

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 30 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Sue Shinnick (Mayor), James Halden (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Robert Gledhill, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Jane Potheary, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Jennifer Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, David Van Day, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall
- Apologies:** Councillors Colin Churchman, Tom Kelly, Martin Kerin, Joycelyn Redsell and Sue Sammons
- In attendance:** Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive - *for the 30 June 2021*
Sean Clark, Corporate Director Resources and Plan Delivery - *for the reconvened meeting on 21 July 2021 only*
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
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised the meeting was being streamed on the Council's YouTube channel.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 26 May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

14. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

15. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor stated she had a most enjoyable first month as Mayor with three visits to local schools, attended an afternoon tea with carers and raised the

flag for Armed Forces Day and the Progress flag for Pride Day. The Mayor had also attended a Windrush Event at the Port of Tilbury where there had been an art exhibition remembering the people stepping off the boat at Tilbury.

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

COVID Update – Thurrock had continued to see an increase in the number of residents testing positive for COVID-19. These numbers were thankfully small but this was a worrying development nevertheless and were monitoring these developments closely but had shown just how important it was that everyone took up the offer of a vaccine. This offer had now been extended to all adults over the age of 18 and it had been great to see over 95,000 people had received their first dose and an incredible 68,473 residents had both doses. Even though vaccine take-up had been strong the Council wanted to make sure that everyone took up this opportunity to get the protection a vaccine offered not only for them but for their loved ones and the wider community. Last week a walk-in vaccine centre had been set up in North Stifford and this weekend there would be one in Thurrock Medical Centre in the Grays town centre between 8am and 8pm on Saturday for first and second doses for anyone aged 18 where no appointments were required. As of last Wednesday, 23 June:

- 4,437 test had been taken in the previous 7 days
- Thurrock 7 day infection rate was 41.3 per 100,000
- Which meant Thurrock sat at 130 out of 149 upper tier local authorities where 1 was the highest rate of infection and 149 being the lowest.

Investment in Grays – The Leader had attended the socially distanced gala opening of a new roof-terrace restaurant at Feast. It was a great event and it was fantastic to see that private investment was coming to Grays. This had come at the same time that Thurrock had received a £540,000 cash boost to make Grays High Street safer. Councillor Gledhill thanked the Home Office for providing this funding and the Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for supporting this bid. This additional cash would be used to improve the CCTV and street lighting in the town centre to hopefully reduce crime.

We were also expecting to hear the announcement of how much funding Grays had secured through the New Towns Fund any day now. This would bring up to £25 million in additional funding for the continuing redevelopment of Grays all managed by the Towns Fund Board which saw local businesses and organisations having a voice in the future of Grays. Councillor Gledhill stated that the Council were also expecting to hear the announcement of how much funding Grays had secured through the New Towns Fund. This would bring up to £25 million of additional funding for the continuing redevelopment of Grays all managed by the Towns Fund Board which so far had done a fantastic job with their upfront money. A separate board through Tilbury had done exactly the same and it was really good to see the Government investing and indeed the community and local businesses investing their time to make sure those two towns were improved.

We will also be submitting proposals to Cabinet next week to ensure the development of the underpass under the railway, this was one of two priority capital projects, the other being Stanford-le-Hope station finally being finished. With on-going plans on the planning application for the State Cinema we can really see this being moved forward and really would like to hope that all residents got behind this and really played their part.

Enforcement work - Our officers used their powers to seize a van being used as a series of fly tips in Tilbury, it had been fortunate someone had pointed this out on social media and the vehicle was seized and crushed with the owner being charged £200. Had more residents come forward with more information we may have been able to secure a much stronger conviction and encouraged residents to continue to report issues. The Essex Police 101 service had been improved by adding a live chat which can be anonymous and this information can go towards forming a much greater picture of what was going on.

The Leader had met with the new borough commander last week who was a very pro-active former police officer who knew Thurrock and the residents of Thurrock well. Discussions had taken place on the problem of nuisance quad bikes and there were some exciting ideas to try and bring this nuisance to a head but still encouraged residents to report issues.

Councillor J Kent remembered former Councillor Peter Harris who had sadly passed a few weeks ago. Peter Harris had been a hard working Councillor for the West Thurrock and Grays Thurrock wards for nine years and condolences were passed onto his family.

Councillor J Kent also remembered former officer, Carmel Littleton, who had sadly passed and gave tribute to the hard work and her commitment to Thurrock.

Councillor Coxshall echoed Councillor J Kent's comments and how Carmel Littleton had transformed the education department of the Council.

Councillor Gledhill also paid tribute to Carmel Littleton and commented how approachable she was and had gone over and beyond in her role.

Councillor Gledhill also paid tribute to Peter Harris who had been a true gentlemen and would be truly missed.

Councillor Okunade paid tribute to Carmel Littleton by stating it had been a privilege to work with her who had always been so professional and supportive and offered comfort to her family at this very sad time.

17. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.co.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

18. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

Councillor Byrne presented a petition on behalf of the staff, care workers and residents against the proposed closure of Kynoch Court day care centre.

19. Petitions Update Report

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

20. 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 the following changes to make:

For Councillor Rigby as Substitute to replace Councillor Little on the Corporate Parenting Committee.

To add Councillor Halden to the William Palmer College Educational Trust Outside Body.

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.

Councillor Massey informed the Chamber he had no changes to make.

21. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

The Mayor referred Members to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2020/21 as published in the agenda.

Councillor Little thanked former member Councillor Gerrish for the hard work he had undertaken as chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and committed to carry on the good work. Councillor Little stated that overview and scrutiny in the council was an important role of members.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21 be noted.

22. Response to Motion at Council 27 January 2021 - Request for Committee

Councillor Gledhill presented the report that following the Council Meeting on the 21 January 2021 where Council passed a resolution to request a report for the formation of a Prevent Committee. This report responded to that resolution and made recommendations which enabled the Council to consider the formation of a committee with the relevant consequent elements. The report highlighted related matters in relation to the proposals, and incorporated the recommendations of the General Services Committee.

At 7.31pm Councillor J Kent recommended the meeting be adjourned due to the poor acoustics and technical issues. This was seconded by Councillor Gledhill.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7.31pm.

At 7.52pm, the Chief Executive stated on behalf of the Mayor that due to the unusual circumstances this evening the meeting would be adjourned following Items 11 and 12. The Mayor had acknowledged the hard work the Thameside Theatre staff had undertaken in preparation for this evenings meeting. That post adjournment, the agenda would remain and be re-set to the 21 July. The Council meeting scheduled for the 21 July would then be moved to the 28 July. In line with the question and motion process set out in the constitution from 9.00am tomorrow members and members of the public can submit questions to the 28 July Council.

Members agreed to the recommendations set out in Item 11 - Response to Motion at Council 27 January 2021 - Request for Committee and Item 12 - Constitutional Change – Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.56pm.

The meeting reconvened on Wednesday 21 July 2021 at 6.00pm.

The Mayor greeted Members back into the Council Chambers and advised Members that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's online webcast channel.

The Mayor received apologies from Councillor Abbas, Baker, Churchman, C Kent, J Kent, Maney and Massey.

The Mayor agreed for Councillor Byrne to resubmit his petition.

Councillor Byrne presented a petition on behalf of the staff, care workers and residents against the proposed closure of Kynoch Court day care centre.

23. Report of the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways

In the absence of Councillor Maney, Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways, his portfolio report would be presented at a later date.

24. Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing

Councillor Spillman, as Cabinet Holder for Housing, stated he was proud to present his first report as portfolio holder and paid tribute to the work undertaken by all officers, to former director Roger Harris and former assistant director, Carol Hinvest, and to Councillor Johnson the previous portfolio holder for housing. That during the COVID pandemic the housing department had excelled and surpassed all expectations. The department had faced unprecedented financial restrictions over the last few years even before COVID. That five years ago the department had been in crisis but had inherited a department that was now forming better in almost every metric providing a higher level of customer care. The department was funded and staffed more nimbler and better equipped to deal with new emerging challenges and had instructed officers for a plan in areas such as temporary accommodation, house-building and supported accommodation on a scaling scope significantly beyond which had been seen in many years. The report referred to the level of KPI performance and referred to how ways of working smarter and differently in many areas had changed due to COVID. Referred to the "Everybody In" Scheme and expressed his pride in the achievements in not only rehousing every single rough sleeper who had been reported but also linking them back to vital mental health support, drug and alcohol services. With Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick, stating that street homelessness would be abolished by the end of this parliament, Thurrock was ready and willing to do their bit. Councillor Spillman referred to the impressive tenant satisfactory feedback across the services that the Council delivered and had requested a further expansion of the customer satisfaction measurement methodology to see more qualitative research and better analysis of all data collected. Look at areas that were not performing well, learn from those and action quicker than ever before. Councillor Spillman expressed his excitement in taking on the responsibility of the cabinet member for housing with a great opportunity for this budget and would do his very best to ensure those opportunities were realised.

Councillor Worrall welcomed Councillor Spillman to his role as cabinet member for housing and stated both were very passionate about housing. Councillor Worrall questioned how many residents, both single and families, were living in temporary accommodation out of borough and what time frame had been set to have those residents returned to the borough where they belonged. Councillor Spillman stated there were too many with a worry that the number of homeless cases would increase and as a priority had asked for plans to create a huge amount of extra places within the borough and hoped to bring plans to September committee for an extra 100 placements, council

owned, in the borough. Councillor Spillman agreed to provide Councillor Worrall with the exact number.

Councillor Worrall expressed her concern that as the safeguards that had been put in place for private renters during COVID were lifted and landlords began to evict tenants, more tenants would become homeless and would put further pressures on an already overwhelmed service. Councillor Worrall questioned what measures would be put in place that officers would be able to cope with the demand so that no family would be forced out of the borough. Councillor Spillman stated it was not clear how many extra homeless cases there would be but gave his guarantee that the extra capacity review that was being put into the service would be enough to cover those but agreed it was deeply worrying.

Councillor Worrall referred to the Mould and Damp Report where over the last two years over 11% of council homes suffered with mould and damp. That in reality the problem was not improving with some families living in deteriorating conditions and questioned what would be done about this. Councillor Spillman stated there were different levels of damp and mould and these needed to be separated and those properties that were not acceptable would be brought down and replaced. That in Autumn/Winter this year another stock survey would be undertaken where 30% of stock would be surveyed during a period when damp and mould was at its worse. Following that there would be better and more accurate data as to where the problems were. Councillor Spillman stated that if any member found a property that was unacceptable to let him know directly.

Councillor Byrne stated his concern that the letters being sent to residents who were unable to pay their council tax or rent and were threatening tenants with eviction and bailiffs. These letters were frightening for residents and were being sent for no reason and asked Councillor Spillman for an explanation. Councillor Spillman asked Councillor Byrne to send him some examples of those letters so that he could comment further.

Councillor Kerin was pleased to see that a good example of council housing was Elmore Court and to see more high quality developments like that and there was a need to push on with the delivery of decent council homes. Councillor Kerin questioned could the portfolio holder identify any current developments that had their genesis design delivered in the last five years. Councillor Spillman stated the situation of the pandemic had frozen plans but he had given officers the scope to plan larger than had been seen before with ambitious projects to include Thurrock Regeneration.

Councillor Potheary referred to a family who had been forced to accept private accommodation by Housing Solutions outside the borough with the property already showing signs of dilapidation and signs of damp and mould. When Councillor Potheary had approached Housing Solutions she had been told this was acceptable and stated if private landlords want resident's money they should be offering acceptable liveable conditions in those properties first. Councillor Spillman stated member's casework should go through the normal

channels for officers but would be happy for members to send such cases to him.

Councillor Muldowney questioned whether the Chadwell Clinic site in Ruskin Road was being released for Council house development or being sold to private developers. Councillor Spillman stated this was being considered under a consultation process and going through committee, that no decision had been made on them but agreed to look into this and provide Councillor Muldowney with a written response.

Councillor Spillman summed up by reminding members that if they had a serious housing issue they could contact him directly. Councillor Spillman stated he was passionate and dedicated to housing and this was an opportunity for him to use the skills and knowledge that he accrued but also with the resource of Thurrock Council to try and change things for the better.

25. Questions from Members

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

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

26. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

No reports were presented.

27. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of Committee as set out in the Agenda were received.

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

Members received an information report updating the progress in respect of Motions received at Council.

29. Motion submitted by Councillor Worrall

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Worrall and seconded by Councillor Kerin. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council recognises the huge problems that residents of Ward Avenue, Bradleigh Avenue, College Avenue and Cresthill Avenue caused by parents, and others, dropping off and picking up children attending the three schools in this area. Council calls on cabinet to endeavour to work with the three schools recommending they create a single, sustainable travel plan covering these schools to try and ease the problems. Council further calls for

Cabinet to increase parking enforcement around these schools and calls for the drop off zone, at St Thomas of Canterbury School, to be reinstated in accordance with their planning obligations.

Councillor Worrall presented her motion by asking for the help of the Council on behalf of those residents on Ward Avenue, Bradleigh Avenue, College Avenue and Cresthill Avenue who were being held prisoners in their own homes at the three school drop off and pick up times due to people parking inconsiderately. That it was a nightmare for home deliveries, mobility scooters were forced to use the road which was unacceptable and that inappropriate parking was not being enforced. A petition had been organised which had demonstrated the passion of those residents and requested the help and support of the Council to work with those three schools to create a single travel plan which would ease the problem.

Councillor Gledhill stated he would not be supporting this motion and appreciated what residents that lived opposite schools endured but the surroundings around schools could not be changed. This was not for Council or Cabinet to work with the schools to do their travel plans this was something that the three schools should be working on together. That other schools in the borough were having the same problems and with a limited number of dedicated enforcement officers they could not be taken away from other duties to work on this three school cluster. Councillor Gledhill agreed to urgently take up the drop off zone element of the motion with Planning Officers.

Councillor Kerin stated his support for the motion and it was important for the Council to work on the enforcement issue and to manage this issue across the borough. That it was important for the Council to be supporting schools as they want this enforced and urged all members to back the motion this evening.

Councillor Worrall stated her disappointment that the Leader was not backing the motion and reiterated that the Council should be working with the three schools and enforcement should be enforced.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

The majority of Members voted against this Motion to which the Mayor announced the Motion would fall.

The meeting finished at 7.02pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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