

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 November 2016 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors John Kent (Chair), Jack Duffin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney and Aaron Watkins
- Apologies:** Councillors Leslie Gamester (Vice-Chair)
- In attendance:** Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Tracie Heiser, Operational Services Lead
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer
Jonathon Wilson, Chief Accountant, Finance
Charlotte Raper, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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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.

17. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 20 September 2016 were approved as a correct record.

18. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

19. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

20. Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities

The Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services presented the report which outlined the ambition for both Thurrock Council and Thurrock as a borough. Members were shown the existing vision and corporate priorities as well as the proposed new draft priorities, and were asked to comment as part of the consultation process.

Councillor Duffin asked why the Council were going through this process as the new priorities seemed to be a lot of words that would not dictate strategy and meant very little to him, and he felt that many of Thurrock's residents would feel the same. He questioned the use of spending a lot of time and money on something that would, in his opinion, achieve very little. The

Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services thanked Councillor Duffin for his feedback and agreed that it would need to be meaningful and there was a risk of being too generic, with no real relation to Thurrock and being unrecognisable. She continued that these visions and priorities were part of the framework for service planning and core service delivery.

Councillor Duffin suggested it be amended to bullet point form, and put more plainly so that it was more accessible for residents. Councillor Liddiard agreed that for the residents of Thurrock there was a large amount of rhetoric, though he felt that the vision and priorities were important to officers to show them what they, and the Council as a whole, would be working towards. Councillor Maney interjected that in terms of what the document meant and how it would be delivered was surely the responsibility of elected Members, and that he suspected in a few months' time Members would be holding officers to account. He queried the meaning of "Wider Team Thurrock" and added that it felt like too much jargon. Many Members echoed this question. The Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services explained that it referred to the Council's partners, businesses and institutions within Thurrock, to identify that a great deal of work done within the borough was a collaborative effort. She agreed that it could be articulated more effectively.

Councillor Watkins agreed that it was important to ensure that officers and those working with the Council were clear of what the expectations and aims were. He referred to the fact that some partner organisations had been listed and not others and asked whether there was any reason why. Members were informed that it was just to give an example, that there was no reason those specific organisations had been listed.

The Chair raised his concern that previously this type of review had always been a "bottom up" process beginning with public consultation whereas in this instance the decision to review the Council's visions and priorities had not been made by Full Council, or even the Cabinet, but solely the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder which implied a very "top down" approach. He continued that in reality there was very little information and detail included; there were three broad areas that no Local Authority would disagree with. The document made no specific reference to schools or increasing pride in Thurrock, Community harmony or Thurrock's heritage. While he accepted this was a first stab he felt it was a disappointing effort.

Councillor Duffin asked what the cost of the consultation process would be and how much time it would absorb as he felt personally that a large number of consultations were undertaken by Thurrock that seemed not to achieve much. The Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services assured Members that the Council had used the wealth of feedback for the most important priorities, from existing forums rather than carrying out a separate exercise which would cost more. She agreed that the feedback of what details were missing from the report would be taken on board, as well as the fact that the approach needed to be "bottom up". She explained that this

had been the first draft to test the waters but agreed that there was work to be done.

Councillor Liddiard outlined that if you were to ask an IT specialist how to improve a situation the response would be to get a new server, a Highways specialist would suggest building another road. It was important that the process considered all areas and options. The Chair agreed that the importance was for people to see the document and own it and the difficulty of a top-down approach was that the final changes would need to be approved by Full Council and this had not been a good start.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented upon the proposed new vision and corporate priorities.

21. Mid-year Corporate Plan Progress and Performance Report 2016/17

The Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service presented the report which provided a progress update in relation to the performance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and against the related actions outlined in the Corporate Priority Activity Plan for 2016/17.

Councillor Duffin referred to Focus 2, regarding the percentage of adults who smoke, in terms of the amount of money spent and the number who quit smoking and asked why the Council was spending money telling adults what to do with their lives. Adults were capable of making their own choices and it was not cost effective as it clearly was not achieving much. He also referred to Focus 3, regarding bin collection, and asked why the Council would consider moving to fortnightly collection if they could not achieve their targets with weekly collection, as it would make the issue of missed bins far worse if residents had to wait a further fortnight rather than one week.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that the Council was not “throwing money” at the issue and the amount at present was between £100,000 and £120,000 spent on a largely treatment based plan. The money was being spent on treatment programmes via pharmacies and GP services rather than publicity, the majority of anti-smoking publicity seen was part of national campaigns funded by the NHS or Public Health UK. The Council had commissioned GPs and other services to run treatment programmes, but it had to be accepted that the traditional four-week programme was very rigid and a new plan was needed. The entire programme was being re-tendered. Focus had shifted to working with schools to stop children taking up smoking in the first place. Councillor Duffin agreed with the work being carried out in schools and expressed his view that it was important but felt money could be better spent on GP surgeries rather than anti-smoking propaganda. Members heard that GPs were not tendered by the Local Authority and Thurrock was facing the problem that the improvement in number of people who smoked had plateaued which was not

the case nationally, with the added worry that the number of young people smoking had begun to rise.

The Chair asked why Thurrock was now an outlier, with the number of smokers not reducing whilst other boroughs still were. He asked what the borough was doing wrong. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that there were a wide range of issues such as primary care, peer group pressure and economic deprivation to consider as well as vulnerable groups such as those with learning difficulties and mental health issues. Some other boroughs had also put far greater focus on educating young people sooner whereas Thurrock was making that shift now. There were a wide range of issues but the traditional four week treatment programme was definitely outdated and needed to be revised.

The Chair also asked whether the KPI was set locally or nationally and Members heard that though it was set locally it had previously been a national target and the Council still had to feed data into Public Health England, based on the number of people that had undertaken the four week programme that were still not smoking after 13 weeks.

The Chair interjected that the Council should be realistic and accept the fact that it would not reach this target any time soon. The minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held in October 2016 showed that resources would no longer be used to re-educate adults about their lifestyle, which implied the Council was no longer trying to get adults to stop smoking and so the target would not be met.

The Committee heard that both this target and the target surrounding obesity, in terms of public health would be the two most challenging targets faced and therefore when the target would be set next year there would be a need to reassess whether or not it was an achievable target. The Chair followed that it could therefore be concluded that the Council would not be helping adults with their weight problems or to stop smoking. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health clarified his point that the focus would be moving away from generic, publicity based campaigns towards more targeted treatment and early intervention.

Councillor Liddiard asked what the length of the contracts would be, as there was concern that the Council could find itself bound into a contract that it was not working. Members were informed that the contract usually included a number of providers and the length of tender was to be 3 years. Councillor Liddiard raised concerns that, within his ward at least, there were a large number of people who smoked and many who were obese and nothing seemed to be working to change these facts. The Committee heard that improvement in both areas had plateaued in Thurrock hence the need for a more targeted approach and increased work with young people in the borough.

Councillor Duffin asked whether the funds were ring-fenced, or if the Council had the ability to change how it would be spent. It was confirmed that the

Public Health Grant was ring-fenced for the next 2 years, and those areas discussed would be part of a contract and therefore ring-fenced as part of that.

The Chair referred to Focus 1 regarding the percentage of good or better primary schools and highlighted the tremendous achievement since 2010 when 30% of children in the borough were attending Good or Outstanding schools which had now risen to 92.4%. He took the opportunity to warn against risking undoing the good work that had been done, especially in the face of looming large cuts to school budgets.

RESOLVED:

- 1) The Committee noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are IN FOCUS.**
- 2) The Committee noted and commented upon the progress in relation to the key corporate priority activities for 2016/17.**
- 3) The Committee identified any areas which required additional consideration.**

22. Customer Services Strategy

The Operational Services Lead presented the report which outlined the draft Customer Services Strategy and proposals for a number of service areas. This would be particularly important as at present there was no overarching strategy for the Council as a whole which meant there were no consistent standards. The council was not managing residents' expectations, nor did it provide clarity for staff. Members were invited to offer comments on the proposals to make some services online only and make others appointment only, whilst aiming to reduce the level of face-to-face walk in clients and increase self-service.

Councillor Liddiard asked how many active "my account" users there were as this was important information. The Committee was advised that currently, whilst there was information surrounding the number of accounts, it did not show how many were actively used.

Councillor Watkins raised concern firstly for those residents without online access and reminded officers that they should be considered. He referred to section 2.6 of the report and expressed his dislike for the wording as it implied the Council did not want residents to be in contact, and also asked whether residents were ever asked why they were not using the website to identify whether it was due to lack of internet access or the website itself. Drawing on his personal experience at work he suggested use of a live-chat system on the website and also highlighted the benefits of phone applications versus traditional webpages.

Members were assured that presently, officers carried out a range of activities to help residents get online, including assisting in the creation of their “my account”. At present applications for benefits or to register as homeless were compulsory online forms and if residents encountered problems there was support to help them complete these forms. The potential of mobile applications was something that would be considered and fed back as a result of the debate. It was stressed that support was 100% available for those in need. Officers hoped to assist vulnerable residents with face-to-face appointments but at present they were having to wait in a queue alongside other residents; it was hoped that resources would be less strained if those who were capable would use the website or the phone service. The majority of those asked advised that they generally came into the Council Offices purely because that was the route they had always taken.

The Director of Strategy, Communication and Customer Services added that every page of the Council’s website had a “did you find what you were looking for” link to obtain comments and feedback from service users. She agreed that the wording of section 2.6 needed to be amended but that it constituted two key points:

1. Getting things right in the first place, for example missed bins. This should reduce the need for residents to contact the Council to complain.
2. A current lack of clarity about standards. At present residents were calling to chase applications if they had not received a response within a few days when the process took a minimum of 7 days. If this was more clearly communicated it would reduce the need for service users to contact the Council to chase a response.

Councillor Liddiard noted that the issues raised by residents in his ward had shifted from largely being related to housing repairs to a wide range of social issues including debt management, mental health issues and substance abuse. He asked whether services were being devoted proportionately and suggested making the service more user friendly with 1-click icons for areas such as housing. He also enquired as to whether there were plans to bring the service surrounding emergency alarms for the elderly, currently located in Harty Close, in house. As yet there were no plans to bring the Care Line in house as it was a fairly small operation that worked 24hours a day with only 2 people working at any one time, who also carried out home visits and as such it was quite a tight resource.

Councillor Liddiard wondered how residents were informed that they could attend their Community Hubs for information and assistance as there were currently a number of volunteers while only a small percentage of the population were aware the Hubs existed. The Committee heard that it was hoped to widen that knowledge and educate residents that they need not come to the Civic Offices for every service. Councillor Liddiard also considered that bus far into Grays could be quite costly from certain parts of the Borough and attending local Hubs could save residents money, although the libraries charged 10p per copy which seemed counterproductive as they were documents requested of residents by the Council. That cost to residents

needed to be addressed. The Operational Services Lead informed Members that the Council was looking at introducing self-scanning booths in the Community Hubs.

Councillor Liddiard also remarked that residents often complained, when using the online system, that they received no response. He asked how officers could ensure jobs were actually being completed. The Committee was advised that this was exactly why the Customer Service Strategy was required, whilst the Contact Centre could log a job it was necessary to ensure jobs were being completed by the relevant service areas. Now that the Customer Services department was an in-house operation it was possible to make improvements.

Councillor Duffin supported suggestions of a live-chat system and agreed that the majority of people these days tended to use apps rather than traditional websites. He admitted that he had been forced to use the telephone service three times due to problems with the “my account” system and that he had experience of emailing with no response, he understood why so many residents called or came into the office if they felt they were not getting anywhere. He suggested the Council should do more with email communication, such as automated replies including timeframes for responses.

Councillor Maney added that encouraging residents to use the online system was a good idea, though certain applications required submission of documents and that was a more complicated matter. He echoed concerns around attempting to reduce email communication, particularly if there was a need to reduce the number of residents coming to the Civic Offices for enquiries. He asked what exercise had been carried out to give the result of 85% of residents that were happy to go online, and whether it was online in general or online with Thurrock Council. He remarked that one of the biggest complaints about Thurrock Council was that requests seemed to go in and nothing more would be heard, which is why people tended to come into the office.

The Committee was advised that the exercise had taken place 3 years ago and as such it would be reasonable to expect that number to be higher at present, and the commitment to supporting those who need help was reiterated.

Councillor Maney asked that the proposals be amended to move away from reducing email communication and Members were assured that feedback would be taken on board. Councillor Liddiard suggested caution as whilst email was easy to use it was also very possible that residents would not include all the information required by the Council and therefore it might be better to promote the use of “my account”. He stated that he had seen data that suggested 85% of people had access to Wi-Fi, which was a very different matter. There were houses within his ward that had no computer or Wi-Fi and were not aware that these were available in libraries, he stressed the importance of informing residents of resources available to them.

Councillor Watkins urged Members and Officers to remember that everyone would have a different need and that it was paramount that there was a clear and definite strategy to ensure these needs would be met. He asked if it might be possible for an automatic system within the council to flag up if requests had not been responded to within a certain timeframe, and proposed the use of online forms with enough information for services users and to outline exactly what the Council required.

Councillor Watkins also expressed the need to increase the Council's social media reach to engage with residents and be easily contactable. Councillor Duffin agreed that the Council did not utilise social media to its full potential. He asked whether there was any way for residents on hold to be aware how long they could expect to wait before their call would be answered and echoed Councillor Watkins' call for a system to ensure response deadlines were met and requests were not missed and that interactions did not reach the complaint stage. The Operational Services Lead outlined that a Customer Charter was to be set which would give very clear timescales for transactions. The Director of Strategy, Communication and Customer Services highlighted that there was currently a consistency issue; once the process left the Contact Centre it fell to the individual departments and some areas had flag systems whilst others did not, the process and standards needed to be constant.

The Committee began to discuss options for Social Media but it was agreed that it would be more practical to discuss at the next meeting when a report on Communications would be presented.

Councillor Liddiard asked whether the Council used exercises such as mystery shoppers to assess the quality of Customer Service. The Committee heard that Customers were invited to participate in a Customer Satisfaction Survey at the end of their call and the Contact Centre service had been independently audited, so there were mechanisms in place. Councillor Liddiard added that the issue did not lie with the Contact Centre but calls put through to the back office. This had been noted and there were plans to undergo a telephony review.

Councillor Liddiard also noted that homelessness was a major issue within the borough and there needed to be a strategy in place to help with access, though he was unsure whether it could be dealt with from a Customer Service view. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health agreed that customer access needed to be reviewed as presently there was a compulsory online form which was not the most suitable method.

Councillor Watkins asked whether calls were recorded for training purposes, though he was aware that telephone recording was an expensive service. The Committee heard that there was set call quality criteria and all Contact Centre calls were recorded and spot-checked.

The Chair referred to p9 of the Customer Service Strategy and highlighted that, although the document read "*We must start our journey with a clear*

definition of Customer Services” none was given. Members were advised that it was about understand who the Council’s customers were, that customers included both residents and businesses and anyone who entered the Civic Offices; it was agreed that there should be a line detailing that information. The Chair reminded the Committee that whilst the Council should be professional and business like, it was not a business and the thought of removing reception services made him uneasy, as did the thought of removing staff to be replaced by volunteers. Online services and applications were pointless if there was not sufficient staff on the receiving end.

He also highlighted that recommendation 1.3 concerned the savings proposals listed in paragraph 4.2 of the report, but it gave no details of savings proposals. The Committee heard that the proposal referred to resource savings and staff reduction, along with held vacancies, however Members agreed that without full details they could not pass comment.

RESOLVED:

- 1) **The Committee commented on the draft Customer Services Strategy at Appendix 1.**
- 2) **The Committee commented on the proposals for the service areas set out in Appendix 2.**
- 3) **The Committee felt they could not comment on the savings proposals for customer services as set out at paragraph 4.2 as there was insufficient information provided.**

23. Local Council Tax Scheme

The Chief Accountant presented the report which outlined proposed changes and options to the Local Council Tax Scheme, which would build upon the existing scheme and align with central Government changes to the Housing Benefit and Universal Credit regulations. There were six proposed changes to the existing scheme, four of which were likely to reduce the amount of support available to individual claimants under the scheme. Members were therefore asked to decide whether to support the proposed changes, but were reminded that the final decision would be made at Full Council.

The Chair led by expressing his disappointment at the low number of responses to the consultation, the highest number of which was 30. He advised that the Committee should not put much weight on the percentage in favour of any changes as the figures were minimal.

He objected to Proposed Change 1, as he felt it would hit the working poor with a loss of £180 support over the course of a year, which for some people was a large amount of money. He continued to state that he was not against Proposed Change 2. As for Proposed Change 3, he expressed his discomfort at ending support for self-employed residents as there some people were self-employed as it was the only way to ensure an income. Finally he objected to Proposed Change 5 as it would penalise larger families which would be unfair,

and there would be a risk of two families living side by side receiving different levels of support.

Councillor Duffin echoed his earlier comments surrounding consultations carried out by the Council and insisted that a consultation with 30 respondents was unremarkable, the percentages might as well be discounted by the Committee as even 24/24 was a minimal percentage of the population of the borough. He expressed disappointment that, in his opinion, Members seemed to be given only two options; hit the working poor or cut Council Services. The proposed changes would have a negative impact on the working poor and those with children which he did not support.

Councillor Maney interjected that he personally would support all the proposed changes, though he would be cautious about Proposed Change 3, which would target self-employed residents. He stated that the reality was the Council needed to reduce the welfare bill. As for Proposed Change 5, he suggested that there was tension in the community around those who made the decision to start a family based upon access to benefits and support; as such he would personally support the change. The Chief Accountant informed Members that, regarding Proposed Change 3, there were currently 400 claims, 160 of which would qualify for the reduction in support.

Councillor Duffin agreed that Proposed Change 2 seemed sensible, but queried whether there would be safeguards in place for families with triplets for example within Proposed Change 5.

Councillor Liddiard echoed the concerns of the Chair and Councillor Duffin, and insisted that he could not support the proposed changes at all.

The Committee was advised that the issue of triplets had not yet been raised but the question would be asked and Members could receive a response outside of the meeting. The Director of Finance and IT advised Members that the report had been incredibly challenging to write and any feedback regarding additional information that would support Members would be greatly welcomed, if they could contact him afterwards.

Councillor Watkins also agreed that the consultation had been poorly attained and added that he had sought clarification whilst reading the report, so it would likely be difficult for many residents to fully comprehend too. He continued to express his support for the changes, especially Proposed Change 2, though he shared Councillor Duffin's concerns regarding Proposed Change 5 and safeguards for families whereby the decision to have more than 2 children was beyond their control.

The Committee voted in favour of Proposed Change 2, and against Proposed Changes 1, 3 and 5. Councillor Watkins asked if there could be clarity on the questions raised regarding Proposed Change 5 ahead of Full Council when the decision would be made.

RESOLVED:

- 1) Members specifically considered if they support the changes to the scheme detailed in section 3.4 in respect of proposed changes 1, 2, 3 and 5. This is in the context of the impact on individual customers and the cost to the Council.**
- 2) Members approved the proposed change 2 as outlined in section 3.4.**
- 3) The Committee rejected the proposed changes 1, 3 and 5 as outlined in section 3.4.**
- 4) Members approved the proposed changes 4 and 6 as outlined in section 3.4 on the basis that these changes are supported by the consultation response.**

24. Council Investments Paper

The Director of Finance & IT presented the report which provided a briefing on the governance around treasury management, including investments, and the benefits that treasury management has brought to the Council's financial position in recent years.

Councillor Duffin proposed some form of democratic oversight to be included within the Treasury Management Strategy which would be approved by Full Council in February, following a Council investment of which Members had been unaware. The Chair interjected that he did not feel it was strictly necessary to be outlined within the Constitution, as up until the investment in Rockfire and the Solar Park the process seemed to have worked well.

Clarification of the investment was sought and the Director of Finance & IT explained that the council had lent money through a bond to a company called Rockfire that in turn owned the Swindon Solar farm. It had been a joint approach with other Local Authorities and the solar farm was equity within the investment. It was further explained that there was an end buyer, HSBC, and the contract was for 15 years with an initial return of 5% that would then rise to 8% at the five year review point. The Council may also be able to extend its period of investment at that time at the higher rate of return and this would be considered nearer the time.

The Chair asked why the process had been so different in this instance. Members heard that the negotiations took place during the period of the election and the immediate weeks after. The Chair continued to probe as to why there had been a press release which said Thurrock Council was proud to invest in Swindon Solar Park and the Director of Finance & IT explained that there had been a period of commercial sensitivity and, when announced by Rockfire some time later, the Council was responding to questions from the media.

Councillor Duffin expressed concern that it set a precedent and stressed that Members should be made aware of Council investments before press releases were issued. He felt there should be some agreed process to avoid a recurrence. The Chair expressed his concern at how this investment decision had been managed and communicated.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Committee received this update on investments.**

25. Council Spending Review Update

The Director of Finance & IT presented the report which updated Members on the proposals which were currently being considered that would affect Central Services budgets.

Councillor Duffin referred to section 2.5 of the report and requested for options for alternative budget reductions to be included in a future report ahead of Full Council so that Members would be clear on impacts if proposals were not accepted. He also questioned whether section 3.4, which indicated a review of all services by March 2019, meant that the report would be ready by then or the review would be completed by then and the report would follow. The Director of Finance and IT assured Members that there would certainly need to be a contingency report and so Councillor Duffin's request would be met. The review of services would be an ongoing process and as such would be brought into the democratic process as and when they were completed. Members were directed to Appendix 3 which outlined the timescale for reviews to be completed.

The Chair referred to section 3.4 and his unease at "*a target of 15-20% efficiencies in each service*" which sounded like services would be "top sliced" and then the Council would have to see how to make the remaining resources work. The Director of Finance and IT admitted that he would happily rephrase the wording of the principle, but the target was subject to the results of service review and efficiencies would only be made where possible. There were possibilities of improved use of IT and merged service areas to also meet this figure.

The Chair referred to 4.1.1 and what the savings amounted to; it was confirmed that the savings, if met, would amount to £2,525,000. The Chair stated that the target areas seemed to be old favourites listed year in and year out yet never delivered upon, with no more certainty that the majority of areas would deliver now. The Committee heard that certain areas, such as agency staff, had been quite modest savings and more could be achieved and that officers were confident of delivering these.

The Chair requested that the proposal "*Treasury Vehicles- full year effect of the solar farm investment*" on page 113 of the report be re-worded following comments in the previous item that the Council had not invested directly in a

Solar Farm and queried why there had been a separate line included, could the report not simply read "Treasury Management".

RESOLVED:

- 1) **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the revised MTFs position and the Council Spending Review approach and timetable.**
- 2) **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee commented on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.**

26. Work Programme

Members were asked if there were any amendments to the Work Programme they wished to propose, in addition to the two reports already requested within the evening's debate. Councillor Duffin requested, following his earlier comments surrounding the cost and functionality of consultations, that a report might be presented outlining the consultations carried out over the past 12 months including details of their cost and the level of response. The Chair agreed that this would be a very useful report for the Committee to receive with regards to what the Council could carry out on its own, and what could be done with partner organisations. The cost would be a key factor as the resident survey had originally been stopped as a cost saving method.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the Work Programme, including the addition of a report on the Council's Consultations.

27. Item 10 - Appendix 4 - Savings Proposal 2017/18 - EXEMPT

The Committee agreed to exclude the press and public for this item.

The Director of Finance & IT presented the Appendix to the Council Spending Review Update which outlined a savings proposal in the form of buying out a current outsourced contract for the service to be directly managed in-house.

Members were given the opportunity to ask questions of the Director of Finance & IT.

The Chair expressed he would be perfectly happy for the service to be managed directly but it would be dependent upon a strong business case, which, as yet, had not been presented to the Committee.

The meeting finished at 9.23 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**