

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 25 January 2023 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors James Halden (Mayor), Susan Little (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, Gary Collins, George Coxshall, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Robert Gledhill, Victoria Holloway, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Srikanth Panjala, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Jane Potheary, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Sue Sammons, Sue Shinnick, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Chris Baker, Colin Churchman, Tony Fish, Shane Hebb, Augustine Ononaji, Elizabeth Rigby and Jennifer Smith

In attendance: Ian Wake, Acting Chief Executive
Les Billingham, Interim Director Adult Social Care
Mark Bradbury, Director Place
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
John Jones, Director Law & Governance, and Monitoring Officer
Gareth Moss, Chief Finance Office
Julie Nelder, Assistant Director of Highways, Fleet and Logistics
Ewelina Sorbjan, Interim Director Housing
Luke Tyson, Delivery and Strategy Manager
Karen Wheeler, Director Strategy, Engagement and Growth
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 was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

93. Minutes

Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 30 November 2022 and the minutes of the Extraordinary Council held on the 9 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.

94. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

95. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor stated that following draft directions between the Secretary of State and commissioners, the Acting Chief Executive, Ian Wake, would return to his former post as Director of Adults, Housing and Health when the new managing director had been appointed. The Mayor stated that the Council would not have made it this far through the recovery process if it had not been for Ian Wake, the advice received had always been exemplary, he welcomed challenge and had been an outstanding advocate both in private and public. With Ian Wake having an incredible future, and with that future in Thurrock, the residents of Thurrock would have a bright future.

The Mayor reminded Members that nominations were still welcomed for the Mayoral Roll of Honour.

The Mayor paid his respect to former Councillor Merlyn Jones who had sadly passed, to which a minute silence was held.

Councillor M Coxshall, Leader of the Council, made the following statement:

“This week it had become clearer than ever that all 49 of us need to really look at ourselves and ask whether we have done enough. The Minster presented a written statement and accompanying letters from the commissions which gave a taste of the Best Value Inspection to come. We now have 10 days to make representations. I can say today I requested a General Services Committee to meet and discuss our response if needed and as chair all Members will be welcome and to speak. Please remember though this is a look back exercise at what happened previously and does not mention the work that had taken place since 2 September 2022. For me, one of the important quotes in this statement was “it was important to make clear that the Council’s financial difficulties are the consequence of the dysfunction within the Council and not the cause of it”. What this points to, was a poor culture and systemic weakness within this Council not just the governing party at the time. As it also says, it was also about lack of consistent strategic direction over many years, inadequate governance arrangements and weaknesses in internal controls. Those were the issues that must be addressed by all 49 of us. The decision taken by this Council were ones which were done in the name of all 49 of us. The process and record keeping provided an audit trail for accountability which was absent here in Thurrock. This was why I put so much emphasis on transparency. Sunlight was the best disinfectant. I must say though it was also the strategic weakness that Thurrock was too small to be a unitary authority, it was also the weakness that comes from successive minority administrations over 13 years, it was also about our mechanisms for accountability and security issues. I am horrified to learn in this report that our accountability structures do not appear to be lawful and that we have lacked a statutory scrutiny officer. It was for our legal

officers to ensure that our procedures were compliant and that had been lacking here. There was a whole situation of weakness that had created this situation. These cultural issues go beyond the party colour of any administration, and it was up to all of us to work collectively to take these. The commissioners documented the failures in political and managerial leadership with challenge discussed and ignored and the normal checks and balances were not operating. Leading to a state of "unconscious incompetence". In terms of how financial management took place decisions were made in the name of this Council without proper oversight by Members. At the time of the council meeting which Members opposite have referred to, there was a clear instruction from that meeting that borrowing should be scaled back. It was not until the Government were forced to intervene that it became clear that had not happened. We still need to establish how this was able to take place in the absence of an instruction from this Council. There were observations with which I totally concur with, Members have not been well served by the production of paperwork and agendas that enable scrutiny and the ability to take informed decisions. Members are not an inconvenience to be managed. We are here to protect the interests of the residents. When we are treated poorly, the people of Thurrock are treated poorly. There needed to be a sea change in the way in which Members and officers work together. The commissions illustrate just why the financial intervention took place came as such a shock. As it stated the Council agreed a set of principles which should have been acted on as the framework for the investment programme, but there was, no audit, no reporting, and no delegated authority. This allowed borrowing to increase when we all believed it was being scaled back. What needs to happen now was for us all to focus on the future and addressing the systemic weaknesses that have been identified here. It was now clear that the assurances I was given were wrong. Since this catastrophe had materialised, I had dedicated every waking hour to try to put it right. This was how I see my duties as a public servant. I think that was what our residents of Thurrock should expect of us. We can rehearse the same partisan lines every month or we can work collectively to fix this. The opposition would have their chance at the ballot box. In the meantime, we need to do our best for the residents of Thurrock. The way politics had played out in this chamber was a factor in where we are. We had three party politics and minority administration in the mid part of the foremost of the last 13 years. That led to the difficult decisions regarding tax and spend to be ducked and was the reason why borrowing to invest began in the first place, endorsed by all involved on all sides of the chamber. As for the failure to deliver projects, as everyone understands that it was for Members to make decisions. It was for officers to implement those decisions and deliver them. People know me well enough to know I would give challenge, that challenge was like hitting a brick wall. This report indicated there were insufficient capacity to deliver major projects and I would concur with that. As for major projects, the management structures are shown to be utterly dysfunctional in this report. By way of illustration, I was utterly embarrassed personally at how this New Town Hall was handled. The attempt to cover up what had been mismanaged was utterly insulting. We were basically asked to unsee what we had seen ourselves. It convinced no one and damaged the reputation of this Council. This was why under my leadership I am being open and transparent. I hope Members will see that I

have delivered on the promises I made on becoming leader, including fronting the hard knocks that come from sorting out what went before me, and I will continue to do so.”

In response to the Leaders statement, Councillor J Kent made the following statement:

“The scope of the new interventions and the further directions to Thurrock were shocking. All functions associated with the governance, scrutiny and transparency of strategic decision making by the authority to ensure compliance with the best value duty, including oversight of audit of the authority’s governance, all functions associated with the authorities operating model and redesign of Council services to achieve value for money and financial sustainability. The appointment, suspension, and dismissal of staff in the top three tiers of the organisation, including powers to determine the process for making those appointments and dismissals and to design a new officer structure. The development oversight and operation of an effective performance management framework for senior officers and of course additionally to appoint a commissioner to act as the managing director of the authority. You read that and then cross reference with the best value inspectors interim report and you can see why Government believed it had no option but to deeper that intervention in Thurrock and to do it immediately. Not to do it at the end of the process, not to do it once the best value inspection report had been published but felt the need to actually make that change now to try and get some capacity into the organisation and as the leader said we could stand here and read quotes all night but there were a few that were really telling, the leader had already said one, financial difficulties of the consequences of dysfunction within the Council and not the cause of it. This had been seen across so many services, we see it in the refuse service where we can’t get the bins emptied. As the leader had said we’ve seen it in major projects where Stanford railway station still not rebuilt, A13 widening over budget and three years late, we’ve seen it in this building, it runs right through the authority. The effective running of the Council and its ability to deliver on its ambitions have been undermined by a failure in political and managerial leadership, a lack of transparency with Members, which was shocking but not surprising. It had been something that we had been talking about for years, but nobody would listen to us. A culture of insularity and complacency within transparency of decision making, the operation of the normal and proper checks and balances have been eroded, internal challenge had been discouraged, external criticism had been routinely dismissed placing the Council in a state of unconscious incompetence. I think that line sums up where we are, with the authority, a state of unconscious incompetence. I have to say our view has not changed, we would do everything we can to work together to turn Thurrock round, we will do that because we live here, we care about the place, we invested in a place, and we want the best for the future of the borough for all our residents. But he had to say that this evening when we look forward and see that budgets can’t be balanced for the next six years and after that six years the situation starts to get worse. I don’t know what the future is for Thurrock. All I do know is that I am incredibly concerned about it.

We must come together and try to do what we can to salvage what was salvageable.”

Councillor M Coxshall thanked Councillor J Kent for the offer.

97. Questions from Members of the Public

One question was received from a member of public.

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.co.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

98. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed the chamber that one notice of petition had been received this evening.

Councillor Kelly presented his petition regarding flooding in Dock Road, Little Thurrock. In response to this Councillor Jefferies acknowledged the petition.

99. Petitions Update Report

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

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

The Mayor enquired whether there were any changes to be made to the appointments previously made by committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor M Coxshall, stated he had the following change to make:

To appoint Councillor Snell to the Essex Pension Fund Advisory Board Outside Body.

The Leader of the Labour group, Councillor J Kent, stated he had no changes to make.

Councillors Byrne, Massey and Allen stated they had no changes to make.

Members agreed with the nomination.

101. Appointment of Electoral Registration Officer and Registration Officer

This item was withdrawn prior to the meeting.

102. Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2021/2022

The report presented outlined the positive work that had been undertaken during 2021/2022 and highlighted to residents and Members how the Corporate Parenting Committee had picked relevant community issues and how Members undertook work to form recommendations that positively affected these issues. The report was presented to Council for information and noting.

No comments received from Members.

The Mayor thanked Councillor P Arnold for the report and proceeded to the vote to which 42 Members agreed to the recommendation.

RESOLVED

That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2021/2022 be noted.

103. Annual Pay Policy Statement 2022/23

The report presented required the Council, through the Localism Act 2011 to publish an annual Pay Policy Statement. Council approved the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement in February 2022. In accordance with the recommendation from the independent market assessment the 2022/23 Pay Policy included a pay increase of between 2.25% and 2.5%. Noted in the report was the unpredictability of the national pay negotiations. The national negotiations for Local Government pay for 2022/23 had now concluded with an agreed increase of £1,925 on all pay points. This represented a higher increase than applied by the Council. The recognised Trade Unions had all requested the Council apply the higher NJC award in the current year. This will cost £2.758m in 2022/23 and represents an unaccounted in year pressure with an already declared S114. General Services Committee had considered a report setting out the costs, legal framework, options, and risks in applying the NJC award and making a change to the Council's 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement and pay scales. The committee unanimously recommended Council support a change to the 2022/23 Pay Policy Statement to implement the NJC award in year. General Services Committee also supported the Commissioners recommendation to review pay arrangements and requested terms of reference to come back to the Committee.

Councillor Collins added his congratulations and appreciation for a good report and a good result for all members of staff who were hard working and was thoroughly deserved.

Councillor Mayes stated his support for the report as this was a cost-of-living increase to keep people in line with the current situation and was mindful that the £2.758 million had not been budgeted but was something that needed to be done and supported.

Councillor M Coxshall as chair of the General Services Committee was pleased the report had been presented this evening and it had been adopted unanimously. Although not in the budget, he agreed that this should happen to reward staff but stated how important the budget setting would be over the coming months.

Councillor Snell summed up by stating he agreed with the comments made this evening and moved to the recommendations.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Snell for the report and proceeded to the vote to which all 42 Members agreed to the recommendations.

RESOLVED

- 1. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be revised to replace the locally agreed pay award with the higher national award.**
- 2. As requested by the commissioner a full review of pay arrangements be carried out before any future agreements are made, which should include a review of policies for increments and all other pay allowances to ensure all opportunities for mitigating the pay growth are considered.**
- 3. An appropriate oversight arrangement for decision making be introduced.**

104. Local Council Tax Scheme

The report presented provided details of Thurrock's current scheme and further analysis to support the recommendation that the current scheme remained unchanged for 2023/24.

No comments received from Members.

Councillor Snell summed up by stating this was good news for Thurrock residents.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Snell for the report and proceeded to the vote to which all 42 Members agreed to the recommendations.

RESOLVED

- 1. Noted the analysis of the current scheme.**
- 2. Supported the recommendation that the current scheme remained unchanged for 2023/24.**
- 3. Supported the recommendation that in light of the Council's financial situation a fuller review of the scheme would be carried out in 2023/24, in advance of setting the 2024/25 budget.**

105. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the chamber that two questions to the Leader had been received and five questions to Cabinet Members.

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

106. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

No reports were presented.

107. Minutes of Committees

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

108. 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.

109. Motion 1 submitted by Councillor Jefferies

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Jefferies and seconded by Councillor G Coxshall. The Motion read as follows:

This Council condemns plans by the London Labour Mayor to extend the Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) to all Greater London and notes with concern the impact this would have on many Thurrock residents if implemented. Members also note the campaign by our Member of Parliament Jackie Doyle-Price to oppose the said extension and calls on Thurrock residents to sign her on-line petition.

Councillor Jefferies presented the motion by stating the motion spoke for people of Thurrock who would be affected by the Labour Mayor of London plan to expand ULEZ across Greater London in the summer of 2023. The change would affect 1000s of Londoners who used their car each day and more concerning the daily charge of £12.50 would affect 1000s of Thurrock residents who used their cars to travel into the zones. Regarding the amendment made by Councillor J Kent, although Councillor Jefferies was in favour of the measures to improve air quality which helped with public health and the climate, he could not agree to the consulting with the Mayor of London who had shown complete disregard to 5000 London residents who had replied to the consultation and were excluded from the headline figures of which 90% opposing to ULEZ. Councillor Jefferies stated if the Mayor of London had not listened to his own constituents, he would not listen to anyone in Thurrock. In conclusion, Councillor Jefferies called on the Mayor of London to cancel the ULEZ expansion which was regressive, unfair and a waste of

money and call on all Members to support this motion and urged all residents to go on-line and sign the member of parliament's petition.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Worrall and read as follows:

Thurrock Council is in favour of measures that seek to improve air quality and public health, tackle the climate emergency, and that reduces traffic congestion. Council notes plans by the London Labour Mayor to extend the Ultra-Low Emission Zone to all Greater London and notes with concern the impact this would have on many Thurrock residents if implemented. Members also note the campaign by our Member of Parliament Jackie Doyle-Price to oppose the said extension and calls on Thurrock residents to sign her on-line petition. Council calls on Cabinet to work with Transport for London and the Mayor's Office to mitigate the impact on Thurrock residents.

Councillor J Kent presented the amended motion and stated all Members understood the need to improve air quality and public health but the scheme being rolled out now would be another hit to working people especially in Thurrock and agreed that this decision should have been delayed at least until the other side of the cost-of-living crisis. With Thurrock having many low-income workers who relied on their cars and vans as there was not the transport infrastructure available here for them, this would have a negative impact on businesses and sole traders within Thurrock who may trade in the zone and may not be financially able to replace older vehicles. Councillor J Kent raised his concern that drivers of non-compliant vehicles in a bid to avoid travelling through that zone, would skirt around that area and come through Thurrock. The amended motion should urge the Council to do something positive and to hold conversations with the Mayor's Office on the extension of some of the elements of the car scrappage scheme to neighbouring boroughs. With a public transport deficit in Thurrock, a conversation should take place with Transport of London to see what improvements could be made to public transport in Thurrock. There were many things that cabinet could do if they had the will to work across boundaries and hoped that Members could see that and support the amendment.

Councillor Maney stated the reason not to support the amendment as the motion presented by Councillor Jefferies had summed up where the Council should be. He reassured Councillor J Kent that they had tried as hard as possible to speak with TFL and the Mayor's Office but with no responses and was obvious that the Mayor of London did not want to consult with Thurrock but would continue to pursue. Regarding improving air quality as stated in Councillor J Kent amendment, the Mayor of London was seeking to offload London's air pollution on Thurrock by people with non-compliant vehicles seeking to reroute through Thurrock. The plans of the Mayor's Office would not only have financial impacts to the people of Thurrock but increase congestion, poor air quality and was unfair, so on that basis he would be supporting Councillor Jefferies motion and urged all Members to do the same.

Councillor Gledhill agreed to the difficulties of working with the Mayor of London and noted that there were people who lived on the outskirts of London who worked, supported, or cared for residents in Thurrock and these people would be hit the most and would need to make a choice whether to continue to work in Thurrock and how they would cover the daily charge. Councillor Gledhill stated this cannot be ignored, it cannot be delayed as referred by Councillor J Kent, it needed to be stopped immediately and as such would be supporting Councillor Jefferies motion as outlined.

Councillor Pearce stated her support for Councillor Jefferies motion as many residents of Aveley travelled to Havering on a regular basis and many could not afford to upgrade their vehicles. Those residents were hard working and would cause further financial hardship or being isolated from Greater London. Her constituents feared that should this proposal go ahead the next extension proposal could be to the congestion zone. Councillor Pearce stated the decision was unfair and all Members should join in opposing Labour's new tax on motorists.

Councillor Abbas stated his support to Councillor Jefferies motion as ULEZ would affect many residents, particularly of Muslim faith, as this charge would make it very difficult for them to visit their loved ones who were buried in cemeteries in Redbridge.

Councillor Watson stated Councillor J Kent's motion had asked for cabinet to take ownership and try to speak with TFL and the Mayor of London's Office and urged them to keep trying.

Councillor Piccolo stated his support to Councillor Jefferies motion as this could be seen as an age and poverty tax which would be restrictive to them and who may not have the finances to purchase new vehicles that were in line with the congestion zone rules.

Councillor Sammons fully supported Councillor Jefferies motion as a small business owner and stated how difficult it was to purchase new vehicles and agreed the extension should be scrapped altogether.

Councillor Byrne commented that thought needed to be given to those Thurrock residents who were now being asked to pay to park outside their homes.

Councillor Johnson reiterated that TFL and the Mayor's Office had and will not listen to Thurrock Council and on that basis would be supporting Councillor Jefferies motion.

Councillor G Coxshall raised his concerns on the proposed plans as residents of South Ockendon who worked in London, who were self-employed or drove to work would be looking at an additional £60 a week extra if they did not comply. He questioned why the motion should just be to note and accepted, that a stance needed to be taken to focus all efforts into opposing and

condemn this and Members should be encouraging residents to sign the petition.

Councillor Worrall as seconder to the amended motion did not comment.

Councillor J Kent summed up by addressing some of the comments made regarding Cllr G Coxshall question about why the motion should just be to note, Councillor J Kent stated the word “note” was in the original motion. Agreed with Councillor Byrne that it was hypocritical for Members to complain about taxes on motorists when charges were being made for residents to park outside their own home, car park increases and new car park charges at places such as Coalhouse Fort. The amendment was asking for the Council to do something rather than not, to try and speak with the Mayor of London and TFL to get some mitigation of the scheme for the residents of Thurrock.

Councillor Jefferies summed up by stating this was the worst time to implement this due to the cost-of-living crisis with £60 extra a week for residents, with only nine months to prepare, new vehicles hard to purchase, energy bills were up, inflation was up so residents could not afford this new charge. With ULEZ never being intended to apply to outer London, this needed to stop, this was a hit on drivers and had nothing to do with air quality but with the mismanagement of the Mayor’s Office of TFL finances. Councillor Jefferies reiterated that over 5000 responses had been taken out of the headline figure with 90% of those opposing to the ULEZ expansion.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion.

With 14 votes for and 28 votes against the amendment, the motion was lost.

The Mayor called a vote on the substantive motion to which Councillor Jefferies requested a requisition vote.

For: Councillors Abbas, Allen, Anderson, D Arnold, P Arnold, Carter, Collins, G Coxshall, M Coxshall, Duffin, Gledhill, Halden, Holloway, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, Little, Maney, Massey, Mayes, Pearce, Piccolo, Polley, Ralph, Redsell, Sammons, Snell, Spillman, Thandi (29)

Against: Councillors Byrne, Chukwu, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Muldowney, Panjala, Potheary, Raper, Shinnick, Watson and Worrall (13)

Abstain: (0)

The Mayor announced the substantive Motion carried.

110. Motion 2 submitted by Councillor Massey

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor Massey and seconded by Councillor Allen. The Motion read as follows:

Members may be aware that National Highways have recently submitted, and had approved, their Development Consent Order for the Lower Thames Crossing scheme, to move forward to the next stage in the Planning Inspectorate process. The LTC Task Force seeks assurances that the Council is committed to opposing the scheme as currently presented and promote this message through Council communications channels.

Councillor Massey presented the motion by stated there needed to be confidence in the Council's capacity to make a good case for the protection of Thurrock residents and businesses against the disruption and destruction of the Lower Thames Crossing. Those working on the Lower Thames Crossing at the Council had produced some really good work which had been presented to the task force and hoped that this important work would continue for the benefit of the borough. The proposed Lower Thames Crossing would consume much green belt, impact the local plan, will impact residents' health and would be a permanent physical barrier going right through the heart of the borough and communities. The cost of both carbon and money are both high and agreed with both Members of Parliament of Thurrock this was now an out-of-date project and no longer delivered the benefits intended. Councillor Massey urged all residents, businesses, and other groups to register as interested party with the planning inspectorate which would allow representation later in the process. He asked Members to reaffirm their opposition to the Lower Thames Crossing, as currently opposed, by supporting the motion to ensure the Council had the resources required to communication and promote the opposition during the planning process.

Councillor Allen stated his support to Councillor Massey's motion.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Byrne and read as follows:

Members may be aware that National Highways have recently submitted, and had approved, their Development Consent Order for the Lower Thames Crossing scheme, to move forward to the next stage in the Planning Inspectorate process. The LTC Task Force seeks assurances that the Council is committed to opposing the scheme as currently presented and promote this message through Council communications channels. Council also calls on cabinet to identify sufficient resources to ensure effective opposition to the proposals.

Councillor J Kent presented the amended motion by stating it was clear that all Members agreed the Lower Thames Crossing, as currently configured, would be an ecological and environmental disaster for Thurrock and would not achieve the aims of the crossing but drive a motorway through the heart of the borough and would create a toxic triangle. Over the last 10 years there had been active opposition to the scheme which had been backed by Council funding to ensure public engagement events could take place, hire experts to advise to ensure the Council made the best case. This funding was no longer available and without those funds turned the Council's active opposition to

passive opposition. The amendment was to ask cabinet to identify sufficient resources so that the proposal could be properly opposed.

Councillor Byrne stated that documentation prepared for this project was immense and funding was required to help Thurrock fight this.

Councillor Mayes stated his support to Councillor Massey's motion and thanked him for the great job he had undertaken in his chairmanship of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force with the battle to continue to fight against the Lower Thames Crossing coming through the borough.

Councillor Maney stated his support to Councillor Massey's motion in that it was evident all in the chamber this evening were opposed to the Lower Thames Crossing and the impact that it would bring to the borough. Councillor Maney stated the question was how we resourced the response, there were many avenues that could be explored but should go to the National Highway and insist they fund the response through the planning performance agreement. Councillor Maney thanked Councillor Massey for the work undertaken by the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force and the Council would be determined to resource the response as best as they could but needed to go to the people who were inflicting this on Thurrock.

Councillor Redsell stated her support to Councillor Massey's motion and that all 49 Members should work together to fight this, there had been too many consultations, with the LTC blighting too many lives in Thurrock. She recognised and thanked Councillor Massey for the work undertaken by the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force.

Councillor Muldowney stated her support to Councillor J Kent motion, as a member of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force it was recognised that proper resources needed to be available to fight this or it would be a disaster for Thurrock. That Highways England when attending the task force provided or shared very little information.

Councillor M Coxshall stated his support for Councillor Massey's motion and reiterated the work he had undertaken as chair on the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force with the project undertaking a lot of work and had been resourced very highly over the last couple years. Councillor M Coxshall stated that money should not now be wasted and to ensure it got through the planning process this should be taken through the 114 processes, this was the process to prove its value, and not through cabinet. The motion had highlighted the impact this would have on the residents and businesses in Thurrock and should continue to oppose this whole-heartly.

Councillor Polley thanked Councillor Massey for his motion and the work that had been undertaken on the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, this was the finest example of Members working together. The Lower Thames Crossing was not right for Thurrock and Thurrock did not want it; the Council should continue their commitment to fight this project in its current format. Councillor Polley also made thanks to the Lower Thames Crossing Action

Group and volunteers which had demonstrated a community working together with a common goal.

Councillor Worrall stated the project would be worth nothing if the resources were not provided and could not understand why all Members were not supporting the amendment as we owed this to Thurrock residents, residents who would not support Members if this project had not been properly resourced.

Councillor Byrne reiterated that funding was important to fund this project and that money was required now to ensure the proper comms work could be undertaken.

Councillor Allen commended Councillor Massey for his chairmanship on the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, stated the Lower Thames Crossing would be an environmental and ecological disaster and put a stake through the heart of Thurrock.

Councillor J Kent summed up by stating his amendment had called on cabinet to identify sufficient resources to ensure effective opposition to the proposals and did not say that money should come from the Council's purse; with Councillor Maney stating there were many other avenues that could have been explored. Referred to Councillor M Coxshall comment that it would be up to the commissioners to make that decision, not cabinet. Councillor J Kent agreed there was agreement amongst all Members they all wanted to identify resources.

Councillor Massey summed up by thanking Members for their support and thanked colleagues on the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force. It was important to remember the challenges that will be created by the Lower Thames Crossing and would be vital to know where this was in the planning process. A clear message should be sent to National Highways and the Secretary of State for Transport that Thurrock remained opposed and urged those decision makers to hear the views of Thurrock.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion.

With 14 votes for, 27 votes against and 1 vote abstain, the amended motion was lost.

A further vote was undertaken for the substantive motion to which all 42 Members voting for, the Mayor announced the Motion carried.

111. Motion 3 submitted by Councillor J Kent

The Motion, as printed in the agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Kerin. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council resolves to use the Local Plan process to support the retention of Speedway in Thurrock and identify a new home for Grays Athletic, in the Grays area.

Councillor J Kent presented the motion by stating that Grays Athletic Football Club had lost their home ground in 2010 when the owner of the ground had sold it for development and since then had a variety of homes, sharing with East Thurrock United, with Rush Green and now sharing with Aveley Football Club. It was important to the town of Grays and for the club to be able to relocate to Grays. With changes being made to planning rules and the introduction of a policy that stated any sport club that had been displaced by a development would be found new land being identified in the borough. This had not happened for Lakeside Hammers who had been displaced by the potential development of Arena Essex. Councillor J Kent stated the motion requested that the planning process and the local plan process be used to identify suitable land for these two clubs that had brought only good to Thurrock.

Councillor M Coxshall welcomed this motion and as the local plan moved through the process it was important to include sports provision with leisure, entertainment, and sports provisions as they were a critical part of the local plan and for the residents of Thurrock.

Councillor Polley stated this was not the first time the Council had been asked to support Grays Athletic and would continue to support and questioned whether more negotiations by Grays Athletic with the landowner could have taken place. She noted the use of the local plan and that all football clubs and sports facilities now had to be profitable. She touched on the geographical area that a potential site could be offered and agreed that any activities and healthy living should be supported.

Councillor Mayes stated his support to the motion and the importance of the local plan. He also agreed for Grays Athletic to have a place to call their own home would be advantageous, not only for the football team but as a whole sports ecosystem, would be good for the whole community and youth set-up.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support to the motion and agreed there was a lot of interest in that Grays Athletic should return to Grays. In the past this had offered a lot of benefits to the area and had been an affordable day out for families. He agreed this should form part of the local plan and urged all residents to have their say. It should be a place where people want to come and spend their money because the sport, the facilities and entertainment were here in Thurrock for them to enjoy.

Councillor Ralph stated his support to the motion and agreed Grays Athletic needed a home of their own, it was great that local football teams helped and supported each other but this needed to happen quickly.

Councillor Jefferies stated his support to the motion as the local plan was not just about building new homes it was about providing a community with

sports, leisure and entertainment with football and speedway being at the heart of that local plan.

Councillor Redsell as chair of the Local Development Plan Task Force had invited Grays Athletic to committee to talk about their aspirations and what they were looking for and needed and they were currently in discussions with Planning and LDF. It was important as part of that discussion, that a safe place be found, that would not interfere with too many people's homes. Councillor Redsell stated it was also important that support should be provided to all sports and coaches, some of which were coaching Thurrock children voluntarily.

Councillor Chukwu stated his support for this motion and urged all Members to support it.

Councillor Duffin stated the motion presented should not be just achieving to get the piece of the land but to have the facilities there that would generate income for the club to sustain and to have facilities availability and revenue generators in place. It had previously been seen that it was those facilities that kept football clubs running, ensuring revenue for the whole year. Councillor Duffin supported the ethos of the motion but highlighted there was still a long way to go and eased caution but agreed to have something done would be great to see for all four teams around the borough having top quality venues that would benefit the community.

Councillor Byrne stated his support for this motion but reminded Members the importance to also support performing arts within the borough.

Councillor Kerin stated his support for Councillor J Kent's motion and comments made this evening had demonstrated how important this was and the local plan should be the opportunity not just for housing but to identify the place that Thurrock should be and what activities, sports and entertainment should be available. With Grays Athletic surviving 13 years of homelessness had been down to the supporters and the community work they undertake. As the local plan progressed it had to be identified how it could support local clubs, cultural assets, and organisations. If the local plan can help to put Grays Athletic onto a surer footing, then there was no reason why the team could not continue into the future.

Councillor J Kent thanked Members for their support this evening and noted the support of Lakeside Hammers was equally as important.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

With 42 votes for, the Mayor announced the motion carried.

The meeting finished at 9.16 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**