

Minutes of the Meeting of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 10 September 2024 at 7.00 pm

- Present:** Councillors Gary Byrne (Chair), David Day, Aaron Green, Mark Hurrell, Tom Kelly, Steve Liddiard, Fraser Massey, Ryan Polston (as substitute) and Cathy Sisterson
- Sue Hodgson, Housing Tenant Representative
- Apologies:** Councillors Paul Arnold and Sue Shinnick
- In attendance:** Councillor Lee Watson, Portfolio Holder for Good Growth
Ashley Baldwin, Chief Planning Officer
Michael Dineen, Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety
Lucy Tricker, Scrutiny Officer
Emma Trencher, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's Youtube channel.

10. Apologies for Absence

Councillors Arnold and Shinnick sent their apologies. It was noted Councillor Polston was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor Shinnick.

11. Minutes

The Minutes of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 16 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

13. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

14. Q&A Session: Annual Report of Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership

The Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety presented the Annual Report of Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership. The committee were provided with a summary of the statutory assessment produced annually to highlight areas of risk and vulnerabilities,

the rationale of determining the priorities for the year 24/25 and summarised TCSP's plans for the year to respond to these priorities.

Members were invited to attend the Prevent Training and were encouraged to contact the Community Safety Partnership Manager to obtain details of the Training Programme.

The following key points were highlighted by members:

- Members noted there was no mention of drug dealing in the performance data, which it was believed was a widespread problem across the Borough and queried why this was not in the top 5 priorities. It was highlighted that the data regarding drug dealing was included on page 56 of the report, but the priorities were set by Essex Police and could not be amended.
- Members noted within the report it detailed Operation Sacred carried out regular visits to all faith groups. Members enquired whether they should be more aware of this Operation in order to embed the message into the community to help reduce hate crime.

Action Point the Assistant Director would liaise with the community safety manager who would arrange for the details of any ward visits to be communicated to ward members.

- Members noted from the data provided, theft of a motor vehicle had increased significantly, and it was felt this should be a focus for the police as it was a growing concern. The Assistant Director noted the concerns, however, advised that the partnership does not have too much involvement with this level of crime and therefore advised that councillors and residents alike should report all incidents to Essex Police in order that they could be included in data statistics.
- Members noted that the data showed that there had been a decrease in the level of crime within the Borough but also noted there had been a decrease in residents who had confidence in the police. Does the Assistant Director think there was a link, whereby due to lack of confidence, residents were not reporting crimes. The Assistant Director urged councillors and residents to report all crimes in order that data could be officially recorded and collated. It was acknowledged the CSP does attend a large number of events throughout the Borough and promotes reporting crime.
- Members raised concerns around increased crime at lakeside.

Action Point the Assistant Director would raise the concerns of the Members at the next meeting of the CSP, which lakeside management attend.

- Members noted in the Report that CCTV improvements were unable to be made due to funding and insufficient data to support. It was queried why was there insufficient data.

Action Point the Assistant Director will take this point away and will provide further information regarding funding of CCTV and will obtain and provide the members with detailed statistics and data.

RESOLVED:

- 1. Members commented on the Annual Report of Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership.**
- 2. Members confirmed they were satisfied that the Local Authority is discharging their functions in relation to their statutory duties that the Community Safety Partnership takes a lead on.**

15. Section 106 Agreements and Financial Contributions - Proposed Governance

Councillor Lee Watson, as Portfolio Holder for Good Growth, presented the Report.

It was reported that since 2016, the Council's internal governance arrangements regarding the use of Section 106 have not been effectively implemented. This was highlighted in the 2023 Planning Advisory Review as a risk to Thurrock Council. This review found that the potential for development contributions/planning obligations through Section 106 agreements were being compromised, with the contributions received under-utilised, due to the lack of a strategic approach to investment via this route.

The following key points were noted and discussed:

- The latest position with respect to Section 106 receipts stood at:
 - Total in pot £12,688,683
 - Committed £11,042,919
 - Uncommitted £1,625,765
- Members were advised meetings were being arranged with Forum chairs and a report would be produced showing how much Section 106 monies were in that ward, how much had been committed to a certain project, how much had been spent and how much was ready to be spent. This information will then be provided to ward members.
- Members were advised and noted that a Board had been set up, with internal Directors and Officers to review the process of how the Section 106 monies were being allocated and spent.

- Members asked for clarification of the term “committed”. It was queried if a scheme was approved but did not go ahead, although they had committed the money, the Council would not receive this money if the scheme failed to proceed. Therefore, was the money only classed as committed when it was in the council’s possession. Clarification was given to the members.

Action Point a breakdown to be brought back to committee, on a quarterly basis, for scrutiny showing what the projects were and how much had been allocated to each project.

- Members asked what were the legal requirements of where committed Section 106 money should be spent. The Chief Planning Officer explained this would depend on what was written in the Section 106 Agreement and how this was defined. If the description of where monies should be spent was specifically defined, then the monies could not be spent on anything else.
- Members asked if monies that were committed were earning interest if they were unspent.

Action point the Portfolio Holder would liaise with the finance team and advised she would bring this information back to committee.

At 19.48 the Assistant Director Counter Fraud, Enforcement and Community Safety left the meeting.

The Chair agreed a councillor sitting in the public gallery could ask a question.

- Councillor Jones enquired, how long did unspent money sit in the Council’s bank accounts if the project that it had been allocated to was no longer required and could this money be reallocated within the ward. The Chief Planning Officer explained everything was defined within the Section 106 agreement and if the Council wanted to repurpose the monies, this would have to be agreed with the developer and must follow a legal process.
- The Chief Planning Officer explained every endeavour was made to negotiate a flexible Section 106 Agreement but advised there were strict legal constraints that were rigid and had to stay within the legal parameters of the Act.
- Members enquired how they feed into the board that had been set up to review Section 106 monies. The Portfolio Holder agreed minutes of the Board Meetings could be shared with ward members. It was advised the first meeting to look at allocations would be held on 26 September 2024.

- Members discussed whether a Task and Finish Group should be set up to discuss this further. It was agreed that at the present time the committee were satisfied with the information being given to them and would decide at a later date if a Task and Finish Group would be needed.
- Members agreed that updated information should be provided to the committee on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED:

- 1. The Membership approved the proposed Thurrock Strategic Infrastructure Board arrangements.**
- 2. The Membership approved the draft Terms of Reference (Appendix A to the Agenda).**

16. Work Programme

Lucy Tricker presented the Work Programme.

- Following on from the last meeting, whereby a report was requested on derelict land in the Borough. It was acknowledged this report had been forth coming and an enquiry was made whether hoarding could be erected around the derelict sites of Tilbury. Action Point the Portfolio Holder agreed she would liaise with Officers on this subject.
- Members asked the Scrutiny Officer to liaise with environmental officers to produce a report on the levels of dust in Tilbury.
- Members were advised that residents had asked for a Task and Finish Group be set up to address the issue of dust in Tilbury. The Chair sought the committee's view, and it was agreed that in the first instance, officers would liaise with their environmental colleagues and obtain a report, to include the mortality rate in Tilbury and the adverse effect on residents' health in Tilbury, before setting up a Task and Finish Group.

Action Point Scrutiny Officer to liaise with environmental department and environmental agency, to collate historic and current information and to organise a briefing session on dust in Tilbury.
- Members questioned, following a training session whereby it was advised the main purpose of scrutiny was to scrutinise the Council's finances. Members asked how were the committee going to receive information on finances. Officers explained that meetings were taking place with the Chief Executive and Chairs of Scrutiny and the work programmes may change to reflect this.

A full recording of this meeting can be found from the following link: Place
Overview and Scrutiny – Tuesday 10 September 2024, 7:00pm -
https://thurrock.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/903842

The meeting finished at 8.14 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**