

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 17 July 2024 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 29 July 2024 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors John Kent (Chair), Lynn Worrall (Vice-Chair), Victoria Holloway, Mark Hooper, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney and Lee Watson

Apologies: Councillor Vikki Hartstean

In attendance:

Dawn Calvert, Chief Financial Officer S151
Paul Crick, Chief Operations Lead- Place
Claire Demmel, Executive Director Place
Daniel Fenwick, Executive Director Corporate Services/Monitoring Officer
Cristina Hall, Chief of Staff to the Commissioners – Thurrock Council
Adam Lewczynski, Asset Disposal Surveyor
Patrick McDermott, Assistant Director Strategy, Policy, Performance and Partnerships
Alex Powell, Assistant Chief Executive
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing and Development
Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Rhiannon Whiteley, 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.

14. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 5 June 2024 were approved as a correct record.

15. Items of Urgent Business

Councillor J Kent nominated himself to the Outside Body Opportunity South Essex. This was agreed by all Cabinet members.

Councillor Victoria Holloway stood down as the Cabinet nomination to the High House Production Park Board of Trustees. Councillor J Kent nominated

himself to take Councillor Holloway's place and this was agreed by all Cabinet members.

16. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

17. Statements by the Leader

No statements were made by the Leader.

18. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on Policy, Budget or Other issues.

19. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No Petitions were submitted by Members of the Public.

20. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There were no questions from non-executive members.

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

No matters were referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

22. Delegated Decisions taken since the last meeting

Councillor J Kent noted that a table of delegated decisions taken since the last meeting had been provided in the agenda and published online. There were no questions from members regarding the delegated decisions.

23. Highways & Transportation Professional Services Contract (Decision: 110730)

Councillor J Kent stated that he had agreed to items 17, 18 and 19 first.

Councillor V Holloway introduced the report and explained that the report is asking Cabinet to approve a Highways and Professional Services contract. The contract will be managed by KPI's to ensure efficient delivery and value for money. The proposal is a contract for 3 years with an option to extend for a further two years subject to performance and KPI's being met.

No comments or questions were received from Cabinet members.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet approve the commencement of the procurement of a Professional Services Contract for the delivery of Highways and Transportation schemes, for a three year period with an option to extend for a further two, commencing 1 October 2024.**
- 1.2 That delegated authority be given to the Interim Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place and the Environment to decide the appropriate procurement route for the delivery of the Transport & Highways design for the next three years, with an option to extend for a further two, subject to performance, commencing October 2024.**
- 1.3 That delegated authority be given to the Interim Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place and the Environment and Chief Finance Officer / S151 Officer, to award the contract REFERRED TO ABOVE.**

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

24. Electric Vehicle Charging Procurement

Councillor V Holloway introduced the report and stated that the report concerns the procurement of the Electric Vehicle charging contract as the current contract expires in March 2025. The contract facilitates the management and provision of Electric Vehicle charging facilities for on street residential charging across Thurrock and allows for transformation of existing EV charging assets the creation of new ones.

The procurement of contract uses funding received from Department for Transport which is expected to be £515,000. Additional funding will come from further grants, funding or S106 money. The contract will be for 15 years.

A range of KPI's and data requirements will be developed using best practice to accurately measure the performance of the contractor and the overall success of the programme.

There were no comments or questions from members.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet approve the commencement of the procurement of a Contract for EV charging for a 15 year period, commencing April 2025, which will be compliant with national legislation and the Councils Contract Procedure Rules.**
- 1.2 That delegated authority be given to the Interim Chief Operations Lead, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for**

Place and the Environment to decide the appropriate procurement route EV charging using LEVI funding for a 15 year period, subject to performance, commencing April 2025.

1.3 That delegated authority be given to the Interim Executive Director - Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place and the Environment, to award the contract referred to above.

25. Amendment to the Parking Enforcement Strategy and introduction of the CCTV/ANPR Enforcement: Code of Practice (Decision: 110731)

Councillor V Holloway introduced the report and explained that Cabinet is being asked to approve the amended Parking Strategy. Councillor V Holloway highlighted that she does not know anyone living in the borough who has not been disrupted by traffic at junction 31 of the M25 motorway. The new strategy allows for an enforcement power in the yellow boxes at junction 31 to keep the road clear from chaotic congestion so hopefully when the M25 grinds to a halt, the rest of Thurrock will not. Councillor V Holloway confirmed it is existing law but will be enforced from 31 July 2024.

Councillor V Morris-Cook welcomed the report and queried if lorries which are not from the UK will be fined.

Councillor V Holloway confirmed the same processes would be used as for UK vehicles.

Councillor Worrall queried how residents will be advised this is now being enforced.

Councillor V Holloway confirmed that an enormous amount of communications will be going out. For six months, warnings will be issued however, repeat offenders during that period will be fined.

Councillor J Kent stated that the issue of unpaid fines dogs this Council with a conversion rate of fines issued at around 50%. He stressed that a piece of work needed to be completed on this. Councillor J Kent noted that this was an initiative from the previous administration which the new administration supports.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Cabinet approved the amendments to the Parking Enforcement Strategy and the adoption of the new CCTV/ANPR Enforcement: Code of Practice.

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

26. Support, Information and Advice for Dementia (SIAD) (Decision: 110726)

Councillor M Hooper introduced the report and outlined that Thurrock Council is planning to procure a provider to deliver a service that will provide information, advice and support for people upon a diagnosis of dementia. This will be delivered via a universally available specialist telephone support service, combined with local face to face support and guided online information. The aim of this will be to enable individuals with a dementia diagnosis to better understand their condition and navigate the Health and Social Care systems. The service will enable Thurrock Council to discharge its duties under the Care Act 2014.

Councillor Muldowney noted the risk section at paragraph 7.4 of the report and the slight risk of the Better Care Fund being reduced. Councillor Muldowney queried the risk of not going forward this.

Councillor M Hooper stated that the risk of not going ahead would be devastating for those with dementia and their carers who use this service. The cost of not offering it could be transferred to other statutory services if we don't step in and ultimately if could save the Council money.

Councillor V Morris Cook welcomed the report and expressed concern regarding the increase in those being diagnosed with dementia. Councillor V Morris Cook raised that there is a risk the Council will not be able to support in the current way in the future and may need to do something different.

Councillor M Hooper stated that carers save the country a great deal of money and this procurement is how to provide for this. Councillor M Hooper acknowledged that there is a growing elderly population as science and medication are helping people live longer and this will have to be monitored and kept under review.

Councillor J Kent permitted Councillor Speight to make comment or ask a question. Councillor Speight stated that the more local we can keep the system the better. The contract is currently with the Alzheimer's Society and there is local control and accessibility. Councillor Speight also requested that if a saving is achieved this money is set aside as a rainy day fund so other organisations that help our elderly like Re-engage should they need it to bring back local control and humanity.

Councillor J Kent responded that they were unable to predetermine the procurement process but he noted what had been said about quality and locality and this should be built into the procurement process. Councillor J Kent also acknowledged this a problem that is only going to get worse.

Councillor Muldowney queried if option 3 was just for Thurrock, or across SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock).

The Head of Transformation and Commissioning for ASC confirmed it was just for Thurrock.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the recommendation to tender for a Support, Information and Advice for Dementia (SIAD) service to meet the council's statutory requirements in law. The proposed start date contract would be April 1st 2025 running until March 31st 2028 (with a possible years extension) totalling £582,760.**
- 1.2 Cabinet agreed to delegate the award of the contract to the Executive Director for Adults and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing.**

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

27. Unpaid Carers - Procurement for Carers' Support, Information and Advice Service (Decision: 110727)

Councillor M Hooper introduced the report and explained that nationally, one in five people are currently identified as an unpaid carer, with more than three in five people having provided care to a loved one at some point. Thurrock has seen a 100% increase in demand locally on its current information, advice and support service in comparison to pre-pandemic numbers and this does not seem to be slowing. With an increase in unpaid carers coming forward, it is becoming even more important to provide high quality information, advice and support services to unpaid carers that is person centred and meets their individual needs. It is a statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 to provide an information and advice service for all unpaid carers to support them whilst preventing, reducing, or delaying the development of long term needs and to help them look after their own wellbeing. The contract is for six years plus two years in order to find a really good provider. The contract will be monitored closely to ensure quality is provided.

Councillor Muldowney queried if Southend-On-Sea City Council will be joining the contract.

The Head of Transformation and Commissioning for ASC confirmed that Thurrock is tendering for its own service.

Councillor Worrall noted that she has already seen the consultation on social media and queried how many people had taken part. Councillor Worrall also queried what is being done to get information out to unpaid carers.

Councillor M Hooper confirmed that the front line should be providing the information and he has been speaking with directors about how they can improve communications to get information out to carers.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 **Cabinet agreed to proceed with a tender for the support, information, and advice service for unpaid carers, with contract commencing on 1st April 2025 for the duration of 6 years, with the option to extend for a further 2 years. The value of this contract, including the extended period, is £1.39M.**
- 1.2 **Cabinet agreed that the award of the contract be delegated to the Executive Director for Adults and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing.**

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

28. Housing Retrofit Decarbonisation Project (Decision: 110728)

Councillor M Hooper introduced the report and stated that in October 2023, Thurrock Council were notified of an additional opportunity of funding under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) scheme for wave 2.2. This wave of funding was only open for bids by a selected number of social housing providers and Thurrock Council were selected as part of this cohort. The competition window opened in November 2023 with a deadline of the 31st of January 2024. Thurrock Council submitted a bid to deliver a retrofit project for 206 of the worst performing homes within the Council's housing stock and on the 18 March 2024, the Council were notified that the bid had been successful in securing £3,318,730.17 excluding VAT of grant funding (£3,982,476.19. including VAT).

In order to comply with the funding requirements, the grant apportionment of the total cost of the project must be delivered and spent by the end of March 2025 and the overall project must be completed by the end of March 2026.

This report is seeking approval from Cabinet to proceed to tender in order to source a contracting partner to deliver this project for and on behalf of the Council and its residents. Furthermore, the report is seeking approval from Cabinet to give delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and the Section 151 Officer for award of contract following a successful procurement exercise.

Councillor V Morris Cook noted that the grant doesn't cover all the properties in the borough it could apply to and therefore queried what the strategy is for the remaining properties.

Councillor M Hooper confirmed that there will be a review at the end of September regarding the remaining 190 properties and a report coming to Cabinet the end of this year.

Councillor V Morris Cook raised that the properties in Orsett require a lot of work and decanting and queried what the impact would be on those decanting from Blackshots.

Councillor M Hooper confirmed that it would have a limited impact on those decanting from the flats as they are looking at doing this in groups of seven and the total project should take a year.

Councillor Worrall queried how the homes were selected and if they are assured that they are the worst properties.

Councillor M Hooper stated that the Orsett properties do not meet legal requirements and therefore they have no choice but to complete the works on those. It is also about volume and the Flowers Estate is better value for money as all the properties are in the same place. The project is time limited and therefore the money is best spent on the Flowers Estate as it will be easier to manage.

Councillor Worrall queried why the tower blocks were not selected.

The Chief Officer for Housing, Economic Development & Skills, Regeneration confirmed that the tower blocks did not meet the criteria.

Councillor Worrall queried that there had not been a consultation with residents and they will not know that they will need to be decanted.

Councillor M Hooper confirmed that there will be a long consultation process with the residents of the 21 Orsett homes. It is in their interests to get their properties decarbonised as it will mean cheaper bills and better heating. Councillor M Hooper stated that they are hoping residents will not refuse to move out and will see the benefits of having this work completed on their property.

Councillor L Watson queried if the 21 Orsett homes are the only non-traditional homes in the borough and if not she queried where the others will sit in the programme.

The Chief Officer for Housing, Economic Development & Skills, Regeneration stated that a report on the remaining 190 properties will be ready by the end of the year and it is in the Council's forward plan for its finances in 2026-27. The Teviot properties are also still being completed.

Councillor J Kent queried what structural defect means.

The Chief Officer for Housing, Economic Development & Skills, Regeneration responded that the criteria for the bid focussed on the type of build and trying to improve it. Non-traditional homes are poorly insulated and ventilated.

Councillor Kent stated that heat escapes leaving them cold and poor ventilation leads to mould. The work will be addressing issues residents have endured for too long.

Councillor L Watson queried if there would be any rental loss and if the grant covers this.

Councillor M Hooper responded that there would be some rental loss but this would be minimal in comparison to the size of the project and has been taken into account.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Cabinet Members:

1.2 Acknowledged the £3,982,476.19 (Including VAT) grant funding the Council have secured and accepted to upgrade 206 Council owned residential units.

1.3 Approved the procurement approach to allow the Council to undertake a competitive tender exercise via a framework. Following a successful procurement process a report will be issued to the Executive Director of Place and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing that will recommend awarding of contract to a Principal Contractor to deliver the works.

1.4 Members agreed delegated authority to the Executive Director of Place and the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health and Wellbeing to award the contract to deliver this project as set out within this report.

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

29. End of Year / Quarter 4 (April 2023 to March 2024) Interim Corporate Performance Report

Councillor Worrall introduced the report and confirmed it covers Corporate Performance in 2023-24. It will be the last in the current format. Councillor Worrall thanked the staff that work across every level at the Council and whose performance and services are being judged in the report. Councillor Worrall stated that as we move forward and begin to embed the new operating model we will see an upward trend in the performance markers. In the report it states that 66.7 % of the indicators achieved their targets which is a good foundation but this leaves a third of the indicators not in a place that we would want them to be. The new corporate plan which will be discussed in the next item will lay the groundwork for delivering improvements on this cabinets key measurables.

Councillor Muldowney queried how robust the KPI's were as missed bins received a 99.9 % collection rate. Councillor Muldowney commented that she looked forward to the new KPI's being more robust.

Councillor V Morris Cook stated that in her view it had been a tick box exercise and she welcomed the new operating model and KPI's.

Councillor J Kent queried the process for developing new KPI's and to change the confidence residents have in the council.

Councillor Worrall responded that over the summer cabinet members will be discussing with their Director the KPI's and designing a framework.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 **To note and comment upon the performance of the key corporate performance, demand management and organisational health indicators in 2023/24**

30. Corporate Plan 2024-29

Councillor J Kent introduced the report and explained that the Corporate Plan articulates the change that we need, it builds on our recovery plan and it will become the basis for all work to come. We will bring together residents, businesses, the wider community and partners of Thurrock to all work together on the huge challenges the authority and place still faces. Officers and members in their work will focus on the three priorities; An Enabling Council that focuses on People, and Place. It demonstrates our commitment to be different and better for our residents, partners, commissioners and in the eyes of the new government.

Councillor Worrall explained that the new corporate plan is a crucial step for the council in the coming months. Councillor Worrall stated she was honoured to be taking the lead on this and will ensure its successful implementation. The plan is a living document and will become the golden thread that runs through the council, sets our agenda for working collaboratively with partners and, re-engages us with our communities as we negotiate our way out of intervention. The plan is a five year plan but it will be refreshed and reviewed every year and taken to Full Council to be approved by all 49 members. The goal is to create a different and better council that enables and delivers the right outcomes for our residents. Councillor Worrall thanked Councillor J Kent for trusting her with such a significant and important piece of work.

Councillor V Morris Cook welcomed the plan and stated that residents are at the heart of everything we do and the plan states that throughout. Councillor V Morris Cook commented that she looked forward to delivering her part in it.

Councillor Speight stated that he was particularly interested in pages 17 to 22 which related to his Overview and Scrutiny responsibilities. Councillor Speight highlighted that the document makes some strong promises and from time to time we will need to be stronger and possibly abrasive with suppliers and associates. Thurrock has had short end of some big sticks in the last few years. Councillor Speight applauded the document and stated that he looked forward to working with his group to help deliver it.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Cabinet agreed the Corporate Plan and recommended its adoption to Full Council on July 2024

31. Preferred Supplier of Network Hardware Procurement (Decision: 110729)

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and confirmed that network hardware relates to the physical components of computers as opposed to software. Staff rely on this to complete their daily work. The report seeks to commence a competitive tender process for the award of a contract to supply network hardware and related support packages for a contract period of three years (with an option to extend for one year subject to satisfactory performance).

There were no questions or comments from members.

RESOLVED:

3.1 Cabinet agreed to commence the competitive tender of a preferred provider for network hardware equipment purchases as described in this report using the CCS Frameworks Technology Products & Associated Services 2 (RM6098) for a period of three years from 1 November 2024 with an option to extend for a further one year conditional on satisfactory performance for an estimated total contract up to a value of up to £909,731 (including the optional year extension)

3.2 If 3.1 is agreed, to delegate the award of the contract to the Executive Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

32. Provisional Financial Outturn 2023/24 (Decision: 110732)

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and stated that it updates Cabinet on the Council's financial performance last year. Councillor Muldowney commented that the Council was under a different administration last year.

Councillor V Morris Cook stated that she was concerned about the slippage in capital programmes.

Councillor J Kent permitted Councillor Speight to speak as a non-executive member. Councillor Speight expressed concern at the number of slippages in the final quarter and in particular Children's Services. Councillor Speight sought assurance this would be addressed as the children are our future and there was a lot of pressure on Children's health services and they are looking to make substantial investments in this and do not want to be running into problems where there isn't enough money or they go over budget.

Councillor Muldowney responded that in September there will be a report covering the projected spend in that department.

Councillor J Kent stated that the Council is two years into intervention following the largest financial crash of any Local Authority in the history of this country. The Government support of over £200 million to bridge our budget is truly shocking. This is not money that is being given to us, it is borrowed and has to be paid back. On the first day of this financial year we were already £17 million down.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1. That Cabinet notes the revenue outturn positions for:**
 - **General Fund - exceptional government support of £206.7m is required to balance 2023/24 revenue budget,**
 - **Dedicated Schools Budget – underspend of £1.2m (transferred to ring-fenced reserve)**
 - **Public Health – underspend of £0.3m (transferred to ring-fenced reserve),**
 - **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – underspend of 1.6m (transferred to ring-fenced reserve),**
 - **Capital programme -General Fund slippage of £8.4m, HRA slippage of £3.2m,**
- 1.2. That Cabinet note the reserves position (as set out in section 6 and Appendix 2) and approve net movement to reserves of £19.1m which includes the additional contribution to the Transformation reserve of £2.5m (as per para 3.6)**
- 1.3. That Cabinet comment on the capital budget additions set out in section 8**
- 1.4. That Cabinet note an action plan will be drawn up by officers to address the capital programme slippage set out in section 8 and that this will be reported into the Finance Recovery Board**

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

33. National Investigation Service - NATIS

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and stated that NATIS is a traded service providing an end-to-end investigation service for financial crime. It is unique in its offering with 100 staff across the UK committed to protecting public funds. NATIS is currently working under a contract for the Department for Business and Trade investigating bounce back loans and business support loans. The contract is due to end in March 2025. NATIS has recently been reviewed by Mazars and most of their recommendations have been addressed. NATIS now sits firmly in the governance structure of the Council. A business plan for NATIS will be coming to Cabinet later this year.

Councillor J Kent commented that following the Mazars review it was comforting to see just about all of the recommendations have been successfully actioned.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet noted the progress made against the recommendations of Mazars in March 2024.**
- 1.2 Cabinet noted that a business case regarding the future of NATIS will be presented at the September 2024 Cabinet meeting.**

34. Asset Disposals Programme - Recommended next Tranche of Properties for Disposal (Decision: 110733)

Councillor J Kent reminded members and officers that the report had an exempt appendix and therefore if they could refrain from discussing this in open session.

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and reminded members that they had agreed to the Asset Disposal Strategy to dispose of 118 million pounds of assets. This report seeks approval to put the next tranche of properties on the market. A full list has been published for the public in contrast to the previous administration.

Councillor Worrall queried if everything had been sold that was already up for sale.

Councillor Muldowney confirmed that the target for last year was met. The Asset Disposal Surveyor also confirmed that the target had been met last year and various properties do remain under offer and are being marketed.

Councillor J Kent permitted Councillor Speight to speak as a non-executive member.

Councillor Speight confirmed he was appointed to the outside body of East Thurrock Community Association, and he had to highlight the good work that they do. Their community engagement was fantastic. Councillor Speight confirmed that he had visited it with the previous Director of Place who commented that it was the best run community facility in the borough. Councillor Speight confirmed that he is also a member. Councillor Speight stated there was an expectation that they would be gifted the building under plans from the previous administration and it is clear now that is not going to happen. Councillor Speight stressed they would like the Council to look at what it brings to the community and for officers to consider when a final decision is being made that the East Thurrock Community Association is not just bricks and mortar but a living entity that serves the people of Stanford-Le-Hope and Corringham very well.

Councillor J Kent commented that it was clear a balance needed to be struck between the financial need of the authority and the need to the best for our community.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet recommended that the attached schedule of property assets is now put on the market and sold.**
- 1.2 This recommendation for disposal is *following recommendation by Strategic Property Board and Finance Recovery Board (FRB)*. Cabinet will delegate authority to agree the method and terms of disposals to the Chief Financial Officer S151 in consultation with the Leader.**

*Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

The meeting finished at 8.31 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**

