

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 February 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Sue Hooper, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day, Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillor Chris Baker

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
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 the meeting was being live streamed to the Council's online webcast channel

206. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 27 January 2021 were approved as a correct record.

207. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

208. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor stated he still had not attended any functions or with any Thurrock faced groups or businesses which had been disappointing but still hoped by the end of his time as Mayor he would be able to visit some functions but unfortunately this was looking very unlikely.

The Mayor stated he continued to make donations to Thurrock based groups from his mayoral allowance.

As this was the last meeting for Councillor Piccolo, as Mayor, he thanked all Members for their services this year and wished those standing for re-election in May all the very best.

Councillor Gledhill, Leader of the Council, made the following announcements:

In regards to COVID he was sure everyone in the borough had wholeheartedly welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement that there were now clear plans in place which would see us move out of the current national lockdown to better enjoy greater freedoms as we went through the year. This was a welcome light at the end of the tunnel for all in our borough who had worked so hard to follow Government guidance and had successfully help lower the infection rates in Thurrock. The roadmap would see schools opening on the 8 March, non-essential shops, gyms and beer gardens opening on the 12 April, pubs and restaurants on the 17 May and hopefully everything back to as near to normal as we could expect on the 21 June. The Council had made tremendous strides in fighting, slowing and halting the spread of infection locally but it was important that we continued to so to see those huge reductions since December continue. Thurrock had moved away from being the highest infection rate in the country but the strain was still there for the NHS. It was crucial to still stay at home with the 'Stay at Home' order would still in place until the 29 March, those who were clinically extremely vulnerable were being advised not to attend work, school or education until the 31 March. Now was the time to make sure that we were doubling down on our efforts in order to keep the proposals for the roadmap on track and to get back to getting the shops open once again and to get the high streets back and viable.

The national vaccination programme had been a huge success and although local figures were not yet available these were being pushed for every week. The overall vaccination rate of over 18 million people nationally with three quarters of a million of those having received their second dose.

The Leader provided a COVID figure update on the actual positive test results by age brackets between the 12 February and 18 February:

- Under 18s – 31 (previous 7 days from 5 February to 11 February was 18)
- 18-49 years – 106 down from 126
- 50-59 years – 25 down from 47
- 60-69 years – 20 up from 14
- Over 70s – 15 down from 18

With the local authority rank (where 1 was the highest and 149 being the lowest) Thurrock was 81st.

The Leader stated that in this financial year a staggering 3380 potholes across Thurrock had been filled, with just under 200 pot holes not meeting the criteria to be filled. Residents were urged to continue to report potholes to the Council so these could be assessed. That 37 capital resurfacing programmes had been undertaken this year which had delivered 90 kilometres of new road surfaces.

The Leader stated the keys to the remaining homes at Claudian Way had been handed over as part of the Council's investment in new Council homes for affordable rent for people on the borough's housing register. The new development in Chadwell St Mary consisted of 53 new homes including apartments, houses and bungalows, three of which were wheelchair accessible. The high quality homes followed the Alma Court development that provided 29 much-needed Council homes in Grays last year and would be followed by 35 flats specifically designed to meet the needs of the borough's older residents on Calcutta Road in Tilbury. The Leader urged those small or medium sized builders who wished to work for Thurrock on small site developments to get in contact so that the Council could work in partnership with them to deliver more Council homes for those that need them.

The Leader provided an update on School Meals and thanks to the Government's £524k COVID Winter Grant Scheme the Council had made sure that £15 supermarket vouchers were distributed to support thousands of children across Thurrock. This followed on from Thurrock delivering vouchers through the two week Christmas school holiday and in total 17,400 vouchers had been issued during the Christmas and February school holidays.

The Leader wished those Councillors retiring this year well and passed on his thanks to those not seeking re-election in May, the Leader also wished those who were up re-election all the very best.

210. Questions from Members of the Public

There were no public questions received.

211. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, no requisition of notice had been given to present a petition at the meeting.

212. Petitions Update Report

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council meetings and Council offices.

213. 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 by Committees and Outside Bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Chamber he had no changes to make.

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

Councillor Byrne, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group informed the Chamber he had no changes to make.

Councillors Massey and Allen informed the Chamber they had no changes to make.

214. Assistant Director Housing Management Recruitment

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and sought the approval from Council to appoint to the permanent Assistant Director Housing Management. Following a robust search and selection process, General Services Committee interviewed on the 23 February 2021 with a recommendation to appoint Ewelina Sorbjan as the permanent Assistant Director Housing Management. Councillor Johnson sincerely thanked Carol Hinvest for her services to Thurrock and wished her well in her new appointment.

Councillor Byrne questioned why higher paid appointments were still being replaced.

Councillor Massey and Councillor Allen echoed Councillor Johnson's words and wished Carol Hinvest all the best for the future.

Councillor Gledhill echoed Councillor Johnson's words and stated Carol Hinvest had been a great edition to the housing team and although all candidates had been of high class and this had been a difficult decision he welcomed Ewelina Sorbjan to the Council.

Councillor Redsell thanked Carol Hinvest for all her hard work and wished her well.

Councillor Coxshall stated it was really important and critical that this Assistant Director role was delivered.

Councillor Spillman thanked Carol Hinvest for all her hard work and had definitely left the department in a better shape than when she arrived at Thurrock Council. He wished her well in her new appointment and looked forward to working with the new appointment.

Councillor Worrall, as chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, thanked Carol Hinvest for all her hard work and wished her well in her new appointment.

Councillor Johnson summed up by stating this was a vital assistant director appointment that needed to be filled by the most suitable candidate.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendation to which this was carried.

RESOLVED

Approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution the appointment of Ewelina Sorbjan as the permanent Assistant Director Housing Management

215. Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

Councillor Huelin, Portfolio Holder for Central Services and Communities, 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.

An amendment to recommendation 1.2 had been received from Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Kerin, read:

In line with the Chancellor's statement apply an increase of £250 to each pay point up to and including pay point 17 (top of band C).

Councillor J Kent stated he moved his amendment that removed the words "subject to reaching agreement with the Trade Unions on phase 2 of the pay review" from the substantive recommendation and saw this as a matter of fairness with the Council's lowest paid workers deserving a pay rise now. That to link to the outcome of phase 2 of the pay review was not fair and was a threat to the lower paid workers. Some speculation had been seen from the impact of this pay review and Unite Trade Union had stated the documents shared with them had suggested front line workers could lose the equivalent to £3,500 a year and care workers could lose up to £8,000 a year. Councillor J Kent stated he had requested to see these documents but nothing had been shared with him. Councillor J Kent asked Councillor Huelin to explain how the £800,000 of reductions of allowances had been made up and which outdated allowances would go to make up the £800,000. Councillor J Kent also questioned how the portfolio holder could justify the £5.00 a week pay rise to lower paid workers but at the same time allowing an increase in the number of officers earning over £100,000 to rise from five in 2017/18 to 18 today and at the same time the increase in officers earning over £50,000 had risen from 119 to 176. Councillor J Kent concluded by stating this was an issue of fairness.

Councillor Byrne echoed Councillor J Kent's comments and referred to the £250 flat rate and stated he had not known of any worker who would be happy to have their differentials eroded.

Councillor Allen also echoed Councillor J Kent's comments and how the lower paid staff thoroughly deserved a pay rise and it was the lower paid staff salaries that should be addressed before the higher paid members of staff.

Councillor Halden stated the paper tabled this evening had stated they wished to pay lower paid workers more and there was no reason why an amicable agreement could not be reasonably made with the Trade Unions.

Councillor Muldowney stated her support for Councillor J Kent's amendment and stated if Councillor Halden was confident that the unions would reach an agreement there was no reason to tie up the £250 increase with the Union agreement and stated this should just be done and not subject to any conditions. These were the people who had worked on the front line during COVID who should be given this pay rise.

Councillor Jefferies stated his confusion as to why the Labour Group would not be supporting the pay rise for lower paid workers and how confusing it was that the Labour Group were questioning whether the unions would actually agree to this pay rise for low paid workers. Councillor Jefferies stated his support to the papers as he wanted to see lower paid workers earn more money and urged Trade Unions to agree so that lower paid workers could be paid more money.

Councillor Kerin stated the Labour Group were saying that no conditions should be put on this pay rise as the lowest paid workers had been the heroes throughout the COVID pandemic. Councillor Kerin stated the only confusion was why conditions were being put on the lowest paid workers and the conditions had not been put on increases to those workers earning over £100,000 and £50,000 a year. Councillor Kerin stated he seconded Councillor J Kent's amendment and urged all elected Members to do the same.

Councillor Huelin reiterated what Members were commenting on was on the pay review which was completely separate to the pay policy which was under her portfolio and this would be governed by the General Services Committee of which the Labour, Thurrock Independents and Independent Members had all agreed to. Councillor Huelin referred to the collective agreement which had been signed by the Unions and gone past all Groups at the General Services Committee. The £800,000 additional investment in the employee budget came within that agreement and had been signed by everybody that it would be repaid from the employee budget. Councillor Huelin referred to Councillor J Kent question on allowances and stated that Human Resources were looking at those employees who would likely to be affected and something could be done with the allowances to ensure they mitigate any lose. This was still ongoing and no proposals had been put to the General Services Committee or the Union.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended recommendation 1.2 to which 25 Members voted against, 17 Members voted for and with no Members abstaining. The Mayor called a vote on the substantial recommendation to which the majority of Members voted in favour.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 was agreed in line with the Council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011, the Collective Agreement, the recommendations by the independent market assessment and the output of the pay review project (as agreed by General Services Committee on 8 October 2018).**
- 2. In line with the Chancellor's statement apply an increase of £250 to each pay point up to and including pay point 17 (top of band C), subject to reaching agreement with the Trade Unions on phase 2 of the pay review.**

216. Capital Strategy 2021/22

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the Capital Strategy report which set out the strategic framework underpinning capital expenditure and the associated financing of the Council and included the Treasury Management Strategy. The strategy continued to support the Council's ambitions through the ongoing investments which created revenue returns which could be allocated to spending on the services for Thurrock residents. The report had set out the capital strategy for 2021/22, the proposed Prudential Indicators and set out the Capital and Treasury Management projections for 2021/22.

Councillor J Kent stated his support for this report and welcomed Councillor Hebb's comments that the borrowing investment carried out was meant to be a means to an end to enable for some time for a secure and sustainable medium term financial future for the Council. This had given the opportunity for some to speculate with someone else's money which had led the Council borrowing too much money and taking too many risks. Councillor J Kent welcomed the lower maximum borrowing limit by £350 million, welcomed there would be more transparency, more oversight in investment decisions and welcomed the Council would be concentrating on the borrowing of delivering key infrastructure.

Councillor Byrne echoed Councillor J Kent's comments and stated his support in favour of this report.

Councillor Massey echoed the positive and good comments already made above.

Councillor Allen stated his support for the report.

Councillor Gledhill stated it was good that Members were unanimously in favour of the report and had agreed to move this forward to ensure the best for Thurrock.

Councillor Hebb thanked Members for their contributions and requested this item went to the vote.

The Mayor called a vote on this item to which Members voted unanimously in favour

RESOLVED. That:

- 1. Approved the Capital Strategy for 2021/22 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement for 2021/22;**
- 2. Approved the adoption of the prudential indicators as set out in Appendix 1; and**
- 3. Noted the revised 2020/21 and 2021/22 Treasury Management projections as set out in Annex 1 paragraph 2.32.**

217. General Fund Budget Proposals

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

Councillor Gledhill

This financial year had been like no other for over a century, it had put a strain on the whole world, it had put a strain on this great nation, it had put a strain on Thurrock and had put a strain on every single resident within. Who would have thought it this time last year the nation would be coming to all but a stand still not once but three times, over 120,000 deaths of loved ones that were not expected, terms like PPE, epidemiology, pandemic all becoming day to day words, suddenly the whole nation having to come together and looking to our Government for support. They in turn, of course, looked to the NHS, to the care homes, the carers and indeed to local Government to deliver the billions of pounds of support this nation needed to see us through. That was whether you were a business, or whether you were a resident or indeed helping out the Council with the extra finances. From the day that restrictions and lockdown was announced Thurrock Council started to do all it could to help support residents. IT infrastructure rapidly upgraded to allow staff to work from home where possible to ensure that resident's enquiries were still dealt with. Some people may say "so what about IT?" we have still managed to maintain a very good response times to our residents. Our residents were still contacting us on a daily basis in large numbers and indeed using our websites. This was indeed one of those things that had shown a step forward where we needed to. We made sure that PPE, which at the time was in short supply nationally was provided to private nursing homes, to carers and staff

who had to visit residents in their homes to look after them. Staff came together to volunteer to help to put food parcels together with food that we purchased, the food that was made up volunteers and then distributed to residents in what was now the old category A where they needed them where they couldn't get support from their close and loved ones, where they couldn't get support from their neighbours or where they couldn't get support from supermarkets delivering direct. Staff were working all hours every day to ensure businesses and residents got the support payments they needed as soon as humanly possible. Funding had to be found and allocated to support local bus companies to retain services. Funding to early years providers to meet business adaptation costs so the young could still receive help, support and education. Organising additional laptops and IT equipment for children to be able to connect to the internet and learn from home where possible. Taking in all the rough sleepers off the streets where they engaged with us. Something that we did quite well in Thurrock. Even having to organise Temporary Mortuary Facilities if the worse had happened and those facilities at mortuaries or funeral parlours were overwhelmed. Something that I am glad we did not have to use but had to have on standby. Now none of this came for free, as partially outlined on page 110 of the report extra costs such as supplying more care for our most vulnerable adults and children who needed support, the loss of income such as from street parking charges to theatre income, extra cost for staff for COVID compliancy and increases in supporting those who were homeless, as example all those listed below came to around £17 million. Her Majesty's Government generously supported Thurrock Council to over £15 million during the pandemic so far to help pay for lost income. However just on this £2 million shortfall, plus further service pressure and reduction in investment as we have already heard had led to last year's £4 million one of surplus being used to cover the shortfall and indeed the reduction in income last year. But on the plus side it does appear we would not be using our reserves this year as feared as half way through the financial year. So now some figures and where this year's increases would be spent.

Firstly, I will go to the adult social care increase at 3% - as briefly outlined in my opening speech, this pandemic showed the need for further investment in adult social care. I am not going to open up the debate of whether this money to invest in adult social care should be raised locally or nationally, anyone who had been in local Government for a few years knows that Government irrespective of colour does not just write a cheque out based on why you spend, it had algorithms, it had formulae, it had processes. All of these invariably mean that not quite enough money was taken from the taxpayers nationally to be given to be spent by Thurrock Council locally on those that need it the most. This means we would have to raise more tax locally to cover that difference. So the obvious solution to rather going this long convoluted way through nationally and locally was for this to be raised locally and spent on local residents. Adult social care was the largest budget in the Council at £43 million per year and was needed to cover everything from the cost for those who need advice on general day to day care and information or for such services such as meals on wheels all the way up to 24 hours day 7 days a week care packages and support packages some of which cost between £200,000 and £300,000 per year each. Now had the Government not allowed

local Councils to raise more money for this vital service since 2016 the service would be roughly around £6.5 million short of the funding that it currently had to pay. That was the equivalent to us having to cut 400,000 hours of home care where they were needed the most to get to a position where we would have been without this extra spending power. So since 2016 this Council had had to raise the equivalent of around 10% in Council tax to improve the provision to our most vulnerable adults. Now I am sure that most members would agree this was a good use of money that was raised locally. Now this year we going to have to ask again for an increase that will raise roughly £2 million locally to be spent solely on the adult social care budget. Now this money raised will go to the following areas: £504,000 to cover inflation and general demographic growth that was where people are moving into the borough with extra care needs, something that had always been an issue for all local authorities but certainly for Thurrock; £610,000 for uplift for care home rates; £980,000 for uplift in residential, nursing and dementia home rates; and over £400,000 again to increase for payments through transitions from adult social care from children's social care and indeed other routes into this vital service. Now these uplifts as mentioned earlier will allow providers to be competitive, to increase the salary to the staff who were supplying this fantastic service to our residents and to ensure they were adequately provided with PPE for their safety and indeed for the safety of residents. Now anyone adding this up as I go along will see this equals roughly about £25 million already which will be more than we raise in this social care precept. The difference of this is coming a little bit more from the social care grant, from the general fund increase that I will cover much later and indeed the vacant posts savings which again I will cover later. You can see that was not frivolous spending on management or any other negatives normally thrown at any Council by any opposition seeking headlines or oppose for opposition sake, this was the money for the day to day vitals needs, to increase the salary of those supporting our most vulnerable, for the cost increase for the services and for those who were moving from children's to adult social care and as I have said to ensure that sufficient PPE was available to protect both staff and residents. Now before I move onto the 1.99% general fund increase we have just heard that the investments we were undertaking will be decreasing so equally we will see a decrease in the amount of money we generate ourselves to fund services over and above statute levels and I am glad that this was supported this year again and hope as we move through we can improve on our investments and start to increase the income from them without increasing the borrowing as outlined earlier by the leader of the opposition. So I will move to the reserves, we currently have a number of reserves built up over our time in administration. These were: £11 million in general fund reserves. The report makes clear that these reserves were still required at this level. This money was here to support the budget in the event of something like a major care provider going bust or us having to support those residents, if we have significant flooding and need to rehome whole streets of residents. Now I could obviously continue with examples but I won't as I am sure we all get the point and frankly I will not gamble on something catastrophic like something that I have just mentioned happening by not having this level of reserves to support residents at that crucial time. We have a £1.5 million reserve for social care to help manage in year pressures. Again

I will not gamble on there not being enough money in this budget when this was a demand budget and Members were fully aware that year on year there were always pressures. We have a £6 million financial resilience reserve for loss of income or for any other pressure from loss of treasury. Whilst we have invested wisely, so wisely in fact we have received over £30 million per year from them at the moment, the risk of a shortfall in income from many of our sources was not one that can remain uninsured by again spending this reserve and should remain as it was. And finally we have £5.5 million budget management reserve and it was this reserve and it is only this reserve that we will be tapping into this year to help set a balanced budget. This year's increase will raise the general fund income by about £1.3 million from residents and this was going to be matched by £3.3 million from reserves as mentioned. So for every £1 residents pay for the general fund increase the Council matches nearly three times that from reserves. These reserves have only been able to be raised as our investment programme and these were the same investment programmes that had supported services for last couple of years and indeed hopefully as we go through and we reduce the cost of the Council that those investments can again turn back into one off services to be spend as and when needed on priorities as they appear. Now I am sure the question on every ones lips was "well why don't you do more, you have the money sitting there?" I would like to give a simple answer but it just isn't that easy. As outlined what the reserve budgets were and as I outlined in my speech, last year, due to COVID, we saw more expenditure than the generous grant from Government to the tune of £4 million that wasn't backed by Government grant. This year we will allocate an extra 10% to the local Council tax scheme, but what if this isn't enough? We have had to allocate £2.7 million for shortfalls on Council Tax and Business rate income-yes we may well recover that money in years to come but that money was the cash flow the Council uses day by day. Instead of trying to squeeze this from those who truly cannot pay it at the moment we were subbing it from reserves, but again what if that isn't enough? What if we don't see our other income increase to pre COVID or even better than pre COVID levels, what if we don't see that back to normal income from trade refuse or from parking income, or from theatre income or Grangewaters income for examples? All of these, it would be prudent to ensure that we have some money left was those reserves to cover the shortfall as we go through the year. Of course if Government were quite willing to grant more money to local authorities indeed back up the vast amount of money it had given Thurrock to distribute either directly to resident's businesses or to allocate for the extra work we will obviously take that with open hands. On top of that we also have £1 million set aside for the local plan to ensure that residents will have their say in shaping the borough's future again a pressure on reserves. So we need to make sure as we go through this year's budget we have the headroom to cover the unexpected. This was clearly laid out in the report by Council s151 officer in his section 25 appendix. As we know, Councillor Hebb constantly refers to the reserves as our rainy day fund, but you know what, it isn't all about that rainy day, it was for the days that after where unexpected expense after expense comes in. On top of that we also need to keep reserves at a minimum just in case there were further rainy days. As such use of reserves would put us and residents at risk, and that frankly Mr Mayor that would not be prudent or indeed

something any members should be considering. Equally I will not expose this Council to having to submit a section 114 notice, the Council equivalent of being in financial administration before going bust as we saw in Croydon this year. I will not support us using 50% or more of all of our reserves in the hope that nothing else goes wrong and kick the can down the road. Remember every £1 of reserves that was used for day to day running of the Council will need to be found next year and every subsequent year. So when the reserves run out it would mean more cuts, more rises and indeed just to make ends meet as well as having that safety net completely removed on a financial front. So too help further and not dip into these vital reserves further the Council was also not looking to fill the £4 million of current staff vacancies it was carrying. So just for clarity that was £4 million jobs that were not currently filled and any new vacancies that come up throughout the year will be closely scrutinised before they were replaced, irrespective of position of the Council which I am sure will please the leader of the Independent Group. So to the details, the 1.99% Council tax increase will raise roughly £1.3 million and was the equivalent of 40 pence per household per week for about 70% of our residents. This will be allocated to: £700,000 worth of Council tax support for those who may need it as we move along the road map out of lock down and more residents find that they will need this support as they may have lost their jobs as furlough comes to an end and fallen short of time and indeed that companies could not move them back onto full time position; £300,000 for our lowest paid staff to receive the Government cost of living grant of £250 for the coming year. Indeed I was going to raise that earlier with the leader of the Independent Group the £250 was that suggested and put forward by Government and nowhere else; £500,000 to further support vulnerable adults above and beyond the 3% adult social care precept. Now again anyone with a calculator will see this was more than the £1.3 million raised by the Council tax increase to residents. It means the remainder will come out of the reserves as mentioned and vacant post savings as mentioned and indeed all the other £7 million of pressures to supply vital services will come from that funding. That brings us to the Capital Budget. As outlined in the report it was good practice to outline the capital program. To be clear the capital budget was not the money to be used on a day by day basis for services such as social care, bin collections etc. this was money used from sale of property we no longer need, from prudential borrowing or from surpluses. It was worth remembering that even though this was one of the most difficult years for local Government, Thurrock was still investing money to improve the borough. Some of these projects have already started, some, where money had been spent in advance of implementation were going forward and others were still being worked up so when the plans were submitted to Government for extra support it was done so with a true costing and not something drawn up from a guesstimate of 10 years previously as seen over the years. A good example of the capital budget was the road resurfacing I mentioned in my speech earlier this evening Mr Mayor, 90 kilometres of resurfaced road a metre wide delivered in 2020, a straight road from Grays all the way to Brighton Pier. But I need to be clear that, as explained at scrutiny meetings, to drive down prudential borrowing and cost to residents as well as to ensure that the staff who were working hard in the relevant teams were able to cope with the number of capital projects, the number of these projects was being reduced.

But I can assure residents such programs as the new medical centres across the borough something that we have been pushing for and indeed have started to deliver for many years, the Grays regeneration projects which again had been on the cards for many years but we were now starting to deliver there, school improvements as we saw in Purfleet to continue, Council estate renewal as part of the HRA programme and indeed the improvement programme for homes will continue and East Facing Slips for example at Lakeside will continue in their planning phases. So in conclusion. These rises proposed were, as explained to help support our most vulnerable adults, to ensure there was an adequate supply of PPE for those working directly with those people in care, to increase the income of those on lower wages either at our care providers or in the Council and for a 10% increase in Council tax support provision for those who may need it next year as furlough comes to an end and we hopefully try and get back to normal. All at the same time we had to maintain sufficient reserves should we need them in the future. We have reduced the number of capital projects to reduce the pressure on the budget but at the same time have not stopped investing in improving the borough and again I will mention and before my voice fails completely we were holding these £4 million worth of vacant positions open and we were not recruiting to directors who were leaving the borough after long service with us and that will reorganisation had gone to the General Services Committee. So irrespective of whether it was in the local authority we will look at all jobs and those not needed will be gone. Now as I say my voice was failing Mr Mayor and I am running out of time so with that I submit our budget to the chamber.

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

Councillor J Kent

Thank you Mr Mayor and I thank the Leader for his words. And it's only right that we start by talking about COVID and the impact of COVID which has ravaged Thurrock just as it has the rest of the country. So we now know that as of last week, we'd had 434 Thurrock residents that have died with COVID. 434 is just a number but behind each of those was a person. There was a father, a mother, a brother, a sister, a son, a daughter. They were people, friends, there were neighbours and there were families across Thurrock as they were across the country where there is one more empty chair around the dinner table than there was this time last year. And inevitably, when it comes to a budget setting Council meeting, we concentrate on the financial impacts of COVID and we have to balance the books, but we must never forget that human impact of COVID is much, much more important than any financial impact. You know, when the pandemic first hit the country last year, there was an incredible coming together of people within the community to do the right thing and to do their bit. There was a real spirit of solidarity as people came together to support those who were unable to support themselves at that time. Whether it was because they were shielding, because they were vulnerable in some way, because they had children or dependents that were shielding. We had people both formally and informally shopping and delivering food – I see a Councillor Smith on my screen, I know that she was one of those that was out there. We had people collecting and delivering medicines. We had people

ensuring that the elderly and vulnerable had a hot meal. That people had previously been on the street homeless, had somewhere to sleep and a hot meal. We had people that were doing the things that you don't imagine like making sure that neighbours and strangers' dogs were walked and properly exercised. More recently, we've had people fundraising and buying laptops so that kids can home school as effectively as possible. We've had people getting out there purchasing the wireless routers with sim cards so that people could actually have some Wi-Fi rather than just relying on the allowance that comes with Mum or Dad's phone. That spirit of solidarity that has been shown not only across Thurrock but across the country is genuinely the best, the best of Britain, it is the best of Thurrock and we should do all we can to harness it so that as we come out of the pandemic we can get the Thurrock that we all want to see. But Mr Mayer as we came through the pandemic it did expose some of the weaknesses that 10 years of austerity has left. We did see some of the weaknesses in our care system, we did see some of the weaknesses in the NHS and it took us a long time to get through it and yes we saw some of the damage that had been done to local authorities by 10 years of cuts but this authority lost £50 million in grant funding over the last 10 years and that's the backdrop Mr Mayor against which we come to the budget setting this year. Now I will start with those things that I really welcome in this budget it's sensible to look at vacant posts and not to fill those vacant posts, it's sensible to use capital receipts where we can to lever in the gearing for some of this revenue money and it's sensible to have an appropriate use of reserves that is what reserves are there for and I agree with Councillor Gledhill on the importance of reserves. You know I remember the day that I became leader of the Council here our reserves were down at £2 million, the day that we left the reserves were up at £8 million and we'd recently taken £7 million for reserves to buy our way out of the SERCO contract. The one thing that released more opportunities for savings than anything else so I welcome all of those acts but you know as Councillor Gledhill said you can only use the same reserves once, you can only use those capital receipts once, so there is a danger that we're kicking the can down the road and just leaving a bigger problem in future years and we have to make sure that's not what we do. There's a danger in vacant posts those posts aren't filled then there is important work that's not being done that's not being carried out and as we look at the budget we see a capital program that is really pretty thin and one of the reasons that the capital program is thinner than we might like is that because of those staff vacancies were not carrying the expertise that we need to deliver a bigger and more complicated capital program so there are dangers. We've identified for this year £19 million of tax rises of grants and of one offs to make sure that we can balance the budget that still leaves over £25 million to be found over the next couple of years in order to deliver balanced budgets in the medium term and this budget really should have been the chance, the opportunity to start looking ahead at how we were going to balance the books in the medium term and I really think it's a missed opportunity this evening to actually start that process. I have to say this is the thinnest budget that I've known in my time on the Council the actual budget papers themselves run to no more than 17 pages and there is very little, very little detail in here so as we look forward over the medium term financial forecast we can see that there are something in the region of £5 million worth of savings that appear to already have been

identified for that period between 2022 and 2024 other than the move to fortnightly bin collections I have no idea what any of those identified savings are and I would be grateful if Councillor Gledhill could run through some of them when he responds. Mr Mayor there are things that I would hope we could all agree on that would help us to balance the budget in the medium term we've already discussed high paid staff this evening and I really do feel that moving from five officers paid over £100,000 a year to 18 an increase of 260% in just a couple of years is too much. I would hope we all agree that we need to do something about that. I think the agency staff costs for this Council which are currently running at over £7 million pounds a year are too high. I would hope that we all agree that's too high and would want to bring it down. Mr Mayor I think the layers of management that seem to have sprung up over the last few years are just bizarre bureaucracy seems to be running away with this and I'll give an example. I asked for the starting maps for the senior management team maps just for the environment. I know that it's difficult to get a like for like comparison so I asked for that to be restrict to like the like environment as it would have been in 2016. So in 2016 there was a head of service, two frontline service managers and one strategy projects operations manager so four senior members of staff there in environment. Now there is a director and assistant director, three strategic leads and three operating managers the bureaucracy the senior management has doubled you know no wonder we've seen such a big increase in high paid officers we have to wonder if that's really necessary. I'm pretty sure Mr Mayor that it isn't but there is no way that we are merely going to make savings and cut our way out of the problems of the next couple of years we need to do two other things. I think that we need to look again at how we trade our services. In the past we've done some really good work with shared legal services and trading legal services, we share planning services and trading planning services. We need to do much, much more of that. Were currently doing some really good work with the fraud team and trading that service we need to do more. But I come back to that spirit of solidarity that we saw at the start of the pandemic and we've seen all the way through the pandemic. People in Thurrock are entrepreneurial, they are caring, and they are full of dynamism we need to be harnessing that dynamism, we need to be harnessing that spirit of solidarity to give people the tools to do some of those things that we currently do that the community could do better. There are great examples across the borough of where community groups and community companies deliver services. Hardy Park in Stanford a really good example delivering good quality services over there but almost zero cost to the Council. There are good models out there and we should be looking at how we kind of roll those out much, much more widely. Mr Mayor I've gone over some of those things that I will support but I have to turn to some of those things now that we can't support. We can't support those unspecified cuts to terms and conditions which could cut frontline workers' pay by thousands of pounds and we can't at this time support a 5% increase in Council tax. Now I want to be fair it would be churlish not to say that we all welcome some of the Government interventions that have helped us through the pandemic. We welcome furlough, we welcome the business rate suspension, we welcome the £20 uplifting universal credit all of which must be extended in next week's budget to prevent further damage to the economy but frankly we in local Government

have been failed but the Conservative Government they said they would do whatever it takes to support local Government through the pandemic but they've let us down with limited help and a frankly paltry settlement. They announced before Christmas a 4.5% increase in local Government spending power however when you examine it three quarters of that increase in spending power is predicated on a 5% Council tax hike. That's not fair on people in Thurrock. The Government encouraged us to go out and spend, they encouraged us to do whatever it takes and they promised to recompense for that and they have reneged on their side of the deal. Mr Mayor we know that unemployment in Thurrock now stands at 7% which is well above the national average. Youth employment in Thurrock is now at 11% again well above the national average and we know that it's only going to get rougher we know that growing numbers of local families are struggling to get by and more will struggle as we emerge from this pandemic. Mr Mayor the last thing they need is another Council tax increase. We will therefore be voting against that aspect of the budget. Thank you.

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

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your words especially those where we were in agreement. You know we are quite often in local politics spa over you know the words on the head of a pin and everything else but on the whole there are a number of things that we can agree with and your absolutely right you know there has been a financial impact for COVID but it really has impacted us all. I now know a lot of my neighbours and thank them for the support they gave me when I needed it and we've all known people and lost people. They may not be family members but they'll be close friends or friends of friends or indeed people that we've interacted with as elected members for years that are suddenly no longer with us and you know not only they're no longer with us and no longer with their families and it is I say probably the most difficult time for local Government but probably even more so for all of our residents. I'm going to touch on a few of the points that he's raised in disagreement. So for instance with the vacant posts and we can't have it all. We can't have another £4 million pounds worth of staff doing work when we don't have the resources for them to start to deliver the programme sorry the capital programme that we had before we do need to be really quite clear that you know there is because of the reduction in the amount of income we get from our investments and because develop other reasons that we do need to fill that gap and you're quite right we cannot keep the can down the road into next year and next year in the following year but I keep on tapping into the reserves so we do need to all pull together and indeed, I just verified with one of chairs of scrutiny and said I'm sure that all of those savings that we've proposed and been put forward actually we've gone through overview and scrutiny and he confirmed that they have so I'm going to leave that one

there. Now when you mentioned the management and the environment team it did actually make me smile a little bit. Yes you're probably right in 2015 and there probably was only four managers there to manage the whole of that department. Let's face it you left us with no department, you left us with no grass cutting equipment, you left us no street cleaners, you left us pretty much nothing. The only thing you didn't leave us was a nice little note saying there's no money, there's no team, there's no environment services. Now were going to move onto the fact that you cannot support this £870,000 terms and conditions change now as outlined by Councillor Huelin earlier in her report this particular amount was agreed to be discussed and worked with by all of the Unions. It is now only one union that is looking to take action in relation to that. Now quite frankly we cannot have a situation where our management team enter into negotiations with unions only for them to renege on that at the first opportunity. Yes those members of staff have been at the front end of the pandemic on the whole they've done an absolutely fantastic job. They got hit with COVID no more no less than any other residents but they were out there every day collecting the bins that they could when they could. But that doesn't mean that they're exempt from having to play their part or indeed get rid of outdated practices. That we understand are still being used as part of their terms and conditions. I'm not going to go into those terms and practices. I'm not going to undershoot those officers that are negotiating with the said unions. Now when it comes to the settlement nationally again I find it a little bit ironic that the national labour party, the lib dems, indeed all the other parties failed to say that there was a problem with the local Government settlement so one can only assume that you know silence is agreement in that and if it's not an agreement why didn't they put forward their voices and say no this wasn't enough. So we can assume that if the national party agreed with it when one would assume all the local parties agree with it. I cannot remember a year where central Government has given everything that local Government want unless it was the back end of the brown years where money was thrown everywhere to try and keep voters on board that failed because that money is taxpayer's money. So you can only get taxpayer's money from people that are being taxed that they're employed so that's why our Government has put so much money not only towards the Council to try and ensure that our extra spend has been covered it hasn't covered it all but its covered the vast majority of it and indeed some of the things that we did over and above what Government would have expected us to do but I'm sorry was the level of expectation I expected our officers and Council to do indeed this was appreciated by those who received that extras support and care. So I would have thought again that the labour party locally would have realised that the last thing that the increased number of unemployed residents whether they be youth unemployment or adult unemployment that we've seen due to the pandemic the last thing that they would want to hear is that labour are not supporting £700,000 extra Council tax support in this budget and indeed they are not supporting that aspect of the budget at all but do we see any alternatives, do we hear where this money would come from, no we don't we hear opposition for opposition sake. Now I can see a number of my members already got their hands up and I'm sure a good number more will do so as well and quite frankly opposition for opposition sake when you're going effectively vote against £700,000 to those that are going to need it the most in

the coming year, for those £2 million or £2.5 million to vulnerable adults who are going to need it most next year then I'm sorry that will sit on your shoulders and you can explain to those residents who don't get the support for those who find out that the Council will be delayed in paying them support for their Council tax and other support that rests on your shoulders and every single member here who votes this budget down so thank you Mr Mayor.

The Mayor asked Members for any questions.

Councillor Byrne questioned who decided on what jobs were not needed? Asked why the Union were being bypassed when correspondence from the Council were being sent to individual union members? Confirming he agreed with Councillor Kent's comments. That he had been asked what his alternative budget would have been. Councillor Byrne commented the budget would have been voted through irrespective of what had been discussed this evening. Asked whether the administration were totally out of touch in the borough with businesses in trouble, thousands of Thurrock residents unable to pay their rates and now faced a 5% increase, residents who did not know where their next meal would come from and seeing heating their homes as a luxury. The Council did not provide the right advice instead getting residents into more debt. He referred to the number of senior officers in the Council and questioned why directors need assistant directors when they were earning more than £150,000. There were too many layers of managers and there could be six figure savings to be made. How many departments had more managers now than they did three or four years ago? There was no outside the box thinking and the Council had to look for value for money. Councillor Byrne final comment was asking for an explanation as to why the increase had been for 4.9% and not 5%?

Councillor Massey was pleased Thurrock had one of the lowest Council tax amounts in Essex but what was not so pleasing was the low placement of Thurrock in the Ministry of Housing and Communities, the Local Government 2019 data which had been rated Thurrock in the bottom five based on deprivation data in Essex. He asked was there a reason why Council tax had been so low and had it protected those on very low incomes and those who were really struggling. Overall he would support the increase in the adult social care but could not support the general fund proposals at this time as residents were struggling. Although Councillor Massey did not have the answers he agreed this was a hard budget to deliver and thanked Councillor Gledhill.

Councillor Allen echoed Councillor Massey's comments and stated an increase in taxation would hit residents very hard in these times and would hit a large population in Thurrock. He morally supported the increase in adult social care but was against the 1.99% general fund proposal as this would be unacceptable on Thurrock residents who were struggling at this time due to the pandemic and this increase would put an immense pressure on some families.

Councillor Halden stated he had never known the Labour Group to be so vicious and mean spirited. That arguments had been heard why the Council tax had to be voted down as apparently 99p per week per household was the biggest issue. Councillor Halden stated the biggest issues were the care markets that had been ravished by this global pandemic, there were stressed care staff, people being made more vulnerable and with a care system that had been forced to the edge. The budget put forward this evening increasing the investments into home care, domiciliary care, care homes, foster carers and also those vulnerable areas being supported by Thurrock's vital key support workers. These were the areas to which investments were being invested in.

Councillor Spillman stated the Labour Group had hung the vulnerable and needy out to dry with their decision and stated the Labour Group did not even believe in what they were doing as there had been no plan, no alternative budget being put forward because they were unable to put one together. Councillor Spillman encouraged Labour members to do the right thing for the most vulnerable in Thurrock.

Councillor Mayes stated this evening's meeting had shown the politics of the opposite in full flow and had been embarrassed the Labour and Independent Groups had not put residents first. Councillor Mayes asked the opposition groups to put forward a credible alternative budget that would not just say they would use reserves or Council tax would be frozen.

Councillor Johnson stated opposition members were acting in the most irresponsible way by depriving vulnerable people who needed adult social care to receive a good strong service and would leave residents with no confidence on the services they were dependent on a daily basis. That services must continue to be fit for purpose and reserves being used in a responsible manner. Councillor Johnson concluded by stating this budget was the best and fairest way to protect the services that protected the Council's finances and ensured those people who provided care could continue to do.

Councillor Maney stated he failed to see how anyone could deny the generous measures that had been introduced by the Government. This evening, Members were talking about vulnerable people and it would have been threefold if it had not been for the measures the Government had introduced to cushion the devastating blow of COVID. These services had to be properly funded for those people who were going to need our help. Councillor Maney concluded it was not about asking the small majority of people who would be unemployed to pay more Council tax it was asking for the rest of us to do the right thing to support those people when they need it.

Councillor Kerin stated that if the Council tax increase was voted in favour this evening this meant that since 2016 we had seen Council tax rise by 21%. There were also other charges and rises that were afflicting people such as increases in lift maintenance and communal door entries, additional caretaking and parking permits. There were people in Thurrock who had been furloughed but had not received the support when they had to self-isolate and

with the uncertainty on post-COVID workplaces. Councillor Kerin stated this tax rise was the last thing Thurrock residents needed and would not be voting to increase it any further.

Councillor Watkins indicated his support for the budget and stated he understood the difficulties people up and down the country were facing and the Government had responded in kind to help those in need. Councillor Watkins stated that those Members who were voting against the proposals this evening were voting against helping the most vulnerable and those most needing the support. He was saddened that no alternative budget had been put forward and could not see any actions being undertaken by the opposition members as it was in their powers to do so. Councillor Watkins concluded that the budget this evening would help those who were most needed and it was very disingenuous to say to use the reserves or to rely on the Government.

Councillor Muldowney stated the budget proposal should have set out a framework for the medium term and not just getting the Council through the next 12 months and this was a missed opportunity. That the Governments promises to fully fund the costs of responding to the COVID crisis had not been honoured nor had the constant promises to sort out and fund social care and were expecting some of the people who were suffering under this pandemic to now fund those costs and noted the investment strategy was not delivering the returns the administration had promised. Councillor Muldowney noted the importance of financial reports coming to overview and scrutiny committees so members could do the work of identifying sustainable cost savings. Councillor Muldowney concluded that Conservative Members had completely failed residents and were now asking them to pay for their financial mismanagement and incompetence and she would be backing Councillor J Kent plan for a Council tax freeze and would be voting against the Council tax rises this evening.

Councillor Worrall referred to page 95, paragraph 2.2 of the agenda and quoted "it was role of the Council to agree the level of Council tax and inherently the budget envelope for the Council. The precise allocation of that envelope and expenditure fell to the cabinet". It was not for this Labour Group to put forward the budget they had not received any information to do so. Councillor Worrall agreed this had been one of the most difficult years for many families across Thurrock's communities who would had been affected financially by COVID. With food banks and homeless soup kitchens being a lifeline for many residents over the last year, referred to the work being undertaken by the voluntary sectors, the kindness of supermarkets and local community champions.

Councillor Ralph referred to the "Clap for Carers" and stated that not voting this through this evening would be like stabbing them in the back and was shocked and disgusted some Members would not be voting for this increase. Councillor Ralph referred to Councillor Byrne's statement and he had not made one valid point on what he would do to cover the budget costs.

Councillor Huelin referred to Councillor Muldowney's statement and stated instead of complaining perhaps Labour should speak to the unions and get them to stick to their agreement and pay back the £800,000, that Councillor Byrne spent more time complaining that he could not do anything as the Conservatives had the majority and stated this was democracy as Thurrock residents had voted Conservative in to look after their hard earned money and spend it wisely on services. Councillor Huelin conclude by stating Councillor Byrne should produce a budget and explain to residents how he would supply better services, cut tax but still pay for better services.

Councillor Shinnick stated her residents had contacted her and asked her not to vote for the 5% increase as they believed they were not getting good value for money.

Councillor Duffin stated his shock of the comments being made by the opposite group this evening and although he was someone who actively championed for lower taxes but giving money to frontline workers for the work they were undertaking in adult social care was important and had assumed that all would be in support of. Councillor Duffin stated that from those comments being made from opposite parties it had been apparent the frontline workers were not important.

Councillor Hebb referred to Councillor J Kent's statement that there was a weakness in the care system and was unable to understand that in the middle of an adult centric, once in a century health pandemic, there were people that would be put at risk increasing the adult care budget up by 8% and £2.5 million was the weakness in the care system that we had. Councillor Hebb stated it was a 33p per week increase which would fund children's and social care, it would also fund the Police. The administration were aware of that was going on in the borough and had put in another £0.7 million to increase the local Council tax benefit scheme to support those people who needed it most. Councillor Hebb stated there was no longer a surplus because of the world that we were currently in and to continue to fund the Police this would need to be done through normal processes rather than through services. This budget allowed the administration to do what it needed to do to create what would need to be dealt with in two to three years' time and it was conditional to do that this year to structure what needed to be done.

Councillor Gerrish stated he had been shocked on the scale of what was being presented in the budget. He referred to the budget gap of £42 million over the next three years, that as current investments matured there would need to be an additional £30 million to be saved so this evening we were looking at a budget gap of at least £72 million. That this was a staggering amount and could be the worst financial outlook that this Council had ever presented and questions needed to be asked what had gone wrong. Councillor Gerrish stated a shared vision was now needed to realistically begin to meet this challenge as he felt the consequences of this budget would be felt in Thurrock for many decades to come.

Councillor Gledhill summed up by referring to Councillor Massey question in regard to Thurrock's low Council tax to which he stating that they had started off with a very low base in 1999 and every administration, over the years, had tried to keep the Council tax down to the lowest possible whether under the amount of the rate of inflation or where the Labour administration had accepted huge amounts of Government funding to be able to keep it at zero for their length of administration. Councillor Gledhill continued to say that failing to support this budget would be failing to support those most vulnerable people, failure to support adult social care and a failure to support those low paid staff. Councillor Gledhill questioned those that were saying no to this budget where their tax axe would fall and questioned what areas and services would they cut. Councillor Gledhill concluded that he would present this budget as outlined and support the 3% Council tax increase for adult social care and the 1.99% general fund increase.

At 9.29pm the Mayor suspended standing orders and stated the meeting would finish following item 13.

Councillor J Kent raised an alternative to the Mayor's suggestion that the meeting continue until 10.30pm so that the business on the agenda could be completed.

The Mayor called a vote on Councillor J Kent's alternative suggestion to which the majority of Members voted against.

The Mayor continued with the report recommendations.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.1. Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.1 to be carried.

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

For: Councillors Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Sue Hooper, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Angela Lawrence, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Terry Piccolo, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Luke Spillman, David Van Day and Aaron Watkins (30)

Against: Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Daniel Chukwu, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Victoria Holloway, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Gerard Rice, Sue Shinnick, Jennifer Smith and Lynn Worrall (16)

Abstain: (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.2 to be carried.

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

For: Councillors Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Sue Hooper, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Angela Lawrence, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes, Terry Piccolo, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Luke Spillman, David Van Day and Aaron Watkins (28)

Against: Councillors Qaisar Abbas, John Allen, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Victoria Holloway, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Fraser Massey, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, Gerard Rice, Sue Shinnick, Jennifer Smith and Lynn Worrall (20)

Abstain: (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.3 to be carried.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendations 1.4 and 1.5. Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.4 and 1.5 to be carried.

Finally, a recorded en-bloc vote would take place on recommendations 1.6 to 1.11 the result of which was:

For: Councillors Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Sue Hooper, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Sue Shinnick, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day, Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall (47)

Against: (0)

Abstain: Councillor Gary Byrne (1)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.6 to 1.11 to be carried.

RESOLVED. That the Council:

- 1. Considered and acknowledged the Section 151 Officer's (Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property's) S25 report on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of the Council's reserves as set out in Appendix 1, including the conditions upon which the following recommendations are made;**

2. **Agreed a 3% Council tax increase towards the cost of Adult Social Care;**
3. **Agreed a 1.99% Council tax increase to meet the increasing costs and demands of all other services and to move the Council towards greater financial sustainability for the medium to longer term;**
4. **Approved 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 5; and**
5. **Delegated to Cabinet the ability to agree schemes (a) where it can be evidenced that there was 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.**

Statutory Council Tax Resolution

(Members should note that these recommendations are a result of the previous recommendations above and can be agreed as written or as amended by any changes agreed to those above).

6. **Calculated that the Council tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2021/22 was £71,110,644 as set out in the table at paragraph 5.1 of this report.**
7. **That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:**
 - (a) **£502,865,204 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act.**
 - (b) **£431,754,560 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.**
 - (c) **£71,110,644 being the amount by which the aggregate at 1.7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.7(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) **£1,399.32 being the amount at 1.7(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (Council Tax Base of 50,818), 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) £1,399.32 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.

8. Noted that the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner had issued precepts to the Council in respect of Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service 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.
9. 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 2021/22 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

2021/22 COUNCIL TAX FOR THURROCK PURPOSES EXCLUDING ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY AND ESSEX POLICE AUTHORITY

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2021/22							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
932.88	1,088.36	1,243.84	1,399.32	1,710.28	2,021.24	2,332.20	2,798.64

10. That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority had stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council in respect of Essex Police for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2021/22							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
139.02	162.19	185.36	208.53	254.87	301.21	347.55	417.06

11. That it be noted that for the year 2021/22 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority had stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council in respect of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2021/22							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
49.26	57.47	65.68	73.89	90.31	106.73	123.15	147.78

2021/22 COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING FIRE AND POLICE AUTHORITY PRECEPTS)

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2021/22							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
1,121.16	1,308.02	1,494.88	1,681.74	2,055.46	2,429.18	2,802.90	3,363.48

218. Report of the Cabinet Member for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour

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

219. Questions from Members

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

220. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

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

221. Minutes of Committees

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

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

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

The meeting finished at 9.51 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