

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 27 July 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Mayor), Tunde Ojetola (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell (*arrived 7.50*), Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Deborah Stewart, Pauline Tolson, Aaron Watkins and Kevin Wheeler

Apologies: Councillors Bukky Okunade and Michael Stone

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
David Lawson, Deputy Head of Legal & Monitoring Officer
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.

The Mayor invited Father Paul from Milton Keynes to lead those present in prayer and a one minute's silence was held as a mark of respect to reflect the recent tragedies that had taken place around the world.

27. Minutes

Councillor Allen requested an amendment to the minutes as it was himself that presented the Petition on behalf of the residents of Lansbury Gardens and not Councillor Collins as stated in the minutes.

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

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 29 June 2016 were approved as a correct record.

28. Items of Urgent Business

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

29. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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

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

The Mayor announced that the itinerary of her mayoral events for this year would be emailed to all members and would be grateful for members' support.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, firstly stated that on behalf of the Administration and the Council he welcomed the appointment of the new Prime Minister, Theresa May, and congratulated her on forming a new government. Councillor Gledhill stated that he would be writing to members of her administration team to secure the best positive outcomes for Thurrock.

He also stated that work to improve the environment across Thurrock was ongoing at a pace with the Administration's commitment to "Clean It, Cut It, Fill It".

At the last Cabinet meeting it had been agreed that tougher enforcement powers to crack down on those blighting the borough with litter would be introduced and a public awareness campaign would shortly be underway to inform residents on how to change their behaviour or risk being fined.

The new Trade Ways Team was working their way through the borough offering business council trade waste as a new business opportunity.

The new Waste Data Systems were currently being installed to allow street and ground maintenance teams to log and see all service requests via the "Report It" mobile application. This would be accessible through the council contact centre, the communications team and be available on the council web site. Councillor Gledhill stated that the Administration was still committed to a weekly bin collection.

Starting next week the Thurrock section of the A13 would be cleaned up with the grass being cut and litter picked up and hoped that the Highways Agency would follow suit.

Councillor Gledhill stated that it would not be possible to pick every piece of litter up and encouraged residents to not drop litter, dispose of larger items appropriately and to report those that do.

Flooding at Grays Beach at the weekend was caused by high tides and the Council was working with Anglian Water to clean up the damage and ensure this did not happen again.

Progress had been made and further works were planned to fulfil the Administration's vision of making Thurrock a safer and cleaner place to live.

Finally, the Leader took the opportunity to thank Richard Parkin, Head of Environment, for his contributions and hard work to the Council and wished him well in his new role.

31. 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.

32. 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 a member who wished to present two petitions at the meeting.

Councillor Duffin presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Limeslade Close on the lack of parking spaces for residents.

Councillor Duffin presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Southend Road, Plashet Close and Abbots Drive on the introduction of parking permits.

33. Petitions Update Report

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

34. 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, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Council Chamber that he wished to make the following changes:

- For Councillor Piccolo be appointed as member of the Planning Committee
- For Councillor Piccolo be appointed a member of the Standard and Audit Committee.
- For Councillor Ojetola be appointed a substitute member of the Standard and Audit Committee.

Councillor Snell, Leader of the UKIP Group, informed the Council Chamber he had no changes to make.

Councillor Kent, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Council Chamber that he wished to make the following change:

- For Councillor Liddiard be appointed a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Piccolo be appointed a member of the Planning Committee.**
- 2. That Councillor Piccolo be appointed a member of the Standard and Audit Committee.**
- 3. That Councillor Ojetola be appointed a substitute member of the Standard and Audit Committee.**
- 4. That Councillor Liddiard be appointed a member of the Health and Wellbeing Board.**

35. Review of Electoral Arrangements

Councillor Hebb introduced the report which provided members with background information to enable them to make a decision on the recommendation received from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Full Council consider consulting with the communities in Thurrock on the potential changes to the Council's electoral arrangements.

Councillor Hebb pointed out an error in the report on page 37, paragraph 2.8, fourth line down, third word in which it should have said country rather than borough.

Councillor Hebb stated that residents did not feel that their votes counted and made enough of a difference to their lives. He stated that members were close enough to the electorates to know that and that it was time to potentially rectify this. In the past the debate on elections and the future of elections had taken place within the four walls of the Council Chamber. It was now the intention to take the question of electoral reform to the heart of the community to give all residents the opportunity to have their say.

The report proposed that the Council changed its electoral cycle and opt for a whole council election taking place four-yearly, rather than by the current method of elections by thirds and recommended that a public consultation be undertaken before any final decision can be made.

Councillor Hebb stated that this consultation exercise was key and the need to give residents the opportunity to respond. It was proposed that the consultation be carried out using:

- Social media
- Letters
- Reference Point on the Council website
- Forums
- Consultations with elected members and local members of parliament
- Press releases

In early 2017 a hard copy format of the consultation would be sent out as a reminder to all residents with Council Tax notices.

Councillor Duffin stated that he could not see any point or benefit from the four-yearly elections and that a consultation would not work. Councillor Duffin suggested that elections should be left as they currently were.

Councillor Spillman agreed with Councillor Duffin and asked Councillor Hebb how much the consultation would cost. At present there was a real connection between the elected candidates and residents due to the yearly nature of elections and did not see any point or benefit of the consultation.

Councillor G Rice stated that from previous experience of four-yearly terms at Essex County Council members 'go to sleep' and totally disconnect with the public. The public should be able to vote year by year and hold councillors to account.

Councillor J Kent stated that he would support the consultation going ahead and give the public the opportunity to speak but had concerns that the key motivator for changing to four-yearly elections was to save money and democracy should not be done on the cheap.

Councillor Aker stated that there should be more opportunities for residents to get involved and engage more in the voting process but believed the costings of the consultations would be far greater than the projected savings and would not be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Hamilton believed that members would become disconnected with the public if the four-yearly term were to go ahead.

Councillor Watkins stated he supported the consultation process at this stage as it was up to residents to decide how members get elected.

Councillor V Holloway stated that she supported the recommendation in the report which had been received from an overview and scrutiny committee and that the engagement with residents should continue. Councillor V Holloway asked Councillor Hebb how many responders would be required to make the consultation a valid sample before this was discussed next time.

Councillor Snell stated that he had a different opinion to the rest of the members of his party on this item and that he would vote in favour for the recommendation to give residents an opportunity to speak and that a figure be agreed that could be accepted as a representative sample for responses.

Councillor Gledhill agreed that residents should be given the opportunity to have their say and would be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he would be willing to back the recommendations in respect of the consultation but had concerns over the cost of the consultation. To ensure that the wording in the recommendation was neutral he felt that a valid sample, 33 per cent, could be used as a turn out figure.

Councillor B Rice stated she would not be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Kerin stated that he agreed with the consultation and debate should be undertaken when feedback was available.

Councillor Jones stated that from experience consultations do not get a good response rate and would not be supporting this recommendation.

Councillor Hebb summed up from his report and thanked those members who agreed that residents should have a say. Councillor Hebb stated that a cross party discussion would need to take place before a final decision and from an operational point of view this discussion had to be informed by feedback from the consultation. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee could look at the wording of the recommendation relating to the consultation and the costs of consultation. In addition the consultation would be digitalised and hard copies would be sent out with Council Tax notices.

The Mayor called a vote on the report recommendation:

For : 31

Against : 15

The Mayor declared the recommendation be carried.

RESOLVED

That a public consultation exercise be undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements relating to the proposals to change the cycle of electing councillors to Thurrock Borough Council from elections by thirds to whole-Council elections, with effect from May 2018.

36. Annual Cabinet Member Report for Education and Health

Councillor Halden introduced the report and stated that he was delighted to be presenting this report tonight as the Cabinet Member for Education and

Health and that the mission and overriding priority was to tackle mediocrity to ensure that Thurrock can fulfil its potential.

Councillor Halden stated that the three key areas of tackling mediocrity in Thurrock were:

- Council Leadership – Display true commitment to leadership to improve public services.
- Expectations – Be more rigorous in challenging services and becoming residents' champions to hold poor general practitioners and Primary Care facilities to account.
- Early Years Support – A role as a corporate parent or in the role monitoring the causes of child poverty or neglect and to view poor early years support as a serious threat to the long term future of the borough.

Councillor Halden explained the reason for bringing Education and Health Directorates together as one report which was to ensure that any gaps found between education and employment outcomes with associated poor physical and mental health outcomes were bridged.

Councillor Halden updated members on the number of visits and meetings attended in his time so far as portfolio holder.

Councillor Halden stated he was grateful to be given the opportunity to undertake a job that he relished and would give it his all. Councillor Halden then thanked his party colleagues, officers in his directorates and the residents of Thurrock.

Councillor V Holloway asked what authority the scorecards would have and why general practitioners would sign up to them. Councillor Halden stated that providers would be held to account if services did not improve and peer pressure would be evident amongst providers.

Councillor Gerrish welcomed Councillor Halden to his role and shared his passion with other members that young people do well in education, be set up for life and the healthcare be the best for residents. With regard to the much reduced role in the local authorities post academies, Councillor Gerrish asked Councillor Halden if the educational budget could be radically cut or had he changed his mind now that he was in office. Councillor Halden referred members to past actions of Councillor Gerrish's portfolio holder and that he should not be lecturing him.

Councillor Jones was concerned that there were not enough provisions for senior schools and insufficient monies were being spent on obesity which was at a high level in the borough. Councillor Halden stated the reason his lobby unit was in place was to holistically look at the entire school system and to look at where schools need to plan forward. The redesign of the children's centres and bringing the health and education strands together would ensure that children get comprehensive and joined up care.

Councillor Watkins asked Councillor Halden for a performance update on the schools in his ward. Councillor Halden stated the results at the moment were provisional. Corringham Primary and Gable Hall had been outstanding and showed a good example where multi academy trusts work.

Councillor Fish asked Councillor Halden what other strategies were in place should the plans to enforce disability health checks by general practitioners failed. Councillor Halden stated that general practitioners would be held to account for undertaking these checks and that the scorecard could be used to improve the service.

Councillor Spillman stated that Aveley had a lack of general practitioners, as well as issues in recruiting and retaining general practitioners and that over the last 12 months this area had lost four general practitioners. He asked Councillor Halden how long before key worker housing would be available to encourage general practitioners to the area. Councillor Halden stated he thanked Steve Munday, the head teacher at William Edwards School, who had shown him the key worker housing used on their site and how this had impacted on teacher retention. The final ideas were not known but would be shared with overview and scrutiny when known and members would have the opportunity to feed into it.

Councillor Kerin asked Councillor Halden to guarantee that the many multi academy trusts in the borough would provide school places in the areas they were needed and not where there was already a surplus. Councillor Halden stated that looking at data projections there would not be many areas with surplus places. A vital part of the portfolio holder's role was the building of relationships between council, schools and providers.

Councillor J Kent stated that as the Council were currently in dialogue for free schools in the borough this could put pressure on some schools or even result in the closure of schools. He asked Councillor Halden how he would ensure that this did not happen. Councillor Halden confirmed that parents should be given the choice to decide which school they send their children to. He had the support of officers and the advice given to ensure that support was targeted.

Councillor Collins asked Councillor Halden for an update on Basildon Hospital. Councillor Halden stated that the hospital had much improved since 2010 which had been down to the leadership of governors. There was still a very substantial operational deficit which was being tackled. The Sustainability and Transformation Plan and the Success Regime were important to ensure a system wide transformation would be delivered.

Councillor Snell expressed concern that the Success Regime and the Sustainability and Transformation Plan would result in changes to the health care in the borough and could the portfolio holder ensure that communication was right and that residents were made aware of what was happening. Councillor Halden stated that as part of the Engagement Panel he had already written to express his displeasure on how some of the consultations

had been carried out and the requirement to consult with Thurrock was vital for these projects to work.

37. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and seven 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.

38. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

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

39. Minutes of Committees

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

Members were informed that the General Services Minutes for the 17 May 2016 should have been included in the agenda item. Copies of these minutes were tabled.

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

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

41. To consider motions from Members in the order in which they were submitted

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

Thurrock Council calls upon the government to introduce legislation to provide for a right of "Real Recall" of underperforming local government councillors on grounds similar to those put before parliament when MPs debated "Real Recall" in 2014.

Councillor Duffin introduced the Motion, and in doing so, explained that if legislation was passed Thurrock Council could then work to implement "Real Recall".

Councillor Duffin explained that if a councillor was underperforming the Council would be able to deal with the matter instantly and not have to wait for their four year term to finish. The recall mechanism would potentially see 20

per cent of registered voters campaigning to get a councillor removed for the following situations:

- Misconduct
- Failure to Represent
- Crossing the Floor
- Breaking Electoral Promises

This motion was to put the power back in the hands of the voters.

A proposed amendment to the Motion had been submitted by Councillor Hebb and seconded by Councillor Gledhill. The amended Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council calls upon the government to introduce legislation to provide for a right of "Recall" of local government councillors, alongside Thurrock Council also exploring the possibilities to introduce its own local recall scheme.

Councillor Hebb introduced his amendment and stated that it was an important matter to consider and that it was announced at Council last year as an Administration policy to ensure that councillors who do not behave were held to account.

The amendment was made to ensure that the work already undertaken by the Council had not been overlooked.

Councillor J Kent stated that he would be supporting the amendment and stated that the principal behind Recall was right. He stated that over the past 20 years the vast majority of elected members of all parties had stood for election to do the best they could to improve the area they lived in. Councillor J Kent stated that if recall was brought in it would be used very rarely. He stated that the current six month rule can be waived when health matters were involved and that the current regime could be tightened up. The council could also publish the casework undertaken by councillors to show their activity in office. Councillor J Kent went on further to say that some transparency was needed to give residents the tools to hold councillors to account which they currently do not have.

Councillor Aker stated that he supported Councillor Duffin's motion and told members that if the Real Recall were to pass he believed that it would never get used. Having agreed with Councillor J Kent's comment that people get involved with politics for the right reasons Councillor Aker felt that the passing of this motion would demonstrate that councillors were already happy to hold members to account.

At 9.15pm, the Mayor moved a motion to suspend Council Procedure Rule 11.1 to allow the meeting to continue beyond the 2.5 hour time limit until completion of business. Members indicated their disagreement to the proposal and that the meeting should finish at 9.30pm.

Councillor Gledhill also agreed with Councillor Kent's comments and stated that some clarity would be required on what was being done by a councillor and how often this was done. Councillor Gledhill stated that he was in favour of Recall and that it would be used very rarely and would need to be thought through properly which could then be used as a good example for other councils to use. Councillor Gledhill was in favour of the amendment and looked forward to discussing it at the Constitution Working Group and to ensure that residents had an input.

Councillor Hebb stated that all parties were in agreement in a higher accountability of councillors and although there would be a long way to go he stated Thurrock Council should make a start and put Thurrock on the map for open democracy.

Councillor Duffin summed up by confirming that it was 20 per cent of registered voters in the initial motion and not 5 per cent as Councillor Hebb quoted. Councillor Duffin stated that if the Amendment was passed, he would vote against the Bill as this did not allow voters to recall anyone. The amendment did nothing to resolve the issue and urged members to vote in favour of the original motion.

Councillor Duffin requested a requisition vote be undertaken.

The Mayor called a vote on Councillor Hebb's amendment.

Upon being put to the vote, 28 Members voted in favour of the Amendment with 16 Members voted against, whereupon the Mayor declared the Amendment carried.

Councillor Duffin stated that his request for a requisition vote be withdrawn.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion as amended.

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

The meeting finished at 9.30 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**

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Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 27 July 2016

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

One question was submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Coxshall

In 2014 I raised the issue of the £600,000 gifted to the Council by the Heritage Lottery Fund to spend on improvements to the Mardyke Valley. Can you tell me what improvements have been made since 2014 and if any improvements are currently ongoing?

Councillor Coxshall

Well, I never thought I'd be answering questions from Mr Perrin! In 2005 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded £611,000, like you asked in the last question in 2014, this was for a three year Mardyke Valley project on behalf of, led by, Thames Chase and including Thurrock Council. Although the project finished in 2008, it included provision for the ten-year management plan produced to make work to deliver the project rather than make further improvements at the Mardyke Valley.

Mayor

Mr Perrin, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I do not know if you or any other Councillors have recently walked the Mardyke Valley, either from the Davey Down entrance or the Ship Lane entrance. I have attempted to do so twice in the last seven days, yesterday 26 July being the most recent. I had to walk a gauntlet of brambles, nettles, and in some areas ankle-deep pools of stinking, stagnant water on what was supposed to be designated walkways. I also climbed the steep stepped walkway, which had a handrail rendered useless owing to the overgrown vegetation. The entrance to this step way is located off Cullen Grove, near number 52. In short, far from being a pleasant walk, it was a hazardous journey, fraught with danger. Should you consider my comments to be an exaggeration, I ask you, and any other Councillor, join me in a walk along the Mardyke Valley so that you and they can judge if the £600,000 has been well spent and provided the people of Thurrock with an asset that is value for money.

Councillor Coxshall

As we've said, Mr Perrin, the £600,000 was spent in a three-year period. I think Councillor Kent answered this question to you as well in 2014 actual capital works a ten-year management plan was put in place and reviewed in

2014. In 2014 it showed that this Council had spent £200,000 extra maintaining that in 2014. There have been no figures in the past five years because it hasn't finished in 2018. This Council at the moment is reviewing the alternative management options at this very moment for the Mardyke, in place for what happens after 2018. I take your point that there are issues around the walkways, the public walkways, but I think every Councillor in here has had said issues, I know personally, my public footpaths have been impossible to walk around in certain places in Corringham, are very, very bad. As you know, we have "Clean it, Cut it, Fill it" and the problem is, what we have got to do is actually deliver a reasonable, clean, cut area. Two of those priorities I mentioned there, so I will certainly take that back, understand that we have got to do more there and actually look into why the management is failing, let's be honest. We're nearly at the end of the management plan for up to 2018, we then will look and see issues of how we can, who can carry on looking after that, from 2018 onwards, and whether that needs to come back to the Council or be into a private outsourced vehicle.

Mr Perrin

Thank you, Madam Mayor

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 27 July 2016

Item 12 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 8 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution

1. From Councillor Duffin to Councillor Gledhill

Is your Administration still proposing to only debate decisions and reports at Cabinet that have passed through pre-scrutiny at the overview and scrutiny committees first?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor, and thank you Councillor Duffin for your question. No, to be clear I said that all major decisions would go through the pre-scrutiny process before coming to Cabinet. The Cabinet has a specific role to make decisions, not just debate them. There are some decisions that would not go through scrutiny, such as the recent insurance report that came to Cabinet last week, certain procurement projects or indeed decisions that are deemed "urgent", for example if a road has collapsed and we need to spend vast sums of money from the capital fund to ensure that it is reopened. However I do feel that the scrutiny process is extremely important, I do feel that we have not used it properly in the past and we should start using it with pre-scrutiny as we go through for all those major decisions. It's not going to be as easy as I'd hoped, it's going to take some time to make sure that all these decisions can go through the process, because of course the previous administration didn't believe in this process so of course there will be some decisions that come in quick and not allow us to have enough time to go through the pre-scrutiny. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Duffin, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Duffin

Are you not worried that big decisions could take up to three months to then be made, because that's effectively what we're going to see with the move to a more committee system? If the big decisions need to be made, are we not going to force them through quickly?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Duffin. As said, there is obviously going to be some leading time into this. I would much prefer that there be more Overview and Scrutiny Committees held, to be brutally honest, and that would allow not only the Cabinet to be held to account more regularly, it would also enable Members to have a much bigger and longer oversight at some of the many complex things that we have to deal with as a Council and give residents confidence that we will hold ourselves to account and that we will answer questions that need to be answered.

Mayor

Councillor Duffin, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Duffin

I support your move to more of a committee system. I would just wonder though, that when you're moving more decisions away from Cabinet and down to the Committee system, do you not agree that paying yourself and your Conservative colleagues £120,000 a year of tax payers' money to make less decisions surely is a saving we should be looking to make?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Duffin. Again, as I said, we make the decisions; Overview and Scrutiny make recommendations, which is completely different. So we will still be held accountable, after it's gone to scrutiny or if it doesn't go to scrutiny on what we say; we of course could, as the last administration did, quite regularly just ignore the recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny. I don't think that's right, we should take that on board and that should be part of the built in process, it's the same as the built in process with any other Local Authority. So, no, it's not the kind of savings we should be looking at because if we went to a Committee system there would still be a Chair of the Committee earning the same kind of allowances so it would all be shifting from one area to another, so no, but thank you.

2. From Councillor Jones to Councillor Gledhill

Mayor

Councillor Jones, could you please read out your question as on the Agenda.

Councillor Jones

Thank you, Madam Mayor. The Conservative Administration's new agenda programme for Thurrock - Clean It, Cut It, Fill It. Has this been costed?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Jones. You will no doubt be, I should hope you're not surprised actually, to hear that the answer is yes, it has been costed. As with everything the Council does there is a cost and that will have to be factored into the level of service the Council supply to meet any requirements for this project, or indeed any of its projects.

Mayor

Councillor Jones, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Jones

I do Madam Mayor, thank you very much. The reason I ask this question, quite simply is because it was stated by yourself, you just stated it just now, major decisions at scrutiny, that all ideas, agenda programmes, before being advertised or implemented were to go through the process of the Scrutiny Committee so all could be involved in the decision making process before it came to Cabinet, and then on to Full Council. This agenda seemed to have escaped the net. Question two; could you inform the Chamber when these costings were carried out for this process?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Jones. Obviously it is still the decision of the Cabinet to decide what becomes a priority. You must remember, of course, that over the past two years you, and your party, have backed up the cuts that have been proposed by the former administration, and in this particular area came to somewhere in the region of £1.8 million and I think somewhere in the region of sixty staff being cut. So yes, we could have waited another three or four months to start making the borough look better, or we could have just grasped the nettle, if you'll excuse the pun there, and got on with the job, which we have. In response to 'when was this done?' this has been done over a period of time with officers coming forward with various sums for various different levels of service and I for one and indeed my Cabinet Member, Councillor Tolson, do not think we should go back to a period in time, for instance 2014 or 2012, with a certain amount of staff and certain amount of equipment, we should be looking forward to what we can do this year, what we can do next year and what we can do for all future years.

Mayor

Councillor Jones, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

Councillor Jones

I do, Madam Mayor. Thank you, Leader. You make it sound like I don't want a good borough, I do and I don't remember being part of that cut that you were on about and stuff like that. Now, we all know about the "fill it" part of this agenda programme, because the Council basically made us all aware that they are trialling a new system for filling in the potholes, which actually should have the effect of making the limited funds available go further. I've seen this in action and I must admit I'm quite impressed, and recently with the weather, both being extremes water and heat, it seems to be holding out quite well. Added to the fact that the Department for Transport also has allocated an additional £110,000 this year to Thurrock Council for pothole repairs, so for the "fill it" part of this agenda programme we all know where some of the money is coming from, where is the extra money coming from for the "clean it, cut it" part of the programme? Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you, Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Jones. This will come from existing budgets; it will not come from reserves. It will come from savings that we can make in-year, for instance we have a member of staff who is leaving us voluntarily and we will not be replacing that member of staff immediately. That saving for instance, the in-year saving in there will go towards the "clean it" aspect of it and there will be very similar viaments within the system to make sure that happens.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor Duffin to Councillor Tolson

Please could the Council publish on its website the monthly grass cutting calendar as many residents have concerns over the Council's promises to cut their grass and this way residents and Councillors can make sure that they are getting the promised services that they pay their Council Tax for?

Mayor

Councillor Tolson, could you please answer the question.

Councillor Tolson

Evening, Madam Mayor. Thank you for your question. Yes, we will be doing that because it's something I raised at my first meeting in June. We aim to be having it on within the next few weeks; maybe a month and we will be publishing parks and major routes cutting.

Mayor

Councillor Duffin, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Duffin

If it's just parks and major routes, what about all the other green spaces because myself and Councillor Jones had to go to the ends of the Earth to get a piece of grass that was apparently the fault of Newham, then another part that was the fault of DP World. Are we going to get actual solid detail on everything or are we just going to get the three biggest areas and everywhere else ignored?

Councillor Tolson

Yes, thank you very much. Well, as Councillor Gledhill alluded to earlier Madam Mayor, you will remember this because you chaired the July 2014 O&S Committee meeting where a saving, or cut, was brought forward of 46% of staff in street and parks, that equated to 59 posts being deleted. So if you've said 28 in parks and 28 in streets, the service has been under pressure. Now, when you're saying about 'Newham' are you talking about housing land? Once we've got consistency, and I will actually pay tribute to the small and dedicated team that we've had actually, who have worked extremely hard, and they have never known it like this because they've never had 59 posts deleted before, a 46% cut that UKIP colleagues of yours voted for in the February 2015 budget, so that is your UKIP and Labour legacy.

Mayor

Councillor Duffin, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Duffin

Just a point of information that it's your party butchering Local Government but we won't go down that route or present the graph of doom. I'll go back to the second question I actually asked and you didn't bother answering; will you give us information on every piece of Council grass, when it's being cut, or are you just going to give us the three big parks, because you didn't answer that question so I'll ask it again.

Councillor Tolson

No.

Mayor

Councillor Smith, could you please read your question out, as it appears on the Agenda.

2. From Councillor Smith to Councillor Gledhill

How many repeat visits (more than 3) for minor/intermediate and major repairs have TBC repairs contractors made in municipal year 2015-2016?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill, could you please answer the question.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Smith for another insightful question. Between April 2015 and March 2016, Mears reported that 2053 jobs had more than three appointments. On the average of around 30,000 repairs a year this is 6.84%. These repeat appointments were for visits and take into consideration the additional work that may be identified as part of it, for example the installation of a bath may then need new plastering, or indeed some tiling or some painting done which will then give you a repeat visit. At this time I have not been able to identify where residents have had repeat visits because the wrong traders turned up or the tradesman has turned up without the parts to complete the job, or where the wrong job has been booked. I will be asking officers to see if this can be drilled down to that level. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Smith, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Smith

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I'm bewildered at the number of times I hear that TBC contractors have had to revisit a resident's home to affect a repair, in fact it's ongoing, it's not a daily occurrence but it's certainly every week. Just last week a resident reported a leaking radiator and Councillor Gledhill will join me in not being impressed that five visits later the final contractor diagnosed a faulty pump, and I will certainly forward that to you if you wish. During this time the family with young children under ten were without hot water for nearly a week. Is this reasonable service?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you, Councillor Smith. On this individual case, no. Unfortunately I'd like to say that this was an individual case but I hear this all too regularly myself, where people are left without essential services within their house because either the wrong contractors turn up, or they're unable to fix it at that time, or for whatever reason. We've got to remember, of course, 2053 jobs where there are more than three appointments that really should be a daily occurrence, it's terrible to say but that's somewhere in the region of ten a day and it's not acceptable, absolutely not acceptable at all. If you'd like to pass me that particular case on, I will indeed look into it. I'll also be looking into the way that there should be an acceptable standard of services that a resident can expect, irrespective of what repairs need to take place, you're quite right, no family should be left

without hot water, for however long, we should at least be able to fix that or at least give them some form of alternative than their boiler.

Mayor

Councillor Smith, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Smith

Could we expect Thurrock Council's housing repair supplier to improve on this level of service, which Councillor Gledhill just touched upon, thus bringing to an end the merry-go-round of visits by contractors, and moreover would the Portfolio Holder seek to reinforce only tradespeople with the correct qualification and skill are deployed, and penalise the contractor when failing to affect a repair promptly?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you Councillor Smith. I'm beginning to think you've had my office bugged at times because these are exactly the problems that I wish to make sure are tackled. It is no point sending a carpenter out to do the job of a plumber. It is no point, as my own mother found out, to send a plumber to deal with an electricity problem. About a week ago I met with the Tenant Excellence Panel who informed me that the information that they have is that this part of the service is improving and that it is not as many. I have asked officers to try to back that up, to make sure that the figures they are getting from Mears correlates with the figures we're getting from Mears, and yes, it's just not acceptable if we have the wrong person turning up. I will be asking for a lot more information, and not just asking for that information but acting on it. I will also be sharing that obviously with Councillor Spillman who is the Shadow Member for Housing; indeed I've asked him to be included in the Tenants Excellence Panel meetings so he can hear, direct from those tenants that are dealing as part of the Excellence Panel with Mears and the repairs to see their views of what they see. Unfortunately, of course, we get a bit of a jaded view because we only get the ones that fail; they get the ones obviously that work first time. Thank you.

3. From Councillor B Rice to Councillor Gledhill

Thank you very much, Madam Mayor. Councillor Gledhill, how many Thurrock households are currently classified as homeless?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor, and thank you Councillor Rice for your question. The number of households defined by Statute for homelessness changes on a daily basis and we actively manage the service and try to help those in need. To answer the question I therefore asked for a snapshot of the last day of June to provide figures, it should be noted that we only have figures for those who approach the Local Authority for assistance not those that

approach other agencies. At the end of June we had 162 households that were going through the process of being assessed on whether they meet the statutory duty of homelessness or not. A further 82 households had been through the investigation stage, of which 81 had had their homelessness duty accepted and they were waiting for accommodation either private or social sector housing. 31 had been assessed as having no duty from the Local Authority and would be provided with advice and assistance. On that date, Thurrock Council had 85 households in temporary accommodation that were classed as homeless.

Mayor

Councillor B Rice, do you have a supplementary.

Councillor B Rice

Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Gledhill for those figures, and I wondered if you have had a chance to read, and I'm sure you have, the Thurrock Tenancy Policy, in particular the bit around succession. Now I'm really quite perturbed about this part of our policy and I just want to say a few things about it. It's a very complex policy because of the Localism Act in 2012 as you no doubt know. Residents who have been both informal and formal carers, or indeed are children of tenants are treated differently because of the 2012 Localism Act. Some are automatically given the right to succession, and some it's a discretionary look at with a panel, so all I'm asking you Councillor Gledhill, with no tricks or anything like that, I just want you to give your assurance that we can go and have a look at this policy again so that we can give some continuity to our residents, and that people will be treated equally across the board so we as councillors will be able to say 'this is the fact' and not 'well if you moved in before this date, or if you moved in after that'. I'm asking for that policy to be looked at, please. Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Rice. I probably should ask if there's a doctor or medic in the house, because some people might be shocked at my next answer, so shocked that they may actually need that help. I actually agree with Councillor Val Morris-Cook, who was Portfolio Holder for a number of years on this very subject. The Policy is not a stone tablet; it is not something that we etch out, whack on a shelf and leave until we decide to have a look at it again. It needs to be a living, breathing programme. I am more than happy for this, amongst other things on tenancy agreements that we have, to be looked at potentially to be changed, obviously in line with the Law and legislation. There is a number of new legislative changes coming through, as you know, that would have gone to Overview and Scrutiny I believe it was on the 21st, but I am more than happy for all of this to be reviewed. It is no point, as I say, having a slab of stone sitting on a shelf somewhere, it's not the way we should work as a Local Authority. Needs change monthly, needs change yearly, so we do need to make sure that we're

moving with the herd on this.

Mayor

Councillor B Rice, do you have a second supplementary question.

Councillor B Rice

No, I just want to say Thank you to Councillor Gledhill, thanks.

Mayor

Okay, thank you. Councillor J Kent could you please read your question out, as set on the Agenda.

4. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Tolson

There is a severe problem of dumping in back alleyways in the Grays Thurrock ward. This is of course not a new problem and not a problem confined to Grays Thurrock.

Does the portfolio holder have any plans for helping residents deal with this scourge?

Mayor

Councillor Tolson, could you respond.

Councillor Tolson

Thank you very much, Madam Mayor. Thank you, Councillor Kent, for your question. Just as there was an upward trend with fly-tipping in the borough our enforcement officers, there was six in the Public Protection team and six enforcement officers, were cut to two in the February '15 budget, supported by UKIP. So, we went from twelve to two at a time when the trend for flytipping was going up. Yes you know that we've brought an enforcement document forward, you know that we also have waste enforcement contracts now coming into force in the borough, there was a resource before but it was removed now it's being put back again. So, you are aware that we are concentrating on this matter at the moment.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Yes, Madam Mayor. I'm sure that residents will be glad that come September there will be a paper that goes to Cabinet that looks at enforcement. Until

then though, what practical steps can the Portfolio Holder outline to help residents to deal with and clear some of the rubbish?

Councillor Tolson

Thank you. So, we are going to have a clean-up of the borough, Madam Mayor, and we are going to be using CCTV because some residents that don't act in this deplorable way find it very antisocial and very irritating that other neighbours do act in that manner. So what we want to do is, we've already mapped where fly tips happen, predominantly it is Grays but it does happen across the borough too, so ideally what we want is witnesses and enforcement action if we get the evidence, but that is what we are proposing shortly. A campaign to stop it.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Yes. Again, an answer that's about enforcement and not dealing with the problem on the ground. I've yet to see a CCTV camera that can actually lift up a mattress and put it in a skip, perhaps that would be helpful Madam Mayor. In the William Street area of Grays residents have totally cleared the back alleyway between William Street and Arthur Street, but they're left with a good deal of vegetation. In an alleyway in John Street there are piled up a chest freezer, cans, bottles, mattresses. Residents are quite prepared to help clear the refuse but they need a skip. Will the Portfolio Holder undertake to meet residents half way and perhaps clear the weeds with weed killer in the one back alleyway, and provide a skip so that residents can clear the other?

Councillor Tolson

Well, as I said, we will be doing a pre-clean of the borough, and Councillor Kent has alluded to CCTV but he never asked for any in that area, and neither has any Councillor that represents that Ward.

Mayor

Councillor Barbara Rice, could you please read your question out as it appears on the Agenda?

5. From Councillor B Rice to Councillor Tolson

Thank you very much, Madam Mayor. Right, okay. Following reports of the council failing to cut grass at Blackshots leading to residents having to do the

job themselves can the portfolio holder explain what steps she is taking to ensure this doesn't happen again?

Councillor Tolson

Yes. Reports on this, Madam Mayor, are sketchy and, as with anything, if you want it cut in the borough, as I've told you, we've had less staff, assets sold, I told you that last month when I don't believe some Councillors were present. Something put in for repair, the spearhead, which is the first cut of the season, that didn't even get its MOT or service until June; it's supposed to be out cutting in the borough in March. So, you report it, that's the first thing and there isn't any interviews or reports coming through for Blackshots, but what we have done, because we was in such a shambolic situation, is we hired in a tractor, a trimax rotary and a flowell, prior to this Blackshots event because we needed equipment to get on with the job, and now we've just got another tractor on hire, a further tractor.

Mayor

Councillor B Rice, do you wish to raise a supplementary question.

Councillor B Rice

Well, thank you for letting us know just how many staff the previous administration disposed of. The issue, Madam Mayor, that I'm referring to tonight, and Councillor Tolson, is the football pitches – I'm going to pass these around – these are football pitches at Orsett Heath, football pitches, Madam Mayor that was raised and dug out and built from the proceeds of 106 monies, from the development over at Woodview. Okay? At the beginning of May they were in pristine condition and conformed to the football pitch maintenance schedule, okay? Which clearly states that we cannot have more than 60mm on any football pitch. Madam Mayor, I'm going to pass these around 'cause it's an absolute disgrace and I'm absolutely disgusted and I want to know how this is going to be rectified, 'cause it won't be rectified by a cut, Madam Mayor, it's gone back to heathland. Okay? Because of neglect we now have 4ft high thistles, all across the heath, okay? Not lovely pristine green grass, so it's not down to getting rid of staff, this is a problem that we need to have solved and we need to have solved now. We have continually in Chadwell-St-Mary reported week on week. The question is, when is it going to be resolved? That's the question, and how was it allowed, Madam Mayor, to get to almost 4ft high, and also – No! This is since May Councillor Halden! - Madam Mayor, this has been since May okay? That's when it's grown since. It's an absolute disgrace, complete waste of 106 monies and I want to know how we're going to rectify the situation.

Mayor

Councillor Tolson.

Councillor Tolson

Okay, thank you Madam Mayor. Well, I really can't understand why Councillor Barbara Rice is getting so animated given that the minutes of the CGS Committee in July '14 are a historical document and all the Committee Members on that expressed concern at the nearly 50% cut of staff. You wasn't here last month, I've told you that you've got rid of 59 posts in frontline street services and parks so if you've said 28, you've then later sold assets that we could've used for a window of time. The previous Portfolio didn't check on the spearhead and it went in for MOT in November and didn't come out until June '16! This really is something of your own sewing, isn't it? You reap what you sew and you haven't done very well at all, it's appalling your shambolic record. So, report it and we'll get it cut!

Mayor

Councillor B Rice, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

Okay, I did not receive an answer. I have stated and told you that this was in pristine condition in May. I am animated, absolutely, and so will the residents of Thurrock be when they see what a waste of money we've had in this Authority in the last two months, and where are our kids going to play football come September?

Point of order

The question: how is this going to be rectified for the children of Thurrock to be playing football in September? That's the question.

Councillor Tolson

Yes. Report it and it will be cut.

Mayor

Councillor Kent, would you like to read your question as on the Agenda, please.

6. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Hebb

What is the current Thurrock Council savings target for the financial year 2017/2018?

Mayor

Councillor Hebb, please answer.

Councillor Hebb

Thank you, Councillor Kent, for your question. The medium term financial strategy showed a projected budget gap of £7.4million in February of this year and the MTF5 is currently being reviewed and will be presented at Cabinet in September of this year. The Conservative Administration's commitment to "Cut it, Clean it, Fill it" and the pilot which has been planned will be used to determine any additional funding which is necessary to be directed towards the priority. So, to call it out, I have requested that a range of targets between the £7.4million previously reported and up to £11-12million, to give all Members real choice in the future, are brought forward to all members to consider in the future. This is following feedback from yourself, last year, and following some feedback from yourself, Councillor Kent I have also requested that the previously adopted Panel Review budget process be evolved into a new, strategic process, a process where priorities are set, budgets are allocated to those services, contra to the previous top-down cuts we've lived with for the last six years. A process which will have cross-party involvement, it will have staff involvement, and I'm really passionate about that one, and Cabinet leadership at heart. The new budget setting process will be called the Council Spending Review, and it is this process which will define the new Thurrock offer for the future. In essence, we are looking to save more so we can spend more on the environment of Thurrock. To do that, looking at £18.5million over two years may simply not do, as all we will be doing is currently maintaining the existing standards which, let's be frank, are absolutely not good enough. Our residents deserve a better Thurrock, a Thurrock that will now be forged, from now on, through the Council Spending Review, taking a hard look at how we spend, what we spend and the decisions on where we put the money and making decisions with the wishes and needs of alarm clock Thurrock first and foremost in our minds.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Madam Mayor, setting a balanced budget is an arduous and long task, I know, I've been responsible for it for the last six years. I'm therefore concerned that we've had no report presented to Cabinet or to Council on planning for a balanced budget for 2017-2018. As we have no cabinet meeting until September, the first public sight of these plans on delivering a balanced budget for 2017-18 will be practically half way through this financial year. Is the Portfolio Holder really satisfied that that is appropriate?

Mayor

Councillor Hebb

Councillor Hebb

Absolutely, and I thank you for the question. The truth be told is, you're going to be engaged throughout the whole process, Councillor Kent, as will all political groups. We'd had an undertaking and you and I had a conversation about the previous year's system not being the best system, we've agreed that all parties will be involved in the process. So you have an undertaking from me, and while we're talking about a legacy of Councillor John Kent, let's just remind everybody about the reserves that we've had to look at since coming into office. For six years we've been told by the Labour Administration that the reserves have been built up and saved for a rainy day, when I asked when a thorough review was last completed the answer was 2010-11; six years ago! Six years ago we sat down, wrote on a bit of paper how much we've got to spend and what our commitments were if something bad went wrong and we haven't reviewed it ever since. Six years! David Cameron had just become Prime Minister, we were still in a recession caused by inadequate banking control and public spending, we had the London riots, we had the Diamond Jubilee, we had the Olympics, Cyprus has been bailed out, you know nearly every country in Greece has been bailed out, just recently we voted to leave the EU and not once have we done a thorough review of the reserves. This is absolutely unacceptable, so I can announce that I have instigated a thorough review of the general fund balance and again to call it out, should the professional comprehensive guidance come out and emerge that we need to bolster the reserves so to support Thurrock for a rainy day, then we will fix the roof while it's shining and we will plan to ensure that those reserves are maintained at the level that is as recommended by professionals, something his administration forgot to do for over half a decade.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent, do you wish to ask a second supplementary.

Councillor J Kent

Yes, does Councillor Hebb recall every year, when we come to set the budget, reading the Section 151 officers' Section 25 statement that includes a review of the level of reserves? Does he not recall voting on that every year? Does he further not recall that when the Labour group took the administration in 2010, the level of reserves that we inherited was £1.8million and that it took us years to build up reserves to an appropriate level of £8million? And does he understand that people will be concerned that the noises that the Administration is making is to go back into this kind of slash and burn, spend the reserves and let somebody else come in to clear up the mess?

Mayor

Councillor Hebb.

Councillor Hebb

Let me look you squarely in the eye and call you out. This Administration, despite all the rhetoric and rubbish on social media, is not going to use reserves to fund cuts. The reserves are our bank account for a rainy day. I am not going to put the future of all of your children, my children and my grandchildren at risk to use reserves to cut back, to mitigate the damage caused by cuts. We will find those cuts by being innovative and with respect, with working together and not against each other.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell, could you please read your question out as it appears on the Agenda.

7. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Gledhill

As I am still getting a regular complaints about damp and mould can the portfolio holder say whether he is happy with the current service being provided to tenants in respect of treating and resolving these issues in Council properties please?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Redsell. For a long time I've said I'm not satisfied with the service that we're providing to tenants regarding damp and mould. It is a difficult issue to solve, not one that is simply just replacing a tap or fixing in a new socket. Last year the sample of those residents who had works to tackle the problem only 44% said they were satisfied with the service and only 1/3 of them said that the problem was eventually fully resolved. I'm sorry, but anyone who would be satisfied with that level of satisfaction or that level of success would seriously be letting our residents down, so no, I am not happy with it.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell, do you wish to ask a supplementary question.

Councillor Redsell

Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you Councillor Gledhill. That's actually shocking. I was told that the Council spent nearly £200,000 on all types of repairs last year; in that case could you tell me what is being done to stop the problem and improve satisfaction?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Redsell. I think the figure you were talking about was actually £240,000 on somewhere in the region of 950 separate jobs, or separate properties that were visited, of which 123/125 had more than one visit. So what we're talking about is 1 in 10 properties getting at least one visit in relation to mould which is not good. But to your substantive question; damp and mould are sometimes misunderstood problems. I've asked officers to look at different solutions to damp and mould and we've broken these down into two areas. Firstly, the fabric of the building – that includes the way it was constructed and the way it's been looked after. Our housing stock has for many years been underinvested and this is beginning to show clearly, and this is not a slight at any particular administration this goes back for some significant time. Secondly is the tenants' lifestyle issues and the way they actually live within the property. What we're doing now is we are currently changing the process in regards to damp and mould. Previously if a tenant reported damp and mould what would happen is someone would go out, clear it up with antifungal paint and wash. That sometimes would rectify the issue, if not they'd come and get a repeat visit and it would be some time before someone qualified would come along to see what the cause is. That will now change. We will now be putting the horse in front of the cart and the qualified damp building surveyor will go first, he will identify whether it's the fabric of the property, if it's damage to the property or whether it is the lifestyle or the way that tenants are using it. If it is found that there is a problem with the tenant our resident liaison officers will be liaising with them to explain how to do things better, how to make sure that condensation and damp isn't kept within the property, obviously to help inhibit the mould. So we're hoping actually by changing the process completely will stop the repeat visits, will identify the problems and where it is a fabric issue we'll deal with that rather than just blame it on the tenants. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell, do you wish to pose a second supplementary.

Councillor Redsell

Thank you, Madam Mayor. I think Councillor Redsell has answered my next supplementary question, but a lot of my residents have actually been told it is their lifestyle that is causing the problem and the advice of officers is that they really could, and the underlying problem with the property that they're in is ignored. What are we doing about these special cases? Thank you.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Redsell. I know, from someone who lived in a private rented accommodation that was regularly high-humidity and mould problems, I was really annoyed and indeed shocked when my landlord was telling me it was all my fault, I needed to open

windows, I needed to not dry washing indoors, something which I actually did open windows and didn't dry washing indoors. What was interesting was when I managed to record the humidity in the property when I was on holiday for two weeks and it was clear there was a fabric issue with the property, not with the tenant, i.e. me. This is going to happen with our tenants as well, and where there are extenuating circumstances where tenants do feel it's not what they're doing is the problem, and sometimes tenants have got no alternative but to dry washing indoors if they live in flats or live in areas where washing just can't be hung up, then we will have to look to see if there is an alternative to help that resident live a decent, normal lifestyle and be able to carry on living at the property but be able to carry out those day to day things, like cooking, like cleaning, like indeed washing and drying stuff inside. That will be dealt with on an individual basis, not as a block for each individual area. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

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