

25 October 2017

ITEM: 13

Council

Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Report of: Councillor Mark Coxshall, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

This report is public.

1.0 Introduction and Overview

I am delighted to introduce this report as Portfolio Holder for Regeneration at a time when the growth programme is delivering real opportunities for all Thurrock residents and businesses.

The growth programme in Thurrock continues to be one of the largest and most exciting opportunities in the country. Thurrock's reputation as a place full of opportunity has helped attract a number of large scale regeneration projects including London Distribution Park at the Port of Tilbury, the continuing investment at DP World London Gateway, Thames Enterprise Park, Purfleet Port and the expansions of Lakeside and the Purfleet Regeneration. These projects in turn have created significant numbers of jobs with the opening of Amazon and UPS facilities in 2017. The announcement of further investment by Halo and Wincanton at London Gateway and emerging proposals for the port expansion at Tilbury2 will ensure further opportunities.

In addition to these large scale projects we have also focussed on smaller but nevertheless significant projects for local people such as expanding our small business accommodation offer in the borough, helping local people to find work and improving our town centres.

Good progress has been made in a number of areas as the Borough-wide regeneration programme continues to move from plans to deliverables. The award of £10.8m from the Local Growth Fund to the Grays South project has secured the implementation of another of our key regeneration projects.

Beyond Thurrock's boundaries we have led the coordination of growth and investment planning across the wider South Essex area and continue to play an important part in the work of SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership). In addition, we have taken the lead in shaping strategic planning discussions in South Essex.

Employment rates remain strong and in the last 12 months to March 2017 (the

latest published figures) 79.1% of working age residents were in employment up 6.4% on the same period last year. With Amazon and UPS both due to become operational in October 2017 with the creation of over 2,000 new jobs the outlook remains very positive.

Development activity in Thurrock remains strong reflecting the growing confidence of developers and investors in the Borough, not least due to the way in which the Planning and Regeneration services pro-actively and positively conduct their business. This puts us in an enviable position to secure lasting change, to address some of the infrastructure issues in the Borough and to create opportunities for local residents.

2.0 Progress in the Growth Hubs

Our focussed approach to securing significant growth within our six key Growth Hubs is delivering results.

2.1 Tilbury

We have continued to make significant progress in our long-term plan for growth.

A wider masterplan for the for all of Tilbury Town was presented to Cabinet in October 2017 which provides a clear and unified strategic framework to be used as a reference point for all future development, and above all empower the Tilbury Community to continue to bring effective challenge and realise benefits from investment.

This incorporates the masterplan for the Civic Square, recognising a number of significant drivers of change which present opportunities for and pressures on the town. Notably there are three Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) all adjacent or close to Tilbury and likely to have significant impacts on the town:

- The Lower Thames Crossing;
- The proposed expansion of the Port of Tilbury (Tilbury2); and
- The new Power Generation facilities.

The new Masterplanning Framework will provide a guide for further development and will support Tilbury residents and businesses to realise the opportunities of development and to mitigate against any potential negative impacts. The new framework has six strategic objectives:

1. integrate projects to deliver place;
2. Enhance public realm;
3. Facilitate employment and skills;
4. Improve access and movement;
5. Balance development and environment; and
6. Support the development of a new Local Plan.

Work has continued with colleagues in Thurrock CCG and other NHS partners to develop an Integrated Medical Centre on Civic Square. The consultant team including an architect will be appointed late 2017, leading to submission of an Outline Business

Case to NHS England in March 2018. It is currently anticipated that the facility will be open in 2020.

Elsewhere in Tilbury plans have been approved for an expansion of the Tilbury Riverside Business Centre. This will create an additional 1,300 square metres of workspace for small and medium sized businesses in Tilbury. The procurement process to appoint a contractor will begin in 2017. The programme aims to support jobs and growth.

A programme of public realm improvements has been developed as a forerunner to the improvements set out in the masterplan framework. These focus on an improved street scene in key areas including Calcutta Road, Montreal Road and London Road. Our housing company has completed the development of the former St Chads school site for 128 housing units. Of these 26 units will be for affordable housing.

The Port of Tilbury and associated industries continue to create jobs for local people. In September 2017 the new Amazon Fulfilment Centre was opened at the London Logistics Park. The facility will operate with two daily shifts, each with up to 1,670 staff, and a further 170 management, administration and security staff giving a total of 3,510 staff. The actual position at opening is a total 1,500 permanent staff, though this is anticipated to rise with a further 1,000 seasonal staff to be recruited shortly. The Port of Tilbury have completed a comprehensive community consultation exercise around their proposals for a port extension at Tilbury2 and more detailed plans will be published shortly.

The Council has continued to work with the newly formed Local Action Group (LAG) of local community and other stakeholders to develop and submit a bid to the Community Led Local Development (CLLD) Programme which will deliver a range of volunteering, skills development, employment and business support projects in the town. The strategy outlining the use of the funding was approved by the DCLG and DWP in the autumn of 2016 and the final funding application was submitted in July 2017. The proposals are based on a local grant scheme model, whereby local organisations will bid to the Council for funding to support local initiatives. If the bid to CLLD is successful the programme will leverage up to £3m additional funding to the town to support skills, jobs and business support activity between 2018 and 2021.

2.2 Purfleet

Purfleet Centre will transform Purfleet, delivering now c. 2,800 new homes, a new town centre including shops, bars and restaurants, community facilities including schools, health centre and leisure facilities. It will also open up access to the riverfront and replace the existing level crossing with a new pedestrian and vehicle bridge significantly improving local public realm and connections through the area.

PCRL have re-worked their funding package and are developing the proposals for the scheme ready for the submission of an outline planning application by the end of this year and a detailed application for the first part of the development in February 2018. Enabling works are expected to start on site in spring 2018 and construction of the first new homes is anticipated to begin swiftly after achieving planning consent.

We have secured a site for a new Secondary School in Purfleet. The EFA is progressing this scheme and a full planning application has recently been submitted, with Harris Riverside opening its doors in Purfleet in September 2019.

2.3 Lakeside

Lakeside Basin provides thousands of jobs for local people, generates significant business rate income and attracts millions of visitors to the Borough every year. We continue to work with landowners and businesses to ensure that the exciting vision for the future transformation and development of the area set out in the Lakeside Area Development Framework becomes a reality.

Under this vision, Lakeside's existing strategic role will be further strengthened and developed through ambitious proposals to expand and diversify the basin to provide more retail floor space alongside greatly enhanced leisure, commercial and residential uses as part of a new Regional Town Centre.

In order to translate the vision into reality the Council has been working closely in partnership with Intu to assist them in bringing forward their proposed £230m investment in new retail and leisure floor space at Lakeside. This includes the renewal of planning permission for the Northern Extension and the grant of planning permission for the first phase of a mixed use leisure scheme which is now being implemented.

2.4 Grays

The Council has continued to deliver its vision for Grays. Recognising that much of the original vision has been delivered or is in the process of being delivered we have undertaken a refresh of the Grays Development Framework. I will be reporting to Cabinet in November with an updated Master Plan that will provide the Council's development framework for the town centre recognising the progress that has been made and identifying further steps and new opportunities to continue the momentum that we have built up. Next year the Master Plan will be part of the Council's Second Issues and Options Consultation on the Local Plan.

Earlier this year we received confirmation of a £10.8 million grant from the Local Growth Fund (Round 3) to complete the funding package for an exciting regeneration project including a new foot crossing under the rail line in High Street with new public squares. The project provides opportunities to create new commercial and residential accommodation around the rail station.

The Council's property consultants have been asked to proceed with the land acquisition required for the project. We have appointed a dedicated project manager with experience of working within Network Rail and the Department for Transport to manage delivery. We will shortly be tendering for a design team to lead the design of the appearance of the project working closely with Network Rail's technical design teams.

The first stage of improvements to the road network around the town centre has

been completed and further work will be done over the next year to enable removal of the one way system.

The Council owns business centres in Grays which accommodate a growing number of small businesses. Alongside the Centre for Business the Council also operates the Old Courthouse (former Magistrates Court) which was converted into a business centre opened in December 2015. There is strong demand for space at both centres and occupancy targets are being exceeded.

In 2016 the Council introduced a permanent Town Centre Management resource to support the local economy and address negative perceptions of place. Between January and April 2016, there was a period of consultation with town centre traders and visitors. This consultation led to the formation of the Grays Town Management Partnership (GTMP) supported by a Town Centres Co-ordinator. The business led GTMP has now published its own business plan containing a range of activities and initiatives to achieve its four priorities:

Community Engagement and Integration

- Delivery of free events and festivals such as Love Grays launch, Grays Art Trail & Christmas Switch On

Safe and welcome

- Improved relationships with the Police
- Roll out an improved town link radio system

Improved Street Scene

- Work with Thurrock Council to improve the cleanliness of the town centre
- Grays In Bloom summer competition

18hr Economy

- Free Open Air Cinema community event
- Pre-theatre dinner vouchers

A marketing and communications working group has also been established to ensure efficient communication of all projects and initiatives. The public destination brand – Love Grays – was formally launched in February 2017, including a website and social media for users of the town centre. The GTMP will aim to build on these existing projects and initiatives into 2018 to continue supporting the local economy and communities in Grays.

Following a successful procurement exercise a new markets operator, Geraud, was appointed with effect from 1 June 2017. Working with the Council the new operator has developed exciting plans to introduce new specialist and food markets to enhance the offer in the Town Centre. Evening street food markets will also be trialled to try and increase the dwell time of commuters returning from London.

2.5 London Gateway

London Gateway Port continues to establish itself as a major operator in international shipping. The first three berths (of an eventual six) are now open meaning that the port has 1250 meters of quay wall, providing three deep-water berths and more ultra-large container vessel capacity than any other port in the UK.

Whilst shipping activity clearly continues to build, the development of the logistics and distribution park remains slower than anticipated. The bulk of the jobs anticipated from London Gateway will be generated through the logistics park and, therefore, the Council remains keen to work with the port owners to secure further development and create job opportunities at all levels for local residents.

Last year, UPS obtained consent to develop their London distribution centre on 18.6 hectares in the distribution park in just 17 days via the London Gateway Local Development Order. Speed of decision-making is paramount to attracting growth and investment and this case highlights the proactive and efficient approach taken by the Council's award winning Planning Service. The UPS facility will open later this year with the creation of 542 jobs and the Council has formed a taskforce to help UPS to recruit their workforce and to look at improving accessibility to these jobs from across Thurrock.

Recognising the benefits of the LDO and the fast track planning process, SH Pratt Group, one of Europe's leading fruit importers recently announced that they are to take leave on a bespoke temperature-controlled facility measuring 108,555 sq. ft. The prior approval application is expected in October 2017.

2.6 Thames Enterprise Park

The Council initially worked with Thames Oil Port and Thames Enterprise Park [TEP] to develop and agree a masterplan for the 400 acre site that placed Thurrock at the heart of the emerging Green Technology/Energy market. Demolition of the refinery began in November 2014 and clearance of refinery process units is continuing. In 2015 the site was put up for sale with strong interest from investors and the Council continues to support the sale process and to meet potential inward investors. The site was purchased by Marcol and plans are now being driven forward by Thames Oilport investor Greenergy in partnership with iSec, the industrial development arm of Marcol. Since purchasing the site, the DM team have worked closely with the TEP project team to develop their plans to regenerate the site. Planning consent was granted in September 2017 to remediate large parts of the site and to protect biodiversity assets around the creek ahead of the forthcoming application for the entire site, which is expected later this year. The emerging plans show the site to be redeveloped to provide a range of complementary services and functions including food processing, manufacture, storage and distribution, along with a new sustainable energy park and central hub accommodating a new skills academy, research and development, training and conference spaces.

3.0 Wider Regeneration and Economic Development

The Council's Planning and Growth Service is responsible for leading a broad range of regeneration, growth and economic development work. Outside of the growth hubs and capital projects the service has focussed on:

- Building strong partnerships and playing a leading role in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP); Thames Gateway Strategic Group; and Opportunity South Essex (OSE). Thurrock has provided the lead for the OSE in developing the Growth Strategy for South Essex and in identifying a pipeline of investment propositions for the business led partnership which serves as one of four federated boards of SELEP.
- Through LGF 3 £10.8m was secured towards the Grays South regeneration project which will see a new pedestrian walkway created under the rail line at Grays station. Working with partners across OSE more than £160m of Local Growth Fund support has already been secured, with nearly £100m coming to Thurrock alone.
- Working with partners to develop a simplified and co-ordinated approach to business support and engagement through the Business Essex, Southend and Thurrock (BEST) Growth Hub.
- Strengthening the relationship with our business community through regular meetings of the Thurrock Business Board and Network Groups which have facilitated a two-way discussion on a range of strategic issues.
- Worked with partners to deliver the ERDF funded Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) programme. This provides support, including grants, to improve business efficiency and to bring new low carbon products and services to market. So far over 205 businesses have received grants, totalling £1.1m, to improve energy efficiency and introduce 'green' business practices. The programme is due to complete by February 2019 and work has begun looking options to extend the programme.
- Funding was secured from the Department for Work and Pensions to pilot a partnership project 'Back to your Future-Thurrock', which successfully supported 15 young and lone parents back into employment, self-employment or training. Funding has now been secured for a further programme, On Track to Your Futures, which will support a further 30 young and lone parents.
- Progressing our ambition for Thurrock to become a 'hub' for social enterprise, with four 'Soup' projects held over the year. The events give budding social entrepreneurs the opportunity to share their business idea and win a sum of money to help get the idea off the ground. A 'School for Social Entrepreneurs' has also been introduced in 2017 in partnership with a number of local community organisations including Grays Big Local and the Eastern Enterprise Hub. The school will support 16 budding social entrepreneurs to develop and implement their business idea with ongoing advice, assistance and support.

- Strong progress has been made through the Economic Development and Skills Partnership in tackling employment and skills issues. Initiatives include:
 - The successful JobTown project ultimately secured over £2m of external resources to tackle unemployment amongst NEETs through the On Track Thurrock Programme.
 - The jobs@opportunitythurrock Facebook page has been developed to provide businesses with a cost effective place to advertise their vacancies and to raise the profile of these vacancies amongst Thurrock residents and communities. This initiative has been particularly effective in helping Amazon and UPS to find the workforce that they require.
 - Developing a digital employability and skills platform, Opportunities South East, as a pilot with SELEP. This platform will bring together all the offers of assistance and support for employers and job seekers, in one place. The platform allows users to post job opportunities, search job opportunities as a user, secure work experience and promote support services for businesses.
- Spent £40,000 through a High Street Innovation Fund on improving the appearance of shop fronts of small businesses in local parades and high streets throughout Thurrock.
- Managing the Council's portfolio of business space to achieve occupancy and income targets. During 2017 a new managing agent, NWES, was procured for the Tilbury Riverside Business Centre.
- Our Business Rates Pool, including partners at the London Boroughs of Havering and Barking & Dagenham and Basildon District Council achieved a surplus of £200,000 in 2016/17. Under the terms of the pool this can be invested in economic development initiatives which will increase business rate income in future years. Partners are currently developing a range of bespoke business growth services.
- Working across Opportunity South Essex and SELEP and to secure external resources. The Council is leading or a key partner in a number of new bids for funding which will support employment programmes, provide support services to priority growth sectors and make finance available to businesses to support their growth plans.

Our efforts to date have ensured that Thurrock has been able to achieve significant growth both in terms of jobs and business growth. We are now strongly placed to realise further benefits and provide local communities with significant opportunities.

4.0 Strategic Planning

The Council's Strategic Planning and Growth Strategy Teams coordinate and lead on the preparation of sub-regional and local planning policy and associated activity including but not limited to:

- Leading on the development and promotion of the strategic planning process across South Essex.
- Co-ordinating the Council's responses to planning consultations from other authorities and key stakeholders as required under the Duty to Co-operate.
- Co-ordinating the production of sub-regional technical studies such as the South Essex Strategic Housing Market Assessment; South Essex Strategic Retail Study and the South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment.
- Preparing a new Local Plan for Thurrock which will guide the development of the borough over the period to 2037.
- Developing a comprehensive evidence base to support the emerging Local Plan and to support an increase in housing delivery.
- Undertaking capacity building work on planning matters with key stakeholders and members of the public through the Local Plan Developers, Residents and Youth Forums.
- Preparing the now adopted Thurrock Design Strategy and Residential Extensions Design Guide which will raise design standards and promote quality place making throughout the borough.
- Contributing to the preparation and development of corporate plans and strategies like the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the Active Place Strategy.
- Organising the South Essex Health Wellbeing and Planning Summit 2 with colleagues in Public Health.

Thurrock Local Plan

In February-April 2016 the Council undertook its first formal consultation on the emerging Local Plan to obtain the views of stakeholders, local businesses and the community on the key issues that the Local Plan will need to address.

Since the conclusion of the Issues and Options (Stage 1) consultation the Council has continued to engage key stakeholders through the creation of four discussion forums and through the use of summer roadshows. Both the Local Plan Developer Forum and the Local Plan Residents Forum now meet regularly and have been very successful in providing an effective means of engaging local businesses and the community in shaping the future development of the Local Plan.

It is shortly proposed to begin consultation on the Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Public Consultation Document which will set out for the first time the scale and nature of Thurrock's future housing, employment and retail/leisure needs over the period of the Local Plan. The Consultation Document will also set out a range of spatial options for accommodating the projected levels of housing growth, including

proposals for a number of major urban extensions at selected locations across the Borough. Following the conclusion of the consultation period, work will begin on collating the representations received and the production of Report of Public Consultation which will help inform the next stage of the plan-making process, including, the preparation of a Draft Local Plan.

In addition to the preparation of the Local Plan, the Growth and Strategy Team have also been involved in the production of Master Plans for Grays and Tilbury, with the preparation of further Master Plans for other Borough Centres and the proposed Local Plan Urban Extensions now also under consideration for commissioning and development.

5.0 Development Management

The Council's Development Management Service is responsible for:

- The determination of Planning Applications;
- Pre-application enquiries and advice service;
- Appeals;
- Discharge of conditions; and
- Enforcement of planning controls.

In 2016/17 the Development Management (DM) team ranked 4th out of 339 Local Authorities nationally for its speed in determining planning applications. This is a great achievement and having a DM team ranking so highly in the DCLG league tables means that Thurrock continues to be an attractive place for business to invest. The team have also continued to hone its proactive approach to planning, delivering front line projects and working with the development industry to realise our regeneration ambitions. Having an efficient Development Management Service and a strong and competitive Building Control service is particularly important in a regeneration area as credibility and reputation has a considerable influence on investor confidence, helping to attract growth and investment in Thurrock.

In 2016/17, the Service produced its first ever Design Strategy and released a new Residential Alterations and Extensions (RAE) Design Guide. These documents mark a new age for Thurrock and lay the foundations to secure higher quality design in Thurrock.

Alongside the design guides, the service has continued to work with Design Council CABE, sending large scale major planning proposals through the Thurrock CABE design review panel. The design review process has been incredibly valuable to applicants as it exposes their schemes to a panel of industry experts who are able to help shape and refine schemes alongside the planning officers, prior to submission.

It is absolutely vital that new development in the Borough is of the highest design quality and the Planning Service is committed to shape schemes to create quality places in Thurrock and challenge schemes that do not meet the standard. Through the publications of design guides, engagement with developers and the partnership

with Design Council CABE, perceptions of the place have already started to change and Thurrock is beginning to be seen as a destination for not just opportunity, but quality.

The reputation and credibility of the Service has also been important in securing commercial opportunities beyond Thurrock's boundaries. In October 2016, after an initial commission, the Service entered into a Managed Service agreement with Brentwood Borough Council. This arrangement sees the Service providing the management of Brentwood's Planning team and in 9 months of working with the team Brentwood have risen from 92nd to 7th nationally in the DCLG league tables. This highlights the commercial and professional capabilities of the Planning team, with the Managed Service arrangement with Brentwood ultimately helping to secure jobs and services at Thurrock.

Looking ahead, my priority will be on improving these levels of performance wherever possible, and working on initiatives to further improve the quality of service delivery and outcomes so as to make Thurrock an even more attractive place for high quality development and investment.

6.0 Corporate Property

- Community Asset Transfer (CAT). The Council's CAT policy was approved by cabinet in July. It sets out the Council's approach to support the VCFS to achieve sustainable community managed assets that meet local needs, maximise social value, support growth and resilience in the sector. Through its application, the policy seeks to deliver the most efficient use of publicly owned buildings and spaces in Thurrock.
- Plot B Hogg lane. The sale was completed and the wider land area has been leased out to enable the adjoining business to expand.
- Treetops, Dell Road. First phase has been completed by Keepmoat and they have now commenced Phase 2. The development will accommodate some 74 residential units. Working in partnership with the Lands Trust the developer will be creating a woodland path and walk for the benefit of the local community.
- Jack Lobley/Olive Academy. The construction of the replacement facilities for the PRU has been completed and the academy relocated on 2 July 2017. This has freed up the culver centre for redevelopment.
- Corporate landlord. The Council has adopted a corporate landlord model for the management of its property assets. A compliance review of all operational properties is underway. This will lead to the more efficient use and management and allow the council to maximise value and opportunity from its asset base.
- Dell Road/Orsett road (1.5 acres). Negotiations for the sale of this site are in progress and it is anticipated will be drawn to a conclusion fairly shortly. The site has the potential for the development of around 34 residential units.

- The East of England Local Government Association (EELGA) has completed a review of the corporate property function and made recommendations for the future provision of the service. We are currently considering these recommendations and developing an implementation plan.
- Following a serious fire the service arranged the urgent demolition of dangerous properties at Botany Cottages, Purfleet.
- A specification is currently being prepared for the development of a single asset management database for the Council. A project manager has been appointed to prepare the specification and procurement of a solution will be completed early in 2018.
- Work is ongoing with the Education Funding agency to find sites for seven free schools in the borough:
 - Treetops Special Free School
 - Thameside Secondary School
 - Orsett Heath Academy
 - Reach 2 – Primary
 - The Gateway Primary Free School
 - Harris Primary Academy Mayflower
 - Harris Academy Riverside

Once plans are finalised a report will be presented to Cabinet.

- A strategic review of all the Council's general fund sites is underway to identify those suitable for housing development by Gloriana.
- The service is working with RSPB to secure a one acre extension to the Rainham Marshes Nature Reserve.

7.0 Lower Thames crossing

On the 12 April 2017, the Secretary of State for Transport announced the preferred route for a Lower Thames Crossing. The planned route will run from the M25 near North Ockendon, cross the A13 at Orsett before crossing under the Thames east of Tilbury and Gravesend. Plans for a proposed future Lower Thames Crossing will be taken through the Development Consent Order (DCO) process for Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). The expected date for the submission of the DCO Application is mid-2019. In preparing the Council for the challenges ahead we have spoken with other local authorities with experience of having major infrastructure projects delivered within their area and this has provided valuable learning.

While there are growth opportunities linked to the project it has an unavoidable impact on Thurrock both in its planning and in its delivery. The Council will need to engage with Highways England to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and to protect the interests of residents in Thurrock, particularly in relation to environmental matters. There will be considerable resource implications to achieve this.

The Council has established a Task Force to discuss and make recommendations in relation to the environmental, economic and social aspects of the Lower Thames Crossing (LTC). The Task Force will include one representatives of the Lower Thames Crossing Action Group.

8.0 Challenges in the Coming Year

As my report makes clear, there is a significant amount of exciting activity underway in the borough with major schemes now being delivered and generating jobs, new homes and economic prosperity. Thurrock is proving increasingly attractive to investors and developers and we have fantastic opportunities to improve the place we live, work and socialise, create jobs and enhance the lives of our communities.

The major challenge going forward will continue to be maintaining momentum in the face of competing demands. We will also need to be alert to the opportunities and challenges presented by Brexit.

In the coming months there will be a particular focus on:

a) Securing maximum benefit through external funds

External funding to deliver the programmes and projects that will create opportunities for local people is increasingly competitive and difficult to secure.

Thurrock won significant funding allocations in past SELEP rounds of the Local Growth Fund. We will continue to work to turn these allocations into secured funding and make the case for our priorities.

Positive relationships with the Arts Council, Historic England and the Heritage Lottery Fund are of increasing importance as we work to transform the heritage, arts and culture opportunities available to local people. Further development of these relationships and the development of a portfolio of projects will continue.

We will continue to pursue all opportunities to secure external funding for the borough. Thurrock is leading or a major delivery partner in four applications already and we will continue to scan for opportunities to access additional funding to support priorities in the borough.

b) Delivery of key projects

With many projects now underway the Council must continue to focus on securing their delivery in order to secure tangible benefits. We will play an active role in creating and nurturing these opportunities and developing relationships with partners and investors so that projects are delivered and local people benefit.

c) Progressing the development of the Local Plan

Having a clear and positive policy framework in place is critical to the delivery of the Council's wider regeneration ambitions. Over the next year, our focus will be on engaging with communities to develop a strong spatial vision for the future of the Borough that seeks to build upon the many opportunities that exist to bring investment that will accelerate the delivery of infrastructure, jobs and homes. This plan making process does, however, face a number of challenges:

- Uncertainty surrounding the precise future alignment, design and timing of the Lower Thames Crossing and its link with the M25
- Further changes to the National Planning System including the proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance due out in spring 2018 and our need to respond and react to these changes in timely manner.
- The lack of a five-year housing land supply and the potential risk that developers will begin to submit speculative green belt planning applications if there is likelihood of any serious delay in the plan-making process. .
- Increased need to engage with residents in the plan making process as we explore site allocations and alternative approaches to new development.

The preparation of the Local Plan cannot proceed in isolation of the need to gain Government backing and an agreement to fund the delivery of critical community and transport infrastructure improvements needed to support the development and delivery of up to 32,000 new homes and over 13,000 new jobs and the creation of over a million sq. m of new employment floor space in Thurrock over the period to 2037. A key priority therefore over the coming year will be the need to demonstrate to Government the scale and nature of the Council's ambitions for transformational change and to obtain their commitment to forward fund the essential infrastructure needed to allow local communities to truly benefit from future economic growth in Thurrock.

d) Assisting in the delivery of growth and investment in the Borough

As a direct result of the scale of the growth agenda in Thurrock we will be supporting three National Infrastructure Projects in the coming years. Managing these projects alongside our other key regeneration projects will place significant demands on the Council and ensuring we have capacity in key areas will be important in maintaining momentum and maximising opportunity for the borough.

Dealing effectively and efficiently with development proposals is vital to ensuring that Thurrock becomes a key location for investment and growth. The work of the Development Management service enables and assists in this being achieved.

Major developments expected to progress over the next 12 months and beyond include further commercial developments associated with London Gateway and the Port of Tilbury, retail and leisure developments at Lakeside and major education projects and housing developments including the new Purfleet Centre.

Maintaining relationships with key regional and national organisations will also be key as work on the Industrial Strategy is finalised and proposals from the Thames Estuary Growth Commission 2050 become clearer. Despite our very significant workload we must continue to look outwards for the next opportunity.

8.0 Financial Information:

The financial position for the Regeneration Portfolio is show in the table below.

All service areas are forecasting a balanced position at year end.

Service	YTD Actual	YTD Budget	YTD Variance	Revised Budget	Forecast Outturn	Budget Variance
XXXDB - Planning & Growth	45,312	261,781	(216,470)	1,047,128	1,047,128	0
XXXDC - Regeneration	1,033,400	129,109	904,291	516,419	516,419	0
XXXDG - Assets	538,655	414,675	123,980	1,658,695	1,658,695	0
Grand Total	1,617,367	805,565	811,801	3,222,242	3,222,242	0

The YTD actual for Regeneration looks high because of the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) funded LoCASE project which spends money which is then claimed back from the Department for Communities and Local Government retrospectively.