

Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on 28 November 2024 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Kairen Raper (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Ngozi Alike, Deborah Arnold, Paul Arnold, Gary Byrne, Ross Byrne, John Cecil, Daniel Chukwu, George Coxshall, John Fox, Robert Gledhill, Aaron Green, James Halden, Vikki Hartstean, Lynda Heath, Victoria Holloway, Mark Hooper, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Roy Jones, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Jacqui Maney, Fraser Massey, Sara Muldowney, Ryan Polston, Sue Sammons, Cathy Sisterson, Neil Speight and Lee Watson

Apologies: Councillors John Allen, Alex Anderson, David Day, Michael Fletcher, Clifford Holloway, Mark Hurrell, Tom Kelly, Martin Kerin, Valerie Morris-Cook, Srikanth Panjala, Elizabeth Rigby, Gary Watson and Lynn Worrall

In attendance: Dr Dave Smith, Chief Executive and Managing Director
Commissioner
Claire Demmel, Executive Director Place
Daniel Fenwick, Executive Director Corporate Services/
Monitoring Officer
Matthew Boulter, Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member
Services
Jenny Shade, Principal 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.

79. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

80. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

81. Motion

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

- 1. Members note with concern, and seek to debate, the decision taken by Cabinet on the 9 October, under item 16 of the agenda, which extends the*

timetable for the adoption of a Thurrock Local Plan, whilst placing a further financial pressure on the council.

- 2. Further, members request that the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the said decision and seek assurances from both the cabinet member for Good Growth and the Executive Director of Place as to the potential implications of the extended timetable.*

Councillor Jefferies presented his motion by stating in December 2023, members took the decision to move Regulation 18 in effort to formulate a local plan. Under the agreed timetable, the consultation responses should have been digested and now moved onto Regulation 19, a genuine progress but disappointed that cabinet in October made the decision to delay the timetable by many months. Changes in Government and further delays had impacted on the agreed timetable. With serious questions over the implications of the decision taken in October these now needed to be probed by all elected members to ensure no repeat of past failures. Agreed the local plan was one of the single most important things the council would need to do and do this through the Place overview and scrutiny function, on behalf of members. One of the biggest challenges facing the council would be the formation of a local plan and should be looking at the here and now and not what came next. The BVI stressed the importance of agreeing a local plan as a sign of the council's corporate recovery and the ability to deliver. Need to address urgently what the consequences would be of any further delay and how the Council could respond to that if that should arise. Concluded that he implored all members to agree to his motion this evening.

An amendment was received from Councillor Speight and seconded by Councillor Massey and read as follows:

Council members in this chamber this evening call on Thurrock Council through its officers to revisit the motion approved unanimously in September 2023 and to re-endorse it, with one significant change. We call on Thurrock Council to report on the management and achievements of Thurrock Council's planning department since 2015 – with that report's remit to be to produce a year-by-year performance analysis indicating the number of applications received, the number dealt with by delegation, the number progressed to committee and the number passed or rejected that have been contrary to officer recommendation. The report should produce a subjective judgement on the performance of the planning department over each of those years. In addition, the remit will include a full and detailed investigation into how and why the council has not been able to formulate a new local plan over the same period of time. When that report is completed, request it be reviewed and analysed by the CEO of Thurrock Council who will then prepare an assessment of its findings, implications, and possible further points of action to be submitted to Cabinet.

At 7.10pm, Councillor Jefferies called Point of Order, questioned how an amendment could replace an entire original motion. The Monitoring Officer stated the amendment whilst it replaced all of the words did remain on the

subject but presented a different point of view and was not outside of the council's procedural rules particularly on the point of not negating the motion.

Councillor Speight stated in preparing the amendment he believed it was the utmost importance to raise concerns over the planning system in Thurrock as this was not fit for purpose. In practical terms the council had undertaken a peer review of the planning department, with the review being short of detail and accountability and a motion heard which had been unanimously supported by all 49 members in September 2023. Heard that the local plan the council hoped to deliver in 2026 would now come to print in 2028. Concerns that delays would continue to allow ongoing assault on the greenbelt in Thurrock. Noted that new developments did not include new schools, new doctors or dentist surgeries or even leisure facilities. There was no joined up approach. The amendment called for an analytical dive into what had happened since 2015 and learn from the past. Concluded by stating what mattered now was what lied ahead and urged all members to support the motion to allow Thurrock a chance of getting better.

Councillors Massey, J Kent, J Maney, Abbas, V Holloway, Johnson, B Maney, Jones, L Watson and Coxshall spoke on this motion. The following comments were made:

- The need to understand the reasons why the latest plan had taken so long to reach this stage.
- Ensure going forward no more delays as the process moved towards adoption.
- The longer the council waited for the local plan the more developments would be approved that the council had less input. The council needed to ensure those developments worked for residents and businesses of the borough.
- Large developments already been approved through appeal by the secretary of state.
- The move of adoption date by 21 months seemed excessive.
- Residents and businesses rely on up-to-date local plan information.
- Extended delay would have a negative impact on growth, prevent residents from making educated decisions when renting or purchasing property.
- Questioned the reason for the non-delivery and scrutiny of the local plan should have come to cabinet or called into scrutiny.
- It was right to look forward and to ensure that a competent local plan that delivered what was needed in Thurrock.
- Noted the delay costs of £1.2 million.
- The reality there being no evidence to create policies to feed into that plan.
- The Planning committee had no impact or power and members felt they did not make a difference which had to change.
- Some Planning committee members felt they were merely bystanders on planning applications rather than being in control of the planning process.
- Feared that the council had created a developers' charter by delaying the adoption of a local plan.

- An immediate concern that the added delay removed the council's ability to defend themselves at appeal.
- The council needed to know how ready and capable the planning service was when it came to defending the Councillor's interests and resisting developments that were deemed unsuitable.
- Not having the local plan weaken negotiations on section 106 arrangements.
- Plan in place to get the infrastructure required for new developments.
- Delaying the local plan may make it likely that mistakes of the past would be repeated.
- Further delay would increase further burden on existing local resources.
- Residents of Thurrock expect and deserve better.
- The local plan would protect Thurrock from inappropriate development.
- Annoyed that very important members training had been cancelled this evening to hear the motion.
- Agreed the substantive motion would get to the point quicker as this was what the Place overview and scrutiny committee was in place for.
- Going through scrutiny would be more open and transparent and the committee would be able to shape the report, be responsible for the content and more importantly ask the right questions.
- To use scrutiny and the new scrutiny model to look at something which was of fundamental importance and to look forward, not backwards.
- There must be a need to monitor what was being built in the borough.
- A need to get the local plan completed earlier.
- The council needed to listen to their residents and their concerns.
- Too many broken promises.
- 50 recommendations had been made on the local plan, therefore could not go to the secretary of state as no evidence, no data to support the policy it would have been rejected.
- Concerned to be told that eight years of evidence was no good, could not be used and questioned what had happened.
- The scrutiny process could look at that evidence and understand why it had not been good enough and not suitable.
- Agreed that Thurrock needed home growth in the borough that would come with a local plan.
- There was a need to look forward not continually backwards.

At 7.29pm, Councillor V Holloway left the chamber.

At 7.44pm the Leader called Point of Order, Council Procedure Rules, Paragraph 19.17, Alteration of Motion, that the amendment be added to Councillor Jefferies motion as Point 3. The Mayor asked Councillor Jefferies whether he would consider this alteration to which he agreed.

At 7.47pm the meeting was adjourned.

At 7.59pm the meeting convened.

The Mayor called a vote on Members for the altered motion to be include in full as Point 3. Members voted unanimously in favour. The motion now read as follows:

- 1. Members note with concern, and seek to debate, the decision taken by Cabinet on the 9 October, under item 16 of the agenda, which extends the timetable for the adoption of a Thurrock Local Plan, whilst placing a further financial pressure on the council.*
- 2. Further, members request that the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the said decision and seek assurances from both the cabinet member for Good Growth and the Executive Director of Place as to the potential implications of the extended timetable.*
- 3. Council members in this chamber this evening call on Thurrock Council through its officers to revisit the motion approved unanimously in September 2023 and to re-endorse it, with one significant change. We call on Thurrock Council to report on the management and achievements of Thurrock Council's planning department since 2015 – with that report's remit to be to produce a year-by-year performance analysis indicating the number of applications received, the number dealt with by delegation, the number progressed to committee and the number passed or rejected that have been contrary to officer recommendation. The report should produce a subjective judgement on the performance of the planning department over each of those years. In addition, the remit will include a full and detailed investigation into how and why the council has not been able to formulate a new local plan over the same period of time. When that report is completed, request it be reviewed and analysed by the CEO of Thurrock Council who will then prepare an assessment of its findings, implications, and possible further points of action to be submitted to Cabinet.*

Councillor Speight stated that the deep analytical dive would show what had happened to the Local Plan.

Councillor Jefferies summed up by stating it was important that all members understood why the Local Plan had not moved forward and to ensure that was corrected. This was so that a local plan could be put in place to protect the borough's greenbelt, to protect green and open spaces, provide the people of Thurrock with homes, jobs, and the businesses that they need to grow.

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

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

[Council - Thursday 28 November 2024, 7:00pm - Thurrock Council committee meeting webcasts](#)

The meeting finished at 8.08 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**