

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 October 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Sue Gray (Mayor), Cathy Kent (Deputy Mayor), Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Russell Cherry, Mark Coxshall, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Garry Hague, James Halden, Terence Hipsey, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Robert Ray, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Deborah Stewart, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Tim Aker, Clare Baldwin, Colin Churchman, Robert Gledhill, Shane Hebb, Charlie Key and Andrew Roast

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Carmel Littleton, Director of Children's Services
Roger Harris, Director of Adults, Health and Commissioning
Sean Clark, Head of Corporate Finance
Jackie Hinchliffe, Head of HR, OD & Transformation
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy & Communications
Daniel Toohey, Principal Solicitor - Contracts & Procurement
David Lawson, Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Stephanie Cox, 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.

82. Minutes

Councillor Jones requested an amendment to the minutes of the previous meeting as he felt that his comments had not been sufficiently recorded in the following two items:

Minute Number 70, 'Debate of a Petition containing over 1500 verified signatures – Save Corringham Green Belt'

Councillor Jones observed that his main concern was that Iceni, the company involved in the project, had submitted three applications for the greenbelt farm land site despite two separate petitions against the proposals, one which was

submitted over a year ago with 1300 signatories and the most recent with 2500 signatories. He felt that the applicant was persisting in an attempt to get their own way and that the derelict brownfield Bata Shoe Factory site in East Tilbury was a preferred location for such a development instead of the favoured farmland nearby.

Minute Number 77, 'Motion submitted by Councillor Halden' in relation to legal highs

Councillor Jones reported that his comments had not been recorded as he had concerns about the workings of the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order and the potential cost to Thurrock Council.

The Mayor accepted the requested amendments to which Members indicated their agreement.

The Minutes of the meeting of Council, held on 23 September 2015, were approved as a correct record.

83. Items of Urgent Business

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

84. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

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

Firstly the Mayor invited all those present to observe a minutes silence to remember Thurrock's fallen of World War One and in respect of Remembrance Sunday.

At 7.04 pm a minutes silence was observed.

The Mayor remarked that since the last meeting of Council she had the pleasure of attending the opening of the High House Production Park's Bob and Tamar Manoukin costume store, and was proud that Thurrock had this wonderful asset to store over 200,000 costumes for the Royal Ballet Productions showing at the Covent Garden Theatre. She added that the costumes could be recreated by apprentices in the workshops at the Park and young and old people were learning how to make the costumes and outfits.

The Mayor explained that she had attended a Sheltered Housing 70s night held in the Civic Hall which was attended by over 150 residents, and commended the work of Sue Kane, the Sheltered Housing Manager, for her hard work in organising the event

The Mayor reported that she had recently opened a new Foodbank store in Corringham and that the need for food banks in 2015 was increasing. She called upon all Members to donate one item from their weekly shop to help, especially in the run up to Christmas.

The Mayor further asked Members if they could help Thurrock's Looked After Children to enjoy a night out at the Christmas pantomime by purchasing a ticket for one child, and encouraged Members to also attend.

Finally, the Chamber were advised that the 12th Thurrock Civic Awards would soon be launched and asked Members to look out online for details and the nomination form, and put Friday 26 February 2016 at High House Production Park in Purfleet in the diary for the awards night itself.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that he had no announcements he wished to make.

86. 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.

87. 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 one Councillor who wished to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Redsell presented a petition on behalf of residents of Long Lane, Kerry Road, Jesmond Road and Laird Avenue, which called on the Council to introduce a one-way system for the number 88 bus route.

88. Petition Update Report

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

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

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished for any changes to be made to the appointments previously made to Committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following change in accordance with the new Political Balance calculations:

- for Councillor Liddiard to be removed from the Standards and Audit Committee.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following change:

- for Councillor Roast to be appointed as a substitute member of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor S. Little.

The Leader of the UKIP group confirmed that he wished to make the following changes in accordance with the new Political Balance calculations:

- for Councillor James Baker to be removed from the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- for Councillor C. Baker to be removed from the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- for Councillor Cherry to be appointed as a member of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to fill the UKIP vacancy.

Councillor Ray confirmed that he wished to appoint himself to the Independent vacancies on the following committees:

- for Councillor Ray to be appointed as a member of the Standards and Audit Committee.
- for Councillor Ray to be appointed as a member of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- for Councillor Ray to be appointed as a member of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group queried whether Councillor Ray was entitled to the seats on the aforementioned Committees, to which the Mayor confirmed that the appointments were in accordance with the new Political Balance calculations.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the changes to Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Liddiard be removed from the membership of the Standards and Audit Committee.**
- 2. That Councillor Roast be appointed as a substitute member of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to replace Councillor S. Little.**
- 3. That Councillor James Baker be removed from the membership of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

4. **That Councillor C. Baker be removed from the membership of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
5. **That Councillor Cherry be appointed as a member of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
6. **That Councillor Ray be appointed as a member of the Standards and Audit Committee.**
7. **That Councillor Ray be appointed as a member of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
8. **That Councillor Ray be appointed as a member of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

90. Thurrock Healthwatch Co-Opted Member Request

The Mayor advised that the report set out the request from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to amend their terms of reference to include an additional non-voting Co-Opted representative from Thurrock Healthwatch to represent children's health interests.

Councillor Halden, Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, explained that the Committee wished to formally Co-Opt a Healthwatch member so that they would have a tangible role in the scrutiny process, which would be beneficial when the Committee considered the Children's Social Care annual complaints and complements report.

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

RESOLVED:

That Council agree to amend the terms of reference for the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee in order to include an additional non-voting Co-opted representative from Thurrock Healthwatch.

91. Report of the Cabinet Member for the Environment

Councillor G. Rice, Cabinet Member for the Environment, introduced the report and in doing so provided an overview of the services provided, including the civic amenity site, 2 country parks, 3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, fleet management, street waste and the winter gritting service.

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member raised the following key points:

- That 70,000 tonnes of materials, almost 10 million bins had been collected during the past year, only 23% of which was sent to landfill.
- That the total 2015/16 weekly household cost was £4.53 per household, compared with £5.44 in 2014/15.
- This equated to £1.58 per household spent on waste collection, £1.75 on waste disposal, £0.73p on green spaces, £0.06p on Emergency Response and Highways Maintenance and £0.41p on Street Cleansing.
- That challenges to the service included the significant reduction of staff numbers, it was reported that since May 2014 8% managers, 55% of business services staff and 33% of street services front line staff had been lost.
- That the Environment Services directorate had contributed to £3.5 million in year savings and the controlled budget had been reduced by 40%.
- That the level of cleanliness in Thurrock was better than the average for local authorities in England despite the fact that funding for street cleaning had fallen year on year.
- That the levels of recycling contamination was an issue and communications had increased in an effort to better educate residents on what items could, and could not be recycled, as the cost for the disposal of recycled material was significantly cheaper per tonne rather than sending waste to landfill.
- That the new technically, environmentally and economically practicable recycling regulations (TEEP) had impacted upon recycling rates as if waste was not separated correctly the whole recycling load could be deemed as cross-contaminated.
- He commended the work of community groups and forums, such as the Friends of Hardie Park, in leading environmental projects in the local community to improve open and green spaces in Thurrock.
- He called on all residents to take pride in their community and encouraged residents to litter pick outside their homes.

Members questioned the Cabinet Member and received responses as follows:

- Councillor Halden explained that he wanted to see an improvement in the performance of the service, not maintenance at current levels, and added that the report highlighted that in 2014/15 the standard of street cleanliness in the Borough showed a further year-on-year improvement, not the levels of decline that the Cabinet Member had alluded to in his introduction, and questioned whether they were reading the same report.

In response the Cabinet Member explained that the report documented performance in 2014/15, and he had been referring to performance of the service in the early part of 2015/16 that had yet to be formally reported, which he felt had been negatively affected due to the budget pressured faced.

- Councillor Snell questioned the assertion that the standard of street cleanliness had improved across the Borough and observed that residents of Stifford Clays were unlikely to agree. He remarked that the fact that recently 60 bags of waste had been collected in Crammavill Street in just a 2 hour period suggested that the Borough was not as clean as the report implied.

The Cabinet Member explained that if the service had not faced considerable budget cuts then there would not be as much litter in the Borough and called upon all Elected Members and the public to come on board to help improve street cleanliness. He further reported that it was important to educate children and young people about the effects of dropping litter and those drivers who dropped litter from their cars was a particular issue.

- Councillor Jones commended the work of community forums and community groups for all their work in picking up litter and taking responsibility for their parks and open spaces but was concerned that the impact of the new technically, environmentally and economically practicable recycling regulations (TEEP) had not been effectively communicated to residents. He felt that residents should be made aware of the need to separate their waste correctly and the fact that this was not a Thurrock Council decision but rather a national regulation that needed to be complied with.

The Cabinet Member explained that some residents put the wrong items in the blue bin that created additional expense for the Council, which was why all blue bins with incorrect waste were identified by a tag that sought to better educate residents.

The Mayor advised that 15 minutes had elapsed for this item and asked Members whether they wished the time for questions to be extended as there were further Members who had indicated that they wanted to speak, to which all Members indicated their agreement.

- Councillor Ray highlighted that it was not easy to stop people littering the Borough from vehicles as it was difficult to remember registration numbers. He explained that he understood that rules had recently changed which allowed the registered keeper of the vehicle to be fined for littering and questioned whether this only applied in London, or was something Thurrock could adopt, as he felt that the best way to educate people was through fines and points on a licence.

The Cabinet Member remarked that this was a good idea and asked officers to investigate the matter further.

- Councillor S. Little asked how many free tonnes of salt did Thurrock obtain from Essex County Council during its promotion for winter gritting and what was its value.

The Cabinet Member advised that he did not know of the answer to the question but that he would endeavour to obtain details from officers.

Some Members interjected that Thurrock was not eligible for the free winter gritting salt, in response Councillor S. Little explained that she understood all authorities in Essex could apply, to which the Cabinet Member added that Thurrock tended to purchase its own supplies but he would ask officers to investigate any cost benefit of working with Essex County Council.

- Councillor Redsell questioned how many households had received 3 strikes, or tags, on their blue recycling bin for cross-contamination and how much money had been saved by the process.

The Cabinet Member explained that he did not know the answer to the question but would instruct officers to investigate and circulate a response to all Members.

- Councillor B. Little questioned how much levels of contamination had been reduced since Thurrock had started the process of tagging blue recycling bins.

The Cabinet Member explained that he did not know the answer to the question but would instruct officers to circulate a response to all Members.

- Councillor Tolson asked whether plans to join Coalhouse Country Park with Tilbury Fort by a footpath and cycleway were still going ahead and if so when it would be completed. She further questioned how the Council was ensuring that bicycles and pushchairs had level access over the estuary inlet.

The Cabinet Member explained that he was aware of the footpath and areas mentioned but did not know the latest position on the proposals and so would instruct officers to circulate a response to all Members after the meeting.

- Councillor Kelly advised that he had received a letter through the door that day from the Environmental Services team which explained that contamination had been found in his blue recycling bin. He explained that his collection day was a Monday and that this week he had not put his bin out as it was not full. He added that he was always very careful with what he disposed of in the blue recycling bin, and combined with the fact that his bin had not been collected that week, felt that the letter had been sent to him in error.

As a result he queried what the process was for ensuring letters were sent to the correct households, especially as some blue bins were not identifiable with house numbers.

The Cabinet Member explained that this was an operational matter which he would need to ask officers to investigate further and provide a response to the Member on.

- Councillor Worrall observed that during the summer months the waste collection trucks arrived earlier in the morning to collect recyclable waste and questioned whether this would continue in winter.

The Cabinet Member explained that blue bins started to be collected from 6am and that the change was as a result of the Council securing a different recycling contractor which charged £15 a tonne for disposal rather than £75 a tonne that had been charged by their predecessor. He explained that as the new contractor was based in East London the refuse trucks had to leave the depot earlier to start the waste collection round but that the Council had secured better value for money.

The Mayor advised the Chamber that they had run out of time to receive questions from Councillors Cliff Holloway, Barry Johnson and Mike Stone but asked the Members to email their questions following the meeting so that a response could be provided and circulated to all Members.

92. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that one question had been submitted to the Leader and a further three questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

The Mayor advised that Councillor Hebb had withdrawn his two questions to Councillor Gerrish and Councillor B. Little.

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

93. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

There were no reports from Members representing the Council on outside bodies.

94. Minutes of Committees

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

95. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

Members received an information report updating them on progress in respect of Motions resolved at Council over the past year.

96. Motion submitted by Councillor Redsell

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Redsell and seconded by Councillor S. Little. The Motion read as follows:

“We call on Thurrock Council to take action with its partners to help prevent the use of motorbikes and similar vehicles on our green spaces.”

Councillor Redsell introduced the motion, and in doing so explained that motorbikes and quad bikes were causing a nuisance across parks and green spaces in the Borough, including the Blackshots playing field in her ward, and that since her petition had been submitted ten bikes had been seized as a result of targeted work.

Councillor S. Little welcomed the motion as her ward was also plagued by motorbikes and quad bikes riding across Orsett Heath, and explained that despite proactive work by the Police the Council needed to provide further support and intelligence so that riders could be identified and information obtained on where they came from and gathered.

Councillor G. Rice supported the motion and commented that he too had seen young riders with their parents who should be better educated on where they can ride. He felt that cameras could be a good idea, especially as the Police faced considerable cuts and announced that they would be unable to attend 97% of Anti-Social Behaviour related calls.

Councillor Potheary welcomed the motion and provided an update of what the Council had been doing in support of the Police, which included:

- The introduction of signage across the Borough to advise riders of Section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002 where vehicles used in an anti-social manner could be seized.
- Close liaison with the Housing team
- That the Council’s CCTV team assisted the Police wherever feasible, which included the mobile camera unit.

Councillor Ojetola highlighted the work that had been undertaken with the Police and Council to prevent illegal racing, particularly around Lakeside and Chafford Hundred. He affirmed that he did not want racing of any kind on the streets and that there were other appropriate places for racing such as Arena Essex. He further reported that a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) had been supported recently, but felt that PSPOs should be delegated to a smaller Committee, rather than to full Council, so that they could be actioned much faster.

Councillor Jones reported that he too was tired of the nuisance caused by motorbikes, which was a common complaint by residents. He felt that the problem would be exacerbated by the cuts to the Police and subsequent closure of Police stations.

Councillor Cherry advised that where he had seen such incidents he had attempted to speak to the riders and take their photograph as evidence in order to share with the Police, he felt that Councillors should consider speaking to offenders in order to better educate them as a way to help.

Councillor Hipsey observed that this was an ongoing problem that had been going on for a long time, reporting that a cross-party working group had undertaken work on this in the past to examine whether an official motocross track could be developed in Thurrock. He called upon the Chair of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ask officers if any redundant pieces of Council land could be identified in order to create an official motocross track, as neither the Council nor the Police had the resources to enforce the issue so an alternative solution was needed.

Councillor Tolson commented that she had seen Section 59 notices on display but parents needed be more responsible as they often provided the bikes to the young people. She felt that tough action needed to be taken, such as crushing the motorbikes.

Councillor B. Little agreed that the use of motorbikes and similar vehicles on green spaces was unacceptable and suggested that a warning notice be included on the annual Council Tax statement circulated to every household.

Councillor B. Rice highlighted that Orsett Heath had been plagued by the problem for years but disagreed with Councillor Cherry regarding Members approaching riders, which she felt could be dangerous and not recommended by the Police.

Councillor Redsell agreed that this could be dangerous and reported that recently a resident had been threatened by a rider when confronted about their behaviour.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared the motion was carried

RESOLVED:

We call on Thurrock Council to take action with its partners to help prevent the use of motorbikes and similar vehicles on our green spaces.

97. Motion submitted by Councillor J. Kent

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

“Thurrock Council is concerned at reports that government is considering scrapping Universal Free School Meals for infant school children.

We believe that such a move would be damaging to both the education and health outcomes of our young people so resolve to write to the Treasury and Department for Education to show our support for the continuation of Universal Free School Meals as well as to our two members of parliament to make them aware of our concerns.”

Councillor J. Kent introduced the motion, and in doing so explained that he had been concerned by reports that funding for Free School Meals for infant school children could be axed in the Chancellors Autumn Statement and therefore felt that Thurrock should write to its two Members of Parliament (MPs) at an early stage in order to express Thurrock’s objection should this happen.

Councillor Okunade agreed that Free School Meals were vital as some parents struggled to make ends meet financially and an alarming number of children lived in poverty in Thurrock, which included Tilbury where rates of Child Poverty were higher than the national average.

Councillor Halden explained that whilst he supported the principle of the motion he would abstain from the vote as he felt the debate provoked scaremongering and fear among residents because it was based upon a hypothetical situation and not factual information. He informed Members that the Conservative manifesto supported Free School Meals, which was also backed up by the Prime Minister’s recent announcements and a statement released from the Department for Education (DfE).

Councillor Halden further expressed that Members’ time should be spent debating existent issues such as child poverty and childcare sufficiency, which he had circulated reports on through the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, rather than debating a hypothetical situation.

Councillor Wheeler felt that as Child Poverty was a real issue in Thurrock free school meals should be supported in order to assist families.

Councillor G. Rice commended the fact that free school meals had been supported but expressed a view that rumours did often turn out to be true, which was why he was supporting the motion.

At this point in the meeting there were a number of outbursts in the Council Chamber during which Members argued that the motion was based on factual inaccuracies.

Councillor Jones observed that as one of the richest countries in the World, every child should have the opportunity to have a free school meal.

Councillor B. Rice expressed her support for the motion as she felt that children should learn to eat in a social context and school meals helped them in their education through improved memory and concentration.

During the lengthy debate a number of members explained that there was a danger of confusing the two issues of free school meals with the hypothetical situation of funding being cut and therefore that they would be abstaining from the vote, as Members were in effect debating a matter which had already been ruled out.

Councillor Holloway highlighted that in the past Members had voted on motions based upon issues that had yet to be formally announced, such as a motion regarding asylum.

In response Councillor Ojetola explained that the government had already made announcements on those matters, which was not the case in this instance, and felt that free school meals was an emotive issue which nobody wanted to take away. He remarked that it was also important to provide free meals outside of term time which some community groups did enable in Thurrock.

Councillor Speight supported the principles of the motion and stated that he did not share the faith of his Conservative colleagues that funding for free school meals would not be cut.

Councillor Hamilton felt that the motion had good intentions and that it only served to highlight Thurrock's concerns to the local MP's, to which Councillor Coxshall objected as the motion was based on unsubstantiated information.

Following an extensive debate on the subject, Councillor J. Kent summed up the reasons why he had proposed the motion. He recognised that everyone supported the principles of the motion and remarked that whilst the motion was based upon speculation, in his experience such reports did sometimes turn out to be true and he just wanted to put Thurrock's thoughts on record.

Upon being put to the vote, 24 Members voted in favour of the Motion, 1 Member voted against and 17 abstained, whereupon the Mayor declared the motion to be carried.

RESOLVED:

Thurrock Council is concerned at reports that government is considering scrapping Universal Free School Meals for infant school children.

We believe that such a move would be damaging to both the education and health outcomes of our young people so resolve to write to the Treasury and Department for Education to show our support for the continuation of Universal Free School Meals as well as to our two members of parliament to make them aware of our concerns.

Councillor Stone left the meeting before the consideration of the next item.

98. Motion submitted by Councillor Ray

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Ray and seconded by Councillor S. Little. The Motion read as follows:

“That this Council will explore ways of working with NHS partners to fully endorse and promote the importance of giving blood and signing up for organ and tissue donation in Thurrock.”

Councillor Ray introduced the motion, and in doing so explained that his late wife Maggie O’Keefe-Ray, who was also an Elected Member of Thurrock Council, had been posthumously honoured at an award ceremony at the Priory Church of the Order of St John on 13 October 2015 after her organs were used to save the lives of 13 people, which included a one-year old child who was given the gift of sight.

Councillor S. Little commended Councillor Ray’s emotive motion and observed that it was the 21st anniversary of the NHS organ donation register which had enabled over 55,000 transplants and millions of pints of blood donated to help others. She reported that 7,000 people were currently awaiting a transplant and that 1,300 unfortunately passed away in 2014 whilst waiting for a transplant, therefore it was essential people discussed the matter with relatives.

Councillor S. Little further remarked that registering to become an organ donor was simple and added that the Council should help to advertise organ donation wherever possible.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the Motion, whereupon the Mayor declared the motion was carried

RESOLVED:

That this Council will explore ways of working with NHS partners to fully endorse and promote the importance of giving blood and signing up for organ and tissue donation in Thurrock.

99. Motion submitted by Councillor Potheary

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

“Essex Police have recently announced they plan to close two of the borough’s police stations and sell off a third, as well as cut the number of PCSOs in Thurrock from 38 to just 6. After already making cuts of £40 million, Essex Police is facing having to make over £60 million worth of cuts by 2020 thanks to the Government. The dramatic reduction in the number of police

officers and PCSOs on our streets is a big issue for our residents and has worrying implications for community safety.

The Council resolves to write to the two MPs for Thurrock to set out our concerns about the detrimental impact of police cuts on Thurrock residents and community safety, and ask them to lobby for better funding for Essex Police.”

Councillor Potheary introduced the motion, and in doing so expressed her concern at the impact of the budget cuts and the recent announcement by Essex Police that they would be unable to attend 97% of Anti-Social Behaviour calls and anticipated a reduction of 300 Police Officers by 2020.

Councillor Halden felt alternative ideas should be developed in order to offset the impact of budget cuts, such as the arrangement with the Youth Offending team and Corringham Police Station.

Councillor Halden reported that the Cabinet appointed representative to the Essex Police and Crime Panel had failed to attend numerous meetings of the panel during the previous year, and that on the two occasions he had been present he was not recorded in the minutes as contributing to the debate. He felt that Thurrock should be correctly represented at such meetings in an attempt to make a difference to outcomes with the Police, rather than submitting motions.

During the debate a number of Councillors expressed a view that the Police force was being ruined by Central Government, which was imposing significant cuts that made Essex Police less effective and able to do their job, such as through the closure of police stations.

Councillor Johnson argued that the UK needed to pay back a huge deficit that had been created by the previous government and that money needed to be spent more efficiently. He felt that the Police and Crime Commissioner should be invited to a meeting of Council so that Members could question whether money was being spent wisely.

Councillor Hipsey felt that the morale of Police Officers would be negatively affected and the pressures they faced immense, in light of the fact that a considerable number of Anti-Social Behaviour calls could not be responded to in future.

Councillor Worrall added that soon there would not be adequate Policing to enforce existing dispersal orders and Anti-Social Behaviour, especially during Halloween and Bonfire Night season where residents could become increasingly intimidated.

Councillor Snell was concerned that the Cabinet Member did not attend meetings of the Essex Police and Crime Panel during the previous year in order to represent Thurrock's interests and felt that this needed to be

remedied. He argued that the cuts had gone too deep and the priority for any government must be the protection of its citizens.

Councillor Ray remarked that Essex Police had been responsible for wasting considerable sums of money, which included spending £100,000 on equipment that was never used and £300,000 on a survey asking the public what they thought crime was.

Councillor J. Kent agreed that it was unacceptable that a representative had not attended meetings of the Essex Police and Crime Panel and explained that although Councillor Potheary would be unable to attend future meetings in her capacity as Cabinet Member for Public Protection due to work commitments a permanent substitute would be appointed.

At 9.16 pm Members agreed not to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11.1 in order to allow the meeting to continue beyond the 2 ½ hour time limit.

Councillor Ojetola felt that although the wording of the motion itself was not harmful he was concerned at the speculation during the arguments that had been made.

A further debate ensued during which a number of Councillors made comments regarding how Central Government should save money through the cessation of other schemes, initiatives and proposals.

Councillor Halden noted that it was not the current Portfolio Holder, Councillor Potheary, who had not attended Police and Crime Panel meetings, rather it was her predecessor.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 20.7, five Members indicated that the vote on the motion be recorded. Democratic Services conducted the recorded vote, the result of which was as follows:

Votes in favour of the motion:

Councillors Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Terry Hipsey, Cliff Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Roy Jones, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Kevin Wheeler, Lynn Worrall, Cathy Kent and Sue Gray **(26)**

Votes against the motion:

Councillors Mark Coxshall, Garry Hague, James Halden, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Joy Redsell, Deborah Stewart and Pauline Tolson **(13)**

Abstentions:

Councillors Robert Ray and Peter Smith (2)

The Mayor declared that the motion be carried.

RESOLVED:

Essex Police have recently announced they plan to close two of the borough's police stations and sell off a third, as well as cut the number of PCSOs in Thurrock from 38 to just 6. After already making cuts of £40 million, Essex Police is facing having to make over £60 million worth of cuts by 2020 thanks to the Government. The dramatic reduction in the number of police officers and PCSOs on our streets is a big issue for our residents and has worrying implications for community safety.

The Council resolves to write to the two MPs for Thurrock to set out our concerns about the detrimental impact of police cuts on Thurrock residents and community safety, and ask them to lobby for better funding for Essex Police.

The meeting finished at 9.32 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**