

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 27 September 2017 at 7.50 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors Russell Cherry, Sue MacPherson, David Potter and Pauline Tolson

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
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
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring 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.

The Mayor invited Pastor Akin to lead those present in prayer.

46. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 26 July 2017 were approved as a correct record.

47. Items of Urgent Business

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

48. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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

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

The Mayor welcomed Members back from the long summer break and made the following announcements:

That September marked 16 years of the atrocious attack on 9/11 and he had the opportunity to accompany 24 students and teachers from local schools in Thurrock on a visit to the 9/11 museum, the United Nations and to hear from witnesses and Mayor of New York about how they coped with the event and had rebuilt their community. The Mayor stated how proud he had been of the exemplary behaviour of the students.

The Mayor congratulated all Thurrock artists who had been involved in the Thurrock 100 event over the summer and that he was working with Well House Gallery to show case some of their work and thanked Terry Finnegan for allowing his work to be displayed in the Mayor's parlour.

The Mayor was sorry to announce the passing away of ex-Mayor George Watts last week who had been Mayor for the year 1988-89 and had chaired a number of scrutiny committees. The Mayor had not worked with him on the Council, but had been aware of his community work on behalf of the Council and that thoughts were with his family at this time.

That earlier this month, the Mayor wrote to all members to remind them about the responsibility to adhere to the code of conduct that Members signed up to as community leaders. The Mayor stated that no matter how passionate Members got he hoped that all Members could display a moral example to the community. As to debating of issues tonight, the Mayor reminded member and also asked residents in the public gallery to be calm and allow questions and answers to be heard. He understood that passions could run high but both the question and the answers had to be heard. The Mayor thanked all in advance for their usual calm behaviour.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, updated Members on the following:

Clean It, Cut It, Fill It, since April this year a continued investment had been made to these important services. That 10 extra street cleansing rounds had continued with nearly 950 tonnes of rubbish collected. That 10 new ride-on-grass mowers had cut 9,000 acres of grass and that £2 million had been invested in road repairs and improvement to surface or treated 44 square kilometres of roads and filled over 4,000 potholes.

Councillor Gledhill stated that five action days had been held in the Grays Town Centre with Police and Council Enforcement Officers tackling street drinking, littering and businesses who had no trade waste duty of care documents. That 44 Fixed Penalty Notices for breaches of the Grays Public Space Protection Orders notices had been issued, covering abusive language and failing to comply with alcohol provisions. Three persistent offenders breaching the Public Space Protection Orders had been subject to prosecution for persistent breach. Also 13 businesses were visited regarding the inspection of trade waste duty of care documents with five penalty notices being issued to businesses who had previously received warnings.

Councillor Gledhill confirmed that 21 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued to persons who littered and encouraged residents to stop dropping rubbish on Thurrock streets as the Council would fine them.

Councillor Gledhill was pleased to report that one of Thurrock's operatives who wished to remain anonymous, saved the resident's life by quickly applying first aid skills after they had collapsed. Councillor Gledhill stated he intended to thank them personally for their swift actions on behalf of all Members.

Councillor Gledhill attended a reception at 10 Downing Street with a number of other Essex Members of Parliament and the Police and Crime Commissioner and discussed a number of issues:

- Illegal Traveller Incursion Enforcement: A lack of direct action from Essex Police when there are unauthorised encampments in the borough and the delay in how Police deal with such encampments in Thurrock.
- Thanks were given to the Police and Crime Commissioner for the extra work undertaken by the Grays Town Centre Team in helping tackle the issue of street drinkers and had reminded him that there were other Designated Public Places Order's that had become Public Space Protection Orders that needed policing.
- The extension of camera enforcement for moving traffic offences such as breaching width restrictions, blocking yellow box junctions and similar offences in Thurrock. This would be vital to keep the heavy logistics traffic moving and at the same time keep residents safe.

Councillor Gledhill stated that following an announcement made on Tuesday 26 September a temporary stop had been made to the grounds maintenance service charge for housing. This item will be referred back to Housing Overview and Scrutiny for further consideration and then returned to Cabinet.

50. Questions from Members of the Public

At 8.08pm, Councillor Gledhill requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate all Public Questions. Members voted in favour of this.

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.

51. 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 four members and one member of the public who wished to present petitions at the meeting.

Councillor Hebb presented a petition on behalf of residents of Hadfield Road, Rectory Road, Wharf Road and Fairview Avenue, Stanford-le-Hope to request that Thurrock Council (a) consult on the introduction of a one-way system around Hadfield and Rectory Road and (b) introduce speed-calming measures down both roads.

Councillor Kerin presented a petition to request the installation of CCTV on a section of Seabrooke Rise.

Councillor Jones presented a petition that related to the poor state of road surface in Gordon Road, Corringham.

Mrs Imamzade presented a petition on the Council's proposal to introduce and extend service charges by up to £400 per year for all tenants.

Councillor Jones presented a petition for Thurrock Council to reconsider the unfair rent increase imposed on Council tenants.

52. Petitions Update Report

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

53. 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.

54. Recruitment of Director of Environment and Highways

Councillor Gledhill presented the report to seek the agreement of Council to recruit a new Director of Environment and Highways and stated that the proposed changes in this report to the senior management team were intended to provide the delivery of the Council's Strategic Place ambitions whilst bringing into line all priorities into a single new directorate.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the Portfolio for Regeneration had continually changed over the last 18 months and that himself and a dedicated team of Officers need to be able to move forward to the delivery stage of projects with the new build of houses as a high priority in Thurrock.

Councillor Duffin stated that he welcomed the two new roles but questioned how when the administration were so against the Lower Thames Crossing they were now funding a new position. Surely this was not fighting against it but helping to build the crossing.

Councillor Halden stated that the Lower Thames Crossing decision was not down to Thurrock and that those new homes referred to by Councillor Coxshall were vital for the new schools and medical centres that are planned for the borough. A dedicated team with proper managerial staff focusing on major projects was essential.

Councillor Snell stated that it was good news that the restructuring proposal was cost neutral and that the Council was reacting to the large projects coming to Thurrock.

Councillor Gerrish welcomed the change and that delivery and regeneration was important to Thurrock rather than structure but stated that the Labour Party would be monitoring progress.

Councillor B Rice would be supporting the recommendation and that the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force had met for the first time last week and that Highways England should be reminded at every opportunity that Thurrock stood opposed to the new crossing.

Councillor Piccolo stated that at July Full Council Members criticised the administration for not taking the Lower Thames Crossing proposal seriously and that this new restructuring and the Task Force Working Group displayed otherwise.

Councillor Hamilton had concerns how information would be filtered back to Members. Councillor Gledhill stated this would be through the Task Force.

Councillor Gledhill stated that the Assistant Director, Lower Thames Crossing post would report directly to the Corporate Director of Place and would lead on the programme management of the high profile project.

Councillor Gledhill also stated that it was the delivery of services that was key to the restructuring and was vital to the future regeneration and investments in Thurrock.

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

RESOLVED

That the approval in accordance with the Council's constitution and the Pay Policy statement:

Subject to the outcome of formal consultation, General Services Committee to make arrangements for the recruitment of a Director of Environment and Highways.

55. Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal

Councillor Hebb, Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal, reported to the Chamber that Thurrock was on the right path, had lived last year within its means and was ready in itself for finance self-sufficiency.

Councillor Hebb continued to update Members on the following:

- That the Council would not be dependent on money of Government contributions towards the general funding
- That in the first year of administration there had been a balanced first year budget and delivered £10 million worth of savings
- Reduced the Labour overspend of children services from £4 million to £1 million
- Commercial Services seen an income generation of £2.5 million
- £1.5 million had been invested into front line services
- Cutting the grass and cleaning the streets of Thurrock
- In collaboration with the Government now filling pot holes across the borough
- Retained the free weekly bin collections
- Purchased a £4 million bin collection fleet
- Clean It, Cut It, Fill It was funded and remained funded whilst the Conservatives are in power
- £65 million investment in the borough for new classrooms, medical centres and new fleets

Although there was much more to do, Councillor Hebb stated that money was not being spent prettily it was being spent to make the borough look pretty.

Councillor Snell stated that the language in the report was bizarre and could the Portfolio Holder stop treating residents as customers and treats them as people.

Councillor Gerrish questioned the Portfolio Holder whether he would commit to increasing the role of investment of the Council in providing new homes to ensure that the Council was made more financially stable in the future.

Councillor Okunade thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report and questioned what strategies were in place for ensuring better engagement with residents in view of consultations.

Councillor Duffin questioned whether amounts of money for grass cutting transferred from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account would now be reversed if the grass tax were to be scrapped and what cuts would be made to the general fund balance to allow the budgets to balance.

Councillor Hebb replied to Councillor Snell that the Council takes the view to serve whether they are residents or customers and had gone above and beyond to make contact with residents and had the appropriate conversations with them.

Councillor Hebb replied to Councillor Gerrish to confirm that this would need to be looked at in more detail and to look at the housing banding to see what was viable. Councillor Hebb thanked Councillor Gerrish for his contributions.

Councillor Hebb replied to Councillor Okunade and stated that a public participation group had just been launched and would encourage more residents to join.

Councillor Hebb replied to Councillor Duffin and reconfirmed that the grounds maintenance charge will go back to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny for further consideration.

56. Report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Central Services

Councillor Huelin, Cabinet Member for Performance and Central Services introduced the report and stated that it was an honour to stand in the Council Chamber for the second time to report on the performance of the Council over the past year. That it took commitment and hard work and reassured residents they were in safe hands.

The Portfolio Holder stated it had been a year of hard work and change and thanked staff at all levels on how well they had performed. Councillor Huelin compared the 60% target achieved in comparison to the 50% under the previous administration.

Councillor Huelin referenced that 96% of primary schools were being judged as good or better; Clean It, Cut It, Fill It had enabled pot holes to be filled; streets had been cleaned, equipment had been purchased and for parks and roads to be brought up to scratch. That Keep Britain Tidy was judging the cleanliness of streets in Thurrock and had scored amazingly so far.

Councillor Huelin confirmed that response rates had been improved and Members were encouraged to report effectively and referred Members to the Appendix A of the report. Councillor Huelin would forward an electronic copy of this Appendix to all Members so that this could be shared with residents. That the customer service/digital and people strategies had been brought together to improve customer services.

Councillor Snell thanked the Portfolio Holder for her report and stated that there was some good news and how encouraging that the web based

reporting had improved and that residents were actually getting a response. Councillor Snell asked for reassurance that there would always be a telephone call centre available for residents as more services go on-line. Councillor Huelin reassured Councillor Snell that the telephone call centre would always be available.

Councillor Gerrish asked the Portfolio Holder whether the Agency Staff target had been met. Councillor Huelin stated that there had been an increase in the agency spends which was due to putting things right following the previous administration and changes in social care had increased the urgent need of more agency social care staff to care for residents.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether the new street inspections would help meet the targets set. Councillor Huelin stated that praise should be given to the street cleansing team as targets were being met.

Councillor Okunade asked the Portfolio Holder to explain why the Key Performance Indicators for Timeliness had scored worse. Councillor Huelin replied that this was dependent on the nature of the complaint and at what stages these complaints were at. Councillor Huelin stated that the numbers will come down as the Council continued to drive forward to learn from complaints and implement the required changes.

57. Questions from Members

At 9.25pm, Councillor Gledhill requested that standing orders be suspended to provide time to hear and debate all Member Questions. Members voted in favour of this.

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 14 questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and 8 questions to Cabinet Members.

At 10.04pm, the Mayor moved a motion to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11.1 to allow the meeting to continue beyond the 2.5 hour time limit. Members indicated their agreement to the proposal.

At 10.40pm, the Mayor called for a comfort break.

Full Council reconvened at 10.50pm.

At 10.50pm, Councillor Snell moved a motion to suspend the remainder of member questions and move to the Motions.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to vote. Upon being put to the vote, Members voted as follows:

For	:	14
Against	:	24
Abstain	:	0

The Mayor adjourned Full Council at 11.21pm due to a general disturbance making orderly business impossible.

Councillor Wheeler left the Council Chamber at 11.22pm.

Full Council reconvened at 11.23pm.

The Mayor adjourned Full Council again at 11.23pm due to a general disturbance making orderly business impossible.

Councillors Hague and Sammons left the Council Chamber at 11.30pm.

Full Council reconvened at 11.33pm.

The Mayor made an apology on behalf of all Members in the Chamber to residents in the public gallery.

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

58. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

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

59. Minutes of Committees

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

60. 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.

Councillor J Kent requested an update on the following Motion presented by Councillor Jones on the 28 September 2016:

We call on Thurrock Council to write to the Secretary of State to express many residents' views that in its present state the police service contact number 101 is not fit for purpose.

Councillor C Kent requested an update on her Motion presented on the 26 July 2017 and questioned why the process had taken so long:

This Council urges the Essex Fire Authority and the P.C.C to urgently review the crewing of all special appliances in Thurrock.

Councillor Maney left the Council Chamber at 11.42pm.

61. Motion received from Councillor B Rice

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor B Rice and seconded by Councillor Gerrish. The Motion read as follows:

This Council calls on the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex to fully review and evaluate Police numbers in Thurrock in light of the serious nature of crimes that are we are experiencing in the Borough.

Councillor B Rice presented the Motion that highlighted the increased level of crime and anti-social behaviour in Thurrock and that residents should not have to put up with this. That immediate action was required by the Government to establish the confidence back into Thurrock residents. A poem written by a local Police Officer highlighting the need for better services was read out by Councillor B Rice.

Councillor Gerrish was proud to support this Motion with more than ever the number of crime and anti-social behaviour incidents being reported by residents had increased. That the budget set by the Conservative Government should be ashamed of how residents had been treated and with Labour's plan to recruit ten thousand Police Officers as protection should not be done on the cheap. Councillor Gerrish stated that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner should listen and action.

Councillor Spillman stated that there was a crisis in Thurrock with no Police presence in public spaces and demanded that the Government action as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Jones stated that he would be supporting this Motion and echoed Councillor Spillman's comments. Councillor Jones stated he had recently attended a RAF memorial service where there was no Police presence to stop the unfortunate anti-social behaviour taking place at this event.

Councillor Gledhill stated that he would be supporting this Motion and quoted incident and offence figures and would insist that the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner listened to what Thurrock needed.

Councillor Duffin stated that crime was a serious problem in Thurrock with residents not having any confidence when they rang the Police 101 number and although the administration praised the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner nothing had been done.

Councillor Potheary stated that she would be supporting the Motion but residents who reported crime were being batted back to the Council by the 101 service and that the procedure required clarity.

Councillor J Kent welcomed the Motion but with new challenges being faced with less Officers he called on the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to undertake a full review of Thurrock.

Councillor Coxshall stated he would be supporting the Motion as confidence had to be restored back into the community. Councillor Coxshall questioned

how in Essex we could pay more to get more Police and quoted that an extra ten pound on everybody's tax could generate a further 100 Police Officers for the county.

Councillor Huelin stated that she would be supporting the Motion and praised the quick response made by the Police following an incident in Corringham.

Councillor Allen stated that as Thurrock grew with the potential infrastructure and new homes being built in Thurrock it was vital that residents got proper Police presence.

Councillor Smith stated he would be supporting the Motion and go straight to the vote.

Councillor B Rice summed up by stating that Members owed it to the residents of Thurrock to increase the Police presence in the borough.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

Councillor Sheridan left the Council Chambers at 0.03am.

62. Motion received from Councillor Spillman

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

Council calls on Cabinet to work with local arts and music groups to assist them in looking at options for establishing:

- *A not-for-profit community arts and music multi use venue open to all arts, crafts and music groups across Thurrock which will be able to secure relevant licenses that will allow the venue to be financially sustainable by raising revenue through ticketed music and performance events, and*
- *A not-for-profit, open air, "Festival of Thurrock" to provide an opportunity for a wide range of artists and musicians in Thurrock to showcase their talents.*

Councillor Spillman stated that the Motion was about art and not politics.

Councillor Halden stated he would support this Motion and explained that structures could be connected with existing services that Schools and the Council already provided. Councillor Halden would be more than happy to meet with Councillor Spillman outside of this committee.

Councillor Duffin spoke in favour of the Motion and requested the Motion go straight to vote.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

63. Motion received from Councillor B Rice

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor B Rice and seconded by Councillor Kerin. The Motion read as follows:

Members in this Council Chamber to call on the Cabinet to re-evaluate the need for £5 per week charge for grounds maintenance to Council tenants as this will cause many residents further hardship.

Councillor B Rice stated that the service charges were unfair and unjust to the residents of Thurrock that the consultation was not transparent and that the correspondence sent to residents was not clear. Councillor B Rice stated that Councillor Gledhill should stop blaming Officers and the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for his mistakes. Cabinet made the decision and those residents of Thurrock should not be punished for this mistake.

Councillor Kerin stated that the service charges should be scrapped all together as they were unfair to those residents that could not afford them and that Councillor Gledhill should listen to those individuals.

Councillor Spillman stated as Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee that it was not his job to fix the problem but to ensure that this did not happen again and try and regain the faith of residents by looking and supporting any new proposals.

Councillor Okunade stated her support for this Motion.

Councillor Duffin stated that the Leader had to be taken into account and withdraw the service charges and that the administration had to come to their senses otherwise a pre-signed "vote of no confidence" motion would be used going forward.

Councillor Aker questioned what other ideas had been put forward before this proposal and urged the Leader to say that the service charges would be scrapped from tonight.

Councillor Gledhill stated that any increase in new charges or rent increases was unpopular. Councillor Gledhill stated he would not be bullied into making any decisions and reconfirmed that residents would only be charged for the services they used and that further decisions would go back to Cabinet following scrutiny. Councillor Gledhill stated that a decision would be made when ready.

Councillor G Rice stated that the service charges were scandalous and that the administration should be ashamed of themselves.

Councillor Gerrish questioned whether the service charge was suspended this evening as the Leader thought he might have had an easier ride. That the Leader should not have blamed Officers or Scrutiny Committees but to take the blame and responsibility for himself. Councillor Gerrish stated that some residents would not be able to pay the service charge therefore they should go completely.

Councillor Potheary stated that she was a strong opposition to the service charges and that she would be proud to support the Motion. Councillor Potheary thanked the previous chairs of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee for all the hard work previously undertaken. That Councillor Potheary was proud of the campaign and that petitions, consultations and scrutiny committees should be listened to. Councillor Potheary concluded that the service charge was not right, not fair and should be scrapped.

Councillor Jones stated that the service charges were wrong and hitting the wrong people. Councillor Jones then gave Members a brief overview of the expenditure of an elderly resident living in sheltered housing.

At 0.28am, Councillor Gledhill, called a Point of Order on personal explanation or clarification. Councillor Gledhill stated he wanted to make clear that the charges were only on the services that were used which would in turn free up money that could be put back into other services.

Councillor B Rice thanked Members for their support and was disappointed in the Leader's approach and was not becoming behaviour of a Leader of a Council. That Councillor Gledhill should now do the right thing and scrap the service charges. Councillor B Rice spoke on behalf of the residents that Councillor Gledhill should now take full responsibility

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Following a unanimous vote in favour, the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

The meeting finished at 0.31am on Thursday 28 September.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**