

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 29 January 2025 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Kairen Raper (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Ngozi Alike, John Allen, Alex Anderson, 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, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Cici Manwa, Valerie Morris-Cook, Sara Muldowney, Srikanth Panjala, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Cathy Sisterson, Neil Speight, Gary Watson, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

**Apologies:** Councillors Deborah Arnold, Cathy Kent and Fraser Massey

**In attendance:** Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director  
Commissioner  
Gavin Jones, Lead 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  
Helen Nicol, Assistant Director Legal and Governance  
Robert Persey, Interim Executive Director- Adults and Health  
Alex Powell, Assistant Chief Executive  
Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member Services  
Jenny Shade, Principal Democratic Services Officer

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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.

### **82. Minutes**

The minutes of Council held on the 27 November 2024 and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council held on the 28 November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

### **83. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 84. **Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council**

The Leader provided an update following the growth statement made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer with regard to the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. The Leader provided a timeline of events with a decision expected to be received by the 23 May this year. The Leader stated Thurrock Council remained opposed to the crossing as this would not resolve the real problems caused by congestion at the Dartford crossings. This would be a huge damage to the environment, ecology, as well as doing little to add to the resilience of the local road network. Therefore the council would be writing to the Chancellor to reiterate the council's views and the views of Thurrock's residents.

#### 85. **Questions from Members of the Public**

The Mayor informed the chamber of the question received:

From	To	Question	Overview
Melissa Perry	Cllr Hooper	Can the portfolio holder, tell me what action the council is taking to the keep the high-rise car park in Chadwell safe and secure?	Council takes the security and appropriate use of their facilities seriously. A Traffic Regulation Order introduced alongside a residents' car parking permit scheme. This remains in place and is actively monitored and enforces its regulations. On-site caretakers and concierge conduct regular patrols. Reviewing decision on access gates. Contact will be made with the resident. Further contact will be made with the resident.

#### 86. **Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors**

A petition was presented by Councillor B Maney that noted the current consultation being carried out by Thurrock Council under its Area Intervention Programme, regarding potential road safety measure in Little Thurrock Blackshots. Residents were concerned that the section of Blackshots Lane north of Long Lane was excluded from the proposals and would not be included in any speed reduction or traffic calming scheme. The Portfolio Holder for Place, Councillor V Holloway, acknowledged the petition.

## **87. Petitions Update Report**

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

Under Council Procedure Rule 3.7, the Mayor agreed to vary the order of business by taking item 14 next.

## **88. Revised Political Balance**

The report presented to Council confirmed the revised political balance calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees following the resignation of Councillor Ryan Polston as an elected Member on 6 January 2025.

### **RESOLVED**

- 1. The political balance and allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix 1, was noted.**
- 2. Members agreed any changes to appointments to committees in response to the revised political balance.**

## **89. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels**

The following changes to appointments were agreed:

- Add Councillor Green to the Planning Committee.
- Add Councillor Cecil to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee.
- Add Councillor C Holloway to the Licensing Committee.
- Add Councillor Muldowney to the vacancy on the Thurrock Play network outside body.

## **90. Debate on a Petition containing over 1500 verified signatures – Residents against the use of green belt being used on part of Blackshots playing fields**

The report summarised that at Full Council on 30 October 2024 a petition had been submitted relating to residents against the use of green belt being used for housing on part of Blackshots playing fields. The petition exceeded the threshold of 1500 verified signatures and in accordance with Chapter 1, Part 2, Article 3 of the Constitution qualified to be debated by Full Council this evening.

Mr Bilton, the lead petitioner, presented his petition and made the following comments:

- On behalf of the group thanked members for the opportunity to present the case.
- As a group applaud the council's decision to replace the current sub standing housing in the Blackshots estate.
- Petition of 2,000 signature to register a protest of building houses on Blackshots playing field.
- Loss of this public space would inevitably have a detrimental effect to the public, especially the young.
- Questioned whether the plans would meet the government's criteria.
- Adjacent sites were originally designated for housing were available.
- Concerns on access routes.
- Concerns on potential loss of trees and wildlife habitat.
- Concerns on the history of subsidence in Blackshots Lane.
- A need to strike a balance between the use of land currently designated as green belt and the impact on adjacent properties.
- In conclusion, there was significant public resistance to the use of land on Blackshots field for some housing, as demonstrated by the petition and the presence in the public gallery this evening.
- This public opinion indicated that part of the development was not perceived as desirable or wanted by residents.
- Hoped the Council would recognise and accept residents' opinions.

The full speech can be viewed from Item 9 on the following link:

[Thurrock Council - Full Council, 29/01/25](#)

Councillors L Watson, Speight, Fletcher, B Maney, Jefferies, Johnson, Allen and Rigby spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- The portfolio holder thanked the lead petitioner and the residents committee for organising and presenting the petition.
- Good working relationship had been established with residents and members.
- Portfolio holder had committed to being open and honest on what was possible and to work with them until the delivery of the development.
- New chief of housing had been willing to listen to residents and had given a commitment to review all options.
- A solution needed to be found that provided a space whilst minimising the inconvenience for both local residents and those using the park.
- Plan should still be to provide decent and safe homes for Thurrock residents who need and deserved them but also retaining local facilities and open spaces.
- Encouraged the portfolio holder to make a formal approach with Fields in Trust, a charity in place to protect open spaces.
- King George V Park had been gifted to the people of Thurrock with the intention of being used as a green space, not for development.
- The petition had demonstrated the depth of feelings of local residents.
- There was a need to increase social housing stock, and this should be possible without sacrificing Blackshots Field.

- There was an option for the administration to change their mind and not build on the playing field.
- Member would be happy to see less new units being built as the need for social housing outweighed the need to protect King George V playing field.
- Concern raised on the change of advice being given to the current administration and asked that the truth on what was financially viable to be made known.
- Land would be more important as a playing field for the community.
- Further suggestion made to approach the Fields in Trust on the relinquishing of the land.
- Blackshots field should be protected with other options being looked into.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Chamber noted the commitments the portfolio holder had made to engage with residents on this issue and to explore all options available to the Council.**

### **91. Local Council Tax Support Scheme**

The report presented detailed the Local Council Tax Support Scheme that supported Council taxpayers who had a low income by providing a reduction to the actual amount of Council Tax payable after other discounts had been applied. The report outlined a summary and findings of the review, the alternative options considered and reasoning for the recommendation that the current scheme continued unchanged for 2025/26.

Councillors Jefferies and Speight spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- Welcomed the help for those most vulnerable.
- Questioned whether the help would be for those pensioners who had lost their winter fuel allowance.
- Referred to paragraph 4.8 of the report that stated the current latest best estimate for the cost of providing the scheme in 2024/25 was £9.5m and raised concern on any potential increase in 2025/26 of potential claimants.
- Questioned the portfolio holder on what basis the estimate figure had been based on.
- Questioned the portfolio holder whether she was confident the number of claimants would go down and not up in the coming year.

Councillor Muldowney summed up by stating comments had been noted and a written response would be provided following the meeting.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. Noted the analysis and review of the current Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Scheme for Working age people.**

**2. Approved that the current Local Council Tax support scheme for working age people which had been in place since 2017/18 continued for 2025/26 with no changes:**

- to ensure work pays, the first £25 per week of earned income is disregarded when calculating levels of council tax support;
- the maximum capital limit is to be set at £6,000. This means anyone who has savings over £6,000 may not receive support with their council tax;
- for working age claimants, the maximum support allowed is set at 75% of their full council tax bill;
- to assist those with families, the Child Benefit and Child Maintenance received is not included as income in the calculation of council tax support;
- the maximum period a claim can be backdated under the scheme is one calendar month. To qualify for this, the claimant will need to provide good reason for not claiming earlier;
- there is a full disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments;
- Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments are fully disregarded;
- the number of dependants assessed in the calculation of claimants' needs is a maximum of two;
- the maximum period of an award when temporarily absent outside the United Kingdom was four weeks.

**92. Local Tax Discounts and Premiums**

The report presented summarised under Sections 11B and 11C of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 amended by the Levelling up and Regeneration Act 2023 allow billing authorities to charge a premium up to a maximum defined level on properties that had been empty and unfurnished for over 12 months and were classed as second homes from 1 April 2025 (a second home being defined as "being substantially furnished but have no permanent resident").

Councillors Jefferies and Speight spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- Welcomed the introduction of the additional charge on empty homes as an incentive to have more properties back on market.
- Requested information on the number of properties that had been brought back into use as a result of the additional charge that had been put in place.
- Encouraged further ideas on how the number of properties brought back on the market could be increased.
- No reference as to whether the policy had been successful.
- Further details were required to ensure proper decisions could be made.
- A more accurate prognosis was required.

Councillor Muldowney summed up by acknowledging the comments and suggestions made, would be happy for the policy to be reviewed but noted the government legislation had been in place since 1992, and the council had not charged before. Additional legislation had also been put in place to capture those trying to get around the law and not be charged for empty properties. Further data would be available once further charging started in April 2025.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. Noted the additional income generated from the 'Long term Empty and Unfurnished' premium year to date in 2024/2025 as detailed in 4.12.**
- 2. Noted the statutory exceptions/exemptions that had now been finalised in regulations and would apply to both premiums from April 2025.**
- 3. Noted the work that had been undertaken in 2024/25 to validate properties that would potentially be subject to the 'Second Homes' premium from 1st April 2025.**
- 4. Approved that the council continued to charge the 'Long term Empty' council tax premium in line with the existing determination on:**
  - Properties empty after 12 Months and up to 5 years = 100% Premium**
  - Properties empty between 5 and 10 years = 200% Premium**
  - Properties empty over 10 years = 300% Premium**
- 5. Approved that as per the existing determination, the Council proceeds to implement the 'Second homes' premium from 1st April 2025.**

It was noted that Councillor Speight voted against 2.4 and 2.5.

### **93. Gambling Act 2005 Policy Statement Review**

The report presented identified the Gambling Act 2005 that required local councils to review their Gambling Policy Statement every three years. A reviewed Gambling Policy Statement had been produced, consulted upon and considered by both the Licensing Committee and Cabinet and was ready for adoption by full Council.

Councillors Speight, Green, B Maney and Gledhill spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- Concerns raised on the validity of the report.**

- Concerns raised on the timing of the consultation alongside the meeting of cabinet before the consultation period had concluded.
- Assumed no significant relevant responses had been received as no paperwork available to members to support this.
- Members were being asked to vote on a policy without having received any verified information.
- Concern raised if policy did not get approved the council would be unable to operate this statutory function.
- Concern that the report was late which gave members insufficient time to properly digest the information.
- Noted the date in paragraph on page 71 was incorrect.

Councillor Holloway summed up by noting members concerns on the timing of the report and the crossover of the consultation date. Stated that were there any significant comments or objections received this report this would have gone back to cabinet for further discussion.

## **RESOLVED**

**Agreed to adopt the Statement of Gambling Policy as attached as Appendix A and for it to take effect from the 31 January 2025.**

### **94. Progress on Thurrock Council's Improvement and Recovery**

The report provided Members with a progress update on the work to date to deliver the council's Improvement and Recovery Plan.

Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner, provided a brief summary of the report written to the Minister in November 2024, once a response had been received this would then be published. The key messages from the report were:

- There had been significant progress across the council.
- An increase in improvement and the pace of improvement over the past year.
- Highlighted the importance of the corporate plan.
- Improvements made around risk management.
- Thurrock council should be proud of the journey so far to date but accept there was still a lot to be done.
- Important that Thurrock could demonstrate that improvements were sustainable improvements.
- Over the next few months commissioners to look at how well embedded those changes had been done.
- Real improvements noted in member/officer relationship.
- Leadership of the council, managerially and politically, working well together and with the engagement with officers.
- All 49 members still had a role to play.
- Encouraged all members to engage with the council's training and development offer.
- On finances, latest report highlighted huge progress.



- Concern about capacity and would need to continue to focus on transformation.
- Improved engagement with the local community had been noted.
- Council's leadership continued to emphasise the work that was being undertaken to meet best value duty and this must remain a priority.
- Devolution and Local Government reorganisation – the council would still have a duty to focus on recovery and as commissioners, would continue to hold the council to account for that improvement.
- Noted that Gavin Jones would be standing down as Chief Executive of Essex County Council next month.

Councillors Jefferies, Speight, J Kent, Muldowney, Halden and Coxshall spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- Acknowledged the progress been made within the council but noted there was still a long way to go.
- Residents should be reassured that changes being made was to give residents of Thurrock a council fit for purpose.
- Concern over the withdrawal of the local plan and urged the leader and his administration to publish the full reasons behind its withdrawal.
- Referred to the RAG ratings within the report.
- Noted this time next year some comparison between the two documents could take place.
- Concern raised on red RAG rating for risk.
- Thanks were given to Gavin Jones and commissioners for their help, support, advice and reassurance.
- Recovery was still fragile and not to lose focus.
- Take the past experience that we have had and to make sure that whatever came next was more sustainable, more responsive, that actually held people to account and linked that accountability to delivery from day one.
- Praised the members risk training and encouraged all members to attend.
- Thanks were also given to council officers who continued to do their job to improve services and delivery those for the people of Thurrock. To cabinet members and the senior leadership team for all the work undertaken.
- Touched on capacity and that some areas did not have a full complement of staff.
- Risk profiles would now be in all overview and scrutiny reports.
- Member supported the Government's reform agenda.
- Thurrock was a national leader for adult and children's social care, and these should not be lost.
- Important that the council got a defined and clear offer and that Thurrock with the national gold standard services took the driving seat and scaled those services up.
- More development on what the Thurrock offer would be in devolution and how those excellent services already being provided by Thurrock should led on.
- Could not see a sense of legitimacy by cancelling the elections.

- Having an authority in Thurrock for at least 12 months, possibly 24 or even for 36 months, it was not legitimate to go three years without an election.
- Suggestion that a response be made to the Deputy Prime Minister that Thurrock agreed with the reform agenda but cancelling the elections was not a good part of Thurrock's recovery.
- Important as part of the recovery plan that members were mindful that the council's commitment to residents remained and ongoing to improve and deliver improvements for this council.
- Not to forget the corporate responsibilities that all 49 members have.

Councillor Worrall summed up by thanking members for their comments. Ensured that services were still being delivered to meet the objectives of the commissioners and that balanced budgets were delivered. Confident that the council was going the right way but needed to remain focused.

## RESOLVED

**Noted the progress made on the Council's improvement and recovery within the context of the Outcomes Framework.**

### 95. Questions from Members

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

From	To	Question	Overview
Cllr Anderson	Leader	Does the Leader of the Council think that the all-out local elections scheduled for May in Thurrock ought to go ahead?	Remain ambitious for residents of Thurrock who deserved this following the failures of the past. An opportunity of going on to the government priority program, and although this was not a given, it would be a real once in a lifetime opportunity for Thurrock to become part of something that was stronger, more resilient, more ambitious, more impactful for the people that lived here. It was getting ahead of the game, driving that forward, if we have to postpone elections, then I believe it is a price worth paying.
Cllr G Byrne	Leader	The leaders Christmas message was very uplifting if you live in the West of the	Reflected on the achievements delivered not just by the council, but with partners across the borough, working together to improve the lives for all our

		Borough, can I ask if East Thurrock is on the Cabinet and Directors radar.	residents. Every part of the borough was touched by those achievements and as Leader was quite clear that he represented all residents and was proud to do so.
Cllr Coxshall	Leader	To ask the Leader of the Council to outline his proposal for Local Government Reform following the expression of interest to join the Government's Priority Programme for Devolution.	Accept that ambition for devolution was something that had been about for at least 20 years. The previous Conservative government came close to agreeing a devolution deal for greater Essex some years ago. There was merit in applying to be part of that first wave where we can shape our future from the start rather than having an approach that we did not want imposed on us at a later date. Proposal would be to engage closely with partners across the county of Essex, be ambitious at the same time for the people of Thurrock. Not yet accepted onto the priority program, so not seen detail from government. Will be guided by evidence and be committed to finding a solution that balances geographies, that made sense for long-term sustainability, that championed our distinctive communities here in Thurrock and delivered excellent local services for years to come for everyone, but particularly for our most vulnerable friends and neighbours.
Cllr Jefferies	Leader	Does Cllr Kent agree with the statement made by the leader of Basildon District Council, that under plans to reorganise local government in Essex, Basildon	Devolution coupled with local government reorganisation could achieve benefits for residents. Ahead of being accepted onto the priority program, there were lots of unknowns and questions to be answered. Will engage in discussions based on robust evidence and with clear principles. Continue to have conversations

		and Thurrock should be joined as a single unitary authority?	with neighbouring councils and district councils. Continue to work on developing plans that worked for Thurrock and delivered councils that were capable of being sustainable.
Cllr J Maney	Leader	The leader stated recently that Essex devolution and local government reorganisation would be "the most significant change for local government in more than a generation". In light of this, how will his administration ensure that residents in Thurrock are informed and engaged from this point forward?	Most significant piece of work the council will be involved in. Ensure that energy and resources are put into keeping residents informed and engaged in changes. Promote information through local community groups and forums so that local people can be informed and have their say. More information on plans will be shared once known. Discussions will take place with residents at the planning public question time events. Keep members updated and informed through the process. Reconfirm that commitment made at Cabinet that people will have a say in the changes that affect them.
Cllr Jones	Cllr L Watson	What message does it send to developers when this Labour Government continually announces that it is going to force local councils to build more houses in their area.	Thurrock is significantly under the supply of homes when set against the housing need. The need to address significant increase in homelessness in Thurrock and further compounded by housing affordability. As well as boosting supply of homes there was the opportunity to create community benefits such as securing monies for school provision and highway improvements, as developments are permitted through the use of planning obligations. Of critical importance was the delivery of affordable homes that was captured as part of new developments that assist with the council's social housing needs. Applicants were required to go through the planning

			system.
Cllr B Maney	Cllr Worrall	The general consensus appears to be that the new Overview and Scrutiny arrangements at the council have improved the democratic process. What if any measures are being considered for further strengthening the democratic structure of the council in the new municipal year?	The new scrutiny framework had strengthened governance to enable scrutiny committees to play a more active role in shaping decisions and policy review. Cabinet valued feedback and encouraged committee chairs to present their views to cabinet. A full review will be undertaken following the end of the pilot year for all 49 members to contribute to. Outcomes will be presented to General Services Committee with final proposals being presented to council.
Cllr G Byrne	Cllr Hooper	Can I ask why the place committee were told the Phi deal had to go through procurement process with tenders, when clearly other purchases have not been.	As discussed at Place O&S, due to time constraints as it would take up to 8 to 12 months to go through the proper full tender process. The Phi procurement went through the housing framework process.
Cllr Rigby	Cllr L Watson	Further to the previous updates on this matter, would the portfolio holder advise when we will know how s106 monies held by the council will be allocated?	All monies must be spent in line with the Section 106 agreement. Progress made on unblocking a number of existing obligations the Council currently held. Where the Council were in receipt of monies, and the element of agreed spend within the agreement requires review we were seeking legal advice on how these can be unblocked. Due to the nuanced nature of Section 106 agreements, it was not possible to provide a specific date for completion, the outcome was being expedited.

Cllr Johnson	Cllr Worrall	How will the council ensure that, via the internal democratic process, there is proper member engagement, oversight and scrutiny of the devolution process including all negotiations with other local authorities / third parties?	Agreed that ensuring proper member engagement, oversight and scrutiny of the devolution process was vital to its success. Administration totally committed to ensure all members can contribute and represent their views of their residents. A cross-party working group would be established, an excellent forum to discuss devolution. Expand discussions with residents and stake holders, collaboration was essential to achieve best outcomes. Appreciate early days but once more information was available this would be shared with members.
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Councillor Chukwu left the chamber at 8.51pm.

Councillor Morris-Cook left the chamber at 9.04pm.

Gavin Jones left the chamber at 9.08pm.

**96. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

No reports were presented.

**97. Minutes of Committees**

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

**98. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year**

Members received an update on outstanding motions.

Councillor Jones requested an update on the following two motions, the Leader agreed that a response would be provided and sent to members.

Cllr Jones	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.
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Cllr Speight	Following the abortive attempt to get a positive response from the Conservative government, will members now support my request that the current Labour administration repeats our unanimous call for an independent public inquiry into the financial collapse of this council; an inquiry that allocates responsibility for what happened and – should it be required – takes appropriate action against those proven to be at fault, and also that if the responsible Labour Local Government minister rejects it, the council cabinet consider funding an independent enquiry?
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## 99. Motions Received for January Council

Motion 1, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Speight and seconded by Councillor B Maney. The Motion read as follows:

*With the benefit of hindsight and experience and having reviewed the changes instigated to the council constitution O&S rules (Chapter 4), following the full council meeting on 30 October, this chamber seeks an immediate amendment to those changes. Namely that the right be restored to members of an O&S committee to extend the length of meetings if there is still important, appropriate and necessary business to be debated and decided. That decision would be made by a majority vote of eligible members present. It is my interpretation that this change can immediately be approved by the Monitoring officer who was delegated the authority to make agreed revisions that are clerical or minor changes into the Constitution, but that may be open to a different interpretation. I put it forward for speed of process. However, the matter can be referred to the executive (cabinet or GSC) for a final decision.*

Councillor Speight stated that an error of judgement had been made when the report had been presented to members and this was now the opportunity to correct it. Concerns that the two and half hours was not always sufficient time for important scrutiny to take place and decisions in the past to extend standing orders had not been taken lightly. Only taken place when serious or appropriate matters needed to be dealt with. The change was required to allow scrutiny chairs with the majority vote of committee members to take extra time if required to undertake the role they were elected to do. Voting against this motion would prevent all three overview and scrutiny committees being able to scrutinise those important issues.

Councillors V Holloway, G Byrne, Jones, Worrall, Johnson, Fletcher, Muldowney, Kerin, L Watson, Halden and B Maney spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- All legislative bodies had time limits on debates.
- Timings would be managed by a competent chair working with officers, democratic services and committee members.
- Ensuring work programme items were suitable for the time allotted.
- Chairs should be able to decide how long meetings should go on for.

- If committee members not happy to go beyond the allocated time they say so.
- Not an officer decision.
- Concern on the item of urgent business being removed from the agenda.
- Concern that members were being asked to attend daytime meetings and training sessions.
- With the number of overview and scrutiny committees being reduced from six to three meant more reports being brought to committee.
- Concern that not sufficient time was given to read reports.
- Items being missed or not debated fully as not sufficient time was provided to discuss.
- Of the 14 overview and scrutiny meetings held this year only two meetings had been affected by the guillotine and items having to be deferred.
- Would be discussed as part of the already planned scrutiny review.
- Rules set clear time limits on meetings and are in place for a good reason to allow structure and ensure meetings remained focused, efficient and manageable.
- The chair should have the right to extend times if required.
- Concentrate on the time given for pre-meetings to ensure members were prepared to make their points at committee meetings.

At 9.54pm, Members agreed to a motion to extend time.

- Chairs needed to take responsibility for how meetings were managed.
- Chairs would be encouraged to attend chair training.
- New system had not been trialled long enough, look again at reviewing after a full municipal year and look at the stats again then compared to those presented this evening.
- The process of scrutiny needed to be followed as agreed.
- Members have the option to vote down extended time if they did not agree that a meeting warranted an extension.
- Members had been elected to turn up at meetings, debate and make decisions accordingly.
- Members should be less concerned on the length of meetings and more concerned about the quality of those meetings.
- The motion was asking for the right for members to take a vote to extend time.
- Allow more flexibility on items so they could be heard and scrutinised on.
- Work programmes were often governed when officers made reports available and when cabinet were making decisions on such reports.

Councillor Speight noted the comments made and called for a requisition vote.

The results were as follows:

For: Cllrs Abbas, Alike, Allen, Anderson, P Arnold, G Byrne, R Byrne, Coxshall, Day, Fox, Gledhill, Halden, Jefferies, Jones, Johnson, Kelly, B Maney, J Maney, Rigby, Sammons and Speight (21)



Against: Cllrs Cecil, Fish, Green, Hartstean, Heath, C Holloway, V Holloway, Hooper, Hurrell, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Manwa, Muldowney, Panjala, Raper, Shinnick, Sisterson, G Watson, L Watson and Worrall (21)

Abstain: Cllr Fletcher (1)

With the equal number of votes for and against, the Mayor used her casting vote and voted against the motion. Therefore the motion fell.

Motion 2, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Rigby and seconded by Councillor P Arnold. The Motion read as follows:

*Due to the current high energy costs, members call on the council to ensure that heating systems put into Council properties are the most cost effective for the tenants.*

Councillor Rigby stated that energy prices were very high, alongside the cost-of-living crisis and the withdrawal of winter fuel allowance from many pensioners, it was increasingly difficult for many residents to warm their homes. Councillor Rigby highlighted some of the possible heating systems available and requested that the council ensured that properties were adequately insulated and that running costs to tenants were fully investigated and balanced before any decisions were made.

Councillors Speight, G Byrne, Hooper and P Arnold spoke on this item with the following comments made:

- The availability of Grant funding.
- Great motion.
- Support any means to heat homes in the most efficient way.
- Council would be prepared to explore wider packages of measures to improve energy performance ratings of the housing stock.
- Council would continue to explore submissions to Government for sustainable energy grants and funding schemes to improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock.
- All new housing stock projects would be fitted with the most up-to-date and efficient heating systems.
- Portfolio Holder would be happy to hear from members on any offers of advice or support to improve the heating insulation of housing stock.
- Council's duty as councillors to look after the elderly and the vulnerable in our borough and give them our full support at all times.

Councillor Rigby summed up by thanking members for their comments.

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

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

[Thurrock Council - Full Council, 29/01/25](#)

**The meeting finished at 10.27 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**