

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 26 July 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Susan Little (Mayor), Qaisar Abbas (Deputy Mayor), John Allen, Alex Anderson, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, John Cecil, Daniel Chukwu, Gary Collins, George Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Robert Gledhill, Aaron Green, James Halden, Vikki Hartstean, Mark Hooper, Mark Hurrell, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Cici Manwa, Fraser Massey, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney, Augustine Ononaji, Srikanth Panjala, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Sue Shinnick, Graham Snell, Neil Speight, Luke Spillman, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillor James Thandi and Reverend Canon Darren Barlow

In attendance: Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Mark Bradbury, Interim Director of Place
Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member Services
Claire Demmel, Interim Director Public Realm
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Alix MacFarlane, Interim Director, Communications Advisor - Intervention and Improvement
Steven Mair, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Kerry Thomas, Chief Executive Business Manager
Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Karen Wheeler, Director Strategy, Engagement and Growth
Jonathan Wilson, Interim Director Finance & S151 Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website. The Mayor advised members that the new electronic voting system would be trialled this evening.

32. Minutes

Councillor Speight stated he presented an update at the 28 June 2023 council meeting on the East Thurrock Community Association outside body that he represented and requested this update be added to the minutes.

Following the above amendment, minutes of Council held on the 28 June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

33. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

34. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Kelly made a non-pecuniary interest in that he was an employee of DP World.

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

The Leader of the Council made the following announcements:

- Changes to the Environment Act 2021 would mean all local authorities would need to introduce separate weekly food waste collections. In preparation for that he had joined Councillor Morris-Cook as chair of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee and crew members who were collecting food waste as part of the council's pilot test.
- News from Roger Hirst the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner that funding would be made available for Police to carry out additional high visibility patrols in areas experiencing issues with antisocial behaviour. One of those patrols would be around Lakeside and Chafford Hundred rail station.
- The council would not be putting ULEZ yellow signs or cameras on any land that was owned by Thurrock and called on the campaigner of ULEZ, the Labour Leader of London, to rethink his proposals, stop the introduction of ULEZ and to speak with Thurrock residents who would be the hardest hit.
- This week saw the start of "Love Parks Week" with the active parks programme bringing organised fun and games for children at different parks every Tuesday in August. He encouraged all members to visit those parks with further information available on the council's website.

36. Questions from Members of the Public

The Mayor informed the chamber that two questions had been received from members of public.

Asked by	Asked to	Subject
Mr Groves	Councillor B Maney	Publication of the Local Plan.
Mr Austin	Councillor Jefferies	Current status of the Towns Fund.

37. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed the chamber that two notices of petition had been received this evening.

Councillor Polley presented her petition in regard to Caretaker Charges. In response, Councillor Johnson acknowledged the petition.

Mr Combe presented his petition in regard to Flower Estate's residents association requesting a consultation for a 20-mph speed limit. In response, Councillor B Maney acknowledged the petition.

38. Petitions Update Report

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

39. Revised Political Balance

The report requested Council to confirm the calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees following Councillor Sammons becoming an Independent councillor on 13 July 2023.

With 45 electronic votes for and 1 electronic abstained vote, the recommendation was approved.

RESOLVED

That the political balance and allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix 1, were approved.

40. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Mayor asked whether there were any changes to be made to the appointments previously made by committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader made the following changes:

Due to the revised political balance, the Leader released seats for the Licensing Committee and Lower Thames Crossing Task Force. Councillor Sammons to retain both seats as an Independent councillor.

Appointed Councillors Anderson, Massey, Rigby and Snell to the Investment Advisory Panel.

Replaced Councillor Halden with Councillor Snell on the Constitution Working Group.

The Leader of the Labour group, Councillor J Kent, stated he had no changes to make.

Independent Councillors Allen, Byrne, Massey, Sammons, and Speight stated they had no changes to make.

41. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the chamber that three questions to the Leader and seven questions to cabinet members and committee chairs had been received:

Asked by	Asked to	Subject
Councillor Byrne	Leader	Stanford Le Hope Station
Councillor Byrne	Leader	Referendum vote
Councillor J Kent	Leader	Boundary Commission
Councillor Polley	Councillor B Maney	Plans for Culver Centres site
Councillor Green	Leader	Fly Tipping
Councillor J Kent	Councillor Kelly	Deferred Planning item
Councillor Polley	Councillor Coxshall	Local Events Organisers Network
Councillor J Kent	Councillor Carter	Strategy for School Improvement
Councillor Speight	Councillor B Maney	Parking in Stanford Le Hope
Councillor Speight	Leader	Current state of council administered cemeteries

In regard to the question from Councillor J Kent to Councillor Kelly, the Mayor requested that the Monitoring Officer send an email out to all members to clarify the constitutional rules on committee substitution.

The recording of the questions and responses can be found from the following link:

[Council - Wednesday 26 July 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

ACTION:

Monitoring Officer to clarify the constitutional rules on committee substitution to all members.

42. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

Councillor Speight reported that he had attended a meeting with the East Thurrock Community Association last week and thanked Mark Bradbury for his assistance prior to the meeting and looked forward to joining Mark Bradbury on the next visit. It was noted that Members were very appreciative in that steady progress was being made.

43. Minutes of Committees

The minutes of committees as set out in the agenda were received.

44. 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.

45. Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Kerin. The Motion read as follows:

Council resolves to write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities calling for an independent inquiry into the financial collapse of Thurrock Council - along with similar collapses in Woking, Croydon, Slough and Northamptonshire. The inquiry should look at, amongst other things - the impact of austerity on council budgets, the impact of scrapping of independent oversight bodies such as the Audit Commission, the impact of government encouragement of councils to pursue a commercialisation agenda, the role of councils' external auditors, the role of council Monitoring Officers, Section 151 Officers and Chief Executives, and the apparent absence of central government oversight of local government.

Councillor J Kent presented the motion by thanking the inspection team for the work undertaken and the evidence and recommendations presented. The motion called on a full inquiry that would explore in detail the issues that led to the financial collapse of Thurrock council and other local authorities. The inquiry would need to factor the impact in the reduction of central Government grants to councils. With questions being repeatedly asked as to why external auditors had not picked up on the risks that were being undertaken, did not pick up the gaps in insurance or the lack of proper governance around decision making. These issues were not limited to Thurrock, therefore a proper look needed to be undertaken across authorities. The Best Value Inspection had recommended the Secretary of State commissioned a review of external auditors for local authorities and for the roles of three statutory officers to be strengthened. To also look at how central Government had played its part in this catastrophe. A full Government led inquiry into the circumstances would identify the causes and reduce the risk of this happening somewhere else.

An amendment to this motion had been received from the Leader and seconded by Councillor D Arnold and read as follows:

Council welcomes the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities investigation into the financial collapse of Thurrock Council - along with similar collapses in Woking, Croydon, Slough and Northamptonshire. The inquiry should look at, amongst other things - the impact of austerity on council budgets, the impact of scrapping of independent

oversight bodies such as the Audit Commission, the impact of government encouragement of councils to pursue a commercialisation agenda, the role of councils' external auditors, the role of council Monitoring Officers, Section 151 Officers and Chief Executives, and the apparent absence of central government oversight of local government.

The leader presented the amended motion by stating the Government were already investigating what actually happened in the councils that were mentioned by Councillor J Kent, the Best Value Inspection had provided answers and Government had accepted those recommendations. The way local Government was funded and ran was also being looked into by the Government.

The following points were made:

- The substantive motion was more specific as the inquiry would identify what happened and who was accountable.
- Some members were in favour of the independent inquiry.
- There should not be a demand for something that was already in place.
- Thurrock council needed to lead from the front, learn from this and potentially help other councils.
- Questioned where the evidence of the inquiry was and whether the inquiry had actually happened.
- The Motion needed to ask Government to do something by asking the Secretary of State to launch an independent inquiry into austerity, the scrapping of independent oversight, the commercialisation agenda, external auditors, the role of CEOs and senior officers and central Government oversight.
- By tackling each area of the independent inquiry could lead and plot the way forward for local authorities in the UK.
- The process was already ongoing and could be seen from committee work programmes, the work of the commissioners and the deep dives that were being undertaken and being reported back to the Secretary of State.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended motion to which Councillor J Kent requested a requisition vote.

For: Councillors Abbas, Anderson, D Arnold, P Arnold, Carter, Collins, Coxshall, Duffin, Gledhill, Halden, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, Little, B Maney, J Maney, Ononaji, Pearce, Piccolo, Polley, Redsell, Rigby, Snell, Spillman (24)

Against: Councillors Allen, Byrne, Cecil, Chukwu, Fish, Green, Hartstean, Hooper, Hurrell, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Manwa, Massey, Morris Cook, Muldowney, Panjala, Raper, Sammons, Shinnick, Speight, Watson and Worrall (24)

Abstain: (0)

With the vote being tied, the Mayor exercised her second and casting vote and announced the amended Motion carried with 25 votes for and 24 votes against.

The Mayor called a vote on the substantive motion, with 24 votes in favour and 24 votes against. The Mayor exercised her second and casting vote and announced the substantive motion carried with 25 votes for and 24 votes against.

46. Motion submitted by Councillor Watson

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Watson and seconded by Councillor Muldowney. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council notes with concern the news that the Department for Transport and the 13 train operating companies it manages have announced plans to close almost all staffed ticket offices in England, totalling nearly 1000, following changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours and operation. Statutory Consultations began on 5th July and will close on 26th July. Thurrock Council believes that ticket offices provide a vital service to residents using the stations at Stanford le Hope, Ockendon, Purfleet, Tilbury and East Tilbury and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having a central place in the station for people requiring advice and assistance provides certainty and confidence for customers who may struggle to otherwise locate station staff and also acts as a point of safety for passengers. At many stations, access to facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms is reliant on ticket office staff. Thurrock Council is concerned the closure of ticket offices will disproportionately affect disabled, deaf and older residents in Thurrock – as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes. Council also notes the possible implications for current station staff and believes that the closure of ticket offices could lead to a de-staffing of rail stations.

Council therefore resolves to:

- Instruct the Managing Director/Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Transport, expressing Thurrock Council's opposition to the possible closure of staffed rail ticket offices – and in particular the tickets offices at Ockendon, East Tilbury, Tilbury, Stanford Le Hope and Purfleet on Thames.*
- Instruct the Managing Director/Chief Executive to write to C2C expressing the Council's opposition to any plans to close the staffed ticket offices at those stations.*

Councillor Watson presented the motion by stating those services were vital to Thurrock residents, especially those that were vulnerable. Councillor Watson urging all to complete the consultation which had been extended to September.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor B Maney and seconded by Councillor Halden and read as follows:

Thurrock Council notes the news that the Department for Transport and the 13 train operating companies it manages have announced plans to close almost all staffed ticket offices in England, totalling nearly 1000, following changes to the Government's guidance relating to ticket office opening hours and operation. Thurrock Council believes that ticket offices can provide an important service to some residents using the stations at Stanford le Hope, Ockendon, Purfleet, Tilbury and East Tilbury and support passenger safety, security and accessibility. Having staff who can offer advice and assistance provides certainty and confidence for some customers. At many stations, access to facilities such as toilets and waiting rooms is reliant on the presence of staff. Thurrock Council should therefore seek assurances that the closure of ticket offices will not disproportionately affect vulnerable residents including the disabled, deaf or older people, as well as those with poor literacy and IT skills or on lower incomes. Members also note the falling numbers of passengers who purchase tickets from staffed ticket offices. We further note that the plans announced include moving staff out of ticket offices and onto platforms and public areas in order to provide enhanced 'customer help' roles. This chamber:

- Requests that the leader of the council write to the Secretary of State for Transport and c2c in order to seek assurances over the impact of possible closures of staffed rail ticket offices and in particular the offices at Ockendon, East Tilbury, Tilbury, Stanford Le Hope and Purfleet.*
- Requests that the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider this matter at the soonest opportunity and assess the potential impact of staffed ticket office closures in Thurrock, making such representations to the Department for Transport and c2c as it deems necessary.*

Councillor B Maney presented the amended motion by stating Chafford Hundred should have been included in the list of stations. It was understandable that the announcement could be seen as controversial, such a move would result in a fundamental change for passengers, especially the elderly and vulnerable and they would need reassurances. It was right that members challenged C2C to ensure all the needs of residents were met and none were excluded. Councillor B Maney stated it was right to await the outcome of the consultation which had been extended to September and at the same time holding those behind the plans to account. The way rail tickets were purchased had changed dramatically with more people buying tickets on-line. It was noted that a number of Thurrock stations already ran a reduced facility with ticket offices closing early and stations being unmanned. Councillor B Maney recommended this item be brought to the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be scrutinized and to invite C2C to present the proposed changes.

The following points were made:

- Member noted as a wheelchair user he had no confidence in using rail services.
- Members acknowledged the concern of disabled passengers, including visually impaired, blind and cane users.
- The council had to make a stand and protect those most vulnerable.
- Acknowledged a report, cross party, should be taken to the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee to understand the basic demand within Thurrock and for a forensic study to be undertaken.
- There needed to be an acknowledgement that staff at ticket offices do so much more on site to help customers.
- Noted that SS17 residents had no station.
- Consideration needed for those residents that did not use digital.
- Members were here to support residents and not politically.
- This was a short-sighted move; ticket office staff were there also to help travellers with ticket preferences.
- Residents would be reassured having a ticket office open.
- Following the consultation, further discussions and forums could take place.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion. With 24 votes in favour, 19 votes against, and 3 abstained votes the Mayor announced the amended Motion carried.

The Mayor called a vote on the substantive motion to which members voted unanimously in favour; the Mayor announced the substantive motion carried.

47. Motion submitted by Councillor Speight

At 9.50pm, Councillor J Kent raised a standing order to allow the meeting to continue for a further 30 minutes. All members agreed.

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Speight and seconded by Councillor Massey. The Motion read as follows:

This chamber has previously welcomed creation of the Thames Freeport and the benefits it may bring. Freeport comes with a commitment to improve quality of life and opportunities for Thurrock residents and a budget to back up its intentions. A project that would help quality of life of residents in Stanford-le-Hope would be the creation of a relief road to mediate impact of Stanhope Industrial Estate. A route was envisioned by Thurrock Thames Gateway DC. It was not taken forward in 2011's Thurrock Core Strategy created when council took back planning. Nor is it in the emerging Local Plan process. I have established senior figures at Freeport including chair, Ruth Kelly, and DP World representatives have tacit support for the relief road if possible, subject to the council's view. It is a complex issue, not least because it's in Green Belt. Freeport, and DPW would be reticent to commit without TBC support in principle. This road is the only way to solve all the problems.

Would members of this council join me in calling on the appropriate and requisite TBC to revisit the possibility of the relief road linking up with the Manorway and produce a timely outline project plan.

Councillor Speight presented the motion by stating the relief road would change Stanford Le Hope massively, this was a serious matter and required the engagement of Thurrock Council. The plan would fundamentally change the Manorway, London Road, Wharf Road and Corringham Road.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor Piccolo and seconded by Councillor Anderson and read as follows:

The chamber welcomes the fact that much work has been done in recent years regarding a relief road to mediate impact of Stanhope Industrial Estate, from lobbying the freeport process and work between councillors and cabinet members on the local plan. This chamber has previously welcomed creation of the Thames Freeport and the benefits it may bring. Freeport comes with a commitment to improve quality of life and opportunities for Thurrock residents and a budget to back up its intentions. A project that would help quality of life of residents in Stanford-le-Hope would be the creation of a relief road to mediate impact of Stanhope Industrial Estate. A route was envisioned by Thurrock Thames Gateway DC. It was not taken forward in 2011's Thurrock Core Strategy created when council took back planning. Council has already put views to Ruth Kelly, and DP World representatives and others. It is a complex issue. This road is the only way to solve all the problems. Would members of this council join me in calling on the appropriate and requisite TBC to continue to support the possibility of the relief road linking up with the Manorway and produce a timely outline project plan.

Councillor Piccolo presented the amended motion by stating the importance of the relief road to residents of Stanford Le Hope and asked for all members to support the amendment.

Councillor J Kent stated that Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation needed to revisit plans and requested that old paperwork of the Development Corporation on the Manorway relief road be found and supplied to all members.

Councillor Speight agreed to withdraw his motion and recommended members to vote in favour of the amended motion.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion, to which members voted unanimously in favour; the Mayor announced the amended motion, now the substantive motion carried.

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[Council - Wednesday 26 July 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 10.10 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**