

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 March 2019 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Wednesday 27 March 2019 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Gary Collins, Deborah Huelin, Barry Johnson, Susan Little and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Councillors Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader), Mark Coxshall and James Halden

In attendance: Tim Hallam, Deputy Head of Legal
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Lucy Tricker, 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.

109. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 February 2019 were approved as a correct record.

110. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

111. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Johnson declared a non-pecuniary interest for Item 11 as he was the Deputy Chair of Governors for Benyon Primary School, and stated that he would refrain from voting on this item.

112. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by reminding Members that the Council was currently in a period of purdah due to the by-election in Aveley and Uplands ward. He reminded Members of the purdah guidance that party political statements should not be made through Council channels.

He moved on to discuss the recent occurrence in Purfleet whereby two off-duty enforcement officers caught two men attempting to fly-tip hundreds of tyres. He stated that the would-be fly-tippers were now facing prosecution and

a £50,000 fine due to the actions of the off-duty enforcement officers, and stated that the council would be looking into ways to take legal action regarding the proceeds of crime, if they were found guilty. The Leader added that fly-tipping in Thurrock would not pay and is not a victimless crime as it costs the council money, which could be better used elsewhere. He then asked residents to always check waste carrier licences if they saw an advert for cheap waste clearance, as residents could face a fine if their rubbish ended up fly-tipped, as it could promote criminal activity. The Leader stated that much money had been invested into the Linford Waste and Recycling Centre, and over 3000 van permits had been issued since the scheme began last year. He stated that those people who had applied for van permits when the scheme was announced would soon have to reapply free of charge, and reminded those residents to do so. He added that those residents who would like a permit should apply two weeks before they wish to visit the Centre. He mentioned that ANPR cameras were being installed at the site to make the system more efficient. He also stated that at the recent Environment Agency inspection the site had received no breaches of usage.

The Leader then described how the 4th round of the CEDF fund was now available to residents to use to deliver community projects, for example installing fencing, painting, clearing undergrowth and improving walkways. He stated that it was up to residents to decide what to use the money for and he was looking forward to receiving applications. He added that four events would be held across the borough to give residents ideas on what to apply for, and to make the system fair. He finally stated that the CEDF grant was open until 17 May 2019.

The Leader moved on to the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It Update and stated that since April 2018: 3225 potholes had been filled, with 98% in target time; 1230 acres of grass had been cut; 1871 fly-tips had been cleared; 1015 tonnes of rubbish had been removed; and 3660 fixed penalty notices had been issued for offences such as littering and spitting. The Leader also commented on Councillor Hebb and Councillor Coxshall's non-attendance at the meeting as they were currently attending the Local Government Chronicle Awards where Thurrock Council had been nominated for 'Most Entrepreneurial Council' and had been nominated for an award regarding the work the Council had undertaken on the 'Head Start Housing' project. He added that the Chief Executive and two other senior officers were currently at the MIPIN Conference doing business worldwide. He stated that this had been funded solely through sponsorship and had zero cost for the taxpayer. He added that at the MIPIN Conference in 2018, over £100,000 in pre-planning money had been given to Thurrock due to the trade made there.

113. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on policy, budget and other issues.

114. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

115. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions had been received from non-Executive Members.

116. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

No matters had been referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

117. New Council Home Building Programme (Decision 110507)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and stated he was very pleased to see this coming to Cabinet. He described how the report outlined plans for 500 new council homes within the next 5-10 years, funded through the HRA. He added that Thurrock currently provided roughly 500 council tenants with monetary advice to stop homelessness across the borough, and the proposed 500 houses could also stop the rise of homelessness. He mentioned that this project would be supported by Thurrock Regeneration Limited, who would be well placed to assist with the delivery. He then described how a high-level financial model had been undertaken to ensure the self-financing of the project, which had taken into account current government legislation, and found that the project could be self-financing if weekly rent was 57% of current market value. He added that Thurrock needed new council homes as well as infrastructure, and stated that the council would continue to work with landlords and Thurrock Regeneration Limited to meet the council home target. He stated that the next step in the project would be to identify the types of homes needed and their location, and challenges would be identified. He summarised that this was only possible due to the removal of the HRA borrowing cap by central government, which allowed local council's to increase their social housing stock, and ensured all residents could be provided with suitable and safe housing. He finally mentioned that this project, if agreed by Cabinet, would be going to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then on for consultation.

Councillor Watkins thanked Councillor Johnson for the report and stated that he felt this was good work. He stated that this put the council on the right path towards building new council homes, and looked forward to the comments from Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Leader added that this was a good first step in providing council homes, as there were 1500 new cases of homelessness in the borough every year, which costs taxpayers money. He stated that the council would not be advertising how much they would spend on the project, as Thurrock wanted developers to meet their criteria, but the figure would run into the billions.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved that a housing development pipeline be prepared to seek to deliver up to 500 new Council homes for Thurrock residents over the

next 5 to 10 years to be funded within the Housing Revenue Account.

2. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Place in consultation with the Corporate Director of Adults, Health and Housing and the Director of Finance and IT, as well as the Cabinet Member for Housing, to ensure the Council Homes Delivery Programme is adequately resourced in accordance with the Council's Procurement Regulations and to enter into appropriate agreements as may be necessary to seek to secure the necessary statutory consents to deliver 500 new Council homes.

3. Agreed to refer this decision to Housing Overview and Scrutiny for its consideration and advice on ensuring the successful delivery of a New Council Homes Programme through the HRA.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call in

118. School Capital Programme Update 2019/20 (Decision 110508)

The Leader stated that he would be presenting this report on behalf of Councillor Halden, and reiterated that Councillor Johnson would not be partaking in the vote due to his non-pecuniary interest. He drew Members attention to paragraph 3 of the executive summary and stated that this showed the council were always looking for alternatives, rather than placing small bulge classes and demountables across the borough. He stated that the recommendations were asking for a £2m investment into expanding Benyon Primary School, as the population of Ockendon was growing and the buildings in the current school were nearing end of life. He commented that it was good to see money being set aside for the expansion as Benyon was a very good school, which had an excellent reputation in the borough. He added that there was also a deficit of 800 places between primary and secondary education, and projects were being put forward to alleviate this deficit. He commented that whilst these projects were being undertaken, the council were looking into long-run permanent solutions, which were part of the local plan. He then reaffirmed the council's commitment to infrastructure first and expansion second.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet (excluding Councillor Johnson):

1. Approved a £2.2m budget for the expansion of Benyon Primary School to be funded from the School's Basic Need capital funding 2019/20

2. Approved a budget of up to £1m for works to be undertaken to enable construction of additional classrooms in current secondary schools.

3. Progressed the procurement process to secure design and construction for the expansion of Benyon Primary School to take

forward the proposed schemes.

Councillor Johnson stated that now recommendations had been agreed, in which he had not voted, he felt the school was excellent and the staff worked very hard. He felt that the school had an excellent reputation in Ockendon and local residents cared about its wellbeing.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

119. Adult Mental Health Service Transformation (Decision 110509)

Councillor Little presented the report on behalf of Councillor Halden and stated that before she introduced the report, she wished to congratulate Collins House for their 'good' rating by OFSTED on all five points. She then introduced the report and stated that Councillor Halden had worked in collaboration with the Director for Public Health, and he had been pleased this report was coming in front of Cabinet. She added that the report had also been to Health Overview and Scrutiny and the Health and Wellbeing Board, both of whom had been supportive. She affirmed that an expert peer review had been undertaken in April 2018, as well as a survey by a Joint Strategic Needs Analyst and HealthWatch, all of which had considered the effectiveness of mental health diagnosis and treatment across the borough, and both had said change was needed. She commented that they had found a need for increased integration with primary care, and this was what the report was recommending.

The Leader stated that mental health issues could affect anybody, old or young, and these issues had been widely covered in national news. He felt this report was long overdue and was pleased to see work being undertaken. He thanked Councillor Halden, the Corporate Director of Children's Services and his team for their hard work and hoped this report would show what steps were needed to transform mental health services across the borough.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the direction of travel in terms of adult mental health system transformation and the action plan outlined to deliver that service transformation.

2. Approved the proposals set out in section 7.14 to 7.16 of the report to develop a new Section 75 Agreement with EPUT from 1 April 2019 based on a longer term contract, with a revised performance and budget framework, subject to the agreement from the Director of Public Health, Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Health.

3. Approved the proposals set out in section 10 of this report in relation to suicide prevention.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

120. Revenue Budget Monitoring - Quarter 3 2018/19 (Decision 110510)

The Leader introduced this report on behalf of Councillor Hebb and drew Members attention to the executive summary. He stated that this report covered quarter 3, which had ended 3 months ago, and did not give up-to-date statistics for this year. He confirmed that quarter 3 had seen an increase spend by the waste team due to unforeseen circumstances that had been out of the council's control, but this overspend had been absorbed by other services and the corporate budget. He stated that Councillor Hebb and the Director of Finance and IT believed the council would be on target to spend the budget by the end of the financial year, and would not be using reserves or one-off reserves. He mentioned that in the 2018/19 financial year, general fund reserves had increased by 4% and overspend had been managed.

The Leader commented that homelessness was still an issue within the borough, as landlords were increasing rents and renting to families faced with homelessness from London boroughs. He stated that this meant the council had to spend more on temporary accommodation, which cost the taxpayers money. He reaffirmed that the council were doing all they could to help people who had been made homeless, such as pressuring central government and meeting regularly with Leaders across Essex to discuss the problem of London borough's housing their homeless people outside of London. He added that the council were currently looking into initiatives to stop temporary accommodation such as building more houses for a permanent solution, as outlined in Item 10 of the agenda. He stated that last year 1556 Thurrock residents had been made homeless, which was a 40% increase from the year before. He summarised and stated that the council were looking into every service to find efficiencies, such as Children's Services who had saved £3.5m, most of which had been re-invested in the service.

Councillor Collins thanked Councillor Hebb and his team for all their hard work on balancing the budget and stated that he felt concerned over the number of homeless people across the borough and hoped the figure could decrease. The Leader thanked Councillor Collins as his portfolio of Central Services usually underspent, which helped those services who had overspent.

Councillor Johnson reassured Cabinet that his housing team are very proactive when looking for solutions for homelessness, such as building new homes and new houses of multiple occupancy. He stated that he had attended a seminar last week regarding the Homelessness Reduction Act, and felt that no other council were doing more than Thurrock to prevent homelessness. He stated that he was constantly looking for improvements, but often the headline figures gave a bad impression. The Leader reiterated the point that the council were constantly looking for solutions, and always looked to see if they could use ideas from other councils. He added that the

council were currently looking into temporary housing, which would be erected in weeks and had a watertight guarantee of 50 years. He stated that this temporary housing would not be prefab, but would be of well-designed concrete and would be dismantled and moved elsewhere when needed. He then stated that he felt it was good to see other services such as Children's minimise their overspend, but knew this could change quickly if even a few children needed the council's help.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the forecast outturn position for 2018/19 and that further mitigation is required to outturn within the agreed budget envelope.

Reason for Decision – as stated in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

121. 2018/19 Capital Monitoring Report - Quarter 3

The Leader stated that he would be presenting this report on behalf of Councillor Hebb and stated that capital projects were now running on time and on-budget. He thanked all Cabinet Members for their part in ensuring capital projects were run efficiently, particularly Councillor Little for her work on Collins House and Councillor Watkins for his work on the Linford Recycling Centre. He stated that sometimes he felt frustrated as projects could take time, and often the council were reliant on outside partners and government agencies which could delay proceedings. The Leader mentioned that he, Councillor Coxshall and Thurrock MP Jackie Doyle-Price had recently been to see the new Harris Academy in Purfleet, which was part of the Purfleet regeneration scheme and would be open in time for the new school year in September.

The Leader then drew Members attention to page 79 of the agenda and £50m which was being used to develop infrastructure, not just expansion across the borough. He finally stated that the report contained a number of appendices which broke down the figures for each directorate and outlined where the £50m would be going, such as the Purfleet regeneration; a number of schools across the borough; the Grays South regeneration; and more money for care homes. He summarised and stated that they money had already been set aside for these projects and Thurrock would continue to deliver across the borough.

Councillor Johnson drew Members attention to page 81 of the agenda and stated he felt it was good to see that 4 housing projects would be completed in 2020. The Leader reiterated that the council was committed to providing new council homes, and these were not just plans as they were being delivered on. He then mentioned that he often travelled past the former Tops Club site, and felt that there was visible progress being made each day.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the General Fund capital programme is projected to have available resources of £16.154m as at 31 March 2019 with this funding carried forward to 2019/20 to fund schemes currently in progress.

2. In addition, there is further £50.546m in the approved programme that is under development and/or dependent on third party actions as set out in paragraph 3.5

3. Noted the Housing Revenue Account capital programme is projected to breakeven by 31 March 2019, which will be funded from the Housing capital receipts.

122. Quarter 3 Corporate Performance Report 2018/19

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that quarter 3 ran up until December 2018, and felt that the report showed some excellent figures. She stated that the council had maintained 70% of services meeting their targets, compared to 2 years ago when only 45% had been passing. She stated that some new measures had been put in place, such as how the council measured the removal of abandoned vehicles. She also highlighted the number of new apprentices being hired by Thurrock, and felt this was good to see. She added that weekly bin collections had been maintained, and although the 98.5% target had not been hit, this was a very high target. She stated this missed target had been due to vehicle repairs and poor weather conditions.

Councillor Watkins stated that he felt this report was good news. He added that the bin collection was measured on a year to date figure, and although was below target, in January the target had been exceeded. He also added that although there had been a missed target in household waste, there was lots of behind the scenes work to improve this, such as work with the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee and internal work with the communications team to release a new strategy. He added that the KPI regarding street cleanliness was good to see, and this was due to the Clean It, Cut It and Fill It Scheme. He added that Keep Britain Tidy also monitored street cleanliness around the borough, and produced independent results.

Councillor Little added that she felt pleased to see the time taken to adopt children had decreased, and described how she had recently sat on a panel which had adopted 3 children in one day, all of whom were now going to their 'forever homes'. She stated that this service had only recently been brought back in-house and felt lots more children were now going to their forever homes. The Leader stated that under the previous contract only 5 children had been adopted in one year, and now the in-house service were adopting 3 children in one day, which he felt was good to see. He also felt that it was good to see 70% of targets being achieved with the new green/red scale and the removal of amber. He added that there would always be fluctuations in bin collections due to factors outside of the council's control such as poor weather or people parking inconsiderately so bin lorries could not access streets, but

these were still counted as missed targets. He added that the council were still pushing for all targets to be met, and thanked the officers for all their hard work. He stated that residents and Members were often out on the weekends and during their free time to tidy up Thurrock and thanked residents for all their hard work. He then summarised and highlighted the hard work the environment team had put in during the windy weather over the weekend, as two crews including the new apprentice, had been out across the borough clearing fallen trees.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are off target.**
- 2. Identified any areas which require additional consideration.**

The meeting finished at 7.57 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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