

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 February 2018 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tunde Ojetola (Mayor), Michael Stone (Deputy Mayor), John Allen, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Clifford Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, 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, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Councillors Tim Aker, Russell Cherry, Tony Fish, Victoria Holloway and Sue Sammons

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring 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 Pastor Akin Laosun to lead those present in Prayer.

118. Minutes

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 31 January 2018 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor C Baker stated that his question to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner had not reflected what his question was. Democratic Services will update the minutes to say the following:

“It seems in Thurrock we have more and more drug crime and violent crime than ever before would you say it maybe something to do with more and more London people moving into the borough in which case does the met link up with Essex police to try and resolve these crimes that we have to face.”

119. Items of Urgent Business

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

120. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

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

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

The Mayor welcomed Members to the second Full Council meeting of the year and that despite being at the end of February we had woken up to a lovely snowy day.

February marked the occasion of the Chinese New Year, the year of the dog, which a number of Thurrock residents had celebrated and the Mayor congratulated everyone involved.

The Thurrock's 13th Civic Awards were held in February with over 100 nominations for nine awards, it had showed that Thurrock residents went out of their way to help others. The Mayor congratulated all the nominees, the winners and the joint organising team of Members and Officers.

The Mayor stated that Contact the Elderly were working to reduce loneliness for Thurrock elderly residents and planned to open their 8th group shortly. With Friends of Blackshots had successfully obtained a grant for funding benches on Blackshots field so that residents could watch the sports being played.

The Mayor also stated that Thurrock Mind, Stanford, Corringham and Tilbury First Responders and One Community Development Trust had been nominated for the Queens Award for Voluntary Services.

The Mayor was proud to state that this month the Mayor's parlour had been decorated by the photography work of four students from Gateway Academy. The Mayor stated that the work was of top quality and was sure that Members would be impressed when they saw it. That the school had asked Members for comments about the quality of the work and hoped Members would not mind taking time to fill in the comments book. The Mayor also thanked Gabi Randyte, Jo Mclean, Precious Daniel and David Ojetola of Gateway Academy and Lisa Anderson of Well House Art Gallery for the display.

February also marked 100 years of women suffrage. It was a hard fought battle, using all means to entrench equality in the law. In reality, it had taken 10 more years before all women above the age of 21 had the right to vote. So finally, tolerance and equity of treatment, at least at the ballot box, was won.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, updated Members on what Thurrock Council had been undertaking over the past few days to keep the borough moving in the adverse weather. That approximately 226 miles of highway had been gritted with the first priority being major routes such as the A13 and bus routes. Those secondary routes such as those at significant risk and high usage were also gritted. That in the adverse weather primary routes had also received grit runs, up to three times a day in some cases. Those crews were deployed on Tuesday throughout the day with the snow plan being activated at 6.30am today.

Residents that cleared their own pathways would not face prosecution as long as the snow was cleared away safely and that it had not caused a hazard.

The Leader stated that he would be attending the Association of South Essex Local Authorities to discuss Thurrock proposals for Government and would update Group Leader and bring item back to the next Council meeting.

122. Questions from Members of the Public

The Mayor informed Members that no questions had been accepted for the meeting.

123. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme no notices of petition had been received.

124. Petitions Update Report

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

Councillor Duffin question why Councillors Kerin, Jones, Maney and Gerrish were listed as portfolio holders in the report. Councillor Gledhill stated that this was an administrative error and would be corrected by democratic services.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he had received an update today from the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner on Petition 505 and would update Members further following on from the Council meeting.

125. 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 Chamber he had no further changes to make.

Councillor Snell, Leader of the Thurrock Independents, informed the Chamber he had no changes to make.

Councillor Gerrish, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following changes:

For Councillor Kerin to become a substitute Member on the General Services Committee.

For Councillors G Rice to replace Councillor C Holloway on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Kerin be appointed as substitute member on the General Services Committee.**
- 2. That Councillor C Holloway be replaced by Councillor G Rice on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

126. Annual Pay Policy Statement 2018/19

Councillor Huelin, Portfolio Holder for Performance and Central Services, presented the report which sought the approval of the Council's Annual Pay Policy Statement. That Thurrock's statement included a pay policy for all categories of employees which reflected the existing employment terms and conditions.

Councillor Snell stated that the report had been presented through the Comprehensive Spending Review and would agree to the recommendations.

Councillor Duffin questioned why Members could not vote on recommendation 1.1 and questioned whether the Comprehensive Spending Review was a committee of Council. Councillor Duffin stated that therefore all Members should be invited to sit on the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Councillor Huelin stated that Council had voted previously to using an independent market research company to set the pay rises fairly.

Councillor Spillman questioned had any progress been made for senior managers to be on fixed term contracts to reduce any pay offs in local Government in Essex.

Councillor Huelin would seek advice on Councillor Spillman's question and update him outside the meeting.

Councillor Hebb reiterated that the Comprehensive Spending Review was a briefing group that received papers presented by the Directors Board. That

the Members of the Comprehensive Spending Review made no decisions and it was not a committee of the Council. Councillor Hebb would welcome any new Members.

Councillor Gledhill had concerns that Members could not change the report and stated that Members could seek the Chief Executive and Monitoring Officers understanding of what was required for this report.

Councillor Gledhill stated his agreement to all the recommendations and that Members should focus on the positives of the report. Councillor Gledhill stated how important it was to keep managerial staff and would not agree to fixed term contracts at Thurrock.

Councillor Coxshall supported this statement and used an example of fixed term contracts at the Thames Gateway Corporation which demonstrated the challenges of fixed term contracts for managerial staff.

Councillor Huelin summed up by thanking Members for comments and that the recommendations made sense and demonstrated that staff were valued within the Council.

At 7.23pm, Councillor James Baker left the Council Chamber.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 was agreed in line with the Council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011, the Single Status Agreement and the recommendations by the independent market assessment.**
- 2. That agreement to remove pay points 1 to 4, with pay point 5 becoming the lowest council pay point, set at the UK Living Wage rate of £8.75 ph from 1st April 2018.**
- 3. That agreement to pay apprentices the National Minimum/Living Wage appropriate to their age from the start of employment, starting at £4.20 ph for those under 18 from 1st April 2018.**

127. Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL)

Councillor Gledhill, Leader of the Council, presented the report that set out the ambitious and exciting vision for the development of new homes in Thurrock through the Council owned company, Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL). The paper proposed a significant up-scaling of the role of TRL and sought the

agreement from Council to provide the necessary finance for TRL to deliver 1,000 homes in the next five years, 35% of which would be affordable and available for residents on the Council's housing needs register. That the approach would enable the Council to directly support the delivery of high quality new homes.

Councillor Snell thanked the Leader for the report and agreed that the Thurrock Regeneration Limited was a good scheme but questioned was it ambitious enough and had consideration been given to off-site construction that would allow for more affordable homes.

Councillor Gerrish stated that he would be voting in favour of the recommendations but had one big caveat. That providing affordable houses in Thurrock was affordable to Thurrock residents. That the ambition and approach of the Council should be to explore the best options for Thurrock residents.

Councillor Duffin had concerns that recommendation 1.3 could be open to legal challenge and questioned why local business were not being offered to make bids.

Councillor Spillman stated his support for the recommendations but questioned had the report been ambitious enough for possible future expansion and asked for reassurances that this was a reality and not just aspirations of the administration.

Councillor Kerin welcomed the report but had concerns over the affordability for Thurrock residents on average wages and asked what guarantee that the homes would form part of the Council Stock and would become Council houses for those residents in need.

Councillor Redsell stated that this was a brilliant scheme and would be voting in favour.

Councillor Halden stated that the report was exciting and explained to Members that Gloriana had not worked due to the scheme being delivered late and over budget. That a housing release stock of 1000 new homes would be in place with Thurrock Regeneration Limited and the expertise would grow as the projects got bigger.

Councillor B Rice welcomed and commended the scheme but stated that investments were needed for the benefit of Thurrock residents. That the St Chad site was not affordable housing for the average paid resident and looked forward to seeing the third truly affordable homes in Thurrock.

Councillor Coxshall stated that regeneration on brown fill sites was awkward to build on and that the Council should take advantage of Thurrock Regeneration Limited to build on these sites compared to those private companies who do not want to. That Thurrock Regeneration Limited has a long term commitment and that land could be released immediately. That the

report demonstrated a very strong message that the administration would build high quality Council homes.

Councillor Hebb stated that this was the second report presented this evening that was good news for the residents of Thurrock. Those residents were proud to live in the borough and want their families to remain close by in the future. That the Council continually builds good quality homes in the borough and brown fill sites could be used to do this.

Councillor G Rice stated his support for the scheme but highlighted realistic affordable rent would be between £600 to £800 per month. That it was pleasing that Council houses were being built for those residents that want to live in the borough but cannot currently afford to do so.

Councillor Gledhill replied to Members questions.

That the use of off-site construction would be a good process going forward to free up sites.

That affordability of new homes was subjective and that Thurrock Regeneration Limited would need to build this criterion into their business models. The price of affordable housing was subject to a market test.

That the selling of land would stop land banking.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED:

That Council:

- 1. Financially commits to supporting Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL) in its objective of delivering 1,000 new homes in the Borough by the end of 2022/23;**
- 2. That this support be made available on the basis that the conditions set out in the report are met and the governance procedures are followed;**
- 3. Agree that any general fund sites designated for release by the Council for housing be offered to TRL in the first instance;**
- 4. In line with the investment principles agreed by Council on 25 October 2017, the Director of Finance and IT be delegated the authority to enter into site specific funding agreements with TRL; and**

5. **Asks the Board of TRL to formally consider the Council's offer.**

128. Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance, stated the Treasury Management Strategy was a critical component of the way Thurrock Council managed cash-flow. This was linked to the Council's ambitions of becoming a more commercially focused borough; one where sensible transactions are completed which created revenue returns that could be allocated to spending on the services for Thurrock residents.

Councillor Snell stated that the final report had been presented at the Comprehensive Spending Review and agreed with the recommendations although stated the report could have been more ambitious on the investment strategy.

Councillor Gledhill stated that investment strategy would go forward as a budget item.

Councillor Gledhill referred to an error on Page 85 of the report. That the figure for Prudential Indicators for External Debt 2018/19 Estimate total should have read 937,121 instead of 936,121.

Councillor Hebb recommended that the report go to the vote.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations.

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

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

1. **Approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2018/19 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2018/19.**
2. **Approved the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1.**
3. **Noted the revised 2017/18 and 2018/19 Treasury Management projections as set out in paragraph 2.35.**

129. General Fund Budget Proposals

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

Thank you Mr Mayor

This is the second Conservative budget I have delivered and how much has changed in those two years. As you know in 2016 we inherited a budget with a £4m pressure, a budget with no street cleaners, no environmental enforcement officers, little or no equipment to cut the grass, no coherent assets list, no plans to make our assets work for our residents and worse than a letter saying there was absolutely no money left we had a so called graph of doom which was rolled out on every single occasion to show how bad things were going to become. In 2016 we started to reverse this poor administration of these public services, putting council tax payer's money back to where they wanted to see it, back into the services what they expected the council to provide. That was cleaning the streets, cutting the grass and filling the potholes. And of course all the other services that we provide. Looking after the elderly, young and most vulnerable, supply educational support, regeneration of the borough, collecting council tax the list goes on and on. At the end of last year we closed the year with a small surplus which increased the reserves, we made headway onto the 6 years of neglect this borough had suffered with our clean it cut it fill campaign, we set a budget that we were told would not be deliverable. During the year we set investment principles which were agreed by every councillor here this evening to ensure openness when we made large investments and in doing so we achieved something that every single member outside of the conservative group said we would not, we balanced the budget at year end. Not only did we balance the budget we put £5.5million extra into reserves but because of our investment strategy we also had a surplus, a one off surplus, of £2.3million. Not money taken from the hard pressed tax payer but money we had got from our ability to invest wisely and get income from those investments. A surplus this year being used to improve the ability of our grounds maintenance team to do their job throughout the year, extra money for road surfacing and more importantly more money, and new money going into tackling anti-social behaviour across our borough. So in 22 months what we have done we have turned that ridiculous graph of doom upside down into the graph of BOOM. As I would hope every member in this room would know we are a unitary authority so we have responsibility for services both County Councils and District Councils supply combined. However, we still manage to do this with the lowest Council Tax in Essex, the third lowest of all unitary authorities like Thurrock and indeed one of the lowest in the Country. Now this had been managed by on or just below inflation increases from 2004 to 2011 including a very small cut in 2011, subsidised increases from Government from 2012 to 2016 and then below the threshold of 2% increases ever since. This is something that I will refer to later. Services such as Grangewaters, Grays beach Café and the Thameside Theatre are all forecasted to break even rather than costing the Taxpayer hundreds and thousands of pounds a year. Frankly any party could say they were saving these services by throwing tax payers money at them, but only the Conservatives have made them financially viable thereby making the services save themselves and this is something we should all recognise. We also turned round the frankly disgusting cuts on the citizen advice bureau and I am glad to report that I was told today that the citizen advice bureau

were awarded another £50,000 for the next three years to carry out this vital work and would like to thank all councillors and indeed other members of the community who were there yesterday unfortunately I was unable to be there as I was here dealing with other matters.

So now I am going to move to the detail of this year's budget:

Unlike other councils who have gone to their electors asking for significant increases through a referendum in the past, and failed, or like many other councils doing this year who are asking for the maximum 2.99% council tax this budget is only asking for only 1.99% that's for council tax on its own nothing to do with the adult social care precept. Now there are a number for reasons for this.

Following last year's recommendation across party overview and scrutiny committee we will be increasing the Adult Social Care precept by 3%. Something agreed by them. Something I believe I think we all agreed last year as we put the budget forward as well. This will bring the council up the maximum permissible increase in this new charge of 6%. So unless legislation changes next year this will be the last we will see of this particular increase. We must remember that this money is ring-fenced and goes to pay for the care of adults and other older persons in our borough who are vulnerable and this equates to an average of £3.25 per month on the average Band D property. Now as we go through the report we will notice that not many people pay the average Band D because of the different types of discount and indeed our borough is made up dominantly of Band C so will be less than that £3.25.

The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner will be asking for an average of an extra £1 per month to help fund an extra 140 police officers across Essex.

Last year we put through overview and scrutiny and through cabinet a medium term financial strategy that only assumed an increase of 1.99% for the next few years. As we have worked to that principle all year round and we have put in £8.4 million of investment money this year I see no particular reason to change that. So if you look at the combination of increases in adult social care the increase from the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for those extra police officers that are much needed we feel that 1.99% is the amount that we should be asking.

Now for a number of years I have sat here as a councillor at this point and listened to the list of services that are going to be cut or subject to efficiencies or whatever you wish to call them at the time, however I am going to start with the services we will be investing extra money into:

Environment to reinforce the clean it cut it initiative

We have put million and million pounds, it being capital or it being million pound of direct funding each year to ensure that it is moving forward indeed a one off surplus also helped that with extra resources.

Children's Social Care to help manage the increase in pressures

One of the things I am sure that Councillor Little will attest to we have finally got a bit more of a control on the spending in this area and she is continuing to work to make sure that it comes into budget year on year. Unlike we have seen in previous years where it just seemed to go up, up and up.

Adult Social Care

The 3% ring fenced increase will mean an extra £1.9 million of money in to this vital area and that is without the extra grants amounting to £400,000 coming from Government this year.

Now to the list of services that will not be cut:

Street Cleaning

We put 10 new rounds on in 2016 and we will not be cutting them and indeed we are already discussing as a cabinet how we may increase that number. It being on a temporary or on a permanent basis.

Bin Collections

Let me make it very clear - we will be keeping weekly bin collections. There was only ever been one attempt to decrease this and that was under the previous administration. That was successfully fought and I do thank Councillor Kent at the time for withdrawing it on the night so to make sure we keep the weekly bin collections. We will continue to so whilst in administration.

Pothole Filling

We certainly won't be cutting that, over the past 22 months this administration, if you excuse the pun, have poured millions of pounds into potholes and resurfacing the roads in this borough and will continue to do so. With the weather we have recently will increase the number of potholes so we know as soon as it starts to clear up will have another hefty job in front of us but guess what we are up for that and we have the money to help in advance.

Libraries

There will be no change to our current library provision. Something we are also accused of that is something that they will cut, libraries, it is not happening.

To be honest I could carry on like this all night but pretty much everything else this council has been doing will be protected by what is effectively below inflation Council Tax increase and on the council tax increase itself and more importantly good wise financial investments, that plus making the Council more commercial and achieving service reviews that will continue to drive efficiencies throughout the system.

However we must remember that Council Spending Review process and the investment strategy, something we all signed up to here, makes clear that we will continue to review our services to ensure that they are efficient, they are cost effective and more importantly still required. But unlike probably every other local authority in the country any reduction in funding that is listed here tonight on any service will be on the grounds that we are looking for efficiencies they are not masquerading as cuts they will just be part of those that we chose to make more efficient. That will continue for the next couple of years and I am sure my cabinet member for finance will touch on that later. Page 123 does outline where some of those efficiencies will be made and if you look at that you will see no service cuts, clearly efficiencies that are there clearly need to happen.

I have and will continue to mention these one off surpluses in the budget, these are as the title suggests one off. They exist in one year only and are then rolled into the budget for future income. Those investments will need to be replaced with others as we go through the life of those investments and therefore any extra windfalls will come again as a one off capital receipts.

Now moving to the Capital Program - As with every other Council we have an ongoing capital program with some significant schemes that will span a number of years, these are outlined more in the report. But just to touch on them:

- A13 Widening
- Purfleet Regeneration – I understand the planning application went in this week
- Grays Underpass
- New Waste Fleet – to ensure our waste lorries are to up to date and efficient
- New Education Facilities

That is just to name a few.

But to become more efficient we also need to spend money to save money and on page 112 you will see the breakdown regarding spending on service reviews, digital improvements, property improvements not just at the council offices but places like libraries etc.

And now moving on to the actual new capital projects

We have the new litter bins – which I am sure Councillor Watkins will cover that later.

Drainage and gully improvements across the borough to help those who experience flooding, flooding that eventually leads to damaged roads to help bring that to an end.

£150 million to help improve our war memorials and their surroundings. As we rapidly approach the 100 year commemoration of the end of the First World War what could be more fitting than to show our respect that we will never forget by putting one-off money into this project to ensure that for the next 100 years we will still never forget.

There will be new care facilities in Ockendon.

We have our integrated medical centres which again my portfolio holder for health will mention those.

And we will be rebuilding the library in East Tilbury – something that has been vitally missed since the dreadful events there which had led to the closure temporarily.

There are also our aspirational and future projects which as we can see from the table at appendix 7 with a wide range of projects that will help improve Thurrock be it improvements to our commerciality, our cultural offer, older persons units, our health provision, our energy use or in deed our sports provision at Blackshots. All of these are aspirational some of them are happening as we speak.

I will touch on the dedicated school grants whilst we are able to agree this item here there is very little influence the Members have over it. The allocation is dealt with by democratically by the schools forum the total is set by a formula. This again unfortunately has been overspent but oddly enough it is not unusual for local authorities around the country and the over spends caused by the previous year's commitments and that are directly recoverable from the grant before it is allocated to schools.

Now before we go onto discussions let me reiterate some of the issues that I have raised and those that were raised last year that failed to materialise. Elected member after elected member from opposition parties stood up that the Conservatives were not deliver the services improvements that we had proposed, the challenge we accepted, we raised to and we delivered as promised. The Conservatives will bankrupt the council well far from it. Our reserves have been increased by 40% we are investing millions of pounds into services stripped down by the previous administration and at the end of this financial year have one off surplus to invest back into services. For the next financial year we have a surplus of £2.5 million. Not money taken from the tax payer as mentioned but money earned from wise investment. Now I understand there is an amendment proposed which is on the table, which is 1.3.1 which has been submitted this afternoon. Whilst I am slightly disappointed that it was put in at the eleventh hour despite everyone attending this Comprehensive Spending Review process I am not going to play politics with this I actually think these are very good suggestions and I will be accepting this as a recommendation to be voted on as we go through. But we need to make it very, very clear this windfall cannot be allocated here tonight. The suggestions as they have been put forward or need to be discussed at cabinet formally and put money into services that will call on it year on year

will not be viable and are not covered by the constraints. Cabinet is currently looking at investing some of this money, as we have had discussions ourselves, in our high street with a viable high street investment fund. We all know how vital these are to our residents as the improvements to them will make them more attractive to customers and give a wide range, increase the range of shops. This is a clear sign that this council believes that one of the signs of a great communities is a well-used local town centre and the only way we are going to that is to help them improve. Also this investment fund will be open to every single area and not exclude places like Tilbury as the last one was. Everyone who's in the town centre will be able to bid into this fund once and if it is approved.

Further to the anti-social behaviour funding we are also looking to improve the capabilities of CCTV as well as the associated improvements to helping, investigating, responding and preventing the scourge of fly tipping across the borough which has kind of been captured in some of the suggestions as well as the money for mental health improvements and further protection. However, as said, it would be a matter for cabinet to make the final decision on that and until that time the money remains unspent and unallocated.

I know I have 20 minutes for this and I did not intend to take the entire 20 minutes for this, I am sure the leader of the opposition is desperate to speak on this as are my cabinet members and indeed probably members across the chamber. With that, Mister Mayor, I propose the budget as outlined in the report, item 13.

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

Councillor Snell

Thank you Mister Mayor. I would like to begin by saying that the budget we are being asked to approve tonight hasn't just appeared out of thin air. Through the Comprehensive Spending Review process, all three Group leaders and deputies have had the opportunity on a regular monthly basis to discuss the various options available to us and to have our say on the direction of travel for this Council's finances. Whilst it is true that there have been similar budget discussions in previous years, the Comprehensive Spending Review for this year has been comprehensive and informative and I would like to thank both the officers and the administration for their engagement. Thank you very much.

Setting a balanced and robust budget isn't easy. Against a backdrop of significant cuts in Government funding this Council is tasked with carrying out all of its duties, statutory or otherwise, with far less money than in the past. However, with the officers now taking a much more commercial approach than before, and having made some prudent choices, the administration are presenting a budget that is, for the next few years at least (and subject to no major, unforeseen upheavals) in surplus. With that, in my opinion, should be applauded. Nevertheless, we also have to deal with the unintended

consequences of Government policies that have a substantial impact on the budget and about which we can do very little. The cuts to adult social care have been particularly damaging and brought the funding for those services to the very edge, our residents are being asked to pay an extra 3% on their Council tax to cover that funding gap. Likewise, cuts to the Police service have seen significant rises of crime in Thurrock as the number of Police men and women have been reduced and the stations out of which they operate closed; yet our residents are being asked for an extra 7.62% on the police precept.

These things are important. We in this chamber are well aware which portions of our resident's Council tax bills are decided here but the people of Thurrock see it as one bill, one amount that they have to pay and, this year, this amount is rising considerably yet again.

With all that said the fact remains that we do support the 3% Adult Social Care precept. It's a little harder to accept the 1.99% Council tax rise. Whilst we in Thurrock Independents approve of the Council being able to generate a budget in surplus, we firmly believe that such surpluses should be used to reduce Council tax bills. However, we can also see the need to put more money into initiatives like Clean It, Cut It, Fill It and others. We do want that to continue as it is a good initiative which goes some way to making the borough a cleaner and more pleasant place to live. We would very much like to see a bolder, longer term approach to commercial investments in the future with the aim of ensuring solid, stable Council finances as well as the afore-mentioned reduction in Council tax bills.

I would like to reiterate as well how valuable a process the Comprehensive Spending Review is. It is important. It has to be right that all Groups have their opportunity to influence the budget, to agree where we can agree and to make our objections where we can't. I hope this now carries on as a regular exercise, and participated in by all Groups, for many years to come and I take Councillor Gledhill point quite rightly we did in did not vote for last year's budget, we did indeed have our reservations and the budget was fine. We were proved wrong. And it is only fair that we acknowledge that so this year we have looked at it, been through the process and I guess you could always pick things that you are not too fond of or some little things you might do a little bit differently but on the whole I think the budget is a good one, it seems favourable to us and we are happy to approve it. Thank you.

At 8.23pm the meeting was stopped by the Mayor to allow him to confirm procedure with Officers.

At 8.24pm the meeting was reconvened by the Mayor.

The Mayor stated that the Leader had accepted the amendment recommendation 1.3.1 to which Members agreed that this should become a substantive recommendation.

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

Council Gledhill

Thank you Mister Mayor. I certainly won't be taking 10 minutes. I would like to thank Councillor Snell for possibly the nicest reply to any budget that has been proposed in the 11 years that I have stood in this chamber and I have been proposing them or fighting against them. It just shows that politics in Thurrock is starting to realise that whilst this is important we do need to be making these decisions wisely. As those kind words about Comprehensive Spending Review are most gratefully accepted it is the right thing to do with everyone involved with everyone around the table and may long this continue. You did mention about there being less money, actually there is less money for us to spend actually the money is coming from a different source now rather than just straight from the tax payer via the Government and I am going to touch on that same thing again. You mentioned the obvious 3% increase in adult social care and indeed the increase for the police crime commissioner for the extra police officers. Whilst I do not have any control over the last one we have control over 3%. Of course if that 3% wasn't coming from here, if it was coming straight from Government where would it come from? There is no such thing as Government money. It is tax payer money. And by us raising this locally we know that money is going to be spent locally so rather than it going straight into the coffers, that's no disrespect to the Mayor and his day time job, whilst it goes off to the revenue to be distributed around the country at least we know that 3% tax increase will be spent locally. Where you also said about using the one off services to reduce the council tax whilst again that sounds commendable to do what we have to remember is just that for general increases for the borough is £2.7 million this year. So if that increase carries on year on year that means we will have to find an extra £5.5 million next year and £8.25 million the year after. None of our services would eat into that and indeed once we put the services towards reducing council tax we will have to find that excess. So on top of that £8.25 million if we use £1 million a year over the next couple of years it will mean that we end back up where we started at the beginning of this administration with a £10 million gap to find. I'm sorry that is just not going to happen certainly not on my watch. But I certainly understand where you are coming from and I think it is the right thing to raise here. As I said this is probably the nicest response to the budget I have ever experienced whilst in opposition or as leader so with that Mister Mayor, obviously go back to the remainder of the report.

The proposed amendment to add a new Motion 1.3.1 read as follows:

In respect of the projected revenue surplus for 2018/19, Council calls on Cabinet to make the following one-off allocations for 2018/19:

- a) £100,000 additional funding for Adult Social Care in 2018/19;
- b) £50,000 to Thurrock Citizens Advice Bureau;
- c) £450,000 to pilot a quick-response team to tackle fly-tipping across Thurrock;

- d) £300,000 to enable further target-hardening schemes to prevent site incursions;
- e) £250,000 to fund evidence-gathering to robustly challenge the requirement for 32,000 additional houses through the Local Plan process;

Councillor Gerrish, as Leader of the Labour Group, highlighted the shortcomings of the proposed budget. That the budget was weak with the introduction in the rise of council tax and that it was not ambitious enough on resident's priorities. There were very few steps forward for Thurrock residents and that the amendment to the recommendations addressed such key issues. That the biggest complaint received from residents was the state of the borough with too much litter on the streets. That the pilot of a quick response team would enable action to be undertaken quicker and work alongside the Enforcement Team. That to prevent further site incursions onto unprotected land more target hardening schemes would need to be introduced. That the funding details for the proposed 32,000 additional houses should be scrutinised more and build homes based on that evidence.

Councillor Spillman stated that Members should congratulate themselves for working well together and getting the borough to where it was today. But stressed that the tax burden on residents over the last 2 years had not been done lightly and had affected the poorest people in the borough.

Councillor Halden stated that the borough was now a better place than it was 2 years ago, that the Council now had a 4 year balanced budget, expansions made to schools and medical centres and Clean It Cut it Fill It making the borough better. With the Council taking less tax than was legally required and those residents deserved an optimistic approach with decent relationships with Members.

Councillor G Rice stated that those local families already struggling were being penalised on the tax increase and that the Council should be looking into investments to build up bigger surpluses and taxes should be funded nationally spread across a wide range.

Councillor Coxshall stated he was pleased with the budget and the Council had made some proud achievements with the reserves up by 40%. That Thurrock was a growing area with the new proposed 32,000 new homes being built.

Councillor B Rice stated that in reality the council tax increase would affect working class residents. That the budget had some good points but the increase in council tax was one step too far.

Councillor Huelin stated that investments had been made which had secured the future of the Council for the next 4 years, with 60% of Key Performance Indicators being met and that performance of the Council was evident with the administration working alongside Members and Office staff.

Councillor Redsell stated that a lot of hard work had gone into setting the budget.

Councillor B Little stated that data had been prepared and used as evidence to fund the Council for the future and that organisation was important for the future. That the Community Assets Scheme was close to being finalised where land and buildings would be owned or managed by community organisations.

Councillor Hebb stated that the proposed amendment should have come out of the Comprehensive Spending Review rather than at this late hour. That the third of the members up for election in May will return for their next electoral term to have the books balanced for the next 4 years. Councillor Hebb stated that self-sufficiency was on its way and that the ambition of all would be to have good schools, transport, good road scheme, green spaces, medical facilities and residential homes. Councillor Hebb commended the budget and thanked his team for the hard work undertaken.

Councillor Potheary stated that a lot of the projects mentioned had started under the Labour Government such as Gloriana and the end of the SERCO contract. That the dedicated school grant should be kept in mind and what was being challenged.

Councillor C Holloway stated that the proposals should be of a Council and not an Investment Bank. That there was a social divide in the borough and that the proposals would not be agreed on by all residents.

Councillor Kerin stated that recommendation 1.3.1 was a result of Labour listening to residents. Some residents of the borough could not afford the proposed council tax increase and had nothing to look forward to.

Councillor Watkins stated he was proud of the administration and what had been achieved. That the Council had reinvested money back into the environment and given services a new lease of life. That the budget had been set to protect services and provide a vision for Thurrock residents.

Councillor S Little stated the budget was inspirational and had provided adult social care a twenty-first century provision that had been recognised by the Government. This was achieved by listening to residents and ensuring that money was spent in Thurrock.

Councillor Maney stated that budget was sound and it had been a weak attack from the Labour Leader. Councillor Maney confirmed that street cleaning was improving on a much harder test and being monitored by Keep Britain Tidy.

Councillor Duffin stated he would abstain on recommendation 1.3 to agree a 1.99% council tax increase and asked Councillor Gerrish to set out what his proposed plans would be to reduce this figure.

Councillor Gledhill stated that Group Leaders had agreed the rise in council tax and that this would not appear next year. That recommendation 1.3.1 had been accepted and voted on as a substantive recommendation. Councillor Gledhill compared services, such as the Citizen Advice Bureau, and stated that under Labour administration there would be no budget.

Councillor Gledhill stated that taxes had to be paid for locally and not nationally as suggested. With the budget balanced for the next 4 years.

Councillor Gledhill proposed that the budget is moved as outlined to the vote.

At 9.14pm the meeting was stopped by the Mayor to seek procedural advice from Officers.

At 9.15pm the meeting was reconvened by the Mayor.

Councillor Gledhill sought clarification whether recommendations 1.7 to 1.12 should be non-recorded. The Mayor confirmed that these recommendations would be recorded.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.1.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.1.:

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.1 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.2.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.2 the result of which was:

For : Councillors John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Cliff Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (42)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.2 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.3.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.3 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, Joy Redsell, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (18)

Against : Councillors Claire Baldwin, Oliver Gerrish, Cliff Holloway, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice and Michael Stone (12)

Abstain : Councillors John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Jack Duffin, Leslie Gamester, Graham Hamilton, Roy Jones, David Potter, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell and Luke Spillman (12)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.3 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on amendment recommendation 1.3.1.

Councillor Gerrish made a Point of Order requesting that 1.3.1 be a requisition vote.

A recorded vote took place on amendment recommendation 1.3.1 the result of which was:

For : Councillors Claire Baldwin, Oliver Gerrish, Cliff Holloway, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice and Michael Stone (12)

Against : (0)

Abstain : Councillors John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Leslie Gamester, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Terry Piccolo, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (30)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.3.1 to be carried and become a substantive recommendation.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.4.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.4.

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.4 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.5.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.5.

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.5 to be carried.

The Mayor explained that a non-recorded vote would take place on recommendation 1.6.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.6.

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.6 to be carried.

Finally, the Mayor explained that a recorded en-bloc vote would take place on recommendations 1.7 to 1.12 the result of which was:

For : Councillors John Allen, Chris Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Shane Hebb, Cliff Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Tunde Ojetola, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Joy Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerald Rice, Angela Sheridan, Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Michael Stone, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins (42)

Against : (0)

Abstain : (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.7 to 1.12 to be carried.

RESOLVED:

That the Council:

- 1.1 Considers and acknowledges the Section 151 Officer's (Director of Finance and IT's) S25 report on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves and the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 1, including the conditions upon which the following recommendations are made;**
- 1.2 Agree to a 3% council tax increase in respect of Adult Social Care;**
- 1.3 Agree to a 1.99% council tax increase in support of the general budget;**
- 1.3.1 In respect of the projected revenue surplus for 2018/19, Council calls on Cabinet to make the following one-off allocations for 2018/19:**

- (a) £100,000 additional funding for Adult Social Care in 2018/19;
 - (b) £50,000 to Thurrock Citizens Advice Bureau;
 - (c) £450,000 to pilot a quick-response team to tackle fly-tipping across Thurrock;
 - (d) £300,000 to enable further target-hardening schemes to prevent site incursions;
 - (e) £250,000 to fund evidence-gathering to robustly challenge the requirement for 32,000 additional houses through the Local Plan process.
- 1.4 Approve the Dedicated Schools Grant as set out in section 8 and Appendix 5;
- 1.5 Approve the new General Fund capital proposals, including the allocation for feasibility work on future and aspirational proposals, as set out in section 10 and Appendix 8;
- 1.6 Delegate to Cabinet the ability to agree schemes (a) where it can be evidenced that there is a spend to save opportunity or (b) that use any unbudgeted contributions from third parties, including those by way of grants or developers' contributions, and these be deemed as part of the capital programme.
- 1.7 Calculate that the council tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2018/19 is £65,407,870 as set out in the table at paragraph 5.8 of this report.
- 1.8 That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2018/19 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
- (a) £402,469,412 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act.
 - (b) £337,061,542 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £65,407,870 being the amount by which the aggregate at 1.8(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.8(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
 - (d) £1,287.81 being the amount at 1.8(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (Council Tax Base of 50,790), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
 - (e) £0 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
 - (f) £1,287.81 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by Item T, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the

year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

- 1.9 To note that the Police Authority and the Fire Authority have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the tables below.
- 1.10 That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of council tax for 2018/19 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

**2018/19 COUNCIL TAX FOR THURROCK PURPOSES EXCLUDING ESSEX
FIRE AUTHORITY AND ESSEX POLICE AUTHORITY**

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2018/19							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
858.54	1,001.63	1,144.72	1,287.81	1,573.99	1,860.17	2,146.35	2,575.62

- 1.11 That it be noted that for the year 2018/19 Essex Police Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2018/19							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
112.68	131.46	150.24	169.02	206.58	244.14	281.70	338.04

- 1.12 That it be noted that for the year 2018/19 Essex Fire Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council for each of the categories of dwellings as follows (waiting on formal confirmation):

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2018/19							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
46.92	54.74	62.56	70.38	86.02	101.66	117.30	140.76

**2018/19 COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING FIRE AND POLICE AUTHORITY
PRECEPTS)**

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2018/19							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
1,018.14	1,187.83	1,357.52	1,527.21	1,866.59	2,205.97	2,545.35	3,054.42

The Mayor informed the Chamber that four questions to the Leader had been received and six questions to Cabinet Members. Those not heard would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

A copy of the transcript of part of question 1 and answer can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

At 9.30pm the Mayor called the close of the Full Council meeting having not received any motions to suspend Standing Orders beyond the 2.5 hour time limit.

Councillor Spillman withdrew his question and would resubmit.

Councillor Potheary requested a written response.

Councillor Redsell requested a written response.

Councillor Duffin withdrew his question and would resubmit.

Councillor B Rice requested a written response.

Councillor Maney requested a written response.

Councillor G Rice requested a written response.

Councillor Gerrish withdrew his question and would resubmit.

Councillor Redsell requested a written response.

Councillor Duffin questioned the Mayor why he had not suspended Standing Orders to continue beyond the 2.5 hour time limit as he had previously done at Full Council meetings he had chaired. Councillor Ojetola stated that this was a Budget Council and that no Member had requested to suspend standing orders.

131. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.

132. Minutes of Committees

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.

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

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.

134. Motion submitted by Councillor Spillman

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Spillman. The Motion read as follows:

That Thurrock Council seeks as part of the nationally prescribed process of bringing forward our Local Plan as positively and quickly as possible and using all available legislation, to ensure that sufficient homes of the right type and tenure are delivered to meet the local needs of our communities. And that such an approach should also inform all new developments, especially Thurrock Regeneration Limited projects.

Councillor Spillman introduced the Motion by stating that the legislation process should take priority and push the legal boundaries when Thurrock Council brought forward the Local Plan and Regeneration Projects within the Council.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

135. Motion submitted by Councillor Duffin

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

Thurrock Council resolves to increase its investment portfolio with the ambition to reduce General Fund Council Tax.

Councillor Duffin stated that Thurrock Council should work to increase the investment portfolio to reduce the general fund council tax if the financial position was viable. That the Council had the power to reduce the cost of living for residents in Thurrock by working together to make these reductions to council tax an ambitious goal.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

136. Motion submitted by Councillor Aker

Councillor Aker withdrew his Motion prior to the start of the meeting.

137. Motion submitted by Councillor Snell

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Snell. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care as well as NHS England setting out a detailed case supporting

the need for a new hospital in Thurrock to help address the future needs of the borough.

Councillor Snell stating the Motion was not a judgement on whether Orsett Hospital should close or not but to start conversations now on the proposal of a new hospital in Thurrock in the next 10 to 15 years by writing to the Secretary of State and NHS England to identify a site for such a new hospital.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted in minority in favour of the Motion whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

138. Motion submitted by Councillor Jones

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Jones. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock faces an environmental crisis if it does not balance the economic growth of the Borough with the increasing risks to our resident's health and our environment. Therefore Thurrock Council requests the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to convene a fact finding meeting, the results of which can be reported to the relevant decision making bodies of the council. The meeting will:

- (1) Analyse current and future risk to Thurrock's environment.*
- (2) Develop concrete policy proposals.*

Councillor Jones introduced the Motion by stating that air pollution was a worry to residents with Thurrock being in the top 6 worse areas in the country. With future planned infrastructures such as the expansion of DP World, Tilbury Docks, Tilbury Power Plant, Purfleet Regeneration, Integrated Medical Centres and the future development of 32,000 new homes into Thurrock. Residents deserved a better place to live and not have to endure worrying environmental issues.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

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

The Mayor wished the Leader a happy 50th birthday.

The meeting finished at 9.43 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**