

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 February 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Charlie Key, 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, Andrew Roast, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Deborah Stewart, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Sue Gray (Mayor), Colin Churchman, Mark Coxshall and Terence Hipsey

In attendance:

Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
David Archibald, Interim Director of Children's Services
David Bull, Director of Planning and Transportation
Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer
Richard Parkin, Head of Environment
Matthew Boulter, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

Before the start of the meeting, the Mayor invited Reverend Canon Darren Barlow to lead those present in prayer.

139. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Council, held on 27 January 2016, were approved as a correct record.

For accuracy Councillor Hebb stated that his Motion in Item 136 on Page 20 of the minutes should be corrected by replacing the word “fares” to read “fairness” as the discussion was on the concept of fairness in terms of the fairness commission.

140. Items of Urgent Business

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

141. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Gledhill declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 22, Motion 1, as his partner travels on C2C.

Councillor Potheary declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 22, Motion 1, as she is a commuter on C2C.

Councillor C Holloway declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 22, Motion 1, as he is a commuter on C2C.

Councillor Aker declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 22, Motion 1, as he is a commuter on C2C.

Councillor Gerrish declared a non-pecuniary interest on Item 22, Motion 1, as he is a commuter on C2C.

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

Firstly the Deputy Mayor invited all those present to reflect and remember Thurrock’s fallen during World War One.

The Deputy Mayor stated on behalf of the Mayor that young people across Thurrock’s senior schools were making collages of images depicting what they saw as representing Thurrock. These would be displayed in the Mayor’s Parlour during April.

The Mayor attended a meeting with the Rotary Club of Mardyke Valley who were organising a Cycle Marathon in June and encouraged Councillors to support and sponsor cyclists.

The Mayor also held a thank you lunch for Officers to formally acknowledge their help and support shown to the Mayor over the past 8 years as a Councillor.

The Deputy Mayor also stated that Thames 21 would be at Grays Beach this Saturday from 10.00am-1.00pm, they were a group that try to keep UK rivers clean.

Finally, the Deputy Mayor took the opportunity to thank David Bull for his contribution and hard work to the Council and wished him well in the future.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor J. Kent, reiterated the Deputy Mayor's comments and thanked David Bull on the great achievements he had made since joining the Council in 2012. Councillor Kent stated that he would miss David's advice, enthusiasm and wished him well in his retirement.

Councillor J. Kent commented on the Lower Thames Crossing and reiterated the important points made at Council in January. Thurrock Council remained opposed to any further Thames Crossing in Thurrock and that it did not matter if it was Option C or A, Route 1, 2, 3 or 4; these proposals were no good for Thurrock. He stated that the Government and Highways England appear to be thoroughly confused on what they were consulting on and with the consultation process being launched on the 26 January 2016 it was clear that Option A had been dropped and was not part of the consultation process.

Councillor J. Kent stated that he had written to the Secretary of State to ask that the consultation process period be extended but had not received a reply. Since then the Transport Minister, Andrew Jones, has declared that Option A was still being considered by the Government. It was suggested that Councillor J. Kent write again to the Secretary of State to demand that the consultation process be stopped right now so that all Options could be looked at again and considered.

Councillor J. Kent reminded Members of the consultation taking place on Thursday 25 February at the London Cruise Terminal and urged members and residents to attend.

143. 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 were attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

144. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Deputy Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme, the requisite notice had not been given by any councillors or members of the public that they wished to present a petition at the meeting.

145. Petitions 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.

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

There were no changes to appointments to Committees, Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels declared.

147. The Children In Care Pledge

Joseph Kaley, Chair of Children in Care Council, thanked the Members for allowing him the opportunity to speak to them about the Children in Care Pledge. He explained that the Pledge was a very important document representing the Young People of Thurrock, particularly those that did not have the courage to speak out. The Pledge had been adopted by Thurrock Council to ensure that social workers provided the care and support required to all children in the borough and encouraged all Members in their role as corporate parents to sign-up to this Pledge.

Councillor Okunade thanked Joseph Kaley for coming to Council to speak to Members and stated that this was a Government initiative with a promise between Thurrock Council and the Young Children in Thurrock.

Councillor Halden congratulated Joseph on his speech and commented on the Children's Voice element of the Pledge and asked how the Council were listening to that Voice. Councillor Halden stated that he was proud of the cross party commitment and the interaction between Members through the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Councillor S. Little also thanked Joseph on his eloquently delivered speech and stressed as a council, on any overview and scrutiny committee the pledge should be addressed. Councillor S. Little confirmed that the "Staying Put Policy", offering support to Looked After Children even when at university, is not quite here yet but that the Policy for savings and bank accounts of Looked After Children was in place.

Joseph Kaley commented that it should be the Council's focus on getting the Staying Put Policy right to ensure that the professionalism and passion of Foster Carers were taken into consideration.

148. General Fund Budget Proposals

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

Councillor J. Kent

I have to say Madam Deputy Mayor, that setting the Council's budget becomes increasingly difficult year on year, and I want to start by thanking Sean Clark and his officers, in fact all Senior Offices and Senior Members for their work over many many months that they have put in to getting the proposals and recommendations that we have before us this evening.

This year has been different in many ways. For a start we have a three way political split in the council, and yet despite that we have seen unprecedented

co-operation from both the opposition groups in overseeing the necessary and difficult decisions the council has had to take.

The Leaders and Deputy Leaders of the Conservative and UKIP parties have joined with me and Councillor Barbara Rice, and the individual portfolio holders, in examining pretty much every line of each directorate's budget.

Between us we sought out ways of reducing spending while protecting the front line as far as possible. And then there was the overview and scrutiny process. These cross-party committees have looked over these proposals, suggesting changes and tweaks, but in the main have backed our suggestions and proposals.

We also have to look at how the rules have changed. From 2010 onwards the national government was putting pressure on councils to maintain council tax levels whilst at the same time cutting grants and offering what they call a council tax freeze grant, usually the equivalent to around one per cent on council tax. We took this bribe each year – bar one.

But now the government has changed so have the rules. The new, Conservative Government has ushered in the era of – what it calls – “Financial Self Sustainability”. They say that ever council in the country is being expected to raise council tax by very nearly two per cent and those with social care responsibilities such as us here in Thurrock, should add a further two per cent – the Social Care precept.

Madam Deputy Mayor, in helping decide on the level of Council Tax increase we asked the cross party Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to look at all the issues and come up with a recommendation on the way forward.

I am really grateful to Councillors Hebb and Snell – as the Chair and Vice Chair of that committee – for undertaking that task, for taking it seriously and for their committee unanimously agreeing the recommended increase that we have before us this evening.

So led by Cabinet and endorsed by Councillors from all three of the major parties here in Thurrock – Labour, Conservative, UKIP – we have jointly come to the conclusion that if Thurrock Council is to be able to continue providing the services that people rely on – supporting the vulnerable, supporting families, supporting the young and the old – then we must support in turn tonight's recommendation to increase council tax by 3.99 per cent.

To put that into some context, unlike most of the rest of the country where Band D homes were the average, Band D homes account for less than a fifth of Thurrock homes, the vast majority – over two-thirds – were Band A, B and C. So if we look at the weekly cost of Thurrock's 3.99 per cent increase, a Band A home is 57p a week, for a Band B it's 67p a week, and for a Band C – which is the band most Thurrock homes fall into – it is 77p a week.

Madam Deputy Mayor, it is important to realise that moan as we might – and we all moan about our bills, I'm no different to anybody else in that – out of the 55 unitary councils in this country, Thurrock has the third lowest council tax. This means that we were only able to raise the third lowest amount of council tax income – it's around £550,000 per one per cent increase; we receive the third lowest level of Revenue Support Grant from the government; we have the third lowest net budget; and we have the fifth lowest net budget per head of population.

This leads to two things; the first is that implementing the government's Social Care precept – the care tax – will bring in £1.1 million. The cost of our contractors implementing the Living Wage, I have to say that the living wage is a good thing and something we all support, but the cost to this council will be at £1½ million, a shortfall of £400,000 before any of the other demographic challenges we face in this area were considered.

The 1.99 per cent Council Tax increase will also bring in around £1.1 million, but we face new costs such as the Apprentice Levy – again a good initiative but one that will cost us half a million pounds – and the scrapping of the Council Tax Freeze grant that removes another £600,000 takes care of that entire increase. All of this at the same time as our government grant is being cut by a quarter in April – where we lose another £8 million.

The second is that since 2010, in real terms and taking inflation into account, our Council Tax bills here in Thurrock have effectively fallen in real terms by £100 pounds a year. This proposed rise recoups roughly half of that. So, hopefully with the support of our colleagues around this chamber, I am proposing that Council Tax should rise by 3.99 per cent this April.

The budget that we were proposing this evening is for a total of £110 million pounds.

It includes no new cuts to front line services and I point out that unlike many other councils we still have a weekly bin collection collecting three streams, we have no library closures and we have kept the street lights on. In fact this budget provides a little extra cash to maintain some subsidised buses, providing a new library facility for Purfleet and for additional street cleaning. How have we managed to do this?

From what I hear, there were those amongst our colleagues opposite who claim we were a left wing group unable to provide leadership at all. Madam Deputy Mayor I just do not accept that. We were sensible people; people who care about other people; people who care about Thurrock now and Thurrock in the future. We were sensible people who work hard for Thurrock now for the future of Thurrock; people who want local business to grow and prosper today, tomorrow and beyond; we were sensible people who have helped attract hundreds of new jobs and sensible people who were still working hard to ensure that even more new jobs come Thurrock's way; we were sensible people who work hard to help those who work hard and we work hard to protect those who cannot help themselves; in short, we were sensible people

who have sensible ideas which were beginning to bear fruit – and I just want to look at some of those sensible ideas that we have led on these past few years.

We've led on creating a new-look Purfleet; a new town centre, new shops, new homes and new offices, with a new railway station and a huge television and film studio complex.

Over the past few years we have seen our schools improve well beyond expectations. If we got back to 2010 and 2011 our colleagues opposite seemed to at times take great pleasure at lambasting school performance; talking down Thurrock's young people; and damning their efforts. But not any longer. Madam Deputy Mayor in 2010 the vast majority of our schools needed improvement, today the vast majority were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted. That doesn't mean that there's not more work to do, of course there is, and we won't rest until every place of learning is rated as 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. If we go back to Purfleet and the High House Production Park, we have led the way, with two Royal Opera House centres, a national centre for learning and skills, dozens of artist studios and this week we hear the Royal Academy of Arts – yes THE Royal Academy of Arts – also want to come to Purfleet too.

On a more bureaucratic note, let's look at the Local Enterprise Partnership. It covers the whole of Kent, Essex and East Sussex and yet where do the millions of pounds come? They come to Thurrock, or through Thurrock to Thames Gateway South Essex – schemes like the £5 million for developing the A13 widening to ensure that we get the tens of millions pounds needed to complete the project, £5 million towards the Purfleet town centre proposal, £7½ million towards improving access to London Gateway and its jobs, £5 million for improving the borough's cycle network, thirty-five-and-a-half million pounds for improving pinch-point projects across South Essex and £14 million for sustainable transport plans across South Essex.

And what about jobs and business? I think we've led on jobs and business time and time again, from London Gateway, in the thousands, to the Old Courthouse in Grays – in the hundreds. Where-ever you look jobs were being created here in Thurrock and that's because we have worked alongside our business partners, large and small, showing a can-do and will-do attitude; we have led on and created an atmosphere here in Thurrock that acts like a magnet attracting billions, yes billions of pounds of private investment.

Despite the global recession Thurrock's employment rate is now above the national average, one of the more impressive changes is employment generation, where our leadership has encouraged private sector investment, is the creation of 5,000 jobs between 2007 and 2014, a growth of very nearly eight per cent which is more than double the national and regional averages.

Then we have the Business Board. We created a business led forum for local businesses large, small and intermediate to get together, to talk and discuss the future.

If we look here in Grays, just across the road we have the new South Essex College campus, a project made possible because this council took the right decision to put its land into the project. Now the whole of the town is benefitting as hundreds and hundreds of students and associated workers come here every day.

What else have we led on in Grays? Saving the theatre and keeping the Thameside running, not selling it off as some had suggested the way forward to be. Instead we want to maintain our town's arts heritage until we can create a brand new 21st century complex on the riverside to become the flagship of a revitalised town literally making the best of our Thames-side location.

Thurrock Council has developed the best counter-fraud team in the Country, a team that works with police forces nationwide as well as supporting other councils, housing associations and even a government department.

We have led on creating our own wholly owned company to kick-start housing developments and create low-cost homes for local people; we've led on attracting new devolved powers from government – battling with Essex to ensure we don't lose out and working with Southend for the benefit of both boroughs; we have taken on industry giants like Serco, bringing back 400 staff members – as well as saving at least £300,000 each and every month, money which went straight to the company's profit margin and not to local services; and, of course, for the past four years and more we have led on fighting plans to tarmac our borough with a massive new motorway and Thames crossing.

Madam Deputy Mayor we have taken on and welcomed new Public Health responsibilities – despite our initial problems of over a million pounds of our money being given to Essex County Council. We still welcome those responsibilities although things were made more difficult when the government announced a £655,000 cut in the middle of this working year and after all our contracts had been let; and we still welcome Public Health responsibilities even though that cut has now been increased to £924,000 – nearly £1 million less to spend on local people's health – in the coming year.

On top of all of these successes, and on top of the continual cut-cut-cut in our finances, we have still managed business pretty much as usual. Yes there have been some cuts, but the vast majority of our services have continued with minimal impact – not only is this because we have managed the problem well, but it is also down to our hard-working and dedicated staff – from top to bottom. Madam Deputy Mayor we should here tonight say thank you to each one of our 2,000 workers. So I move the recommendations before us this evening – recommendations that protect the front line, invest in our priorities, protect our replenished reserves and – once again – will levy the lowest Council Tax in Essex.

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

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor, and thank you Councillor Kent for your very informative budget speech as they tend to be every year. There were some aspects of this report I will be supporting, for example, the Adult Social Care increase. For at least a decade, if not longer, irrespective of political leadership every Council has been raising this as an issue. But for five years of a Labour Government and at least five years of the Coalition Government, these issues were not really addressed. However, first year of Conservative Government we have the opportunity to start to fix this Adult Social Care time bomb that has been ticking, for as I say, more than a decade.

Will the Adult Social Care premium – I don't like calling it a care tax – solve the problem? No, no it won't. Will it make a dent in how much money we will need to spend on that this year? No, no it won't. Will it be the start of some serious conversations about funding for our older residents who were vulnerable and in need? Yes, I really hope it does, but what we have got to remember is that this care needs to be paid for. It will be paid for either directly through the council tax payments from taxpayers or what we pay through directly for income tax payers – from tax payers – but whatever way you look at it, it will come from the tax payer.

I must echo Councillor Kent's comments about the way this budget has been put together, what the Section 151 officer has done this year can only be described as some form of accountancy magic, and it really must be applauded. No extra cuts to front line services, except for those that already have been proposed and agreed last year by certain Members of this Chamber. But it just goes to show another example of what happens when government turns off the tax payer taps – innovation starts to become the norm and we don't end up with the same old, same old; and this is why it makes it very difficult, very, very difficult to oppose this budget – I say very difficult, but not impossible.

Now, as Councillor Kent has said, we had cross-party meetings with the Leaders and Deputy Leaders – and I know I missed one of them – but I can't remember a line by line breakdown of what was going on, on what is being spent, my apologies.

If we did have that then of course we would still be remembering roughly £13 million pounds on temporary staff and consultancy fees, will be the cost by the end of the year; roughly £10 million of that alone on temporary staff. £2 million spend on suppliers of taxis and other contract hire vehicles – which don't appear to be checked for financial viability or correct expenditure. £88,000 on professional subscriptions going to the Council, to obviously make sure that officers subscribe to certain national bodies to do their job properly. I can't quite work out why we were paying them for officers to ensure that they were keeping their qualifications up-to-date. My favourite of course, £45,000 on a paid union rep, something we were promised a long discussion on. I can't remember that at all, and if we had gone line by line, as has been suggested, we would notice that we spent £3000 on a male entertainment troupe, and I

use that term quite politely. Now, this was a group that went to perform at Thameside; now fortunately this £3000 was one of the ones that was well spent, it made a very small profit – probably the first time the Council didn't lose its shirt when everyone else was.

Now at the moment we were also supporting what should only be described as commercial operations, now these commercial operations were being subsidised by the tax payer directly to the tune of £1.5 million pounds a year. Now, we were always told that there were reasons for this and we haven't got provision very well in this area and we need outside help for doing that – now if we weren't supplying a taxi service as a subsidised service we would end up with businesses taking up opportunities there; and when the businesses take up the opportunities there, the tax payer is not seeing their money wasted to support things that should at least break even.

Now I'm not saying that these services should be scrapped, far from it, that would be the wrong thing, and as Councillor Kent has pointed out, not shutting the Thameside instantly and putting the plans forward for a brand new Thameside Theatre that's on the side of the Thames is the right thing to do; but of course between now and then every council tax payer will be paying for this.

I'm also a bit concerned about the scaremongering that's in the report that's saying that if we don't agree the budget tonight the first thing that's going to go is subsidised bus services, street cleaning and libraries; now what were they being picked out when we have got, as I say, things that should be commercially viable being subsidised by the tax payer – they could easily choose those before hitting residents directly.

Now, one thing we haven't seen tonight is obviously the fabled graph of doom, a graph that only shows a portion of the money that this Council gets. And to put this into perspective – in 2010 we had £127 million pounds, sorry I've got that wrong my apologies, its one-two-six million pounds and then in 2015 we have got £122 million, a drop of just £5 million – a 4 per cent reduction – not this graph of doom that basically needs to be put on the first floor to show that its crashed so far it's in the basement, it's ridiculous.

Now we also see from last year that agenda item 1.8 to 1.8.3, to delegate powers back to Cabinet to agree certain borrowing and expenditure, last year we agreed as a Council not to support that so whenever we get grants in from outside, whenever we decide to spend huge, vast amounts of money on Gloriana, it should be decisions made in this full Council so all of our residents know that we have had a say and either we have all agreed or we didn't agree. We were not flooded with these enquiries last year, in fact I can only think of one, so I cannot see why we would want to delegate to Cabinet those powers again and I shall be rejecting those proposals and ask that they were not delegated and remain with Council.

Other than that Madam Deputy Mayor, as I say, I'm finding it very, very difficult to oppose the proposals – there were not massive cuts that were being done – this is not down to this administrations good management, this

is down to Mr Clark and his team who as I say, pulled the rabbit out of the hat – the financial rabbit out of the hat – this year, and time and again, and they must be applauded. Thank you.

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

Councillor J. Kent

I shall take ten minutes as a ceiling not a floor, Madam Deputy Mayor. First of all I will thank Councillor Gledhill for his broad support, I tend to agree with him when it comes to support for Adult Social Care. All we have seen is the government moving the burden of taxation away from Central Government and putting it into Local Government; I think that this is a theme that we will see more and more over the next four and five years. As Councillor Gledhill quite rightly said, if we want good quality Social Care it has to be paid for, whether that's paid for by income tax, or paid for through Council Tax, this government – as it moves to financial self-sustainability for local authorities – it is quite clear, it will be down to local authorities to get the blame for raising these bills.

Councillor Gledhill came out with a series of examples of spending that he may not agree with, including the way that we hire acts at the Thameside Theatre; I have to say I don't think it's for Members of this Council to get involved in the operational detail of which acts were hired to go on stage at the Thameside Theatre.

I also wonder if Councillor Gledhill thinks that he hasn't seen each of the directorate line by line, how he comes up with those lines, but there we go. And finally, I'm glad that Councillor Gledhill appreciates the graph of doom, we will have to bring it back out. The graph of doom of course charts the fall in our Revenue Support Grant, a Revenue Support Grant that in three years' time will disappear altogether.

Councillor Gledhill rather disingenuously, I think, goes back to the £126 million budget that we set in 2010 and compares it, I'm sorry I didn't catch the year, to a budget of £122 million – the budget we set tonight is for £110 million; of course much of that difference is the new responsibilities that we have been given, back in 2010 we had a development corporation that provided all of our strategic planning, for example, that has now returned to the Council with the budget that went along with it. We now have responsibility for Public Health with a budget of another £8 million that was passed with it, and just earlier this year we took responsibility for Children's Health with I believe a budget of £3 million pounds for the first year, £4.5 million pounds in a full year; I think that more than accounts for the difference that Councillor Gledhill has pointed out. Thank you Madam Deputy Mayor.

The Deputy Mayor then invited debate on the whole subject of the item.

Councillor Snell stated that over the past year he had attended many meetings with Councillor Jones at leadership level and attended the Budget Review Panel to have the chance to look at every aspect of the budget and the budget setting to find ways of making the Council work more efficiently. Opportunities at this time were given for Members to speak up and bring forward items on the budget, raise any issues or concerns. Councillor Snell stated that everything that Councillor Gledhill had mentioned tonight had not been brought up prior to this budget report and felt it unreasonable to bring them up tonight.

Councillor Halden stated a positive point on the budget on how it had been formatted, an example of this was the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee where Officers presented Members with 27 different options on how adult social care could be reformatted with each option having different cost and service implications. Councillor Halden stated this was the perfect way to do this with different options and scenarios available to Members.

Councillor G. Rice stated he supported the budget report and identified that Members had all committed to keep a weekly bin collection.

Councillor B. Rice stated that ample opportunity had been given to Councillor Gledhill to comment on the budget report after attending nine budget meetings and felt that it was unfair and an insult to Thurrock residents that no mention of his comments were made prior to tonight.

Councillor Worrall stated that with regards to Gloriana an executive group had met with Labour and UKIP Members in attendance apart from a conservative group member. It was stated that decisions were made regarding the budget at these meetings and commented that all groups should attend so that comments can be made at that time.

Councillor Ray stated that was he never invited to an executive group to discuss the budget so could not comment. He added that he felt the UKIP Party was not offering viable alternatives to the proposed budget as an opposition group.

Councillor S. Little stated that cuts had been made especially in Bulphan where there was no longer a library bus and a community café had been started with little financial support from the Council.

Councillor J. Kent thanked Members for all the contributions and for the support of Councillor Snell.

The Deputy Major asked the Chief Executive to explain the vote recording process in relation to budget and council tax setting.

The Chief Executive explained that Council were asked to vote on the recommendations within the report in a series of blocks. Some were required to have a recorded vote. Therefore, the voting would be conducted as follows:

- The Council would vote for recommendation 1.1. This would be unrecorded unless Members requested otherwise.
- The Council would then vote on recommendations 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 together. This would be a recorded vote.
- The Council would then vote for recommendations 1.5 to 1.8.3 inclusive en-bloc. This would be unrecorded unless Members requested otherwise.
- Finally, the Council would vote on recommendations 1.9 to 1.14 en-bloc. This would be a recorded vote.

Councillor Gledhill requested that recommendations 1.2, 1.3, 1.4 be recorded individually and that recommendations 1.8 to 1.8.3 be voted on separately. This was agreed by Members.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on recommendation 1.1 as printed in the report. All Members present voted in favour of the recommendation, whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared 1.1 to be carried.

The Deputy Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.2, the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jane Baker, Claire Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Yash Gupta, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Cliff Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Robert Ray, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Andrew Roast, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler, Lynn Worrall, Cathy Kent **(44)**

Against : **(0)**

Abstain : **(0)**

Whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared recommendation 1.2 to be carried.

The Deputy Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.3, the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jane Baker, Claire Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Yash Gupta, Graham Hamilton, Cliff Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Roy Jones, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Kevin Wheeler, Lynn Worrall, Cathy Kent **(28)**

Against : Councillor Ray (1)

Abstain : Councillors Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Charlie Key, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Joy Redsell, Andrew Roast, Pauline Tolson (15)

Whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared recommendation 1.3 to be carried.

The Deputy Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.4, the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jane Baker, Claire Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Yash Gupta, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Cliff Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Robert Ray, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Andrew Roast, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler, Lynn Worrall, Cathy Kent (44)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared recommendation 1.4 to be carried.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on recommendation 1.5 to 1.7 as printed in the report. All Members present voted in favour of the recommendations, whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared these to be carried.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Chamber to undertake a vote on recommendation 1.8 to 1.8.3 as printed in the report, the result of which was:

For : 27

Against : 16

Abstain : 1

Whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared recommendations 1.8 to 1.8.3 to be carried.

The Mayor invited the Chamber to undertake a recorded vote on recommendations 1.9 to 1.14 as printed in the report, the result of which was:

For : Councillors Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jane Baker, Claire Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Yash Gupta, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Cliff Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Charlie Key, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Barry Palmer, Jane Potheary, Robert Ray, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Andrew Roast, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Richard Speight, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson, Kevin Wheeler, Lynn Worrall, Cathy Kent (44)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Deputy Mayor declared recommendations 1.9 to 1.14 to be carried.

RESOLVED

That the Council:

- 1.1 Considers and acknowledges the Section 151 Officer's (Director of Finance and IT's) report on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves and the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 1, including the conditions upon which the following recommendations were made;**
- 1.2 Following the recommendations of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, agree to a 2% Council Tax increase in respect of Adult Social Care;**
- 1.3 Following the recommendations of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny and the Cabinet, agree to a 1.99% Council Tax increase in support of the general budget;**
- 1.4 Approve a General Fund net revenue budget for 2016/17 of £110,289,954 allocated to services as set out in paragraph 5.3;**
- 1.5 That Cabinet recommend to Council that delegation be granted to the Director of Finance and IT, in consultation with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council, the authority to make the relevant submissions to government to secure the four year settlement and freedom to use capital receipts for transformation purposes if considered to be in the Council's best interest;**

- 1.6 Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in section 7 and Appendix 4;**
- 1.7 Approve the new General Fund capital schemes as set out in section 9 and Appendix 5;**
- 1.8 Delegate to Cabinet:**
 - 1.8.1 The approval of any expenditure, including loan and equity advances, related to Gloriana Thurrock Ltd developments and these be deemed as part of the capital programme;**
 - 1.8.2 The ability to agree schemes where it can be evidenced that there is a spend to save opportunity and these be deemed as part of the capital programme; and**
 - 1.8.3 The ability to agree schemes that use any unbudgeted contributions from third parties, including those by way of grants or developers' contributions, and these be deemed as part of the capital programme.**

Statutory Council Tax Resolution

(Members should note that these recommendations were a result of the previous recommendations above and can be agreed as written or as amended by any changes agreed to those above).

- 1.9 Calculate that the Council Tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2016/17 is £57,135,138 as set out in the table at paragraph 5.3 of this report.**
- 1.10 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2016/17 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:**
 - (a) £390,012,962 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.**
 - (b) £332,877,824 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.**
 - (c) £57,135,138 being the amount by which the aggregate at 1.10(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.10(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).**

- (d) £1,169.46 being the amount at 1.10(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (Council Tax Base of 48,856), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £0 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) £1,169.46 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by Item T, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

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

1.12 That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for 2016/17 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

**2016/17 COUNCIL TAX FOR THURROCK PURPOSES EXCLUDING ESSEX
FIRE AUTHORITY AND ESSEX POLICE AUTHORITY**

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2016/17

A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £
779.64	909.58	1,039.52	1,169.46	1,429.34	1,689.00

1.13 That it be noted that for the year 2016/17 Essex Police Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2016/17

A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £
101.40	118.30	135.20	152.10	185.90	219.00

- 1.14 That it be noted that for the year 2016/17 Essex Fire Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2016/17					
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £
45.12	52.64	60.16	67.68	82.72	97.7

2016/17 COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING FIRE AND POLICE AUTHORITY PRECEPTS)

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2016/17					
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £
926.16	1,080.52	1,234.88	1,389.24	1,697.96	2,000

149. Housing Revenue Account Base Budgets and Rent Setting 2016-17

Councillor J. Kent, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the report that set out the proposals for the Housing Revenue Account based budget for 2016/17 and highlighted the proposals for rent and service charges. The report also identified the changes within the base budget between 2015/16 and 2016/17.

In July 2015, the Government announced key policy changes that impacted the Housing Revenue business plan and these were:

- 1% reduction in social rents for four years from 1 April 2016
- Pay to Stay proposals from 2017/18
- The disposal of high value properties as they become vacant

Councillor J. Kent referred Members to the six recommendations in the report to which he proposed were accepted. These recommendations had been through the Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet process.

Councillor J. Kent stated that when the item was discussed by Cabinet the Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing was not present, no questions or no calls-ins were made.

Councillor Ojetola apologised for arriving late into the Council Chambers.

Councillor Ojetola stated that he had taken the comments on board and that he did not attend Cabinet anymore as no real answers were given. The 'Call In' process was used recently at the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the proposed demolition of Seabrooke Rise Flats. Councillor Ojetola commented that help should be given to those on the housing waiting list as required and as and when homes became available.

Councillor G. Rice stated that in 1979 Thurrock Council had reached the gold standard with 25,000 council homes in the borough until Margaret Thatcher decided to sell them off but not having the opportunity to replace them. In 1979, it took six months for a married couple to have a council house compared to the waiting list of 6,500 people today, which was a disgrace.

Councillor Redsell asked what action was being taken to clear the traveller's site on Gammon Fields.

Councillor Worrall updated Members on the exemption in the 1 per cent reduction in rents; an initial meeting had taken place with DCLG but confirmed very little information was available and that proof of significant hardship would need to prove to warrant this 1 per cent reduction. Councillor Worrall stated that details had been released that increase to the rent could be made to Sheltered Housing Accommodation, which would mean that extra rent could be made to old age pensioners not nobody else. As a Cabinet it was decided not to penalise old age pensioners and those living in sheltered housing accommodation.

Councillor Hebb stated that young people should be given the opportunity to the 'Right to Buy' scheme and not feel they have to live off the welfare state system.

Councillor Kerin stated that with the increase in the Joint Income to £30,000 some residents might feel that working extra hours might result in them losing their homes.

Councillor Halden called a Point of Order at 8.56pm to go straight to the vote.

Councillor B. Rice explained to Members how hard it was for ordinary young people of Thurrock who did not want to rely on the state to be able to buy a home.

Councillor B. Rice stated that even for the "Right to Buy" scheme young people could not even afford the deposit.

Councillor Gledhill called for a Point of Order – stating that Councillor Halden had called Point of Order at 8.56pm to go straight to vote. He asked that Legal check the constitution for the correct process.

The Deputy Mayor invited the Chamber to vote on the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED

- 1. That the changes included in the base budget for 2016/17 be agreed.**

2. That the 1% rent reduction outlined in the Summer Budget be noted.
3. That a 1% increase in de-pooled service charges for 2016/17 be agreed.
4. That a 2.5% increase in garage rents for 2016/17 be agreed.
5. That a 1.5% increase in to central heating charges in 2016/17 be agreed.
6. That a 2.5% increase in traveller's sites rents be agreed.

150. Treasury Management Strategy 2016-17

Councillor J. Kent, Leader of the Council, presented the report which set out the Annual Borrowing and Investment Strategy and the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement. It was stated that the function had again contributed towards protecting front line services and would be used to facilitate the housing development programme for the borough; thorough building schemes such as Gloriana.

Councillor J. Kent stated that it was unfair for Councillor Hebb to ask why the Council were not doing more to help residents buy their own homes when schemes like Gloriana and Shared Equity were available.

Councillor J. Kent summed up by stating that the report was important in what it aimed to achieve and deliver and therefore he moved the recommendations.

Councillor Gledhill thanked Sean Clark for the excellent report and that it delivered what the borough needed to improve, which in turn would improve the business rate income.

Councillor Ray thanked Councillor J. Kent for his presentation and Sean Clark for the thorough report.

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

RESOLVED

1. That the Council approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2016/17 and its application to 2015/16 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2016/17 and its application to 2015/16.
2. That the Council approve the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in the report.

3. **That the delegate the approval of any changes to the Prudential Indicators to Cabinet where required due to the delivery mechanism for affordable homes in the borough as outlined in the report**
4. **That the Council note the revised 2015/16 and 2016/17 Treasury Management projections as set out in the report.**

151. Thurrock Local Plan: Issues and Options (Stage 1) and Design Strategy Consultations

Councillor Speight, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, introduced the report following the 12 February 2014 Cabinet giving authorisation for the preparation of a new Local Plan to guide the future development of Thurrock.

The preparation and publication of the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) Consultation represented the first key stage in the plan making process and provided the local community and stakeholders with their first opportunity to help shape the future development of the borough.

Councillor Speight stated that a draft Thurrock Design Strategy for public consultation will also be published. The intention of this Strategy was to promote the higher standards of design in Thurrock and provide detailed guidance to developers and landowners.

The consultation of both the Issues and Options and the Strategy would run for a six week period beginning on Friday 26 February.

Councillor Hebb stated that every resident in Thurrock needed to be engaged and encouraged to read and contribute to the consultation process.

Councillor S. Little asked how specifically the engagement of residents in rural communities would take place.

Councillor Ojetola welcomed and thanked the portfolio holder for his report and stated that on Planning Committees discussions had taken place on grey areas of the development plan and that it was a good opportunity for everyone to contribute to the way forward. Councillor Ojetola also wished David Bull a well-deserved retirement.

Councillor Gledhill also thanked David Bull for his hard work and was sorry to see him go.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for the recommendation and that it was important for the Council to get the consultation right and obtain as many views of local residents as possible.

Councillor Hamilton asked for an update on the renovation the State Cinema in Grays. Councillor Speight would provide an update outside of the committee.

Councillor Jones stated that it was an excellent report and that Officers had attended local forums and explained to residents in rural areas in the past, which he felt might help Cllr S. Little's community.

Councillor Speight would liaise with Councillor S. Little on how best to consult with rural communities outside of the committee.

At 9.16pm, the Deputy Mayor moved a motion to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11.1 to allow the meeting to continue beyond the 2.5 hour time limit until completion of business. Members indicated their agreement to the proposal.

Councillor G. Rice stated how important this document was and how it attracted a high network of families; with regard to the timetable could this Plan move forward before the Lower Thames Crossing or Option D had been agreed. Councillor Speight stated that the consultation paper consisted of 40 questions some of which related to the Lower Thames Crossing. Councillor Speight would provide an update in writing of progress to Members once this information was to hand.

Councillor Speight also stated that outreach work was to take place with proposed road shows. Dates and times of these roadshows were not known at present but these would be provided to Members.

Councillor Speight thanked David Bull for all his hard work and contributions and moved the recommendations in the report.

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

RESOLVED

That the Council authorise public consultation on both the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 1) Consultation Document and the Thurrock Local Plan Design Strategy Document.

152. Constitution Working Group - Governance Review

Councillor J. Kent, Leader of the Council, introduced the interim report following a governance review where the constitution working group had met over the last year to discuss best practices and potential protocols.

It was recommended that the setting of the Council Tax Base and the Determining the Collection Fund Balance should be delegated to the section 151 Officer.

Members were then referred to 14 other areas of the constitution working group which they seek the permission of Council to continue investigating and exploring before coming back to Council.

Councillor Ojetola thanked the Constitution Working Group for their hard work, time and openness. It was suggested that a time frame be added to the recommendations and asked that this item be returned to Council for an update.

Councillor Ray, as a member of the Constitution Working Group, thanked all Members that turned up the meetings. He noted that no UKIP member was on this group.

Councillor J. Kent agreed the urgency of this document but due to time constraints this item might not appear on the agenda in time for Annual Council. It was recommended that it was brought back in September 2016.

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

RESOLVED

- 1. That the options discussed at Constitutional Working Group set out in the report were investigated further for best practice and that potential protocols, changes to procedures or draft amendments to the Constitution be developed for consideration where appropriate.**
- 2. That the pursuant to the recommendation that the function of setting the Council Tax Base and Determining the Collection Fund Balance be delegated to the section 151 Officer.**

153. Report of the Cabinet Member for Education

Councillor J. Kent, Leader of the Council, directed Members to the report in the agenda and reiterated that no matter what the status of a school was in the borough, the Council remained determined to work with everyone at that place of learning and offer help where required to ensure that school was as good as it could be.

Councillor J. Kent briefly commented on:

- Thurrock Education Alliance - excellent progress in developing strong partnership work both between schools of all types and the Council.
- Thurrock Education Awards - how pleased Councillor J. Kent was to see so many Members at the awards in November which were a true celebration of the success of the Council schools.
- Early Years - Continue to improve and shows a further rise in pupils achieving a Good level of Development.
- Key Stage 1 - At, or very close, to the national average.

- Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – Confident that each NEET in the borough is known to the Council and that the number of under 16s is below average.
- Continuation of the Arts and Cultural Entitlement – There were now 28 schools involved in the pathfinder programme commissioned by the Royal Opera House.
- GCSE Results – Saw a dip locally and nationally following the change in grade boundaries.

Councillor Ojetola left the Council Chambers at 9.30pm

Councillor Gledhill stated that 1 in 5 jobs were logistically based in Thurrock and asked the Leader of the Council what help was available to re-train adults or those later in life to find logistic or non-logistic employment. Councillor J. Kent stated that the Council was working with the Thurrock Business Board and industrial experts in the borough, including the Ports, to get a logistic academy up and running to enable adults to re-train.

Councillor Halden asked what plans were in place in helping smaller schools or those schools that stand alone to help nurture relationships with each other.

Councillor J. Kent stated there were some small schools in close proximity to each other which some have already federated but stated that it would be a real mistake for the Council to be prescriptive about the right size of a multi academy trust. The Council would offer any help, guidance or support for those schools that would like to merge.

Councillor S. Little asked with INSPIRE what specific schemes were available for Thurrock care leavers. Councillor J. Kent referred to a scheme promoted by The Prince's Trust who work with all care leavers; the Princes Trust had invited Members to see The Prince's Trust in action and would encourage all Members to do this.

Councillor Kerin asked for information on the regional school commissioner responsible for raising standards in the Academy in Thurrock. Councillor J. Kent stated that academies were not accountable to local authorities or to the minister but accountable to the regional school commissioner for the east, Tim Culson, based in Cambridge who had been invited to join the education alliance to drive up standards in academies.

Councillor Gupta thanked Councillor J. Kent for an excellent report and asked if a school that was not achieving high standards what help was given by the Council to that school. Councillor J. Kent commented that this depended on the school's individual circumstances and that generally support was provided by the education alliance and various sub-groups also the PEER groups between schools.

154. Report of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection

Councillor Potheary introduced the report which covered a very wide range of statutory services with the overall aim of protecting the public and developing the community in Thurrock. In doing so, Councillor Potheary highlighted some of the key achievements of the Portfolio:

- Public Protection brings together a number of services designed to keep Thurrock residents safe and include Environmental Protection, Civil Protection, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, Trading Standards, Licensing, Health and Safety and the Food Safety Team.
- Highlight from this year is the focus on pursuing Fly Tippers – With the result of 13 offences so far this year with further prosecutions in the pipeline.
- Excellent work on trading standards – from faulty hover boards to unhealthy, illegal imported puppies, work continues by the team to keep Thurrock residents safe.
- A large part of this role has been working with Essex Police and holding them to account.
- As Portfolio Holder, attending on the Police & Crime Panel in Chelmsford holding the Police Crime Commissioner to account on Thurrock's behalf.
- Concerns over the recent inspection on the Essex Police which echoed some of the major concerns of Thurrock on Police cuts.
- Parking regulation and enforcement management – An increase in train commuters parking in residential areas has resulted in the implementation of resident parking permits.
- Community development across the borough to build really strong communities.

Councillor Gledhill asked how the Council could force landlords and owners of public living spaces to clean up rubbish.

Councillor Roast suggested that the Council invite the Chief Constable and the Crime Commissioner back to Council to discuss what plans they have to keep Thurrock residents safe.

Councillor Potheary apologised for not being at January Council and if Members were in agreement she would invite the Chief Constable and the Crime Commissioner back to Council.

Councillor Hague left the Council Chambers at 9.48pm

Councillor Cherry commented on the nuisance of quad bikes in the Chadwell St Mary Ward and asked what more could the portfolio holder do to stop this. Councillor Potheary agreed that it was anti-social behaviour taking place in public spaces and that communication with Essex Police had taken place. Councillor Potheary urged residents to report every incident as the Police were looking for trends in data.

Councillor Cherry asked what measures were being taken to secure Claudian Way against Traveller incursions. Councillor Potheary did not have this information to hand but would supply Councillor Cherry with an update.

Councillor Kerin asked the portfolio holder what the pollution levels were in London Road, Grays. Councillor Potheary stated that London Road was one of the worst areas for bad air population and that an Air Pollution Plan was in place.

155. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that one question to the Leader of the Council had been received and no questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee were received.

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

156. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

A report from Councillor Cathy Kent regarding Coalhouse Fort was tabled at the meeting.

157. Minutes of Committees

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

158. 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.

159. Motion submitted by Councillor Aker

Councillor Aker introduced his Motion and requested that it be altered to accommodate Councillor Gerrish's amendment but to change the word "or" for "and". Councillor Aker felt that this was a small change which had a significant impact. The meeting agreed to this alteration and it was seconded by Councillor Snell.

The Motion therefore read as follows:

“Thurrock Council calls on C2C rail company to return to its pre-December 13th timetable and to swiftly add sufficient carriages to the current timetable to adequately cover the demand for services in Thurrock”.

Councillor Aker stated that the Motion had been raised due to the chaos the changes to the C2C timetables on the 13 December 2015 had caused residents. Councillor Aker confirmed that he met with C2C in December who promised flexibility in elements of the timetable and that more carriages would be provided.

Councillor Aker urged Members to put pressure on C2C to deal with these issues now and to seek advice from the legal team to identify if C2C were in breach of the franchise agreement.

Councillor Gerrish proposed the tabled amendment which read as follows and was seconded by Councillor J. Kent:

“Thurrock Council calls on C2C rail company to return to its pre-December 13th timetable or to swiftly add sufficient carriages to the current timetable to adequately cover the demand for services in Thurrock”.

Councillor Kent supported the amendment which sent a clear message to C2C that since the franchise of C2C the service had worsened.

Councillor G. Rice, as a commuter on C2C, stated the service was unacceptable and had concerns over the safety of passengers and urged the Chief Executive to meet with C2C.

Councillor Gerrish provided the Members with figures on the current number of peak time trains and carriages for Grays, Chafford Hundred and Ockendon stations.

Councillor B. Little stated the only agenda item on the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March was C2C. Unfortunately no representative from C2C was available to attend. It was apparent that the changes in the timetable and the number of carriages had not worked. Items of work proposed by C2C on signalling and a dual line were in the pipeline.

Councillor B. Little stated that emergency steps needed to be done by C2C to ensure the safety of Thurrock residents.

Councillor Halden supported Councillor Gerrish's Motion and that C2C needed to act before the summer on health and safety grounds to ensure the safety of passengers.

Councillor Worrall stated that consideration should be given to those residents who did not have their own transport and with the growth in the Tilbury Docks area the need for more carriages was essential.

Councillor Ray stated that C2C had confirmed that they had reached their maximum capacity and that work was proposed on the braking systems and extending tracks.

Councillor Gledhill stated that it was unacceptable that C2C were not able to attend the Overview & Scrutiny in March and that C2C should be made accountable for these changes and that consultation with C2C was vital for future plans of this service.

Councillor Speight agreed that bringing back just the service prior to the 13 December would not benefit all passengers.

Councillor Hamilton stated that if there were no other choices available to passengers than using C2C this was their only option.

Councillor Snell stated that the new timetable appeared to be a classic case of computer modelling not working in practice. The service needed to be improved by C2C and the current situation of passengers, including pregnant women, having to stand was unacceptable.

Councillor Gupta left the Council Chambers at 10.25pm

As mover of the amendment, Council Gerrish summed up by welcoming the good debate amongst Members.

As mover of the altered original Motion, Councillor Aker stated that it was crucial that no wiggle room was given to C2C and that it was imperative that the service be improved.

The Deputy Mayor called a vote on Councillor Gerrish's amendment:

For : 12

Against : 25

Abstain : 0

The Deputy Mayor declared the amendment lost.

The Deputy Mayor called a vote on the substantive altered motion, the Chamber voted overwhelmingly in favour of the motion and the Deputy Mayor declared the altered motion carried.

Councillors Key, Palmer and Tolson left the Council Chambers at 10.31pm

160. Motion submitted by Councillor Jones

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda, was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Snell who reserved his right to speak later. The Motion read as follows:

In light of recent events where the Borough of Thurrock was brought to a virtual standstill on the 28th January and 9th February because of events relating to the Dartford crossing, we request that Thurrock Council send a letter to both Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Services to rethink their proposals to drastically cut essential services to the borough of Thurrock and work with Highways England on an action plan to combat the chronic congestion that affects the whole Borough during such incidents.

A proposed amendment to Motion 2 had been submitted by Councillor Gledhill and seconded by Councillor Halden.

In light of recent events where the Borough of Thurrock was brought to a virtual standstill on the 28th January and 9th February because of events relating to the Dartford Crossing, we request that Thurrock Council send a letter to both Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue Services to work with Thurrock Council and Highways England on an action plan to combat the chronic congestion that affects the whole Borough during such incidents.

Councillor Gledhill thanked Councillor Jones for putting the Motion forward. The amendment was proposed to differentiate the interpretation of the need of change for the two services and how they should be working with external partners to ensure they were able to implement the efficiencies they proposed. Councillor Gledhill reminded Members of the two recent congestion incidents and stated that having reductions in the Police and Fire Services would not have made any difference in these situations and that the Government could not be blamed for high winds and diesel spills.

Councillor Gledhill stated that the proposals for change that have been put forward would not affect their ability to respond to calls and stated what needed to be done was for the Police, Fire Service, Thurrock Council and Highways England to get together to talk and ensure when incidents like these happen they were dealt with appropriately.

Councillor C. Holloway stated he was in support of the original Motion, as further retraction of services would affect the health and safety of the borough.

Councillor Speight stated that he agreed with the original Motion, it covered all the ground needed but stated that any further discussions should be wider ranged across the borough to ensure that the Ports were included in strategic discussions.

Councillor Hebb stated that having a plan between the Council, Highways England and the emergency services was vital and supported Councillor Gledhill's amendment.

Councillor J. Kent, spoke against Councillor Gledhill's amendment and confirmed that the Chief Executive had met with the Police at a high level since those two incidents to look at a plan to get police officers onto key roundabouts and junctions and keep the traffic flowing. Councillor J. Kent

stated that this could not be done if cuts were continually being made to the Police Service.

Councillor Jones summed up by stating how passionate he was about the proposed cuts to Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue and Thurrock should be considered as a special case as it is the industrial hub of Essex. Councillor Jones stated to Members that these cuts were unacceptable and that if a major incident did occur there may not be sufficient services available to cope.

Councillor Halden stated that bringing Fire and Police Service was a good way forward together but no number of resources could fix these congestions.

Councillor Snell stated that some perspective was needed on the situation was required and there was no need to change the Motion.

Councillor Gledhill stated that it would be the tax payers who would pay for any extra services.

Councillor Jones agreed that shared premises between the Essex Police and Essex Fire and Rescue was a good idea.

The Deputy Mayor called a vote on the Cllr Gledhill's amendment. The Chamber voted overwhelmingly against the amendment and the Deputy Mayor declared the amendment lost.

The Deputy Mayor called a vote on the original Motion:

For : 26

Against : 0

Abstain : 12

The Deputy Mayor declared the Motion was carried.

The meeting finished at 10.57 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