

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 June 2024 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 17 June 2024 at 5.00pm

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

Apologies:

In attendance:

Claire Demmel, Executive Director Place
Daniel Fenwick, Executive Director Corporate Services/Monitoring Officer
Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner
Sheila Murphy, Executive Director Children's Services
Helen Nicol, Assistant Director Legal and Governance
Alex Powell, Assistant Chief Executive
Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Kerry Thomas, Chief of Staff
Ian Wake, Executive Director Adults and Health
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.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Cabinet meetings of 13 March 2024 and 18 March 2024 were noted by Cabinet as a record of those meetings, Councillor J Kent highlighted that none of the current Cabinet members were present at that meeting or made up the Cabinet in March.

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

4. Statements by the Leader

Councillor J Kent confirmed he would only be using this item to make Statements by exception going forward.

5. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on policy, budget and other issues.

6. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions were submitted by members of the public.

7. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There were no questions from non-executive members.

8. 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.

9. Delegated Decisions taken since the last meeting

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

10. Update on Corporate Plan 2024-29

Councillor J Kent stated that this was the first formal meeting of Cabinet since the people of Thurrock voted for change. Councillor J Kent confirmed it was an honour for all of them to be asked to serve and an opportunity to do things differently and put the people of Thurrock at the heart of everything they do. Councillor J Kent stated that they all wanted to make positive change for the borough. This will not be an easy task in the years ahead, the council is failing and commissioners are overseeing the Council's work as it faces the significant challenge of addressing the failings of the past. The Council is functionally bankrupt with a significant toxic debt to deal with and a general fund spend which is out of control. Savings to stabilise the Council of 60 million pounds in the medium term are required and 20 million pounds in this year alone.

Councillor J Kent stated that there is a need to rebuild trust with communities and let partners know we have changed too. There is a need for a Corporate Plan that articulates this and becomes the basis of all the work to come. It sets a new purpose to bring together residents, businesses, the third sector,

the wider community of Thurrock and partners to understand the scale of our ambition and to understand that we have a better chance of meeting these challenges if we work together to address them.

The Corporate Plan speaks to 3 priorities; An Enabling Council, focussing on People and Place. It sets clear values that members and officers will uphold and the foundation needed to be open, honest and transparent. Councillor J Kent explained that a more detailed version of the plan will be provided later in the summer and highlighted that it is the start of a better and different Thurrock.

Councillor J Kent invited the other Cabinet Members to talk about the work within their portfolios to deliver this plan.

Councillor Worrall stated that she is honoured to have the Portfolio for Change and Improvement and the opportunity to drive forward the improvement agenda across the Council. Councillor Worrall stated that the role is not just a position but a commitment to meet and exceed the expectations of our residents. The Corporate Plan lays the foundation for change. As the plan is developed over the coming months it will provide a clear and strategic basis for transformation. However, having a plan will be just the beginning and we must focus on delivering effectively and efficiently. The new operating model is at the heart of this transformation and we must embrace new approaches, adopt cutting edge technologies and implement efficiencies that will make our organisation fit for the purpose of the modern era. These changes are not optional, they are essential for our success. Councillor Worrall highlighted that she is committed to working with all 49 members and officers to embed the values outlined in the Corporate Plan into daily operations.

Councillor Worrall commented that she is excited to share the fuller version of the plan later this summer and this will be an opportunity to delve into the detail, set clear milestones and ensure that progress is visible to residents. Tangible and measurable changes and improvements are needed that the community can see and feel. It is important that the changes are made at a pace that works for residents and which meets the expectations of the Government and Commissioners. Councillor Worrall stated that together we can make a real difference, the people of Thurrock have given us their trust and we must honour that trust by delivering the change that they have already called for.

Councillor Muldowney explained that a lack of a Corporate Plan previously was one of the factors that allowed the Council to drift along in a state of what the Best Value Inspection called 'unconscious incompetence'. Councillor Muldowney welcomed the development of the plan and stated that it is just a snippet tonight and there is more to come. The plan has come out of the engagement with staff and members from across the council as well as taking into account the recommendations of the Commissioners and Secretary of State. Councillor Muldowney stated that the new administration are

determined to be open and honest, fair and respectful, learning the lessons of past failures whilst looking towards the future success of the borough.

Councillor Muldowney stated that as Cabinet member for Resources she will be looking at getting the Council to a place of financial stability and sustainability. The Council is still in the foothills of financial recovery and she does not underestimate the work that needs to be done and the difficult decisions that will need to be made on this journey. There is also a huge opportunity to change the way we work and learn from the best practice of other organisations and also to work with our communities.

Councillor Watson stated that she has been given the privilege of the Portfolio for the Good Growth agenda which is a role she is going to relish and needs to take forward to ensure we enable and help residents going forward. Councillor Watson stated that she wants to collaborate with residents, the community, all relevant stakeholders and businesses to help shape the borough to what we want it to be. This approach will ensure that good growth is a shared journey with input from all sectors from all parts of the borough. Councillor Watson stated that she wants to develop a plan for prosperity for Thurrock which encourages collaborations between the private, public and voluntary sectors, this plan will engage the communities, faith groups and social enterprises sectors to foster a common understanding and a vision of what the good growth agenda really means for us and for everyone. It will also help improve investment, infrastructure, housing, transport and education capabilities. Councillor Watson commented that she wanted to create jobs and transform places.

Councillor Watson highlighted that she wanted to ensure good growth provides opportunities for Thurrock residents, communities and businesses and to foster an environment where good growth benefits all stakeholders and residents and creates a thriving and resilient borough. Councillor Watson also stated that she wanted to increase opportunities to find good growth and for people to start a business here and to ensure the economic landscape supports businesses and small SME's. Thurrock is strategic where it is situated and there is a need to take advantage of that.

Councillor Hartstean stated that she was delighted to present the Corporate Plan which will guide their efforts in the coming years. Councillor Hartstean explained that by delivering this plan, the following will be achieved within Children's Services and Education:

- We will work closely with all officers who support adults, ensuring that our services are integrated to support families in living good lives. This holistic approach will provide comprehensive care and support to those in need and the most vulnerable in the community.
- We will improve access to high-quality placements for the children and young people who require them. Our commitment is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive in a safe and nurturing environment across all of Children's services.

- We will continue to develop new approaches to prevention and early intervention. By focusing on these areas, we will support children so they can live safely within their communities. Our aim is to reduce the number of children and families requiring formal intervention, enabling them to flourish independently.
- Finally, we will collaborate with schools, academies, training providers, and businesses to increase work programmes and employment opportunities for young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable. By expanding these opportunities, we will help our young people gain the skills and experience to thrive and make a purposeful and valid contribution to their communities.

Councillor Hartstean summarised that together, through these initiatives, they will create a brighter future for our children, families, and communities.

Councillor Hooper commented that he was grateful for the opportunity to be Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing. Councillor Hooper stated that the Corporate Plan is a roadmap to shape a brighter future for our communities. By delivering the Corporate Plan we will:

- work differently and integrate services to support communities, working closely with families and residents to live good and healthy lives. We will ensure everyone has access to the resources they need.
- focus on prevention to reduce the potential for long term damaging impacts for children, adults and/or families.
- reduce inequality by co-designing inclusive, people-focused outcomes and widen opportunity for all. Engage with the community to create a society everyone can thrive in.
- support people to improve their skills, find good employment, progress their careers, or be entrepreneurial. The Community will be empowered to achieve their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our economy.

Councillor Hooper concluded that together he believes this plan will help our community thrive.

Councillor Morris-Cook stated that it was extremely exciting to be involved with the role of developing our communities and partners and devolving decision making. Councillor Morris-Cook explained that it starts to rebuild trust with residents which has been sadly lacking in the last 7 -10 years and it ensures stakeholders of all communities are at the heart of plans for the future. Councillor Morris-Cook highlighted that at the end of every decision made will be a resident. The plan maximises our strength and assets and our greatest asset is our people – volunteers, our employees who work with us and our residents. It builds community capacity to allow communities and volunteer groups to grow and thrive in an exciting time. Councillor Morris-

Cook summarised that they would work together with a can-do attitude, getting things right first time.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 Cabinet confirmed they had reviewed and support the key principles of the Corporate Plan as articulated in Appendix 1.**
- 1.2 Cabinet noted the full Corporate Plan 2024-29 will be presented to Cabinet in July ready for recommendation to Full Council in July.**

11. Appointment of Outside Bodies, Statutory and other Panels

Councillor J Kent announced the following nominations: -

Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee – Cllr S Liddiard

Association for Public Services Excellence – Cllr S Muldowney

Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust Council of Governors –
Cllr M Fletcher

Essex County Traveller Unit – Cllr L Watson

Thurrock Arts Council – Cllr L Watson

Thames Estuary 2100 Strategic Programme Board – Cllr L Watson

Thames Freeport Sub-Committee – Cllr L Watson, Cllr L Worrall, Cllr J Kent

Thurrock Community Safety Partnership – Cllr S Panjala

ASELA – Cllr J Kent

High House Production Park – Cllr V Holloway

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 The nominations to Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels read out at the meeting and noted above were agreed by Cabinet.**

12. Oracle Fusion 3 year Contract Award (Decision: 110724)

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and explained that it was regarding the contract for the software Oracle Enterprise Resource Management system. Oracle is essential software that helps with corporate

tasks such as Human Resources, Payroll, Finance and for employees to complete self-service tasks such as booking leave, claiming expenses and managing budgets.

A 3 year extension with the current supplier is being proposed to allow for sufficient time to transfer to a different supplier if Oracle does not win the tender. A 5 year contract will then be awarded to the most suitable bidder.

Councillor J Kent commented that it is clearly essential software that will contribute to the improved running of the council.

No other questions or comments were received from members.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet agreed:

- 1.1 **To the commencement of a pre-tender exercise for an enterprise resource management (ERM) system in August 2025 to inform and to be followed by the commencement of a procurement process for a ERM system for a five year contract from 1 April 2026 with an option to be extended for up to a further five years, subject to, in the Council's view, the delivery of best value by the provider.**
- 1.2 **The direct award of a new contract extension for the provision of the current ERM system with Oracle Systems from 30 August 2024 to 31 August 2027 for a total fixed contract price of £1.85M by award under the Crown Commercial's Back Office Software Framework RM6194**

Reason for the decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

13. Re-Procurement of Education Case Management Application (Decision: 110725)

Councillor Muldowney introduced the report and explained that it is another software procurement.

It is used for case management covering school admissions, early years funding and free school meals which are all statutory services. It also records key information on children who are missing education, children who are home educated or attending an alternative provision. The report proposes that the Crown Commercial Framework will be used. Currently there are two separate systems being used and this will allow for the data to be put on a single platform to simplify data reporting and improve data accuracy. It will also give the Council a stable system up to 10 years and provide greater transparency and a better service for children of the borough.

Councillor Worrall commented that she really liked the risk section in the report and would like to see it included in other reports across the Council.

Councillor Worrall queried how confident they were that the exit clauses were sufficient to allow for a seamless transition. The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer stated that there would be a lengthy transition between the systems to ensure the data is transferred.

Councillor Worrall queried when any budget savings would be realised. Councillor Muldowney responded that it is not about realising budget savings, it is about having an integrated system as opposed to two separate systems in order to comply with the Council's statutory duties to the Department of Education and to provide a better service. There may be some efficiencies realised further down the line as a result but it would be difficult to predict at this stage.

Councillor Hartstean commented that she supported an integrated system to bring together Children's services and Education.

Councillor Morris-Cook confirmed that she also welcomed the risk management section in the report. She also queried when the data stops and how long the data has to be kept for. Councillor Muldowney credited the Chief Financial Officer for introducing the risk management section in the report.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer stated under the Data Protection Act the principle is that you only hold data for as long as is necessary. The Council has a record management system in place to ensure that data is destroyed at the correct time.

Councillor V Holloway queried recommendation 1.2 and delegating the decision to the Director in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder and queried what would happen if the Portfolio Holder was not happy.

The Executive Director of Corporate Services and Monitoring Officer stated that it is at the discretion of cabinet what decisions are delegated down to officers and if the Portfolio Holder was not happy with the outcome and if they had concerns Cabinet can take back the decision-making power. Councillor V Holloway confirmed she was happy with the response and with the recommendation remaining as it is.

RESOLVED:

Cabinet agreed:

- 1.1 To commence the procurement of an education case management software system as described in this report using the CCS (Crown Commercial Services) Vertical Applications Solutions framework RM6259 for a period of five plus five years from 1 September 2024 with an option to extend for a further five years conditional on satisfactory performance for an estimated total contract value of £2.13M.**

- 1.2 If 1.1 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

The meeting finished at 7.39 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**