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Agenda item

Motion 3 submitted by Councillor J Kent

- [Meeting of Council, Wednesday, 25th January, 2023 7.00 pm \(Item 111.\)](#)

Minutes:

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.

Supporting documents:

- [Motion 3 - submitted by Councillor J Kent, item 111.](#)  PDF 57 KB

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