

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 10 November 2021 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 22 November 2021 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Luke Spillman

Councillor Fraser Massey, Chair Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force
Councillor Joycelyn Redsell, Chair Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Apologies: Councillors Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader)

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded and the recording would be uploaded to the Council's website.

47. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 8 September 2021 were approved as a correct record.

48. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

49. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

50. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by outlining the local rates of COVID-19. He explained that Thurrock's COVID rate had been decreasing steadily, with a large drop being seen during the previous week, which could partly be explained by the beginning of half term in schools. He urged residents to take up the vaccine when offered and thanked residents for taking the necessary precautions, as well as protecting and supporting their local communities. He stated that Thurrock's current COVID rate was 278 per 100,000, which had dropped from 359 per 100,000 the previous week. He explained that this meant Thurrock was 124th out of 144 upper tier local authorities.

The Leader continued and explained that Thurrock's Freeport had been agreed and included within the budget statement. He stated that operations on the Freeport would begin later this month, and the Right Honourable Ruth Kelly had been chosen as Chair. He commented that the Freeport would bring £4.5 billion in investment as well as over 20,000 jobs, and health and cultural benefits for local residents. The Leader then explained that anti-social behaviour was still being seen in local high streets across the borough, but the Council would be working closely with the police to tackle this issue. He urged residents to report anti-social behaviour through either 999 if urgent, or 101 by phone or online if non-urgent.

Councillor Redsell arrived 7.05pm

The Leader stated that a new Shop Safe scheme had recently been introduced which linked local shop owners together, as well as with the police in real time. He commented that the vast majority of shops had registered with the scheme and was beginning to be regularly used. He added that the police met with shop owners every third Friday of the month to discuss local problems. The Leader moved on and stated that tomorrow was Remembrance Day, and a number of events would be held across Thurrock to remember the fallen, including an event on Sunday at Grays Memorial. He thanked Reverend Cannon Darren Barlow for his support and dedication in planning Remembrance Day events, and stated that Reverend Cannon Darren Barlow was still seeking volunteers to help at the Remembrance event on Sunday.

The Leader moved on and stated that he had recently taken a tour of the new Civic Offices building, and felt that lots of thought had gone into the building and the design, and provided good views over the area. He explained that the ground floor contained a specialist reception area for those homeless residents, as well as other dedicated work spaces. He explained that the ground floor also contained a large, open plan registrar's area to allow weddings to take place, and this would be connected via video link to allow family and friends of the bride and groom that could not attend in person to still take part and view the celebration. He stated that the new building was almost completed and the inaugural meeting would be January's Full Council meeting.

Councillor Coxshall added that the registrar area was the first purpose built registrars area since Thurrock had become a unitary authority, and would provide a full service including weddings. He added that the design had been thought out, for example there was a separate, private entrance for the bride and could be laid out for small or large weddings.

51. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Jefferies stated that the environment team had recently produced new posters for parks and open spaces that encouraged people to use the bins, take home their litter, and outlined that those littering would be fined. He

stated that these had been trialled in Bonnygate Park, which had remained mostly tidy due to the new posters on bins. The Leader stated that last year Thurrock had been in the upper quartile following the Keep Britain Tidy assessment, and areas such as Grays had become noticeably tidier. He thanked residents for putting their rubbish in bins or taking their rubbish home with them.

Councillor Spillman stated that two new HUSK houses had been built and were now being lived in by local residents. He explained that he had met those residents now in the HUSK houses, who had previously been living in houses that were not suitable for their mobility needs. He commented that the team had also been undertaking a piece of work on homelessness, and trying to find education, employment or training for people who had become homeless. He stated that an announcement would be made soon on this piece of work, and thanked the team for their hard work on the project. The Leader felt it was good to see Portfolio Holder's working together on a variety of projects. He felt that Thurrock was a place that people wanted to live, work and play and thanked officers and Members for their hard work.

52. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

53. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There were no questions submitted by Non-Executive Members.

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

Other than those items already contained within the agenda, no items had been referred to the Cabinet for their consideration by an overview and scrutiny committee.

55. Lower Thames Crossing Task Force Update Report (Decision: 110588)

Councillor Massey, as Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC) Task Force introduced the report and stated that it was a brief summary of the Task Force meetings between June and September, during which time the Community Impacts Consultation took place, and Highways England rebranded to become known as National Highways. He explained that in June the Task Force had considered the 57 mitigation items, as outlined in the Hatch report, and heard which items could be secured, and which could not be taken forward, for example LTC hypothecation and legacy housing. He stated that concern was raised by Task Force Members in relation to these points, particularly surrounding legacy housing as Thurrock would need to shoulder the burden of the increased need for properties in the area to house the LTC workforce. He explained that the Task Force, and Council, would continue to

engage with National Highways to see if progress on this mitigation item could be made.

Councillor Massey moved on and commented that in July, National Highways had virtually attended the Task Force meeting and had given a presentation on the Community Impacts Consultation, during which they had stated that they would be aiming to submit their Development Consent Order (DCO) in winter 2021. Councillor Massey highlighted that the Community Impacts Consultation had included Ward Impact Summaries, which included detailed information about how the scheme could affect each ward in the borough. He stated that Members had raised concern that areas such as Stanford-le-Hope and Chadwell St Mary had not been included as areas for consultation events, but after the meeting National Highways had agreed to add these as locations for events. He described how the consultation took place as the country unlocked from the pandemic, and Members would have liked to have seen more in-person events, with material available for those without internet access. He added that during the meeting in July, the Task Force had also discussed the Health and Equalities Impact Assessment (HEqIA), and the consultant had explained that Thurrock were putting forward changes to the methodology of the HEqIA, and hoped that National Highways would consider these. He stated that they had also discussed the issue of COPD along the route, and how populations clustered around the proposed route would be affected.

Councillor Massey continued and stated that National Highways had also attended the August meeting of the LTC Task Force, during which Members shared their concerns that the consultation was being held during the summer holidays. He stated that National Highways had been satisfied with the consultation as it was running for 8 weeks rather than the statutory 28 days. He stated that 1900 responses had been received up until the date of the meeting, which was higher than both previous consultations when looking at the same timeframe. Councillor Massey explained that the Task Force had submitted 25 questions to National Highways on varied topics such as housing, employment, tunnel safety, historic landfill, watercourses and site working hours. He explained that National Highways responded to all of these questions, and the minutes of this meeting could be found online.

Councillor Massey explained that the September meeting of the LTC Task Force was held in the Beehive, with the only substantive item being the Thurrock Council Consultation response, which included a 17 page short summary, a 100 page overall summary, and approximately 500 pages of technical appendices. The Task Force had listened to the senior consultant who had explained that Thurrock Council had determined the route would negatively impact local connectivity, reduce the ability for housing development in the area, and would have a large impact on the local road network. He added that not enough detailed mitigation had been included in the consultation in relation to the increase in traffic, both during the construction phase and route opening. Councillor Massey added that Thurrock Council were still waiting on data from the traffic models, and a discussion was also taking place in relation to the peak travel hours used for

this data. He highlighted that 2,700 people had completed the consultation, and thanked residents for taking part. Councillor Massey summarised and stated that October's meeting was postponed as a mark of respect to the late Sir David Amess MP, and the next meeting would be held on 15 November 2021.

Councillor Coxshall echoed Councillor Massey's comments regarding legacy housing and felt disappointed that National Highways had not agreed the mitigation measure regarding this issue. He stated that the LTC workforce would need homes, and wanted to see proper homes built, rather than containers or caravans on site. He stated that National Highways should look to the London Olympics as a model to build sustainable homes that could be used for the community once the workforce had left, and would not be as unsightly as temporary container accommodation. The Leader thanked residents for their consultation responses and hoped that National Highways would take these responses on board.

Councillor Coxshall asked if the Task Force could look into the connectivity of the scheme with the local road network, particularly the junction with the A13. He stated that as there would currently only be a westbound junction this could cause delays at Stanford-le-Hope, particularly with the development of the Freeport. The Leader added that the Council did not want a repeat of the East facing slip road with the A13 at Lakeside. Councillor Massey replied that he would go back to the Task Force and discuss the A13 junction with the LTC.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the work of the Task Force.

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

56. Clean and Green Service Savings Proposals (Decision: 110589)

Councillor Jefferies introduced the report and stated the street scene and leisure service had identified two areas of savings which were outlined within the report. He stated that the team had reviewed how, when, and the frequency of town centre and green space cleaning. Councillor Redsell explained that the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed the report in detail. She queried if staff who would be made redundant could be retrained or redeployed in other areas. She also questioned what other areas of savings had been considered. Councillor Redsell and the Committee had felt that street cleaning was an important area, which all residents would notice. She sought reassurance that roads, paths and green spaces would remain clean and up to their present standard. She added that although the Committee had felt that wildflower planting could be good in some areas, they did not want this to be at the detriment of parks and green spaces. She also queried what the team were doing to tackle

nuisance motorbikes on green spaces, and if new fencing could be used to stop them accessing these areas. The Leader stated that he had met recently with the environment team to discuss the problem of motorbikes on green spaces. He explained that during this meeting he had suggested deadwood hedging, which utilised coppiced material and deadwood to stop motorbikes entering certain areas, as well as providing a sanctuary for wildlife. Councillor Jefferies thanked Councillor Redsell and the Committee for their comments and questions, and assured them that the proposed savings would not see standards fall. He agreed that clean and green services were important for residents and the teams would continue to ensure the highest standards. He stated that he did not know which specific posts would be made redundant, but assured Councillor Redsell that these redundancies would follow all the necessary employment laws, and the HR team would work with those affected people to support them where possible. He stated that street cleaning now utilised machinery that was more efficient, and the team had developed a strategy which concentrated on cleaning parks and open spaces after they had been busy, for example on weekends. He added that officers were now considering the frequency and type of cleaning undertaken in parks and open spaces, and this would be amended where appropriate. Councillor Jefferies commented that they did not want areas to become overgrown, but felt that wildflower planting would enhance certain areas, such as road verges. He explained that roads currently had to close when they required cleaning or grass maintenance, which could cause delays and problems for road users. He stated that wildflower areas did not require maintenance as often and looked better than grass. He explained that the team were also considering wildflower planting in small verges between footpaths and roads, as well as considering ground covering that did not grow and therefore did not require as much maintenance.

Councillor Redsell asked if the Portfolio Holder could look into how street cleaners and housing stock street cleaners worked together to ensure all areas were being cleaned efficiently. Councillor Jefferies replied that work was currently ongoing to ensure that street cleaners and housing stock street cleaners worked together efficiently. Councillor Spillman added that the housing service had become leaner and more efficient, but continued to perform well. He felt that savings could improve services and provide value for money for taxpayers. Councillor Coxshall stated that he had shared the concern of Councillor Redsell and the Committee regarding job losses and if this would affect the service. He highlighted 3.21 and 3.22 of the report which outlined that a number of the posts marked for potential redundancy were already vacant or filled by agency staff, and had been this way for a long time, so would have a limited impact. He stated that the Council were committed to ensuring a better service for residents whilst making savings, and officers had been working hard on this area for a number of years.

Councillor Redsell highlighted an issue with bin collections that had been reported to her, particularly regarding bins in fields and parks that relied on solar power technology to inform the team when they were full. She stated that she had received reports that these bins were positioned under trees, so were not communicating efficiently to officers when they needed emptying,

and therefore were overflowing. Councillor Jefferies responded that he would ask officers to look into this issue.

The Leader thanked Councillor Redsell for her attendance, and stated that scrutiny Chairs would always be welcome to attend Cabinet meetings, as it was good to hear scrutiny comments first hand.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Considered and approved the proposals outlined in the context of the current MTFS position.

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

The meeting finished at 7.47 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**