this motion.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor Byrne and seconded by Councillor Smith and read as follows:

*The Council calls for the building operationally known as C03 to be renamed as the Town Hall and to be referred to as such in all communications when it is in a fit state to warrant 'Town Hall' status.*

Councillor Byrne presented his amended motion by stating the building was nowhere near ready to warrant the Town Hall status. Councillor Byrne continued to state the Council did not warrant a town hall based on the mess of the borough and the mess that everything else was in. When the building work had been finalised and the borough was on a better track then maybe then the building would warrant the Town Hall status.

Councillor J Kent stated a town hall was historically a place for entertainment and a place for municipal debate so therefore he had an issue in the name change to Town Hall. Councillor J Kent stated this may have been a missed opportunity to rename the building "King Charles III Centre" and confirmed that he would not be supporting the motion nor the amendment.

Councillor M Coxshall understood Councillor J Kent's point, but the new building had venues and halls with the new building having a more welcoming ceremony suite. The renaming of the building had to be for resident to recognise where they would meet their elected representatives, at the Town Hall, not to a named building. Councillor M Coxshall also agreed with Councillor Byrne's points and had apologised, but the council needed to move forward with a new chamber, new leader and a new start, starting with the Town Hall name.

Councillor Fish stated the building was not welcoming for disabled users with very poor access to and from the building and questioned when this would be improved. Councillor M Coxshall agreed that the building was unwelcoming and agreed to get this right, but the name change would be fitting for the building as it was in the right place.

Councillor Worrall raised her concerns on the inadequate safety measures that should be in place to protect members leaving the offices late at night, she had concerns over the lack of lifts, disability access and that some of the glass panels were loose and very dangerous.

Councillor Redsell agreed with Councillor Worrall's comments on the concerns of safety and inadequate disability access. Councillor Redsell stated that C03 needed a name and that Town Hall sounded good for a building in the centre of the town.

Councillor Snell agreed with Councillor Redsell's comments, that it would be nicer for C03 to have a name especially for those residents using the Mulberry Suite for wedding services.

Councillor Byrne stated C03 was in no fit state to be called a Town Hall.

Councillor Carter stated Thurrock had to look to the future and had been surprised by the defeated attitude this evening. The change of name would create a new community hub and promote Grays as a commuter town into London. Councillor Carter acknowledged there were more issues facing the Council but the renaming of the C03 would connect more within the community and urged all members to vote in favour of the motion.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion. With the majority of votes against the amendment the Mayor called a vote on the substantive motion to which with 30 votes for and 10 votes against the substantive motion was carried.

**64. Motion submitted by Councillor Polley**

Motion 3 was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

**The meeting finished at 8.18 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**