

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 9 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 21 October 2019 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Barry Johnson, Susan Little, Ben Maney and Aaron Watkins

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property
Tim Hallam, Acting Head of Legal, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services
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.

37. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 September 2019 were approved as a correct record.

38. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

39. Declaration of Interests

The Leader stated that he had a general declaration for all Cabinet Members as they had all received correspondence regarding the Billet Field Site for Item 11. He stated that the letter had been passed to the relevant officers, and all Cabinet Members would keep an open mind when making the decision. Councillor Hebb added that he had received additional correspondence and was the Ward Councillor for the affected ward. Councillor Watkins declared that he was a supporter of East Thurrock United Football Club, so therefore would not be voting and would be excluding himself from that item.

40. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by describing the recent successes that the Council and Essex Police had seen in tackling anti-social behaviour issues, and felt good results were being seen across the borough, which were having a good impact on people's lives. He elaborated that Essex Police had recently imprisoned the leader of the C17 gang for nineteen weeks for making a drill video, which would be made available to the public shortly, with an

explanation on drill videos and the videos meaning. He felt this was a good step as it helped to protect the borough's young people and would help to ensure they would not get involved in violence and drug dealing.

The Leader also mentioned the work the Environmental Enforcement Officers were doing in collaboration with Essex Police in regards to people discarding nitrous oxide canisters in car parks, and stated that 11 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for the offence, each receiving a £400 fine. He added that 10 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued for littering, and 10 had been issued for public urination. He added that 30 community protection notices had also been issued, with 10 being for the possession of marijuana. The Leader elaborated that one arrest had also been made for operating a vehicle under the influence of drugs, and possession of cocaine and marijuana. He added that 4 community protection notices had been issued for disposing of nitrous oxide canisters in car parks, and 3 had been issued for parking HGVs on the Manorway.

The Leader stated that yesterday officers had joined Essex Police and the Environmental Agency at an illegal waste site in South Ockendon, where a criminal level of waste had been disposed over a long time period. He stated that the Council would not tolerate the illegal disposal of waste in the borough and would take action against the perpetrators. He added that Thurrock Council had pledged £1million for extra police officers in the borough, as well as the extra police officers promised from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. He stated there were currently 3068 police officers in the borough, which would rise to 3218 by 2020. He added that central government had also promised an extra 20,000 police officers nationally, which would hopefully bring the total number of police officers to over 3,500. The Leader mentioned the new Town Centre Police Teams that had increased the number of police in town centres, such as Grays and Stanford-le-Hope and were making a difference. The Leader then announced that new Town Centre Police Teams would also be launched in Purfleet and Tilbury. He commented that the money left over from the £1million for extra police officers, would be used to help police with their special operations, such as Operation Raptor and Operation Caesar.

The Leader then discussed the three incidents that Essex Police had attended in South Ockendon over the weekend, and felt glad to see that they were using their additional stop and search powers under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. He added that the Council made lots of resources available to the police and this would help keep communities safe.

The Leader finished with the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It update and stated that since April 2019 1084 potholes had been filled; 647 fly-tips had been cleared; 1299 tonnes of waste had been cleared; 187 Fixed Penalty Notices for fly-tipping had been issued; and 54 people had been prosecuted for failing to pay fines.

41. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Halden stated that he had a briefing in policy relating to special educational needs provision across the borough, as officers had received a letter from OFSTED in response to concerns raised earlier this year. He began by stating that the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service had seen some concerns in 2017 due to inappropriate use of the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). He stated that since those concerns had been raised the Council had followed a policy of inclusion and had closed all primary PRUs and reduced the number of secondary PRUs. He felt that it was good to see inclusion in schools and with the Council's support, all PRUs had received a 'good' OFSTED rating. He added that the Council had set up an Improvement Board to monitor SEN and PRU progress and ran regular engagement events with schools to discuss issues. Councillor Halden added that the capacity of the SEN team had increased to provide additional support. He stated that an OFSTED letter received earlier this year had outlined these concerns, and officers had worked on a formal reply, which outlined the Council's plans for improvement. Councillor Halden stated that this morning OFSTED had replied and found the plans fit for purpose. He felt that although the plan tackled short-term issues, the Council were also working on a longer-term vision for SEN, and were therefore working on 'a year of inclusion' to begin in 2020. He stated that the aim of this project would be to reduce the time taken for Education, Health and Social Care Plans to be drawn up, and introduce a framework in which partners such as health, education and the Council could work together and make the best use of resources.

42. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No members of the public had submitted petitions.

43. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader advised that one question had been received from Councillor Piccolo regarding Item 11: Billet Field Site, Stanford-le-Hope, and this would be discussed during that item.

44. 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.

45. Education Support Strategy

Councillor Halden introduced the report and stated that this Education Support Strategy updated the current 2015-2020 version, and had been formulated in consultation with the Schools Forum over the past six months. He added that 85% of Thurrock schools were currently rated 'good' or 'outstanding' and this included the two special needs schools, and all phases

of education. He added that over the past nine years there had been many changes to the schools system, with the majority of schools moving away from the maintained school system, and becoming academies. He also stated that the Council had ensured the Dedicated Schools Grant was no longer indebted, and had balanced the budget, which helped to tackle issues in schools. Councillor Halden elaborated on the six strategic priorities outlined in the report and described how three were education related; two were health related; and one was employment based. He felt this was good as many factors influenced a child's education. He added that one of the main goals in the new Education Support Strategy was to reduce the attainment gap, and the Council were going to measure this using the Deprivation Index, which very few Councils had done.

Councillor Halden also felt that it was good to see increased Multi Academy Trust (MAT) capacity as this provided good economies of scale and could renew partnership arrangements. He commented that the Council were currently investing £1million into health and wellbeing in schools, and £500,000 into tackling overuse of pharmaceutical treatments for children, as well as introducing the 2020 Year of Inclusion and working on the weaknesses within SEN provision. He felt that although academies were independent of the Council, joint partnership arrangements between schools, the Council and the CCG could only be a good thing. Councillor Halden mentioned that there had been a 34% increase in special needs plans over the past year, and many of these children were now supported in mainstream education. He also felt that many young people were taking advantage of opportunities available, and discussed his visit to Grangewaters which received referrals from the NEET Service, Youth Offending Service and the Drug and Alcohol Service and offered skills training such first aid courses. He felt that Thurrock Council were now running a 0-25 model, rather than an 11-16 model which had been endorsed by the schools forum and had received no objections from the overview and scrutiny committee.

The Leader felt it was good to see Councillors going out and experiencing services, rather than simply reading reports on the issue, and added it could be interesting to use money earmarked for anti-social behaviour for facilities such as Grangewaters, which benefitted disadvantaged young people.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the Education Support Strategy

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

46. Billet Field Site, Stanford-le-Hope

Councillor Watkins left at 19.21

Before the item began, the Leader invited Councillor Piccolo to read his

question as follows: can you explain why there has been such a change in opinion, over the sale of the Billet Field site, by the current administration, about the sale proposed by the last administration. Councillor Coxshall replied that there were three overarching reasons why, the first being the 3R's policy that had been adopted by the Council in 2016. He elaborated that the 3R's were release, retain and reuse and all assets had been analysed under this policy. He stated that the Billet Field Site had been earmarked as retain in 2017, although the Council would continue to analyse. He stated that the second reason was the Local Plan which had been moving forward since 2014, and ensured that all assets helped to deliver the bigger strategy of 'work, rest and play'. He stated that the third reason was the undervaluation of the asset. Councillor Piccolo was then invited to ask a supplementary question as follows: can you confirm the land had been designated green belt and is therefore protected under this status. Councillor Coxshall agreed that the land was designated green belt, and a green belt review had been taken place in 2019. He stated that the new Local Plan would help to protect green belt, but would also help to deliver the Council's strategy of 'play' so residents could participate in sports. Councillor Coxshall mentioned that the Football Association had reviewed Thurrock and found the borough was under the suitable number of football pitches, so the Council wanted to increase participation in sport, and would be looked at through the Local Plan.

Councillor Piccolo thanked Councillor Coxshall for his response, and the Leader invited Councillor Coxshall to present the report. Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that the proposed decision was to decline the request for the disposal of the Billet Field Site. He described how a lot of time had passed since 2014 when the process had started, and since then two stages of the Local Plan had occurred, during which it had been decided that the borough needed more homes and more participatory sport under the 'work, rest, play' strategy. He outlined the 3R's strategy and informed Members that the Council did not want to sell assets that may be needed in the future, and Billet Field had been identified for retention. He added that the Football Association had found there to be a lack of football pitches within the borough. Councillor Coxshall described how the site had been undervalued in 2014, but the Council now wanted value for money. He summarised and stated that the Council wanted to work with East Thurrock United Football Club to find a new home if they needed one, and did not want to see the club fail.

Councillor Hebb stated that even though he was Ward Councillor he was open-minded and had considered both the pros and cons of disposal of the site. He felt that the report should be looked at from the Council's perspective, as a property owner and as a fan of East Thurrock United Football Club. He felt that the applicant had put forward well-considered plans to create a good space, which managed traffic and was of high quality. He added that he also wanted to see security for East Thurrock United Football Club, and felt they would be a good neighbour. He added that the space was used by the community and should be kept open to protect the borough's green belt. He stated that as a property owner, the Council wanted to make sure they received value for money. He summarised and felt that there was still lots of

work to do regarding the site, and many questions still to be answered, but felt it was premature to dispose of the site now.

Councillor Coxshall added that the Local Plan still needed to evolve, so East Thurrock United Football Club could still deliver plans in the future, but in the five years since the original proposal, Thurrock Council had further analysed all assets. He felt that as the Local Plan was currently being designed, it would be inappropriate to lose land at this time, and the Council had to consider the whole picture as a landowner. The Leader added that the Local Plan did not just include houses, but all assets including open space and football pitches. He felt that added value was not just about money, but included value for the community and Local Authority, and how the space could improve resident's lives. He also clarified that Cabinet had received correspondence regarding a planning application for the Crooked Billet pub, but this was not a part of the Billet Field site. He also clarified that all statistics in the reports were correct that day. The Leader also highlighted point 2.3 of the report to Members, which stated that the previous Cabinet in 2014 had only agreed to disposal of the land if planning consent had been given, but plans were not currently at that stage. He summarised and stated that the submissions received in April 2019 were high-quality and felt there may be conversation in the future regarding disposal of the site. He added that the Council wanted to see East Thurrock United Football Club remain successful and would help them to look at other sites across the borough if they so wished.

It was highlighted that Councillor Watkins would not be taking part in the vote due to his declaration of interest.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Considered the contents of the report and agreed that the request to progress with the disposal of Billet Field be declined at this time.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

Councillor Watkins returned at 19.39

47. Integrated Community Equipment Service

Councillor Little introduced the report and stated that the Integrated Community Equipment Service provided Thurrock residents with daily living support, such as hoists, slings and special kettles, so they could remain independent in their own homes. She commented that the service supported Thurrock Council's 'strength-based approach', which helped residents work on their strengths rather than weaknesses, and remain independent for longer. She described how Essex Cares Ltd delivered the service with the current contract running until 2020, and felt it was good to see analysis of the contract and negotiations starting early. She stated that the annual cost of the

contract was £578,412, and this had delivered 6545 items to 1719 residents across the borough in the financial year 2018. She mentioned that as the contract was due for renewal, officers had considered other options such as bringing the service in-house, but felt that all other options would increase the cost of the service, and the current contract provided good economies of scale. She summarised and stated that if recommendations were agreed, negotiations would continue and officers could try to find additional savings.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed that Thurrock Council enter into a Section 101 and Section 75 agreement with the Commissioning Partnership to procure an Integrated Community Equipment contract.

2. Agreed to delegate the award of the contract to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

48. Re-Procurement of the Corporate Cleaning Contract

Councillor Gledhill introduced the report on behalf of Councillor Coxshall and stated that lots of work had gone into this report, as the current window-cleaning contract had been terminated. He felt this was an important service as the first thing visitors to the Council building would see were the windows, and they would not expect to see an untidy and unclean vista. Councillor Little added that the company who had received the window-cleaning contract had been given multiple opportunities to improve, but had been unable to do so. She agreed with the Leader that this was an important service as shoddy Council buildings were unacceptable. She added that as the window-cleaning company had had their contract terminated, this would serve as a warning to other contractors that their work must be of a high standard. Councillor Huelin added that as the window-cleaning contract was paid for using taxpayer's money then the Council had to provide due diligence and get value for money for the contract.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed the proposed process for re-procurement of the Corporate Cleaning Contract for a period of up to five year (three years plus two further one year periods subject to performance and funding)

2. Approved delegation to award the Director of Finance, Governance and Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in

The meeting finished at 7.48 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**