

# Thurrock Community Engagement Strategy

2011 – 2016

We want Thurrock to be at the **dynamic** heart of the Thames gateway, a place of **ambition**, **enterprise** and **opportunity**, where communities and businesses **flourish**.

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### Revision History

This document will be subject to amendments during the review period and will be updated during this time using formal change control procedures.

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## INTRODUCTION

Thurrock's character and personality has formed and evolved over centuries as agriculture, industry and the river have shaped the landscape, the make-up of its people and the quality of life.

The enduring characteristics of those who live or have lived and worked in the borough – enterprise, resilience, opportunism, adaptability – represent a strength of spirit that will drive a new tone and a fresh relationship between the council and everyone it does business with and is captured in the council's vision and priorities:

***“We want Thurrock to be at the dynamic heart of the Thames Gateway, a place of ambition, enterprise and opportunity, where communities and businesses flourish***

- 1. Improve the education and skills of local people***
- 2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity***
- 3. Ensure a safe, clean and green environment***
- 4. Provide and commission high quality and accessible services that meet, wherever possible, individual needs***
- 5. Build pride, respect and responsibility in Thurrock's communities and its residents.***

This strategy is designed to change the way Thurrock Council and its partners engage with our communities to shape Thurrock's vision. The strategy primarily supports priority number five – to build pride, respect and responsibility in Thurrock's communities and its residents; however the strategy also impacts on priority number four as good engagement ensures efficient commissioning.

We recognise that Thurrock Council and its partners can only achieve this vision and deliver these priorities together. We need to work with our communities to realise the vision and in doing so we will engender greater pride in Thurrock as a place.

This strategy is about changing people's lives, meeting people's current and future aspirations, and empowering our communities. This strategy is also about localism and creating a smaller government and a big society. It is about shifting power from the centre to elected councillors, and from bureaucrats to communities and individuals.

There is a risk that this strategy could be seen as either a “to do” list for council officers and partners or a “wish list” for elected councillors. However, it is neither. Rather this strategy represents an opportunity to articulate how, in Thurrock, we are working to design and commission services that meet local priorities.

This strategy will develop as we get better at listening to our communities and as we hand over more control to our communities and increase their independence from public services. We strongly believe that communities are best placed to identify local priorities. Often, the voluntary sector plays a key role in advocating the voice of communities, and this strategy will strengthen our relationship with Thurrock's voluntary sector.

The council will have to make choices about which services it delivers in the future, and this strategy aims to help every resident have their say about local services. This strategy is about finding new ways of empowering communities to take decisions and actions to help

themselves. Our strategy for community engagement could be seen to signal our ambitions and commitment to this.

## **THE SHAPE OF THURROCK**

2011 is the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thurrock as a Borough and marks the start of a new phase of opportunity for the next generation – the next generation of young people, older people, families, vulnerable people – the next generation of people who have an opportunity to benefit from the future prosperity of the borough.

The current regeneration programme will once again change the landscape, with the expansion of retail and Lakeside, the creation of the biggest container port in Europe, the continuation of the High House Production Park housing the Royal Opera House development and performing arts, to name a few. All of these will bring new jobs and fresh opportunities for the future.

How people feel about where they live, how they feel about their public services, how they feel about themselves will be central to creating a collective sense of identity and direction. One in which people aspire for themselves and for their families to do well in their education, are equipped to take on the new and different types of jobs available, have the best possible quality of life and are proud of where they live. When we engage with communities we want to help people reconnect with one another, building stronger communities marked by reciprocity and an understanding of competing needs.

Thurrock Council will be changing and adapting to help achieve this, enabling and facilitating change, preparing its residents for the new opportunities, engaging and involving, more in tune and in touch with the needs of local residents, partners, businesses and its employees, aligning expectations and aspirations.

The current economic downturn provides an opportunity and a catalyst for operating differently and valuing the perspectives of everyone who has a stake in the future of the Borough.

## **THURROCK – THE SUM OF ITS PARTS**

We recognise that Thurrock is a borough with contrasting, individual areas that are geographically and socially distinctive. Recognising different priorities within areas will better enable public services to respond to specific issues that need to be addressed to improve local lives. Adopting an area engagement approach will enable local priorities to be identified and considered across agencies

For the Council, this new approach will mean changing the way in which we work. Officers and senior management need to take a more community focused approach to how we design services and prepare strategies. We need to make it easier for communities to fix things themselves, reducing bureaucracy and the barriers to empowerment. Over the next few years, local government in Thurrock will change to be more of an enabler than a doer, helping communities and organisations succeed locally. Our leadership role will be one of place shaping assisting the skills and aspiration that exists here flourish for the benefit of current and future communities. If we are to truly develop communities that care for each other and are publicly spirited in their networks and support, therefore reducing the call on public services, we need to provide the leadership and culture that nurtures that approach.

The voluntary, community and faith sector has a key role to play in developing the capacity of communities to identify and meet local priorities effectively. More than ever, with decreasing resources and increasing demands on public services, new ways of working with communities are needed to ensure the voice of the most disadvantaged is not lost; and that every opportunity to use available resource and community assets is capitalised. This strategy builds on our relationship with Thurrock's voluntary sector to create a supportive environment that nurtures and recognise all efforts to meet community need. Voluntary sector and public sector partners in Thurrock have agreed a joint vision for future working, underpinned by this strategy. That vision states:

*'We share a commitment to improving outcomes for all residents of Thurrock in a time of severe financial constraint. As a group of senior personnel from across the public and third sectors we recognise that improving cross sector partnership working is a crucial element of this. We will therefore develop an action plan to improve cross sector partnership.'*

An action plan will be developed to implement this strategy and achieve its vision.

### **EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES**

What do we mean by community? A community is a group of people who hold something in common, such as where they live, an experience, interest or identity. Communities are not homogenous and people can belong to several different communities such as:

- Communities of place – people that share a geographical area or locality.
- Communities of interest – people who share a particular interest or experience. For example, user groups, residents' association, tenants' groups or local businesses.
- Communities of identity – people who share a particular identity or characteristic. For example, boys and girls, women and men, disabled people, black and minority ethnic groups or faith groups.
- On line communities – for example, through social media such as Facebook.

There are different levels of community engagement, which is often referred to as the 'spectrum of engagement'. They range from information giving at one end of the spectrum to collaboration and partnership working at the other end.

Through this community engagement strategy we aim to support different communities to come together to share their hopes, fears, aspirations and needs. In doing so, we aim to foster a better understanding between different communities of competing needs and recognise the need to support residents to gain the skills, knowledge and information to participate effectively. Community empowerment is the desired outcome of a strong local approach to engagement.

### **AIMS OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The aims of this strategy are to ensure that elected councillors and staff in Thurrock Council and its partners work together to:

- Ensure that all available resources in the local area are used for the benefit of local communities.
- Increase involvement in communities and enable people to be more independent of public services, bringing people together within neighbourhoods.
- Enable people to better shape their communities for the future.

- Strengthen Local Democracy and supporting elected Councillors as community leaders.
- Develop capacity for priority and resource allocation decisions to be delegated to a local level.

We will achieve these aims by improving our engagement with local communities and at the same time by strengthening local democracy and the role of elected councillors within a new governance structure in support of area engagement.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The following key **objectives** identify how this strategy will contribute to the Thurrock vision and how we will improve community engagement in Thurrock.

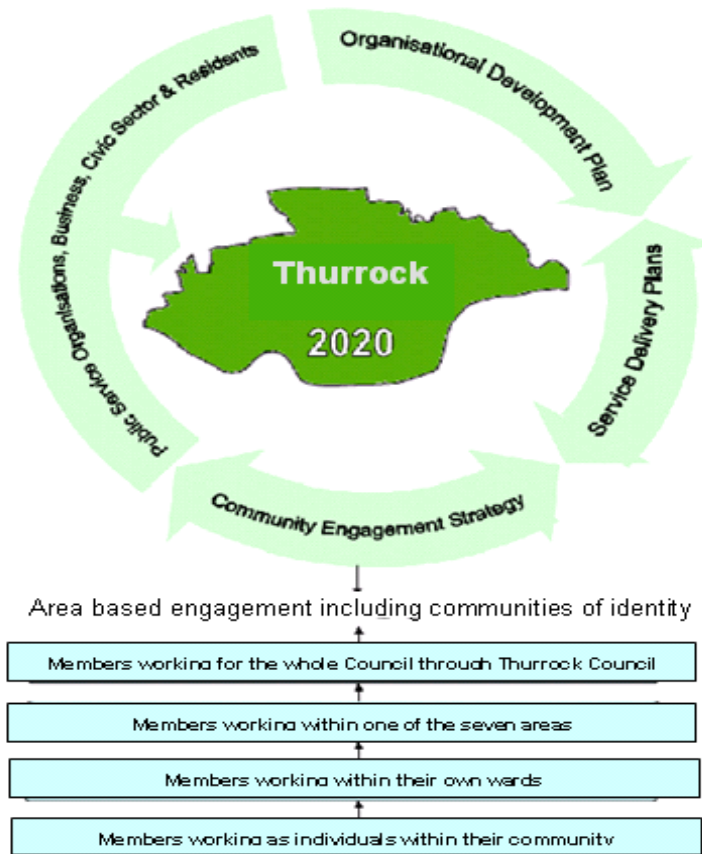
1. **Develop and support communities and local people to get involved.** This means that we will provide practical opportunities for people to influence decisions about services in their area. Local arrangements will be developed which engage our communities and empower them to improve their quality of life. We will work with voluntary, community and faith sector organisations and develop opportunities for people to build knowledge of decision-making processes, which will enable them to participate in civic activities and take more control of local services. We will recognise that community action requires support and professional input, and will seek to provide this as far as resources and priorities allow. Our engagement activity will aim to actively involve all communities, valuing each strand of diversity.
2. **Support Councillors to be leaders for their communities.** This means that we will ensure that our Councillors have up to date information about their locality including service delivery plans; are made aware of forthcoming issues in their area; have the skills they need to engage with and capture the views of constituents; and have appropriate officer support for area based engagement activities.
3. **Making things happen: Establish a coordinated, efficient and value for money partnership approach to community engagement.** This means we will identify and improve work with voluntary community and faith sector organisations that are already supporting and engaging with our communities. We will work to join up our efforts with key partners, share resources and provide value for money. This will help to avoid duplication and achieve a more effective use of resources. In doing so we will ensure a co-ordinated approach to our communications so that residents recognise that Thurrock Council and its partners are engaging effectively.

The strategy places local people and Councillors at the heart of community engagement. We feel that these objectives will help us to embed a culture of engagement and empowerment across the Council and its partners.

### DELIVERING OUR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**Community Councils** – The diagram below shows how we envisage working with our community through area based governance structures.





The over-arching strategy that drives the partnership vision for Thurrock and the priorities is the Community Strategy 2020. The community strategy has been informed by a number of partner organisations and community groups including health, the police, voluntary and community sectors, local businesses and the council.

Around that strategy the Council and each of its partner organisations will have firstly an organisational development plan, secondly their service delivery plan and thirdly this community engagement strategy.

At the time of writing, the structure and scope of many public sector organisations is changing. For council officers and elected Councillors, this means an increased responsibility for the way in which we facilitate public engagement across all services. New mechanisms, new means of communication, and changes to the ways in which we have traditionally worked will need to be supported to help embrace new challenges.

We envisage a stronger role for elected members with greater support working individually, within ward level with better intelligence and information about their communities. We will also create a governance structure with a cluster of wards around natural communities supported by a designated Head of Service. There will be seven Community Councils, the boundaries of which will be drawn along ward lines including several wards (see Appendix 1 A and B).

These Community Councils are drawn along administrative boundaries so that they can be administered more easily, but the boundaries also take into account natural communities and common characteristics that we are aware of. In addition to the seven geographic areas, each area will be expected to involve residents from cross cutting communities for example, young people, LGBT, women, people with disabilities and BME groups. In doing so, Community Councils will need to seek expert advice from the voluntary; community and faith sector, and

ensure join-up with partnership structures that also support dialogue through networks across the whole of the borough.

Community Councils will evolve organically in response to local issues under the leadership of elected Councillors. Governance arrangements will be established to ensure that Community Councils can take devolved decisions at an area level. The governance guidelines will support a consistent approach across all Community Councils. In addition, a framework of opportunities will be developed to support Councillors and Heads of Service consider the scope of service opportunities that may be discussed at Community Councils. In addition, this framework will also support Councillors consider the style of public engagement to be supported at Community Council meetings so to ensure the most effective engagement method to be adopted.

Councillors will be supported by officers to carry out their community leadership role. This will include Councillors understanding and taking the lead on responding to key community issues in their wards, at an area level and across the whole borough. Councillors need to know what is going on, so that they are not taken by surprise when attending meetings in their wards or whilst having discussions with partners and constituents.

Officers too have to change the way in which they engage with communities. As a council, we exist to serve public interests. We can only really meet the public's best interests through active listening; engaging with communities about what measures will improve their lives, and giving honest feedback at every occasion. Officers of the Council will seek to resolve issues through dialogue and face to face meetings, and promote community engagement through their work. Senior officers will play a more prominent role within communities – supporting area engagement and key community events that support effective dialogue.

The Community Councils are not intended to replace the Community Forums. Community Forums will be encouraged to feed into Community Councils and the whole engagement strategy aims to build on existing networks and to make them stronger where development is needed. But we want to encourage more Forums, associations, community groups, action groups, self help groups and tenant groups to become actively involved and influence better decision making at every level. Once established, Community Councils will be the key mechanism used by Council officers to engage with communities providing an economy of scale that is less resource intensive.

## **STRENGTHENING LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

With the development of the local partnership working, and the increasing role of the community and voluntary sector, locally elected councillors have felt what is described as a "democratic deficit". Only Members of Parliament and elected councillors have the democratic mandate to lead our communities. Therefore elected members should be at the heart of any community engagement activity and in deciding on the priorities of our communities locally, working alongside residents and representative groups such as the voluntary sector who advocate the needs of communities at risk of exclusion.

For the foreseeable future we will have reducing resources. Services will need to be better targeted to meet clearly identified needs. Public services will shrink and councillors will be at the forefront of dialogue with communities about what services the Council should provide and what communities might do for themselves in the future. Elected members are best placed to lead a discussion with our residents about what they can expect from public services, to identify

and clearly communicate what we will do and, perhaps more importantly, what we will no longer be able to do. Strong engagement will ensure that expectations are effectively managed, whilst supporting a 'can do' approach within communities where there is a desire for people to help themselves.

As resources become scarcer it will be more important to ensure that services are targeted to where they are needed most and a localised approach to the provision of services will need to be adopted. Even during a time when we will be reducing some services, we can still deliver greater added value to our residents by listening to them more and involving them in finding solutions for themselves. We aim to bring people together in dialogue around local priorities and how to find the best solutions possible.

As elected representatives of our communities, members will need to demonstrate clear leadership by engaging with our citizens on the local issues that matter to them most, and that have the biggest impact on their quality of life. As resources decrease, communities will need to be more resilient and reliant on each other. But rather than lament the past, we want to capture the community spirit that underpins so much of life across Thurrock and support stronger communities to grow where residents do know their neighbours and develop networks of mutual support where people feel a sense of belonging and local pride in where they live.

This community engagement strategy outlines a range of specific actions and initiatives. However, at its heart it is about how we support councillors in their community leadership role, and enable communities to be more engaged.

### **LOCALISM and the Government's agenda**

The Government has made it clear that greater local decision-making is a core part of its long-term reform plans. The Localism Bill contains a number of proposals to give local authorities new freedoms and flexibility. The Government wants to see power exercised at the lowest practical level, close to the people that are affected by decisions, rather than distant from them. The Bill includes new rights and powers for communities that will make it easier for local people to take over amenities they love and give people new ways to voice their opinions on any local issue. In addition, the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 replaces Police authorities with the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner, directly elected by the public in every Force in England and Wales (except for the City of London). Also, the Health and Social Care Bill makes proposals to strengthen public engagement around health through the local establishment of HealthWatch as a consumer champion, replacing Local Involvement Networks as of October 2012.

Thurrock Council supports the localism agenda. For a borough such as ours, where people identify much more with the town or village where they live rather than the borough, taking a local approach makes perfect sense. Services across all partners can be delivered more effectively and efficiently if planned with localities in mind. Councillors too have a genuinely local grounding. This strategy will create appropriate structures which will allow residents to become more involved in identifying area priorities and getting involved in local decision-making, and will allow residents to take more responsibility for the delivery of public services where they live.

For the Council, this shift requires us to take a lead role in developing the relationships needed to be able to shape all public services that respond to needs in Thurrock. Our role is one of leadership and influence, working through elected members and alongside public agencies, and the voluntary sector and communities, to affect change through effective engagement.

Our leadership role includes harnessing all that the voluntary, faith and community sector has to offer the borough. This will require clear corporate support to develop relationships built on mutual trust and respect.

### **PROGRESS TO DATE**

Thurrock is already working to achieve many of the aspirations set out in this strategy. The Cabinet and senior management at Thurrock Council have held a number of Lets Talk community conversations in local areas to address key issues of concern. In 2010, the Lets Talk approach was extended to Thurrock's Budget. A campaign was held to encourage borough-wide participation via on line votes for or against suggestions. Residents were also able to make their own suggestions on future savings. Many of these suggestions have been implemented since that time.

Another example is Thurrock's User Led Organisation (ULO) 'Thurrock Coalition'. National guidance to social services via the policy 'Putting People First' required each authority to identify a User Led Organisation to support local engagement in the transformation of local services. Thurrock Council wrote to local existing organisations asking them to express their interest in delivering this service. Subsequently, three local organisations supporting residents with an interest in what disables people and promoting equalities joined forces to take on this role under a new entity. Thurrock Coalition was thus formed and has been commissioned until March 2013. They have helped residents engage in local and national consultations and enabled an effective response to proposed social care budget changes. Currently, they are working towards the co-production of a number of specific strategies alongside council officers and residents.

Partners have worked together to develop a new e-portal to support more joined up consultation. As well as supporting e-petitions and direct resident surveys, the portal will also be a central place where consultations can be promoted and the results held for future reference. This will support a more joined up approach to future engagement across agencies.

**Objective 1 - Develop and support communities and local people to get involved****We will:**

1. Provide opportunities for all Thurrock's diverse communities to participate in achieving Thurrock's vision e.g. developing community councils and building the capacity of residents' skills and knowledge to be active citizens or volunteers .
2. Support residents to influence and shape services through joined up effective consultation and participation such as Lets Talk.
3. Enable those who want to do more for themselves to do so through reducing beauracracy and improving how we commission and procure services that meet community outcomes.
4. Develop the capacity and structures for resource allocation and priority decision to be taken at a local level.

**Objective 2 - Support Councillors to be leaders for their communities.****We will:**

1. Support councillors to be effective community champions, with accurate information to hand about the total breadth of their ward through neighbourhood profiles and effective training.
2. Develop area engagement opportunities and pursue devolved budgets wherever possible, starting with a pilot of Councillor Devolved Budgets in three wards.
3. Develop a culture of engagement within public services so we can listen to residents and improve honest dialogue.

**Objective 3 - Establish a coordinated, efficient and value for money partnership approach to****We will:**

1. Make effective use of the skills, expertise and knowledge of the voluntary, community and faith sector in supporting Thurrock's residents through improved partnership working.
2. Map and understand our communities so that services are fully informed by the changing and different needs of local residents, shaping services that are more effective at getting results.
3. Provide residents with access to information about services and resources through clear and timely communications that recognises that partners and communities in Thurrock are working well together.

## IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

In order for community engagement to be meaningful and consistent across the Council and our partners, there must be clear ownership. The initial focus will be upon priorities that will support improvements to the quality of informing, consulting and involving activities. This will ensure that we are working in an effective way in advance of encouraging greater participation of local people.

Implementing the strategy will require the development of a community engagement action plan, which will include actions based on implementing the three key objectives. It will absorb the outstanding actions from the Stronger Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Strategy agreed by Cabinet November 2010 so that we are totally focused on systems that are aligned and produce the change we desire.

Area engagement is key to Thurrock's ability to improve outcomes for residents. Area engagement will enable more joined up service delivery and reduce duplication between agencies – for example, health and the police. New engagement mechanisms will need to be organic in order to accommodate future decisions, whilst being robust enough to support change in a local area. Our aim is to ensure that all engagement mechanisms are identified and promoted so to support a more joined up approach – for example, youth forums, patient forums, neighbourhood action panels etc.

The Localism Bill will provide further opportunities to recognise neighbourhood mechanisms within areas. It is imperative that these smaller community areas, which are most likely to enhance community capacity for strong communities, are consulted on and agreed by communities themselves.

The completed action plan will be monitored quarterly by the Community Engagement Group. The membership of this group will include key partners including the voluntary sector. The strategy will be reviewed every four years.

A task and finish group of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee suggested a phased approach to implementation. The suggested phasing is based on available resource and organisational priorities. Within the phased approach, it was recognised that different areas would develop at different paces and that an organic approach to implementation was healthy. These suggestions were agreed by Cabinet January 2011. These recommendations will inform the development of the action plan.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to realise the benefits of this community engagement strategy, which are to:

**Improve the quality of services in Thurrock:** Involving people in designing and delivering services helps make them “right first time”, more responsive to the needs of the community and delivers better value for taxpayers' money.

**Increase trust in public service providers in Thurrock:** Citizens need to know that public organisations are listening to them, and that their views will be taken into account when decisions are made which make a difference to their lives. This strategy will increase opportunities to influence decisions and enable people to take more control of services.

**Take and justify difficult decisions:** Involving people in decisions about how local money is spent, through techniques such as participatory budgeting gives communities a better understanding of the difficult prioritisations and trade-offs that have to be made, and a stronger sense of “ownership” over the eventual results.

**Promote good community relations:** As individuals engage with their neighbours, with community groups and local decision makers on how to tackle shared concerns, there is more interaction between people of different backgrounds and more emphasis on shared goals. Greater openness about decision-making and greater involvement in those decisions can also remove perceptions of injustice that can challenge cohesion.

**Build resilient community networks:** Voluntary community and faith sector organisations and community groups bind communities together, giving people the means to make their voices heard and to make a positive difference.

### How do we get there?

This strategy is underpinned by the Community Strategy and the priorities identified through consultation on the Community Strategy. Elected Members in Thurrock Council are developing proposals for area engagement.

We will realise the benefits of this strategy through the Community Engagement Strategy Action Plan and the following plans and strategies:

- Communication Strategy
- Stronger Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Strategy

This strategy applies to all community engagement activities and processes used by partner agencies across all services, to inform, consult and involve local people and organisations within Thurrock.

### **HOW WILL SUCCESS BE MEASURED?**

Quarterly monitoring against the agreed implementation plan will ensure that progress is tracked and appropriate measures taken to unblock barriers to delivery.

Previously, performance against a number of indicators was carried out nationally via the Place Survey. This approach has now been abolished; however, many authorities have adopted the questions into a local survey of residents.

Thurrock intends to operate its own Customer Survey. Although the final question set will be agreed with partners, it is envisaged that some of the previous questions used in the Place

Survey be repeated in the local survey. This will enable benchmarking against authorities who are considered to be comparable to Thurrock through the CIPFA 'Nearest neighbour' model. The questions used to assess performance could include:

Percentage of people who feel that their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds can get on well together.

Local levels of volunteering

Percentage of residents who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

Percentage of residents satisfied with the opportunity for participation in decision making provided by the Council

In addition, Thurrock will adopt a local target for the bi-annual Ipsos Mori survey of Charities and Social Enterprises to establish the percentage of voluntary sector organisations who feel that the statutory services in their area support an environment in which they can grow stronger.

## **RESOURCING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

This community engagement strategy is member led in its approach. It is therefore appropriate to provide elected Councillors with some budget to support community needs. A pilot programme targeting seven councillors in three wards throughout 2011/12 will inform the governance of future arrangements, to be underpinned by community engagement.

There is an expectation that Community Councils will be established to facilitate engagement within geographic areas. Initially, this is likely to require budgetary support of £10,000 per annum to hire venues and provide publicity.

Community Forums continue to receive a small budget to support administration, group insurance and website licence at a cost of £15,000 per annum. Funding is provided in recognition of the value that forums bring to community led engagement. This resource must add value to the community engagement strategy and to the role of elected members, and promote area working wherever possible.

In addition many of the three year funding agreements entered through the Voluntary Sector Development Fund help to underpin capacity in the voluntary sector which will be needed to support community development (2011 – 14). This is particularly so in terms of infrastructure support through the Council for Voluntary Service, and the development of a Volunteer Centre and active citizenship support within Ngage. Delivery across all the funding agreements however will strengthen capacity in this area. In addition, other funding relationships across the Council will be monitored and evaluated to encourage a more joined up approach to engagement through existing relationships.

### **The role of councillors**

Councillors will be at the heart of this community engagement strategy. They will lead on the formation of Community Councils, championing the strong identities within their wards and connecting with newer communities to engage in dialogue at a larger geographic level to



support better decision making. Objective 2 of the strategy aims to support the role of Councillors as community leaders and as advocates for good engagement.

### **The role of officers**

Officers have a responsibility to ensure that they follow the Principles of Community Engagement when engaging with the community. The principles have been developed to enhance engagement and lie at the core of this strategy.

Officers who undertake community engagement and consultation activities in Thurrock should also be aware of the Thurrock Profile and understand the specific issues that relate to the different localities and communities in Thurrock. It is important that officers analyse the likely impact on community groups when developing services or when introducing new policies.

Officers proposing any change in policy or strategy, or requesting a decision that impacts on residents, must complete an Equality Impact Analysis. This should actively involve diverse communities to assess the potential impact that a change decision might result in. Assessments should reflect community engagement principles.

### **The role of Heads of Service**

Heads of Service will be identified to support Councillors in the formation and roll out of Community Councils. Heads of Service will take on this role, each with one shadow support Head of Service or equivalent.

Those Heads of Service whose work area is too directly related to area service delivery (i.e. housing and environmental services) will not be asked to support a specific area, but will support better engagement across the whole borough.

Heads of Service will be expected to support Councillors in the Community Council as key strategic leads for that area. Once assigned an area, the Head of Service should make every effort to get to know their area, including key hard and soft data.

The Head of Service will be expected to support Councillors hold at least two engagement events per year. Initially, the Community Councils will be organic and develop at their own pace. They are likely to focus on day to day, operational service issues which cause problems for residents. In time, it is envisaged that Community Councils will provide a focus for more creative solutions to the types of problems that have existed in an area for some time, despite the best efforts of the public sector to intervene.

### **The role of the Voluntary Sector<sup>1</sup>**

A wide range of assets and resources exist within Thurrock's voluntary sector which must be recognised and brought to the fore if we are to achieve the ambitions of this strategy. Local intelligence, volunteer capacity, access to external funding, the management of community buildings, community equipment and the mobilisation and commitment to improving

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<sup>1</sup>Voluntary sector organisations include: Community and faith organisations, third sector, charities, civil society organisations, social enterprises and cooperatives

communities are just some of the reasons why valuing our joint working with the sector is essential to our success.

Conversely, local government can be influential in shaping the environment in which the voluntary sector works. This strategy aims to make the best of those opportunities. Third sector organisations play a vital role in community engagement as advocates for local people, particularly marginalised and vulnerable groups. We will further develop the Thurrock Compact and a Thriving Third Sector Strategy to harness the expertise and experience of the sector in playing a key role in the borough's future as an independent and innovative force for change.

The Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) is the key infrastructure body for the voluntary sector in Thurrock. As such it plays a key role in supporting a strategic dialogue across partners as to how the borough can make the best of all the voluntary sector has to offer. Very often this will mean ensuring that organisations are able to influence the design of services. In addition, the CVS will be supporting the capacity of local organisations who want to tender to deliver services, whilst working with the council to improve commissioning practice.

Ngage is developing a Volunteer Centre for Thurrock – a one stop shop for residents who want to play a more active role in their communities. Ngage will also actively promote opportunities for residents to influence decisions in Thurrock by encouraging participation in a wide range of engagement activities such as Community Councils and consultation events.

In addition, Thurrock's voluntary sector has many well established organisations expert in the specific service area that they support. The council will work with CVS to develop clear pathways for service providers to engage with specialist services, and help them to hold a wider discussion within communities about the needs of communities of interest.

### **The role of partners**

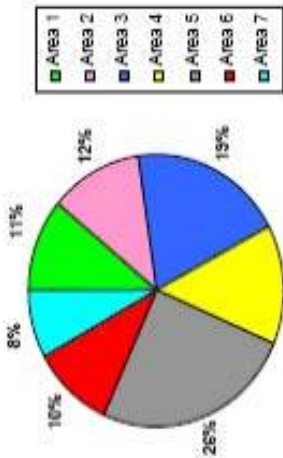
A number of partners (public sector, businesses, interest groups, and the Voluntary Sector) deliver a range of initiatives to help local public service providers and other key organisations work together more effectively to meet the needs of local people. The challenge for partners is to embed the principles of effective community engagement across the spectrum i.e. ensuring that communities are informed, consulted or involved in key decisions affecting their local area whether it is in the health sector or addressing environmental issues. It is also important that we leverage the benefits of the networks and resources available from across the partnership, for example, individual interest groups that we may otherwise not reach.

Effective multi agency working will be increasingly important as the need to target resources more effectively increases. Existing dialogue mechanisms will be mapped within key neighbourhoods with a view to supporting improved cross agency working in the future.

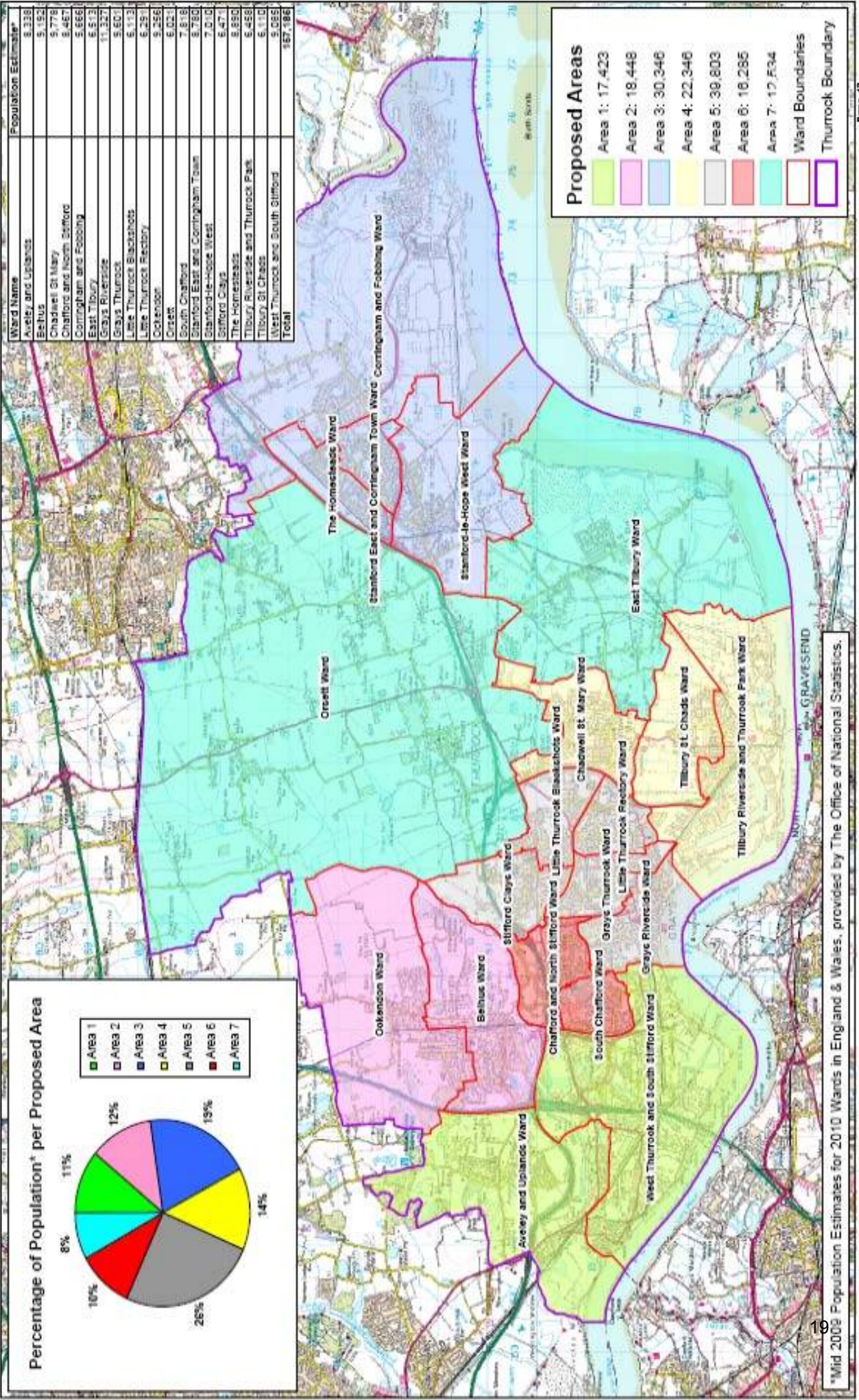
# Appendix 1 - Proposed Area Engagement Map



Percentage of Population\* per Proposed Area



Ward Name	Population Estimate*
Aveley and Uplands	8,338
Bellus	9,152
Chadwell St Mary	9,778
Chafford and North Stifford	8,461
Coringham and Fobbing	5,666
East Tilbury	6,513
Grays Riverside	11,327
Grays Thurrock	9,601
Little Thurrock Blackshotts	6,113
Little Thurrock Rectory	6,251
Cokenton	9,256
Crest	6,021
South Chafford	7,818
Stamford East and Corringham Town	9,760
Stamford-le-Hope West	7,210
Stifford Clays	6,471
The Homesteads	8,890
Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park	6,458
Tilbury St Chads	6,110
West Thurrock and South Stifford	9,083
<b>Total</b>	<b>167,186</b>



**Proposed Areas**

- Area 1: 17,423
- Area 2: 18,448
- Area 3: 30,346
- Area 4: 22,346
- Area 5: 39,803
- Area 6: 18,285
- Area 7: 17,834
- Ward Boundaries
- Thurrock Boundary

\*Mid 2009 Population Estimates for 2010 Wards in England & Wales, provided by The Office of National Statistics.

Appendix 1 Part B

	Estimated Population 2009	Male	Female	Male Under 15	Female Under 15	Male 15-39	Female 15-39	Male 40-64	Female 40-64	Male 65+	Female 65+
<b>Area 1</b> Aveley & Uplands West Thurrock & South	17,423	8610	8813	1,847	1,778	3253	3389	2,711	2,609	799	1,037
<b>Area 2</b> Ockendon Belhus	18,448	8944	9504	1883	1809	2988	3260	3132	2965	941	1470
<b>Area 3</b> Homesteads Stanford East & Corringham and Fobbing Stanford West	30,346	14804	15542	2715	2389	4614	4683	5139	5575	2336	2895
<b>Area 4</b> Chadwell St Mary Tilbury St Chads Tilbury Riverside &	22,346	10586	11760	2375	2413	3555	3888	3341	3545	1315	1914
<b>Area 5</b> Stifford Clays Little Thurrock Blackshots Little Thurrock Rectory Grays Thurrock Grays Riverside	39,803	19550	20253	3913	3523	6911	7305	6461	6182	2265	3243
<b>Area 6</b> Chafford & North Stifford South Chafford	16,285	8370	7915	2064	1969	3617	3667	2438	1974	251	305
<b>Area 7</b> Orsett East Tilbury	12534	6158	6376	1131	1160	1957	2027	2273	2275	797	914
<b>Totals</b>	<b>157185</b>	<b>77022</b>	<b>80163</b>	<b>15928</b>	<b>15041</b>	<b>26895</b>	<b>28219</b>	<b>25,495</b>	<b>25,125</b>	<b>8,704</b>	<b>11,778</b>

## Appendix 2 - PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT<sup>2</sup>

These principles are at the centre of community engagement in Thurrock. By following these principles, all sections of Thurrock's diverse communities should feel engaged and involved, and that their contribution is making a difference to the quality of their lives.

There are three stages of planning community engagement and within those stages there are standards for community engagement activities.

- Planning
- Engagement
- Evaluation and Feedback

### Planning

- Clear and Agreed Purposes - We will be clear about why there is a need to engage with our community
- Co-ordinated Approach - We will ensure that a co-ordinated approach is taken to engaging with our community
- Timing - We will ensure that where possible, engagement with our community is timely in accordance with their requirements
- Methodology – 'Fit for Purpose' - Unless circumstances dictate that engagement should take place via specified methodology, methods taken to engage with our community should take account of different needs
- Justify Target Audience - We will justify and communicate why specific audiences have been targeted for engagement
- Involve - We will involve and seek advice from our community when planning to engage with them

### Engagement

- Transparency – being 'Open and Honest' - We will be open and honest when engaging with our community and ensure that the processes we use are transparent
- Inclusive - We will aim to be inclusive by enabling all groups within our community to participate and/or their views to be represented when engaging on issues relevant to them
- Inform and Communicate Effectively - We will ensure that our community are given information about why they are being engaged with and that the information supplied is accessible by all

### Evaluation and Feedback

- Providing Feedback - We will provide our community with regular feedback when engaging with them

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<sup>2</sup> For a complete list of the Principles of Community Engagement, please visit [www.shapingthurrock.org.uk/](http://www.shapingthurrock.org.uk/)

- Right to Challenge - Our community will be given the opportunity to comment and/or complain about the engagement process and decisions made as a result of information received through the engagement process
- Measuring Success - We will evaluate the engagement process against agreed outcomes and make the results of the evaluation available to our community
- Lessons Learned - We will ensure that any lessons learned from engagement carried out are used to develop better processes and are used to inform future engagement with our community
- Best Practice - We will recognise best practice and ensure that it is used to inform future engagement with our community

The Principles of Community Engagement were written by people living in and representing our communities. Officers are supported to follow best practice in community engagement via the Community Engagement Tool-kit developed in partnership with the voluntary sector and key partners working in Thurrock. This is available via [http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/i-know/pdf/perf\\_how\\_01\\_engagement\\_v1.pdf](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/i-know/pdf/perf_how_01_engagement_v1.pdf).

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