

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 22 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Mayor), Tunde Ojetola (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish (*arrived 7.24*), Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler

Apologies: Councillors Clare Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Clifford Holloway and Luke Spillman

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sharon Bayliss, Director of Commercial Services
Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Ian Wake, Director of Public Health
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Shade, 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.

110. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 25 January 2017 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor Collins stated that his declaration of interest should have read "Bata" instead of "Barter" at Item 94 of the minutes.

111. Items of Urgent Business

The Mayor informed the Council that she had not agreed to the consideration of any items of urgent business.

112. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

113. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council

Firstly, the Mayor invited all those present to reflect on and remember Thurrock's fallen of World War One.

The Mayor reminded Members that tickets were still available for the Blue Light Charity Ball being held on the 3 March 2017.

The Mayor informed Members that a Golf Charity Day in aid of the Fire Fighters, Epilepsy Action and Thurrock Community Chest Charities would be held on the 21 March 2017 at the Langdon Hills Golf and Country Club.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed Members of the following updates:

The Council had secured a funding grant of £10.8 million for the regeneration of Grays Town Centre. Councillor Gledhill stated that this was the kick start to the regeneration of Grays to bring it into the 21st Century.

That the consultation by the Police Crime Commissioner on the proposal to merge the police and fire services together under a single organisation in Essex was available on-line and encouraged members to take part. This consultation would run for the next 12 weeks.

114. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

115. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's petition Scheme, the requisite notice had been given by two members who wished to present petitions at the meeting.

Councillor Allen presented a petition on behalf of residents of Grays South Estate on the caretaking quality and proposed reduction in service levels.

Councillor Barbara Rice presented a petition on behalf of residents on the proposed service charge for sheltered accommodation.

116. Petitions Update Report

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed into Council Meetings and Council Officers over the past six months.

117. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

There were no changes to the appointments previously made to committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

118. Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal, introduced the report to review the vision and priorities so that they better reflected the ambition of the Council and Thurrock. The aim was to make both more succinct and easy to communicate and to articulate the new focus and priorities. Feedback from recent consultations had given some clear opinions from residents on the most important issues for Thurrock and these had been used to focus on the new vision and priorities.

An initial draft of the proposed vision and priorities had been presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other stakeholders during November and December 2016 to which feedback had been used to focus on the final proposed version.

Councillor J Kent stated that he would not be supporting the recommendation tonight as he thought the process was to arrive at the priorities collectively and to give members the opportunity to take part in the process. He had only seen the report on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda in December 2016 to which members had disagreed with the recommendations. Councillor J Kent questioned Councillor Hebb whether the report and the recommendations made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had already gone through Cabinet.

Councillor J Kent agreed that education had improved over the years and that this had been a measureable priority in the past. Councillor J Kent stated that education would fail if it was not a measureable priority and asked Councillor Hebb why this had not been included in the review.

Councillor Snell stated that he would not be supporting the recommendation tonight and that the report was full of unnecessary jargon and had not focused on anything in particular. Councillor Snell stated that the Council had been driving the borough forward well before the Conservatives came into administration.

Councillor Gledhill stated that he would be supporting the recommendation tonight and that the process of reports going to overview and scrutiny committees before Cabinet still stood. Councillor Gledhill stated that the Council should be striving for quality and had to move forward and in doing so listen to residents views.

Councillor Duffin stated that it was ironic that recommendations made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been ignored by Cabinet.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he would not be supporting the recommendation tonight as he believed more work was needed to be undertaken in narrowing the ambition of the review and that all members should come to the same consensus.

Councillor G Rice stated that recommendations made by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been ignored by Cabinet and that members should have been involved in the workshops and the consultation process.

Councillor Hebb stated that a report had gone to Cabinet where no opposition member attended to ask a question and that the administration cared and listened to their residents and the results from the surveys had been fed into the vision.

Councillor Hebb thanked Members for an interesting debate and he would take on board the comments made and proposed an amendment to the recommendation as follows:

“That we defer the recommendation to a working party to continue the piece of work already undertaken on refreshing the vision and to report back to Full Council in due course”.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the amended recommendation.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the amended recommendation, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

RESOLVED

That the Council defer the recommendation to a working party to continue the piece of work already undertaken on refreshing the vision and to report back to Full Council in due course.

119. Annual Pay Policy Statement 2017/18

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Legal, presented the report which sought the approval of the Council’s Annual Pay Policy Statement for 2017/18. It included the requirement, under the Localism Act 2011, to publish its policy relating to pay for chief officers.

Councillor J Kent stated that he would be supporting the recommendations tonight. He felt that Public Sector Chief Executive salaries should be benchmarked against the salaries of senior civil servants and not the Prime Minister or other politicians, which he felt, were not comparable posts. Councillor J Kent also commented that he was glad to hear that there would

be no five per cent reduction cut on senior management pay. Councillor J Kent also thanked Officers for the sterling job that they undertake.

Councillor Coxshall commented that the no five per cent reduction on senior management pay indicated that times and economy had changed and that everyone deserved a pay rise.

Councillor Gledhill congratulated the Chief Executive in reducing staff numbers as part of the five per cent reduction.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the recommendations.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendations, whereupon the Mayor declared these to be carried.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2017/18 was agreed in line with the Council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011, the Single Status Agreement and the recommendations by the independent market assessment.**
- 2. That the Agreement to continue to pay the UK Living Wage as a supplement to its lowest-paid employees and remain competitive. This rate should rise on 1 April 2017 in line with the Living Wage Foundation's recommended rate of £8.45ph.**

120. General Fund Budget Proposals

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, to introduce the budget and advised that he had 20 minutes to do so.

Councillor Gledhill

As already mentioned by Councillor Hebb, last May I received the privilege of becoming Leader of Thurrock Council.

I inherited a budget that I did not agree with, a budget we were told that was too small to supply basic services like street cleaning, grass cutting, pothole filling. A budget where the reserves had not been reviewed for six years. Although in good fairness to Councillor Kent had increased to a more acceptable level. A budget where despite repeated calls for a complete change in approach the previous administration were doing the same thing again and again and expecting a different result, I know Councillor Duffin will understand that statement. A budget that frankly was dying the death of a thousand cuts.

In the 9 months since taking the administration we have seen the highest number of unaccompanied asylum seeker children, over 100, an unbudgeted pressure costing the Thurrock taxpayer £3.2 million since June alone. Staffing

levels cut to the bone from previous budgets. Vital equipment was either sold or unserviceable. Claims that we overspend and would wipe out reserves in a matter of weeks. Significant increases in criminally organised fly-tipping and unlawful incursions causing our green spaces to be dumped on and become diminished.

However, 9 months later I bring to you the results of that same budget, the same amount of money, where we have put the priorities of Thurrock residents first. As I say, remember with the same amount of money we had last year and we have delivered.

An increase in the number of street cleaners and enforcement officers in the environment team with residents saying how much nicer areas of the borough looks. All parks no longer have grass long enough to lose a small child in as I found out on the day I look over administration. Fly-tipping and incursions hotspots target hardened. Thousands of extra bags of rubbish off our streets. Hundreds of acres of extra grass had been cut. Thousands of potholes filled. Nearly half a million pound extra in to the reserves. Kept weekly bin collections. Brought non-essential budgets that overspent year on year in on budget.

Those are some of the positive headlines of last year. But again I said on day one we would be an open and honest administration and as such I would highlight just some, and it is just some, of the things that we have not managed to do. We have not cleaned every street to the high standard of some of town centres, every pothole hasn't been filled and every green space isn't perfect, but again I made clear on day one that it wouldn't happen, six years of neglect cannot be fixed overnight, we also need residents to do their bit to help, you know what they are coming out in their droves and doing it either individually and collectively. Something that has got to be congratulated by all 49 members in this chamber.

Some of the play equipment in our parks are damaged beyond repair and had not been replaced. This is going to be addressed in our capital program which I will come to later.

One of my biggest bugbears is the spend on non-permanent staff hasn't decreased as much I would have liked although indeed in some areas it has increased. Some of this is for the clean it cut it fill it but sorry we still have a long way to go on this.

I haven't managed to decrease the cost of the Thameside complex or indeed get the theatre to at least break even however, I know Councillor Halden has some very good news on Grangewaters which traditionally another taxpayer expense that has cost them dearly year on year with money being thrown at it and not break even.

But I am sure members across the chambers will highlight others and I am not going to stand here and denounce that we have not managed to do it yet but

we will be manage to do it in the next few years. Assuming that we keep administration.

This administration has started the transition from a budget that year on year has been cut, combined, added to, deleted from and fudged about without actually any real change. The budget that we will move into will reflect better where the money is properly allocated to. Where instead of looking inward and salami slicing frontline and support services to the bone we are looking outwards to commercialise. Looking outwards to commercialise on what we do well. What we haven't done before but want we can do at a profit and I know that is a word that many of you do not like but profit is what it is.

- *What we do well,*
- *What we haven't done before but can do at a profit,*
- *Better utilise our staff, assets and buildings,*
- *Make prudential investments that bring returns we can spend on frontline services.*

And as we move forward we will be examining every service we provide. Analysing to see:

- *If need to provide it,*
- *How we can provide it more efficiently, and*
- *If it can be traded commercially, not only to local government but to also other organisations.*

This will help achieve the goal of a zero based budget something that we have banged on about year after year that we can build up on, but supply services that residents want, need and in some cases rely on.

So to the detail:

Tonight we are looking for agreement for a council tax increase of 1.98 per cent, a 3 per cent increase in the adult social care precept, also not only a capital investment program to be agreed but a future and aspirational list which highlights what we are aspiring to achieve and also the dreaded budget envelopes.

The 1.98 per cent council tax increase coupled with

- *Achievable income targets,*
- *An increase in band d equivalent properties in the council tax base and previously agreed reductions will help to deliver for example £1 million increase in the environment department to continue clean it cut it fill it £420 thousand in reserves,*
- *£1.3 million investment in play equipment for our parks over three years,*
- *£8.75 million extra for new refuse and environmental support vehicles ensuring bin collections remain weekly and we can continue on with clean it and cut it,*

- *Up to £2.6 million redeveloping the civic amenity site, the council tip, to make it easier for both residents and hopefully the trade to properly dispose of waste rather than fly-tipping it and making our borough look a shambles in places.*

Examples on the future and aspirational list:

- *Smart bins that will help reduce the number of times they need to be emptied, by emailing the council when they are nearly full. That saves a person going round to empty half empty bins or three quarter empty bins we wait until they are full,*
- *Improving Blackshots field by the removal of a building no longer fit for purpose and improving the car park,*
- *And of course money for the replacement theatre, something I hope we will all agree in Councillor Kent's motion later this evening. I know I will be agreeing it.*

Why are these and others not on the confirmed capital list?

It's simple, we know we need them but I for one will not commit to a figure for a project until it is fully scoped.

The smart bins for instance, we will use our free trial to assess how well they will do in different areas to help shape up any further implementation across the borough. Putting projects on the capital program that just don't happen, or worse legally can't happen sets expectations too high and demoralises residents when it is not delivered. That is why we still have some £70 million of un-started or part finished capital schemes from previous budgets that will need financing in the future.

Now to the bit that annoys me the most, the envelope setting. I have said it before and will say it again; I do not believe setting budget envelopes is setting a budget. A budget is not just an amount on a vague heading for a department it should be outlining what you will be delivering for that amount.

However legislation and case law is very clear, only the cabinet, as the executive, have the power to decide exactly where the money is spent so I will only draw member's attention to the budget envelopes as outlined on page 82 at 4.6. The reasons why I do not like the budget envelopes they don't tell you what we are doing. It doesn't tell you that we will be keeping

- *Weekly bin collections,*
- *Our legal service is looking to become a full traded service,*
- *We will be reaching out to more parents by reorganising children centres,*
- *Supplying area based assistance to our most vulnerable.*

These are just a few examples so you can see my frustration at how this flies in the face of being open and transparent.

Many of you will know, who take the time to look back on previous years, as I did. It appears on the table to have a massive £7 million reduction in the environment team from previous year reports; I have challenged officers on this but have been assured and can assure everyone this is solely to do with accountancy recharge issues. It does not express any reduction in spending power in environment only the location of where the money is originally allocated before transfer.

Now earlier I mentioned that the non-permanent staff spend had not come in anywhere near as low as I had wanted. So as further example of how we are transforming the way taxpayers money is spent, this budget where we have set reduced spending limits we are removing the money from that budget in advance so it cannot be spent. Something that sounds so obvious but has not been done in the past. The money is not there you can't spend it.

Moving away from the central spend we are also spending Deficit School Grant £7 million in capital for improving our schools and over 98 per cent of the £112.5 million dedicated schools grant is going directing to schools. To make sure they can supply good and better services that our children actually deserve to find in the adult world.

So in closing I present to you a number of things with budget paper puts forward.

I already demonstrated that instead of spending time bemoaning that the government isn't giving councils enough to money, that

- Working out how best to spend the taxpayers money we have got,*
- By challenging why and how it is spent*

That not only can you supply services which residents want you can close the year with more money in reserves and next year a small surplus.

I have shown that this administration is committed to supplying the services residents want like street cleaning, pothole filling, weekly bin collections but also those services that are hidden that only a few will receive.

That putting in high quality bids and working closely with our MPs whilst applying for grants from growth bids and regeneration vast amounts of capital to help improve infrastructure that is long overdue in Thurrock as I mentioned in my opening remarks this evening.

That commerciality and making a profit to plough back into services are no longer dirty words.

That we are determined to review every service to drive out every efficiency and commercial possibility to protect resident services on the front line.

And most importantly for a modest increase we will see a significant investment in services everybody in the borough use, significant investment in

our open spaces and significant investment in the equipment and infrastructure that helps us deliver our promises.

This is an open and transparent, no hidden cuts in the background, formed with the input from members across the chamber who attended the council spending review budget, that's a budget that works for all.

I know I have done this before, but I am going to say it again and I will name names. I would like to thank Councillors Snell, Jones and Duffin for attending the meetings at the council spending review and hope they will do so again in the next financial year. Your input was important and ideas proposed have been included in the saving targets we have set and I thank you for that input.

In closing I will mention the funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau. With the budget put in front of us of £44,000 underspend at the end of the year and with some other unspent funding we will be able to fund the Citizens Advice Bureau once again. A cut that would have affected so many in need of help hopefully reversed by good money management. I therefore put this budget to the chamber.

The Mayor then invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Snell, to respond and advised that he had 15 minutes to do so.

Councillor Snell

As had been pointed out more than once recently, and again just now, I have, as leader of the UKIP Group taken a full and active part of the budget review process. Indeed, with the Council being split between three groups with none having a clear majority, I feel it is important that each group should take part in this process so that as wide a variety of opinions and ideas as possible are aired and taken into consideration when the budget is finally set.

That said, what are we asking to agree tonight? Many Thurrock residents are under the impression that we are agreeing each line of service provision but as Councillor Gledhill has just stated that this not the case at all. We are agreeing which services will continue and which won't, they think we are deciding what the Council will continue to do and what it won't. As we in this chamber know, that is not the case. We are asked only to agree the budget envelopes, how much each department has to spend, not what they spend it on. We are asked to make a decision on the here and now, not what might happen a few months' time should circumstances change. Cabinet can change the spending priorities as and when it needs to. It's an important point that residents should be aware of.

Now to the substantive points. It's impossible to look at our budget in isolation. We have to take into account the effect the Government policy as on us here, in Thurrock. There can be no doubt that the year on year reduction in the revenue support grant has had a major effect on the way we do things. We have had to become leaner as an organisation. We have had to develop a more commercial way of doing things, we have to try to earn more

of our own money and that we will continue to do so as time goes by rather than just spend our council taxpayer's money all the time which has tended to be done in the past. That can only be a good thing. We have to try to do the same things we've always done but better and with less money. Our officers are constantly challenged to come up with new, innovative ways of getting things done and all the time under the increasing pressure of ever shrinking budgets. The officers have been magnificent and I thank them for the great work they have done and continue to do.

But, and there is a but, they have a limit. Support from Government has been withdrawn too quickly. None of the new working practices are given any time to bed in before yet more cuts are required; stretching everything almost to breaking point. Whilst there is no doubt that local authorities were once over-indulged with Government funding, that is not the case anymore. We say, UKIP, enough is enough, we have taken the hits up to now but it's time for the Government to stop punching.

There is a crisis in Adult Social Care as well. All of us in the chamber know it. Indeed, the Tory Chair of the Health Select Committee has been telling it to anyone that will listen, clearly, up to now at least, to no avail. We in Thurrock are asking to provide excellent Adult Social Care to a rapidly growing number of people with ever diminishing government support. This Tory Government have very magnanimously passed the bill onto Thurrock Council Taxpayers even though it is fully aware that even with the 3 per cent rise in the adult social care precept and the one off payment of approximately £657,000 there is still severe pressure on the budget. This is unjust. Through government policy, people in need of decent social care are being put at risk, the government has the power to change that and we call on them tonight to do so. However, if we don't agree the rise tonight, the service will likely fail, we cannot allow that to happen and we won't.

Let me return to those budget envelopes. On the face of it they appear reasonable. However, in my opinion there is far too much reliance on expected future savings that each directorate is supposed to realise. As an example and as Councillor Gledhill has just mentioned, it is budgeted that there will be a reduction in the cost of agency and temporary staff. Not that there might be, but there will be. It is one thing to aspire to make that saving but quite another to actually realise it. And I do take the point on board about not providing the budget but when push comes to shove when staff are required what's going to give? Is the level of service or the budget? I am not convinced. That particular saving hasn't been realised in previous years, despite the same commitments being made.

What happens when one or more of those savings targets are not met. Do we dip into reserves or do we cut services to cover any shortfall. What happens should, for example, an already stretched environmental budget come under pressure. Would cabinet curtail their clean it, cut it, fil it or will it change the way the bins are collected. I am not convinced this budget provides security or peace of mind on such matters.

In any event, the budget does balance. How do I know that? The section 151 officer's report says it does. But it is a budget fraught with risks at a time when we can ill afford to take any. To my mind, this budget places a question mark against every service the council provides. I could not vote in favour of it with any confidence that the device landscape at the end of the next municipal year within reason be as it was at the start.

I began my speech by pointing out that this Council is split three ways. We have a minority administration and yet we are asked tonight to agree a budget set by a group that represents less than half of the wards in Thurrock. It is really democratic to leave decisions on spending what is many millions of pounds to a minority and un-representative group on council. I don't think so. The minority should not be the final arbiter of council policy and spending decision. This is a conversation for another day, but it is one we will have and it will be with the aim of making council more democratically accountable.

There are other areas of concern, namely Gloriana and the Thameside Theatre but they both appear later in the agenda for night so I'll reserve any comments until then.

Thank you Madam Mayor.

The Mayor invited Councillor Gledhill to respond and advised that he had 10 minutes to do so.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Snell for your response and your very constructive criticism. I shall do these in no particular order. I can remember standing exactly where you are saying I had no faith in the administration to be able to deliver a budget year on year. Surprisingly every year I was proved wrong and I am sure that you will be proved wrong as well. I mean that in a good sense because if you are proved wrong its means our residents are getting the services they deserve. Is there risk in this? Yes. The expert in this, the section 151 officer, highlights these risks but at the end says there is sufficient ability for us to come in on budget. I have got 8 cabinet members and section 151 officer who has confidence in this budget, I would hope that you had a little bit more confidence in it yourself. However, I can understand where you are coming from on this. It is very good to hear the things you have said that in the past local government has been overly indulged with money. It has been really strange ever since I have been a local government officer and indeed a councillor year on year we have been budgets declined. We have seen gershon savings here and seen savings there and obviously through the administration seen cuts here cuts there but less effectively there is less money in the pot. We have rose to that through this administration to a degree and in deed us to a greater degree. If we look at the children's centres for example fewer buildings better services less money. We are looking at the area based assistance for our vulnerable adults again going onto a much smaller package that can be delivered that gives us much more flexibility within the system. So I think if anything reducing local

authority budgets has made us sit up and focus and start giving good value for money rather than doing the same old, same old. Something that we should never have done in the first place but what ever reason we got complacent and we carried on doing it. We moaned at whatever government it was for not giving us enough. You will notice I have not moaned at the government for not giving us enough. I've just got on with the job and that is what we need to do. I fully understand where you are coming from on the adults social care statement and indeed the statement from Councillor Kent came from on this. However to try and hook-win the administration in trying to say that our government is not doing enough is really poor politics. It is despicable to use that our receiving adult social care as pawns to score political points. So to take the political pressure out of this I am going to put forward an alternative recommendation within the recommendations outlined on page 74 and that will be recommendation 1.2.1. and the words will be exactly the same as Councillor Kent's recommendation which is following the consideration of overview and scrutiny committee and that cabinet agree to the proposed amendment is as it is stated there that

"Thurrock Council believes that the adult social care precept is unable solve the Adult Social Care funding crisis that exists, not only here in Thurrock but, nationally. Council calls on central government to urgently put in place proper and sustainable funding of adult social care and put in place a long - term strategy to deal with increasing pressures."

This will mean that every member can vote for the three per cent without having to think politics and can get on and think people and that is what we should be thinking about, people. And then recommendation 1.2.1 as I have just proposed, certainly this group has a free vote and the other groups will also have free vote on that and it will be up to members to decide whether this council will have a right to government accordingly. As such Madam Mayor I will pass it to you.

Councillor J Kent stated he was happy to proceed with Councillor Gledhill's alternative recommendation and withdrew his amended recommendation.

The Mayor then invited Member comments on the report.

Councillor J Kent stated that the Environmental and Place Directorate, who were the people who Clean It, Cut It, Fill It, will have £6.6 million less to spend next year and that the report did not explain where that money had gone and how the shortfall would be made up.

Councillor J Kent stated that there was an Adult Social Care crisis up and down the country and at the January 2017 Full Council the Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2016 had been received and stated that Thurrock was £18-22 million in deficit in adult social care spending over the next three years. Councillor J Kent agreed with the three per cent precept and the one off government adult social care support grant of £657,000 which would equate to £2.4 million extra for adult social care. Councillor J Kent stated that he thought this was not good enough and that the elderly and vulnerable

residents of Thurrock deserved better and the Council would not be able to offer these services if we accepted the budget envelopes being proposed by the administration.

Councillor J Kent stated that items on the table of savings were too aspirational and the budget being proposed was not robust enough, not fit for purpose and would not be a budget that could be delivered.

Councillor Jones spoke on behalf of the residents that Members had no choice but to agree with the administration's increase on council tax. Councillor Jones stated that the government should be condemned for making these cuts too sharply and without the consideration of residents.

Councillor Jones also questioned whether the £6.2 million allocated to new refuse vehicles and plant hire should be leased instead of purchasing.

Councillor Duffin thanked the Section 151 Officer for the meetings that he had attended throughout the year as shadow portfolio holder for finance.

Councillor Duffin stated that it was bizarre that the council that made major financial decisions where 50 per cent of votes in the chamber counted for nothing and that Cabinet could go away and make the executive decision. Councillor Duffin further commented that he would be voting against this report as nobody would vote for a budget which could not be held to account.

Councillor Wheeler stated that the young families in the borough would suffer due to the tax increases and this was unfair and unjust.

Councillor Halden stated that the administration's goal was doing more for less, reforming, investing and striving forward. Children's Centres were reforming to offer a more comprehensive offer to more people. Investments in schools where expansion plans had already come forward in St Clere's and Ockendon and that £1.4 million would be made available immediately for East Tilbury Primary School to help expand and deliver the class rooms they deserve. Councillor Halden commented that the approved capital was that what was needed and not simply wanted and that the Council was striving with investments in cases such as Grangewaters which now breaks even and hopefully will make a profit next year.

Councillor Redsell thanked the Leader for the positive way the budget was presented and how this was the vision of the administration. Councillor Redsell welcomed the news on funding for the Blackshot fields.

Councillor G Rice stated that the administration should listen to the residents in the public gallery tonight on how the budget was being spent and that the three per cent increase cannot keep happening.

Councillor Sheridan stated that she was sad and angry that £1 million had been allocated to foreign aid and that the government should be helping local residents first.

Councillor Huelin stated that the Council needed to work smarter, learn from the mistakes made and how important it was that the Council listened to local residents and delivered what they ask for by spending money wisely.

Councillor Coxshall referred Members to the Asset Team where there had been £61 million of disposal income in the last budget and that the £800,000 was a reasonable figure to find and what the Council had to do was get this money back, mainly from the Purfleet Regeneration.

Councillor Coxshall stated he was proud that the administration had a foreign aid budget.

Councillor Piccolo stated that the Council should work with the money it had now and to ensure that the money the Council spent was the money that it earned. Councillor Piccolo commented that the Local Area Coordinators were doing a fantastic job and saving social care an enormous amount of money.

Councillor B Rice stated that the administration had to acknowledge real life issues and those residents that were under privileged. That there was nothing in the budget to address such issues.

Councillor Hamilton echoed Councillor Sheridan's comments and was disgusted on where foreign aid money was being allocated.

Councillor S Little stated that adult social care was being addressed to try and devise what residents want rather than what the Council think they want. Councillor S Little also stated that Collins House, an unused asset, required to be brought up to date and she also praised the work done by the Local Area Coordinators.

Councillor Gerrish commented that the budget summary proposals presented were more like a "Wing It, Fudge It, Dodge It" budget. Councillor Gerrish had concerns over the budget that there were too many saving proposals which were too speculative, the proposals were too vague and that too many of the big issues for the future had been ducked. Further clarity was required before the budget could be set and that the proposals were hugely speculative.

Councillor MacPherson stated that she looked forward to the sporting facilities being available and was thrilled that the Citizen Advice Bureau would continue to support vulnerable residents.

Councillor Watkins stated that improvements had been made to the budget going forward and he was proud of the proposed budget.

Councillor Hebb stated that the Council Spending Review was designed to get every member around the table and get a cross party budget. There were 10 meetings held to which all members had sight of all papers being presented giving all members the opportunity to comment and contribute. Councillor Hebb confirmed that the government cuts were a full suite of service reviews

which would look bottom up for the next three years and to look at what was statutory and what was preferable for the tax payer to ensure that the right base was presented.

Councillor Tolson stated that the environmental services, such as grass cutting and cleaner streets, had improved and forward thinking was essential for providing services for residents in the future.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.1.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.1 the result of which was:

For	:	(31)
Against	:	(0)
Abstain	:	(15)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.1 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.2.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.2 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler (45)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.2 to be carried.

At 9.16pm the Mayor requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate the remaining items from Members. Members voted in favour of this and agreed to finish at 9.45pm.

The Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.2.1.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.2.1 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Graham Hamilton, Victoria Holloway, Roy Jones, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Michael Stone and Kevin Wheeler (27)

Against : Councillors Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, , Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, Joy Redsell, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (18)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.2.1 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that an individual recorded vote would take place on recommendations 1.3 and 1.4.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.3 the result of which was:

For : Councillors John Allen, James Baker, Jan Baker, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (41)

Against : Councillors Chris Baker and Kevin Wheeler (2)

Abstain : Councillors Tim Aker and Jack Duffin (2)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.3 to be carried.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.4 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, , Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, Joy Redsell, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (18)

Against : Councillors Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Graham Hamilton, Victoria Holloway, Roy Jones, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue

Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell,
Michael Stone and Kevin Wheeler (27)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.4 lost.

The Mayor adjourned the Full Council at 9.24pm for 10 minutes to enable the Leaders, the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Finance & IT and the Monitoring Officer to debate and agree the way forward.

Full Council reconvened at 9.35pm.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on recommendations 1.5 to 1.7 as printed in the report. This was a non-recorded vote.

For : (45)
Against : (0)
Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.5 to 1.7 to be carried.

Finally, the Mayor explained that a recorded en-bloc vote would take place on recommendations 1.8 to 1.13 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler (45)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.8 to 1.13 to be carried.

RESOLVED

That the Council:

- 1.1 Considers and acknowledges the Section 151 Officer's (Director of Finance and IT's) report on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves and the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 1, including the conditions upon which the following recommendations are made;**

- 1.2 Following the considerations of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, agree to a 3% council tax increase in respect of Adult Social Care;
- 1.2.1 Thurrock Council believes that the adult social care precept is unable solve the Adult Social Care funding crisis that exists, not only here in Thurrock but, nationally. Council calls on central government to urgently put in place proper and sustainable funding of adult social care and put in place a long - term strategy to deal with increasing pressures;
- 1.3 Following the considerations of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, agree to a 1.98% council tax increase in support of the general budget;
- 1.5 Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in section 7 and Appendix 4;
- 1.6 Approve the new General Fund capital proposals, including the allocation for feasibility work on future and aspirational proposals, as set out in section 8 and Appendix 5;
- 1.7 Delegate to Cabinet the ability to agree schemes where it can be evidenced that there is a spend to save opportunity or that use any unbudgeted contributions from third parties, including those by way of grants or developers' contributions, and these be deemed as part of the capital programme;

Statutory Council Tax Resolution

- 1.8 Calculate that the council tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2017/18 is £61,682,537 as set out in the table at paragraph 4.6 of this report;
- 1.9 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2017/18 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £381,756,591 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
 - (b) £320,074,054 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £61,682,537 being the amount by which the aggregate at 1.9(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.9(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).

- (d) £1,226.61 being the amount at 1.9(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (Council Tax Base of 50,287), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £0 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) £1,226.61 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by Item T, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

1.10 To note that the Police Authority and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the tables below;

1.11 That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of council tax for 2017/18 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings;

2017/18 COUNCIL TAX FOR THURROCK PURPOSES EXCLUDING ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY AND ESSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2017/18							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
817.74	954.03	1,090.32	1,226.61	1,499.19	1,771.77	2,044.35	2,453.22

1.12 That it be noted that for the year 2017/18 Essex Police Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2017/18							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
104.70	122.15	139.60	157.05	191.95	226.85	261.75	314.10

1.13 That it be noted that for the year 2017/18 Essex Fire Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows (waiting on formal confirmation):

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2017/18							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
46.02	53.69	61.36	69.03	84.37	99.71	115.05	138.06

2017/18 COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING FIRE AND POLICE AUTHORITY PRECEPTS)

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2017/18							
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
968.46	1,129.87	1,291.28	1,452.69	1,775.51	2,098.33	2,421.15	2,905.38

121. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Budgets 2017/18

Councillor Gledhill, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing, introduced the report that set out the base position after developing a new Housing Review Account Business Plan for 2017/18. This Plan needed to be financially viable whilst being able to continue to deliver the Council's Housing priorities.

Councillor Gledhill stated that the continuation of the government's rent reduction policy reduced the resources available in the Housing Review Account and as a result other ways of generating additional resources had been explored.

A review of the housing service which included all activities funded by the Housing Review Account was currently underway.

Councillor Gledhill stated that no agreement would be given to any new proposals that were under consultation.

Councillor B Rice stated that she was delighted that the consultations had been noticed and that the Council should respect all residents views and to recognise the anger that some residents are currently feeling.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the recommendation.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted as follows:

For	:	18
Against	:	19
Abstain	:	5

Whereupon the Mayor declared the recommendation lost.

122. Treasury Management Strategy 2017/18

Councillor Hebb referred members to the report in the agenda and asked requested the recommendation go to the vote.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the recommendation.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Council approves the Treasury Management Strategy for 2017/18 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement.**
- 2. That the Council approves the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1.**
- 3. That the Council notes the revised 2016/17 and 2017/18 Treasury Management projections as set out in paragraph 2.33.**

123. Appointment of External Auditor

Councillor Hebb referred members to the report in the agenda and asked requested the recommendation go to the vote.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the recommendation.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation, whereupon the Mayor declared this to be carried.

RESOLVED

That the Council opts in to the appointing person arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the Council's local auditor appointments from 2018/19.

124. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Members that questions submitted would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

Councillor Kerin requested a written response from Councillor Tolson.

Councillor Fish requested a written response from Councillor Halden.

Councillor Sammons withdrew her question and would resubmit.

Councillor J Kent withdrew his question and would resubmit.

125. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

The Mayor informed the Chambers that no reports had been received.

126. Minutes of Committees

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

127. 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 over the last year.

128. Motion Submitted by Councillor Duffin

Councillor Duffin withdrew and would resubmit this Motion.

129. Motion Submitted by Councillor J Kent

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Gledhill. The Motion read as follows:

The Thameside Theatre is held in great affection by residents across Thurrock. Therefore the sudden announcement that the theatre is likely to close by April 2019 is causing real concern in many quarters. Council is of the collective view that the Thameside Theatre should remain open until a new civic theatre for Thurrock, situated in Grays, has opened.

Councillor J Kent introduced the Motion and stated that a unanimous message should be sent out that the Thameside Theatre would not close until a provision had been provided elsewhere in the borough.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Following a clear majority in favour, the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

130. Motion Submitted by Councillor Snell

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

In order to demonstrate transparency on its policies, implementation of its policies and overall performance and further to Gloriana Limited willingness to co-operate with such scrutiny from Members, Thurrock Council believes that Gloriana Limited should: provide an Annual Report to the Council; provide regular quarterly updates to our General Services Committee, voluntarily submit to the full democratic scrutiny of Full Council and General Services Committee on the thoroughness of its Business Plan and funding requirements. This is not to seek to inappropriately discuss the specific merits of any material planning considerations or predetermine the quasi-judicial

decision properly within the remit of our Planning Committee on the current part heard planning application.

Councillor Snell introduced the Motion to bring Gloriana Limited into the scrutiny of Full Council and have the opportunity to have an oversight of the substantive amount of monies being put into Gloriana Limited. Councillor Snell stated that although in full support and Gloriana Limited being a worthwhile scheme it required more scrutiny and that Full Council was the place for this to be undertaken.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Following a clear majority in favour, the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

131. Motion submitted by Councillor Hebb

Councillor Hebb withdrew and would resubmit this Motion.

The meeting finished at 9.56 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**