

Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on 14 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Susan Little (Mayor), Qaisar Abbas (Deputy Mayor), John Allen, Alex Anderson, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, John Cecil, Gary Collins, George Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Aaron Green, James Halden, Vikki Hartstean, Mark Hooper, Mark Hurrell, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Cici Manwa, Fraser Massey, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby (*arrived 7.06pm*), Sue Sammons, Sue Shinnick, Graham Snell, Neil Speight, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Daniel Chukwu, Robert Gledhill, Srikanth Panjala and Kairen Raper

In attendance: Dr Dave Smith (Chief Executive)
Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member Services
Mark Bradbury, Interim Director of Place
Jayne Middleton-Albooye, Assistant Director Legal
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

48. Declaration of Interests

No declarations of interest were made.

49. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the chamber that five questions to the Leader had been received:

Asked By	Asked To	Subject
Councillor Massey	Leader	Planning training for Members
Councillor Byrne	Leader	Dismissal of the Assistant Director – Planning Transport and Public Protection
Councillor Speight	Leader	Planning department resources

Councillor J Kent	Leader	Remit of the Planning Development Agency Peer Review
Councillor Watson	Leader	Contentious planning meetings

The recording of the questions and responses can be found from the following link:

[Council - Thursday 14 September 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

50. Motion submitted by Councillor Speight

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Speight and seconded by Councillor Allen. The motion read as follows:

This chamber calls on Thurrock Council to commission a fully independent inquiry into the management and achievements of Thurrock Council's planning department since 2015 – with its remit to produce a year-by-year performance analysis indicating the number of applications received, the number dealt with by delegation, the number progressed to committee and the number passed or rejected that have been contrary to officer recommendation. The report should produce a subjective judgement on the performance of the planning department over each of those years. In addition the remit will include a full and detailed investigation into how and why the council has not been able to formulate a new local plan over the same period of time.

Councillor Speight presented the motion by expressing his concern of the current state of planning in Thurrock. With simple applications taking up to two years or more to be completed, conflicts between councillors and officers and between councillors and councillors; Legal officers' advice and attendance at meetings being inadequate; impropriety in the application of many decisions; delays in processing paperwork in particular relating to Section 106 agreements; developers playing the system and smaller businesses, architects and builders failing whilst waiting for planning decisions to be made and that monies had been invested to develop a local plan since 2015. The motion called for an independent review and commended the motion to the chamber.

The following points were made:

- The seconder fully supported the motion.
- There was a general support in favour of the motion.
- It was recognised by members a review of the Planning Committee was required.
- There was concern of how the system was dysfunctional, in some way predetermined.
- It was recognised the Planning Committee required the appropriate support at meetings so that questions could be asked.

- It was recognised there had been delays with producing the local plan and this would be coming forward in November.
- There was an appetite to move this forward and progress.
- At Governance Recovery Board this week the Planning Advisory Service had agreed to carry out a review that would provide a comprehensive health check of core planning functions.
- The Planning Advisory Service would start their investigation in two weeks' time.
- The Planning Advisory Service would look to what would be required to formulate the local plan.
- The report would be shared and published.
- As part of the review, require a wider consideration of auxiliary issues not just a deep dive of the committee system.
- Concern on motions asking for investigations tended to focus on "what" rather than "why".
- Member referred to the Best Value Inspection, that it was clear as part of the financial collapse, members had been given reports that were incorrect and inadequate. The Pay Policy report was presented to the general services committee in June to approve a pay policy which was agreed but then overturned in August based on the advice provided being incorrect. An apology should have been issued to all 49 members explaining why the mistake had happened and to explain the steps being put in place to ensure this did not happen again. Members stated that to receive legal advice that was unsound after the Best Value Inspection was unacceptable.
- Member stated although in support of the motion, the Motion would require additional efforts once the outcomes were known to fully ensure it will be undertaken.
- Look at the number of planning applications determined through delegated decision powers and then subsequently overturned on appeal.
- Look and learn at why the council had failed to deliver a local plan in a reasonable time.
- It was recognised that any planning application could be deemed controversial.
- Planning Committee Member passionate in their role with a diligent approach and freedom of thought.
- Explore the Planning Committee and recognise what needed to be put in place to inspire members to want to sit on it.

The Mayor called a vote on the motion, with 39 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 0 votes abstained. The Mayor announced the motion carried.

The recording of this meeting can be found from the following link:

[Council - Thursday 14 September 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 8.06 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**