

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cabinet held on 11 March 2020 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-in is 27 March 2020 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Chair), Shane Hebb (Deputy Chair), Mark Coxshall, James Halden, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Aaron Watkins

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Sheila Murphy, 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.

81. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 12 February 2020 were approved as a correct record.

82. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

83. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

84. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by welcoming Councillor Halden to the Cabinet in his new role as Portfolio Holder for Children and Adults Social Care. He also welcomed Ian Hunt, and the new Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, and Sheila Murphy, the new Corporate Director Children's Services. He wished them all luck in their new roles and hoped to see a continuation of the good work that the previous post-holders had achieved.

The Leader then moved on to discussing the new anti-social behaviour initiatives that had taken place across Tilbury, in liaison with Essex Police, to tackle problems such as parking and graffiti. He stated that Operation Banjo had occurred on 2 March 2020 after concerns from residents and local Councillors had been raised, which tackled nuisance parking along Lansdowne Road. He highlighted that 19 parking warnings had been issued for anti-social parking, 14 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued, and one driver had been found to have an uninsured vehicle. The Leader then described the success that had been had with Operation Bellina, which had been tasked with tackling graffiti, and stated that in the first 36 hours, 85 tags had been removed, 1 Fixed Penalty Notice had been issued for fly-tipping, and a Duty of Care Waste Notice had been issued.

The Leader updated Cabinet on the latest developments with the Tilbury Board and Grays Board, and stated that the committees for these groups had now been set up, and both contained members of the local community, MPs, Councillors and business leaders. He felt this was a good opportunity to increase the economy, culture, transport, and connectivity across the borough, and looked forward to seeing bids and improvements.

The Leader moved onto describing the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It Update, and stated that since April 2019: 2042 potholes had been filled (99% within target time); 117 fly-tips had been cleared; 3087 tonnes of waste removed; 3737 Fixed Penalty Notices issued; 208 £400 fly-tipping Fixed Penalty Notices issued; and 268 people had been prosecuted for failure to pay on the spot fines.

The Leader summarised and stated that he wanted to reassure residents regarding the recent outbreaks of Coronavirus, and the preparations that the Council had in place to deal with this. He stated that officers were in contact with Public Health England and were following national advice and updates, with a daily briefing being sent to all Group Leaders. He urged residents to follow the facts and national advice, as there were currently only 32 cases in the East of England, and none confirmed in Thurrock, with most not requiring medical intervention. He reassured residents that the Council had robust business continuity plans in place that would ensure services could continue to operate. He restated the national advice and encouraged residents to follow the NHS and Public Health England's advice of maintaining personal hygiene, regularly washing hands for 20 seconds, and carrying tissues to catch a sneeze or cough. He stated that if a resident felt any symptoms of Coronavirus, they should self-isolate and use the NHS' 111 to seek medical advice.

85. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Mayes added to the Leader's statement regarding Coronavirus and highlighted that new cases around the UK were not unexpected, and plans to tackle the pandemic were already in place and ready. He clarified that the risk remained low, but he was in contact with Public Health England to ensure residents were protected. He stated that most cases of the virus could be

treated by self-isolating, but was most dangerous to older people and people with underlying conditions and respiratory problems. He reiterated the Leader's advice to follow good personal hygiene and hand-washing procedures, and if you had any symptoms to contact 111 and the Public Health England website.

Councillor Halden stated that this virus disproportionately affected the elderly population, and stated he was working with the Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health, as well as Basildon Hospital, to ensure that staff in the council and residents were supported. He added that business continuity and contingency plans were in place to ensure the necessary support was available for vulnerable residents, those in care, and those on the verge of care. He asked residents to consider their elderly neighbours and offer help and advice where necessary. He summarised and stated that the team were currently sending leaflets and notes to schools, churches, libraries, and care homes, and schools were being contacted so they could spread the message to parents and teachers.

Councillor Huelin added that the Council had agile working in place, so many staff members could work from home if necessary. She explained that the IT team were currently checking the system to ensure it could handle increased numbers of people working from home, but felt confident this would be ready. She added that as there was a policy of hot-desking, staff already had a sanitising routine in place, so used antibacterial wipes on their desks and telephones at the end of every working day. She stated that vulnerable staff members who were more at risk from Coronavirus would be allocated a fixed desk to reduce the likelihood of them catching the virus.

Councillor Watkins moved on and stated that the team were in the final stages of procurement for the new Household Waste and Recycling Centre, which would improve access and recycling across the borough, and he would announce the new contractor within the next two weeks. He also welcomed the news from central government that 30,000 hectares of trees would be planted across the UK, and stated that the team would be lobbying government to ensure some of these additional trees would be planted in Thurrock. Councillor Watkins highlighted that the first phase of the Tree Planting Strategy would commence soon, and work would begin planting trees in streets and avenues across the borough, beginning with Lodge Lane. He stated that the next stage would also begin soon to work with the transport team to heat-map trees and improve air quality through tree planting.

Councillor Watkins added that a new waste consultation was also being sent to residents across the borough, and urged residents to fill this in, as well as placing the stickers attached to this documentation on their bins. He felt this would improve recycling rates and make it clear for residents what items could be recycled. He added that a new scheme was also being rolled out to encourage recycling in flats, after a successful pilot scheme last year. He stated that due to the recent wet weather, grass cutting was being increased across the borough, with a particular focus on cemeteries in time for upcoming Mother's Day.

Councillor Watkins stated that this would be his last Cabinet, and thanked the Leader for choosing him to be a Portfolio Holder in 2017. He thanked Members, officers, and gave particular thanks to the Director of Environment, Highways and Counter-Fraud for her support, as well as Councillors Halden, Hebb and Coxshall, and the local MPs.

86. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

There had been no petitions submitted by members of the public.

87. Questions from Non-Executive Members

There had been no questions submitted by Non-Executive Members.

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

There had been no items referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

89. Purfleet Centre Regeneration

The Leader stated that due to attendance of members of the public, this item would be moved forward on the agenda. Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it gave agreement for the first stage of development, which was 61 new houses, as part of the 2000 new houses agreed for Purfleet Centre Regeneration. He added that the rest of the houses and infrastructure would be brought forward for Cabinet approval at a later date. Councillor Maney felt that this report was focussed and started a conversation with the community in Purfleet, and local businesses. He stated that he had received some concerns from local businesses in Botany Way, and sought reassurance that the Portfolio Holder would be mindful of local businesses, and let them know when the next stage of development would start. Councillor Coxshall replied that he was aware of business concerns, but clarified that this report was only for the development of 61 houses, and no concrete plans had been brought forward for further development by Purfleet Regeneration at this stage. He stated that there were currently no plans for Compulsory Purchase Orders near the Botany Way area, and this report was simply asking for agreement to change the land usage, as agreed by the Planning Committee and the last Labour administration.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the appropriation of the areas of land referred to in this report, and shown edged in red and on the plan at Appendix 1A to this report, for planning purposes in order to facilitate the development of 'Phase 1A' of the Purfleet Centre Regeneration Limited masterplan.

2. In respect to the areas of land shown edged in red on the plans at

Appendix 1A of the report:

(i) Noted that the consequence of taking the decision in (a) above is to enable easements and other rights to be overridden in accordance with the provisions of section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016; and

(ii) Authorised officers to take such necessary administrative and accounting steps to give effect to the appropriation.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

90. Quarter 3 Financial Report

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that this was a look back at the financial position in the previous quarter. He stated that although there were overspends and pressures in some areas, he reassured Cabinet Members and residents that the budget would be balanced by the end of the year. He highlighted the pressure currently being felt in Adult Social Care, which had seen a £1million overspend, due to some high-need and complex cases, but that the service had always broken even in previous years, and would do so again this year. He added that nationally, the majority of local authorities had overspent on Adult Social Care, and this was usually due to high-need, high-cost placements. He clarified that the recent increase in council tax had included ring-fencing for adult social care, and to ensure investment in early intervention care to reduce demand, and increase people's ability to live an independent lifestyle. He stated that there was also an overspend in Children's Services, but in 2016 the service had been £6million overspent and had received an OFSTED rating of 'requires improvement', but now the service was only overspending by £0.6million and had an OFSTED rating of 'good'. He felt this was a marked improvement, but the service would continue to try to improve, as well as providing high quality care and balancing the budget.

Councillor Hebb then highlighted that the environment team had broken even, whilst improving the borough and ensuring it looked good for residents and visitors. He also highlighted that there was pressure within the Dedicated Schools Grant high-needs block, as this had a high-needs requirement, but he would work with Councillor Jefferies to ensure this was balanced by the end of the financial year.

Councillor Hebb drew Cabinet's attention to the Housing Revenue Account, which had also broken even, and highlighted the pressures that had been put on the service in regard to increased numbers of people presenting as homeless. He stated that an extra £0.3million had been invested into homelessness to ensure all residents could receive the support they needed. He also felt it was good to see services coming in under budget, as these could help with other overspent services and corporate costs, such as the Belmont Road programme, which had been taken into account within the

budget. He summarised and stated that the budget would be balanced by the end of the municipal year, and services would continue to improve and be well-managed.

Councillor Halden commented that even though Adult Social Care had overspent, the current administration had taken on a £30million overspend in 2016, which they had changed to a £30million surplus, whilst also increasing reserves to 40%. He felt this was good as the Council could be buffeted against any future problems, whilst also continuing with programmes such as Head Start Housing, improving technology access for elderly people, installing pendant alarms for those that needed them free of charge, and improving the care leavers offer. The Leader added that the Council had always been able to deliver a balanced budget, and felt this was on track to be balanced by the end of the financial year. He echoed previous comments regarding the overspend in Adults Social Care and Children's Services, and stated that the most vulnerable residents within Thurrock would always receive the necessary care. He highlighted that some of the pressures, such as additional high-needs cases and additional Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers were outside of the Council's control, but they would continue to manage these.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the revenue forecast outturn position for 2019/20 and that further mitigation is required to outturn within the agreed budget envelope.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

91. Procurement of Housing Capital Programme Delivery

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and stated that the Transforming Homes programme had been improving the internal and external decoration of council housing for seven years, which had improved living conditions, and the economy. He highlighted that 45% of the Transforming Homes team were Thurrock residents, 50% of the supply chain was based in Thurrock, and 51% of construction costs were spent within the local economy. He stated that this report continued the programme until 2025/26, after a procurement exercise through mini competition from a list of providers. He stated that the report had been to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2020, and they had agreed all recommendations, particularly the external refurbishment of the nine tower blocks within the borough.

Councillor Maney welcomed the report, and stated that some of the tower blocks were situated within his ward. He felt that some of the tower blocks had come to the end of their life, and asked if other options had been considered, such as using the refurbishment money to bring some of them down, to be able to build new council housing. Councillor Johnson understood the point

raised, and stated that this option would be discussed with the housing team and would be considered. The Leader echoed Councillor Maney's comments and welcomed comments from the housing team on this issue. Councillor Coxshall highlighted that all site surveys on the cladding for tower blocks would be brought back to Cabinet, who then vote could further on the refurbishment. The Leader then asked when the procurement process would no longer have to include EU legislation, and the Monitoring Officer replied that as the UK were currently in the transition phase, EU legislation would continue to be used. He stated that once the UK had left the EU and agreed its equivalent procurement legislation, the UK would then switch to a national procurement portal.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the procurement of two major works contract packages for the delivery of the Housing Capital work programme as set out in the report.

2. Approved the procurement of two contract packages to provide strategic support and cost management of the Housing Capital Programme as set out in the report.

3. Approved authority being delegated for the awarding of the above contracts to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

92. Housing Planned and Reactive Repair Programme Procurement

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and stated that it was to agree to the re-procurement of the lift and entry door maintenance system for the next five years, with an option to extend for a further five years. He stated that this report had received input from the Tenants Excellence Panel, and the current contractors had delivered good outcomes for residents, including a consistent service. He commented that there would be one contractor for each maintenance area, and robust Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be put in place to monitor the performance of the contract.

The Leader highlighted the work of the current contract, and felt pleased to see that 96% of urgent repairs were carried out within 6 hours, and 100% were carried out the next calendar day. He added that 86% of lift repairs were also carried out the next day, 100% of emergency repairs to entry systems were carried out within 6 hours, and 100% of routine repairs were carried out within 28 days. He stated that Cabinet had introduced charges for lift and entry systems, but felt it was good to see residents getting value for money in these services and 100% of KPIs being met.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the re-procurement of Passenger Lift Maintenance and Door Entry Maintenance contracts for a period of up to five years with an option to extend for a further five years.

2. Approved delegated authority for award of the above contracts to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

93. Contract for Short Term Temporary Accommodation

Councillor Johnson introduced the report and stated that there was currently a range of temporary accommodation across the borough, but there had recently been additional pressures on this system due to the lack of affordable accommodation and no formal contract between the Council and private agents. He explained that this report would establish a contract to provide short term accommodation for single people, former Looked After Children, and families at risk of homelessness.

Councillor Halden felt pleased to see the report and highlighted that housing provided young people leaving care with increased life chances and social mobility. He felt it was important for previously Looked After Children to be included in this report as it supported the Head Start Housing Scheme, as well as other Council services. He felt it was good to see linked up working between the housing department and other teams such as social workers and council tax. Councillor Johnson replied that the housing team continued to look for ways to work with other services, and commented that tackling homelessness was one of their priorities. He mentioned that the first meeting of the Homelessness Reduction Panel had recently met whose aim was to tackle homelessness across the borough.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved to proceed to tender for a contract for Letting Agents and Landlords for short term accommodation, and agreed to delegate authority for award of the contract to the Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

94. Post 18 Autism Support Service

Councillor Halden introduced the report had stated that it was asking Cabinet to go out to procurement to formalise a pilot scheme that supported young adults on the autism spectrum. He commented that a wide variety of partners had been working in coalition on the pilot scheme, which had proven successful, and now needed to be embedded within the Council. Councillor Halden highlighted that at the recent OFSTED inspection, Thurrock had received a 'good' rating, but one of the areas for improvement had been the level of support for people transitioning from childhood to adulthood. He stated that he was working with the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health to ensure that this project would have a long lead-in time, so people aged 16-17 would be familiar with the autism support services, before they were able to benefit at aged 18.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed the proposed process to commence procurement to establish a Framework for a Post 18 Autism Support Service, for Thurrock young people aged 18 to 25 with a diagnosis of autism and disabilities that challenge service responses.

2. Agreed to delegate authority to award the contract to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in agreement with the Cabinet Member for Children's and Adults Social Care.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

95. Tuition Support Services

Councillor Jefferies introduced the report and stated that it sought Cabinet approval to go to tender on tuition support services, and needed Cabinet approval due to the size of the contract. He clarified that currently tuition services were purchased on an ad-hoc basis when necessary, but this contract would commission one-to-one support for those children that were better suited to external learning, such as those with illness or those that had been excluded. He stated that this service would ensure a formal process for purchasing and receiving specialist tuition support for those that needed it.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Agreed that a tender process be initiated to procure Tuition Support services.

2. Agreed that delegated authority to award the contract is given to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

96. Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme 2020/21, DfT Block Maintenance Capital Programme 2020/21 & A126 Safer Roads Programme

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that as the Council moved into a new financial year, central government allocated money to the Council for highways development. He stated that the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) programme would receive £971,000 from central government, and the DfT Block Maintenance programme would receive £1,938,000. He commented that the money would be spent in line with the Council's highways strategies and priorities, and these were outlined at 3.3 and Table 1 of the report. He stated that these included improved road safety, public rights of way access, traffic and freight management, as well as the A126 Safer Roads programme, which would last for three years.

Councillor Watkins felt it was good to see the continuation of the Safer Routes to School programme, and congratulated Woodside Academy for their poster campaign relating to idling engines outside of schools. He stated that air pollution had already reduced outside the school due to this campaign, and asked if it could be rolled out across schools in the borough, as part of the continued Safer Routes to School Programme. Councillor Hebb added that a Stanford-le-Hope resident had pitched that idea of a poster campaign, and Arthur Bugler Primary School had reached out to him to ask if they could follow a similar poster competition.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Approved the Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme for 2020/21 (as detailed in Appendix 1) and noted the process by which the Safer Routes to School and Road Safety Engineering programme are assessed and prioritised for implementation.**
- 2. Approved the A126 Safer Roads fund programme for the next 3 years (as detailed in Appendix 2).**
- 3. Delegated authority to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to review and make local changes to the ITB and Safer Roads programmes, taking into account local views and priorities.**
- 4. Approved the DfT Maintenance Block Allocation Programme for 2020/21 (as detailed in Appendix 2).**
- 5. Delegated authority to the Director of Environment and Highways, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to review and make local changes to the DfT Maintenance Block Allocation**

programme.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

97. Quarter 3 (Month 9) Corporate Performance Report 2019/20

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that 85% of KPIs had met their target, and thanked Members and officers for their hard work on this. She stated that today was the first day of the 'One View of Debt' portal, which allowed residents to see all of their debt across the Council in one place, and highlighted that Thurrock had been nominated for an award because of this innovative idea. She stated that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had commented on the report and had congratulated officers and Members on the achievement, particularly relating to the apprenticeship KPI, which had already met its end of year target. She added that the Committee had welcomed the new 'route to green' for each KPI that had not met its target, but she highlighted that 60% of KPIs were better than they had been in 2018/19.

Councillor Watkins congratulated officers and Members on this achievement, and felt that the bin collection KPI, which had previously been a problem, was now regularly meeting its target and was seeing a positive direction of travel. He added that although the KPI relating to graffiti was still an issue, actions were in place to tackle this and the budget surplus had provided more investment to ensure graffiti was regularly cleaned up. He also highlighted that the percentage of waste being recycled, reused or composted had not met its target, and encouraged residents to fill out the waste consultation that was being delivered to their houses, and put the new stickers on their blue bins. He felt that the roll out of the new recycling policies in flats and communal areas would also improve the KPI.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators, in particular those areas which are off target.

2. Identified any areas which require additional consideration.

The meeting finished at 8.15 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**