

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the 8 September 2022, held on the 11<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at 7.00 pm**

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**Present:** Councillors Joycelyn Redsell (Chair), Daniel Chukwu, Sara Muldowney, Elizabeth Rigby and Paul Arnold (Substitute) (substitute for Maureen Pearce)

**Apologies:** Councillor Pearce and Daren Spring, Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure

**In attendance:** Michelle Cunningham, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager  
Steve Skinner, Grays Athletic Football Club  
Susan Reddick, Contracts Manager.  
Vincent Taylor, Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services  
Cheryl Wells, Emergency Planning and Resilience Manager  
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

**8. Minutes**

The minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14 June 2022 were approved as a true and correct record of the meeting.

**9. Items of Urgent Business**

Steve Skinner from Grays Athletic Football Club gave a presentation to the meeting.

Steve Skinner explained that the Football Club is 132 years old, it was based in Grays from 1906 -2010. In 2010 the ground in Bridge Road was sold by the owners for re-development and the football club did not receive any of the proceeds of sale. The S106 money of £511,000 went into other projects over the years and the breakdown of how this was spent is on public record. The football club has been looking for another ground since this time.

It is a 100% fan owned club. It runs 28 football teams with around 400 players.

The football club has recently had a meeting with Council Planning officers Sean Nethercott and Leigh Nicholson with regard to the local plan and the Club has conveyed to the Council Officers they would like the location of any new ground to be where the other sporting facilities are around Blackshots or Treetops. Thurrock is an under provided area for football and could be eligible for up to 70% funding from the football foundation to build a community football facility.

Steve Skinner highlighted to Councillors that sport is one of the best ways to reduce anti-social behaviour as it gives young people something to do as they will be taking young people off the streets and into activities where they will be training twice a week and playing a match at the weekends.

Steve Skinner also explained to the meeting that the new Football ground could be built in an environmentally friendly way and stated that Princes Park in Dartford is a good example of an environmentally friendly football ground.

The Chair thanked Steve Skinner for attending the meeting.

#### **10. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

#### **11. Overview of responsibilities of Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sports and Leisure - Verbal Update**

Councillor Jefferies invited the Committee to ask him questions.

Councillor Muldowney stated that there has been lots of disruptions to the bin collection services over the last couple of years and queried what contingency plans were in place to stop the impact from the Just Stop Oil protestors on the waste collection services.

Councillor Jefferies explained that it was difficult to predict that the protestors would dig a tunnel or glue themselves to the road. As there is only one way in and one way out of the depot it did cause disruption to the service and action was taken as soon possible to arrange for the bin collection vehicles to access the site from a different road.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed the actions of the protestors wasn't the sole reason for problems with the bin collections. A whole host of reasons have contributed towards disruptions to the service such as industrial action and poor working relations. There is a shortage of drivers and a lot of agency drivers, they are now encouraging agency staff to apply to become permanent employees to reduce the dependency on agency staff.

Councillor Muldowney asked if the reason there was reduced numbers of staff was because they were planning to move to two weekly green bin collections.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed that they were going to introduce changes to the frequency of collections in September 2022 and therefore that decision was made. However, once that decision was changed they did start to employ people again.

Councillor Muldowney asked when the decision was made to delay the changes until next year.

Councillor Jefferies said he believed he said it at Full Council early in the Summer but would have to check the date.

Councillor Muldowney requested further information about the reasons for the decision.

Councillor Jefferies clarified that it was to do with the Environment Act and changes the Government is introducing regarding separate food waste collection and therefore it was decided it was best to hold off. He added that there was also a need to stabilise the service and ensure that bins were being collected when they were supposed to be before making further changes. Councillor Jefferies also stated that he understood that the Government may be providing additional funding for Councils relating to waste collection.

Councillor Muldowney requested confirmation of when collection of the brown bins will be reinstated.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed that from next week all 3 bins will be collected. Councillor Jefferies clarified the decision was made to stop the blue bins as they couldn't collect all 3 bins due to worker shortages, so they had to suspend the blue bins service. Things have settled down now and normal services can resume.

Councillor Arnold asked if there was now a plan in place to overcome the difficulties with recruiting drivers.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed that they are now recruiting drivers and loaders. They have made sure that they have a baseline and if they get close to that baseline they will advertise jobs.

Councillor Redsell highlighted that Members do appreciate the hard work the drivers and loaders do.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed they have taken steps to make employees feel more valued and they have introduced shorts for employees to wear in the summer, water and suntan lotion has been provided and safari style hats to protect their necks when working in the sun.

Councillor Chukwu queried how many street cleaners there are in Chadwell.

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services confirmed that there are two.

Councillor Muldowney queried when the recycling KPI will be reinstated.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed that he cannot give a specific date today, with the situation with missed bin collections figures are not likely to be accurate. He confirmed that he wanted to set a KPI when they can accurately see what is going on.

Councillor Muldowney requested sight of the report prepared by the external Consultant following his review of the service and queried why it had not been brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jefferies stated that back in July there was a full review of the service by an outside Consultant. Some of the suggested improvements have been implemented already. There is now a Waste Board which relevant Officers sit on. There have been changes to how missed bins and complaints are recorded. There is now a health and safety representative on site for workers to raise issues with and additional training has been put in place. Improvements have been made to the depot and to the working conditions so that workers feel valued. Councillor Jefferies estimated that the full findings of the review will be made available by the beginning of next year and he stated that has only seen parts of the report as some of it was redacted due to employment reasons.

The Chair queried if a small food bin is being introduced.

Councillor Jefferies clarified that is one of the changes they are looking introduce which will be a small caddy for people to put in their kitchens for food waste which can then be emptied into a large lockable food waste bin stored outside. This will be introduced gradually across the Borough.

*Councillor Jefferies left the meeting.*

## **12. Council Funded Police Officers**

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager presented the report on Council Funded Police Officers. The report provides members with an insight as to the remit of the team, their progress and some of their key successes.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager explained that there are 4 Council funded officers who are a dedicated resource for Tilbury and Purfleet and they are funded until February 2024. Since their inception confidence in local policing has increased by 19%.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager updated the Committee that since writing the report there is an update on Operation Savage and to date 4 arrests have been made and 3 vehicles seized.

The Chair commented that residents want to see the police and not just in the town centres. The Chair stated that on page 21 it says that 717 hours were spent on patrol, she queried the location of the patrols.

*Councillor Chukwu left the meeting at 19.56.*

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that Inspector Fisher from Essex Police would be able to answer this question better but unfortunately could not attend the meeting. She confirmed in Tilbury it would include Civic Square and Daisy park and in Purfleet it is concentrated on the Garrison Parade, down the London Road to the riverside.

Councillor Arnold queried the meaning of retail crime.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that would cover shoplifting and anti-social behaviour in some of the shops in Gray's High Street. The Business Crime Team work with shop staff and provide crime prevention advice and encourage reporting. A lot of work has been done on the Garrison Parade too by this team.

Councillor Arnold queried the average time an officer would spend on patrol.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed she would need to ask the Police to answer that question.

Councillor Muldowney queried if the Police had been funded by the increase in Council tax rises. She commented that it seemed a little unfair that only small areas are getting the benefits of these extra police if all residents were paying towards it.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that this question would need to be raised with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. She added that the town centre team does alleviate pressure from the rest of the Community Policing team.

Councillor Muldowney highlighted that there have been two incidents of arson on play equipment in Chadwell. She stated that the Police have not responded to incidents at the Pyramid centre where a defibrillator was vandalised and people are starting to question what the point is in reporting these incidents if the police do not respond. She added that people are becoming more emboldened in their anti-social behaviour as with the off-road nuisance motorbikes as they do not think there is a deterrent.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed the District Commander is currently reviewing the incidents in relation to arson.

Councillor Muldowney stated that there is damaged equipment still on the Heath and a child has broken his humorous today on the railings.

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services said he will have a team out there tomorrow morning to make it safe.

Councillor Rigby explained that when she speaks to residents they are still concerned about going into Gray's Town Centre and queried if there was any scope to increase patrols.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that the Police would need to respond to that question however she can confirm that the town centre team and community policing team are full resourced. She confirmed that interim injunctions have been secured on 8 juveniles and were pending for 9 adults currently to address this.

Councillor Arnold explained that he lives close to one of the maps and he never sees a police officer. He asked if the police officers time is logged and if they are solely designated to a particular area. If people know, it might help allay people's fears and frustrations that they are not seeing officers.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that the 4 Council funded Officers are dedicated to Tilbury and Purfleet. The other town centre teams may fluctuate between areas for example, if they are conducting an operation in Grays they may be pulled over to support that operation. Recently, due to the Protestors it has meant they haven't been in their dedicated areas. It is the same with the community policing teams, they will support officers in other areas with operations. Policing is intelligence led and is based on where reports are made. The Police are responsive to things as they happen.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the CGS Overview and Scrutiny Committee: -**

- 1.1 Note the positive approach taken by this team to community engagement.**
- 1.2 Promote the work of Town Centre officers to their residents to improve public confidence in local policing and encourage reporting of concerns.**
- 1.3 Support the decision to carry out a review of the funded Town Centre Police Officers, as is good practise with all council contracts**

**13. Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Update**

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager presented the report to members. She explained that the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) has a role to play in preventing and safeguarding the most vulnerable in our society from being victims of crime, abuse and exploitation. TCSP has

identified 9 priorities for this financial year and they are listed at paragraph 2.2 of the report.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager clarified that whilst there has been an increase in all types of crime except burglary, members are advised it reflects against non-comparable data due to the varying degrees of restrictions in place during 2020 and 2021. In the last 12 months ending August 2022, anti-social behaviour, violence against the person which includes domestic abuse and domestic burglary are on a downward trajectory. All crime has seen a 6.4% increase in Thurrock however that does compare favourably against the Force which has seen a 9.2% increase.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager stated that Section 3 of the report explains the breadth of work going across the Borough to address those identified priorities.

Councillor Muldowney commented that she was shocked to see there has been a 22.4 % increase in stalking and harassment in Thurrock.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that there has been a change in the way it has been reported which might have affected this. She confirmed there have been 2206 offences reported in Thurrock to end of August 2022 which is a decrease of 332 and is a -13 % reduction, so it is now on a downward trajectory.

Councillor Arnold queried what are the contributing factors that make Thurrock the 5<sup>th</sup> highest borough for domestic abuse in Essex.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager stated that there are 14 districts in Essex. There are so many factors that are picked up in domestic abuse. We do promote the reporting of it very highly. The Housing Safeguarding team respond to all tenures including for male victims as well. We have a lot of areas of high deprivation however, it happens everywhere and cuts across all social aspects.

Councillor Arnold queries if there was any reason why burglary had fallen and if there were any lessons we could learn from this and apply to other areas of crime.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed the figure does include some periods of lockdown restrictions and burglary plummeted over that period of time.

There is an Integrated Offender Management Programme that manage prolific offenders. They meet monthly to discuss each of the offenders alongside representatives from the drug and alcohol service and they look at the criminogenic needs of those offenders such as housing or to get them into employment and training and there is support there for offenders who want to engage. If they don't want to engage and curb their behaviour curfews and tags can be used.

The Chair raised that often women cannot move out of their home and we have only one safe house in Thurrock.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that the first option is always to try and make it safe for victims to stay in their own home, especially if they have children in school.

Councillor Muldowney commented that it was upsetting to hear in the Youth Focus Listening Project that half of the respondents are worried about being exploited by gangs. She requested more information about the emerging gang in Thurrock.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that 9 adults and 9 juveniles are going through the courts with gang injunctions. She also confirmed that a company called Red Balloon are working with young people out in the Community and have been based in Seabrooke Rise and Koala Park. TCSP have secured some funding and had discussions with the local churches to try and bring in a Street Pastor to act as a trusted adult in the Gray's Station area. They have also given some funding to the Duke of Edinburgh scheme which 5 people in Seabrooke Rise have taken up. It is hoped that this they may become involved in some volunteering work which will give them pride in their local area.

Councillor Muldowney noted that hate crime figures have increased. The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership Manager confirmed that Thurrock has a strong response to hate crime. Thurrock has lots of Hate Crime Ambassadors. All staff in the Council that complete Prevent training also complete Hate Crime awareness training.

People don't always feel comfortable going into a police station to report hate crime. This week is National Hate Crime week. Thurrock has 9 hate crime reporting centres to provide alternative venues for people to report hate crimes.

## **RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the performance of the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership for the year 2021/22 and satisfy themselves that the Community Safety Partnership priorities agreed for the year 2022/23 respond to the community safety issues raised by their residents**
  
- 1.2 That Overview and Scrutiny Committee recognise the collaborative working across our priorities with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to keep the community of Thurrock safe.**

### **1.3 That Overview and Scrutiny understand the impact on the Council of the Serious Violence Duty**

## **14. Cemetery and Burial Strategy**

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services presented the report to members. He stated that Thurrock has not previously had a Cemetery strategy in place and it will provide a framework to effectively manage Thurrock's Cemeteries. The aim is to ensure that Cemeteries are beautiful, peaceful, and well used and that they cater for a diverse range of cultural needs.

The Chair asked if they are still looking at putting a crematorium in Thurrock.

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services confirmed that a large number of people in Thurrock are being cremated outside of the Borough as Thurrock does not have a crematorium and they would like to be able to offer this service in Thurrock. The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services stated that he will work with colleagues in planning to identify a suitable piece of land and ideally this would be in the centre of the Borough.

Councillor Arnold queried when we will need our own crematorium.

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services responded that the number of burials has reduced. Only 10% of people in Thurrock are buried as opposed to being cremated. There are still a lot of internment of ashes in the burial sites. People who were born and lived in Thurrock would like to be cremated in Thurrock.

Councillor Rigby queried if cemeteries need to be Council owned or can they be privately run.

The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services said they will be looking at all options and what will provide the best value to the residents of Thurrock. The Strategic Lead for Clean and Green Services confirmed that he will present the options to the Committee when he has them as there is lots of work to be done. He estimated these options may be ready by the first Cleaner, Greener and Safer Committee meeting in the next municipal year.

### **RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend to Cabinet to formally adopt the Cemetery and Burial Strategy and its associated policies.**

## **15. Flats Recycling Update**

The Contract Manager presented the report to Members. The aim of the project is to provide to all Thurrock residents equal access to recycling and to help educate residents on recycling. The current situation is that 97% of residents in flats have access to recycling and they are hoping to complete the project within the next 3 weeks.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1.1 That Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee review this report as an update on the Flats Recycling Project.**

**16. Work Programme**

Councillor Muldowney requested an update report on Waste Collection.

The Chair requested that the Police attend the next meeting to provide an update.

**The meeting finished at 9.29 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**