

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 July 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Kairen Raper (Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Ngozi Alike, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Ross Byrne, John Cecil, Daniel Chukwu, George Coxshall, David Day, Tony Fish, Michael Fletcher, John Fox, Robert Gledhill, Aaron Green, James Halden, Vikki Hartstean, Lynda Heath, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway, Mark Hooper, Mark Hurrell, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Cici Manwa, Fraser Massey, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney, Srikanth Panjala, Ryan Polston, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Cathy Sisterson, Gary Watson, Lee Watson *and* Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), John Allen, Alex Anderson, Andrew Jefferies and Neil Speight

In attendance: Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Dawn Calvert, Chief Financial Officer S151
Claire Demmel, Executive Director Place
Daniel Fenwick, Executive Director Corporate
Services/Monitoring Officer
Cristina Hall, Chief of Staff to the Commissioners – Thurrock
Council
Sheila Murphy, Executive Director Children's Services
Alex Powell, Assistant Chief Executive
Ian Wake, Executive Director Adults and Health
Kerry Thomas, Chief of Staff
Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member
Services
Jenny Shade, Principal 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.

13. Minutes

The minutes of Annual Council held on the 22 May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

Councillor Byrne commented that independent group councillors were disappointed that the full content of the comments made at this meeting, in relation to the conservative party's decision not to nominate vice-chairs, were not detailed in more depth within the minutes

14. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

15. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

16. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor and the Leader of the Council

The Mayor announced her chaplain would be Father Anthony Cho, Parish Priest for Our Lady Star of the Sea Church in Tilbury.

The Leader announced that following Carpet Right entering into administration, the Purfleet head office had not been saved and as a result could see over 300 people losing their job. With every job loss a personal tragedy, the Leader had spoken to the Member of Parliament, Jen Craft, who would raise this with the Secretary of State for Business and Trade to gain his support for those workers that would be affected. In addition, the Leader confirmed the Department of Work and Pensions and Job Centre Plus had committed to putting together a rapid redundancy package of support. The council would stand ready to work with all agencies to do whatever it could to offer help with skills and training to aid those affected to find new employment.

The Leader made the following change to his cabinet responsibilities by moving the arts, culture and heritage from the Environment and Place portfolio to the Community Partnership portfolio.

17. Motion 3 submitted by Councillor Hartstean

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Hartstean and seconded by Councillor Hurrell.

The Motion read as follows:

“Care-experienced people are a disadvantaged group who face challenges and discrimination in every aspect of their lives. However, care experience is not currently a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010. This Council wishes, as a matter of policy, to provide that care experience is a protected characteristic and has due regard to this characteristic when it makes decisions and determines its plans and policies. It is noted that the determination of this policy matter is an executive decision for Cabinet to make. Therefore, this Council resolves to treat care experience as if it were a protected characteristic within the meaning of s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, until such time as it may be introduced as legislation and that the Director of Children Services present a report to request give effect to this decision.”

Councillors Hartstean, Heath, Halden, Johnson, J Kent, Fletcher and Hurrell spoke on this motion with the following comments noted:

- All 49 Councillors had a special responsibility for providing the best possible care.
- To ensure the best support to ensure lives could be the happiest and healthiest as possible, to enable young persons to reach their full potential and to enjoy the economic and social success in their communities.
- Four young persons' spoke in favour of the motion to ensure care experience became a protected characteristic.
- The motion would help remove some of the significant barriers and challenges that impacted care experienced people throughout their lives.
- Raised caution the importance that protected characteristics matched certain very specific resources to help young people understand that if they were to come forward to the Authority with a protected characteristic, they would know the suite of services that could be unlocked to them.
- Would require a dedicated education exercise across the authority to ensure that all departments understood how they were meant to interact with it.
- There must be a clear route for young persons to follow and information on who would give them that help when needed.
- Potentially look at a way of putting a bursary in place for care leavers to enable them to go to college or get apprenticeships to help them get a good start in life.
- Every care experienced young person should have a good future as any other child in the borough.
- It was important and crucial to listen to young people when they speak of their experiences as members and officers would learn much from them.

Councillor Hartstean summed up by thanking members for their support and valid comments.

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

18. Questions from Members of the Public

There were no public questions.

19. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

A petition was presented by Mr Findlay urging Thurrock Council to abandon the proposed £80 Garden Waste Collection Charge. The Portfolio Holder for Place, Councillor Victoria Holloway, provided a response.

20. Petitions Update Report

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

21. 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 no changes.

Councillor Coxshall replaced Councillor Gledhill with himself as substitute on the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Massey made the following changes:

- Replaced Councillor Allen with Councillor Fox on the Standards Committee.
- Changed Councillor Massey appointment as substantial member to substitute on the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Changed Councillor Jones appointment as substitute to substantial member on the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Appointed Councillor Jones to vice chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- Removed Councillor Allen from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

22. Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2023/24

Councillor P Arnold, as Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee for 2023/24 introduced the Corporate Parenting Annual Report.

Councillors J Kent, P Arnold, Coxshall, Massey, Hartstean and Hurrell spoke on this report with the following comments noted:

- It was vital for all members to learn and discover as much as possible about being a corporate parent.
- Confirmed good attendance at the member training corporate parenting session the previous evening.
- Enjoyed their time as chair to the Corporate Parenting Committee and hoped members would continue to keep politics to one side on this committee.
- Wished the new chair well and hope the amount of support received would continue.
- Thanked members, co-opted members, Thurrock young voices and officers who attended the 2023/24 Corporate Parenting committee.
- Thurrock undertook a lot of amazing things for looked after children and made sure they were placed at the heart of what the council did.
- The chamber would always be united to make sure young people that were in the council's care would be looked after.

- That politics were left at the door and work would be undertaken cross party with the best interests of Thurrock's looked after children as its sole focus.
- Thanks were given to Thurrock's foster carers who worked tirelessly to support and champion the looked after children.
- Thanks were also given to the outgoing chair of the Corporate Parenting committee, Councillor P Arnold, for his hard work and enthusiasm.
- The incoming chair, Councillor Hurrell, hoped to continue the good work alongside officers.

Recommendation

That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2023/2024 were noted.

23. Corporate Plan 2024-2029

The Leader presented the report that as part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan Thurrock Council needed a Corporate Plan to give clarity about how the organisation would move forward. The Corporate Plan set out the purpose of the council and how services would need to adapt. It focussed on corporate priorities, the changes needed, guiding the work of the council's leadership, teams and officers and rebuilding external and internal confidence in the council.

Councillors J Kent, Worrall, Coxshall, Massey and D Arnold spoke on this report with the following comments noted:

- Acknowledged that work on the plan had started in September 2022 as members, officers and commissioners worked together on the council's recovery looking at transformation, how to improve and how to thrive, with the corporate plan being an important step in that process.
- An important step forward for the council setting out how the council would deliver that fresh start for Thurrock.
- Plan sets out the changes needed for the council and build on the recovery plan that would set out the basis for all the work to come.
- The council needed to bring together residents, businesses, communities and partners to work together to address the challenges that the council faced.
- To focus on three priorities (1) move to being an enabling council (2) focus on the people of the borough and (3) focus on the place.
- The plan would build onto the council's improvement and recovery plan setting out where the council was today, the council's plans and what would be achieved on behalf of its residents over the next five years.
- Approval of the plan was an important step on that journey.
- Plan must be owned by all 49 members.
- The plan would mirror the new performance management assurance framework and align closely with the three scrutiny committees.
- Goal was to build a different and better council that enabled and delivered the right outcomes for the residents of Thurrock.
- Key point was the importance of the delivery of the plan by "Measuring Impacts and Report" to openly demonstrate progress with members.
- It was important that the "so what" questions continue to be asked.

The Leader summed up by thanking members for the support across the chamber this evening, this was important for the council, the community and in the eyes of the commissioners. The Leader reassured members this was a living document that would be refreshed on an annual basis.

Recommendation - Council agreed the Corporate Plan.

24. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

No reports were presented.

25. Minutes of Committees

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

26. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

Members received an update on the following motions:

Motion raised by former Councillor Redsell in October 2023 full council to look at options for tackling school parking across the borough. Members of the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on the 16 July agreed to a parking at schools' task and finish group. This motion is now complete.

Motion raised by Councillor Speight in January 2024 full council to acknowledge the tremendous contributions to community and sport by Margaret Whitbread and Fatima Whitbread and to offer both the freedom of the borough of Thurrock. This motion is still on going with officers in correspondence with Ms Whitbread on a suitable date.

27. Motion 1 submitted by Councillor C Kent

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor C Kent and seconded by Councillor Fletcher.

The Motion read as follows:

“This Council congratulates the Thameside Theatre its staff and volunteers in winning the Muddy Stilettos best theatre/arts venue in Essex for a second consecutive year.”

Councillors C Kent, Fletcher, V Holloway, Jones spoke on this motion with the following comments noted:

- Congratulated all those involved, staff and volunteers, in the running of Thameside Theatre for all their hard work, commitment, dedication and belief.
- Regional winners were highly voted for by members of the public.

- Thameside was more than just a theatre it was home to young producers, community groups, producing good quality entertainment at great value for money.
- It provided a safe place for children to find their value.
- It was essential to celebrate this brilliant success and recognise its enormous value within the community.

Councillor C Kent summed up by thanking members for their support on the motion and congratulated all the staff and volunteers at the theatre for all their hard work and their success. The council needed to look at the success of the Thameside Theatre and replicate that success throughout the community.

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

28. Motion 2 submitted by Councillor Jones

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor J Kent.

The Motion read as follows:

“We call on Thurrock Council to work with both Central Government and Kent County Council to find a way to restore the vital historic Tilbury to Gravesend Thames River Crossing. We urge all parties to seek funding from community or other sources as to put in place a long-term plan for this infrastructure link between Essex and Kent.”

Councillors Jones, Johnson, D Arnold and J Kent spoke on this motion with the following comments noted:

- The council had to play their part to try and keep the ferry operational.
- For all members to help support this motion to restore the ferry and maintain that important infrastructure link between Essex and Kent.
- Questioned where the £40,000 council funding for this scheme had gone as this was available before the May elections. This was money was to made available to any operator who may have needed a subsidy to run the service.
- There had always been a problem finding a company willing to run the service and questioned what Thurrock and Kent were doing to make this an attractive proposition for companies.
- Potentially get funding from the Department of Transport to ease the pressure on Thurrock and Kent, creating a company whose sole purpose would be to run and maintain a ferry.
- Concerned that no company appeared to want to run this service and with Thurrock being blamed, although to the knowledge of some members this funding was still available.
- Leader confirmed there were no monies set aside in any budget.
- Committed to do everything in the councils power to introduce the ferry.

- Any new service would be based on a sound business model.
- Requested further discussions take place with parties in the public and private sector to examine every possibility of how this could work in more details.
- Unable to provide a firm timetable but following the next stage of discussions it should become clearer what was possible, and members would be informed.

Councillor Jones summed up by stating politics needed to be put aside to find a way to introduce this service for people who need that ferry crossing.

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

29. Motion 4 submitted by Councillor D Arnold

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor D Arnold and seconded by Councillor Rigby.

The Motion read as follows:

“This council notes with concern recent media reports which highlight that the newly elected Member of Parliament for South Basildon and East Thurrock has received a criminal conviction and custodial sentence for violence against a woman. This chamber reaffirms our utter intolerance of violence of any kind, especially violence by men against women and girls.”

Councillors D Arnold, Rigby, G Byrne, Manwa, Johnson, Cecil spoke on this motion with the following comments noted:

- Member had made a promise to Thurrock women who had been victims of violence to be a voice for them in this Chamber.
- As part of the members agreement to uphold a code of conduct which included leading by example.
- Questioned how it would be possible for members to expect a victim of a violent act to find themselves facing a perpetrator or ex-perpetrator having to ask them for help.
- Members need to have a part in the candidate selection by taking responsibility to review the candidate selection processes, especially around disclosure.
- Members were urged to vote in favour of the motion and stand together in commitment of eradicating the torment of gender-based violence from our wards, our borough and our communities.
- Member speak for all rehabilitated criminals who had changed, some do change and changed for the better and do not want and do not need to be hammered by this Council.

Councillor D Arnold summed up stating it was of high importance to highlight violence against women and girls where there had been such an increase and thanked members for their support and comments.

The Mayor called a vote on the motion, to which members voted in favour. The Mayor announced the motion carried. It was noted that Councillor Cecil voted against this motion.

30. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the chamber of the questions received to the cabinet members:

| From | To | Question | Overview of Response |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|---|
| Councillor G Byrne | Councillor L Watson | What is the current position with the Stanford station and the land acquired opposite? | The Council is currently conducting a gateway review of the Stanford Le Hope Station redevelopment. This assessment is designed to review the current plans for the station and the land opposite to identify the best scheme for the area. The scheme will be delivered both operational and fully requirements whilst offering the best value for the Council the review is currently forecast to come to Cabinet in October. |
| Councillor D Day | Councillor L Watson | Following the award of £432,000 from the Department of Transport, it was announced this Spring that the council would tender for the provision of a new rural bus service, with the proposed route serving Horndon on the Hill. Would the Portfolio Holder please provide an update on the tender process and | The 375-bus route would start at the beginning of September. |

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| | | advise whether an operator has been secured; if so, when will the new service commence? | |
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The meeting finished at 8.40 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**