

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 18 September 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish (*arrived 7.44pm*), Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Pothecary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Councillors Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Chris Baker, Mike Fletcher, Garry Hague, Victoria Holloway, John Kent, Sue MacPherson and Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services
Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property
Andrew Millard, Interim Director of Place
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Tim Hallam, Acting Head of Legal, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior 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.

46. Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 24 July 2019 were approved as a correct record.

47. Items of Urgent Business

No items of urgent business were received.

48. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

49. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council

The Mayor stated that he hoped all Members had enjoyed a good summer break.

The Mayor was pleased to announce that he had attended his first Giving for Thurrock event at the Tilbury Cruise Terminal where £450 had been raised and thanked all those involved.

The Mayor reminded Members to leave their webcasting swipe card on the table when they left this evening with any Member forgetting would be asked to donate £10 to the Giving for Thurrock Fund.

Members were also reminded that they could donate a small amount of money each month through the Pay Roll Giving Scheme.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, updated Members on the Government funding for Grays and Tilbury with both set to benefit from Government funding to bring improvements to infrastructure, drive economic growth and increase job opportunities and would receive a share of the Government's £3.6 billion New Towns Fund with each in line to get up to £25 million in funding. Grays had also been named as one of the additional 50 towns successful in the first round bids for the Government's Future High Street Fund. This would mean that the Council would receive funding to develop a detailed business plan to bid for a share of £1 billion Government funding, which could be used to invest in new infrastructure to revitalise Grays High Street, attracting businesses, shoppers and homes to the town.

The Leader stated this was on top of the ambitious plans Thurrock Council had already announced for Grays Town Centre, stretching from the Thameside Theatre to the very heart of the town. With £200 million in investment already secured including an underpass at Grays Station, which had received £11 million funding from the Government through the Local Growth Fund. In addition, private investment were set to transform the State Cinema site and create a revitalised shopping centre.

The Leader updated Members on the successes Thurrock Council had enjoyed tackling anti-social behaviour in the borough:

- That a temporary injunction had been secured preventing anyone from setting up an unauthorised encampment on specific areas of both public and private land in Thurrock. This would mean that anyone who set up an illegal encampment would face the prospect of immediate arrest and would give the Council the tools it needed to move on encampments within just a few hours rather than the days it currently takes. The interim injunction would be in place for several months

whilst the Council prepared the case for a final injunction. This had been the first successful interim application for an injunction of this nature since the London Borough of Bromley's injunction was significantly reduced in its scope by the High Court, a decision which was currently under appeal to the Court of Appeal.

- That a joint campaign between Essex Police and the Council's Environmental Enforcement Officers to tackle anti-social behaviour and activities linked to discarding nitrous oxide canisters in car parks in Thurrock had proven to be a real success. In the first few weeks of this operation alone the Council had seen some fantastic results, including:
- 20 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for offences such as littering, fly-posting and anti-social behaviour.
- 26 Community protection warnings issued to people involved in Anti-Social Behaviour in Grays, Chafford Hundred and Tilbury.
- A 10 year Criminal Behaviour Order had been secured against a nuisance dog owner who had made his neighbours lives a misery. This decisive action followed fines totalling more than £12,000 after the man failed to comply with a noise abatement notice. Our environment protection team had worked scrupulously with the local community, RSPCA and Essex Police to ensure this thoughtless individual was brought to justice.

The Leader was delighted to announce that Thurrock Council's Give a Gift campaign won Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative at the Association for Public Service Excellence Awards last Thursday. The Give a Gift, hosted by the Council, was a campaign that collected presents in the run up to Christmas for Thurrock's children in need, who may not otherwise receive presents at Christmas. This initiative donated for more than 2,400 children. The Leader thanked all the sponsors, residents, staff, volunteers and intu Lakeside that gave their time and support which had brought the community together. The Leader stated that the Give a Gift would be returning to intu Lakeside for its fourth year this year with more information being announced at the end of October.

The Leader was also pleased to announce that Thurrock's Principal Social Worker, Fran Leddra, had been appointed to the position of Chief Social Worker for England in a joint role with Mark Harvey of Hertfordshire County Council. This a huge recognition of Fran's talent, expertise and experience as well as the high esteem our services here in Thurrock are held.

The Leader provided a Clean It, Cut It, Fill It update that since April 2019:

- 1,084 potholes filled – more than 99% within agreed timeframes
- 647 fly-tips cleared
- 1,299 tonnes of waste cleared from our streets

- 2,187 fixed penalties have been issued for offences such as littering, dropping cigarette butts and various forms of anti-social behaviour
- 187 Fixed Penalty Notices for fly-tipping as well as three vehicles seized
- 54 Prosecutions for failing to pay Fixed Penalty Notices

50. Questions from Members of the Public

No questions from members of the public were received.

51. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, two requisite of notices had been given to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Byrne presented a petition that was strongly against the implementation of parking permit within SS17 until a suitable solution was found we also ask Thurrock Council to abandon this project which was not in the best interest of the community.

Councillor Redsell presented a petition for the Council to consider replacing the grass area in Heathview Gardens with hard standing for parking.

52. Petitions Update Report

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

53. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished for any changes to be made to the appointments previously made to Committees and Outside Bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Chamber that he would like to make the following change:

For Councillor Johnson to be added as a Substitute Member on the General Services Committee.

Councillor Pothecary, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Chamber that she had no changes to make.

Luke Spillman, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group, informed the Chamber that he had no changes to make.

54. Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing

Councillor Johnson, Portfolio Holder for Housing, presented his second portfolio holder report to Members by highlighting the performances, the key challenges and the opportunity of this portfolio in 2018/19. Some of these were:

- The number of new tenant satisfaction Local Performance Indicators had been added to the scorecard for 2018/19 where 71.5% of tenants had been satisfied with the quality of their home.
- The Annual Tenants Conference had taken place in March 2019.
- The satisfaction with Transforming Homes remained high at 87.5% for 2018/19.
- The percentage of repairs completed on target was consistently above the contractual target of 95% throughout the 2018/19 financial year.
- That Improvements had been made on the Active Garage Project.
- The new build programme will deliver in total 117 new Council homes for rent.
- That Cabinet had agreed to deliver up to 500 new Council homes for Thurrock over the next five to ten years.
- That a report will be presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November to look and identify the allocation of these 500 units.
- That a number of changes to the Housing Allocations Policy had been around the financial criteria and the allocation needs.
- That the number of new homeless applications had increased by 15% from the previous year and it had been identified that more needed to be done.

Councillor Johnson stated that the area of complaints was an area to be improved stating that the Administration were listening, learning and taking action.

Councillor Potheary thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and stated it had been concerning to see housing had the highest number of complaints at stage 1 when compared to other areas in the Top Ten Complaints Areas taken from the Annual Complaints Report for 2018/19. Councillor Potheary stated that this would suggest the Council were not getting it right first time and asked the Portfolio Holder that complaints received were being upheld and what steps are being taken to reduce this number. Councillor Johnson stated he was not happy with the number of complaints but the Council were working to address this with Officers showing that these areas can be improved and was confident that they would improve.

Councillor Spillman touched on Out of Borough Placements and questioned what plans were in place to address this. Councillor Johnson stated there were 34 families housed in temporary accommodation outside of Thurrock and plans were in place to get this number down. Councillor Johnson stated this was the last choice to house a family outside of the borough and this will continue to be monitored. Councillor Johnson was pleased to announce the recent purchase of Brooke House which would increase in the number of Council owned temporary accommodation properties by ten.

Councillor Okunade thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report and requested more information on the achievements made by Thurrock Regeneration Limited. Councillor Johnson stated he had confidence and would support Thurrock Regeneration Limited in the delivery of new homes in the borough with an aim to develop 1000 units over a five year period. Councillor Johnson stated that lessons would be learnt going forward but confirmed that a matrix detailing site locations would be consulted on and that all Members having an opportunity to comment.

Councillor Gerrish referred to the abolishment of the Housing Revenue Cap following the announcement made by Government in 2018 and stated the development and plans should have moved forward more. Councillor Johnson agreed this had not been actioned as quickly as he would have liked but 500 units would be built over the next five to ten years and was confident and asked Members to wait and see the report that would be presented to Cabinet.

Councillor Kerin stated he looked forward to seeing the report and reiterated that the Council must focus on the consultation as the Belmont Road consultation had been poor. Councillor Johnson stated he was aware of the concerns of the access to Belmont Road but stated the report would implement these concerns.

Councillor Rice stated that it was good that the scheme in Claudian Way, Chadwell was coming to an end where 20 bungalows would be available for older residents to move into which in turn would release larger properties.

Councillor Allen questioned how many families had been housed in temporary accommodation outside the borough, what areas they had been housed and what was the furthest point a Thurrock family had been placed. Councillor Johnson confirmed that the number of families housed in temporary accommodation outside the borough was 34. Councillor Johnson stated that some of the families had asked to be moved, some had consented to the moved and some had been forced onto the Council. Councillor Johnson agreed to provide a breakdown of data to Councillor Allen if legally allowed to so.

Councillor Johnson summed up by thanking Members for their questions.

55. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions to the Leader had been received and eight questions to Cabinet Members. Those questions not heard would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

At 8.14pm the Mayor called time on this item.

Councillor Gerrish requested a written response.

56. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

Councillor Kerin briefly updated Members on the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report for 2017/18 and thanked the SACRE Chair, Reverend John Guest, for his commitment, passion and enthusiasm at the meetings and continued to thank all the teachers and volunteers from the community faith groups who also attended these meetings. Members were referred to the development of the Youth SACRE which had sought the views, experiences and the importance of Religious Education in Thurrock from members of the Youth Cabinet. Councillor Kerin stated the report had been a pleasure to read and had been a dedication to those that attended the meetings.

57. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of Committee as set out in the Agenda were received.

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

Members received an information report updating the progress in respect of Motions received at Council.

59. Motion submitted by Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies accepted the amendment to his motion, which had been submitted by Councillor Potheary. The motion as amended and proposed was seconded by Councillor Potheary. The original motion read:

This Council notes with concern the violation of planning regulations at Buckles Lane in South Ockendon, which includes unlawful development in the greenbelt. Members therefore call on the Council to bring forward a report detailing what action has been taken to date and how the authority will address planning infringements at Buckles Lane, including via the use of further enforcement proceedings, whilst protecting the Showmen community.

The amended Motion accepted read as follows:

This Council notes with concern the alleged violation of planning regulations at Buckles Lane in South Ockendon, which includes unlawful development in the greenbelt. Members therefore call on the Council to bring forward a report detailing violations, what action has been taken to date and how the authority will address planning infringements at Buckles Lane, including via the use of further enforcement proceedings, whilst protecting the Showmen community.

Councillor Jefferies introduced the Motion by stating it was clearly not an attack on the Showmen community but had been brought to Council to raise

the concerns of the unlawful development on greenbelt, the overcrowding of caravans on the site and the impact this was having on the health and safety of the community living in Buckles Lane. Areas of concern were the electricity tripping, flooding, low water pressure, how the caravans were packed to close together which had been raised by the Fire Authority on how easy a fire could spread and potential cause a loss of life. The Council, as corporate parents, had a responsibility to address the wellbeing of all children and vulnerable adults. Councillor Jefferies stated that necessary action was required to clear the land of caravans and to make this site a legitimate caravan park.

Councillor Potheary stated her support of the Motion and all efforts made with regards to planning and especially around the health and safety of the site but stated this was also happening in other sites in the borough which should also be addressed.

Councillor Spillman asked for clarity from Councillor Jefferies whether Council Officers were refusing to deal with this situation or not.

Councillor Lawrence stated her support of the Motion and identified that the situation had increased at a vast rate and had gone on far too long with the site having been unchecked and unregulated for some time. Councillor Lawrence explained the Showmen Community had lived on that site for many years, were law abiding who made contributions to the community with the Council having a duty of care to protect those people and the environment around them.

Councillor Gledhill welcomed the Motion and thanked Councillor Potheary for her amendments and stated the Motion had highlighted there were potential lives at risk and the issues had to be addressed. Councillor Gledhill confirmed that a number of injunctions had already been issued over the past few years to stop works but with the site being so complex it had not been sufficient to stop those who were clearly determined to develop parts of the greenbelt without the proper permission and regulations. Councillor Gledhill further stated that discussions had taken place with Cabinet Members and Officers which had led to a Multiagency Task Force being formed to take the issue as a whole. That over 1000 hours had already been dedicated to this issue with a further 1000 hours required for the task force to bring this issue to a close. Where the caravan site would then need the Local Plan to move forward so that the number of pitches can be supplied and authorised. Councillor Gledhill stated that this was not the only site in the borough that had been developed without the proper permissions and regulations.

Councillor Gerrish questioned Councillor Jefferies on what action this motion would enable that the Administration could not have already undertaken. Councillor Jefferies stated that Planning Officers would enforce notices to prevent the site developing further and the necessary action would be taken. To ensure the vulnerable were protected and would address the fire and health and safety concerns and take the necessary action to clear the land of caravans to make this site a legitimate caravan park. Councillor Jefferies

thanked Members for their comments and urged Members to vote in favour of the Motion this evening.

The Mayor called a vote on the Amended Motion.

Upon being put to the vote Members voted unanimously in favour of Amendment, whereupon the Mayor declared the Amended motion carried.

The meeting finished at 8.32 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**

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