



Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2017-2018

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What is Overview & Scrutiny?

In general terms, Overview and Scrutiny is the process whereby Councillors investigate, scrutinise and oversee the work of the Council. More specifically Overview and Scrutiny pays particular attention to:

- ❖ The decisions made by Cabinet, Council and officers in relation to Council policy or key decisions.
- ❖ The activities carried out by the Council and other bodies (such as the National Health Service (NHS)).
- ❖ The performance of the Council in relation to its targets and objectives.

Work Programme

The work programme for Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny is created by a combination of:

- ❖ What Councillors feel are important topics (this is gathered from their work in their wards and activities across the whole of the Council).
- ❖ Members of the public highlighting issues for debate, either through Call-Ins or through consultation.
- ❖ Requests by Thurrock's Cabinet for Overview and Scrutiny to undertake "pre-decision scrutiny" prior to policies being taken to Cabinet for consideration and decision. Council officers are requesting Overview and Scrutiny to investigate and consider certain issues on their behalf.

The agendas and associated reports of each Committee can be accessed by the following link: <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/>

Committees

At Thurrock, the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out by six committees, which each have a specific remit:

- ❖ Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

The membership of Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny Committees is made up of Councillors drawn from all the political parties of the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny function enables Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet (also known as the Executive) to have an active role in the decision-making process of the Council.

Thurrock has a number of non-Councillors sitting on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Children's Services Committee has two parent-governors as well as a diocesan representative from the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches respectively. There are also two co-opted members on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one co-opted member on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing health and housing interests across the borough.

In addition, sub-committees or panels may also be formed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to undertake specific tasks, such as a review, the membership of which is decided alongside the remit of the review.

The decision making process

In Thurrock, Overview and Scrutiny plays a key role in adding value to the Council's decision-making process. It also reviews the existing practices of the Council and makes recommendations to Cabinet to enhance and improve service provision.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet in an informal atmosphere and engage with people who can help with their work and provide evidence for their reviews. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committees and at the discretion of the Chair may even be able to take part.

Overview and Scrutiny Online

Overview and Scrutiny has a dedicated section on Thurrock Council's website and can be found at (www.thurrock.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny/overview-and-scrutiny-committees).

Thurrock Council's website provides the most up-to-date information on Overview and Scrutiny in Thurrock. Participation from the public is actively encouraged and promoted online.

A number of documents are available and easily accessible, including our Overview and Scrutiny annual reports. Reports, agendas and minutes from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting are also available electronically from Thurrock's website.

Getting in Touch

The Overview and Scrutiny process at Thurrock is managed by our Democratic Services Team. The Team is located within Legal Services. Democratic Services manage the Council's decision making process and services a wide range of Council decision making bodies including the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee as well as full Council.

If you have any queries about this report or the Overview and Scrutiny process, or if you are interested in participating, please feel free to contact us.

Email: scrutiny.team@thurrock.gov.uk

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Essex RM17 6SL

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee started off the year with a focus on engaging more foster carers into the service within Thurrock which had been raised during the 'Children Looked After Placement Commissioning' report in July 2017. Members had taken the opportunity to suggest using local community forums to reach more carers. The service intended to work as locally as possible starting with in-house foster carers. The recruitment of foster carers was a reoccurring theme within the Committee.

Throughout the year, Children's Services continued to update the Committee on the Ofsted Inspection Action Plan which had seen improvements in staff levels and had increased the retention of permanent staff and foster carers. This had reduced the use of agency workers which had been an issue previously and was improving the stability of the workforce. A recruitment drive had also been set up to bring in more foster carers within the local area.

From the updates provided by the Youth Cabinet who have continued to attend meetings regularly, it was clear their work and commitment in giving young people a voice had become stronger. The fourth Annual Youth Conference in December 2017 had seen higher numbers of attendance of around 100 young people with many participating in two main debates – one of which had been on the teaching of life skills aka Curriculum for Life.

In the October 2017 meeting, the Committee had focused on the 'Peer Review Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Support across the Local Area' report. Children's Services had created a high level action plan with a timeline to ensure more support services could be accessed by children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The service would be working in partnership with Parent Carer Forums and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators to achieve targets within the plan.

There had been a strong focus on the 'Pilot Development of Head Start Housing for Care Leavers and Vulnerable Young People' report brought to the Committee in December 2017. The report gave an overview of the Head Start Housing for Care Leavers scheme which had been developed to provide support to young people leaving care. Young care leavers would be supported through a 24 month plan which would look at housing accommodation and other issues such as managing finances and further education. This has helped to prepare young care leavers for life after being in care. The Committee had welcomed the scheme which had also seen departments working together to ensure no young care leavers would slip through the net and continue to provide support where necessary thereafter.

December 2017's meeting also saw the Committee focusing on the report of 'A Sustainable Children's Social Care System for the Future: Annual Public Health Report 2017'. This report highlighted on the creation of a sustainable children's social care system to meet demands and pressures from the growing population. Strategic recommendations had been made in the report and Members had felt the report was detailed.

The Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children’s Board (LSCB) informed the Committee that the framework was due to change following the implementation of new legislation in April 2018 – Children and Social Work Act 2017. Under this legislation, safeguarding boards would not exist and would be incorporated into a new framework instead. A detailed report would be brought to the Committee at a later date.

Chairing the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year has again given me the opportunity to work with highly committed councillors and co-opted members, dedicated youth cabinet leaders, and accountable senior officers assigned to ensure best outcomes are achieved for children and young people in Thurrock.

During the 2017-18 municipal year, Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has continued to monitor and scrutinise the implementation of action plans. Specifically we looked at the Post Ofsted Inspection, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Peer Review, plus the progress of transferring SEN Statements to Education Health and Care Plans.

Some of the key items the scrutiny committee deliberated upon during the year included;

- ❖ Children Social Care Performance
- ❖ Adoption and Permanency
- ❖ Children Missing Education
- ❖ School Performance
- ❖ Provision for children at risk of permanent exclusion or who have been permanently excluded
- ❖ Head Start Housing for care leavers & vulnerable young people

The committee also received presentations and updates on Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service, Children Social Care Development Plan 2018-19, and Annual Complaints and Representations Report 2016-2017. I would like to mention that regular updates were received from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). Our February 2018 meeting welcomed the attendance of David Archibald, the LSCB Independent Chair who gave an overview of the LSCB’s Annual Report 2016–17, outlining the effectiveness of safeguarding in Thurrock.

The committee appreciated that the 2017 Annual Public Health Report, titled “A Sustainable Children’s Social Care System for the Future” has its central focus on how the council could make our social care system more sustainable and effective. The overview and scrutiny committee discussed and commended the report to be a good reference document for officers and all councillors.

I feel that it has been a successful year, and I would like to thank and appreciate my colleague councillors, co-opted members of the committee, Education, Social Care and other council officers, including the democratic services officers who have ably supported the work of Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Bukky Okunade
Chair of Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Towers in London, a representative from the Essex Fire Service attended committee and reported on what reassurances were being given and how fears were being alleviated for those Thurrock residents living in tower blocks and the work being undertaken to make residents more aware of the emergency procedures. Members were happy with the work being undertaken and appreciated the efforts of the Essex Fire Service and the Community Safety Teams.

A Fly-Tipping of Alleyways Review Panel had been set up in July 2017 with a member from the Cleaner Greener and Safer Committee being nominated as a panel member. The Review focused on the fly-tipping and unauthorised rubbish disposal in private alleyways where no policy was currently in place. A Public Consultation commenced and the feedback and contributions from this was presented to Members at the February 2018 committee, where they recommended to Cabinet the following policy approach for dealing with the issue of fly-tipping in private alleyways:

- ❖ *That the Council launch a communications campaign to raise awareness of the responsibilities of all parties in relation to the clearance of alleys and providing information to facilitate resident organisation of and participation in community initiatives to combat fly tipped alleys.*

A report and proposed plans were presented and agreed by Members on the future development of the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre with a permit based system for site access for commercial waste and vehicles towing trailers being implemented at the recycling centre.

As part of Clean It, Cut It, Fill It a Public Bin Review was undertaken that focused on the location of public litter bins throughout the borough that resulted in new Dual Process Litter Bins and 10 Big Belly Bins being purchased and installed in prime locations within the borough. The committee heard that the Waste Service Route Optimisation was successfully introduced in May 2017 which had impacted on 79% of residents across the borough.

The Air Quality and Health Strategy report framed the authority's approach to improving the air quality and reducing air pollution exposure to safe levels across the borough. As part of the strategy reducing poor air quality would be covered by promoting public transport, working closely with schools to promote walking and cycling, landscaping and tree planning programmes and promoting a heavy goods vehicle management scheme.

Members agreed the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19 that related to the charges within the remit of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Firstly it has been an honour and a privilege to serve as chairman for the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny committee this past year. I have been involved with this committee since being elected and have served as chairman on two occasions.

Secondly I would like to thank all the committee members and officers for all their hard work and input on all the agendas that this very important committee has covered over the past year.

This committee is very important in that it covers many areas that affect the residents of Thurrock, from Anti Social Behaviour, Fly-Tipping, Food Standards, Fees and Charges, Air Quality and of course Waste Collections.

The first item on the July agenda was a report on Thurrock Community Partnership for the year 2016-17. This report gives data on all areas of crime in the borough. The report wanted to convey its three main priorities for the year 2017-18, which are to Reduce Youth Offending and re-offending, to reduce harm to and safeguard vulnerable victims from Domestic abuse, Sexual offences and Violent Extremism. This is a very important subject and members scrutinised the report thoroughly.

This was followed by a report on the Clean It, Cut It update which led into a very important subject that was causing much alarm to many residents of Thurrock which is Fly-tipping in alleyways. It was decided to set up a review panel to consider ideas on the subject and report back at a later date to the committee.

Another item the committee was involved with was a report and update in regards Thurrock Councils requirement to produce an annual plan in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement on Food Law Enforcement. The team reported that the inspection programme for 2016-2017 had been 100% completed, together with inspecting all their overdue premises from the previous year.

At Octobers 2017 Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting members were presented with an update on the Air Quality and Strategy,. It was stated that the overall strategic aim of the Air Quality and Health Strategy is to improve air quality and to reduce the health impacts of air pollution in the borough. The meeting then had an update on the Linford Household waste and Recycling Centre-Future Site Redevelopment which led into a Public Bin review update.

In November we held an extraordinary meeting. This was because an independent survey undertaken in June suggested that there was a significant degree of commercial waste abuse on-site which was jeopardising the site's environmental permit, exacerbating capacity issues and creating significant avoidable waste disposal cost. The recommendations to members were to implement a permit based systems for site access for Commercial vehicles.

At December's committee we were presented with another very important item which was the Strategy to Tackle Violence against Women and Girls in Thurrock, 2017-20. Thurrock Council has been an active member of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board, originally set up and chaired by the then Police and Crime Commissioner. Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership has a long history of tackling domestic, sexual violence and abuse. A very important discussion was had by Members. Also December's meeting was the subject of Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy and the Waste Service Route Optimising. Fees and Charges cover many services to the residents of the borough from sports fields to burials and memorials. The Waste Service Route Optimisation was about changes to the waste collection service. On the 8 May 2017, the optimisation of the waste collection operation was implemented. This included moving to a West to East sweep across the borough and rebalancing routes and operational capacity.

The last meeting of the Cleaner Greener & Safer committee was the report back for review regarding Fly-Tipping in alleyways. This was not an easy fix. If rubbish is left on council property then the council has a responsibility to clear the rubbish but if the rubbish is left on private land then this is not the case. Many options and ideas were put forward by members in the review process. Recommendations put forward to Members were to be recommended to Cabinet:

That the Council launch a communications campaign to raise awareness of the responsibilities of all parties in relation to the clearance of alleys and providing information to facilitate resident organisation of and participation in community initiatives to combat fly-tipped alleys.

That in instances where fly-tipping in alley ways was identified, officers would follow the following sequential approach:

- ❖ *Signposting of concerned residents to the Community Environment Development Fund, to assist in target hardening or other measures such as gating to reduce the incidence of fly-tipping in alleyways.*
- ❖ *Formally request that the occupiers of adjacent premises clear up their alleyway if concerns about non-hazardous alleyway accumulations persist.*
- ❖ *Offer a paid service to clean up alleyway accumulations on a cost recovery basis where the steps above do not result in the fly-tipping being removed.*

As you can see from the report it has been a very busy year for Cleaner Greener and Safer committee members and officers. Once again many thanks.

Councillor Roy Jones

Chair of Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee started the year by continuing to look at the Corporate Performance Report. Members received many reports throughout the year and took this opportunity to engage with Officers to ensure the Council pushed for higher targets.

Members were presented with a report to establish a Task and Finish Group in relation to Public Participation at Council Meetings, it was commented there was high scope for Members of the Public to be more involved in the meetings held by the Council. The Chair thought this was a good opportunity to improve public participation at Council meetings.

The Committee suggested that should a Task and Finish Group be formed then the Mayor and Deputy Mayor should be on the Membership and pass Mayors be invited to the meetings as they Chaired Full Council meetings and these had the highest public attendance. During Members discussions it was raised as to whether it would be better to call a meeting of the Constitution Working Group to complete the review into Public Participation as they were able to report directly to Full Council. Following advice from the Deputy Monitoring Officer, the Committee decided it would be best for the Constitution Working Group to investigate public participation at council meetings.

Thurrock's Voluntary Sector Corporate Grants Programme was discussed at the Committees November meeting, which had been established and was recognised as a source of funding for key strategic voluntary sector partners supporting communities in Thurrock.

Also at their November meeting Members were notified the current Local Council Tax Support scheme had been agreed through a public consultation exercise informed by cross party working groups, with the resulting scheme being agreed by both Cabinet and the Council.

The Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework 2018/22 allowed Members the opportunity to discuss issues, which were not only on a local level but also on a national level. They were advised the Equality Act 2010 had replaced a number of Equality Legislations into one act to cover 9 characteristics which included:

- ❖ Age
- ❖ Disability
- ❖ Gender Reassignment
- ❖ Marriage and Civil Partnerships
- ❖ Pregnancy & Maternity
- ❖ Race
- ❖ Religion & Belief

It has been a very interesting year for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We have continued to monitor the council's Key Performance Indicators and overall budget progress, while also delving into the detail of some of the council's core functions.

In June the committee heard the call-in of the council's communication strategy. There had been concerns raised that the proposed approach to dealing with the press was overly restrictive. After a somewhat lengthy process with contributions from across the political spectrum and from members of the local press, an alternative approach was proposed by officers and accepted by the majority of committee. Ultimately the changes were accepted by Cabinet and I believe this is a positive example of how scrutiny can influence the direction of the council.

The Committee also debated the establishment of a Task and Finish group in relation to improving public participation at meetings, with the aim of improving the accessibility of council processes to residents. Ultimately the committee decided to refer the review to the Constitution Working Group.

Later in the year, members received updates on the budget setting process and made a number of suggestions, including that it was crucial to have a published 5-year view of our medium term financial strategy in order to make the right long-term decisions on the council's finances. This was also accepted by Cabinet and presented to Council in February.

It has therefore been a successful year of constructive scrutiny for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, with a number of cross-party recommendations made and accepted, with the aim of improving accountability at Thurrock Council.

*Councillor Oliver Gerrish
Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

Members of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had considered and made recommendations on the Sustainability and Transformation Plan with regards to the Mid and South Essex Success Regime. This plan proposed major radical changes in health and care across the Mid and South Essex for the next five years. The aim of the plan was to help people stay well for longer, join services together, provide more care closer to people and to prevent people having to go into hospital. With the redesign of the three main hospitals (Basildon, Chelmsford and Southend) to meet the rising demands. Members agreed to join a Joint Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Essex and Southend Councils where substantive discussions would take place jointly with NHS England.

The Integrated Medical Centre Delivery Plan was presented to Members who agreed that the first stage of the process was the delivery of the Tilbury and Chadwell Integrated Medical Centre. Members had concerns over the intention to close Orsett Hospital and sought reassurances and commitment that the services offered at Orsett Hospital would not be moved to Basildon Hospital until such time as the Integrated Medical Centres were up and running.

Members agreed to the proposal to procure an Integrated Sexual Health Service for 2018-2023 as further savings could be identified following the majority of these services now being commissioned by the North East London Foundation Trust.

A report on the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Dementia Strategy for 2017-2021 was presented by the Director of Commissioning of the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group, on the visions and priorities of the work being undertaken between people living with dementia and their carers. Members agreed to endorse this strategy with the agreement that a Local Thurrock Implementation Plan was developed to deliver the dementia strategy in Thurrock.

'The Long Term Conditions Profile Card' report was presented to Members that had been created by the Healthcare Public Health Improvement Team to respond to the high levels of variation within primary care across Thurrock that focused on individual needs, available resources and the overall quality of services. Members agreed that this was a fantastic tool that would help general practitioner surgeries to provide a better service for patients.

'The Annual Complaints and Representation' report was presented with Members being given the opportunity to discuss the complaints and compliments received. The Chair of the committee thanked Officers for the report and stated that complaints could lead to a better service and lessons could be learnt to ensure that the service improved year on year.

Members agreed that the proposed development of a new model of residential care for older people in Thurrock which would be fit for the 21st Century was an encouraging, exciting and interesting report and recommended and supported the decision to develop this facility on the Whiteacre and Dilkes Wood Sites.

The Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group presented a report on Primary Care Updates that summarised the key developments in primary care in Thurrock and provided an overview of the development of the Integrated Medical Centres.

Members of the Committee have continued to work closely with partners such as:

- ❖ Thurrock NHS Clinical Commissioning Group
- ❖ Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- ❖ HealthWatch
- ❖ Thurrock Coalition

It's been a busy and challenging year on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC). I would like to thank everybody that's served on the committee for their hard work and valuable contribution to the many issues we had looked at and scrutinised on behalf of the residents of Thurrock. I would also like to thank the officers for their hard work and particularly the clarity of their reports which have made our jobs on scrutiny that much easier! It would be remiss of me to not also acknowledge the valuable contributions of Healthwatch, Thurrock CCG and NHS England.

Perhaps our biggest task this year has been to take a close look at the plans for the re-configuration of health services and hospital provision put forward by the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP). We have maintained a critical stance on these proposals and have at all times sought to ensure the best outcomes for Thurrock. This work is ongoing and will no doubt continue to be scrutinised by the HOSC Committee in the coming year.

Also this year, we have looked at podiatry services for the elderly, a new dementia strategy hoping to ensure people cope better and live longer with that condition. We have looked at a new model of residential care for our elderly and infirm and we have seen how Long Term Condition Profile Cards are helping our Primary Care providers become more effective and efficient at meeting their patient's needs. Healthcare in Thurrock is evolving. In the future many more services will be provided much closer to where our residents live and work and the HOSC will be there every step of the way to ensure the best outcomes for our great borough.

Councillor Graham Snell
Chair of Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The key focus for the Committee this year had been the Grounds Maintenance Service Charge (GMSC) which had been proposed as a service charge of £5 per week to certain council tenants receiving grounds maintenance within the proximity of their rented properties. This charge had been brought forward from the previous municipal year but in this municipal year, the charge had been suspended. This charge was discussed at the Committee again in October 2017 through the 'HRA Service Charges Update' report and when the full review came back in December 2017, the Committee took the opportunity to fully scrutinise the report.

A range of options had been provided in the 'Grounds Maintenance Charge Review' which included:

- ❖ Proceeding with a suspended standard charge for all selected tenants.
- ❖ Introducing a standard charge for all tenants.
- ❖ Withdrawing the charge in full.
- ❖ Implementing a lower standard charge for the same selected tenants.
- ❖ Introducing a variegated charge.
- ❖ Charging tenants in certain types of property.
- ❖ Lowering the standard charge for fewer selected tenants.
- ❖ A phased introduction of the charge.

Members had been concerned about a scenario in which the charge would be withdrawn and services lost. If the charge was to be withdrawn, grounds maintenance services would continue and the costs would be met from a 'basic rents pool' of money. Following a thorough scrutiny of the options provided in the 'Grounds Maintenance Charge Review' report, the majority of the Members had voted for the charge to be withdrawn in full. With these recommendations, the report would be taken to Cabinet for a decision to be made on the GMC.

The 'Stock Condition Survey' report was also brought to the Committee in December 2017. Upon inspection of the survey results, the Committee discussed the small percentage of damp and mould issues and how the service department was managing this with tenants. Officers explained a leaflet would be produced to help guide tenants on the management of damp and mould. From the survey, the focus would be to improve energy efficiency with the highest priority to be the repairs and replacements of boilers and poor electrics.

Data from the survey was also significant in setting budgets and planning future investments within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This was used for the report of 'HRA – Business Plan and Budgets 2018 /19 – 2048'. Officers had announced additional funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would be made available for councils to bid which Thurrock would use to complement other funds if successful.

Another item high on the Committee's agenda was reducing homelessness which was also in line with central government's Homelessness Reduction Act, due to

come into force in April 2018. What was significant about this new legislation was that it would give councils a stronger role in prevention of homelessness. The service department was looking into the option of modular homes as standardised accommodation options which could help to deliver more homes quickly.

This year has been a very busy year for the Housing Overview And Scrutiny Committee.

The year started on an extremely sober note. The catastrophic disaster at Grenfell brought the safety of Thurrock's tower blocks into sharp focus. An immediate review was conducted and presented to the committee.

The proposal of new grounds maintenance charges on general needs tenants provoked a significant backlash from tenants. I am glad that the issue was brought back to committee and that the administration agreed with our recommendations and the charge was abandoned. However the service charges for older existing tenants in sheltered housing were not referred back to the committee and are now being charged by the council.

New legislation regarding homelessness has also been considered in detail by the committee. I am hopeful that this legislation may greatly improve the service people seeking help receive. However, no matter how much the process improves, it will not solve the fundamental housing crisis in the borough. We simply do not have enough housing that is affordable to many Thurrock residents.

Councillor Luke Spillman

Chair of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Committee have had an interesting year and considered a significant number of high profile regeneration developments that are set to stimulate Thurrock's local economy for years to come.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration was invited to the Committee to discuss the Integrated Medical Centre (IMC) Delivery Plan. Members highlighted the problem Thurrock faced around retention of GPs and urged for one of the IMCs to be designated as a GP training practice to encourage trainee GPs into the borough where they might settle, to the betterment of Thurrock. The Committee queried whether the new IMCs would include a Minor Injuries unit. While it would be unlikely that all 4 would facilitate Minor Injuries units 1 or 2 would. The unit(s) would be commissioned and delivered by the NHS and therefore it was too early to advise which site(s) would be selected. The proposal, which would be very important for the health and wellbeing of residents, was welcomed.

The Committee discussed progress within planning development, in terms of Thurrock's new Design Guide for residential alterations and extensions. This document offered no changes to the existing policy but was rather a supporting document, which provided a greater level of detail and would therefore strengthen the Council's hand if refused applications were appealed. The Design Guide sought to stimulate imaginative design within a diverse borough. Members also recommended that Cabinet agree to in-year amendments to Planning Fees, following Government approval for Planning Authorities to introduce a 20% increase in planning charges, which would lead to an estimated increase in revenue of £180,000 which would be vital to strengthen and grow departments.

Members scrutinised plans for regeneration within Tilbury, Grays and Purfleet. The masterplans would allow developers to see what the Council intended for regeneration within the Borough. Whilst there was clear support for these much needed projects, a recurring concern was that of traffic and congestion; these would directly impact air pollution and therefore the health and wellbeing of local residents. Members also recommended that Cabinet approve the 'in principle' use of the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process to help signify that the Purfleet Regeneration Scheme was serious, and maintain momentum.

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Committee considered updates to the Local Plan, particularly in terms of the target figure of 32,000 additional homes to be built in the borough. Sequential tests had been undertaken. 6500 homes could be built within existing urban areas, which left around 26,000 to be developed elsewhere. Thurrock was a major regeneration area but also a 65% Green Belt Borough. The loss of Green Belt land would only equate to roughly 6% and Thurrock would remain a principally Green Belt Authority.

Updates regarding the Aveley Community Hub were also presented to the Committee. Members stressed the importance of ensuring the community was engaged and their requests met through the consultation process. Aveley was one of

the areas of deprivation and health inequality within the borough and therefore the project should seek to look after public health as much as possible through the services and activities provided, even down to thoughtful, healthy choices within the café.

The Committee continued its work with C2C, welcoming input towards the personal safety of passengers. It was also noted that there were problems across the borough with parking around rail stations and the question was raised as to whether C2C had plans to increase parking facilities around stations where possible. C2C planned to increase their existing car park facilities in the first instance, by decking car parks and adding more spaces. Moving forward C2C hoped to do more with parking facilities for both cars and cycles.

The Coalhouse Fort Conservation Management Plan was welcomed, as Coalhouse Fort was a treasure in Thurrock and it would be useful to have it fully open to members of the Public. Coalhouse Fort was of great historical significance and heritage was of great importance to the borough.

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee took a keen interest in the work of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, given the huge impact the scheme would have on the borough if approved. It was queried whether it would be possible to influence the proposed Lower Thames Crossing route if the Local Plan were at an advanced stage with areas for development highlighted. This was the very reason that the Local Plan had been delayed to allow for updates regarding the proposals, as the Council could not plan in isolation. The relationship between growth and accessibility was intrinsic. Members agreed it was good to see the work of the Task Force progressing. It was noted that additional funds of £380,000 had been granted by Cabinet to manage the necessary work regarding the Lower Thames Crossing. Officers would work with the Task Force to shape what needed to be done, however Members were reminded that Highways England were responsible for the scheme, not Thurrock Council and therefore it was paramount that the Council could react quickly. The Task Force would provide a steer at each meeting once data had been received from Highways England.

It has been my pleasure to Chair the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. At a time of unprecedented regeneration and growth within Thurrock it is especially important that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was as effective as possible. I would like to thank all of the committee Members and especially Councillor John Allen who has done a great job as my Vice Chair.

The Committee this year scrutinised the Integrated Medical Centre Delivery Plan, which will be of the utmost importance for the health and wellbeing of residents throughout the borough.

The regeneration of Purfleet, Grays and Tilbury has been discussed with particular focus on recurring areas of concern such as congestion and air quality.

Updates to the Local Plan and the introduction of Thurrock's new Design Guide for residential alterations and extensions were also considered, to stimulate creative design within the borough, and work towards the Government target for additional homes.

The Committee also took a keen interest in the work of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, given the unrivalled scale of the scheme and the impact it would have upon the borough if approved.

I have mentioned just a few of the projects and plans that have come through the Committee in the last year, it is of the utmost importance to have a strong Overview and Scrutiny Committee to ensure the residents of Thurrock are represented, and the best possible outcomes are achieved.

Councillor Barbara Rice
Chair of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Budget Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Members were keen to scrutinise the budget to ensure that the Council was on target to achieve significant budget savings and to identify if further value for money and efficiencies could be realised. Members were keen to ensure that Thurrock was doing all it could to ensure value for money and ascertain any new income streams whilst protecting services that were important to local people.

Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed proposals for additional income generation and agreed the proposed fees and charges, particularly around Waste Collection Authorities.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and agreed to the proposed fees and charges including Grangewaters and nursery provisions.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed the aspirational approach suggested for the Capital Programme. Members sought assurances that individual schemes underwent an appropriate degree of scrutiny.

The Committee supported a 3% increase in the adult social care precept. Members were enquired as to an alternative plan, should Council opt against the 2.99% increase. Committee Members were advised there was currently a £4million deficit which assumed no further financial pressures, the additional increase would reduce the deficit by one third, and proposals to bridge this gap could only come through increased income or reduced expenditure.

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19 that related to the charges within the remit of the health and wellbeing overview and scrutiny committee.

Housing Overview and Scrutiny

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy report presented at the December meeting. Members scrutinised the rent increase on traveller sites and waste removal from such sites across the borough.

Planning, Transport & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

To ensure the delivery of the income targets for 2017/18, the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed and agreed the proposed fees and charges within the remit of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration services.

Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can establish Scrutiny Review Panels to investigate in-depth issues which have come to their attention.

Therefore a Task and Finish Group may be established by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a specific piece of work and make recommendations to its parent committee or directly to the Cabinet. The number of Members of the Task and Finish Group and its terms of reference must be specified when it is established.

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee may establish Working Groups to consider a specific piece of work or look into a particular issue in more detail outside of the formal meeting of the Committee. Any such Working Group will comprise of members of the Committee, working informally with Officers or other Members and reporting their findings back to the Committee.

Although there were no Task and Finish Groups convened this year, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee called on the Constitution Working Group to review public participation within Committee meetings.

Constitution Working Group

This Group was set up in October 2017 to review public participation within Committee meetings and looked at the following:

- Question submission deadlines and how aware the public was of these;
- How accessible and detailed information on the Council's website was in regards to democracy; and
- How the public could become more involved in the democratic process of the Council.

Benchmarking of similar councils to Thurrock Council had been provided to Members to give them an idea of how other councils operated in terms of the points above. The data had shown that there were no big differences and that Thurrock Council was doing well compared to other councils.

Members had discussed in length on current rules within the Constitution and recommended some changes which would help the public to understand the democratic process better. These changes would be presented to Council in the next municipal year of 2018-19.

Call-ins

Thurrock's Call-In process is a vital aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny function. It allows Councillors or members of the public to ask that a decision of the Cabinet not be implemented until it has been subject to scrutiny by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Call-In of a Cabinet decision can be requested by two elected Members who are not members of the Cabinet, a Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a voluntary group with an interest in the Borough, a local business situated in the Borough or ten residents in the Borough. The Call-In must be in writing and include reasons for the Call-In together with an alternative course of action.

The Call-In once it has been verified as legitimate and in accordance with the provisions of the Council's constitution is then referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee receives all the evidence relating to the issue in question and following consideration makes recommendations about whether the original decision should stand or whether Cabinet should be requested to reconsider its original decision.

During 2017-2018 two Call-Ins were submitted as detailed below:

Communications Strategy

In April 2017 Cabinet agreed a report which set out the changing landscape and context for the Council's communication activity. It proposed a strategic approach and clear principles to guide engagement with residents, partners, staff and the media and improve public perception.

Following this meeting Councillor John Kent the then Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee called in the recommendations of the Cabinet report Communications Strategy 2017/20 (Decision 01104421), in his capacity as a Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

He argued that the decision did not take the following into account; due regard for individuals and communities served by Thurrock; proportionality (i.e. the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome); due consultation and a presumption in favour of openness.

An alternative proposal was put forward on the call in form to:

Withdraw the threat to not recognise or engage with outlets that don't – in the Councils view - accurately reflect the Council line. Recognise all legitimate media organisations. Put the strategy to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In June 2017 the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the comments of Councillor John Kent together with the views and comments of officers, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Shane Hebb, and a Member of the media who had enquired if he could speak at the meeting. Following a debate the Committee agreed to support the Call-In and refer back to Cabinet for reconsideration.

The Call-In was presented to Cabinet in October 2017, with Councillor Gerrish Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee commenting that Cabinet Members would be aware of the Committee's concerns, in particular that one element was not best for the Council's relationship with media colleagues.

He continued by expressing no communication strategy would be perfect, however the work undertaken by the Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service had eased Members' concerns and they therefore agreed and suggested to Cabinet the amended wording at 3.2-3.4 of the report.

The Leader of the Council commented the Call-In process demonstrated the good work that Overview and Scrutiny Committees completed and proposed to Cabinet Members that the following recommendations be agreed:

- ❖ That Cabinet note the decision made by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to refer the decision back to Cabinet.
- ❖ That Cabinet agree to the amended wording at 3.2-3.4 and reflected within the updated Communication Strategy 2017-20 at Appendix 1.

Pilot Development of Head Start Housing for Care Leavers & Vulnerable Young People

In February 2018 Cabinet were presented with a report which outlined how the Council was looking to support young people who were leaving care and other vulnerable young people with one of the key barriers they have identified, finding suitable affordable accommodation.

Following this meeting, Councillor Okunade, Chair of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the request of Members of the Committee and called in the recommendations of the Cabinet report 'Pilot Development of Head Start Housing for Care Leavers & Vulnerable Young People' (decision 0110465), in their capacity as three non-executive Members.

The Call-In was taken through the validation process which is outlined in the Constitution and was deemed invalid for the following reason:

- ❖ Based on Rule 10.11 (i), the report had already been subject to a scrutiny meeting where the issues raised could have been reasonably discussed as part of the committee's scrutiny of the contract and arrangements.