

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 November 2015 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-in is Friday 20 November 2015 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors John Kent (Chair), Barbara Rice (Vice-Chair), Oliver Gerrish, Victoria Holloway, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Gerard Rice and Richard Speight

Apologies: Councillor Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Roger Harris, Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning
Kathryn Adedeji, Head of Housing - Investment and Development
Andrew Carter, Head of Children's Social Care
Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance
Jackie Hinchliffe, Head of HR, OD & Transformation
Richard Parkin, Head of Housing - Community & Needs
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications
Daniel Toohey, Principal Solicitor - Contracts & Procurement
Stephanie Cox, 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.

63. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 14 October 2015, were approved as a correct record.

64. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

65. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Okunade declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 11, 'Community Environmental Development Fund' as she was involved in two community organisations who may wish to make a future bid for funding.

Councillor Speight declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 14, 'Potential disposal of Billet Field, Stanford-le-Hope', as he had family

members involved in the club, and as a result would leave the meeting room during the consideration of the item.

Councillor J. Kent declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Agenda Item 14, 'Potential disposal of Billet Field, Stanford-le-Hope', as he was the honorary president of East Thurrock Football Club. He declared that although he was not involved in the running of the club he would leave the meeting room during the consideration of the item

66. Statements by the Leader

There were no statements made by the Leader.

67. Update Report: Corporate Performance Summary - Month 5 (Up To End of August 2015)

Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which summarised performance against the Corporate Scorecard 2015-16, a basket of key performance indicators (KPI's), as at Month 5 (end of August 2015). Members were informed that at the end of Month 5, 87% of these indicators were either meeting or within an acceptable tolerance of their target.

Members were informed that a more in depth report detailing all aspects of the Corporate Plan would be referred to the next meeting of Cabinet.

Councillor B. Rice explained that the key performance indicator of permanent admissions to residential nursing homes was currently showing at red due to the fact that the Department of Health had changed the reporting mechanisms for the indicator, which would have otherwise still been green. She advised that she would ask officers to investigate to see if the target could be adjusted accordingly.

68. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted.

69. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions were submitted.

70. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader of the Council informed Members that no matters had been referred to the Cabinet by an overview and scrutiny committee.

71. Shaping the Council and Budget Progress Update (Decision: 01104423)

Councillor J. Kent, the Leader of the Council, introduced the report which set out the budget pressures identified in 2015/16 and how these might impact on the 2016/17 budget projections.

In introducing the report the Leader of the Council made the following key observations:

- That despite serious budget pressures the Council was in a relatively stable position, which he felt was due to the hard work of officers in responding to the challenges.
- That the Children's Social Care and Environmental Services teams faced considerable pressures to their budget.
- That Thurrock collected 200,000 wheelie bins each week despite other local authorities moving to fortnightly, three-weekly or monthly bin collections.
- That primary schools in Thurrock continued to improve and called for Ofsted to inspect schools more regularly as he believed there were schools which would be awarded 'good' or 'outstanding' status if re-inspected.
- That secondary schools continued to do well and Thurrock was well underway to prepare young people with the skills necessary in order to take up the thousands of job opportunities which were being created in the Borough.

Councillor B. Rice explained that Adult Social Care faced considerable demand pressures as people were living longer and with more complex health needs and that the private sector also faced similar challenges. She reported that a domiciliary care provider had given notice that it could no longer continue with an existing contract, which placed additional pressure on the service, but that alternative providers were being sought.

Councillor B. Rice further reported that since the report had been printed the government had announced that the Public Health grant for Thurrock would be cut in-year by £655,000 despite respondents, which included Thurrock Council, requesting a move to a needs based formula which would have instead resulted in a lower £455,000 in-year cut.

Councillor J. Kent questioned whether the confirmation of the in-year budget reduction in the recent government announcement was better or worse than expected.

In response, Councillor B. Rice explained that although Thurrock had remained optimistic that a needs-based approach would be adopted – as it was the preferred option among local authorities – unfortunately this had not been realised.

Councillor G. Rice commended the fact that Thurrock maintained a weekly bin collection service despite the challenging budget pressures faced and

observed that a small underspend that had been identified in the Planning and Transportation service should be used to hold public meetings on the Lower Thames Crossing as he was concerned that greenbelt land could be put at risk.

Councillor J. Kent reported that the Government was expected to make an announcement on route options before the Christmas period, and in addition to holding public meetings to raise awareness, felt that a scrutiny session should be organised to hold an open debate.

Councillor G. Rice remarked that it was understood Option C was the government's preferred option, and felt that if it went ahead it would be horrendous for communities such as Chadwell St. Mary, Tilbury and Bulphan which could see a 42ft high road network constructed. He called upon Thurrock's Member of Parliament to represent the views of residents to challenge government on the matter.

Councillor Okunade remarked that the deficit in Children's Social Care was due to the fact that the service was demand led and that Thurrock needed to meet its obligations in order to preserve the safety of children and young people. She reported that the service looked to move away from a reliance on agency staff through increasing the number of newly qualified social workers, but there remained an additional reliance on agency staff during the first year of employment of newly qualified social workers as they had reduced caseloads and were unable to take on statutory work.

Councillor Gerrish welcomed the decision to take Serco back in house and questioned what the timetable to deliver savings was.

In response Councillor J. Kent explained that the priority was to transfer the service back to Thurrock Council as smoothly as possible, and that once complete it was expected to deliver savings of £300,000 per month. He reported that once complete the service would need to be examined closely, like all departments had been, in order to return maximum efficiencies.

Members were informed that a further report detailing the impact of Serco and pension arrangements would be referred to Cabinet for consideration in December.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Cabinet note the 2015/16 net service budget pressure, with particular focus on those in Children's and Environment Services, and that officers will bring back further mitigating action to the December Cabinet;**
- 2. That Cabinet note the current position on the Serco pension fund projected surplus;**

3. **That Cabinet note the potential new pressures in adult and children's social care and that work is underway to understand these pressures and identify mitigating action; and**
4. **That Cabinet acknowledge the current position on the Serco contract termination and transfer of staff.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

72. Community Environmental Development Fund (Decision: 01104424)

Councillor Potheary, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, introduced the report which sought approval to proceed with the establishment of a bidding process for a Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF) to support street-scene infrastructure and environmental improvements which would enable residents to take greater responsibility for the areas in which they lived.

Members were advised of the intention to make capital funding available to community groups to deliver defined projects which provided significant added value to the local community according to agreed criteria.

Councillor Gerrish welcomed the proposal which he felt was a valuable tool for helping local communities to deliver ideas and schemes to improve areas, which could not be delivered by the Highways and Transportation capital programme.

Councillor Speight echoed the comments made and that the proposal would give more power back to local communities.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

1. **Gives approval in principle to the establishment of a Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF), based on the criteria set out in Appendix 1, and the Expression of Interest Form at Appendix 2.**
2. **Recommends that £250k for the fund for 2016/17 is provided from capital resources, which will be subject to Council approval in February 2016.**
3. **Agrees that officers seek two nominations from each of the Council's political groups to a Shadow CEDF Panel to oversee the development of the process, procedure and future governance of the fund.**

- 4. Agrees that the bidding process should start immediately with an invitation to established community groups to make expressions of interest.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

73. Implications of Summer budget announcement on HRA Business Plan (Decision: 01104425)

In the absence of Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, the Leader of the Council introduced the report which detailed the impact of the budget announcements to introduce key policy changes that had financial implications on the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

The Leader of the Council commended the work of the Portfolio Holder and her predecessors in realising efficiency savings, improving performance of the service and continuing to build and improve homes. He added that this would be tougher to do in light of the government's 1% rent cut.

Councillor B. Rice commended the work of the Portfolio Holder and officers for improving the service and remarked that with the introduction of the Transforming Homes programme and transfer of contract to Mears the number of complaints in her ward had reduced significantly.

Councillor G. Rice welcomed the fact that new homes were being built and thanked the Head of Housing for her work.

Councillor Holloway welcomed the fact that new homes were being built and questioned how likely it was that the Secretary of State would issue an exemption to allow current affordable housing to be delivered.

Councillor J. Kent felt that Thurrock was in a unique position as one of the few local authorities that were attempting to build new Council homes and expressed concern regarding the affordability of rents, given the fact that setting "affordable rents" at 80% of market rent levels were still unaffordable to many residents.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Approve an application to the Secretary of State to issue an exemption to allow much needed current affordable Housing to be delivered.**
- 2. Approve the principle to let all new HRA dwellings at "affordable rents" i.e. up to 80% of market rents. However the specific rate will be subject to further analysis, discussion and scrutiny by Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2015 ahead of final recommendation to cabinet in December 2015.**

3. **Approve the principle of a review to the Transforming Homes programme and where the asset supports it delivery of the programme will be extended beyond 17/18.**
4. **Note housing department will seek to achieve revenue cost savings and efficiencies equating to £500k per annum or £2m over the four-year period. This will be achieved through a combination of cost savings and increased funding and grant opportunities for existing development.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

74. Homeless Supported Accommodation and Crisis Intervention (Decision: 01104426)

In the absence of Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, the Leader of the Council introduced the report which sought approval to procure a single housing management and support contract to prevent homelessness for Council tenants and to support homeless households and young people in supported accommodation.

In introducing the report the Leader of the Council reported that nationally there had been a 55% rise in homelessness and those sleeping rough since 2010 and Thurrock was not immune from the increase as there were 90 households in temporary accommodation, which was a figure up from the previous year.

Members were informed that through the procurement of a single contract it was hoped that greater savings could be achieved through joint management and administration which would enable savings to be put back into the service in order better support young people leaving care.

Councillor Okunade welcomed the change which she felt would be smarter and more cost effective.

RESOLVED:

1. **That Cabinet approves the Commissioning Report at Appendix 1 to enable the procurement of the service.**
2. **That Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Director for Planning, Transportation and Housing, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder, to authorise the award of the contract following completion of the tendering process.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

At 7.38 pm Councillors J. Kent and Speight left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

75. Potential disposal of Billet Field, Stanford le Hope (Decision: 01104427)

Councillor G. Rice, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report which provided an update on the progress of East Thurrock United Football Club's ("ETUFC's") plans to purchase Billet Field in order to develop new facilities for the club's relocation.

Members were advised that a sale price had been agreed in April 2014 but as the club were not in a position to submit a formalised planning application it was only right that the Council reviewed the price that had been agreed.

Councillor G. Rice explained that it was proposed to extend the in principle agreement until the end of March 2016, by which time it was expected that substantive planning applications would have been submitted.

He further observed that this highlighted the Council's commitment to working in partnership in order to support the development of sporting facilities in the Borough.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Notes the continuing progress of ETUFC's relocation plans.**
- 2. Confirms the in principle agreement to dispose of Billet Field to the club at market value as a relocation site, provided that substantive planning applications for both the housing and sporting facilities are submitted by the end of March 2016.**
- 3. Defers detailed discussion on the sale price and other terms until the club relevant planning applications are submitted.**
- 4. Agrees to formally consider the detailed price and sale conditions recommended by officers at the conclusion of negotiations.**

Reason for Decision - as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

The meeting finished at 7.40 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**