

Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on 6 December 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, George Coxshall, Tony Fish, Robert Gledhill, Aaron Green, James Halden, Vikki Hartstean, Mark Hooper, Mark Hurrell, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, Martin Kerin, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Cici Manwa, Fraser Massey, Augustine Ononaji, Srikanth Panjala, Maureen Pearce, Georgette Polley, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Sue Shinnick, Graham Snell, Neil Speight, Luke Spillman, James Thandi and Lee Watson

Apologies: Councillors Gary Collins, Jack Duffin, John Kent, Steve Liddiard, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney, Terry Piccolo and Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Mark Bradbury, Interim Director of Place
Jayne Middleton-Albooye, Assistant Director Legal
Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer
Luke Tucker, 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.

102. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

103. Local Plan - Initial Proposals Consultation (Regulation 18)

Councillor B Maney presented the report that stated there was a statutory requirement placed on all Local Planning Authorities to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place and for Local Planning Authorities to review their plans every five years. This Council's current 'Local Plan' was adopted eight years ago. Those plans set out the future land use and planning policies for the borough over a set time frame. Consultation on the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Initial Proposals document) formed the next stage in the preparation of the new Local Plan. Councillor B Maney called for a new recommendation to be added to formulate a working group of members and officers.

The following points were raised:

Councillor Watson noted she was not in favour of the proposals in their current state but recognised there needed to be a starting point. That members, residents, businesses, and stakeholders should all have the opportunity to be involved in the consultation to enable them to raise their concerns and to add comments. Confirmed she would be supporting the engagement side but not the proposals in their current state.

Councillor Shinnick stated she would not be endorsing the proposals as set out in the report but confirmed she agreed that the proposals be shared with residents and relevant stakeholders to allow them the opportunity to comment.

Councillor Kerin stated he would vote for the recommendations this evening but not as an endorsement of the proposals in their current state and agreed with members on the need for the consultation.

Councillor Redsell would be voting in favour of the recommendations and the consultation and stated if the plan did not go through, a local plan would be forced upon the council by the Government.

Councillor P Arnold agreed there needed to be a clear direction for the residents of Thurrock and for them to be involved in the consultation. Thurrock needed a local plan in place to stop developers carving up the borough.

Councillor Carter stated tonight was the opportunity to take the first step in writing the future of Thurrock and agreed the urgency and the need for the consultation for all to have their say.

Councillor Allen stated he doubted the council would be able to deliver a local plan that would work for the majority of Thurrock residents and not profit developers and would not be voting in favour of the recommendations this evening. He also raised concerns on the delivery of social and affordable accommodation.

Councillor J Maney stated that by doing nothing would be a developers charter and would be supporting the recommendations this evening as it was vital to hear the views of residents as part of the consultation. She also stated that if the consultation processes were not voted on, the council would have to adopt a plan that would be forced upon Thurrock.

Councillor Pearce stated she would be supporting the recommendations but not without reservation and agreed that public options for future developments within the borough were required and this local plan allowed that.

Councillor Massey stated he would not be supporting the recommendations. He stated some of the detail in the plans were wrong, making reference that the plans highlighted that East Tilbury and Linford still had a bus service and

the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, of which a decision had not yet been decided. To allow the consultation to take place when the detail was incorrect or in regard to the Lower Thames Crossing may not take place, was not right.

Councillor Thandi stated he would be supporting the recommendations as this would allow the council to decide on where housing growth was delivered.

Councillor Polley welcomed the consultation to enable all residents to have their say and the additional recommendation to form a working group, this was an opportunity for all residents. She stated the plan should not just be about a housing number, a target set by Government to deliver a certain number of dwellings. She stated there needed to be a master plan and that an infrastructure needs assessment required to be undertaken.

Councillor Speight recognised the importance of the local plan to the borough and that a focused planning process was a must, highlighted the importance of undertaking a branch review of the council's planning system was vital. Had concerns that too much was trying to be undertaken in this one process. He raised the following caveats that he hoped could be incorporated: the formatting of an overarching strategic needs document; a reason needed to be provided on why there was such a rush to meet the obligations of the Regulation 18 and to recognise the strategic partners going forward.

Councillor Jefferies stated this was not only an opportunity for the residents to have their say on the future of the borough but to also show residents that the council had learnt lessons from the past and would not be repeating them. To build a better future for Thurrock it was now time to listen to residents, to be honest with them that this stage of the local plan was a consultation. He concluded that by voting this evening to go out to consultation would be voting for a brighter future for Thurrock, decided on by residents for residents and urged all members to vote in favour of regulation 18.

Councillor Gledhill welcomed the report and agreed the consultation was vital to ensure all had their say. Noted the local plan was not just about housing and raised concerns on the development of industrial estates into the borough and there had been no specific details captured in the report on employment nor freight rail transport and lorry parks.

Councillor Sammons agreed on the consultation for residents to have their say but would not be voting in favour of the recommendations.

Councillor Manwa commented on the element of deliverability of the plan and hoped that in the 10, 20, 30 years residents could look back and see the plan being implemented. She questioned what was in plan that had a chance of being implemented and achieved and whether an assessment of feasibility had been undertaken. She stated the plan should concentrate on infrastructural elements as well as housing.

Councillor Johnson echoed comments made that it was important to give residents, partners, and stakeholders the opportunity to have their say as part

of the consultation but to be mindful that planning by appeal was very possible if the local plan did not progress.

Councillor Spillman stated there were some incredible commitments within the plan but raised his concern that there had been no proper scrutiny of the documents that would be sent out for consultation and believed this document had not been finalised and not ready to be sent out. He continued to state that concepts and key themes within the document needed more clarification, which could cause confusion for those being asked to undertake the consultation.

Councillor Halden thanked Councillor B Maney for his engagement on the process, the former portfolio holder for the work he had undertaken on the progression of the local plan and thanked Councillor Spillman for the effective scrutiny undertaken. He confirmed he would be voting in favour this evening, but it had to be made clear what the consultation should be achieving. This was an opportunity to consult and listen to partners and stakeholders with a specific commitment from them on their intentions for the borough going forward.

Councillor B Maney summed up by thanking members for the debate this evening, respected all the valid comments made and recognised all had been founded on genuine comments or genuine aspirations. He reiterated this was not a plan but initial proposals and recognised this was not a perfect local plan and it would always be subject to change. Stated the local plan was a suite of documents which needed to come together to deliver the needs of the borough. Agreed that the working group needed to include businesses and those key stakeholders. He concluded that members now need to take a lead and to make collective decisions.

Councillor Watson requested that recommendation 1.4 be amended to ensure the group was a cross party working group and be politically balanced.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations:

Recommendation 1.1 to note the contents of the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Regulation 18) (Appendix A) and approve it for public consultation was voted on unanimously. Majority of members voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 1.2 to agree that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content of the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Appendix A) be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Highways. The result of the vote was that 34 members voted in favour and 5 members voted against, therefore the recommendation was carried.

Recommendation 1.3 to endorse the suggested approach to stakeholder engagement set out in the Local Plan – Regulation 18 Engagement Strategy (Appendix B). Majority of members voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 1.4 to agree the formation of a working group of members and officers to be organised by the Place Directorate to help shape the draft Local Plan document and to incorporate a cross party membership which would include all three groups presented at council. The working group to then provide updates to Council and or cabinet on its work and recommendations. Majority of members voted in favour of this recommendation.

Recommendation 1.4.1 to request that an operational report be brought back to Council on the Terms of Reference once proposed by the working group. Majority of members voted in favour of this recommendation.

RESOLVED

- 1. Noted the contents of the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Regulation 18) (Appendix A) and approve it for public consultation.**
- 2. Agreed that any subsequent minor amendments and editing changes that do not materially affect the content of the Thurrock Local Plan: Initial Proposals document (Appendix A) be delegated to the Director of Place in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Highways.**
- 3. Endorsed the suggested approach to stakeholder engagement set out in the Local Plan – Regulation 18 Engagement Strategy (Appendix B).**
- 4. Agreed the formation of a working group of members and officers to be organised by the Place Directorate to help shape the draft Local Plan document and to incorporate a cross party membership which would include all three groups presented at council. The working group to then provide updates to Council and or cabinet on its work and recommendations was voted on unanimously.**
 - 4.1 Requested that an operational report be brought back to Council on the Terms of Reference once proposed by the working group.**

A full recording of this meeting can be viewed from the following link:

[Council - Wednesday 6 December 2023, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts \(public-i.tv\)](#)

The meeting finished at 8.19 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