

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 7 February 2024 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 19 February 2024 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Andrew Jefferies (Chair), Deborah Arnold (Deputy Chair), Adam Carter, George Coxshall, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney and Graham Snell

Apologies:

In attendance:

Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Patrick McDermott, Chief of Staff to the Thurrock Commissioners
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director Housing and Development
Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Rhiannon Whiteley, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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.

230. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 January 2024 were approved as a correct record.

231. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

232. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

233. Statements by the Leader

The Leader stated that since the last Cabinet meeting the Council has divested Toucan energy and this is a great leap forward in the steps to stabilising and recovering the Council's financial position. The Leader thanked everyone involved in the negotiations and the sale of Toucan energy.

The Leader stated that residents will have noted that the budget proposals have been announced and include a proposal to raise Council Tax by 7.99% this year, reduced from 10% last year. The Leader stated that he looked forward to discussing this at the extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny meeting next week and at Budget Council and he sincerely hopes all 49 councillors will agree to the proposals.

The Leader confirmed that the SEND and Focus week will begin on the 18th of this month which will shine a light on the fantastic work being done to support Special Educational Needs and he encouraged all members to engage with this.

234. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

There were no briefings on policy, budget or other issues.

235. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There were no petitions submitted by members of the public.

236. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There were no questions from Non-Executive Members.

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

There were no matters referred to Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

238. Delegated Decisions taken since the last meeting

The Leader explained that a separate table of delegated decisions taken since the last meeting had been provided and this sets out that two decisions have been made: -

- The Lower Thames Crossing S106 Agreement on 19.12.23
- Toucan Group request to release the Council's security over assets to facilitate the sale by the Administrator taken on the 15.1.24.

239. Update on Procurement of Strategic Delivery Partner for Housing Works

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained that it is to provide Members with a further update on the progress of procurement activities since January 2024. Councillor Johnson stated that they have re-started the clock, clarified the role, changed the KPI / profit allocation and expanded the Thurrock team in conjunction with holding an additional bidder meeting. Whilst the response from the market was broadly positive, some clarification was

requested from the Thurrock team. The queries were around the planning of capital works and the managing of demand for repairs, they were also seeking clarification around the risk profile and sharing, the decision-making and governance of the contract and the Council's client functions and resourcing. These queries were addressed in the Tender Briefing note which is an appendix to the report. This is a normal part of the procurement process and bidders often have queries before submitting a formal tender. On Friday 31st January 2024 a briefing session was held with interested bidders. The Council has extended the timescales for submission of the initial tender. Following the meeting attending bidders expressed an even more positive outlook on their opportunity to bid for the delivery of this partner model.

Councillor Coxshall stated that he was reassured by the process. It is an important re-procurement process and it was good that a briefing session had taken place. It is a long-life contract and an important service. He noted it was good to see the Council's interaction with providers and he is looking forward to the further updates.

Councillor D Arnold stated that in the current times we are doing our utmost to improve our own accountability and governance over the public purse and it was good to hear that those tendering wanted the same thing.

Councillor Maney stated that the providers' concerns were well founded given the Council's position. He queried whether the meeting on the 31st January had allayed concerns and kept providers interested.

Councillor Johnson responded that they were relatively positive anyway but stated that in his view it had made them happier.

RESOLVED:

1.1 Members are requested to note and comment on the contents of this report.

240. Commissioning Report - Domiciliary Care (Decision: 110692)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and confirmed it concerns going out to tender for the contract for Domiciliary care. The current contract expires on 31st March 2025. It is for a 10 year long contract with a contract value of nearly 115 million pounds. In quarter 1 in 2023, nearly 9000 hours of service were provided. In comparison, in 2013 only 5100 hours were provided. Demand for the service will increase as demographic data shows that Thurrock's population is ageing. Wellbeing teams are being introduced in Thurrock to provide bespoke and more personalised solutions for residents. The Domiciliary care market is quite fragile. Option 1 in the report is keeping the traditional time and task care. Councillor Coxshall stated that this method doesn't work and doesn't provide bespoke services to residents. Whilst Thurrock has piloted the wellbeing team model, it has only been a pilot in a small area and is not ready to be rolled out. The Council is looking to work

with providers to build and learn and evolve the model to move to our end goal without the risk of destabilising things and to support the market to create much better solutions for residents.

The Leader raised the issue of recruiting carers and queried if this could help.

Councillor Coxshall stated that it has been noticed that staff retention has increased with the Wellbeing teams. Staff have the freedom to create and co-produce with residents. They are upskilling staff so they can administer insulin. This means residents don't have to wait for a Community Nurse to do it as a social worker can.

Councillor Coxshall explained that going forward they need to make sure social worker's feel valued and give them the freedom and power to make impactful change in Thurrock's communities and this model is the way to do it.

Councillor Carter commented that he had worked in the care industry for close to a decade and he is of the view the report is positive and the right step to take, he queried how this will help rural communities.

Councillor Coxshall referred to the appendix to the report which breaks down the locations of home care provided. Rural communities are harder to reach. Councillor Coxshall stated as they build the model it will be built around primary care networks so you can have a provider in each community. Thurrock has supported the creations of micro enterprises who may offer services residents want and with direct payments residents can choose the services they buy into. Councillor Coxshall reassured the meeting that they are looking to provide the same level of care to rural communities as those in urban communities.

Councillor D Arnold commented that when she was Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care she always hoped this would move along. Building a connection with the person you are looking after is a real honour. For those receiving care they don't have to repeat themselves and the person knows and understands them already. Having smaller enterprises more local would be better.

Councillor Coxshall responded that the time and task model is archaic. It creates a barrier. Others want to copy the model Thurrock have created.

Councillor D Arnold stated that her one worry with this is it is difficult to quantify all the wellbeing elements up the chain to the accountant level and it is something that needs to be looked at in corporate performance and measuring outcomes to safeguard those services.

Councillor Johnson welcomed the report and stated that although the bespoke care for the receiver is paramount, if relationships can be built and staff can be retained through this model then it can only go from strength to strength. It is important the people giving the care are happy in their job. The Leader agreed that to those receiving care having their likes and dislikes considered is really important.

Councillor Snell queried what is the fallback position if they are not able to procure micro enterprises in time.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the priority is microenterprises. The market is fragile and they are trying to develop it with micro enterprises or larger providers. They are hoping that they can work with microenterprises.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 To approve the tender of domiciliary care services to meet our statutory requirements under the Care Act (2014). This includes both the core domiciliary care service, reablement and the Out of Hours service.**
- 1.2 Delegate the award of the contract to the Executive Director for Adults, Housing and Health in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Health, Adult's Health, Community and Public Protection**

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

241. Domestic Abuse Services Reprourement (Decision: 110693)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and explained it is a statutory service of the Local Authority. By seeking the procurement as a regionally commissioned services it is hoped this will improve consistency and accessibility to the service. The newly commissioned contract will have built in focus KPI's.

Councillor Johnson stated that working with Essex County Council, Southend-On-Sea City Council and Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioners we should be able to secure a first class victim and perpetrator domestic abuse service.

Councillor Coxshall commented that it is important to work across the county as it is a wider issue and it is sensible to pool the budget to deliver better outcomes.

Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Cabinet agree the pooling of budgets with Essex County Council, Southend City Council, and the Essex Police, Fire, and Crime Commissioners Office to jointly procure domestic abuse victim and perpetrator services as follows:**
 - 1.1.1 Childrens Services (General Fund) - £73,100.00 p.a. for a total contract period of 7 years – total value £511,700.**

- 1.1.2 Adults, Housing, and Health (Housing General Fund) - £29,750 p.a. for a total contract period of 7 years – total value £208,250.**
- 1.1.3 Adults, Housing, and Health (Grant funding to Housing via the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities ‘New Burdens Fund’) - £221,990 p.a. for a total contract period of 7 years – total value £1,553,930.**
- 1.2 That the power to award the contract be delegated to the Executive Director of Childrens Services and the Executive Director of Adults, Housing, and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Childrens Services and Housing.**
- 1.3 That the power to agree decisions on the allocation of funds from the ‘Safe Accommodation New Burdens’ funding to any joint procurement arrangements and expenditure committed internally, be delegated to the Executive Director of Adults, Housing, and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Childrens Services and Housing.**

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

The Leader commented that it is the current S151 Officer’s last cabinet meeting and thanked him for all his hard work and commitment to Thurrock. Due to his hard work and dedication we have divested Toucan and got a budget to take to Council.

The meeting finished at 7.26 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