

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 January 2016 at 7.00 pm
The deadline for call-in is Tuesday 26 January 2016 at 5.00 pm

Present: Councillors John Kent (Chair), Oliver Gerrish, Victoria Holloway, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Richard Speight and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Barbara Rice (Vice-Chair) and Gerard Rice

In attendance:

Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance
Lee Henley, Information Manager
Jackie Hinchliffe, Head of HR, OD & Transformation
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications
David Lawson, Monitoring Officer
Kenna-Victoria Martin, 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.

96. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 9 December 2015, were approved as a correct record.

97. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

98. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

99. Statements by the Leader

The Leader of the Council wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed members of the public to the first meeting of 2016. He continued by congratulating Councillor Gledhill on the birth of his son.

100. Corporate Performance Summary - Month 7 (up to end of October 2015)

There were no petitions submitted.

101. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

102. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader of the Council advised that one question had been submitted and that the question would be taken with its corresponding agenda item in the usual manner.

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

The Leader of the Council informed Members that there was one matter which had been referred to the Cabinet by an overview and scrutiny committee; however it had its own item number

104. Shaping the Council and Budget Update (Decision 01104338)

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which updated Members on the provisional grant settlement and its impact on the 2016/2017 financial position, in doing so he raised the following key points:

- Thurrock Council had not increased council tax for the last 5 years and were led to believe the freeze would continue for 2016/2017. This was no longer the case;
- All Local Authorities were now looking at a 2% raise in council tax which had been passed from Government to assist with paying the Social Care Tax nationally;
- It was expected by the Government that there would be a 1.99% council tax rise, which had been included in to the Autumn Budget for local authorities at 1.75%;
- The Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would eventually be phased out;
- It was clear that councils would have to rely more on local income generation, particularly from council tax, to meet a growing range of services going forward.

The Leader stated that he wanted to have cross-party working on the possibility of a raise in council tax and had sought the assistance of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He commented that if the Committee decided not to increase the level of Council Tax, the Council would have to find a further £2.2 million in budget savings.

Councillor Worrall commented that she knew it was difficult to ask residents to pay more in the way of Council Tax however she welcomed a balanced budget. She further commented that it was positive Group Leaders had been meeting to discuss the budget as it highlighted they were all aware of the pressure the Council was under financially.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he welcomed the approach to cross-party working and for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to further look at the proposed raise in Council Tax.

RESOLVED:

1. **That Cabinet note that there is still a forecast budget deficit of circa £0.3m for 2015/16;**
2. **That Cabinet recommends to Council the approach of capitalising the budget provision for the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), starting in the current financial year;**
3. **That Cabinet note the assumption of a 2% Council Tax increase to provide additional funding towards the cost of Adult Social Care;**
4. **That Cabinet note the assumption of a 1.99% Council Tax increase to support the Council's resource base going forward; and**
5. **That Cabinet note this draft budget and ask Corporate Overview and Scrutiny to comment and make recommendations back to Cabinet in February.**

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

105. Pathways For Youth Employment And Work Experience (Decision 01104339)

The Leader of the Council invited Councillor Halden to introduce the report to Cabinet and in doing so Councillor Halden highlighted the following:

- It was felt that students studying in the borough were lucky to be in the position to compete for placements in the City of London, especially with Thurrock being only a short journey into London;
- The Task and Finish Group did not agree with the Government's Wolfe report;
- Not only did the Task and Finish Group look into the topic it extended its conversations out to local schools, businesses and the Youth Cabinet;
- Throughout discussions the Task and Finish Group raised concern as to the varied quality of offers of work experience from schools .

Councillor Halden informed the Cabinet that the recommendations included publishing the work experience offered by schools as part of their admission criteria. This would enable students to take work placements into account when choosing a secondary school.

Councillor Halden continued to inform Cabinet it was discussed whether to include work experience at the Education and Business Awards and to encourage students to shape the work experience offers they may receive to suit the career path they may wish to follow.

Councillor Worrall welcomed the report and queried as to why the group focused on 11-16 year olds when young people out of work reached up to 25 year olds. She commented that the Council worked with partner agencies to get the most value out of offers for all young people not just school leavers.

Councillor Halden replied that the group did not agree that work experience should just be for post 16 year olds as suggested within the Wolfe report. He continued to agree with Councillor Worrall that post 16 year olds, as well as school and college leavers, should be given the same opportunities in relation to work experience.

Councillor Kent, Leader of the Council, mentioned that some of the recommendations had already been accepted by a number of schools within the borough. He further suggested an amendment to recommendation 1.2 to read:

It is requested that work experience quality become part of the education awards and the business awards.

Cabinet Members unanimously agreed to the amended recommendation.

RESOLVED:

- 1 That work experience offers became a part of the published admissions information given to parents and students when deciding upon a school.**
- 2 It is requested that work experience quality become part of the education awards and the business awards.**
- 3 Thurrock Council offers a small amount of premium provision work experience places as a part of a Borough wide award for young people's community service.**
- 4 Youth Cabinet and Thurrock Youth Services to support schools and young people who wish to shape their own work experience offer.**
- 5 Thurrock Council continues to work with Ensign Buses and C2C regarding the associated travel costs of work experience.**
- 6 That a request is made to the Chair of the Thurrock Business Board for a future agenda item on Youth Employment and Work Experience, that takes account of the outcomes from the recent Business:Education Summit.**

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

106. Determination of The Collection Fund Balance 2015/16 and Setting of the Council Tax Base for 2016/17 (Decision 01104340)

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and informed Members that the Council Tax Collection Fund was to have a surplus of £1.2 Million with more funds due to be collected. Members were advised that this surplus was

to be apportioned with preceptors such as the Essex Fire Authority and Essex Police Authority.

Councillor Kent continued to advise Members that there was a deficit of £5.7million in relation to Business Rates Collection Fund.

Cabinet were further notified that 65,693 properties within the borough had been allocated within valuation bands under the Council Tax Base Calculation. The valuation officer from the Inland Revenue produced a Valuation List which showed the bands properties had been allocated.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Council :**
 - **Determines the estimated 31 March 2016 balance of the Council Tax Collection Fund to be a surplus of £1,199,312 (before distribution to major precepting authorities).**
 - **Allocates the surplus to the three main precepting bodies in proportion to their precepts for 2015/16 as follows:**
 - o **Thurrock Council £1,007,909;**
 - o **Essex Police Authority £131,877; and**
 - o **Essex Fire Authority £59,526.**

- 2. That the Cabinet recommend to Council that it:**
 - **Determines the estimated 31 March 2016 balance of the Business Rate Collection Fund to be a deficit of £5,761,084 (before distribution to Central Government and Essex Fire Authority).**
 - **Allocates the deficit to the three main precepting bodies in the proportion set out in legislation:**
 - o **Thurrock Council £2,822,931;**
 - o **Central Government £2,880,542; and**
 - o **Essex Fire Authority £57,611.**

- 3 To recommend that Council set the Council Tax base for 2016/17 by approving the following resolutions:**
 - **That the report of the Head of Corporate Finance for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2016/17 be approved; and**
 - **That pursuant to the Head of Corporate Finance report and in accordance with the relevant regulations, the amount calculated by Thurrock Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2016/17 shall be 48,856.**

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

107. Complaints Report - April 2015 to September 2015 (Decision 01104341)

Councillor Holloway, Cabinet Member for Central Services, introduced the report which had been requested by Cabinet in September 2015. She continued to advise that the report set out the Council's complaints statistics for the first six months of 2015/2016.

The Cabinet Member advised that the period had showed an increase in concerns and complaints received compared to last year. It was considered that the increase may be attributed to the action the Council had taken to improve customer access channels, in particular social media such as Twitter.

Councillor Holloway further mentioned that 98% of complaints were responded to within the designated timeframe with 1670 Member enquiries being received and responded to within the relevant timeframe. The average time taken to respond to Member enquires across all directorates was 6 calendar days.

It was noted that during the reported period 45% of complaints had been upheld. This was an increase on the 42% of upheld complaints last year.

Councillor Worrall commented that 40,000 housing repair complaints had been received within 6 months, with the team receiving 1,000 complaints on average per month. She informed Members that she had spoken with officers and encouraged cross-party working with the repairs team in contacting residents and surveying the working they had received.

Councillor Kent welcomed the report and highlighted the importance of the Council having a good complaints process.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To note the statistics and performance for the reporting period.**
- 2. To note that further work is on-going with a number of service areas to establish the root cause for concerns/complaints received, reasons for complaint escalation and reasons why complaints are upheld.**

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

108. To Request Agreement to an Extension for the Day Opportunities Contract (Decision 01104342)

Councillor Kent, Leader of the Council, presented the report on behalf of Councillor B. Rice. The report proposed the extension of the Day

Opportunities Contract for a further 14 months due to be completed at the end of the financial year in March 2017.

The Leader commented that with the extension came a £100,000 reduction in funding which he knew Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions would find difficult. He continued to inform Members that Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions was a user lead community company who offered a variety of services for adults with learning difficulties.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet approve:

- 1. The extension of the current contract for a period of 14 months from 1st February 2016 until 31st March 2017.**
- 2. A further annual reduction to the contract price from £1,481,858 to £1,381,858 for the period of the 14 month extension. The saving on the current contract will be £116,678.30 during this period.**

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

109. Highways and Transportation Works Programme and Policies Update (Decision 01104343)

Councillor Gerrish, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, introduced the report which presented a number of interim projects within the Highways and Transportation portfolio.

Councillor Gerrish explained to Members that the Council was looking to endorse the prioritisation principles which would be used to determine the schemes put forward for delivery within the Maintenance Block of the 2016/2017 Highways & Transportation Capital Programme. He continued to inform the Cabinet that agreement to progress a Considerate Contractor Scheme, to reduce the inconvenience resulting from works on the highway, was due to be in place by the summer.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation stated that the endorsement of a programme of cycle network improvements to support the aspirations for cycling set out within the 2013 - 2016 Thurrock Transport Strategy would be assisted with an allocation of £5 million.

It was further mentioned that a proposed pilot project, similar to a lower emission zone, was to be undertaken which would use camera enforcement to control freight on unsuitable routes, improve air quality, make it easier and safer to walk and cycle in residential areas.

Councillor Holloway commented that she welcomed the pilot on using camera enforcement to monitor HGVs movements as it was not just noise and

pollution which was caused as on some occasions lorry movements could force houses to shake.

Councillor Speight stated that he applauded the Considerate Contractor Scheme. Speaking from experience of development within his own ward he commented that communication with residents and Members alike was important.

Councillor Worrall mentioned that with the expansion of Tilbury Docks, HGVs were continually finding their way in to residential areas.

The Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Councillor Potheary, commented that the parking team were investigating issues and watching Laybys for any sign of HGV parking.

The Leader of the Council thought the Considerate Contractor Scheme should be in place before the summer so as to coincide with the gas works due to take place on London Road.

Councillor Gerrish confirmed he would discuss the option with the Director of Planning and Transportation.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet:

- 1. Agrees planned maintenance prioritisation criteria in line with Government guidance on cost-effective asset management as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 2. Approves the development, for future approval, of a considerate contractor scheme to improve traffic management within the Borough and reduce the inconvenience to businesses and residents resulting from works on the highway;**
- 3. Agrees the programme of cycling network improvements contained in Appendix 2 as the basis for the Business Case for the draw-down of Local Growth Funding from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) in April 2016, and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and Chief Executive, to agree the final business case for SELEP approval.**
- 4. Gives approval to consult on a pilot project to provide more effective management of HGV movements in sensitive areas, as a means of improving air quality and reducing conflict caused by freight vehicles in residential areas.**

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

110. Thurrock Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (Decision 01104344)

The Leader of the Council, presented the report on behalf of Councillor G. Rice and informed the Cabinet that the Council had completed a lot of work to prepare the borough for any risk of flooding. He mentioned that many residents would remember the flood of 1953.

Councillor Kent commented that there are more than 8,000 properties across the borough at risk of flooding from surface water runoff. He commented further that the Council was working on designs for flood storage areas on the edge of Stanford le Hope and a project was also underway in Tilbury to produce a computer model of the drainage system, which would provide evidence of flood risk to support future bids for funding to improve drainage infrastructure.

The Leader of the Council stated it was important to look at the possible risks to enable to Council to minimize future flooding.

The Leader invited Councillor Halden to read the question that he had submitted and the following response was received:

- Councillor Halden asked Councillor J. Kent, whether the Portfolio Holder was confident that this report outlined not just risk but enough in terms of mitigation?

The Leader of the Council stated that recent months had shown that no amount of planning could prevent flooding. He continued by stating the report mentioned the Council was working to reduce flooding risks and had allocated £300,000 of capital funding to this prevention.

Councillor Kent commented that as a Council he wanted to do more to prevent flooding within the borough, however like most Local Authorities Thurrock needed more support from central Government.

In response Councillor Halden stated that the report had not been seen by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for debate or for the Committee to explore the issue further.

The Leader of the Council commented that he would be happy for the report to be presented to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Worrall, Cabinet Member for Housing, welcomed the report. She mentioned that even with a little rain parts of Tilbury still flooded to the point that sand bags were issued to residents recently.

Councillor Kent commented that with the new computer technology the Council was bidding for would assist the Council to improve drainage infrastructure.

Councillor Okunade commented that she was happy the Thurrock Marshes were identified within the report.

The Leader stated Gloriana was working on building housing at the St Chads site and Tilbury was the lead in good design in preventing flooding.

RESOLVED:

1. **To approve the Thurrock Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for the period 2016-2021.**
2. **To endorse the prioritised measures and interventions for implementation outlined in the Strategy Action Plan (Appendix 1 A).**
3. **For the report to be presented to its relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for discussion.**

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

The meeting finished at 8.00 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**