

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26 October 2016 at 7.00 pm

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

Apologies: Councillors Tim Aker, Clare Baldwin, Leslie Gamester, Garry Hague, Victoria Holloway, Martin Kerin, Sue Sammons, Michael Stone and Kevin Wheeler

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Steve Cox, Corporate Director of Environment and Place
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Paul Fields, Senior Corporate Governance Lawyer
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.

60. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 28 September 2016 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor J Kent referred the Mayor to Item 52 – Questions from Members and asked for an explanation as to why written responses had not been provided for unheard questions from September Council. The Chief Executive agreed to investigate and responses will be sent to Members in due course.

Councillor Cherry requested that the following paragraph be added to Item 58 – Motion submitted by Councillor Jones:

“Councillor Cherry stated that residents could also contact Essex Police via email which would then free up the 101 telephone service and emphasised how important it was that residents knew and used this service”.

61. Items of Urgent Business

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

62. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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

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

The Mayor congratulated Thurrock Marching Brass who won the 2016 Cadet Class British Championships that had been held at the Telford Football Club on 1 October 2016.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, gave Members the following updates:

- Discussions had taken place with Highways England to discuss the closure of the lay-bys on the A1089 and A13. Following this meeting two lay-bys had been coned off with the rest being done by the end of this weekend. This had only been managed with the constant pressure from the Council and residents.
- The coning off of these lay-bys will stop the most terrible practice of fly tipping in Thurrock.
- A Netting Programme had been agreed with Highways England and Essex Police that any vehicles carrying waste through the borough should be netted. Local businesses that operate these types of vehicles will be made aware of the penalties.
- Work at Junction 30/31 on the A13 should be completed by the end of November 2016 which would free up the Lakeside Traffic.
- 47,000 results of the Lower Thames Crossing consultation had been requested to ensure that Thurrock Council had the same information that the Highways England and Ministers had to ensure that Thurrock was on the same level of knowledge and understanding to engage with them.
- Clean It, Cut It, Fill It Pilot will be completed at the end of October where the service will be appraised on how to take the service forward and thanked all those involved.

- Spoken recently to local residents from Little Thurrock who stated that the borough was so much cleaner.
- Councillor Gledhill thanked all Officers, Staff and those personally responsible who have contributed to this pilot.
- It was unanimously agreed at Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to endorse enforcements on those dropping litter and blighting the borough with rubbish. This would be the final warning, either pay the fine or face the magistrate's court.
- To undertake a Housing Service Review to look at policy changes for the 10,000 families in the borough to focus on repairs and upgrades. The first stage of the review will take up to 4 to 6 months to complete and will be addressed at the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee before any policy changes are implemented.

64. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A to these minutes.

65. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's Petition Scheme no notices of petitions had been received.

66. 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.

67. Revised Political Balance

This report requested Council to confirm the calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees following Councillor Churchman becoming a member of the Conservative Group on 20 September 2016.

The Mayor stated that since the report was published, recommendation 1.3 had been removed as Group Leaders had agreed to the proposed manual adjustments as set out below:

- Labour to lose 2 seats across committees
- Conservative to gain 1 set across the committees
- UKIP to gain 1 seat across committees

Councillor J Kent stated that Labour will give one seat on Planning Committee to the Conservative Group and that the Member leaving this committee would be Councillor J Kent. One seat on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be given to the UKIP Group and the Member leaving this committee would be Councillor Kerin. Councillor Kerin will then become the substitute member on Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

Committee and Councillor J Kent will become the substitute member on the Planning Committee.

The Mayor called a vote on recommendations 1.1 and 1.2 and Members agreed.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the political balance and allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.**
- 2. Council note the manual adjustment requirements outlined in 2.3 and agree those adjustments proposed by group leaders at the meeting.**

68. 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 Hague to become a substitute member on the General Services Committee.
- For Councillor Hebb to replace Councillor Hague on the General Services Committee.
- For Councillor Coxshall to become a member on the General Services Committee.
- For Councillor Churchman to become a substitute member on the General Services Committee.
- For Councillor Ojetola to replace Councillor MacPherson on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- For Councillor Kelly to replace Councillor MacPherson as substitute on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- For Councillor Hague to become a substitute member on the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- For Councillor Kelly to replace Councillor S Little on the Corporate Parenting Committee.
- For Councillor Churchman to replace Councillor Gledhill on the Licensing Committee.
- For Councillor Churchman to become a member on the Planning Committee.
- For Councillor Collins to replace Councillor MacPherson as a substitute member on the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- For Councillor Collins to replace Councillor Piccolo as member of the Standards and Audit Committee.

- For Councillor Piccolo to replace Councillor Collins as substitute member of the Standards and Audit Committee.

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

- For Councillor Snell to become a member on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Kent, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Council Chamber he had no further changes to make.

69. Report of the Cabinet Member for Performance and Central Services

Councillor Stewart presented the report and firstly thanked the Director, Heads of Service and Officers for their support, focus and dedication throughout the year to ensure that a good quality service had been delivered to Thurrock residents and to look at the tasks ahead.

Councillor Stewart highlighted the following areas of her report:

The Serco transition was a huge undertaking for staff and had been recognised by a national award from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development for Best Employee Relations Initiative 2016 and a Customer Contact Association Version 6 accreditation. This multi-functional front line team had been trained to cover a wide range of service issues and staff should be very proud of themselves.

There will be a full and thorough review of existing KPIs and other performance tools in 2016 keeping in line with recommendations made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Report in 2015/16.

Targets will no longer be categorised using KPI performance Red, Amber or Green (RAG status) instead there will be a simplified Achieved or Failed indicator.

That a 'deep clean' had started to reform the complaints system by removing the concern stage and all complaints will be dealt with swiftly. Officers would embrace complaints, learn from them and put measures in place to try and not make the same mistakes again. The Council will be more open and transparent and that reports will now be presented to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee before going to Cabinet so cross party discussions can take place and issues raised before the Portfolio Holders consider any reports.

Residents of Thurrock deserved the best service the Council can provide and the administration were listening and will offer better services which were fit for residents' needs.

Councillor Piccolo thanked Councillor Stewart for her report and asked whether the changes in the KPI performance indicators would show that there were greater numbers of failed KPIs. Councillor Stewart stated that it may look like more have failed but this was not the case as the indicators only showed current in-year progress and more targets would be met as the year progressed.

Councillor Spillman stated that having had experience of submitting complaints he was amazed that complaints could get to stage 3 without any complainant interview taking place and asked the Portfolio Holder if the department would consider a formal interview or consent from the complainant to be more involved to ensure scrutiny was taking place. Councillor Stewart stated she was unsure if this could be achieved for all cases due to legal and data protection issues but she would seek guidance from the Director and would report back to Councillor Spillman.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Portfolio Holder for her report and asked when she expected the agency staff spend to be lowered. Councillor Stewart stated very soon and highlighted that the Conservative administration has had only four months to work at this issue whereas Labour had 6 years and 7 months to resolve it. The Conservative administration would tackle this issue as best they can.

Councillor Collins asked the Portfolio Holder when the last residents survey was carried out. Councillor Stewart stated that she did not know but knew that one had not been done under the previous administration, so more than 7 years ago.

70. Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Legal

Councillor Hebb presented the report and stated there were three key aspects to the report which were Revenue, Reform and Relay and Respond.

With regards to Revenue, the Conservative administration had made it clear that this was a pro-revenue authority and had to be inventive about earning more. The Council needed to become smarter by offering the same service with less money. The Clean It Cut it Fill It initiative was the medicine this borough needed but to undertake these initiatives the Council had to save more from what was already taking place or earn more. The Pro-Revenue Growth Plan complimented the Council Spending Review.

The Legal Team were the gold star holders for being commercial and earning money for the organisation for services such as Clean It Cut It and Fill It. Nearly £700,000 will be earned in Legal this year for a service which costs £757,000 with potential to earn more. The Counter Fraud Team were already trading services as well.

Councillor Hebb stated that heads are turning to Thurrock and this was the place to go and come to, his message to councils along the South Essex

Estuary and into London was that Thurrock was open and welcoming to trading services.

The Administration pledged to take the question of electoral reform to the heart of the Thurrock community where the General Services Committee will shortly have sight of the consultation questions and the supplementary document which will support residents in making an informed decision on how the 49 members are elected. Councillor Hebb confirmed that a hard copy of the consultation and supplementary document will go out to residents with the council tax demand reminder letters.

Relay and Response – The direction of travel for the communications team was to ensure that the heads of the outside investors and neighbours turn to Thurrock for the great things that happen here. Cabinet will ensure that the communications team have the freedom to talk to people as people and use social media to talk and engage with people outside of office hours.

Next month a new Council monthly e-newsletter will be introduced and coordinated by the communications team, which will be campaign-led enabling the communication of key priority messages and future events to which residents can sign up for.

Councillor Hebb thanked all the team members in his directorate and stated that the Plan will be formative in the Council and as we grow at home and across borders.

Councillor Snell thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report and stated that it demonstrated a positive way forward but to ensure that investments were not hidden away but were open to democratic scrutiny.

Councillor Hebb stated that clear investigation work was an undertaking of the Section 151 Officer and as part of the Council Spending Review Process. Councillor Hebb confirmed that the investment programme will continue to be discussed at these review meetings.

Councillor Snell also stated that although social media was good some elderly residents do not have the use of IT and should not be forgotten. Councillor Hebb stated that the front line customer service strategy will ensure that no one was neglected.

Councillor Redsell reiterated that elderly residents should not be forgotten and asked for reassurance from the Portfolio Holder that this would be the case. Councillor Hebb undertook this re-assurance and stated that no-body should be made to feel isolated or segregated.

Councillor Duffin asked the Portfolio Holder if more can be done to use Facebook as a useful tool to engage with residents on social media. Councillor Hebb stated that it was his understanding that Facebook, Twitter and Linked-In would be used to engage with residents on social media.

71. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chambers that no questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and 10 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.

The Mayor requested that standing order be suspended by 10 minutes to provide more time to hear and debate the remaining questions. Members voted against this and the Mayor announced that time according to the constitution had run out.

Due to the lack of time the Mayor stated that the questions not dealt with those members would receive a written response.

72. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

Councillor G Rice updated Members on a report from the Anglian (Eastern) Regional Flood & Coastal Committee and was happy to announce that the £12 million flood barrier had the legal agreements signed off and the scheme was now progressing. This was welcome news to the residents of Thurrock which will not only protect the Tilbury Port but also the residents of Tilbury.

Councillor Ojetola updated Members on a report on Impulse Leisure with the key points:

- Councillor Ojetola welcomed Councillor Redsell to the Board
- The Leader had taken an interest in the on-going issues and had asked for monthly updates
- Look forward to working with the new Portfolio Holder, Councillor MacPherson
- £1.2 million repair work will be undertaken to the park and in the reception areas at Belhus Park
- Impulse Leisure had improved in its position
- Evidence shows that residents are swimming more
- Jimmy Carr shows have been a complete sell out
- Reduction in staff income

Councillor Ojetola will forward the report to Democratic Services for distribution.

73. Minutes of Committees

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

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

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

Councillor Redsell requested an update to a Motion regarding the prevention of the use of motorbikes and similar vehicles on our green spaces as this continued to be a problem and affects all residents in the borough.

75. Motion submitted by Councillor Collins

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

This administration condemns in the strongest possible terms, the barbaric practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and will support all health, welfare, civil and criminal enforcement services to eradicate it from Thurrock and the rest of the World.

Councillor Collins introduced the Motion and in doing so explained that he had raised this Motion on the request of a local resident in his ward and found it incredible that in the 21st Century this barbaric act was still being practiced since it was outlawed in the United Kingdom in September 1985. Councillor Collins had a Crown Prosecution Service document on FGM if any member would like to read about some case studies.

Councillor Collins stated that there were four reasons for raising this Motion:

1. Highlight this shameful practice and expose to scrutiny and condemnation.
2. Commend all the good work that had already taken place by our Local Council Agencies.
3. Draw the line of this evil activity in Thurrock.
4. Drawback FGM out of Thurrock and to inspire others in the UK and in the rest of the world to eradicate this evil practice.

Councillors Collins stated that not one single successful prosecution had taken place and would support all to eradicate this practice in Thurrock, the country and in the world and urged all councillors to vote for this Motion.

Councillor MacPherson stated that FGM was child abuse and this horrific act was being done on children as young as 4 years of age. Parents were undertaking this act in secrecy and as part of their tradition and culture. Councillor MacPherson highlighted some signs that a child was a potential FGM victim, such as children talking about a religious ceremony, the child being tearful or stressful or belonging to a community known for FGM practice. Councillor MacPherson stated that this illegal activity would not be tolerated and anyone caught could face up to 14 years in prison.

Councillor Snell thanked Councillor Collins for the report and stated that FGM had no place in this Country and that parents of victims and the backstreet practitioners who carried out these operations should be brought to justice

and prosecuted with the full force of the law. Although a complex issue which cannot be dealt with by law alone with FGM deeply embedded into the culture of many countries in Africa, Middle East and Asia there was no evidence that FGM formed part of any religion requirement. Stating that FGM cannot continue with the Council doing everything possible to educate those of the true horror.

Councillor Snell proposed an FGM Awareness Week to raise awareness amongst all councillors, charities and the community.

Councillor Gledhill thanked Councillors Collins, MacPherson and Snell for their comments and stated the Council need to make sure those affected in the community have the support to maintain a family life. Councillor Gledhill also seconded Councillor Snell's suggestion for a FGM Awareness Week in Thurrock to make more people aware and understand how barbaric FGM was.

Councillor Okunade thanked Councillor Collins for the motion and reiterated that this was a difficult issue which had been raised before at Council. Councillor Okunade would support the Motion and was aware of charities already in Thurrock supporting residents and would suggest they are involved in the FGM Awareness Week.

Councillor Potheary welcomed the Motion and pointed out that a FGM strategy had commenced in 2008 and would like to thank those for the work undertaken so far.

Councillor Ojetola's concern with the Motion was that it may push FGM perpetrators and victims underground and may put younger persons at risk. The key would be to educate all especially those hard to reach of the health hazards.

Councillor Collins summed up by stating that FGM was foul practice and we should eradicate it.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

The meeting finished at 8.31 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**