

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 January 2019 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Friday 25 January 2019 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Gary Collins, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Barry Johnson, Susan Little and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Councillor Mark Coxshall

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Lucy Tricker, 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.

80. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 December 2018 were approved as a correct record.

81. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

82. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

83. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began by wishing everybody a happy New Year and felt that the Council could look back proudly on all the work achieved in 2018, particularly the financial achievements which he felt helped to improve residents lives. He added that the Council were not complacent though and had big aspirations for the coming year to improve Thurrock and make it a first class borough.

He continued by describing how one of the biggest priorities for the coming year was the local plan, as once this was adopted he felt it would ensure a positive change in the borough for residents' health, well-being and

employment opportunities, as well as ensuring the right infrastructure and new housing in the right places. He added that currently residents were being asked to give their views on the types of locations local communities would want to see change through the Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation, and stated this was available online and a number of events would be taking place across the borough. He encouraged all residents to take part and share their thoughts.

The Leader also discussed the multi-million pound plans for Linford Waste and Recycling Centre, which had been approved and included: a new carriageway to ensure cars no longer queued along the road; improved waste disposal areas which meant waste bins were no longer at height and removed the need to climb stairs; and two new weigh bridges to monitor waste brought onto the site. The Leader then commented on the recent problems in Aveley concerning HGVs driving through residential areas in violation of the weight limit. He stated that a consultation had been launched for residents to give their views on proposals to introduce new restrictive measures to tackle the problem, and encouraged everyone to take part.

The Leader finished with the Clean, It, Cut It, Fill It update and stated that since April 2018: 2504 potholes had been filled, 99% of which had been filled in on time, with 100% being filled in on time in November; 1030 areas of grass cut; 1625 fly-tips cleared; 2443 tonnes of waste cleared; and 2952 fixed penalty notices issued. He mentioned that his Portfolio Holder report would be going to Full Council which would discuss how people could pay their fines, and measures to bring justice to those that did not.

84. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Little brought to the attention of the Cabinet the fact that Thurrock Council had featured in an article entitled “New Developments in Adult Social Care”, which was written by respected academic Professor John Bolton. She stated the article mentioned all the good work Thurrock had been doing including with micro-enterprises and the local area co-ordinator teams. She thanked the Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health for the hard work of his team, as Thurrock was now becoming well-recognised. The Leader commented that Thurrock was now starting to look outward, as people were coming to the borough for advice and to learn new skills. He felt it was good to see Cabinet members were now being nationally recognised as this had never happened before. He also felt it was a positive stance that Thurrock was being recognised for its good work nationally and internationally.

85. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

86. Questions from Non-Executive Members

No questions had been received from non-Executive Members.

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

No matters had been referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

88. Medium Term Financial Strategy Update (Decision 110495)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report by stating that as the Council had a balanced budget it meant genuine choice for residents and ensured services were protected. He thanked the Cabinet and officer team for all their hard work on the budget and listed a number of key elements in the report. The first of these was the Council Spending Review as this embedded the policy of fewer buildings, better services which benefitted residents. He used the example of the children's centre reforms as the centralised system reached 90% of Thurrock families and still offered a quality service. The second point he raised was that commercial objectives had been embedded which increased revenue for the Council and thanked the newly appointed commercial team for their hard work. He then drew the Committee's attention to the success of the Thameside Theatre as due to the commercial investment it was now commercially viable.

Councillor Hebb added that income also came to the Council from council tax and business rates. He mentioned that residents perceived their council tax only paid for grass cutting and bin collections, which he highlighted were still weekly, but stated that council tax also paid for vital services such as adult social care. He mentioned that adult social care needed funding as people were beginning to live longer and therefore suffered more ailments and illnesses. He then discussed how the Conservative central government did not want people on lower incomes to face an increased tax burden, and Thurrock Council agreed as more than 40% of Thurrock workers were on lower incomes.

He then stated that Thurrock Council would not be raising their council tax at all during the next financial year, and this was due to the fact that no part of the Council's economic plan was dependent on each other, and the fact the Council were commercially investing. He also stated that Thurrock Council had not undertaken any arbitrary top-down cuts to fund this, and the Council still ensured services remained dependable. He added that Thurrock had funded 23 new police officers, new schools, new integrated medical centres, and new homes, as well as undertaking essential services such as cutting the grass and filling potholes. He finally reiterated the point that council tax would be frozen across the borough for the next financial year.

Councillor Collins congratulated Councillor Hebb and all the officers for their hard work on the balanced budget, and stated a high bar had been set. He felt that residents would be thankful for the council tax freeze. Councillor Halden added that Essex County Council had increased their council tax by an average of £50 per year, even though they had fewer responsibilities compared to Thurrock. He felt that efficiencies could always be made in local

government, but that Thurrock was always innovating and the council tax freeze showed they had confidence. The Leader added that the £50 increase in council tax from Essex County Council did not include the increase in preceptors, and stated Thurrock Council did not have these as they are a unitary authority. He also highlighted Councillor Hebb's point on children's centre reform as this had saved money and delivered a better service to people. He thanked Councillor Hebb and his team for all his hard work. The Leader went on to describe his first day as Leader when he had walked round Grays town centre and had felt 'ankle deep' in rubbish. He stated that an external body had proven there was less rubbish, and residents felt the streets were cleaner too. The Leader then described how council tax was not linked to income, but was linked to a property figure that had been introduced in 1992 which needed refreshing. He felt that although people may be asset-rich, they could be cash-poor, so council tax hit them the hardest. The Leader finally thanked the Director of Finance and IT for all his good work, and felt the Council were in a good position compared to other local authorities.

Councillor Watkins thanked Councillor Hebb, the Director of Finance and IT and his team for all their hard work and felt the long term financial plan was working. He added this helped the highways and environment department as they could grow their service, for example through initiatives such as the 'Kerb It' Scheme. He added that the statistics also proved this as Thurrock performed well in the Keep Britain Tidy Scheme, and had filled all potholes on time in November despite the weather.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Noted the assumption of a 0% Council Tax increase for 2019/20.**
- 2. Noted this draft budget and ask Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment and make recommendations back to Cabinet in February ahead of Full Council.**

89. Procurement of Microsoft Licence Subscriptions (Decision 110496)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report by stating that the Council needed ICT infrastructure to continue working smoothly, and with factors such as fluid working, this was very important in 2019. He added this report would begin procurement of Office 365 as the contract would be coming to an end in March 2019. The Leader added it was good to see this report going forward as it was important for the council to purchase what they need.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the process to commence procurement of the Microsoft Licences Subscriptions contract for a period of three years plus a further optional extension of three years.**

2. Agreed delegated authority for award of contract to the Director of Finance and IT in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance.

90. Healthy Housing for the Third Age: Improving Older People's Health through Housing. Annual Public Health Report (Decision 110497)

Councillor Halden introduced the report by stating it was leading the way in public health as it was rare for an annual public health report to branch into such subjects. He added that the public health team understood that housing was a key component for people to age in a healthy way, and it was up to local government to make decisions to achieve a good housing mix, such as accessible shopping and gardens for those that wanted them. He mentioned that he wanted older people's housing to work across the borough through a mix of housing, rather than simply retirement villages which could further isolate older people. He added that the local plan was again important as it could create the right type of homes and ensure good health for residents. Councillor Halden added that the next stage would be a wider JSNA product on younger people's housing. He finally thanked the Director of Public Health and the team for all their hard work on the report.

Councillor Johnson welcomed the report as he felt it showed the administration were being proactive in preventing issues, rather than reacting to issues as they arose. The Leader then gave a personal example of an elderly resident in his ward that had had to leave the borough as he could not find suitable housing in Thurrock, and felt it was great that in 5, 10 or 15 years' time more people will be able to remain in Thurrock during their old age. He felt this was above and beyond work ongoing in other local authorities and thanked the public health team as they were being proactive and looking to improve.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Recommended the report go to Full Council.

91. Housing Allocations Policy Review 2018 (Decision 110498)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and stated he was pleased to see this report coming to Cabinet as this was the first overhaul of the scheme in 5 years, and had been agreed after extensive consultation with residents and the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He felt the report was Thurrock-centric and based on the needs of residents which had been identified following consultation. He stated that Band 5 of the Housing Waiting List was now being removed as these were people who had little priority for housing need, but they would be added to the Sheltered Housing Register. He stated this was an appropriate way to manage demand and ensure that those with the greatest housing need received priority. He also felt it would give residents a clearer picture on how the Housing Waiting List operated. He moved on to discuss how currently Band 5 constituted 30% of the housing list, and of that figure 70% of those had not bid within 12 months. He then

discussed how members of opposing parties had called this change “social cleansing” and felt this was inappropriate language. He called for those Members that had used this language to formally apologise.

Councillor Johnson also mentioned how the local connection criterion was being increased from 5 years to 6 years to ensure those residents with the greatest connection to the borough could have the highest priority. He then stated that the percentage of properties set aside for working households or community contributions was being increased from 15% to 20%. He explained that the family criterion was also being narrowed to only include parents, siblings, children, and those that had acquired parental responsibility for the applicant. He explained that the housing list was being amended so its local connection criteria could allow key workers, such as those working in Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital to join the Housing Waiting List. Councillor Johnson finally described how the Housing Waiting List would be reviewed on an annual basis to consider the number of inactive applicants. He finished by stating this report put Thurrock in a strong position as it helped residents with the highest needs and allowed the Housing Waiting List to actively reflect the numbers of people applying.

Councillor Halden thanked Councillor Johnson for his support with the revised keyworker scheme, as the existing scheme had not been as successful as he would have liked, but hoped that the benefit of keyworker housing laid out in the report might help. The Leader then stated that other local authorities were also taking a similar approach by removing Band 5 from the Housing Waiting List, but stated that if people’s circumstances changed, their priority banding could change. He felt it was good to see that those with the highest need were being prioritised, but raised concern with the review of inactive applications after one year. He felt that people may have a particular housing need, such as number of bedrooms or location due to employment, and may not apply as nothing suitable had become available. He felt this policy should be considered by the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they could look in-depth into reasons for the annual review, and might be able to instigate criteria so people’s personal reasons for not applying could be considered. The Leader also raised concern with the financial qualification change, as the level of savings people had to have to qualify was not outlined in the report and he felt this was important. He elaborated that the methodology for calculating income and savings had not been outlined in the report either and felt this needed to be clear. He stated that current or previous members of the armed forces should have their service taken into account when the financial qualification was considered.

The Leader also raised concern with the change to the maximum net income criteria as he felt lots of people would fall into the middle of this, as they may not earn enough to meet the one third salary requirements of private renting, but may earn too much to qualify for council housing. He stated an additional recommendation would be added for Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider the concerns raised, and particularly make sure the financial qualification criteria was realistic.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1.1 Agreed the proposals set out in the following sections of the report:

3.1.7 – Local Connection – Proposed Changes

3.3.4 – Banding and Lists – Proposed Changes

2.4.6 – Key Workers and Working Households – Proposed Changes

3.5.12 – Applications, Bidding and Offers – Proposed Changes

1.2 Agreed for Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review the financial qualification outlined in 3.2.3 and report back to Cabinet with findings regarding the changes to the financial qualification criteria.

92. Additional Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (Decision 110499)

Councillor Johnson introduced the report by stating the Council already undertook mandatory licensing, of which 72 licences were currently being assessed, but stated that some houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) did not fall under this scheme. He explained that the new regulations, which would hopefully be brought into force on 1 May 2019, would ensure landlords met regulations and would protect residents from poor living standards and poor management of housing. He drew the Cabinet's attention to page 123 and 124 of the agenda which outlined which areas would be affected by the new licensing regulations.

The Leader stated he felt it was good news to see this report come to Cabinet as officers had put a lot of work into it. He added that Little Thurrock Rectory was not on the list, and although had some problems with HMOs, these were a negligible amount. He raised concern that by only licensing in certain wards, it could push problems into other wards, such as East Tilbury which already had a problem with HMOs. He felt this additional licensing was good for all residents though, as it would increase the standard of properties in the borough and make landlords accountable for their actions. He added that HMOs could cause local problems with parking due the number of cars and with community cohesion, so felt this was a good report.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1.1 Approved the implementation of an Additional Licensing Scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation in designated areas within the borough as set out in section 4.

1.2 That the evidence needed to support the introduction of additional licensing is justified.

1.3 That all Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) except section 257 HMOs and those that are subject to mandatory licensing in Thurrock are subject to additional licensing.

1.4 That the designation map comes into force on 1 May 2019 and lasts for a period of 5 years, see appendix 1.

1.5 That the legislative requirements the Council has to take for a designated area has been carried out to support the implementation of the scheme.

1.6 That additional licensing is consistent with the Council's Housing Strategy 2015/20.

93. Developing a New Residential Care Facility in South Ockendon, and New Model of Primary Care for Thurrock (Decision 110500)

Councillor Little introduced the report and stated this was a follow-up to a report presented to Cabinet in December 2017 which agreed a residential care facility in Dilkes Wood, South Ockendon. She stated that there was an increased need for older adult supported housing and discussions had progressed with partners to increase the amount of care provided in the borough, and reduce the pressure on hospitals. She added there were also future plans to develop the current residential care facility in Collins House. She stated that this report was asking for Cabinet to develop the residential care in South Ockendon scheme by delegating authority for procurement following the conclusion of discussions with the CCG and the agreement of the business case. She felt this report supported people living independently, but also addressed the imbalance of supported living care between the East and West of the borough.

Councillor Halden added that this was an ambitious investment as it also replaced the South Ockendon health centre with a comprehensive service which would include a pharmacy, GP surgery and mental health facilities. He added it would also support Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital as it would get people out of hospital beds and back into the community. He felt it would support residents to stay in homes in the borough either through residential care, supported living, or in an upgraded Collins House. Councillor Halden summarised by stating this was a complicated piece of work as it had included a number of partners, and as it was non-statutory, was an ambitious project. The Leader added that before Christmas he had read in the news a piece on hospitals setting up pharmaceutical companies and felt Thurrock was ahead of the curve as the Council was already breaking down barriers between health services by centralising health care. He congratulated the Councillors, officers and the Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital Trust for all their hard work.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1.1 Approved the delegated authority for the Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health, and the Director of Finance and IT or the Corporate Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Adult Social Care and the Portfolio Holder for Education and Health,

to tender for, and award the building contract for, the development of housing and associated facilities for older people requiring residential and nursing care, subject to tender returns being in line with an agreed business plan based on the principles within this report.

1.2 Expand the negotiations being undertaken with NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and other NHS partners concerning the viability and business plan for a phase 2 Integrated Medical Centre to replace the adjacent South Ockendon Health Centre.

1.3 Instruct officers to work with Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BTUH) and other NHS partners to outline the options for a possible future upgrade to Collins House.

The meeting finished at 7.56 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