

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **21 March 2017**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Tunde Ojetola, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors John Allen, Tony Fish, Ben Maney, Terry Piccolo and Kevin Wheeler

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

	Page
1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 10
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 2 February 2017.	
3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
4 Declaration of Interests	
5 Report on Housing White Paper - 'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'	11 - 18

6	Developing And Expanding Assistive Technology For The 21st Century For Social Care Service Users In Thurrock	19 - 44
7	Key Worker Housing Scheme	45 - 52
8	Residents Survey Results	53 - 64
9	Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme 2016/2017	65 - 68

Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **13 March 2017**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 February 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Gerard Rice (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Tunde Ojetola, Jane Potheary and Joycelyn Redsell

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative - Co-Opted Member

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
John Knight, Head of Housing
Julie Curtis, HRA and Development Accountant
Stefanie Seff, Corporate Procurement Strategy Delivery Manager
Kenna-Victoria Martin, 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.

24. Minutes

The Minutes of Cabinet, held on 13 December 2016, were approved as a correct record.

25. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

26. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Procurement of Housing Capital Programme Delivery

The Head of Housing presented the item by explaining the report set out the proposals for the re-procurement of the Housing Capital Programme, which was part of the Transforming Homes programme.

He continued to inform Members that the programme would bring significant improvement to the long term viability of Council housing and to the living conditions of residents and ensured the Council fulfilled its duty to provide warm homes with modern facilities. Members were notified the feedback from residents was positive with 82% of residents rating the contractor as good or excellent and 84% of residents rating the overall delivery of the programme as good or excellent.

It was stated that once out for advertisement, the Council's current contractors, were also entitled to bid for the contract along with other suppliers.

The Chair of the Committee enquired as to the financial impact of the government's 1% rent reduction. Officers explained that following the government's announcement £2.5 million would be removed from the housing budget.

Members sought as to how the key principals noted with the report were to be achieved. The Head of Housing informed the Committee that the second principal was to be accomplished with the support of a third party and the first would be achieved by monitoring the programme, working with the Liaison Officers and making visits to ensure that the process was explained to all tenants.

It was further queried as to who made the decision to continue with two main refurbishment packages. The Corporate Procurement Strategy Delivery Manager advised that it was recommended that the Council continue with two contractors, as the competition between the two would keep works to a high standard and should the work of one contractor begin to lack, work could be given to the other.

During discussions the Committee were advised that any feedback rated under 'fair' was not satisfactory, only ratings of good or excellent were considered a 'pass' under Key Performance Indicators and Officers were able to see comments left by residents, which could be used to improve the service.

The Housing Tenant Representative commented that at her complex many of the contractors could not speak English, which for the elderly and vulnerable people living there made them uncomfortable and they would often not allow them into their homes. She continued by stating the manager did a good job at assisting residents. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, stated all contractors' especially those visiting elderly or vulnerable people were required to wear ID badges and speak English as a basic need.

It was finally enquired as to why void properties within the borough were being left, for at times up to a year. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that the Council had a 30 to 40 day turn around period for void properties. He continued by commenting if a property had been left then it could mean that substantial work was required or the property could be privately owned.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were recommended to comment on the proposed process and contract package as set out in the report for re-procurement of the refurbishment and strategic cost management elements of the Housing Capital Programme.

28. HRA Business Plan and Budgets 2017/18

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health introduced the report and in doing, so advised Members the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had been redeveloped due to the government's announcement of the 1% rent reduction and was to be presented to Cabinet on Wednesday 8 February 2017.

It was explained that Officers had also taken into account additional costs such as repairs and the 3 Capital Programmes and were now facing the decision on how to generate an income or charge for services.

The Head of Housing informed the Committee that following the last meeting where Members raised concerns on the suggested service charges and the announcement of the 1% reduction Officers had relooked at the HRA. He continued by explaining the Council were still awaiting the Housing Whitepaper, which was to be announced immanently.

Members were notified that following their concerns at the previous meeting, Officers had come to the conclusion to offer satisfactory services to tenants and invest into the HRA, to complete this the phased extension of service charges was thought to be the most appropriate means of generating the required additional revenue.

The Chair of the Committee commented he felt the consultation with residents was important, however the Sheltered Service Charge of £15 per week was unacceptable. He continued by stating that people living in Sheltered Housing would rather complete certain tasks such as grass cutting themselves, than to have to pay for the services they received.

The Housing Tenant Representative agreed with the Chair stating that tenants did not want to pay for services that they did not receive. She further mentioned that she checked the lights, in her own complex and when informing the manager of lights which were not working, was informed to call the repair team herself.

Members were advised by the Head of Housing that the Council was the landlord for sheltered housing residents, which meant repairs were up to the Council to complete. He further mentioned in relation to a question about garages in the borough, that issues were to be picked up with the relevant service and he accepted that improvements were required.

It was discussed that the Council were commissioning a Stock Survey, following which they would be able to create a potential management plan with regards to garages.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health mentioned that he had visited all but 3 Sheltered Housing Complexes in the Borough. He notified the Committee that 70% of sheltered housing tenants were on full or partial

housing benefit and assured the Committee that all affected residents would be included within the consultation.

During discussions, Councillor Potheary stated that she was against the Sheltered Service charges. She queried as to who the Council was charging for heating, as this was subject to a 3% increase. It was explained that the 3% heating charge, came from the fees and charges policy.

Councillor Ojetola commented that he had concerns with Thurrock's vulnerable residents paying additional costs, when living in sheltered housing. The Head of Housing explained that the HRA budget was ring fenced and that the Council was currently charging some residents and not others for the services they were receiving.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health advised that all Local Authorities would be having the same conversations and looking at ways to contribute to the HRA budgets and so were also considering charging tenants for services offered.

It was queried as to whether the service charges would mean that an improved service would be offered to residents. Officers advised that the service charges would allow the Council to maintain the services currently provided.

Members were notified that all tenants affected would receive an advice letter, informing them of the consultation, which was to be undertaken via telephone, email or online. The Head of Housing advised the consultation would start at the end of February and would finish at the end of March.

The Chair of Committee suggested a new recommendation which was seconded by Councillor C Baker:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that no new charge of £15 per week be introduced for sheltered housing tenants and that following the Council's consultation, any such charge will apply to new tenants only.

Members voted on the suggested recommendation as follows:

For: Councillors G Rice, C Baker, J Baker, J Potheary and J Redsell.

Against: Councillor T Ojetola.

The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health explained that a report was to be presented at the February meeting of Cabinet, then the consultation would begin, after which a report would be presented to Cabinet in April for a final decision.

RESOLVED:

1. That the assumptions included in the HRA Business Plan be noted.
2. That the budgets for 2017/18 be noted.
3. That the HRA New Build programme maximises the use of Right to Buy (RTB) Receipts in place of Homes and Communities Agency funding.
4. That growth for revenue repairs and capital investment is noted.
5. That a 3% increase to all existing tenant charges is noted in line with the Council's increases to Fees and Charges.
6. That tenants receiving certain housing management services be consulted on the phased introduction of service charges, which are currently only levied on leaseholders, with a final report back to Cabinet in April.
7. The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend that no new charge of £15 per week be introduced for sheltered housing tenants and that following the Council's consultation, any such charge will apply to new tenants only.

Councillor Potheary declared that she was against recommendations 1.5 and 1.6.

29. Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy 2017/18

The Chair of the Committee introduced the report commenting that it was self-explanatory, he enquired if Members had any questions. There were no questions from any Member on the report.

RESOLVED That Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

1. Note the revised fees and charges proposals including those no longer applicable;
2. Commented on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

30. Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

Members discussed the Work Programme. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health sought if the Committee would be happy for an extraordinary meeting to be arranged for March 2017, as there were a number of reports, which Officers wished to present to Members before presenting to Cabinet in April.

It was enquired by Members if a report on Garages, could be brought to a March meeting. Officers explained that it might not be possible to present a report at an agreed March meeting, however confirmed a report would be presented at the first meeting of the Committee in the new Municipal Year.

Members further requested a report on the Review of Gatekeeping be presented to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme be updated in line with Members discussions and an extraordinary meeting be arranged for March 2017.

The meeting finished at 8.40 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

21 March 2017	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Report on Housing White Paper - <i>'Fixing Our Broken Housing Market'</i>	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: John Knight, Head of Housing	
Accountable Head of Service: John Knight, Head of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	

Executive Summary

This report provides a brief summary of the Housing White Paper published in February 2017 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, with a focus on its implications for Thurrock.

1. Recommendations :

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on and note this briefing on the Housing White Paper

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report provides a brief summary of the Housing White Paper published in February 2017 by the Department for Communities and Local Government, with a focus on its implications for Thurrock.

Overview of issues

2.2 The White Paper sets out an approach to national housing policy which can be seen as less focussed on home ownership than has been the case in former overall policy statements, reflecting the reduction in owner-occupation which has been occurring since before the financial crisis of 2008.

2.3 The Prime Minister's Foreword for example states that *'Whether buying or renting, the fact is that housing is increasingly unaffordable'*. The Foreword goes on to note that *'the proportion of people living in the private rented sector has doubled since 2000'*, an observation which applies to Thurrock where this form of tenure has increased to 15% of all properties over last 10 years.

- 2.4 This is emphasised further by the commitment to *‘ensure that the housing market is as fair to those who don’t own their own homes as it is for those that do’*. The Prime Minister anticipates the impact of the proposed measures as follows; *The starting point is to build more homes. This will slow the rise in housing costs so that more ordinary working families can afford to buy a home and it will also bring the cost of renting down’*.
- 2.5 Similarly, the Secretary of State’s Foreword concludes that *‘We need radical reform that will get more homes built right now and for many years to come. This White Paper explains how we will do just that’*. The emphasis on additional homes and strengthening the private rented sector represents a notable shift in the aspirations of the national policy envisaged in the rest of the document

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Specific measures – Planning

- 3.1 The main focus of the substantive measures proposed in the White Paper is the planning system and its ability to facilitate the delivery of the new homes England needs. A wide range of potential changes are set out - some of these already tabled in the Neighbourhood Planning Bill, while others are proposed as changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which is being revised for 2017.
- 3.2 The following are among the main specific changes proposed in the White Paper :
- Ensuring every local authority has an up-to-date 5-year plan for development, and standardising the methodology used to arrive at ‘objectively assessed need’, backed up by a ‘housing delivery test’ to highlight insufficient numbers of homes being delivered. Thurrock’s methodology already complies with the one preferred by the government
 - Improvements to the neighbourhood planning process to support higher density in appropriate locations, increase the emphasis on design, and ensure there is a clear positive presumption for development opportunities on small sites and other flexibilities to maximise delivery
 - Putting more onus on developers by requiring more detailed information about timing and build-out rates; shortening from 3 to 2 years the timescale for developers to implement planning permissions; simplifying the process for serving completion notices where development has stopped on agreed sites; and encouraging through new guidance the use of CPO powers.

- Diversifying the market through financial help to smaller builders (a Home Building Fund of £3 billion launched in October 2016); supporting off-site manufacturing methods and other innovative models, and promoting self-build through financial exemptions and encouraging lenders to fund these initiatives
 - Amending national policy to make clear that Green Belt land remains protected and should only be considered when all other reasonable options have been considered
- 3.3 These and other planning measures are the subject of a consultation running until May 2017 to which Thurrock will make a formal response.

Specific measures – Affordable Homes

- 3.4 The government wants to revise the definition of 'affordable housing' in the NPPF, and to ensure that more affordable housing is delivered.
- 3.5 The White Paper suggests two changes to planning policy to assist households currently 'priced out' out of either buying or renting: a) changing the definition of affordable housing to include a modified version of 'starter homes' to buy (with an income cap of £80,000 outside London, a mortgage/repayment term requirement, and a percentage-per-site requirement reduced from 20% to 10%) and b) introducing a new category of 'affordable private rented housing', at least 20% below market rents, to link with Build to Rent schemes. Affordable housing will also include social rented and affordable rented housing and intermediate housing (inc. Shared Ownership).
- 3.6 These proposals are also included in the consultation exercise.
- 3.7 The final level of affordable housing for each site will remain a product of local policies and negotiations. The White Paper recognises that agreed 'commuted sums' can be used in lieu of onsite provision 'where this is robustly justified'.

Specific measures – Private rented sector

- 3.8 The White Paper envisages a 'step change in house building' that will include 'more good quality private rented homes'. The government wants to see major institutional investment in the private rented sector (including local government pension funds), building on the £1 billion Build to Rent fund and including the provision of 'family-friendly tenancies' with minimum terms of 3 years rather than the current statutory minimum of 6 months. The government makes clear this is its preferred form of letting and will be speaking to the LGA and others about how to encourage such longer terms for families (some proposed amendments have been tabled to the Homelessness Reduction Bill with similar intentions)

- 3.9 There are also proposals to give renters a fairer deal – proceeding with banning orders and increased fines for ‘rogue’ landlords (HPA 2016), and consulting on early legislation to ban letting agent fees to tenants. There are also plans to consult on mandatory electrical safety checks for tenancies.

Specific measures – Social and Supported housing

- 3.10 There is a limited emphasis in the document on social housing, and no reference to either the high-value voids levy (included in HPA 2016 but currently deferred to 2017-18) or the introduction of mandatory fixed-term tenancies (currently expected in the autumn) The following significant statements do appear;
- The rent reduction policy of 1% p.a. is confirmed until 2020
 - The White Paper notes that twice as many local authority homes have been built in the last 5 years than in the 13 years from 1997 to 2010, and commits the government to ‘*work with local authorities to understand all the options for increasing the supply of affordable housing*’. This includes encouragement for local housing companies (with the proviso that tenants provided with homes through such models should enjoy the Right to Buy alongside secure tenants)
 - The Homes and Communities Agency is to be re-launched as ‘Homes England’, with a brief to unlock development capacity in line with the recommendations above (e.g. on public land)
 - The social housing regulator will become a stand-alone independent body
 - Regarding supported housing there is a commitment to a sustainable future funding model, including the following ; ‘*we have deferred the application of Local Housing Allowance rates for supported housing until 2019/20, at which point we will bring in a new funding model which will ensure that supported housing continues to be funded at the same level it would otherwise have been in 2019/20..*’
 - The private sector status of Housing Associations is re-asserted along with their key role in meeting housing need, including through participation in Build to Rent schemes, etc. The extension of Right to Buy to HA tenants is also re-affirmed (extension to 3,000 as announced in the Autumn Statement)

Specific measures – Homelessness/rough sleeping

- 3.11 The White Paper confirms the government’s support of Bob Blackman MP’s Homelessness Reduction Bill, seen as a means of ensuring that ‘*households get the help they need before they become homeless, to prevent a crisis happening in the first place*’. Recent funding announcements are also described, including the homelessness ‘trailblazers’ fund – Thurrock’s

individual bid for this funding was unsuccessful, but the Essex region secured £890,000 with this borough as one of ten participating authorities.

Challenges / opportunities for Thurrock

- 3.12 As a borough with an estimated need for additional housing of over 600 dwellings p.a. (Local Plan 2016-21), Thurrock is well-placed to benefit from the increases in a number of pipelines that is anticipated as a result of these proposals.
- 3.13 As a borough of relatively low incomes, successful negotiations with developers will be key to ensuring that local residents are in a position to benefit from developments which increase the overall supply of housing – the proposed adjustments to the definition of ‘affordable housing’ for inclusion in planning requirements may be of assistance to these groups.
- 3.14 The White Paper seeks to address the kind of bottlenecks in the planning system which led in part to the establishment of Gloriana Ltd. in Thurrock as a Special Purpose Vehicle for the delivery of housing. The White Paper includes a statement that the government looks favourably on the development of such local housing companies in recent years.
- 3.15 The endorsement of modular and other non-traditional forms of housing delivery is also consistent with Thurrock’s priorities as a way of delivering homes more efficiently and quickly – similarly, the use of ‘commuted sums’ (allowing approved development bids to be delivered in more than one site) might be a feature of future schemes given the diverse land profile of the borough.
- 3.16 Thurrock has a growing private rented sector with the associated issues of poor standards and increasing insecurity. The proposed measures to strengthen the rights of private tenants are welcome in this context. As the White Paper itself makes clear, private sector evictions are now the single biggest cause of statutory homelessness, and any steps which might increase the security of private tenants, or provide alternative ‘sub-market’ options through Build to Rent etc., might mitigate this pressure locally.
- 3.17 The continued rent reduction policy confirms the need to generate more revenue for the HRA from other sources, in line with the proposed extension of service charges.
- 3.18 As stated above Thurrock’s Housing and Planning services will work on a formal consultation response to be submitted by the deadline date of May 2nd, can will closely monitor developments after that date including any specific changes which are made after the consultation to legislation and/or funding.
- 3.19 The housing review which is now underway will include detailed ‘supply and demand’ modelling, to establish as far as possible what the impact of the measures in the White Paper – as confirmed or out for consultation – are

likely to be in terms of the number of new homes, and in particular affordable homes, to be delivered in Thurrock over the next 5 years.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

This report is only for noting.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

N/A

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Roger Harris**
Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health

This report is only for noting. Any financial implications arising from the White Paper will be reported back in future reports.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Roger Harris**
Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health

This report is only for noting. Any legal implications arising from the White Paper will be reported back in future reports.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roger Harris**
Corporate Director Adults, Housing and Health

This report is only for noting. Any wider implications arising from the White Paper will be reported back in future reports.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Authors:

John Knight, Head of Housing

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21 March 2017	ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Developing And Expanding Assistive Technology For The 21st Century For Social Care Service Users In Thurrock	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
Accountable Head of Service: Les Billingham, Head of Adult Social Care and Community Services	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Enhancing and expanding the take up of telecare and assistive technology is a key council priority, reflected in the Health and Social Care Transformation Programme: “For Thurrock in Thurrock”. It is designed to promote independent living for people living in council and private accommodation, and better enable the council to fulfil its health and well-being duties under the Care Act 2014.

In September 2016, a Careline Review Team was established to examine the options for upgrading obsolete equipment in the Careline monitoring centre, in sheltered housing and general needs flats that have hard-wired pull cord alarm systems, and to review current arrangements for charging for the service. This report sets out the conclusions of the first stage of that review, and provides recommendations designed to resolve a number of the key issues identified.

There are many electronic products and systems that use technology to promote health and wellbeing in the home, by monitoring activity, managing risks, increasing security, helping the person manage the important tasks within their daily lives, and bringing support more quickly when things go wrong. Memory aids, telecare and safe walking devices, mobile phones and digital apps - assistive technology all now offer invaluable opportunities to help your relative stay safe and be more in control of their own life for longer.

Background research into how other health and social care organisations are deploying telecare and assistive technology is also underway and a further briefing

paper is attached for reference at Appendix C. The potential benefits identified to date, even at this early stage of the review are very encouraging – both in terms of improved outcomes for an individual’s health and wellbeing, as well as increased efficiency in the use of resources. A further report to Scrutiny will be presented once the examination of the costs and benefits of enhancing and expanding the take up of telecare and assistive technology has been completed.

1. Recommendation(s)

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to support:

- 1.1 To the essential work being undertaken to decommission the hard-wired pull cord community alarm system in sheltered housing blocks and general needs community alarm flats, and to replace them with dispersed personal alarms where required by the service user.**
- 1.2 To the plan to upgrade the Careline monitoring system which is also obsolete and lacks the functionality required to support the service.**
- 1.3 To develop the Careline service into a new, enhanced and expanded telecare and assistive technology service, linked to telemedicine services where appropriate;**
- 1.4 In relation to charging for Careline and the new telecare service:**
 - To make Careline / Assistive Technology and the new telecare service available free of charge to users of adult social care as part of our wider prevention strategy.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Like many councils, Thurrock set up a community alarm service (comprising both pull-cord and disperse alarms) originally to support its council tenants living in sheltered housing and other supported housing. Since it was first set up, the Careline service has extended its reach and now also supports a wide range of people living across the borough, in all tenures.**
- 2.2 The Careline service has evolved over time and it was recognised that a thorough review of the current service was needed as a precursor to developing, with health partners, a joint telecare and assistive technology strategy fit for the 21st century, as well as providing the best quality of service and value for money to residents.**
- 2.3 A number of factors were considered as context for the review:**
 - 2.3.1 The review recognises that the current Careline service is staffed by dedicated officers who offer a good service to residents in the face of many operational difficulties due to the age of the current equipment (both monitoring centre equipment and hard-wired pull-cord alarms). The service is**

first and foremost a reactive emergency service – activated when the personal alarm is triggered by someone who is in difficulty (for example following a fall or a medical emergency), and depending on the circumstances, Careline staff may go to the person’s home to assist them. Careline users do, however, trigger the alarm for other reasons such as seeking reassurance.

2.3.2 The current Careline monitoring centre equipment at Harty Close, purchased in 2007, is outdated and lacks some elements of modern functionality. The Careline service is dependent on the monitoring centre system so reliability is essential. The current monitoring centre equipment offers little connectivity and integration with other systems, is difficult to interrogate and does not offer GPS tracking. More up to date equipment enables a flow of information between the monitoring centre and other council staff such as social workers, provides tracking data outside of the home, and facilitates a range of reports on Careline activities. The enhanced capability would also allow the development of new service offers such as lone worker support. The pull-cord system used in a number of sheltered housing schemes, and general needs community alarm flats, is now obsolete and no longer supported by the manufacturer. System failures and call outs are therefore costing the Council significant breakdown and repairs charges – 50% in excess of the service contract in 2015/16.

2.3.3 Technology, including mobile phones and digital apps, has evolved since community alarms were first introduced some thirty years ago. These developments mean that both professionals and individuals can exercise choice in relation to the kind of alarms and sensory equipment they may wish to use for themselves, or for the people for whom they care.

2.3.4 There is now a range of bespoke telehealth applications which increasingly will be deployed by primary health care providers¹ and community health care providers - North East London Foundation Trust Community Health Services, and South Essex Partnership Foundation - to support people to successfully manage long term conditions.

2.3.5 A new service is currently being set up called ‘Thurrock First’ - a Single Point of Access to health and care advice and services provided by Thurrock Council Adult Social Care, North East London Foundation Trust Community Health Services, and South Essex Partnership Foundation Trust mental health services. The focus of Thurrock First is a single access point providing professional advice and care coordination across disciplines in one place. The approach will be to have two tiers of staff at any one time – tier 1 call handlers who will respond to enquiries and provide advice/information or further service as required; and tier 2 ‘specialists’ who will provide additional more complex support. The service will be located at Thurrock Hospital and will operate 7 days a week.

2.3.6 As a discretionary service, in line with the Council’s charging policy, the cost of providing the Careline service is currently recharged to users of the service.

¹ c.f. Digital requirements for new primary care models – Nuffield Trust April 2016

The charging arrangements are currently based on the tenure of the service user. The Care Act 2014 provides a new statutory framework for establishing a consistent, transparent and fair approach to charging, in particular stipulating that the approach to charging should:

- Apply the charging rules equally so those with similar needs or services are treated the same and minimise anomalies between different care settings.

2.3.7 To sum up the context for the review, the Council and Clinical Adult Social Care's transformation programme – 'For Thurrock in Thurrock' seeks to build caring communities where the strengths and resources within communities can better support people to live fulfilled lives. As the number of older people with long term conditions increases, there will be increasing demands on care and health services so a response which combines the best that telecare and assistive technology can provide, together with the many community-based supports, will be essential if the Council is to manage the increasing demand.

2.3.8 The Careline service and the technology capability the service requires to function, needs to be 'fit for purpose' both now and in the future if it is to support the Council to undertake its health and wellbeing responsibilities in the 21st century. As telecare can prevent, reduce or delay the need for more intensive health and care services, it is also appropriate to consider whether it is appropriate to charge for the service, or whether other funding can be secured to cover those costs.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Issue One –upgrading the call monitoring equipment

Thurrock's Careline service, based in Harty Close (Sheltered Housing Complex) in Stifford Clays, Grays, provides a 24/7/365 monitoring and response to service users. Business continuity support is located at another sheltered housing site – Airey Neave Court - with one call handling workstation. The monitoring centre is currently operating using the following Tunstall Telecom hardware and software:

- PNC5 software
- Three Call Handling Terminals
- Western Digital Voice Recorder

3.2 The PNC5 software is now outdated, with limited functionality, and therefore any upgrade in equipment for the end user (telehealth, telecare and telemedicine etc.) can only be implemented if the software is also upgraded. In addition the current software is no longer supported by Tunstall.

3.3 As well as monitoring community alarm service users, the Careline monitoring centre also handles all emergency out of hours calls to the Council (between 4.30 pm to 9am). The Council's main contact centre within the Civic offices is open until 6pm for all general enquiries. On average, Careline receives in the

region of 500 “out of hours” emergency calls per week. The monitoring centre split between Careline calls and emergency out of hours calls is 90%-10% respectively.

3.4 Issue Two – decommissioning the hard-wired pull cord equipment and replacing it with dispersed alarms

3.5 The council has upgraded the hard-wired system in half of the sheltered housing stock and should address the failure to upgrade the remainder as a matter of urgency. When upgrading the system the council has two options:

- Option 1 to retain the current hard-wired configuration and upgrade it to provide additional functionality such as voice call and an “I’m OK”² function².
- Option 2 to remove the hard-wired system and replace it with a fully dispersed alarm system which also offers additional functionality such as voice call and an “I’m OK” function.

3.6 Retaining the hard-wired system (option 1) has ongoing maintenance costs of approximately £65k per year whereas replacing the system with dispersed units (option 2) has a higher capital cost of approximately £50k in year one but no maintenance costs thereafter with the exception of some standard batteries to be replaced in future years, depending on usage. The overall costs for retaining a hard wired system over five years is £527k. The overall costs for removing the hard wired system and replacing it with the dispersed alarms over five years is £320k – a projected saving of over £200k over the five years. If the council chooses to remove the hard-wired system and replace it with the dispersed alarms it would require the installation of a telephone line in properties where these do not exist currently and the provision of a direct link for the smoke and heat detectors in communal areas to the Harty Close Contact Centre. These costs are included in the estimates for the work. Because of the significant cost savings achieved by option 2, it is proposed to replace the hard wired system in the sheltered housing stock with the dispersed alarm system.

3.7 The hard wired system in the general needs community alarms flats is also obsolete and should be removed and replaced, where necessary, with dispersed units. The current hard wired system is not used by the majority of residents in these dwellings and it is estimated that the Council will need to re-provide a dispersed alarm service in less than one third of the stock at a cost of approximately £56k over the five year period (including the existing system removal costs).

3.8 Issue Three – Charging for the Careline service

² The “I’m OK” function gives the service user the option to let the service provider know that they are active and don’t need the usual regular call from the service. In Thurrock’s case this means removing the need for Sheltered Housing Officers to ring out to every service user and only contact those who either request a call or who haven’t used the “I’m OK” option that day will free up the Sheltered Housing Officer for other work.

- 3.9 The Council cannot charge for the personal alarm equipment provided to the person's home where it is provided to meet needs or prevent, reduced or delay the needs for adult social care. However, the Council can, at its discretion, charge for the monitoring service that responds to the personal alarm calls, as well as for the installation of the equipment.
- 3.10 The Care Act provides the legal framework for revising the charging structure, furthermore, the financial pressures facing the Council also mean that Thurrock needs to give consideration to raising income for services that are chargeable. The Council cannot charge more than the cost that it incurs in meeting the assessed needs of a person nor can it recover administration fees relating to arranging care and support.
- 3.11 If charges for the Careline and telecare services are to be applied a new uniform charge across the tenures must be introduced in order to comply with the requirements of the Care Act 2014. If the charge is to recover the cost of the service it would need to be set at £2.87 per week. This level of charge compares favourably with all but one of the providers referenced in the report at Appendix A.
- 3.12 The Council also has the option, in particular because Careline and telecare are preventative services, to no longer apply a charge and instead use funding available from the Improved Better Care Fund to cover the costs of the service. This would serve to remove the current anomaly regarding the discretionary charge, encourage take up and so the expansion of the service, and also align with the approach taken to other preventative services and technologies across health and social care.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The Council is currently incurring additional repairs and maintenance expenditure which is approximately 50% of the value of the annual service agreement it has with Tunstall because of the obsolete hard-wired pull-cord systems in the community alarm flats and sheltered schemes and in the monitoring centre. The costs of remedying this situation have been examined, and officers are proposing that the most efficient solutions are procured. The investment made in year one will result in significant savings in terms of repairs and breakdown costs and servicing costs.
- 4.2 The upgrades to the equipment used in both the sheltered housing schemes and general needs community alarm flats will require an upgrade in the central monitoring system at Harty Close. The current software is outdated and lacks functionality. The upgrade to the current software will support more innovative use of telecare and telehealth equipment including the use of mobile personal alarms that help keep people safe outside of their home. It will also facilitate the sharing of data with Adult Social Care systems.
- 4.3 Charges for Careline have been historically based on tenure, reflecting the origins of the community alarm service – with council tenants paying nothing towards the cost of the service and a significant cost being borne by the HRA

and General Fund. The Care Act provides the statutory impetus for correcting the anomalous charging regime for Careline, and the move towards integration with Health provides the mechanism for future funding through the Better Care Fund. This new basis for telecare and assistive technology service will also ensure that prospective service users benefit from a range of integrated health and care services to support their health and well-being.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 A consultation on the proposed changes to the provision of adult social care was undertaken over 12 weeks between 14 September and 7 December 2015. The outcome of the consultation was reported to the Committee at its meeting on 12 January 2016. The Committee agreed to instigate the review of the Careline service and its charges.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 These are dealt with in the body of the report.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

Currently, the cost of providing the Careline Service and associated technology and equipment (exclusive of the Out of Hours Service) is just over £600,000 per annum. This includes the costs of purchasing personal alarm and sensory equipment that, under the Care Act 2014, cannot be charged to service users.

At present, total income raised from charges for the Careline and telecare service is just over £58,000. This leaves a significant gap between the income received and the costs of the service. These costs are met by both the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund. The introduction of a uniform charge, as required by the Act, will go some way to reducing (but not eliminating) the financial call on those Funds.

However, the option exists to offset a proportion of the costs of the Careline and telecare services with new monies released in the Spring Budget 2017 through the Improved Better Care Fund. This would allow the Council to reduce the financial impact of providing this preventative service on the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund, while providing the Careline service at no cost to all eligible users of adult social care services.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Paul O'Reilly**
Projects Lawyer

Legal Services notes the contents of the report and the proposed options. At this point, Legal Services will be available to provide such support as may be required pending clarification of the choice of option, following which, Legal Services will advise and support on the necessary legislative, procurement and contract issues that may arise, including drafting of any agreements with external contractors related to the selected technology and software and any related matters.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer, Community Development and Equalities Team

The community alarm service is provided for residents who require some degree of support or monitoring to ensure their safety, as such they represent some of the protected groups under Diversity and Equality legislation. However, the focus of this report is upon service improvement and providing an equitable charging process across the entire service, regardless of tenure. As such diversity and equality considerations should be enhanced by these actions. In terms of introducing a broader charging model we acknowledge that this might have the potential to adversely impact upon specific groups. However, we will have an obligation to engage fully with current users and others who may be affected and will use this process to ensure that issues that have the potential to unfairly impact upon these groups will be mitigated.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

These are dealt with in the body of the report.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Report: Consultation on the proposed changes to the way Social Care is provided in Thurrock 12 January 2016 Item 8

<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/documents/s6541/Consultation%20on%20the%20proposed%20changes%20to%20the%20way%20Social%20Care%20is%20provided%20in%20Thurrock.pdf>

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Key Information About Careline
- Appendix 2 – Tunstall Upgrade Costs
- Appendix 3 - Future Deployment Of Telecare And Assistive Technology

Report Author:

Sue Williams
Review Project Manager, Adults, Housing and Health

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Appendix 1 – Key Information about Careline

The number and type of Careline connections

There are some 3883 users of ‘dispersed alarms’ and ‘community alarms’. This total comprises 1965 properties with the pull-cord community alarms and 1,918 people with dispersed alarms. The number of service users is increasing each year.

Type of equipment	Numbers	Commentary
Dispersed alarm	1918	This equipment is a stand-alone system that is connected to a phone socket and plug point.
Pull-cord system – sheltered housing	1283	This equipment is ‘hard-wired’ in the sheltered housing blocks. Half of the sheltered housing schemes have obsolete pull-cord systems that are prone to breakdown.
Pull-cord system – general needs community alarm flats	682	This equipment is ‘hard-wired’ in the community alarm flats. It is obsolete and prone to breakdown and expensive to repair. It is estimated that 70% of current community alarm flat occupants do not need a Careline service
Current Total	3883	
Projected Total	3405	After removal of unwanted, obsolete pull-cords.

- Dispersed alarms: This equipment is a stand-alone system that is connected to a phone socket and a plug point. Each current community alarm costs in the region of £100 and consists of a pendant that is worn around the neck or wrist that is linked to the base unit. Careline staff install the equipment and replace batteries as part of the service they provide to users. There is no other maintenance cost.
- Pull-cord system: This system is hard-wired in Council sheltered housing schemes and ‘community alarm’ flats. Approximately half the pull-cord alarm systems in sheltered housing schemes were upgraded three years ago to dispersed alarms but the remainder are both old and virtually obsolete. This creates a risk of equipment breakdown and service failure.

Council tenants comprise 62% of Careline users, 26% of Careline users live in private accommodation and have been assessed by Adult Social Care as eligible for social care. Currently 2% of Careline users living in private accommodation are self-funders and have not been assessed with an eligible need for social care. 10% of Careline users ¹have additional assistive technology equipment. This includes chair and bed occupancy sensors, property exit sensors, flood, gas and extreme temperature sensors. This equipment is provided through a contract with an assistive technology provider, Red Alert.

¹ The current PNC 5 monitoring system does not provide a breakdown by tenure of people who have assistive technology.

Service Performance and Usage

The Service receives a high level of calls by industry standards. In the period April – August 2016, the number of calls received and made by the control centre ranged from 12,000 – 15,000 per month. In the same period, Careline staff made the following emergency and planned client visits per month:

EMERGENCY CALLOUTS

FY 2016/17	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Received / Actioned	84	76	113	112	166
Actioned in 10 min	79	74	112	109	164
% Actioned in 10min	94%	97%	99%	97%	99%
Follow Up*	19	11	20	7	25

**Emergency Callouts resulting in Follow up actions such as Doctors visit, Emergency Services, Falls clinic etc. Some callouts are triggered by faulty equipment, but the team needs to respond to check the situation.*

PLANNED VISITS

FY 2016/17	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Planned Visits	124	220	184	127	129

For the installation or removal of equipment, replacement of batteries or faulty equipment

The target for responding to calls is 20 seconds and Careline regularly exceeds the industry quality standard of 85% of calls answered within 20 seconds. Careline is accredited with the Customer Contact Association (CCA Global Standard version 6), and was recently assessed by BSI as part of the overall customer services inspection in June 2016 with no non-conformities.

Careline staff report that the number of calls received increased when the warden service within Sheltered Housing was changed from fixed wardens per block to peripatetic (floating) support. Analysis of calls (incoming and outgoing) from 22/09/2015 - 23/09/2016 is as follows:

- Council tenants including sheltered housing tenants - 54%
- Private occupiers - 1%
- Service users who have been assessed by Adult Social Care - 15%
- Service users with additional Assistive Technology equipment - 30%
- Total:100%

For the same period, emergency out of hours calls received by the call centre related to the following categories:

- ²Social services calls (Children's) – 70%
- ³Social services calls (Adults) – 14%
- Environmental services e.g. stray dogs etc. – 7.5%
- Highways – 7.5%
- Civil contingency – 1%

² Examples of calls received regarding children included: child absconded, child being taken away from mother at birth, an appropriate adult required by the police for a child in custody.

³ Examples of calls received regarding adults included: adult needing sectioning, emergency respite care, emergency call required

- Total: 100%

Plans for decommissioning hardwired alarms

Prior to the commencement of this decommissioning work, plans will be put in place to ensure that vulnerable tenants who need/want a personal alarm are able to transition seamlessly over to the dispersed alarm. This will require an action plan between Housing, Careline and Adult Social Care. It is suggested that there should be a designated lead in the Community Solutions Team who will be responsible for coordination with Housing and Careline. The following actions are proposed:

- Identification of tenants who are known to Careline (i.e. they have used their Careline in the last 3 months): these tenants should be interviewed by the Community Solutions Team (in person or by phone) to discuss their requirements, and the Community Solutions Team, Careline and Housing should put in place an action plan to ensure a seamless transition.
- Sending a letter to everyone else living in these flats and who is not known to Careline – offering an interview with the Community Solutions Team to assess their requirements for a dispersed alarm as a replacement for the hard-wired pull-cord.
- Regular liaison and updates with residents and local councillors to ensure that there is full understanding of the planned works.
- Any changes in occupancy need to be recorded so that any variation in tenants' requirements are understood during the life of the decommissioning contract.

As stated elsewhere in this report the current software operating the Careline and Community Alarm systems (PNC5) is obsolete and no longer supported by the provider, Tunstall Telecom. As a result of the obsolescence of PNC5, the maintenance agreement the council had with Tunstall no longer covers all failures, leading to additional repairs and servicing costs. Last year the council spent £165,000 on response and ad hoc repairs and maintenance with Tunstall. Upgrading to a new system will significantly reduce this level of cost as there will be no repair and maintenance costs in year one and a maintenance agreement will be in place thereafter at a much lower cost to the Council.

The migration to improved Careline services with the capability of delivering advanced telecare and telehealth services can only be delivered if the hardware and software at Harty Close is also updated. In addition, upgrading the whole service, including replacing the hard wired system with dispersed alarm units, will give the council the option to include procurement of specialist equipment for additional monitoring and support for service users currently provided through Red Alert. These include equipment and sensors that can detect movement, or the lack of it, flood sensors in bathrooms and kitchens and automated reminders for specific service users. The current provider, Tunstall Telecom for the PNC5 and associated hardware does not have a monopoly on dispersed alarm systems and community alarm software and equipment and as such, other providers will be invited to submit tenders

for the service. Subject to further consideration, the tender may also include the supply of additional specialist equipment currently supplied by Red Alert.

The capital costs for upgrading the Harty Close monitoring centre, replacing the hard wired system in the sheltered housing stock and general needs units with Careline units and installing the appropriate heat and smoke detector systems is estimated to be £400k. This would be 'spend to save' expenditure reducing the ongoing costs of the service by approximately £65k per year. The detailed costs are at Appendix B.

The funding for the upgrade is being made available from a Housing Reserve.

Charges for the Careline service

Careline is a discretionary service and so, in line with the Council's charging policy, chargeable. However, the charge as it is currently formulated varies according to the tenure of the user. Thurrock Council tenants pay nothing for the service. People living in all other tenures pay either 93 pence per week (unchanged over many years), if they are assessed as eligible for social care, or otherwise £16.50 plus VAT per month (increased annually). At present there are 1014 people paying 93 pence per week for the service and 92 people paying £16.50 plus VAT per month. These charges were originally set by Housing. This discrepancy in charging does not appear to comply with the Care Act, potentially leaving the Council open to accusations of unfairness and/or discrimination by tenure in not addressed. The arrangement appears to be unique to Thurrock. It is recognised that the charging framework needs to be subject to rigorous review in the context of the Care Act sets which sets out principles that the approach to charging should:

- ensure that people are not charged more than it is reasonably practicable for them to pay
- be comprehensive, to reduce variation in the way people are assessed and charged
- be clear and transparent, so people know what they will be charged
- promote wellbeing, social inclusion, and support the vision of personalisation, independence, choice and control
- support carers to look after their own health and wellbeing and to care effectively and safely
- be person-focused, reflecting the variety of care and caring journeys and the variety of options available to meet their needs
- apply the charging rules equally so those with similar needs or services are treated the same and minimise anomalies between different care settings
- encourage and enable those who wish to stay in or take up employment, education or training or plan for the future costs of meeting their needs to do so
- be sustainable for local authorities in the long-term

At present, the cost of providing the Careline Service and associated technology/equipment (exclusive of the Out of Hours Service) is just over £600,000 per annum. This includes the costs of purchasing personal alarm and sensory equipment that cannot be charged to users. At present, total income raised from charges is just over £58,000. This leaves a significant gap between the income received and the costs of the service. These costs are met by both the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund.

2.3.5 By way of comparison, a sample of charges from a range of providers is set out below. It should be noted that many services simply offer a monitoring service with referral to friends and family or emergency service. Thurrock Careline currently offers a monitoring and response service.

Examples of current charges by other providers:

- Age UK - £3.47 per week plus a set up charge of either £69 (for self-connection) or £129 if Age UK install.
- Chelmsford – First 3 months free, then £2.40 per week plus a set up charge of £40. If additional equipment is installed the weekly charge is £3.63.
- Colchester - 12 week free trial followed by: £4 per week call monitoring service only or £ 6 per week for the response service.
- Havering - £4.74 per week increasing to £6.89 with 2 additional sensors or £8.03 for up to 5 additional sensors.
- Basildon - £3.98 per week increasing to £4.48 for up to 5 pieces of additional equipment and £5.60 for more than 5 pieces of equipment.
- Careline South Essex Homes - £2.80 per month (for equipment rental and monitoring) or £1.65 per month where the Careline unit has been purchased by the user.

At present Council tenants wanting a personal alarm make direct contact with the Careline service whereupon basic details are collected about the individual and an alarm is installed. People living in private accommodation can call Careline direct to have a dispersed alarm installed but are currently charged £16.50 plus VAT. However, most people living in non-Council property and who need a personal alarm make contact with the Community Solutions Team (CST). CST undertake a comprehensive interview over the phone. The conversation establishes a broad picture of the person's abilities, aspirations, local connections and needs. Where a more in-depth assessment is needed, the fieldwork social work team will become involved. There are currently 1014 people living in non-Council housing who have been assessed and who pay 93 pence per week for the service.

There are health and wellbeing benefits of having the conversation between individuals wanting an alarm and the (CST) where a range of issues can be discussed. The Careline Review team proposes that this approach should be offered to all prospective Careline users regardless of tenure as CST may be able to make other suggestions that help to prevent, reduce or delay the need for more intensive services. Regularising the pathway to accessing the

service will also correspond to the harmonisation of charges across tenures which the review recommends.

Appendix 2 – Tunstall Upgrade Costs

OPTION 1 - TUNSTALL UPGRADE COSTS								
Scheme	Description	Capital Cost	Maintenance Year 1	Maintenance Year 2	Maintenance Year 3	Maintenance Year 4	Maintenance Year 5	Five Year Total
Harty Close Upgrade	Upgrade to PNC7 for the Careline Service. Cost from Tunstall, could look at alternative systems.	£64,865.00	£ -	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£133,625.00
Upgrade Sheltered Properties	Upgrade remaining sheltered blocks to new system including speech module (and the "I'm OK" function)	£201,519.71	£30,000.00	£65,286.92	£65,286.92	£65,286.92	£65,286.92	£492,667.39
Additional Extras	Individual prices for upgrades to disabled toilets, various communal halls etc.	£1,402.64	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£1,402.64
Speech Module Upgrade	Retrofit speech modules to already upgraded properties - based on £50 per property x 650 - actual number may vary slightly	£32,500.00	£ -	£-	£ -	£ -	£ -	£32,500.00
YEARLY COST		£300,287.35	£30,000.00	£82,476.92	£82,476.92	£82,476.92	£82,476.92	
TOTAL SPEND OVER FIVE YEARS								£660,195.03

Note that this cost is based on current figures and assumes that there is no increase in maintenance for either Harty Close or for the Group Schemes. Currently there is considerable additional spend on out of scope repair items on top of the servicing schemes which is not included here, although it would be assumed that this would be minimal as the current extra charges are based on the fact that existing equipment is mainly obsolete.

OPTION 2 - DECOMMISSION AND REPLACE WITH PORTABLE TELECARE UNITS

Scheme	Description	Capital Cost	Maintenance Year 1	Maintenance Year 2	Maintenance Year 3	Maintenance Year 4	Maintenance Year 5	Five Year Total
Harty Close Upgrade	Upgrade to PNC7 for the Careline Service. Cost from Tunstall, could look at alternative systems.	£64,865.00	£ -	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£17,190.00	£133,625.00
Decommission sheltered blocks	Removal of hardwired system from all sheltered blocks within flats and communal areas. Based on current estimate ceiling of £40 per flat x 1300	£52,000.00	£30,000.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ -	£82,000.00
Replace with Portable Units	Purchase of portable telecare base units with "I'm OK" function and customisation ability for residents with greater needs. Based on ESPO framework cost of £140 per unit and replacement in all 1300 flats. Includes 5 year warranty	£182,000.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£184,000.00
Contingency for smoke/fire alarms	Replacement of smoke alarms - price to be confirmed	£50,000.00	£ -	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£1,000.00	£54,000.00
YEARLY COST		£348,865.00	£30,000.00	£18,190.00	£18,190.00	£19,190.00	£19,190.00	
TOTAL SPEND OVER FIVE YEARS								£453,625.00

Price for this option is slightly more expensive in year one at the estimated costs but there are considerable savings moving forward on maintenance over the 5 year period, and will continue after 5 years as there is no "maintenance" required on the portable units, they are guaranteed for 5 years and then if they fail we would just replace with a new one. With a procurement exercise the costs here may be lower anyway as the bulk purchase of the units should generate a substantial discount of say 20-25%. This would bring the capital cost lower than the Tunstall upgrade by about £80K. Seeking quotes also for the full programme of decommissioning could also generate savings on this cost. Here worst case scenario is shown.

Purchase of portable telecare base units functionality as above. Based on 30% replacement (likely outcome)	£28,644.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	£50.00	£50.00	£ 28,744.00
	£55,924.00	£ -	£ -	£ -	£ 50.00	£50.00	
TOTAL COST OVER 5 YEARS							£56,024.00

The two tables above set out the costs for decommissioning of the general needs community alarm flats and replacement with dispersed alarms. There is no realistic option for upgrading the hard wired system and many of the properties no longer have "vulnerable" tenants in residence. In an initial discussion with tenants 30% was considered a reasonable number on which to base the calculations.

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY COSTS - OPTION 1	
Upgrade of Harty Close Monitoring system and hard wired option plus general needs flats based on 30%.	£716,219.03

FIVE YEAR SUMMARY COSTS - OPTION 2	
Upgrade of Harty Close Monitoring system and dispersed alarm option plus general needs flats based on 30%.	£509,649.00
Option 2 Savings	£206,570.03

Appendix 3

Future Deployment Of Telecare And Assistive Technology

1. Introduction

Telecare and assistive technology is increasingly recognised by health and social care as an important tool in preventing, delaying or reducing demand for care and support services by keeping people well and safe in their own homes. There are also telecare products that support people to be outside their home, safe in the knowledge that help can be summoned if need be.

Assistive Technology covers a range of telehealth and telecare products including personal alarms and is described as follows:

‘There are many electronic products and systems that use technology to promote health and wellbeing in the home, by monitoring activity, managing risks, increasing security, helping the person manage the important tasks within their daily lives, and bringing support more quickly when things go wrong. Memory aids, telecare and safe walking devices, mobile phones and digital apps - assistive technology all now offer invaluable opportunities to help your relative stay safe and be more in control of their own life for longer’. Which Elderly Care

2. The outline vision for Assistive Technology

Thurrock’s For Thurrock in Thurrock programme aims to support people to live fulfilled lives in caring communities. This ambition will underpin the deployment of assistive technology – liberating people to safely manage their own health conditions both within and outside the home and to stay safe wherever they are. Assistive technology will only be used where it will enhance quality of life and support people to live independently.

Thurrock will gradually move from its current sporadic approach to assistive technology to a comprehensive and systematic approach which is deployed uniformly across the health and social care system. To achieve this will entail a significant cultural change across all the health and social care professions requiring awareness and training sessions for all community health and social care staff.

Thurrock residents will hear a lot more about what telecare can offer them or the people they care for – through hosted sessions at community hubs where telecare users will talk about their experiences.

The decision about the most appropriate telecare/telehealth solution to suit the needs of the individual and their home environment will be taken by assistive technology experts who are ‘product-neutral’. There will be deployment of a wide range of devices, sensors and monitoring techniques as well as different channels of communication including text, skype, phone calls – all playing a part in helping people to live fulfilled lives.

To build confidence and understanding, small-scale learning projects will be set up such as the North East London Foundation Trust Community Health Services (NELFT) Florence telehealth project for people with diabetes. Establishing these initiatives as joint health-social care learning projects would help learning across the sectors. Evaluation of these projects will then be used to inform decisions about whether to extend the approach more widely and how best to engage users to optimise the benefits for the individual.

The single point of access, Thurrock First will provide an excellent launch-pad for a shared, consistent approach across the social care and health system. The Thurrock First we will also aim to be the disseminator of good information and sources of support such as SILVERLINE, the telephone befriending scheme and unforgettable.org the support network for people with dementia (set up through direct experience of caring for a mother with dementia).

3. Experiences from elsewhere

Effective use of assistive technology will only occur where it is embedded in social work and health care policy and practice. It will fail if it is simply deployed as 'a piece of kit'. Experience from elsewhere shows there are some key ingredients in making a success of telecare and telehealth.

To embed assistive technology whether it is in relation to a reablement package; supporting a young person with autism to maximise their potential; enable someone with early stages of dementia to remain safe at home; enable people with long term conditions to better manage their health or reduce hospitalisation and - ambulance callouts in a care home – staff will need to be given training and support so that they develop an understanding and confidence in telecare/telehealth solutions.

Operational procedures will need to incorporate expectations that telecare/telehealth will often feature in a care and support package. And staff will need to develop new skills and practices for example - the monitoring data uploaded by telehealth users or, if working in a residential care home – taking certain vital signs readings and uploading the data.

A second essential requirement is a fundamental belief that individuals are co-producers of their own health and wellbeing. So assistive technology needs to be part of a jointly agreed approach to supporting a person achieve their own goals in relation to their health and wellbeing. Increasingly people will be selecting their own apps to help them manage conditions, they will expect to be able to have virtual consultations with a GP and they will want to know where to access a range of reliable information on health-related matters. Peer to peer support via the web and by other means will also provide networks of mutual support and connections.

A third requirement will be accessing the technical skills of assistive technology experts who are 'product-neutral' and can make the best possible selection of telecare solutions. This expertise is not an 'add on' to a social worker or health worker's competencies. The market is continually developing new approaches and the expertise needs to keep up with these developments.

A fourth requirement is awareness raising of the general public. There are examples of local authorities working with telecare users to run sessions in a variety of settings to advise people on what telecare can offer. The Housing Service will be uniquely placed to spread awareness of assistive technology to its residents.

Examples of success:

Hampshire County Council in partnership with PA Consulting Argenti has a well-established approach to putting assistive technology into the centre of its social care service. As a result, it has made fundamental changes to the way care packages are developed and, over a three year period, has made net savings in excess of £4m as well as improving the quality of support provided. The savings are rigorously audited by the Council's audit team and reflect the savings achieved by substituting assistive technology supports as opposed to more expensive types of care. For example, it is estimated that on average, people are able to stay in their homes six months longer than they would have been before the use of assistive technology. Over the three year period referrals for assistive technology have increased from an average 5 referrals per week to 100 per week. As a result of this approach over 1000 practitioners have been trained in the use of assistive technology and its deployment, and over 6000 assistive connections across Hampshire have been set up.

Pilot studies in **Sussex** (lasting 8 months with 92 residents) and **Kent** (lasting 6 months with 43 residents) in **residential care homes** using low intensity telehealth monitoring devices showed a **75% reduction** in hospital admissions across the residents involved compared to the same time period prior to the pilots. The residents involved were selected because they had a range of long term conditions including heart failure, diabetes, COPD and UTIs. The pilots proved to be a cost effective approach to admission avoidance at £0.90 per resident per day.

In **Northamptonshire**, the telecare provider, Olympus Care Services introduced Canary monitoring sensors into people's homes (including people with dementia, frail elderly, people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable adults who wished to stay safe at home). The outcomes achieved including deferred residential or nursing home admissions, home support package hours reduced/alterd to work better and night-time waking/sleeping care withdrawn as it was realised it was not needed. Based on these achievements, and with 55 Canary systems in use, the estimated savings for one year are £561,000 – a cost saving per head of £8,500 annually.

Many councils are actively helping people to help themselves, so for example, the Staffordshire Council website **Staffordshire Cares** has a range of videos showing telecare and other useful assistive living aids. They are also setting up 'road shows' to enable members of the public to talk to telecare users to learn from their experiences.

The **North East London Foundation Trust Community Health Services (NELFT)** was recently funded to run a 12 week pilot using telehealth to support people with diabetes – ages ranging from 22 -72 years old. The results show both significant

benefits in relation to patient health (significant reductions in blood sugar levels (glycated haemoglobin or HBA1c during the pilot period) as well as efficiencies (50 hours clinical time saved per week). There were also benefits for individuals such as the person who is deaf for whom a signer is needed for appointments - the texting enabled her to communicate easily, and the person with learning disabilities who was able to text in her blood glucose levels and as a result avoided hospital admission through the daily text contact.

4 Next Steps

It will be vital to involve key service leaders across social care and health as well as the Housing Service in developing an understanding of what assistive technology can offer in terms of improved outcomes for individuals and improved use of the resources available.

In order to spread awareness and identify assistive technology champions who are keen to take a leadership role in developing Thurrock's assistive technology strategy, a range of activities will be required including workshops for staff and other stakeholders, visits to good practice sites, engagement with assistive technology suppliers and the setting up of a steering group. Organisational considerations including the role of 'Thurrock First' and Careline will need to be part of the remit of the steering group – so that all key services are able to play their full role in shaping the delivery of assistive technology.

In order to achieve this Scrutiny are asked to consider the following next steps:

- Establishing a steering group to deliver the second phase of this project. The remit of the steering group will be to assess the strategic options for deploying assistive technology (telecare and telehealth) including the following considerations:
- The 'strategic fit' between Careline, Thurrock First and the Rapid Reablement Service and the wider deployment of preventative assistive technology
- Opportunities to integrate the service with similar NHS provision
- The longer term viability of retaining an in-house Careline service

Initial actions of the steering group will include:

- Organise a visit to good practice sites to review their approach.
- Organise a workshop to facilitate greater awareness of the benefits of assistive technology
- Establish small-scale telehealth and telecare learning studies
- Evaluate the learning studies and make recommendations about the future deployment of these approaches

21 March 2017	ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Key Worker Housing Scheme	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Dawn Shepherd, Housing Development Manager	
Accountable Head of Service: John Knight, Head of Housing	
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The Council has experienced difficulties in recruiting staff to key roles in the borough including teachers and social workers. In addition the NHS locally has faced similar difficulties in recruiting to front line positions especially nursing staff.

The Council is determined to show leadership to help shape the local skills market and it is acknowledged that money alone is not enough to support key skills in local public service roles.

In order to meet the demand the Council and NHS have been recruiting outside the borough and the UK. In a highly competitive market it is essential that Thurrock can offer incentives to work in the borough.

One of the issues facing workers is housing, particularly in the first year for those who do not live in the borough or country.

This report outlines a pilot scheme which provides shared accommodation during the first year of employment for key workers.

1. Recommendation(s)

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- 1.1 Support the proposal to assist key workers from outside the borough with shared accommodation, during their first year of employment.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 It has been identified that a number of working roles within Thurrock are difficult to recruit to; these include teachers, social workers and NHS staff (especially nurses).

There is no universal definition of a 'key worker' however the term is generally accepted to include teachers, social workers, nurses and other public sector workers.

- 2.2 In order to fill vacant posts the Council and NHS has undertaken a number of recruitment drives both nationally and abroad. These include recruitment fairs across the country and most recently in Spain, Ireland and Australia.

- 2.3 Two of the key issues obstructing recruitment are:

- Wage levels - Thurrock's close proximity to London provides easy access to London jobs with weighting allowances. Commuters benefit from lower accommodation costs (compared to London) in return for a 20 minute train journey into Fenchurch Street;
- Housing costs - although lower than London, Thurrock housing prices have substantially increased in the past three years. Thurrock is now the most expensive place across the Thames Gateway Sub region¹ to rent a property, at £161 per week for a 1 bed. This represents an increase of £29 per week compared to three years ago.

- 2.2 Recruits from abroad face extra challenges:

- They may have no experience of living abroad or renting in a foreign country
- They may have no family, friends or other contacts in the UK
- They may have difficulty in securing accommodation from a distance

- 2.3 Recruits are unlikely to be in a position to purchase a property since, for many this will be their first job. Incentive payments are provided to social workers but these are not generally counted in any assessment for mortgage purposes.

- 2.4 Non-UK recruits will experience difficulties in arranging shared accommodation unless there are options to link in with other potential sharers.

¹ Basildon, Southend, Thurrock, Castle Point and Rochford local authorities

- 2.5 To meet these challenges, and to offer an attractive incentive, the option of providing shared accommodation during the first year of employment has been considered. Such an incentive may improve recruitment and retention rates for key workers.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Options within Essex

- 3.1.1 Southend Council do offer some priority to key workers for empty high rise flats but this has not proved a popular option and the take up has been very minimal – only one allocation to date

None of the other local authorities in our sub region² are successfully operating a key worker housing scheme:

- 3.1.2 Swan Housing association operates three schemes in Essex, which are primarily for NHS staff and are based near to the local hospitals, but where there is insufficient demand, the properties are made available for other key workers. Properties are let on a minimum term of 6 months as assured shorthold tenancies; they are all fully furnished and within walking distance of the local hospitals.

The local general hospital for Thurrock is in Basildon and there are a number of other more specialised units within the borough. However, none of the Swan schemes are near to these hospitals.

- 3.1.3 In Thurrock, William Edwards School have been offering accommodation to teachers via their School House for the past 5 years; the house has 6 bedrooms and is usually full to capacity although at present they have 2 vacancies. Accommodation is initially offered to William Edwards's staff but has been offered to other local schools when there has been capacity. Rent is calculated at the market rate based on the property value and includes Council Tax, electricity and repairs. There is a flexible approach to renting the rooms; usually each room is rented on a 6 month tenancy agreement which can be extended where appropriate, however, free accommodation for a fixed period of time has been offered in the past as part of a recruitment package. When there is capacity they have also allowed teachers to rent a room when in transition i.e. in process of moving from one accommodation to another. The scheme has been very successful and if possible they would like to extend the scheme further

3.2 Council owned accommodation

- 3.2.1 Thurrock Council stock consists of around 10,000 properties which must be allocated in line with its allocations policy.

² Sub region – Basildon, Southend, Rochford and Castle Point

- 3.2.2 The policy requires that applicants meet the local connection criteria of 5 years with the borough before a property can be allocated to them – either through residence, employment or family members. This would exclude key workers who live out of borough or who have only recently moved here.
- 3.2.3 Council tenancies can only be issued to applicants from abroad if they have recourse to public funds. This would therefore exclude non UK applicants unless they were from the European Union exercising their treaty rights.
- 3.2.4 The Council has a waiting list of over 7,000 applicants, many with competing housing needs including homelessness, medical needs and overcrowding.
- 3.2.5 The policy does not give a priority banding for key workers but does give an advantage to working households whereby 15% of all lettings are made available for households with a working member.
- 3.2.6 Where key workers meet the criteria for Council housing they may apply but it may be many years before they are housed so this option is unlikely to prove suitable in most cases.

3.3 Shared accommodation

- 3.3.1 Single staff, particularly those moving into the area from other parts of the UK or abroad, could be offered shared accommodation. This would be in the form of a single room within a shared house with 2 or 3 other recruits.

Benefits to keyworkers include

- Lower rent and deposit for keyworkers to find since the costs are divided amongst the 3 or 4 sharers
- Immediate contact with other recruits facing similar circumstances – this is particularly helpful to recruits who don't have local connections

- 3.3.2 Lettings would be via a fixed term agreement for a one year period – which could be extended for special circumstances

Properties would be offered at market rent rates, to key workers new to the area. The average rent for a 3 bed house in Grays is £1227 per month³. This equates to £94 per person per week in comparison to the average £161 noted above.

The council would assume responsibility for paying the rent and keyworkers would be expected to pay the Council – this can be arranged via a direct payment from the employee's salary with their consent.

³ Average price for Grays in March 2017 – Home.co.uk

At the end of the tenancy it is anticipated that workers would find their own accommodation and the places would be offered to new key workers for the following 12 months.

3.4 Our Plan :

It is intended that the Council would initially rent 8 x 4 bedroom properties providing 32 spaces for key workers and then as the scheme develops, more properties would be procured.

Initial discussions with Public Health, NELFT, Adult and Children's Social Care indicate that up to 200 spaces (50 properties) could be required over the next three years – this is broken down as follows:

75 - Teachers
10 - Occupational therapists
15 - Social workers
90 – Nurses and physiotherapists

The properties could be procured by the Housing department through a number of routes:

3.4.1 The development at St Chads Road, Tilbury

The St Chad's development in St Chad's Road Tilbury is due to be completed by August 2017 and will be rented out on the open market.

This provides an opportunity for the council to rent 3 and 4 bedroom properties on a long lease (3 -5 years); the properties would then be made available for recruits to share for a period of one year commencing July 2017 on a fixed term tenancy.

The properties would be Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and would need to meet the required safety standards. Basic furniture and white goods would need to be provided

Since the properties would be brand new, there is an added benefit of reduced maintenance costs and the attraction of a new property.

It is envisaged that the majority of properties would be procured through this route

3.4.2 Private sector leasing

The Council could also lease a number of suitable 3/4 bedroom properties from the private sector using general funds. With the owner's permission, the properties could be sublet to recruits.

The Council would expect to lease the property for at least 5 years at below market rents, but would be responsible for minor repairs, decorating etc.

3.4.3 Right Size

Right Size is a new scheme due to be piloted by the Council and targeted at owner occupiers over the age of 60 who would like to down size into smaller more appropriate accommodation that better meets their needs. Initially the scheme was aimed at procuring properties for homeless households but some owner occupiers may be only willing to let to professionals.

The council could lease the properties for a fixed period of 5 years, and subsequently rent to key workers for a fixed period of 1 year at a time. The council would maintain the inside of the building – decorating and minor repairs, but the property owner will remain responsible for all structural repairs. The cost of repairs would be accounted for within the rent along with any other service charges.

3.5 Criteria for allocation

Properties would be allocated to key workers who meet the following criteria

- Single newly qualified or junior front line staff
- Recruited to work within Thurrock on a new permanent contract
- Employed by the NHS or Thurrock Council
- Unable to reasonably access their own accommodation

Applicants would need to be approved by a Director or CEO for their organisation by an agreed eligibility criteria and would be reassessed at the point of offer by the housing team to ensure that they still qualify

3.6 Housing Management

The Housing department would manage the tenancies; this would include

- Signing tenancy agreements
- Rent collection
- Regular property checks
- Dealing with any health & safety issues
- Dealing with any tenancy breaches

Tenants would be charged a service charge to cover the housing management and a charge for the shared utility costs.

The model is similar to accommodation provided at university.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council recognises that staff shortages in key areas are having an impact on service delivery. A key worker housing initiative such as this will address part of this problem and potentially reduce the use of expensive agency staff.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Relevant NHS and other partners.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 Improved recruitment opportunities will enable the Council to meet its priorities to

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis**
HRA and Development Accountant

Funding for the initial cost of leases will be required but this will only apply to private rentals and could be fully recouped through rental charges to key workers

When an employee leaves the service the charge would end; if this is prior to the end of the fixed term the Council will need to find an alternative tenant in order to mitigate any financial impact.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Housing Solicitor / Team leader

The Council will be required to enter into lease arrangements with Gloriana and/or property owners; this will place a legal and financial responsibility on the Council.

The Council can issue one year fixed term tenancies to workers so that accommodation is provided for the first year of employment only; after the first

year employees would be expected to find alternative accommodation themselves

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development & Equalities
Manager

The purpose of the provision is to provide an advantage for key workers and therefore this will positively discriminate this group of people.

This is mitigated by the need for the Council to meet its statutory obligations to provide educational, social care and health services to the borough and the inability to do so without the positive discrimination described.

The group itself may cover a diverse group of people in terms of age, disability, gender and sexual orientation.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

The provision should have a positive impact on the Council's ability to recruit suitable staff for vacant posts within the borough

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Authors:

Dawn Shepherd, Housing Strategy & Quality Manager

21 March 2017		ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Residents Survey Results		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services		
Accountable Head of Service: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services		
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report provides the headline results of the recent Residents Survey carried out by BMG Research on the council's behalf. Cabinet, at its meeting on 8 March 2017, invited all Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the results.

1,000 telephone interviews with Thurrock residents were carried out between late November and early December 2016, achieving a representative sample of the population across the borough.

This is the first survey since 2010 and is an important opportunity to capture local people's experiences and perceptions of the place, their community, the council and its services, that can be considered representative of the wider Thurrock population.

Through the survey, the council can establish a new baseline for perception levels to inform areas of focus across the borough and in specific wards as well as our approach to service delivery and communication and engagement with residents.

The majority of residents are satisfied with Thurrock as a place to live with many feeling a sense of belonging, where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

The results clearly show that the issues of most importance to Thurrock residents are the maintenance of roads such as fixing potholes, waste and recycling collections, and parks, playgrounds and green spaces. The most common neighbourhood issue is rubbish or litter lying around. Satisfaction with these services

has room for improvement. Tackling these issues is already a priority as part of the clean it, cut it, fill it approach.

This report sets out some of the actions to be taken in the coming year to address the areas identified for improvement, ahead of a follow up survey in September 2017.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the results of the Residents Survey 2016.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Between 2000 and 2010 the Government required local authorities to undertake a three-yearly Best Value Resident Satisfaction Survey and latterly a Place Survey. In 2010 this requirement was abolished and Thurrock Council decided not to continue with a survey of this sort. The Local Government Association (LGA) have continued to advocate an annual survey providing guidance to councils, with many still carrying out an annual or bi-annual survey.

2.2 Although the council has not carried out a resident survey since 2010, individual services regularly engage with their users to measure satisfaction levels and improve performance. Examples include within Housing and Adult Social Care services, which both undertake regular consultation and engagement exercises. There is also an optional feedback survey at the end of a call to the council's contact centre. Information from complaints and other methods is also used. However, this engagement activity and consultation on specific services does not provide a quantitative analysis of perceptions that can be considered representative of the wider Thurrock population.

2.3 BMG Research were therefore commissioned to carry out a Residents Survey on the council's behalf. 1,000 telephone interviews with Thurrock residents were carried out between late November and early December 2016. The headline report is provided at Appendix A.

2.4 Through the survey, the council can establish a new baseline for perception levels to inform areas of focus across the borough and in specific wards as well as our approach to service delivery and communication and engagement with residents. The results will also inform the KPIs used going forward to reflect the issues of most concern to residents as well as provide evidence to help with policy direction and decision-making.

2.5 The LGA Peer Challenge in February 2016 emphasised the need for improved data and intelligence to inform decision making for Members. Carrying out a survey was also one of the recommendations of the independent Fairness Commission. The Commission felt that a regular survey

would help ensure perceptions about Thurrock are taken into consideration when developing policy.

- 2.6 A resident survey of this kind is only one source of data and information, which focuses primarily on services and issues impacting on or delivered to the majority of residents. The council provides many other services such as through adults and children's social care that are not included. The survey results and action taken in response should be considered in that context.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1. The headline results report prepared by BMG Research is included at Appendix 1.

- 3.2. The majority of residents are satisfied with Thurrock as a place to live with many feeling a sense of belonging, where people from different backgrounds get on well together. In summary, the most positive results about the place were:

- 69% of residents satisfied with their local area as a place to live
- 70% feel that they belong strongly to their local area
- 61% agree that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
- 89% feel safe when outside in their local area during the day

- 3.3. The results clearly show that the issues of most importance to Thurrock residents are the maintenance of roads such as fixing potholes, waste and recycling collections, and parks, playgrounds and green spaces. The most common neighbourhood issue is rubbish or litter lying around. Satisfaction with these services has room for improvement, although waste and recycling services is the most well regarded with 70% of residents satisfied. Areas for improvement include:

- 23% of residents satisfied with the maintenance and upkeep of roads (61% dissatisfied)
- 45% satisfied with street cleaning
- 46% satisfied with parks, playgrounds and open spaces
- 50% satisfied with the grounds maintenance service
- 55% satisfied with the way the council runs things
- 56% feel safe when outside in their local area after dark

- 3.4. Tackling these issues has already been identified as a priority as part of the clean it, cut it, fill it approach with additional investment in these services committed by Cabinet part way through 2016/17 and planned for 2017/18.

- 3.5. 72% of residents think that Thurrock Council staff are friendly and polite which is positive. The results show that 48% feel that the council responds quickly and efficiently to queries which could be improved. The survey also provides information on how residents prefer to contact the council and their

willingness to use services online. This will help inform the work already underway to develop a Customer Service Strategy.

- 3.6. The majority of residents find out information about the local area from council sources or local newspapers. Word of mouth is also key for people staying informed. 58% of residents feel the council keeps them well informed. These results have fed into the development of a Communication Strategy
- 3.7. Areas where perceptions are less positive and require improvement are set out under five themes below alongside the actions planned to address these:

Residents Survey Results	Actions
<p>Service Delivery Satisfaction levels at or below 50% for services such as grounds maintenance, street cleaning, parks playgrounds and open spaces, and roads maintenance which are also those identified as the most important</p>	<p>Work to address these priorities for residents is already underway through the clean it, cut it, fill it initiative with additional resources allocated for 2017/18</p>
<p>Communications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% of residents find out about the local area from council sources (leaflets/posters, website and social media) however 58% feel that the council keeps residents well informed about services • Use of specific feedback on what would help residents recycle more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a communications strategy informed by the results for Cabinet in April 2017 • Use the feedback on recycling to improve communication about the service and increase recycling rates
<p>Customer Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48% of residents feel that the council responds quickly and efficiently to queries • 81% prefer to contact the council by phone with 73% willing to contact the council online in the future 	<p>Use the results to inform the Customer Service Strategy for Cabinet in April 2017 including a consistent approach to service standards. Work is underway in services and through learning from complaints. Build on positive results for staff in customer services training and link to emerging People Strategy.</p>
<p>Community Community cohesion and participation is vastly different between wards across the borough although positive overall</p>	<p>Further analysis of the detailed data to identify ward specific issues where good practice can be shared or problems identified and resolved</p>
<p>Safety 56% of residents feel safe in their local area after dark and other anti-</p>	<p>Where the council works in partnership the issues will be referred</p>

Residents Survey Results	Actions
social behaviour issues are an area that residents are concerned about	to the Community Safety Partnership

3.8 In addition, detailed analysis will be undertaken across the full range of results by service area, wards and demographic groups, and where the results are below average, to identify any targeted activity that may also be required. Following this, detailed action plans will be developed for the service areas included in the survey. The plans will be developed in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member and informed by any feedback from Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

3.9 55% of residents were satisfied with the way the council runs things and 13% think that there has been an improvement in the last 12 months with 53% thinking that it has stayed the same. Addressing the issues in the themes identified above should have a positive impact on residents' perceptions of the council overall. This will be measured by carrying out another survey in September 2017.

4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 This report provides the results of the Residents Survey 2016 for the committee to consider and comment upon, as invited by Cabinet in March 2017.

5. **Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

5.1 This report provides a factual analysis of the recent Residents Survey following consultation with 1,000 residents at the end of 2016. The results have not been consulted upon. All Overview and Scrutiny Committees are invited by Cabinet to consider the report and comment on the results.

6. **Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

6.1 The Residents Survey provides a valuable source of independently compiled statistically representative perception data to inform the council's policies, priorities and performance alongside the use of other quantitative and qualitative information. The data will be used to inform the development of key strategies in the coming months as well as improve service delivery with a positive impact on the community.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Finance Officer

The Residents Survey cost £19k from within existing budgets with a budget available in 2017/18 to repeat the survey. There are no other direct financial implications from this report. Any costs associated with implementing the actions above are expected to be met within existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**
Community Development Officer

The results from the Residents Survey will help to inform the overall strategic direction, policies and performance of the council including those areas delivered in partnership. The results regarding feelings about the place and local community are generally positive with the opportunity for more detailed analysis of the results to assess whether the perception of residents differs by geographical area and other demographic characteristics e.g. age and ethnicity.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

As set out above the results, where relevant, will be referred to existing partnerships such as the Community Safety Partnership, to review and consider any specific action to be taken to address areas for improvement or of concern to local residents.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- None

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Residents Survey Headline Findings 2016, BMG Research

Report Author:

Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

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Thurrock Council 2016 Residents' Survey

Introduction

BMG Research was commissioned by Thurrock Council to undertake a residents' survey in order to obtain valuable feedback from residents and customers, in order to understand and assess the overall effectiveness of the Council, and to make informed comparisons regarding resident satisfaction to help shape future strategies and performance. In November - December 2016, 1,000 telephone interviews were conducted among a sample of Thurrock residents, with representative quotas set during fieldwork by ward, age and gender. A sample size of 1,000 is subject to a maximum standard error of +/-3.1% at the 95% level of confidence (on an observed statistic of 50%). This means that if all Thurrock residents had responded to the survey, we are 95% confident that a figure of 50% in these findings would actually have been between 53.1% and 46.9%. To ensure the data set is representative the data has been weighted by ward, age, ethnicity, and gender at a borough level.

Overall perceptions

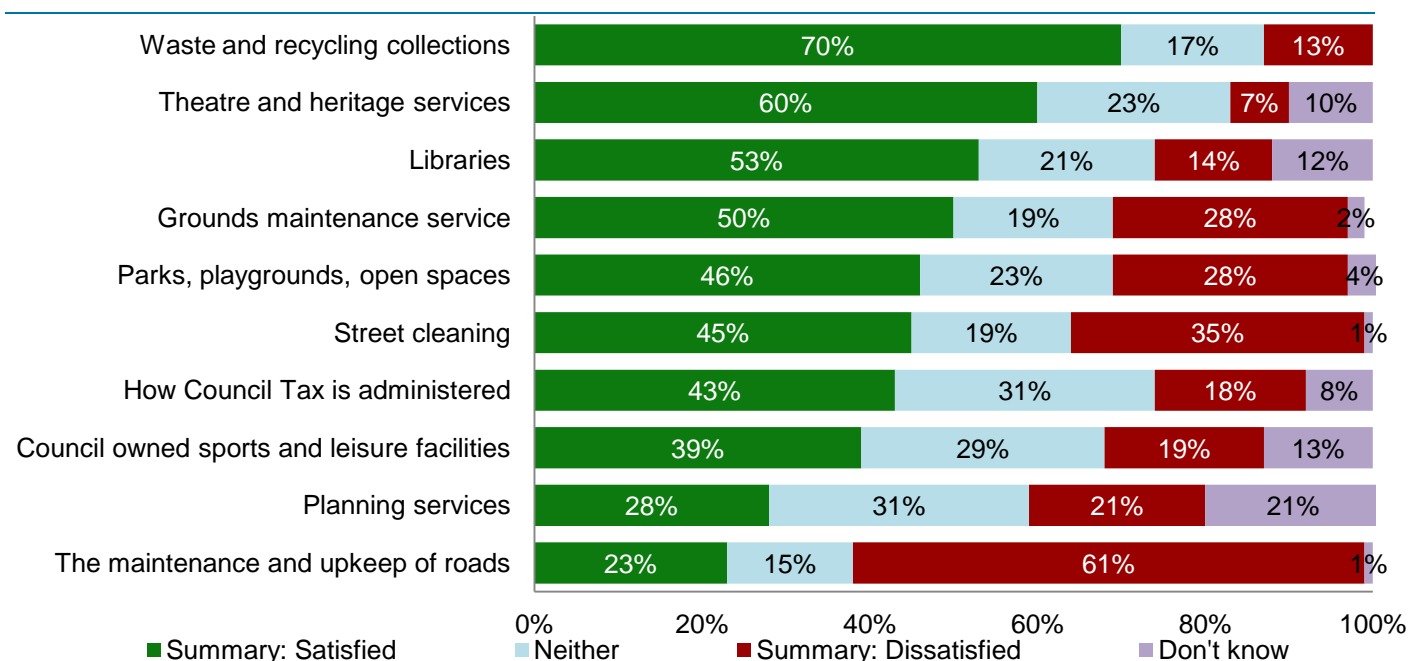
- Approaching seven in ten residents (69%) are satisfied with their **local area as a place to live**, whilst two in ten indicate some degree of dissatisfaction (19%). There is a significant variation in levels of satisfaction indicated by residents dependent on the ward they live in; those living in wards in the North and North East of the borough (Corringham and Fobbing - 89%, Stanford-le-Hope West - 89%, Orsett - 88% and Stanford East and Corringham Town - 87%) indicate significantly higher than average levels of satisfaction, whilst those residents living in wards in the South of the borough (Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park – 52%, Grays Riverside – 49% and Tilbury St Chads – 47%) indicate significantly lower than average levels of satisfaction.
- Just over half of residents (55%) are satisfied with **the way Thurrock Council runs things**, by contrast, nearly three in ten state they are dissatisfied (28%). Just over one in ten (13%) think the way Thurrock Council runs things has got better in the last 12 months, three in ten (31%) think it has got worse, whilst around half feel it has stayed the same (53%).
- Less than half of residents (45%) agree that **Thurrock Council provides value for money**. Around one in four disagree (26%).
- On balance, one in three residents (33%) state that they **speak positively about Thurrock Council**. By contrast, around one in four (27%) state they speak negatively.
- Around seven in ten residents think that Thurrock Council has **staff who are friendly and polite** (72%) and **makes it easy for residents to exercise in the parks and open spaces** (69%). Around half of residents think that Thurrock Council is **efficient and well run** (51%), is **making the local area a better place for people to live** (50%), and **responds quickly and efficiently to queries** (48%). Whilst four in ten think that Thurrock Council **involves residents in making decisions** (43%).

Council services

- When asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the different services provided by Thurrock Council, residents indicate the **highest levels of satisfaction for the waste and recycling**

collections (70%), whilst the **lowest level of satisfaction is observed for the maintenance and upkeep of roads** (23%). Indeed, six in ten (61%) indicate some degree of dissatisfaction with this aspect.

Figure 1: Q12. Thinking about the following services provided by Thurrock Council, can you tell me on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is very satisfied and 5 is very dissatisfied, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following? (All respondents)



Unweighted sample base = 1,000

- Residents indicate the most important services to be: the **maintenance and upkeep of roads such as fixing pot holes** (26% stated it as important); **waste and recycling collections** (23% stated it); and **parks, playgrounds and open spaces** (13% stated it).
- In the last 12 months: three in four residents state that they used the parks, playgrounds and open spaces (74%); around half state that they used the libraries (50%), theatre and heritage services (53%) and Council owned sports and leisure facilities (44%); and nearly two in ten state that they used the planning service (16%).

Communication

- The most commonly used method of finding information about the local area is **via local newspapers** (68%) and **word of mouth** (65%). Although notably, approaching seven in ten (68%) find out information about their local area via a Thurrock Council controlled information stream, most typically the **Thurrock Council website** (47%).
- Six in ten residents (58%) think that **Thurrock Council keeps residents well informed about services and benefits** it provides.
- If they needed to contact the Council, the **most preferred method of contact would be on the telephone** (81% state they would prefer to use this method).

- One in four residents (27%) state that they would prefer to contact the Council using an online method (Thurrock Council website – 10%, Social media – 1%, mobile phone app – 2%, via email – 17%). Of the remaining residents (73%), six in ten would be willing to contact the Council using an online method in the future (61%).

Community cohesion

- Seven in ten residents (70%) feel that they **belong strongly to their local area**. Community cohesion is markedly higher amongst residents living in the Orsett ward (90%), whilst is markedly lower for residents living in wards: Grays Riverside (58%); West Thurrock and South Stifford (53%); Chafford and North Stifford (49%); and Little Thurrock Blackshots (46%).
- When asked where they live, residents are most likely to say Essex (43%), or the name of their town or village (37%). Less than two in ten (15%) would say that they lived in Thurrock.
- Six in ten residents (61%) agree that their local area is a place where **people from different backgrounds get on well together**. When analysing levels of agreement by BME / non-BME residents there are no significant differences found (67% cf. 60%). Agreement with this measure is significantly higher amongst residents living in wards: South Chafford (78%) and the Homesteads (78%), and significantly lower for residents living in wards: West Thurrock and South Stifford (45%) and Little Thurrock Blackshots (46%).
- Half of residents (51%) agree that **people in the local area pull together to improve their local area**. One in four disagree (25%). Agreement is markedly higher amongst residents living in wards: East Tilbury (78%), Orsett (72%) and the Homesteads (71%), and markedly lower for residents living in Ockendon (39%), Chadwell St Mary (34%) and West Thurrock and South Stifford (31%).
- Over four in ten residents (44%) would be interested in **volunteering and helping out in their local community to improve the neighbourhood**.

Recycling behaviours

- Seven in ten residents (72%) claim that their **household recycles as much as possible**, a further two in ten (17%) claim that they **recycle a lot but could probably recycle a bit more**.
- Encouragingly, eight in ten residents (80%) suggest that they would recycle more if certain activities were undertaken by the Council. Most prominently around four in ten indicate that they would recycle more if they had: stickers on the bins (44%), an information leaflet (39%) or more space for recycling and less for waste (39%).

Safety

- When asked about whether commonly found neighbourhood issues were a problem in their local area, over four in ten state that there is a problem with: **rubbish or litter lying around** (44%), or **groups hanging around the streets** (42%). Around one in three indicate there is a problem in their local area with **people using or dealing drugs** (36%) or **vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles** (33%), and a slightly lower proportion state **people being drunk or rowdy in public places** (28%) is a problem. The least commonly cited problem is with **noisy neighbours or loud parties** (13%).
- Nine in ten residents (89%) feel **safe when outside in their local area during the day**, whilst nearly six in ten (56%) feel **safe when outside in their local area after dark**. Three in ten (31%) feel unsafe when outside in their local area after dark.

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Work Programme

Committee: Housing Overview & Scrutiny

Year: 2016/2017

Dates of Meeting: 21 July 2016, 06 October 2016, 13 December 2016 & 02 February 2017

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
21 July 2016		
Update report – The Housing and Planning Act	Dawn Shepherd	Officer
Repairs Working Group Report Include: update on repairs & current contracts	Richard Parkin	Officer
Housing Development Update	Steve Cox/Matthew Essex	Member
06 October 2016		
Homelessness Strategy	Dawn Shepherd	Member
<i>Update Report: Transforming Homes</i>	Richard Parkin	Officer
Quarterly Performance Report	Roger Harris/ Richard Parkin	Member
An update on sheltered housing decommissioning	Dawn Shepherd	Officer

Work Programme

13 December 2016		
HRA Business Plan Review	Richard Birchett/ Julie Curtis	Officer
Sheltered Accommodation Wardens update	Dawn Shepherd	Member
Council Spending Review Update	Sean Clark	Officer
02 February 2017		
Homelessness Service Review	Dawn Shepherd	Member
Allocations Policy Review	Susan Cardozo / Dawn Shepherd	Member/Officer
Disposal of high value asset report	Susan Cardozo / Dawn Shepherd	Officer
Fees and Charges	Laura Last	Officer
Procurement Arrangements for Housing Capital Programme'	Susan Cardozo / Richard Birchett	Officer
HRA Business Plan, Budget and Rent Setting 2017/18	Julie Curtis / Roger Harris	Officer
21 March 2017		
Housing White Paper	Roger Harris / John Knight	Officer
Review of Careline	Roger Harris/ Les Billingham	Officer

Work Programme

Key Worker Housing Proposal	Dawn Shepherd	Officer
HMO (House of Multiple Occupation) – Update	Bali Nahal	Officer
Resident Survey Results	Karen Wheeler	Cabinet
Date To Be Confirmed		

** Shaping the Council Budget Update on themed items as and when required*

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