

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 13 July 2022 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-in is Monday 25 July 2022 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Mark Coxshall (Deputy Leader), Qaisar Abbas, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney and Luke Spillman

Apologies: Councillors Jack Duffin and Andrew Jefferies

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services and Governance Manager, and Interim Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed, with the recording to be made available on the Council's website.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 15 June 2022 were approved as a true and correct record.

14. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

15. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Maney stated that although he did not have a declaration of interest, he had met with the landlords of one of the public houses outlined in the appendix of Item 10.

16. Statements by the Leader

The Leader opened his statement and thanked Essex Police and security staff for their hard work dealing with the bomb hoax at the Civic Offices on Monday. He stated that their prompt action ensured the safety of those in the building and surrounding areas, and allowed the area to be opened as soon as possible. He explained that the hoax led to the evacuation of the Civic Offices, South Essex College, local businesses and disrupted c2c train services, but a man had been arrested on suspicion of making a bomb hoax and possession of a knife, and was in police custody.

The Leader moved on and explained that yesterday a new project had been started to install new heating systems in three council owned tower blocks in

Chadwell St Mary, to reduce heating bills and ensure efficient energy consumption. He explained that Thurrock Council had been given a £3.2 million grant from central government to undertake these works, which would improve the 273 council flats in these blocks. He stated that this system would improve energy efficiency and therefore reduce resident's energy bills and reduce incidences of mould. He described how over the life cycle of the heat pumps, the system would save approximately 7080 tonnes of carbon emissions and improve the lives of residents. He added that the council would also be improving other areas of Chadwell St Mary by installing new play equipment on the heath; resurfacing Claudian Way; and undertaking consultation regarding the Kerb It Scheme on St Michaels Road, which would make it easier for residents to park for free and protect grass verges.

The Leader described how Cabinet Members had been pleased to see the Commonwealth baton arrive in Tilbury Port and Cruise Terminal, which he felt was a fitting place given Tilbury's Windrush history. He added that a new coastal pathway had also recently been opened through Thurrock and ran for 85 miles along the Essex coast from Southend to London.

The Leader provided the Clean It, Cut It Fill It Update and stated that since April 2022: 534 potholes had been filled; 341 fly tips cleared; 410 tonnes of waste cleared; and 522 fixed penalty notices had been issued. He stated that COVID-19 levels were currently rising, and urged residents to follow government guidance and minimise contact with people who had contracted the virus. He added that those residents travelling abroad for their summer holidays should check the government website for COVID international entry restrictions. The Leader also urged residents to look out for vulnerable family, friends, and neighbours during the current heatwave, and to make sure they wear sunscreen, hats, drink water and stay indoors where possible during the hottest parts of the day. He explained that refuse collection teams would be starting one hour earlier at 5am to ensure they were not working during the hottest part of the day, and apologised for any disruption this could cause residents. He added that refuse collection teams had also been issued hats, shorts, and water for their work during the summer heatwave.

The Leader explained that Councillors Abbas, Thandi, and Carter, alongside the Mayor, had joined spiritual leaders for Hindu prayers at the weekend at the Grays Lightship Café, as there was no Hindu temple in Thurrock. He stated that other groups who wished to contact Councillor Abbas could do so via email or the communities team.

17. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Spillman thanked officers and Councillor Carter for their hard work regarding the new heat systems at the tower blocks in Chadwell. He felt that the new heat pumps would improve the lives of residents in the tower blocks and save the money on their energy bills. He also thanked central government for providing the grant to Thurrock Council. The Leader echoed these comments and added that the new heat pump system could save residents approximately £500 per year on their electricity bill. He stated that the new

heat pumps would also create additional space near the tower blocks which would be used for a new community garden.

18. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

19. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions had been submitted by non-Executive Members.

20. 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.

21. Asset Review and 3Rs (Decision: 110613)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it outlined the next tranche of the 3Rs policy of release, reuse or retain. He felt that the Council should not own any assets that were not needed to deliver good services, and where possible assets not needed by the Council should be returned to the open market. He stated that in 2019 all Councillors had signed up to the policy of fewer buildings, better services, and this report worked to implement this policy. He explained that this report proposed that some assets were released as part of the community asset transfer scheme, and would ensure that community buildings were operated for long-term future needs. He added that numerous village halls had already requested the freehold for the building, and this report would allow this to happen, and in some instances would be given for free. He added that once the asset had been disposed of to village halls and scout groups, these groups would be able to access grants that they currently could not, and would free up their time by removing the necessity for lease renewals.

Councillor Hebb thanked Councillor Coxshall for his report and felt that community groups could operate these sites better than the Council, as they had more experience. He felt that the Council should not own buildings such as pubs, and the report was well-timed. He added that he had attended the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee where the report had been discussed and had felt pleased to hear from a representative of the Scout Association in Thurrock that they supported the Council's disposal of the scout hut sites, as it would remove current conflicts of interest and would allow them to access more grants. Councillor Hebb also felt pleased to see the Stanford-le-Hope Children's Centre within the disposal list as he felt it was an underused and large building. He asked what the plan for this site would be if the site was released under the scheme. Councillor Coxshall replied that the site would be released, although this did not mean it would be sold on the open market, and could be reinvented as a community site through public

discussion. He agreed that the Council should not own assets such as pubs and scout huts, and this report outlined the first stage of the process to ensure transparency.

Councillor Maney supported the recommendations in the report. He felt that Thurrock had a thriving voluntary and third sector, and could run buildings such as village halls better than the Council. He felt it was an important step in the right direction and would ensure the buildings continued to be important community hubs. Councillor Huelin echoed Councillor Maney's comments and asked if a covenant would be in place when the freehold was transferred to ensure the building remained for community use. Councillor Coxshall stated that a covenant would be in place for the freehold exchanges to ensure they were not used for residential development. He added that the village hall committees would be able to sell the properties if they wished once the freehold had been transferred, but they would have to provide community assets in an alternative location as outlined in their covenants. Councillor Abbas supported the recommendations and felt it would be good for the assets to be fully controlled by the relevant community groups and forums. He asked how assets such as Purfleet Children's Centre would be transferred to community groups. Councillor Coxshall explained that the sites would be released to a community group or forum and assessed in line with policy, and groups could approach the Council if they wanted to take the building over.

The Leader stated that this was the largest release of sites by the Council and felt it was an open and transparent process. He agreed that the Council should not own sites such as pubs or care homes, and felt it would be better for operators of the care homes to own their own sites to reduce conflicts of interest. He added that he had spoken to community groups who were willing to take over the freeholds of some of the sites so they could access business rate relief and additional grants. Councillor Coxshall highlighted that some of the pictures in the appendices were generic photos, for example the HWRC site and Daiglen Drive, and did not show in detail the sites being proposed for release.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Noted the success of the 3Rs program in generating capital receipts totalling £9.3m in the financial year 2021/22.**
- 2. Noted the success of the previous review of operational properties in delivering revenue savings and identifying potential sites currently being developed by TRL and HRA.**
- 3. Declared the operational properties in section 6.2 of this report surplus to requirements and receive a report back, where applicable, on the future of the sites and any alternative delivery consideration.**
- 4. Declared surplus the properties as shown in Appendix 1, 2, 3, and 4; and approved the release or re-use of the properties as outlined.**

5. Subject to agreement to release the assets in Appendix 1, 2, 3 and 4, delegated authority of the disposal to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Leader and the completion of a delegated authority decision report.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

22. End of Year (April 2021-March 2022) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22

The Leader explained that this item would be brought forward.

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that it was the end of year report from the 2021/22 municipal year, and felt that it showed the Council had improved following the disruption of the pandemic, as nearly 70% of indicators were better or the same as the 2020/21 year. He explained that in following reports COVID would not be used as an explanation for missed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), unless the country entered another lockdown or further restrictions were implemented. He added that since the pandemic Thurrock had changed and grown, for example the new Thames Freeport and Towns Funds in Tilbury and Grays, and therefore the borough's vision should be changed and refreshed. He commented that this had been discussed at Corporate Overview and Scrutiny, who had had no objections to refreshing the Council's vision and would be receiving a more detailed report on this soon. He felt that the Council should also reconsider the current KPIs and review what areas were measured, for example by continuing to measure operational KPIs such as bin collections, but also starting to measure longer-term project milestones and delivery, which were not currently measured using KPIs.

Councillor Spillman highlighted the KPI relating to void re-let turnaround, which had not met target due to the sheltered accommodation team struggling to re-let first floor sheltered accommodation units. He stated that the team were working on this issue to build new units and re-purpose old units, and were discussing how to improve this KPI. Councillor Huelin highlighted the KPI relating to the adult social care team wishing for residents to utilise care provided by an external company rather than the Council, as this would ensure the cost to the resident was the same, but the cost to the Council was lower. She stated that many residents when receiving care, for example after leaving hospital, felt more comfortable with carers they knew, rather than new providers, which meant the KPI struggled to reach target. She added that post-COVID it could be difficult for residents to find carers from an external company, and this was compounded by changes to the NHS discharge policy, but felt it was important that residents were receiving good care. Councillor Huelin added that the Council would be collaboratively working with the NHS to ensure successful discharges into the community, and Thurrock would continue to pursue mindful decision making.

The Leader agreed that the relet turnaround time was a difficult KPI to meet

due to sheltered accommodation and the cost of new build accommodation. He highlighted page 558 of the agenda and the qualitative successes of the Council, and thanked officers and Members for their hard work throughout the year on their service areas. He explained that Members and officers would be considering all KPIs in the future to ensure KPIs were within the Council's remit and were operationally important. He highlighted the missed KPI relating to fixed penalty notices and explained that this could be affected by payment plans or late payment. He added that if residents chose not to pay FPNs, they could be taken to court to recoup costs. Councillor Coxshall also highlighted page 558 and some of the successes of the Council such as new play equipment in Parks, development in Grays beach, and new affordable homes in Tilbury.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which did not reach their target and the impact of COVID-19.

2. Identified any areas which required additional consideration in 2022/23 as part of the refresh of the council's corporate performance framework.

3. Agreed to commencing a refresh of the borough forward vision, and underlying key priorities and key performance indicators, reflecting a modern Thurrock (inclusive of major infrastructure investment through the Towns Funds and Thames Freeport).

Councillor Hebb left the meeting at 7.51pm.

23. Tilbury Town Fund Programme (Decision: 110614)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it outlined the proposed works in Tilbury due to the Tilbury Town Fund Programme, which had been amended since the previous Cabinet report due to cost inflation. He thanked the Tilbury Town Fund Board, Members, officers, and the private sector for their hard work on the report, and stated that the heart, hub, and heritage proposals were still listed in the report following cost amendments. He felt proud that the report would benefit local Tilbury residents, particularly young people through the Onside Youth Centre, which would provide youth facilities seven days a week. He felt that the funding would benefit the heart of Tilbury in the Civic Square, as well as heritage funding within the Forts and new jetty. He added that the hub within the station area would also be improved through the Towns Fund, and through further monies and proposals that were brought forward at a later date.

Councillor Huelin thanked Councillor Coxshall for the report and highlighted 3.3 of the report, which outlined the work that would be undertaken to ensure the Tilbury Integrated Medical Centre (IMC) would be delivered on time, and would promote collaborative working. Councillor Coxshall agreed that the IMC

was critical for Tilbury and collaborative working would ensure Tilbury would be regenerated and improved for future generations. The Leader agreed the Tilbury Town Fund would improve the lives of residents in Tilbury, including the youth centre, jetty and heritage development.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the Tilbury Town Fund Programme and budget allocations as set in Table 1 of this report.

2. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships and the Assistant Director Legal Services, to approve the Business Case Summaries; and agree lease, development and contractual terms (including approval to go to tender and award) to support the delivery of the programme.

3. Confirmed agreement to underwrite the proposed financial settlement to enable the delivery of the Thurrock Youth Zone, as set out in Section 8.1 of this report, and that officers actively seek alternative revenue streams to support the long-term delivery of the Youth Zone.

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

24. Thurrock Supported Bus Services (Decision: 110615)

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that Thurrock Council currently subsidised three bus services, the 11, 265 and 374, in the borough via contractual arrangement since 2019. He explained that these services were deemed to be not financially viable and covered many areas in Thurrock, such as rural villages which had limited other public transport options. He explained that the contract finished in March 2022, with the option to extend for three years, and a one-year extension had been granted to allow the Council to consider the service to ensure the services were utilised effectively and provided value for money for residents. He stated that the services cost approximately £425,00 per annum, and the operators had requested an additional £100,000, which had been paid for by a one-off central government grant. He commented that the Cabinet paper was an enabling report to start a consultation period, and Community Equalities Impact Assessment, before a report would be brought back to Cabinet later in the year.

Councillor Johnson sought assurance that the consultation would be undertaken in rural communities. Councillor Huelin echoed Councillor Johnson's comments and felt that the consultation should be thorough and ensure the service offered value for money. She added that Fobbing was rural and had an older population that utilised the bus service regularly for shopping and hospital trips. The Leader highlighted that bus trips had been

reduced during COVID and highlighted that 89,000 passenger journeys had been undertaken in 2019.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the commencement of consultation within the community for a period no less than 12 weeks on the need and impact of the three bus services supported by Thurrock Council.**
- 2. Noted that during the consultation period any necessary profiling of user groups is to be undertaken together with a Community Equalities Impact Assessment.**
- 3. Agreed to a further report scheduled for December 2022 be presented to Cabinet to consider the outcome of the consultation, the Community Equalities Impact Assessment and recommended options for future service provision into 2023 and beyond.**

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

25. Abandoned Trolley Cost Recovery Programme (Decision: 110616)

The Leader explained that he would be presenting the report in Councillor Jefferies absence and described how the report would allow the Council to recover the cost of collecting abandoned trolleys across the borough. He stated that abandoned trolleys were unsightly; cost the Council money to clear; and could be a hazard. He stated that officers had to pick them up at taxpayers' expense which took them time, but the new policy would allow the Council to recover the full cost of clearing the trolleys, as well as storage and disposal, and the supermarkets would be contacted and could choose to collect or pay to dispose. He summarised and stated that the report had been fully endorsed by the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Abbas felt that the report would improve the borough and would reduce the instances of fly-tipping, as fly-tips often attracted other instances of fly-tips. The Leader agreed and felt that fly-tips would be reduced if trolleys were removed at the cost of the supermarket.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the initiation of the process for the adoption of the new abandoned trolley cost recovery policy, as recommended by the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

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

26. Housing Strategies 2022-2027 (Decision: 110617)

Councillor Spillman introduced the report and thanked officers for their hard work. He explained that the report had been agreed by Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who had questioned different aspects of the Strategy and had therefore been amended following these questions. He felt that the Strategies went above and beyond the Council's statutory duty, particularly regarding areas such as homelessness.

Councillor Huelin welcomed the report and felt that it was collaborative with the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in cross-directorate working to solve issues holistically. She felt pleased to see that the Strategy would reduce the number of hoops that residents would have to jump through to receive help, and highlighted 3.7 of the report which would support residents to get help in their local area. Councillor Spillman echoed Councillor Huelin's comments and felt pleased that the Director of Adults, Housing and Health agreed with the collaborative approach of cross-directorate working, which improved outcomes for residents and made business sense. Councillor Abbas felt that the Housing Strategy could have a good impact on people's lives, and felt pleased to see that community consultation had been undertaken on the strategies. He questioned how the Strategy would ensure homes were affordable for residents. Councillor Spillman stated that as Thurrock began to build more houses, Thurrock Council could begin to build more affordable homes. Councillor Coxshall supported the report and felt that by working with the private sector, the Council could deliver high-quality, affordable housing within the borough to help tackle the housing crisis. Councillor Spillman summarised and stated that officers would work hard to deliver the Strategies, and would take into consideration the current inflationary environment.

The Leader highlighted pages 190, 194 and 195 and felt that the housing team were working hard to deliver discretionary services, such as resident liaison officers trained in giving advice regarding fuel poverty; and officers trained in spotting signs of domestic violence. He felt that consultations undertaken by the housing team were detailed; thorough; and benefitted residents.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed the adoption of the vision, aims, objectives and actions proposed in the draft Housing Strategy 2022-2027.

2. Agreed the adoption of the aims, objectives and actions proposed in the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022-2027, and draft Housing Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2027.

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

27. Integrated Community Equipment Service Reprocurement (Decision: 110618)

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that ordinarily contracts would go out tender when coming to an end, to ensure due diligence and value for money for taxpayers. She explained that this report was an exception to this rule, as it asked Cabinet to re-procure the current contract, as there were only three companies in the UK that could offer the specialised services and equipment, such as specialised hoists and feeding aids. She explained that this service could not be done in-house as it required a warehouse for stock, specialised engineers to install equipment, and emergency replacement services. She commented that the contract was working well, and Thurrock contributed £662,000 for its share of the £12million contract over its lifecycle, which gave residents peace of mind that their equipment was functioning and specialised engineers were on-hand.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed that the procurement for this service should take place under the current arrangements, which are a collaborative approach to commission services with the Greater Essex Commissioning Partnership Group.

2. Agreed to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and the Portfolio Holder to award the contract of Community Equipment following completion of the procurement process.

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

28. Adult Integrated Care Strategy (Decision: 110619)

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that it sat beneath the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy. She stated the Strategy was fully integrated and reliant on partnership working in different service areas of the Council, such as public health, housing, and regeneration, alongside external partners such as the NHS. She mentioned that an external review had found the Strategy to be high quality, and outlined the effect that the pandemic had had on services, such as primary care and NHS discharges, which had put pressure on the Adult Social Care budget. She stated that the strategy had been well received by health partners, and highlighted place-based focusses and community led solutions, as well as embedding the integrated health and wellbeing model. She added that the strategy also looked at how IT could be utilised within primary care, for example video and telephone GP calls for more minor ailments. She stated that there was a chapter on governance and local democracy, which took on board advice from the Health and Wellbeing Board and Overview and Scrutiny. She stated that officers from health, housing, legal and regeneration had written the report, and felt that officers supported the report and subsequent outcomes.

Councillor Johnson supported the report and combined with the 3Rs report, felt that both reports would improve the community. Councillor Abbas felt that

the strategy and associated action plans were important. He highlighted page 498 of the report relating to the IMCs and asked if the fourth Tilbury IMC would be included. Councillor Huelin explained that this had been missed and would be rectified.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed *Better Care Together Thurrock – The Case for Further Change.*

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

29. Hackney Carriage Fares (Decision: 110620)

The Leader introduced the report and stated that Hackney Carriages had not increased their fares since 2012. He clarified that Hackney Carriages were those vehicles which were licensed to pick passengers up from the street and had a 'for hire' light. He stated that the team had worked with drivers, who had seen costs such as fuel and maintenance increase, it had therefore been decided to reduce the distance travelled before the fare increased. He highlighted page 551 of the agenda and felt that fares would only increase moderately for Hackney Carriage fare users.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed for the proposed table of fares, as set out in Appendix A, to go out for public consultation, in accordance with the statutory requirement.

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

The meeting finished at 8.44 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