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

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **22 November 2016**

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

Membership:

Councillors John Kent (Chair), Leslie Gamester (Vice-Chair), Jack Duffin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney and Aaron Watkins

Substitutes:

Councillors Tim Aker, James Baker, Tony Fish, Oliver Gerrish and Tom Kelly

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Agenda published on: **14 November 2016**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

<u>**Helpful Reminders for Members**</u>

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

<u>**When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?**</u>

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

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Does the business to be transacted at the meeting
- **relate to; or**
- **likely to affect**

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary   **Non- pecuniary**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

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

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

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

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

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

4. Improve health and well-being

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

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

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

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 September 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillors Leslie Gamester (Vice-Chair), Jack Duffin, Steve Liddiard, Ben Maney, Oliver Gerrish (Substitute) and Tom Kelly (Substitute)
Apologies:	Councillors John Kent and Aaron Watkins
In attendance:	Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation Sue Harper, Interim Head of Environment Karen Wheeler, Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service Mykela Pratt, Improvement Manager Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer Charlotte Raper, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Councillor Gamester chaired for the duration of this meeting.

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

8.   Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 June 2016 were approved as a correct record, subject to an amendment at the request of Councillor Maney to note his apologies for absence.

9.   Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

10.   Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

11.   Terms of Reference

The Democratic Services Officer presented the terms of reference to the Committee and highlighted that the process of updating them had been completed since the last meeting. Members were reminded that they were also available within the Constitution on the Council's website.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the updated Terms of Reference for the Committee.

12.   **Council Spending Review Update**

The Director of Finance & IT presented the report which gave the Committee an update including budget gaps and pressures. The report also outlined the Council Spending review process and timetable, the General Fund Balance and a revision of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Councillor Duffin raised his concern that following repeated promises from the Portfolio Holder that there would be no "salami slicing" point 3.8 which outlined "a minimum of 15-20% efficiencies in each service" seemed to be exactly that.

The Director of Finance & IT assured members that the reduction of 15-20% had not been built into the budget, but was a target set out by the Chief Executive, he continued to explain that there would be a thorough review headed by the Corporate Director of Environment and Place, including a cross service panel, to assess how effective and efficient services were, including their commercial standing. Once this review had been completed the actual percentage identified would be built into the budget, regardless of whether or not it met the 15-20% target. Councillor Duffin requested the report be amended to reflect the fact that the 15-20% was in fact a target and not a strict minimum. The Director of Finance & IT agreed that the feedback would be noted and the report amended accordingly.

Councillor Duffin continued to refer to point 3.8 of the report and queried whether it might be possible to bring forward the March 2019 date, so that if there were to be a change of administration the responsibility would not fall at their feet. The Director of Finance & IT explained that March 2019 was definitely a long-stop date, but there was a need to ensure that the hundreds of services provided by the Council could be reviewed thoroughly, in the most practical and efficient way which would take time. The aim was to set future direction so that for any administration there would be a pool of evidence and background information to support it. The Committee heard that it would not be a case that anything was pushed through; the reviews would need to be completed in great detail for the most efficient outcome.

Councillor Duffin referred to section 5 of the report, regarding consultation, and particularly asked whether the make-up of the cross-party panel would mean that the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder would not be involved. The Committee was advised that those decisions would be reserved to Party Leaders, based around numbers and workability to avoid large numbers being sent from each Party.

Councillor Duffin sought clarity regarding the "consultation" mentioned in point 3.10 of the report and what the planned process would be. Members heard that the process would depend upon the proposal. "Consultation" would cover

a number of areas; minor restructuring within service areas would fall completely within the remit of management decisions, whilst other areas such as the provision of services, opening hours, etc. would merit the Overview and Scrutiny process, and finally areas where it would be required, such as Adult Social Care or Schooling, would include statutory public consultation. Members were reminded that the report included a three-year programme and consultation may begin in October/November 2016 but need not be completed by that time.

Councillor Gerrish began by reminding the Committee of comments regarding current decisions impacted by a large overspend from the previous year, with a figure of around £6m having been quoted and asked how the Director of Finance & IT would characterise the claim. The Director of Finance & IT explained that his understanding of comments made was that they referred to a single service, not the Council as a whole. He continued to outline that there had been a significant overspend, in excess of £5m, within Children's Services which had been reported in outturn reports and to Cabinet. Members heard that as always, all services worked together to identify ways to breach any overspend and had attempted to balance the overall budget and as a result, last year the Council came within budget. The Committee was advised that the overspend within Children's Services had continued into this year as caseloads and staffing levels were unchanged and so in a sense there had been an inbuilt overspend, however the Authority was working as in previous years and as such the Director of Finance & IT was confident that it would be possible to bring the current deficit back to a balanced budget position.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Director of Finance & IT for the clarification and moved on to reference 3.3 and asked what the overall amount allocated to the "Clean it, cut it, fill it" pilot was at present, and what it would work out to if it were to go forward in terms of the annual budget. The Director of Finance & IT outlined that the report presented to Cabinet showed the pilot at £260,000, which had been included in the forecasted £158,000 deficit, and so without the pilot the Council would have been £100,000 in surplus for this year. He continued to explain that officers, the Cabinet and the Portfolio Holder had agreed that they would continue to work towards reducing the deficit to zero. The Committee was assured that, should it not be possible to bridge the remaining balance through other budget efficiencies, it could be funded through capitalisation of the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), as with the Pension Fund Serco Liability in the previous year. As for moving forward, there had been no figure set. The pilot stage would be coming to a close within the next few months and a full review would be carried out. The pilot would be assessed to see what had been successful and what had been less so, and these results would be used to then create a permanent budget for Members' consideration.

Councillor Gerrish referenced sections 32.1 and 3.4 of the report and asked whether there had been any commitment by the Administration regarding the assumptions around Council Tax. The Director of Finance & IT admitted that there had been no commitment on the part of the Administration either way.

The report assumed 3.99% however there was also a table which illustrated what the impact would be if there were any discussions around this figure, to give Members a choice at Council. The Portfolio Holder for Finance had been clear that officers were instructed to try to find more than the budget gap, though the Director of Finance & IT admitted he was not sure whether or not that would be possible. He continued to express that his position which had not changed in all his years in post, was that Thurrock Council was a very low Council Tax Council. Not only was the Council Tax low but 88% of properties were bands A-D which gave a very low Council Tax base. The aim was to work towards financial self-sustainability and as such he would be recommending 3.99% throughout the rest of the year and the medium term.

Councillor Gerrish expressed concern about the relatively large sums of money being discussed, up to an additional 35% budget gap over the three year period, which would amount to major increases in the amount of funding Thurrock Council as an organisation would need to find, with no commitment from the Administration as to whether or not it should be a core part of assumptions moving forwards with the budget. He continued that it might be helpful to send a message to the Administration that Members wanted clarity around their view on the three year MTFS and their assumptions. Councillor Duffin seconded Councillor Gerrish's view to ensure the Administration had a set agreement moving forward so that it would prove more difficult for plans to change last-minute.

Councillor Maney moved the discussion to section 3.5 of the report and income generation. He agreed that he personally felt it was very important, aside from just making savings and asked if the Committee might be given more information about possible options moving forward. The Director of Finance and IT informed Members that there were a number of routes available, fees and charges, areas in which the Council was not commercial enough such as trade waste where there had been an increase in activity, and officers were also looking at possibilities of investments, sponsorships and advertisements. The Committee also heard that the fraud department had undertaken some work for the Ministry of Justice and Essex Police so there was an opportunity for income generation from other similar traded works.

Councillor Maney commented that Thurrock Council was above the national average for Council Tax and Business Rate recovery but at the top end there were a few long term, larger debts still to be recovered. He asked if there were any figures around how many larger debts were outstanding and what was being done to recover them.

The Director of Finance and IT agreed that there were some outstanding debts, but not a significant amount. He advised Members that in practice the debts are written out of accounts when it seemed unlikely that they would be recovered, so that budgets could be amended accordingly, however they were never written off completely and were still pursued. He continued to state that Thurrock was top in Essex for Business Rate collection and 2nd for Council Tax and that the position had jumped from bottom quartile a few years ago to top of top quartile at the present moment nationally. The

Director of Finance and IT admitted that he did not have the figures with him but could collate them and pass them on after the meeting, but advised there were some which had additional issues particularly surrounding Adult Social Care, which would require more detailed assessment.

Councillor Duffin referred back to section 3.5 of the report and investments. He had spoken to Councillor Kent that day and requested that an item be added to the Work Programme surrounding the Council's investments. The Director of Finance and IT reminded the Committee that the delegations were set out in the Constitution and managed within a framework that was agreed by Members within the Treasury Management Strategy which was agreed annually at Council. He agreed to bring a paper which would give an overview back to the Committee.

Councillor Duffin, prompted by Councillor Maney's earlier comments asked whether there was any more information surrounding the Government's pledge to give Local Authorities 100% of business rates. The Committee was advised that the consultation documents on both Business Rates and Fair Funding Formula would be due back the coming week and Officers had drafted a response back, of which all three parties would receive a copy. The Director of Finance and IT clarified that the pledge had been that Councils as a whole would be able to retain 100% of Business Rates, but that did not necessarily mean that Thurrock would. There was also uncertainty as to what extra duties would be imposed in order for Councils to retain those rates, and so there was a possibility the responsibilities may become more costly than the money returned, or have far higher risk involved and as such the Council would not necessarily find itself in a better financial position.

Councillor Gerrish directed the Committees attention to sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the report and the possibility of reductions to or cessation of service provision. He asked to what extent had there been proposals found to cover the budget gap, and within that what was the balance of the three key areas. The Committee was assured that the level of proposals found had eaten notably into the budget gap, although reviews had only been carried out during the summer. The Director of Finance and IT expressed confidence in the ability to create a balanced budget, and stressed that none of the proposals put forward had included cessation of services, all fell within the three key areas outlined in 3.5.

Councillor Gerrish sought clarification as to whether there would be a full set of proposals to tackle the budget gap ready for when reports were taken through the Overview and Scrutiny process, or whether it was more likely that there would be a phased approach throughout the year. The Director of Finance and IT admitted that it was hard to say, and that he was not entirely certain there would be a full list of proposals to present to the Overview and Scrutiny Committees before Christmas, but there would definitely be enough to show that the gap was very much being closed. Any further proposals would be taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committees at the earliest opportunity.

RESOLVED:

1) **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised MTFS position, including any adjustments for an increase to the General Fund Balance.**

2) **That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the Council Spending Review approach and timetable.**

13.   **Quarter 1 Corporate Performance Report 2016/17**

The Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services presented the report which outlined the new assessment system which differed from the previous Red, Amber, Green (RAG) coding. The report also covered the benchmarking groups used and the approaches taken, as previously requested by the Committee. Members were advised that this was an opportunity for them to comment upon the contents of the report before it would be presented at Cabinet in October.

Councillor Duffin began by referring to Planning, which had been in focus for exceptional performance, raising the concern of elected Members who had submitted complaints or queries and found the department's responses to have been slow, and asked whether anything could be done to make the process faster. The Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services agreed to take that feedback back to the department and respond outside of the meeting.

Councillor Duffin moved onto focus 2 and informed the Committee that he had been in contact with several residents whose bin had been missed on their usual collection day and once they had complained to the Council that it had still not been collected days later. He asked whether it would be possible to review the reporting and complaints process. The Interim Head of Environment agreed that officers were looking into ways to improve the collection service but also the response if there were missed bins.

Councillor Duffin asked what work was being done with local schools as apprenticeships were a great way to offer opportunities to young people as they were leaving school. The Improvement manager informed Members that there had been a talent pool of apprentices set up by the Recruitment Team and that there was also to be an event held in October called "Opportunity Thurrock" which involved schools and at which Thurrock Council would have a presence.

Councillor Maney asked for additional information surrounding section 2.3 and the upcoming residents' survey, particularly how it would be rolled out to residents. The Committee heard that a telephone survey would be held, to obtain results from 1000 residents selected upon the basis of age, gender, ethnicity and their location within the Borough so as to give an accurate depiction of the population as a whole. The survey would be carried out by an independent market research company, BMG and would look into residents' perceptions of council services, access to information, anti-social behaviour

and their preferred means of correspondence. A survey such as this had not been carried out within Thurrock for a number of years and it was expected to take place over 2-3 weeks in October.

Councillor Duffin asked the expected cost of the survey. The survey was expected to cost £18,000 which had been included within the existing budget.

The Chair raised concern that there may be a risk of excluding people by completing a telephone only survey. Members were assured that the market research team would continue to work through residents until the necessary quotas were met to give a proportional depiction of residents. Every methodology offered risks but postal surveys were costly and there was great difficulty in finding the most effective positioning for face-to-face interviews and as such a telephone survey had been deemed most effective, especially since the market research team would ensure that they called enough people until sufficient levels of results had been obtained.

Councillor Duffin queried the cost of benchmarking, and raised concern that each department was able to choose what they were benchmarked against. He feared the possibility to move the goalposts to ensure better standing and asked what checks were in place to avoid this. The Head of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services advised the Committee that many departments had reviewed the benchmarking groups they belonged to, partly due to the cost which had resulted in some groups having become informal, or part of existing networks. Members heard that within Thurrock Council there was a Corporate Performance Board which looked at benchmarking and targets. The Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health informed Members that Adult Social Care used the "Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework", which was recognised by the Department of Health, and benchmarked against nearest statistical neighbours, equivalent Unitary Authorities and Members were assured that departments did not "pick and choose" but instead had a group of similar Unitary Authorities against which they regularly benchmarked.

RESOLVED:

1) **The Committee noted and commented upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are IN FOCUS**

2) **The Committee identified any areas which required additional consideration**

14. **Staff Survey 2016**

The Director of HR, OD & Transformation presented the report which outlined the outcomes of the 2016 staff survey, which measured Thurrock Council's performance as an employer and the performance of managers. She expressed positivity at the 71% response rate and the considerable improvement made since the 2014 survey. Members were assured that there

would be ongoing communication, particularly regarding the less positive responses in the form of a "You said, we did" campaign and a mini survey to identify progress planned to take place in Spring 2017.

Councillor Duffin asked what the cost of the survey had been and what benefit there had been as opposed to having used free survey software. Members heard that the cost of the survey had been £10,000 but the Council had retendered the contract and saved 50% of the previous cost. The requirements of using an externally accredited organisation were that Thurrock Council had access to their benchmarking data and employees would trust the confidentiality. If the survey had been run internally it would not have cost much less and there would have been uncertainty about their responses remaining confidential.

Councillor Duffin asked how the homeless department ranked, as he and other members had faced challenges when contacting the department and wondered what the feedback had been. The Director of HR, OD & Transformation advised Members that she would have to pass that information on outside of the meeting as she did not have data on every department individually to hand. Members also heard that data would depend upon response levels; it was only possible to access results for teams with more than 10 responses otherwise the confidentiality status would be breached.

Councillor Duffin noted that one of the less positive areas was IT and highlighted his own issues with the "Good" app. The Director of HR, OD & Transformation advised the Committee that there were a number of aspects and systems which contributed to the score, and in reality the "Good" app didn't arise in the follow up workshops carried out. The Director of Finance and IT interjected that as IT was one of his areas perhaps he could shed further light on the issue. He assured members that the feedback was being taken very seriously. He also noted that oftentimes, the more IT one had access to the more one would want it to be able to do. Within the survey outcomes there had been a wide ranging set of IT issues highlighted but there would be a need to look into how IT works and whether systems could be improved. Members were advised that the majority of staff did not have access to the "Good" app, as it was only used by staff with work tablets or phones. Councillor Duffin reiterated that he found "Good" did not have much functionality. The Chair added that he had personally lost his emails the day before on the same app.

Councillor Maney agreed with the Director of HR, OD & Transformation that there was no point harvesting the data unless something was to be done with the results. He asked for clarification as to what would happen moving forward and how the action plans would be embedded. The Committee heard that six key areas of focus had been identified which would have the biggest impact in making improvements, particularly the induction process which had possibly been the most negative aspect of the survey. The induction process was now being scrutinised at all levels to improve practices and there would also be a review process over the next six months with any new starters to

see whether induction performance had improved. There was a need to demonstrate to the workforce that if their response was that something didn't work something would be done to improve matters.

Councillor Maney asked whether there would be an opportunity to look at how it would lead to change moving forwards, such as the improvement plans as they were produced and how they were monitored. Councillor Duffin supported this view. It was agreed that there would be an item added to the work programme to ensure Members could monitor the progress made.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted and commented on the outcomes of the Staff Survey 2016 and actions identified.

15.   **Employee Performance Review - 2015/16**

The Director of HR, OD and Transformation presented the report which linked in with KPIs and the Staff Survey as it assessed how the organisation managed the performance of individual employees. It outlined the results for the previous year's assessment process, with 87% of staff having been deemed as working well or excellently.

RESOLVED:

1) **The Overview & Scrutiny Committee noted the report**

2) **Those directorates with lower compliance rates for the completion of one-to-ones and PDRs confirm action plans to ensure full compliance going forward.**

16.   **Work Programme**

Members were asked if there were any amendments to the Work Programme they wished to propose, in addition to the two reports already requested within the evening's debate.

RESOLVED:

Members noted the Work Programme, including the addition of a report on the Council's investment and the Staff Survey Action Plan.

The meeting finished at 7.57 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

22 November 2016	ITEM: 5
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Non-key

Report of:

Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

Accountable Head of Service: N/A

Accountable Director:

Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

This report is public

Executive Summary

The council has retained a consistent vision and set of corporate priorities since they were agreed as part of the Community Strategy consultation in 2012 with some wording remaining consistent since before 2010.

Over the last four years they have been amended slightly, and the corporate objectives underpinning them have been revised, however fundamentally they have remained the same and have had unanimous, cross-party support. The existing vision and corporate priorities are at Appendix 1.

There is now an opportunity to review the vision and priorities to better reflect the ambition for the council and Thurrock the place, to be more succinct and easy to communicate, and to articulate the new focus and priorities.

The committee are invited to comment on the proposed draft new vision and priorities as part of the consultation process.

1.   **Recommendation(s)**

1.1   **Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to comment upon the proposed new vision and corporate priorities.**

2.   **Introduction and Background**

2.1   The council has an agreed vision and set of corporate priorities which are fundamentally the same as those agreed as part of the Community Strategy

consultation exercise in September 2012. These priorities were refreshed slightly in 2015 to take into account the changing relationship between the council and the community and our role in place shaping and community leadership:

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

- **Create** a great place for learning and opportunity
- **Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- **Build** pride, responsibility and respect
- **Improve** health and well-being
- **Promote** and protect our clean and green environment

2.2 The proposed vision and priorities have been updated to reflect the aspiration and uniqueness of Thurrock, where the place and the council are now, the ambition for delivery and balancing the need for growth with quality of life.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The new proposed vision is:

An ambitious, aspiring and collaborative community, which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

3.2 It is proposed that there will be three interconnecting new priorities:

- Striving for quality
    - Quality core service delivery
    - Right first time
    - Affordable and sustainable
- Placemaking and driving growth
    - Inviting and attractive to investors
    - Integrated infrastructure and sought after quality housing
    - Skills and job opportunities so everyone can achieve potential
- Thriving partnerships
    - Integrated health and social care to deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
    - Community empowerment and engagement
    - Wider Team Thurrock

Appendix 2 shows how these fit together and are interconnected to reflect how all components are equally weighted and important, and intrinsically dependent on each other to succeed.

3.3 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on the proposals as part of a period of consultation with stakeholders through existing forums e.g. Joint Strategic Forum, Health and Wellbeing Board, Business Board, Tenancy Excellence Panel. The final version will also be

informed by the results from the residents' survey and feedback from the Local Plan consultation. The views of staff will also be sought through directorate management teams, Corporate Workforce Group and Staff Forums.

3.4 This will allow a final vision and priorities to be considered by Cabinet in and recommend agreement at Full Council in early 2017. Any change to the vision and priorities will need to be agreed by Council which has overall responsibility for the Policy Framework (Constitution: Chapter 3, Part 3).

3.5 This timetable will enable alignment of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to the priorities and have a much stronger narrative around where the council is now, the direction of travel and ambition.

3.6 The vision and priorities will be progressed and delivered by staff and members through the service plans, objective setting and performance management tools.

3.7 Any change to the vision and priorities will be supported by an engagement and communications campaign internally and externally to share the new vision and priorities widely.

4.   Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 In order to obtain full support for a new vision and set of priorities, the views and feedback of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee members is requested early in the process.

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

5.1 The original vision and corporate priorities were extensively consulted upon with residents, community and voluntary sectors and other partners.

5.2 This report is the first stage of consultation with other stakeholders, after which existing external and internal forums will be utilised to gain feedback.

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

6.1 It is proposed that the existing vision and corporate priorities will be replaced. The vision and priorities cascade into every bit of the council and further to our partners, through key strategies, service plans, team plans and individual objectives. Wide consultation and communication people will be undertaken and the changes will be fed into the 2017/18 business planning cycle.

7.   Implications

7.1 **Financial**

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

A new vision and set of corporate priorities does not in itself have any direct financial implications. Indeed the refresh has been developed with the Medium Term Financial Strategy at the forefront of considerations.

However, the delivery of the new visions and priorities may include individual projects which may have a financial implication. These will be considered on an as and when basis once those projects have been developed.

7.2   **Legal**

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

Any change to the vision and priorities will need to be agreed by Council which has overall responsibility for the Policy Framework (Constitution: Chapter 3, Part 3).

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, individual priority projects may have legal implications, and as such will need to be addressed separately as decisions relating to those specific activities are considered.

7.3   **Diversity and Equality**

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

The vision and priorities set out the overall ambition for Thurrock and overall framework within which the council proposes to deliver services. Whilst there are no identifiable direct implications in relation to diversity and equality from the proposals at this stage, individual priority projects may have such implications, and as such will need to be addressed separately as decisions relating to those specific activities are considered.

Within the proposed new priority of "Thriving partnerships" – there is an explicit focus on community empowerment and engagement. This is a positive.

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

The proposed new vision and corporate priorities incorporate all areas of the council's work. Individual priority projects may have a variety of implications, and as such will need to be addressed separately as they are developed and decisions relating to those specific activities are considered.

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

9.   Appendices to the report

- **Appendix 1 – Current Vision and Corporate Priorities**
- **Appendix 2 – Proposed Vision and Corporate Priorities Diagram**

Report Author:
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer

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Current Vision & Corporate Priorities

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

Five **strategic priorities** to achieve our vision:

Create a great place for learning and opportunity

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

Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

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

Build pride, responsibility and respect

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

Improve health and well-being

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

Promote and protect our clean and green environment

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

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Thurrock vision: What we want to achieve

An ambitious, aspiring and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Priorities: Things we will focus on for our residents

STRIVING for quality

Clean, attractive public realm

Commissioning, alternative delivery models

Placemaking and **DRIVING** growth

Health and Growth Partnerships, CCG, Port of Tilbury, ROH, RSPB

THRIVING partnerships

Placemaking and driving growth

We will focus on:

- Inviting and attractive to investors
- Integrated infrastructure and sought after quality housing
- Skills and job opportunities so everyone can achieve potential

Striving for quality

We will focus on:

- Quality core service delivery
- Right first time
- Affordable/sustainable (inc. digital)

Thriving partnerships

We will focus on:

- Integrated health and social care to deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Community empowerment and engagement
- WiderTeam Thurrock

Foundations:

Becoming financially **self-sustainable**
through **place leadership**, facilitating economic **growth**,
protecting the most **vulnerable** and **enabling** communities and individuals

thurrock.gov.uk

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22 November 2016	ITEM: 6
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Mid-year Corporate Plan Progress and Performance Report 2016/17	
Wards and communities affected: All	**Key Decision:** Non-key
Report of: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services	
Accountable Head of Service: n/a	
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

The Corporate Plan 2016/17 outlines the focus areas for service delivery during this year. This is currently based on the existing vision and corporate priorities which will be refreshed during the year. The plan is supported by the Corporate KPI (Key Performance Indicator) Framework which details the statistical evidence the council will use to monitor the progress and performance against those priority activities.

This report provides a progress update in relation to the performance of those KPIs (Appendix 1) and also reports on progress against the related actions/ projects as outlined in the Corporate Priority Activity Plan for 2016/17 (Appendix 2).

1. **Recommendation(s)**

1.1 **To note and comment upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are IN FOCUS**

1.2 **To note and comment upon the progress in relation to the key corporate priority activities for 2016/17**

1.3 **To identify any areas which require additional consideration**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The key corporate plan activities for the year ahead mapped against the priorities were agreed by Cabinet in July 2016. This report provides an update in relation to the progress of those activities detailed in Appendix 2 as well as the performance of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used to monitor performance throughout the year. The data is included in Appendix 1 and the areas for focusing upon at this mid year point are detailed in section 3.3.

2.2 As previously reported, there will be a full and thorough review of existing KPIs and other performance tools in 2016 keeping in line with recommendations made by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny in 2015/16 and in line with the review of the vision and corporate priorities.

3.1 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1.1 This report is a monitoring report, therefore there is no options analysis.

The headline messages for this report are:

3.2 Summary of Corporate KPI Performance

Performance against target		Direction of Travel compared to 2015/16	
Quarter 2		↑ BETTER	44.19%
Achieved	**39.02%**	→ Static	2.33%
Failed	**43.9%**	↓ WORSE	37.2%
Not available for comparison	**17.08%***	Not available for comparison	16.28%**

17.08%* consists of five KPIs which are not due this month and two for which data is currently unavailable
16.28%** consists of five KPIs which are not due this month and two for which data is currently unavailable

3.3 Focus Areas for Quarter 2 (Mid Year)
Each quarter, this report will focus on a few key performance highlights and challenges. This quarter there are four focus areas requiring improvement and one area where performance has excelled.

3.3.1 Focus 1

KPI	% of good or better primary schools (according to Ofsted)		
Portfolio	Education & Health	Directorate	Children's Services
Performance	**88.9%**	Performance	**ACHIEVED**
Quarter 2 Target:	**80%**	Direction of Travel since last year	**BETTER** ⬆

This figure has increased substantially over the last 12 months from 75% in 2014/15 to well over target at present. Indications show that in the coming months it will increase further which will put Thurrock higher than the national average.

All primary schools and academies inspected in the last 12 months have been judged at least good with Quarry Hill being judged outstanding. Two primary schools have not yet been inspected as they have a new Unique Reference Number (URN) - Mayflower and Gateway free school. This leaves only three primaries in the borough judged to require improvement - they are Corringham, Stanford le Hope and Bonnygate primaries.

In the secondary phase Hassenbrook was judged to be in special measures in February 2016. The academy has now formally joined Gable Hall Multi Academy Trust (MAT) and has been issued with a new URN. The school therefore is not in a category and will only be re-inspected in the next three years. Their Section 8 Ofsted inspection in May 2016 identified "green shoots" but the GCSE performance this summer was poor.

(Commentary agreed by Rory Patterson)

3.3.2 Focus 2

KPI	Percentage of Thurrock adults who smoke		
Portfolio	Education & Health	Directorate	Adults, Housing & Health – Public Health
Performance	**21.3%**	Performance	**FAILED**
Quarter 2 Target:	**19.9%**	Direction of Travel since last year	**WORSE** ⬇

This indicator is updated annually and the most recent figures relate to 2015. There is a significant lag on the data meaning that 2016 figures will be available in mid-2017. The most recent data also uses a new methodology for calculating smoking prevalence meaning that it is not directly comparable to previous figures.

The target is to achieve 1% reduction per year. The local trend in recent years appears to be flat (i.e. no statistically significant change in prevalence) while

nationally and regionally prevalence has decreased significantly. Thurrock is now 4.4% above the national average and also has the highest rate in the East of England region.

Historically the tobacco control strategy has focussed on achieving 4-week quitters. However analysis has been done which shows that this has had a minimal impact on prevalence of smoking due to the large proportion of quitters who relapse.

The new strategy (part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy) focuses on:
- An open access quitting service which targets people with long term conditions where the greatest health benefit will be seen;
- A prevention strategy using a programme called ASSIST to prevent uptake on smoking in young people. There has been a good response from schools and it is expected that this will be implemented in four secondary schools this school year with the intention of rolling it out to others if it proves to be successful locally;
- Promoting an innovative use of e-cigarettes in our Stop Smoking service as these are thought to be one factor behind the decline in prevalence nationally.

Due to the long term nature of this lifestyle issue and data lags, it will be some time before the effective of this approach is known. The team is also currently undertaking a deep dive to investigate further the reasons why Thurrock appears to be an outlier on this indicator regionally and nationally.

(Commentary agreed by Roger Harris)

3.3.3 Focus 3			
KPI	% of refuse bins which are emptied on correct day		
Portfolio	Environment	Directorate	Environment & Place
Performance	**97.2%**	Performance	**FAILED**
Quarter 2 Target:	**98.5%**	Direction of Travel since last year	**WORSE** ⬇

Equates to an average of 2,800 bins per 100,000 missed each month so far this year. To put the figure in context, it is interesting to note that this also equates to an average of 865,452 bins being collected each month. Since the beginning of September the number of bins missed per week has dropped significantly compared to August with weekly performance as per the figures below:

Week ending	04-Sep-16	11-Sep-16	18-Sep-16	25-Sep-16
Bins to be collected	198,195	198,195	198,195	198,195
Missed Bins	503	421	790	1,609
Missed Bins per 100,000	254	213	399	812
% of Collections Made	99.7%	99.8%	99.6%	99.2%

Some of the reasons for missed bins have been explored in detail in previous reports and include factors such as:

- Vehicle breakdowns
- Traffic conditions
- Operational difficulties

The fleet of refuse collection vehicles is ageing and breakdowns are becoming more frequent. Whilst a major review of waste collection and disposal is underway, the Department has put in the interim measure of replacing the four oldest and unreliable vehicles with six new leased vehicles. This has increased reliability of the fleet and provided additional spare vehicles that can be deployed when refuse trucks are called into the workshop for servicing and routine maintenance.

The traffic chaos that was created by the closing of the Dartford Tunnel and QE2 Bridge in August had a marked impact on the waste collection service and the number of bins missed in that period (circa 12,000 missed in the week).

Whilst the department cannot always control traffic conditions processes have been put in place to ensure that there is a quick and effective method of alerting residents to disruptions to service. This helps in reducing resident frustration over not knowing when bins will be collected or why they have been missed. It is worth noting that dips in performance of this sort have marked impact on figures and it can take some time for the improved performance of the service to be reflected in the statistics.

Operational difficulties covers a range of scenarios and some of the actions that the department are putting in place to reduce these include implementing a service plan with detailed actions relating to staff engagement and training, waste round adjustments and clarification over processes and policies relating to missed bins. As a short-term measure an additional waste collection crew has been introduced three days a week to ensure that there is capacity within the service to complete all rounds.

(Commentary agreed by Steve Cox)

3.3.4 Focus 4			
KPI	% of complaints responded to within target		
Portfolio	Performance & Central Services	Directorate	HROD & Transformation
Performance	97%	Performance	FAILED
Quarter 2 Target:	98%	Direction of Travel since last year	WORSE ⬇

Although this is technically a failing indicator, the target is very high and in reality the council is still performing well in this area. By way of context a typical month will see between 200-250 complaints received. Therefore a decrease of 1% is approximately equivalent to two complaints.

The council has reviewed its complaints process and as a result a number of changes took effect from 1 August 2016, including shortening the target timeframe within which complaints should be dealt, which has created an increased challenge to improve performance.

(Commentary agreed by Jackie Hinchliffe)

3.3.5 Focus 5			
KPI	% of complaints which are upheld		
Portfolio	Performance & Central Services	Directorate	HROD & Transformation
Performance	**42%**	Performance	**FAILED**
Quarter 2 Target**:**	**40%**	Direction of Travel since last year	**BETTER** ⬆

In July/August, the council implemented a Learning Action Plan (LAP) approach in order to reduce upheld complaints. Progress of this is reported via the Customer & Demand Management Board each month:

- A report is now produced by the Complaints Team detailing those service areas who have in excess of 35% of complaints upheld

- Upheld complaints will then be sent to service areas to ensure root cause analysis of the complaints is undertaken with a view to then producing a LAP

  The LAP must:

  - Confirm what went wrong in the service and identify the cause of the problem
  - Explain what action, targeted to address the cause of the problem, will be taken to stop it happening again and who will be responsible for ensuring this happens
  - Provide a timescale for when that action took place or will take place
  - Provide objective evidence of those actions.
  - Explain how the service will check that these actions have been taken, and are working – and when this will be done, and by whom.

(Commentary agreed by Jackie Hinchliffe)

3.4   The full summary of Corporate Scorecard KPI performance is set out below:

Corporate Priority	Performance against Target			Direction of Travel since 2015/16			
	No. of KPIs unavailable for comparison (n/a)	ACHIEVED	FAILED	*No. of KPIs unavailable for comparison (n/a)*	Better ⬆	In line ➡	Worse ⬇
Create a great place for learning and opportunity	4	1	4	4	4	1	2
Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity	1	2	1	0	3	0	0
Build pride, responsibility and respect	0	2	1	0	0	0	1
Improve health and well-being	0	7	3	0	7	0	5
Promote and protect our clean and green environment	1	1	3	2	1	0	3
Well-run organisation	1	3	6	1	4	0	5
TOTAL	**7**	**16**	**18**	**7**	**19**	**1**	**16**
	% unavailable for comparison **17.08%***	% achieved target **39.02%**	% failed to meet target **43.9%**	% unavailable for DOT comparison **16.28%****	% better than 2015/16 **44.19%**	% same as 2015/16 **2.33%**	% worse than 2015/16 **37.2%**

17.08%* consists of five KPIs which are not due this month and two for which data is currently unavailable (not including annual indicators)
16.28%** consists of five KPIs which are not due this month and two for which data is currently unavailable (not including annual indicators)

4.   Reasons for Recommendation

4.1   The Corporate Plan and associated performance framework are fundamental to articulating what the council is aiming to achieve and how. It is best practice to report on the performance of the council. It shows effective levels of governance and transparency and showcases strong performance as well as an acknowledgement of where we need to improve.

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

5.1   The original vision and corporate priorities were extensively consulted upon with residents, community and voluntary sectors and other partners.

5.2   Performance monitoring reports are considered on a quarterly basis by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and where there are specific issues relevant to other committees these are further circulated as appropriate.

5.3   Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on 21 June were invited to comment on the draft Corporate Plan and KPIs for 2016/17 ahead of consideration by Cabinet and a full review in 2016. The committee felt that the Corporate Plan was robust and welcomed the change to monitoring progress against KPI targets with the introduction of Achieved and Failed making it clearer.

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

6.1   The Corporate Plan and associated performance framework are fundamental to articulating what the council is aiming to achieve and how. The vision and priorities cascade into every bit of the council and further to our partners, through key strategies, service plans, team plans and individual objectives.

6.2   This report will help decision makers and other interested parties, form a view of the success of the council's actions in meeting its political and community priority ambitions.

7.   Implications

7.1   **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
                             Senior Finance Officer – Management
                             Accounts

The report provides an update on performance against corporate priorities. There are financial KPIs within the corporate scorecard, the performance of which are included in the appendix to the report.

The council continues to operate in a challenging financial environment, therefore, where there are issues of underperformance, any recovery planning commissioned by the council may entail future financial implications, and will need to be considered as appropriate.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**

Monitoring Officer & Deputy Head of Law & Governance

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, where there are issues of underperformance, any recovery planning commissioned by the council or associated individual priority projects may have legal implications, and as such will need to be addressed separately as decisions relating to those specific activities are considered.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

The Corporate Plan and KPI Framework for 2016/17 contain measures that help determine the level of progress with meeting wider diversity and equality ambitions, including youth employment and attainment, independent living, vulnerable adults, volunteering etc. Individual commentary will be given throughout the year within the regular monitoring reports regarding progress and actions.

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

The Corporate Plan includes areas which affect a wide variety of issues, including those noted above. Where applicable these are covered in the appendix.

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

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Mid Year Corporate Performance Report 2016/17
- Appendix 2 – Mid Year Corporate Priority Activities Progress 2016/17

Report Author:
Sarah Welton, Strategy & Performance Officer

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KPI Title	Portfolio Holder	Directorate	2014/15 Outturn	2015/16 Outturn	Benchmark / Baseline	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Qtr1 YTD	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Qtr 2 YTD	Qtr 1 Target	Qtr 2 Target	2016/17 Target	Qtr 1 DOT (since last year)	Qtr 2 DOT (since last year)	Qtr 1 Achieved or Failed	Qtr 2 Achieved or Failed
% of primary schools judged "good" or better	Cllr J Halden	Children's	76.5	75.7	87				86.5				88.9	80	80	80	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
% of Major planning applications processed in 13 weeks	Cllr M Coxshall	E&P - Planning	84	84.58	n/a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	75	75	75	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
% of Minor planning applications processed in 8 weeks	Cllr M Coxshall	E&P - Planning	88.3	92.9	n/a	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	88	88	88	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
Permanent admissions to residential/ nursing homes per 100K pop'n (18+)	Cllr S Little	AHH - Adults	133	134	163				37				28	40	41	163	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
No of homes transformed (NB target is given as a % of total stock as the actual figure changes as stock levels change)	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing		58% (5838)	60 per month	192	132	111	435 (6273)	114	106	108	763	180	360	65% of all stock by year end	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
% of repairs completed within target	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing		95 (March in month)	85	98	98	97	98	98	98	98	98	85	85	85	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
Average time to turnaround/re-let voids (in days)	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing	31.5	36	n/a	23	32	40		40	34	31		36	35	33	↓	↑	Failed	Achieved
Average time taken to complete an emergency repair (in days)	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing		0.29	n/a	0.19	0.19	0.14	0.17	0.15	0.14	0.08	0.14	0.2	1	0.2	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
Average sickness absence days per FTE	Cllr D Stewart	HROD - sickness	9.87	9.69	8.99	0.74	0.8	0.68	2.22	0.66	0.76	0.77	4.41	2.25	4.5	9	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
No of people registered for My Account	Cllr D Stewart	HROD - transformation	n/a	31561	n/a				36,035				41,179	35,000	40,000	45,000	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
% General Satisfaction of tenants with neighbourhoods/services provided by Housing	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing	70	70%	n/a	74	73	76	73	70	71	66	72	72	72	72%	↑	↑	Achieved	Achieved
% of adult social care carers in receipt of SDS	Cllr S Little	AHH - Adults	8.9%	94.4%	77.40%	90.9%	92.3%	92.30%		92.9	86.7	86.7		50%	50%	50%	↓	↓	Achieved	Achieved
% Rent collected	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing	99.44	99.64%	99.64	77.9	90.39	93.3		93.6	95.3	95		90	95	99.00%	↑	↓	Achieved	Achieved
Number of "exchanges" carried out through time-banking (in hours)	Cllr S Macpherson	AHH - Comm Dev			n/a				2,408				7219	2,500	5,500	11,000			Failed	Achieved
Number of people supported by a Local Area Coordinator (LAC)	Cllr S Little	AHH - PH			n/a				359				476	162.5	325	650 by year end			Achieved	Achieved
No of business engaged through Council programmes (Quarterly)	Cllr M Coxshall	E&P - Regen			n/a				133				545	125	250	500			Achieved	Achieved
Unemployment rate (data from ONS/NOMIS) (in arrears)	Cllr M Coxshall	E&P - Regen	7.3	5.60%	3.9% (regional average)				5.30%				4.9	3.9 (regional average)	3.7 (regional average)	regional average	↑	↑	Failed	Failed
% Household waste reused/ recycled/ composted	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - ENV	40.38	39%	42% (Unitary Authorities)	39	46	50	45	44.3	40.3	38.32	43	47	46	41%	↓	↑	Failed	Failed
Overall spend to budget on HRA (£K variance)	Cllr S Hebb	Finance & IT	-2485	900	n/a	n/a	n/a	0		0	641	491		0	0	0	↑	↑	Achieved	Failed
% of complaints upheld (all services except social care) (based on closed complaints)	Cllr D Stewart	HROD - complaints	n/a	50	n/a	66	42	36	46	46	43	38	42	40	40	40	↑	↑	Failed	Failed
% of 17-21 yr old Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training	Cllr J Halden	Children's	n/a	54.6	52.3	85.7	70.4	64.1		60	58.3	55.1		70	70	70	↑	↑	Failed	Failed
Average time (in days) for a child to be adopted (3 year average)	Cllr S Little	Children's	625	601	n/a				536				560	575	550	500	↑	↑	Achieved	Failed
Number of volunteers active in roles within the council	Cllr S Macpherson	AHH - Comm Dev	250	251	n/a				232				244	250	250	250	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
Self-Directed Support - % adult social care users in receipt of SDS	Cllr S Little	AHH - Adults	72%	75%	83.70%	74.49	74.47	74.63		74.16	73.93	74.19		80%	80%	80%	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
% older people still at home 91 days after discharge	Cllr S Little	AHH - Adults	86.60%	90.85%	82.10%				83.2				89.4	90.9%	90.9%	90.9%	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
% of refuse bins emptied on correct day	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - ENV	99	98.50%	n/a	99.10%	95.30%	97.30%	97.20%	97.60%	94.50%	99.30%	97.20%	98.5	98.5	98.50%	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
% overall spend on Capital Programme budget	Cllr S Hebb	Finance & IT	90	90	n/a				8				27.91	10	30	90	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
% Council Tax collected	Cllr S Hebb	Finance & IT	98.71	98.58	n/a	10.72	19.54	28.29		36.85	45.45	54.09		28.21	54.22	98.9	↑	↓	Achieved	Failed
% National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected	Cllr S Hebb	Finance & IT	99.68	99.8	n/a	11.73	20.85	29.93		38.83	47.34	56.53		29.76	57.96	99.3	↑	↓	Achieved	Failed
% timeliness of response to all complaints (all services except social care)	Cllr D Stewart	HROD - complaints	98.3	98.1	n/a	99	99	98	99	100	96	95%	97	98	98	98	↑	↓	Achieved	Failed
% adults who smoke (Annual)	Cllr J Halden	AHH - PH	20.9	21.3 (2015)	20.7% (2014) 17.9% (2014 Regional) 18.0% (2014 England)								21.3 (year end)		19.7	19.7		↓		Failed
No of new apprenticeships within the council	Cllr J Halden	Children's	65	55	65	2	0	2	4	0	5	3	12	15	34	60	↓	↓	Failed	Failed
% Early Offer of Help Episodes completed within 12 months	Cllr J Halden	Children's	n/a	97.2	n/a				96				94	95	95	95	↓	↓	Achieved	Failed
% of potholes repaired within policy and agreed timeframe	Cllr B Little	E&P - H&T			n/a - new methodology						93.72	94.02			100%	100%				Failed
Street Cleanliness - a) Litter	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - ENV	1.83	3%	6.47%				3.48					4% (Smaller is better)	4% (Smaller is better)	4% (Smaller is better)	→	not due	Achieved	not due

KPI Title	Portfolio Holder	Directorate	2014/15 Outturn	2015/16 Outturn	Benchmark / Baseline	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Qtr1 YTD	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Qtr 2 YTD	Qtr 1 Target	Qtr 2 Target	2016/17 Target	Qtr 1 DOT (since last year)	Qtr 2 DOT (since last year)	Qtr 1 Achieved or Failed	Qtr 2 Achieved or Failed
Street Cleanliness - c) Graffiti	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - ENV	0.5	0%	1.52%				0.83					2% (Smaller is better)	2% (Smaller is better)	2% (Smaller is better)	→	not due	Achieved	not due
% of young people who reoffend after a previously recorded offence	Cllr J Halden	Children's	37	29	38 (National average)				6				not due (Qtr in arrears)	30	25	30	↑	not due (Qtr in arrears)	Achieved	not due (Qtr in arrears)
Number of places available for two year olds to access early years education in the borough	Cllr J Halden	Children's	1083	1307	929				1094				not due (Termly)	1200	1200	1200	↓	not due (Termly)	Failed	not due (Termly)
Number of places accessed for two year olds for early years education in the borough	Cllr J Halden	Children's	720	665	743				700				not due (Termly)	687	74% of DWP total* (changes each term)	74% of DWP total* (changes each term)	↑	not due (Termly)	Achieved	not due (Termly)
Overall spend to budget on General Fund (£K variance)	Cllr S Hebb	Finance & IT	0	0	n/a				0				TBC	0	0	0	↓	TBC	Failed	TBC
% of 16-19 yr old Not in Education, Employment or Training	Cllr J Halden	Children's	5.5	5.2	5	5.4	5.5	5.6		5.7	unavailable	unavailable		5.9	5.3	5	↑	unavailable	Achieved	unavailable
Demand monitors	Portfolio Holder	Directorate	2014/15 Outturn	2015/16 Outturn	Benchmark / Baseline	Apr-16	May-16	Jun-16	Qtr1 YTD	Jul-16	Aug-16	Sep-16	Qtr 2 YTD	Qtr 1 Target	Qtr 2 Target	2016/17 Target	Qtr 1 DOT (since last year)	Qtr 2 DOT (since last year)		
Number of households at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing	2724	2,944	average 245 per month	238	243	244	725	186	217	236	1364				↑	↑		
Rate of Looked After Children	Cllr S Little	Children's	72	85	57	83	83	82		84	84	87					→	→		
Rate of Children subject to Child Protect Plan	Cllr S Little	Children's	52	71	36	72	76	73		71	72	67					↓	↑		
No of homeless cases accepted	Cllr R Gledhill	AHH - Housing		222	average 19 per month	18	7	20	45	23	15	29	112				↑	↓		
No of incidents of Fly tipping reported	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - Public Protection		2504	2504	273	238	269	780	203	203	313	1499	560 Baseline	1125 Baseline	2250 Baseline	↓	↓		
No of incidents of Abandoned vehicles reported	Cllr P Tolson	E&P - Public Protection		1028	1028	115	105	158	378	140	161	126	805	230 Baseline	460 Baseline	930 Baseline	↓	↓		
No of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (yearly average taken over a rolling 3 years)	Cllr B Little	E&P - H&T	58	73	no comparison with previous years as definition changed					39 (YTD)										

KPI Title	Portfolio Holder	Qtr 2 Achieved or Failed	Commentary
Unemployment rate (data from ONS/NOMIS) (in arrears)	Cllr M Coxshall	Failed	This is not a performance indicator, but data that we monitor each quarter as a wider determinant of the health and wealth of the borough. Whilst not reaching the challenging target of the regional average, the direction of travel is positive.
% Household waste reused/ recycled/ composted	Cllr P Tolson	Failed	We are once again below target having had a run of good performance, and there is still away to go to catch up on earlier months. However. the service are still predicting at this early stage to be on or slightly below the 41% target by year end. Action Plan continues, alongside the wider review of the service.
Overall spend to budget on HRA (£K variance)	Cllr S Hebb	Failed	This in year overspend is largely as a result of additional repairs and maintenance spend.
% of complaints upheld (all services except social care) (based on closed complaints)	Cllr D Stewart	Failed	see covering report for IN FOCUS item
% of 17-21 yr old Care Leavers in Education, Employment or Training	Cllr J Halden	Failed	The department continue to maintain an aspirational target of 70% of care leavers being EET. Our current performance remains above national rates but has not yet returned to above 60%. The teams are analysing the current reduction in performance.
Average time (in days) for a child to be adopted (3 year average)	Cllr S Little	Failed	Our adoption performance remains strong and we continue to reduce the number of days taken for children to be placed for adoption. As of yet we have not reached our target but performance continues to improve on 2014/15 and 2015/16 . To date we have achieved adoption orders for 5 children and predict a total of 10 adoptions by the end of the financial year.
No of new apprentices within the council	Cllr J Halden	Failed	There were 3 starts in September (1xHousing,1xprimary school, 1xInformation Management) and teams being supported to recruit to 31 further posts, this includes 5 appointments subject to checks for report in October. Work is underway to identify apprentice starts by housing contractors funded by Thurrock Council. Two primary schools have withdrawn their apprentice vacancies in favour of recruitment when the Apprentice Levy is introduced next year (now May).
Number of volunteers active in roles within the council	Cllr S Macpherson	Failed	We usually experience a dip in volunteer figures at the beginning of the year which then picks up throughout the rest of the year. During Q1 we contact all volunteers and volunteer managers ahead of National Volunteers' Week and the mid-year review survey, this identifies a number of volunteers that are no longer with us. In July and August the libraries have the Summer Reading Challenge which see's volunteer figures increasing during Q2. The data gives an a snapshot of the number of volunteers active at the end of the quarter which may be less than at other ties in the quarter eg end of Q1 data showed 232 but there were a total of 272 individuals that volunteered with us at some point during that period. We held a successful Volunteers' Week event in June in partnership with ngage which highlighted the fantastic support that the volunteers give to us. All Thurrock Council Volunteers were given a certificate of appreciation signed by the Mayor.
Self-Directed Support - % adult social care users in receipt of SDS	Cllr S Little	Failed	As at end of September 16 we have 799 of 1077 service users receiving their support via self-directed support. This equates to 74.19%. Our target for 16/17 is 80%. The definition of this indicator has been changed and is now reported as an 'as at month end' position rather than 'in-year' which means that there is a lot more scope for changes month to month than previously. The Commissioning Team are undertaking a piece of work to transfer service users currently under a block contract with Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions to Individual Service Funds (ISF's) and Direct Payments (DP's). The block contract comes to an end on the 31/03/17, however there is some potential for some service users to transfer over in year which would improve this indicator.
% older people still at home 91 days after discharge	Cllr S Little	Failed	Q2 16/17 had a total of 151 older people (65+) discharged from hospital into reablement/rehabilitation. Of these, 135 were still at home 91 days later which equates to 89.4%. This is below our target of 90.9% for 16/17 and also falls short of our 2015/16 outturn of 90.8%. We are reviewing data quality on this indicator in terms of our routine recording of reablement potential. Currently we feel some individuals who do not have reablement potential are being included in the indicator, something we are working to improve. In addition, the current home care crisis has meant that the reablement team have been required to take on more basic home care packages which has impacted on their ability to provide reablement.
% of refuse bins emptied on correct day	Cllr P Tolson	Failed	see covering report for IN FOCUS item
% overall spend on Capital Programme budget	Cllr S Hebb	Failed	This is based on actual payments to date so when including outstanding work not yet billed the progress will be largely on target.
% Council Tax collected	Cllr S Hebb	Failed	The monthly profile is put in place at the beginning of each year based on previous experience, whilst this is useful for broad comparison and monitoring purposes, actual collection experience is subject to a number of variables that can impact performance. Significant variances therefore require investigation before considering performance. Debt collection performance within Thurrock compares extremely favourably compared to other councils, whilst performance is currently showing below the monthly profile by 0.22%, it is normal to see minimal monthly variances of this type, and collections are still expected to achieve the year end target.
% National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected	Cllr S Hebb	Failed	The monthly profile is put in place at the beginning of each year based on previous experience, whilst this is useful for broad comparison and monitoring purposes, actual collection experience is subject to a number of variables that can impact performance. Significant variances therefore require investigation before considering performance. Analysis has shown that monthly performance has been impacted by the number of businesses opting to spread instalments over 12 rather 10 months. Whilst this will reduce collections for April to January it is expected this will be recovered within February and March. Debt collection performance within Thurrock compares extremely favourably compared to other councils, whilst performance is currently showing below the monthly profile by 0.91%, collections are still expected to achieve the year end target.
% timeliness of response to all complaints (all services except social care)	Cllr D Stewart	Failed	see covering report for IN FOCUS item
% adults who smoke (Annual)	Cllr J Halden	Failed	21.3% is the 2015 outturn which is the year-end outturn for last year. Target of 19.9% has not been met and the smoking prevalence in Thurrock has increased by 0.4% compared to the previous year. Overall, the national average for amoking prevalence has dropped by 0.9% to 16.9%; we are currently 4.4% above the national average. Regionally, the average has dropped by 1.1% and we are 4.7% above the regional average. Thurrock is the worst perfoming local authority in the region. The majority of other local authorities in the east region have seen a drop in smoking prevalence this year compared to the previous year; only 3 authorities besides Thurrock have seen an increase.
% Early Offer of Help Episodes completed within 12 months	Cllr J Halden	Failed	The service is currently under a restructure with the support of iMPOWER and the expectations are that the majority of cases will be open to the service for less than a year. Current resources will be used more effectively and prioritised to meet emerging needs within families swiftly and decrease the current delays for service provision which has impacted on the length of time cases remain open.
% of potholes repaired within policy and agreed timeframe	Cllr B Little	Failed	There have been some operational and data quality issues embedding the new Symology reporting system, which have led to 16 reports not being actioned on time. However actions have been identified and performance should improve in the coming months.

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Appendix 2
CORPORATE PLAN PRIORITY PROJECTS 2016/17

MID YEAR PROGRESS

Create a great place for learning and opportunity

Work with partners to provide training, apprenticeship and employment opportunities linked to key local industries

The Employability and Skills team continues to build/maintain employer contacts in Thurrock and beyond, in order to extend provision that directly links to key priority sectors and enables local employers to recruit to vacancies. Earlier this month Opportunity Thurrock, the borough wide annual careers fair, hosted more than 130 exhibitors ranging from local/national employers, further education (FE) and higher education (HE) to speak to more than 2,500 students about their aspirations/pathways for the future. Close liaison with the regeneration team has enabled the development of a job vacancies website as another route for local employers to promote opportunities. This has been branded as **Opportunities Thurrock** so it is immediately recognisable and linked to the careers fair and key priority sectors. Regular liaison with the regeneration team enables the inclusion of apprenticeship and employment with training, training for existing staff and the recruitment of local people as part of their statutory obligations via Section 106 Town and Country Planning Act.

Other programmes, such as:

- OnTrack Thurrock provides bespoke services for NEET (Not in Education, Employment of Training) young people to develop skills to enable employment
- Thurrock's Next Top Boss provide students with high profile business mentors to resolve real time business challenges
- the Careers and Enterprise Company programme that is recruiting business leaders as volunteers to provide strategic direction to Head Teachers/Principals to create whole school/college Enterprise Strategy as well as simplify the range of offers and services available to schools and our traded work experience service are all designed to provide students with high quality 'employer encounters'
- In addition, joint work is underway, with an external partner and HR & OD, for the council to consider the creation of fixed term contract employment opportunities for vulnerable young people

Work with schools and other partners to increase percentage of good/outstanding schools, academies and early education facilities in the borough in line with new legislation

The School Improvement Team works closely with the three teaching schools to identify the continued professional development (CPD) and school improvement needs of the schools and academies in the borough using the latest end of key stage data. School to school support bids have been made for two schools in the borough to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL). A comprehensive CPD brochure has been developed which includes masters degrees, short courses and bespoke packages.

Of the 39 primary schools, 36 schools have a current inspection grade - two schools are

awaiting their first inspection. Of the 36 schools, 33 schools are rated by Ofsted as good or better (92%). There are currently three schools that are rated by Ofsted as requiring improvement and the council would expect all three to be judged as good on their next inspection. Both special schools are rated as outstanding and eight out of the nine secondary schools with inspections are rated as good or better with one school awaiting inspection after re-opening as a new academy in September. Overall the percentage of good or better schools in Thurrock is 91%.

The early years team within the school improvement team work closely with all settings to ensure they provide high quality early education and childcare. The team ensures settings are meeting the statutory welfare and education requirements of the early years and foundation stage (EYFS), thereby ensuring the number of good or better settings has continued to rise. (89% good or better).

Review school improvement and other children and young people services and develop proposals for future delivery to make best use of available resources

The Children's Centre review as part of the 0-19 Wellbeing Model is currently out for consultation. It is intended to improve the service by reducing duplication and delivering a more integrated approach to users of Children's Centres, Early Offer of Help, Troubled Families and Health.

The review of the Virtual School is also underway. The commissioning team are working with the virtual school to find efficiencies in the commissioning of services.

Due to departmental restructure the review of school improvement is not yet complete.

Using outcomes of the iMPOWER review and Ofsted Inspection, develop and deliver strategic plan for demand management of children's social care services

A clear Ofsted improvement plan has been developed and is being monitored and progressed by the Director of Children's Services. The overall direction of travel (progress) within the plan is positive.

iMPOWER are completing their final piece of work with Children's Social Care to restructure the current services to offer more effective early help and prevention.

The current service delivery of early offer services is considered to be too fragmented to be effective at early enough a stage to prevent escalation into statutory services and deterioration for the families.

The new model being scoped with iMPOWER will bring together the current offers (teams) into a unified and/ or co-ordinated whole.

Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

Promote Thurrock and what it has to offer to residents, visitors and inward investors

The council has been focusing on a number of different ways to raise the profile of Thurrock and of the council.

A new monthly e-newsletter was launched in October - an additional, customer-centric communication channel to complement the more strategic use of other channels i.e. social media, website, local media, outdoor advertising. It will be coordinated by the Communications team and be campaign-led enabling the communication of key priority messages. It will also feature event dates for the diary. This will be a regular communique which residents can sign-up for, and will be encouraged to do so.

Directors Board have agreed to a focussed programme of awards and nominations to increase the profile of the borough nationally, and have recently contributed to the leading growth industry guide, MIPIM, for developers highlighting the investment opportunities that Thurrock has to offer.

Develop and progress the refreshed Local Plan and associated documents

Thurrock Council is preparing a new Local Plan. This plan will be used to guide decisions on planning applications for development as well as set out the strategic direction of the area on social, economic and environmental matters. All Local Planning Authorities must prepare a Local Plan setting out planning policies for their area.

In February-April 2016 the council undertook its first formal consultation on the emerging Local Plan, an Issues and Options (Stage 1) consultation. The purpose of the consultation was to obtain the views of stakeholders, local businesses and the community on the key issues that the Local Plan will need to address. In total of 70 bodies/persons provided formal responses to the consultation document. They raised 548 separate comments.

In order for the Local Plan to be prepared in an open and inclusive way the council recognises that there needs to be elements of ongoing stakeholder engagement throughout the plan making process. Since the end of the Issues and Options (Stage 1) consultation the council has continued to engage key stakeholders through the creation of four discussion forums and through the use of summer roadshows. It is anticipated that the next formal round of public consultation will take place in April 2017 although this date is dependent upon an announcement on the preferred Lower Thames Crossing Route and how this affects emerging Local Plan evidence (Green Belt Assessment; Economic Development Needs, Strategic Transportation Needs Assessment).

Implement the Economic Growth Strategy and progress the six Growth Hubs including Purfleet Centre Scheme

The growth programme in Thurrock continues to be one of the largest and most exciting opportunities in the country. Thurrock's reputation as a place full of opportunity has helped attract a number of large scale regeneration projects including DP World London Gateway, Port of Tilbury expansion and Purfleet Regeneration. These projects in turn have created significant numbers of jobs and the opening of Amazon and UPS facilities in 2017 presents' further opportunities. In addition to these large scale projects we have also focussed on smaller but nevertheless significant projects for local people such as expanding our small business accommodation offer in the borough, helping local people to find work and improving our town centres. Good progress has been made in a number of areas as the programme continues to move from plans to deliverables. Highlights include: -

- Agreement of the masterplan for Grays and development appraisals for a number of sites which would generate a positive return to contribute towards delivery of the underpass and new theatre.

- Agreement of the masterplan for the Civic Square in Tilbury and progress defining and designing the flagship Integrated Healthy Living Centre proposed as the centre-piece of the new scheme

A full and detailed update on the progress of the six growth hubs will be presented to Council as part of the Portfolio Holder report for Regeneration in November 2016.

Work with partners to identify and provide for infrastructure needs including tackling issues of congestion and proposals for a new Lower Thames Crossing

Waiting for the announcement on the preferred Lower Thames Crossing Route affects Local Plan and other infrastructure strategies moving forward, however in the meantime infrastructure and highways improvements are progressing, including the A13 with local communication and awareness raising having started. The improvements will widen the A13 Stanford-le-Hope Bypass from two to three lanes in both directions, from the junction with the A128 (Orsett Cock roundabout) in the west and the A1014 (The Manorway) to the east.

This widened section of road would tie-in with the existing three lane section of the A13 to the west of the junction with A128. DP World London Gateway will provide £10 million funding towards these improvements. Works will begin once a further £80 million of government funding is confirmed.

Build new homes that are affordable and a mixture of tenures (private and social)

During the first half of the financial year housing development activity has continued to progress at pace. A project of twelve houses for affordable rent to Council tenants has completed at Bracelet Close in Corringham. The remaining three Housing Revenue Account funded schemes in Grays, Chadwell St Mary and Tilbury are well advanced in planning and feasibility terms with all schemes benefitting from external design review to ensure they will be of high quality.

These projects are part of the Housing Zone will deliver a mix of 118 houses, flats and bungalows for rent which meets evidenced housing need and supports other programmes such as the review of sheltered housing and the need to help manage the demand for Social Care by reducing or delaying the need for care services.

The national rent reduction policy will make further HRA schemes very unlikely at present. Two completed HRA schemes also won national design awards and are considered exemplar.

Gloriana's first phase of new homes will be ready for occupation in January 2017 with the balance of the 128 unit scheme at St Chads completing later in the 2017. The next Gloriana scheme has been submitted for planning and will deliver, subject to planning, 80 homes for sale and rent at Belmont Road in Grays. A pipeline of development sites for Gloriana is being evaluated, with feasibility studies ongoing on sites in Grays and South Ockendon.

The development of a business case to achieve the regeneration of estates with high repair costs and poor environmental conditions has progressed substantially in the last six months.

The main drivers in this work are to radically improve the lives of residents whilst managing the repairing liability to the council. Key risks to this project in the long term are ensuring effective and timely resident engagement, changes to build cost and sales values of enabling residential development.

Build pride, responsibility and respect

Develop a communication and engagement strategy informed by the Residents Survey

The resident survey has been commissioned and this will be undertaken during the autumn with final analysis expected in January. This will feed into the wider communication and engagement approach as well as other pieces of work such as the review of the vision and priorities and associated corporate performance framework.

The council has increased its use of social media and this is now a daily, two-way, instant channel of communication with residents and other stakeholders. The council now has around 9,500 followers on Twitter and nearly 2,000 Facebook "likes". Social media accounts are now being manned at evenings and weekends. This is part of an increasingly customer-centric approach to residents. The council now "tweets" press releases and posts them on Facebook to get maximum coverage as well as utilising LinkedIn.

Work with partners to empower communities

The council has progressed a number of programmes to help empower communities. Most significantly in the year to date is the adoption of the Community Assets Transfer (CAT) Policy. Often, communities aspire to provide local resources but lack the facilities to do so. This policy provides a consistent opportunity for community organisations to seek the use of land or property owned by the council at a subsidised rate when the public value of the activity is considered within an agreed framework.

Friends of Hardie Park (based in Stanford Le Hope) were instrumental to the development of the CAT policy and provide a current example of the policy in practice. With a pool of dedicated volunteers, the group are campaigning for park improvements and championing local management and maintenance of the park. They have made improvements to prevent vandalism of equipment and anti-social behaviour and secured funding to install a brand new skate park. A prefabricated building has also been erected and will contain a café and space to deliver training sessions.

A new Community Hub has opened in Purfleet taking the number across the borough to six. Hubs empower communities by bringing people together around common issues and exploring community based solutions to improvement. Often, the simple act of providing a space and support to talk something through can change someone's perception from being dependent and stuck, to having choice and options about the future. People appreciate being supported by trained volunteers, and hubs are increasingly seen as the first point of call of information and support. Hubs are co-produced with the voluntary sector and local communities, and are underpinned by a commitment to equality.

As well as increasing confidence, improving skills and knowledge is an important aspect of empowerment. Subsidised training is available to Thurrock residents active in their communities with Voluntary Sector Training Essex with courses now delivered in Thurrock too. Courses to date have included Finding Funding Faster and Roles and Responsibilities of Trustees.

The key partnership approach helping to empower communities is through the Stronger Together Partnership. A dedicated website has been created to promote the many different programmes in Thurrock supporting people to support themselves and others including Timebanking, the work of Local Area Co-ordinators and support for micro enterprise to

name a few. The site is particularly good for promoting good news about Thurrock and examples of community spirit in action – you can view the site at
http://www.strongertogether.org.uk

Develop new models for adult social care and support provider development through implementation of the Market Position Statement

Excellent progress is being made with the implementation of the key objectives of the Market Position Statement. The micro enterprise project has developed well with a project lead that has supported a number of micro enterprises to be established in Thurrock. The shared lives tender has now been successfully awarded (we are still however in the alcatel period prior to announcement of the result).

Domiciliary support has provided significant challenges – the council has developed a comprehensive project plan which is being implemented, the pilot of a new model is just about to start, a new specification is being developed which will offer a new way of working to support people to be connected to their communities and to receive the level of care and support they need. The approach to domiciliary support is key to the next part of the Building Positive Futures agenda, Living Well in Thurrock. Specialist autism services are being developed for the first time in Thurrock in partnership with Family Mosaic who will be building accommodation with specialist support at Medina Road.

Develop a new and transformational Customer Services Strategy including delivery through digital channels where appropriate

A new Customer Strategy has been drafted and will be presented to Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in November, which ties in all forms of direct contact with our residents, and supports channel shift, but goes further to embed the "getting it right first time" principle. This is a wide ranging piece of work, as there are so many aspects to it, from analysis of customer requests and queries through the contact centre, monitoring of trends in complaints, usage of website to a whole scale look at the quality of the correspondence we send out. This strategy will also recognise the valuable role Community Hubs play in supporting residents who need to help to access online services.

Improve health and wellbeing

Implement the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and deliver the action plans

All action plans are in place – one per Health and Wellbeing Strategy objective (25 action plans). Action Plans have been signed off and with their progress monitored via the Health and Wellbeing Board's Executive Committee and the Board itself. The Board focuses on one of the Health and Wellbeing Board's goals at each of its meetings, with action plan owners presenting action plans and progress.

Action plans will be refreshed on an annual basis and an end of year report will be produced to capture the year's progress. The development of the strategy is being co-produced through regular sessions with both Thurrock Disability Partnership Board and the Older People's Parliament.

Transform and integrate health and social care with a focus on prevention and early intervention, including the delivery of four integrated healthy living centres

The Adult Social Care Transformation Programme 'Living Well in Thurrock' (LWiT) is designed to reduce, delay and prevent the need for care (and health) services. The programme focuses on three elements – stronger communities, built environment, adult social care (and health) offer.

The programme includes the further development of existing initiatives and the introduction of a number of new projects and initiatives. This includes a bid for additional supported housing in Aveley, and the consideration of options for the expansion of Collins House.

The programme is reviewed on a monthly basis via highlight and exception reporting to the Integrated Commissioning Executive. The majority of the projects contained within the LWiT programme are also linked to the delivery of objectives contained within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Some examples of the work accomplished to date include:
- The council has engaged with an external provider to complete a feasibility study concerning the spinning out of provider and fieldwork services in Adult social care
- A Social Prescribing Project has been started seeking alternative solutions being identified by GPs for people who require community solutions rather than medical interventions
- Work is nearing completion to introduce a single point of access called 'Thurrock First', to enable people to access all community based health, mental health and Adult Social Care services through one point of contact, thereby reducing duplication and the need for people to provide information many times to access the variety of services available

Deliver Transforming Homes programme for 2016/17

The Transforming Homes programme is now in its fourth year. The first half of the year has seen 763 properties benefitting from internal improvement works these have been located predominantly in Grays Riverside and West Thurrock and South Stifford areas.

The next phase of year four will continue with the completion of properties in West Thurrock

and South Stifford and will move to start works in properties in both Chadwell St Mary and Aveley.

However the programme remains on target to achieve improvements to 65% of the council's housing stock by year end. This will mean that month on month completion numbers will gradually reduce in the second half of the year in line with the council's spend profile. This will ensure that the programme continues to be affordable and achievable.

A key focus across the programme is to drive improvement by continuing to monitor the resident satisfaction and ensure robust challenge of contractor performance. Average resident satisfaction with the programme across the year to date is 81.76%.

Resident feedback allows for the identification of areas of poor performance and ensures that the services that are delivered reflect our residents' needs.

It is a priority for all partners to ensure emerging issues are addressed as quickly as possible to minimise disruption to residents. Recent improvements have been made through enhanced inspections of works in progress addressing any concerns as they arise and close monitoring of the percentage of properties handed over by the contractors snag free.

Improve efficiency and effectiveness of homelessness prevention

The main cause of homelessness has changed over the past two years from being parental eviction to being the ending of an assured short hold (private) tenancy.

This has proved very challenging since it removes options for prevention through offers of private rented properties. Thurrock is becoming less affordable with an increasing gap between the Local Housing allowance and market rents. The service was only able to prevent 71 households from homelessness.

One of the ways in which the service has been able to prevent homelessness is through the offer of early financial advice and support through the financial inclusion service. Economically vulnerable households are identified early, and supported adequately through better budgeting, sign posting to other services, and ensuring they can sustain their current tenancies. So far this service has provided support to about 300 social tenants and many other residents in the borough.

A new housing management system was designed and built and will be replacing the current outdated one in November 2016; the introduction of the new system will improve record keeping, performance monitoring and drive effective data analysis through business intelligence. This will aid the service in understanding better its effectiveness in delivering services and ensure consistency and accountability.

The introduction of a new homeless prevention scheme called Housing First which is directed to support the most vulnerable service users in the borough went live in November 2016 where the service will be offered to the first two service users.

The Homeless Reduction Bill which is currently being debated in Parliament is likely to present further challenges but should ultimately ensure that homeless households are assisted at a much earlier stage.

The overall review of housing services will include the housing solutions and homeless prevention work streams.

Promote and protect our clean and green environment

Review waste services including collection options, re-tendering of contracts and opportunities for income generation

The project to review waste services is well established with a considerable amount of research having been carried out to identify possible changes to the service, with the intention of ensuring that an efficient and effective waste collection service is provided to all residents. The review includes options relating to collection methods, the separation of materials and the disposal routes for waste collected in Thurrock.

As part of the review options relating to the structure, management and location of the Civic Amenity Site are being considered. As is the possibility of implementing a subscription garden waste collection service for residents.

With regard to income generation there has been renewed vigour in the pursuit of trade waste business by the Department which has resulted in a significant increase in the number of customers contracted to receive the service.

Improve consistency and sustainability of street cleanliness services through stronger enforcement action on fly-tipping and littering and exploring possibilities for trading greening services

The council is engaging a private enforcement company for a 12 month pilot from December with a primary focus on enforcement action relation to littering and dog fouling, both of which have been ongoing issues for the borough. The approach was agreed by Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee. This is supported by the "Love Thurrock" campaign.

Over the past three months the department has been running a pilot of returning street services staff to service-based rather than areas team. This, with the additional resources that have been made available, has had a marked impact on the standard of the parks and open spaces, verges and street cleanliness across Thurrock.

Enhance the built environment, public spaces and access to the river through development of a Design Guide and progressing the town centre Growth Hub programmes

The importance of achieving good design, and the benefits this can bring in delivering sustainable development and communities, is clearly articulated through nation planning policy and guidance. Achieving good design outcomes must therefore be an important component of delivering development proposals across Thurrock.

The Design Strategy Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out the council's core design principles ensuring that future development in the borough is of the highest design standards. Once finalised, the Design Strategy SPD will be used as a tool to inform and assess proposals within existing locations, at all scales, from small infill sites through to larger regeneration and redevelopment schemes. The Design Strategy was subject to public consultation in February 2016 and scheduled for adoption in January 2017.
The Design Strategy will be supported by five more detailed design guides looking at Residential Areas (New Build and Extensions/Alterations); Industrial Areas; Town Centres and Transport Hubs; Rural Locations. Consultation on some of these guides is anticipated to commence in April 2017.

It is also worth noting that the council has produced development frameworks for both Lakeside and Grays. These will form the basis of area based policies/inset plans in the emerging Local Plan.

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22 November 2016	ITEM: 7
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Customer Services Strategy	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Key

Report of:

Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

Accountable Head of Service: N/A

Accountable Director:

Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

This report is public

Executive Summary

Customer expectations are rising, the local population is growing and changing, and in response we are increasingly required to strengthen our customer focus, use of innovative technology and build integrated service delivery models within the resources we have available.

The draft Customer Service Strategy sets out where the council is now, where it wants to be and how it will get there. It is intended to provide a strategic overview that will set the direction of travel to be delivered through service plans and other council strategies and procedures. The strategy is part of a wider programme of projects and brings these together to create a comprehensive plan of how we will improve service to our customers across all access channels.

The strategy acknowledges that in order to deliver the standard of customer services that will meet the expectations of an increasingly demanding public, we need to address issues of people, process, technology and organisation, managing our resources to optimum effect. To succeed it will be necessary to create a culture supported by the right operational procedures and infrastructure that will deliver high quality customer service, listening to the voice of the customer and employees, measuring customer satisfaction, embracing change and technology, and striving to continuously improve.

Throughout the strategy there is a strong emphasis on digital and self-service for customers that are able to utilise this method but recognition that a high standard of service, access and support must still be available for the customers that cannot.

This document will support a set of standards within a customer services charter to embed and support our drive to provide convenient, consistent, cost effective customer care.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the committee comment on the draft Customer Services Strategy at Appendix 1.

1.2 That the committee comment on the proposals for the service areas set out in Appendix 2.

1.3 That the committee comment on the savings proposals for customer services as set out at paragraph 4.2.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Customer Services (the contact centre, reception, face-to-face, cashiers, careline and out of hours) returned to the Council from Serco in December 2015. This provided a new opportunity to consider the strategic direction for the service itself as well as the council's overall approach. The draft Customer Services Strategy, set out at Appendix 1, aims to address the following challenges:

- Inconsistent customer service standards across services
- Clarity and communication of what customers can expect including self-service options
- Customers mainly using more expensive channels such as face to face even for simple transactions available online
- Self-service not available for some high volume transactions
- Better understanding and use of digital methods
- Reduce avoidable contacts and promote proactive contact with residents
- Need to refresh contact centre telephony and implement other technology/ digital solutions i.e. web chat
- No single view of the customer for all contact channels i.e. web, email, face to face, telephone
- Opportunities for cross-council working, further service calls through the contact centre to deliver efficiencies and explore as a potential growth area and for income generation.

2.2 Approximately 38,000 telephone calls are handled by the contact centre each month with an additional 8,000 face-to-face visits to the civic offices. Residents are mainly contacting the council regarding:

- Housing benefits
- Council Tax

- Rents
- Environmental issues e.g. flytipping
- Waste e.g. missed bins

In addition, face-to-face enquiries are also commonly about parking permits and bus passes.

2.3   Many, although not all, of these services, or elements of them, are available online. My Account was introduced in October 2013 providing access to services and transactions online. This led to a reduction of 11% for calls between April 2014 and March 2016. In December 2015 there were 27,000 users which has risen to 43,000 in October 2016 following a communication campaign. The latest services to become available are bulky waste collections and registrars services with Council Tax ebilling and licensing services planned in 2016/17.

2.4   At present each time a customer enquiry is handled within Customer Services the resource cost alone is approximately £5 for face-to-face, £1.50 per telephone call and 15p online.

2.5   Thurrock residents, in the main, have the skills to access services online and utilise our existing self-service options. We already encourage and support customers to use the internet for straightforward transactions. This does not mean that improving the digital access options will mean that providing services through traditional methods such as telephone or face to face stops but that these channels will be reduced and freed up for those that need to use them – often residents with complex and sensitive needs.

2.6   We must aim to minimise the need for our customers to contact us but if they do, provide them with an excellent self-service experience that is quick and convenient and ensure we publicise other available contact channels for hard to reach groups including where support is available for example through the community hubs.

3.   **Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1   The key recommendations in the strategy are summarised below:

1. Channel Migration - Accessibility – April 2017: Approve recommended services **as digital only** closing channels for contacts that add no value to the customer, maximising the use of resources for customers that really need our support or where there is no online solution. This will allow excellent support for vulnerable residents and assisted self-service via telephone or face to face where needed. See appendix 2 – Top query types and suggested channel. In addition continue to design further cost effective, efficient and user friendly digital means of contacting the council.

2. Channel Migration - Face to face channel – April 2018: Remove specific face to face service desks to allow for an increase in self-service facilities,

appointment service only for vulnerable service users. Provide a self-service scanning solution for requested documentation, a meet and greet floorwalker and business visitor self- service check-in solution instead of a reception desk and all customer services advisors multi- skilled to cover all Customer Service functions. This will enable flexibility of resource and appointments for vulnerable customers. A good time to complete these changes would be in line with the refurbishment of the ground floor to allow a period of adjustment for customers however these recommendations are not dependant on this.

3. Channel Migration - Assisted digital support – assisted digital support is for people that cannot use online services at first on their own. The support can be guiding a customer through the digital service, entering a user's information onto the digital service on their behalf initially and setting up their account so that they can continue to utilise this channel going forward. This can be provided via face to face, telephone or web chat. We should continue to provide this support via the contact centre, within the community hubs and within our face to face area at civic offices, always encouraging and supporting our customers to be able to utilise the easiest contact channels for the services where online is available.

4. Technology - 2017/18: Implement a new contact centre telephony solution, along with a new customer satisfaction, call recording and scheduling solution. Ensure new solution will link effectively for potential technology enhancements i.e. advanced IVR capability and potential Omni-channel (single view of the customer) technology solutions which should both be explored. The existing telephony system is due for replacement and there is an opportunity for us to potentially share a telephony platform with another council to reduce costs.

5. Organisational design – From 2016-19: Review the best fit for customer interaction across all departments, completing a review of customer demand and call volumes directed to specific service areas. Determine the best fit within the organisation as part of all service reviews by 2019. This would be an opportunity for us to review existing call volumes across all services and identify transactions not currently digital that would be better placed within the contact centre initially.

6. First time resolution and avoidable contact - 2017/18: We must reduce the need for our customers to contact us by reducing bureaucracy, learning from our mistakes and complaints, continuing to automate processes, process reengineering and working with partners to provide joined up services and manage demand e.g. failure demand, avoidable demand, value demand. Link to Customer and Demand Management Board and service reviews.

7. Growth - 2018/19: There is an opportunity for us to join forces with other local authorities for customer services delivery. This should be pursued as a potential growth area with a view to our customer services department providing services on behalf of other local authorities and generating income.

8. People and Culture - 2017/18: Embed the mission and principles for our customer service delivery and a set of service standards throughout the organisation. We need a holistic approach to Customer Services with customer care training available to **all** employees via classroom or e-learning. This should include the Customer Service, mission, promise and principles with clear standards of performance that are visible and transparent to our customers via a customer charter, We need to create a culture that supports the delivery of high quality customer services cross the organisation and partner organisations. We need to recruit the right people with the right attitude and behaviours and develop their skills to deliver continually improved services. In order to do this we need to provide clear leadership and governance arrangements to drive the strategy from the top and provide a shared vision that everyone can work towards. Our culture must have a high focus on digital and defined approach to digital innovation to empower our employees via digital tools and technology. We need a clear development and change management programme to support this along with a refresh of our current behaviour frameworks to reinforce the changes. Customer services should be part of everyone's objectives and included in all job descriptions and service plans - links to people and digital strategies.

9. Social media - 2017/18: Utilise information received via existing social media to its full potential to proactively reduce contact i.e. if we are made aware of a general issue or trend via social media we can be proactive to reduce the need for other customers to contact us.

10. Process Re-engineering - 2017/18: Process redesign and changing the way that we work across the council is key to the delivery of this strategy – links to service reviews.

11. Digital Principles - 2017/18: We must embed the digital principles within all services and through our digital strategy and this will be a high focus of all service reviews. We should be digital by default - link to people and digital strategies.

12. Community Options – Ongoing: Support the development of community hubs and consider additional community access points alongside service reviews so that community solutions can be explored collectively in ventures that manage demand and reshape our services – links to Customer and Demand Management board, Property Board and service reviews.

4.   **Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1   The committee are invited to comment on the proposed Customer Services Strategy at Appendix 1 and specific proposals for services as set out in Appendix 2. This feedback will inform the final strategy and implementation.

4.2   Budget savings of £120k in 2017/18 and £100k in 2018/19 are proposed as part of the Council Spending Review and budget setting process against a total budget of £1.2m. The delivery of these savings is dependent on the

strategy being agreed by Cabinet in January 2017 in order to implement changes to the resources within Customer Services by the end of 2016/17.

4.3   Further savings, both within customer services and other back office areas across the council, could be realised in future years.

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

5.1   Consultation, and development of the strategy, has taken place through the cross-council Customer and Demand Management Board, Digital Board and other internal customers including ICT and Directors Board.

5.2   Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on the draft strategy as part of the consultation process ahead of the final strategy being presented to Cabinet in January 2017.

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

6.1   Delivering the vision, mission, actions and adhering to the principles within this strategy will help us transform our customers' experience. Our customers will have improved access to services, receive regular updates on service areas that are of interest to them and proactive contact to avoid them having to contact us at all. We will have a workforce with the right skills for the future and with the ability to guide our customers to the right services for them. We will be working closely with our communities to increase access and support and have strong partnerships in place that allow us to have local ambassadors to support local people.

7.   Implications

7.1   **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Carl Tomlinson**

Finance Manager

Budget savings of £120k in 2017/18 and £100k in 2018/19 are proposed as part of the Council Spending Review and budget setting process. The delivery of these savings is dependent on the strategy being agreed by Cabinet in January 2017 in order to implement changes to the resources within Customer Services by the end of 2016/17.

Capital investment may be required in technological solutions to address some of the proposals set out in the strategy. Many of the proposals within the strategy already form part of the capital programme and digital board work programme.

The council continues to operate in a challenging financial environment and given the current MTFS position further budget savings may be required.

7.2 **Legal**

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

There are no legal implications.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

An equality impact assessment has been undertaken. Whilst digital channels for accessing services and transacting with the council will be a primary focus going forward, assisted self-service, support at community hubs and existing channels such as face-to-face and telephone via the contact centre will remain, albeit reduced, for those most in need and unable to go online.

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

- None

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

- None

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Draft Customer Services Strategy
- Appendix 2 - Highest contact types and suggested action

Report Author:
Tracie Heiser, Operational Services Lead, Customer Services

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Thurrock Council

Customer Services Strategy 2016-20

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

Contents

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

Executive Summary

Customer expectations are rising, the local population is growing and changing, and in response we are increasingly required to strengthen our customer focus and build integrated service delivery models within the resources we have available to us. Our approach must be based on meeting customer needs more efficiently and effectively. This means keeping their needs at the heart of every decision from strategy formulation and design through to execution but also to complete process reengineering, resulting in value for money processes that reduce waste and duplication and produce an effective customer journey enabling the customer to self-serve wherever possible.

The Customer Service Strategy sets out where the council is now; where it wants to be; and how it will get there. It is intended that this document will provide a strategic overview that will lead the direction of travel through service plans and other council documents and procedures.

The strategy is part of a wider programme of projects. The strategy brings these together to create a comprehensive plan of how we will improve service to our customers across all access channels.

The strategy acknowledges that in order to deliver the standard of customer services that will meet the expectations of an increasingly demanding public, we need to address issues of people, process, technology and organisation, managing our resources to optimum effect. To succeed it will be necessary to create a culture, supported by the right operational procedures and infrastructure that will deliver high quality customer service; listening to the voice of the customer and employees, measuring customer satisfaction, embracing change and striving to continuously improve.

Throughout the strategy there is a strong emphasis on digital and self-service for the customers that are able to utilise this method but recognition that high standard of service and accessibility must still be available for the customers that cannot.

A Customer Services Strategy cannot be delivered in isolation. The council's relationship with partners and the community is changing and we want to empower groups and individuals through community leadership. This can be achieved by working together with the voluntary and community sectors to build pride and respect but also by building resilience in local communities. We want to support independent, active residents who can benefit from local assets and neighbourhood networks including through the community hubs. This will create a place that better supports community well-being and healthy lifestyles. This approach is at the heart of the strategy.

This document will support a set of standards within a customer services charter to embed and support our drive to provide:

<div align="center">

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

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This strategy aims to address the following challenges:

- Inconsistent customer service standards across all services
- Clarity and communicate what our customers can expect including self-service options
- Customers mainly using more expensive channels such as face to face even for simple transactions available online
- Self-service not available for some high volume transactions
- Reluctance to change including understanding and use of digital methods
- Need to reduce avoidable contacts and promote proactive contact with residents
- Refresh of contact centre telephony platform and other technology enhancements i.e. web chat
- No single view of the customer for all contact channels i.e. web, email, face to face, telephone
- Opportunities for cross-council working, further service calls through the contacts centre to deliver efficiencies and explore as a potential growth area and for income generation

Our Customer Services Mission

To enable our customers to self-serve wherever possible, maximising the efficiency, quality and accessibility of our services, yet still ensuring we provide high quality specialist and targeted support for our customers and transactions where self-service is not possible.

Our Customer Services Promise

To provide you with services that are accessible, meet your needs and leave you satisfied. We promise to keep you aware of the actions being taken and deliver what we say we will, when we say we will aim to meet your needs first time whichever way we serve you.

We will achieve this by committing to the Customer Services Principles below:

1. Customer needs - To deliver consistent customer services with integrity – reducing the need for our customers to repeatedly contact us about the same issue by getting it right first time

2. To go above and beyond for our customers by encouraging and empowering our employees to take ownership and deliver positive outcomes

3. To provide up to date information and efficient processes, continually striving for improvement and innovative solutions

4. To proactively engage our customers in developing services that respond to their needs and seek feedback on the delivery of those services

5. To provide quality, cost effective choices that do not exclude members of the community and offer easy access to our services

6. To enable our customers to transact with the council when it suits them without having to phone and visit to enable the fastest possible service at the lowest possible cost

7. To offer support to help people be online and work with our partners and the community to improve access to services
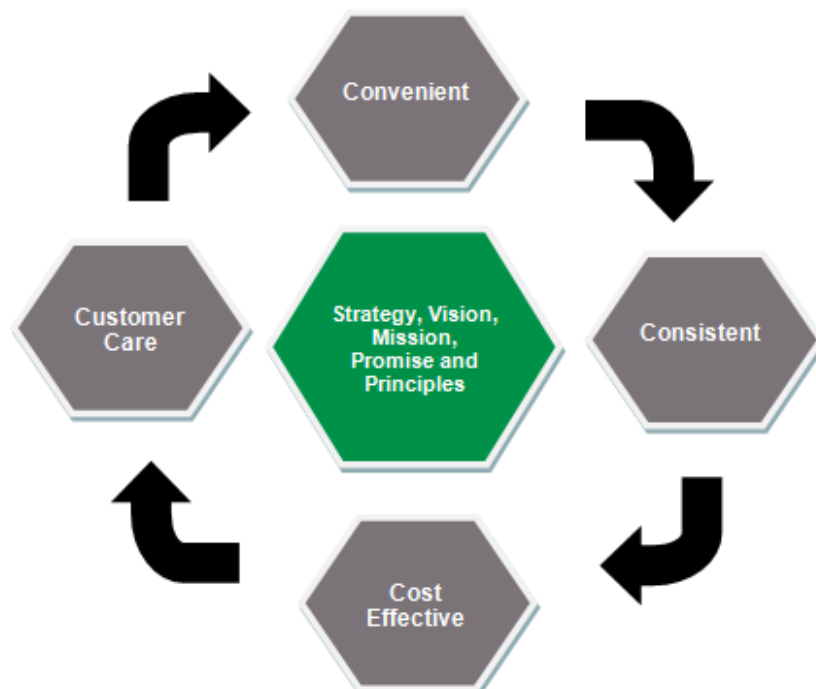
Key recommendations:

1. Channel Migration - Accessibility – April 2017: Approve recommended services **as digital only** closing channels for contacts that add no value to the customers, maximising the use of resources for customers that really need our support or where there is no online solution. Housing benefit and homeless applications are now 100% online and this was implemented without a problem. This will allow excellent support for vulnerable residents and assisted self-service via telephone or face to face where needed. See appendix 2 – Top query types and suggested channel. In addition continue to design further cost effective, efficient and user friendly digital means of contacting the council. We should also utilise Experian mosaic to promote online, targeting specific customer types utilising behavioural insight techniques

2. Channel Migration - Face to face channel – April 2018: Remove specific face to face service desks to allow for an increase in self-service facilities, appointment service only for vulnerable service users. Provide a self- service scanning solution for requested documentation, a meet and greet floorwalker and business visitor self- service check-in solution instead of a reception desk and all customer services advisors multi- skilled to cover all Customer Service functions. This will enable flexibility of resource and appointments for vulnerable customers. A good time to complete these changes would be in line with the refurbishment of the ground floor to allow a period of adjustment for customers however these recommendations are not dependant on this.

3. Channel Migration - Assisted digital support – assisted digital support is for people that cannot use online services at first on their own. The support can be guiding a customer through the digital service, entering a user's information onto the digital service on their behalf initially and setting up their account so that they can continue to utilise this channel going forward. This can be provided via face to face, telephone or web chat. We should continue to provide this support via the contact centre, within the community hubs and within our face to face area at civic offices, always encouraging and supporting our customers to be able to utilise the easiest contact channels for the services where online is available

4. Technology - 2017/18: Implement a new contact centre telephony solution, along with a new customer satisfaction, call recording and scheduling solution. Ensure new solution will link effectively for potential technology enhancements i.e. Advanced IVR capability and potential Omni-channel (single view of the customer) technology solutions which should both be explored. The existing telephony system is due for replacement and there is an opportunity for us to potentially share a telephony platform with another council to reduce costs. Exploratory discussions are already underway regarding this. Single view of the customer solutions should definitely be explored but full business case and impacting to truly understand the benefits against the cost of implementation. – Link to Digital board and Digital strategy

5. Organisational design – From 2016-19: Review the best fit for customer interaction across all departments, completing a review of customer demand and call volumes directed to specific service areas. Determine the best fit within the organisation as part of all service reviews by 2019. This would be an opportunity for us to review existing call volumes across all services and identify transactions not currently digital that would be better placed within the contact centre initially. This may reduce the resource cost for dealing with these transactions which may result in additional savings.

6. First time resolution and avoidable contact - 2017/18: We must reduce the need for our customers to contact us by reducing bureaucracy, learning from our mistakes and complaints, continuing to automate processes, process reengineering and working with partners to provide joined up services and manage demand e.g. failure demand, avoidable demand, value demand. – Link to Customer and Demand Management Board and service reviews.

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

7. Growth - 2018/19: There is definitely opportunity for us to join forces with other local authorities for customer services delivery. This should be pursued as a potential growth area with a view to our customer services department providing services on behalf of other local authorities.

8. People and Culture - 2017/18: Embed the mission and principles for our customer service delivery and a set of service standards throughout the organisation. We need a holistic approach to Customer Services across the organisation with customer care training available to **all** employees via classroom or e learning. This should include the Customer Service, mission, promise and principles with clear standards of performance that are visible and transparent to our customers via a customer charter We need to create a culture that supports the delivery of High quality customer services cross the organisation and partner organisations. We need to recruit the right people with the right attitude and behaviours and develop their skills to deliver continually improved services. In order to do this we need to provide clear leadership and governance arrangements to drive the strategy from the top and provide a shared vision that everyone can work towards. Our culture must-have a high focus on digital and defined approach to digital innovation to empower our employees via digital tools and technology. We need a clear development and change management programme to support this along with a refresh of our current behaviour frameworks to reinforce the changes - Customer services should be part of everyone's objectives and included in all Job descriptions and service plans .- links to people and digital strategies .

9. Social media - 2017/18: Utilise information received via existing social media to its full potential to proactively reduce contact. I.e. if we are made aware of a general issue or trend via social media we can be proactive to reduce the need for other customers to contact us

10. Process Re-engineering - 2017/18: Process redesign and changing the way that we work across the council is key to the delivery of this strategy – links to service reviews.

11. Digital Principles - 2017/18: We must embed the digital principles within all services and within our digital strategy and this will be a high focus of all service reviews. We should be digital by default - link to people and digital strategies

12. Community Options – Ongoing: Support the development of community hubs and consider additional community access routes alongside service reviews so that community solutions can be explored collectively in ventures that manage demand and reshape our services – links to Customer and Demand Management board. Property Board and service reviews.

The following strategy on a page diagram demonstrates the incoming channels and the new proposed delivery model for serving our customers.

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

Customer Services Strategy on a page – Proposed Future Operating Model

Customer Contact Channel for REPORT-PAY-APPLY-HAVE MY SAY-ADVICE-BOOK-INFO

1. New/shared telephony solution and 2.potential Omni channel Contact Centre Platform (SVC) – single queue for all channels - routing from web, telephone and email to Contact Centre

Web/My Acct	Telephone call to Contact Centre	Face to face - Civic Offices	Community Hubs and other potential community options/ locations	Social Media - no plans to promote further as an incoming channel	Email to generic council email boxes

Web/My Acct → **Transaction available online Y/N**

- **Y** - Cust completes transaction or obtains info online
  - If Problem accessing - web chat to cc for assistance setting up My Acct
- **N**- Cust contacts CC, enquiry handled. Potential switchbd voice auto solution. High volume enquiry types tracked for My account and web development suggestions

Telephone call to Contact Centre → **Some transactions categorised as digital only- unless vulnerable- enhanced IVR messaging**

Transaction available web/ digital only Y/N

- **Y**- Enhanced further IVR messaging CSA adv. benefits of web and offers to help set up MY Acct
  - CSA only completes transaction for vulnerable if classified as digital only transaction
- Further IVR dev. with detailed info for key enquires
  - **N** -enquiry handled. High volume transaction enquiry types tracked
  - Appt for vulnerable if necessary.

Face to face - Civic Offices → No reception- greeted by CSA floorwalker with tablet, self-check in for business visitors within separate area

- Floorwalker directs to self-service area with assisted self-service if needed, direct telephones to cc on all self-service pods. No walk in individual services advisors – potential future volunteer provision for assisted self service
- Floorwalker determines vulnerable and face to face specific appt required, dual skilled CSA from CC assists
- Self-services scanning booth with support available and document verification for high risk applications

Community Hubs and other potential community options/ locations → Volunteers provide assisted self-service where needed as per existing process

- Phones on self- service desks with direct lines to cc to support where not on web and to organise appt for vulnerable if req.
- Self-services scanning booth with support available and document verification for high risk applications

Social Media - no plans to promote further as an incoming channel → Contact centre via SVC or cc managing SMA's as per existing process

- CC identify trends, proactive messaging to customers via web, SMS, IVR

Email to generic council email boxes → Contact centre via SVC or generic email boxes

- Enquiry handled where not available online but if online signposting to link to access web/ my account only

Strategy key focus areas- CS mission- promise principles- demand management- people and culture , reducing post -charter-service standards- cont. improvement- avoidable contact – support vulnerable - accessibility- org design- technology- process engineering- channel migration - culture change- digital principles, community hub programme-community options , marketing- measurement–My acct/web further development

Change to existing process only	Change to existing process and new technology

Additional Focus Areas:

As well as the key recommended actions within the executive summary our strategy and action planning will include all access channels, some key new actions and continuation of other existing linked strategy action plans. There will also be some key focus on the following additional areas and specific actions relating to these are all detailed in the action plan:

Contact channel

- Telephone - To minimise the volume of contact numbers published, to provide fast access to an informed advisor for those unable to self- serve

- Mobile - As the adoption of mobile technologies grows we must continue to support our mobile/smart phone customers in new ways and utilise technology in a tactical manner.

- Web - To maintain and improve - providing a single, comprehensive, easy to access and up to date website that allows anyone to transact and interact with the council effectively 24/7.

- Post/paper - To reduce the amount of post and paper communication by enhanced use of electronic channels wherever possible and internal governance.

- Email – To reduce the amount of email communication by better use of electronic forms and other digital channels and internal governance

Quality and continuous improvement

- **Quality assurance** - maintain our existing quality standards and monitoring programme within the Customer Services and maintain our existing CCA global standard accreditation for Customer services, always aiming to identify any issues and areas for improvement.

- **Complaints –** we must continue to value the complaints received from customers as important feedback on our performance and utilise information provided by the complaints team to guide us to identify the best areas that we can make improvements for our customers, along with improvements to policies and working practices.

- **Continuous improvement through customer feedback –** Customer feedback is a powerful tool, not only for understanding customers experience and satisfaction with our service but also for developing strategies to improve our services.

- **Consultation** - should also be a key focus to ensure that money is not wasted in making online channels for those services where particular groups just will not use. We must ensure that we have good engagement with our customers to understand who our customers are, what services they need and want and how and when they want to access these services

Marketing and promotion

- **Marketing digital services –** Increased specific targeted activities for different customer profiles. Marketing can be expensive so we should ensure that we are advertising on assets that are available to us i.e. bills etc. We must find ways of encouraging customers to use our digital channels wherever possible.

- **Digital Psychology** – many customers may suspect that a digital strategy is purely a cost saving measure and whilst this is important it is also a massive opportunity to give our customers what they actually want – access to services that suit them and control over their customer experience.

- **Behavioural Insights** – central government are utilising behavioural insight as they believe that evidence from psychology and behavioural economics offers a toolbox for innovation and service improvement at low cost . Utilising '**EAST**' principles – **E**asy, **A**ttractive, **S**ocial and **T**imely to change the way services are delivered.

Planning and measuring success

- **Critical Success factors –** critical for the success of any projects, including ensuring the key decision makers are on board to enable management of these throughout the programme to increase the likelihood for success.

- **Outcomes/benefits –** we must always identify the outcomes by which the success of any of our programmes will be judged to ensure we can enable any benefits to be accurately determined. We must ensure we have the ability to obtain and analyse internal and external metrics and use them to measure and improve our success.

- **Assumptions –** our strategies should not assume that all services should be made available digitally or that a service that is available on one digital channel should be available across all digital channels. Every choice we make should be backed with evidence utilising customer experience research, website usage data, internal MI customer surveys and results of similar projects.

- **Management Information –** there must be consistent, timely, accurate and scoped management information to measure performance and costs between different services and channels otherwise we will miss opportunities to target areas of waste, identify improvement opportunities and measure the benefits of change.

We must start our journey with a clear definition of Customer Services. We should all understand who our customers are, what we mean by high quality customer services, along with a clear vision of where we need to be and a true understanding of where we are now. This will allow us to implement the required recommended actions.

Background

Customer service in local government has principally been provided reactively. Customers of local government don't always have the choice of dealing with the council and this often increases the expectations they may have. We recognise that in order to create a great borough and a great council we need to work with our customers and our community

We want our customers to have the best possible experience when they use our services at a time when demand is increasing. In very simple terms we cannot continue to deliver services in the way we have so must evolve and improve delivery methods that meet the demands of our residents within the resources we have available.

In achieving this there cannot be a compromise in our commitment to understanding our customers and their needs. We aim to increase our customers control over their experience with us whilst utilising our digital channels as a way of delivering services in the most efficient way. We will ask those customers that are able to self-serve through their on line account or our website to do so but at the same time build our capacity through community options to provide support and help to those people that are less confident in doing so or do not have access to technology, utilising our most expensive channels for the most vulnerable

We will listen to our customers about their experiences with us and use their feedback to make real differences to our services so that our services are valued by the people that use them.

Our challenge is to maintain relentless focus on customer excellence across the entire organisation not just in the Customer services department, to ensure that our systems and processes work consistently and that we are flexible in our approach as technology, legislation and other pressures continue to change over the coming years

The modern way of delivering customer services is changing across all sectors and we too here at Thurrock have become much more innovative in our service delivery with the implementation of My account, as customers seek online and accessible 24/7 services. This document will enable us to better understand our customers' needs and expectations and enable us to further meet the challenges of delivering services in this digital age

Useful data

At present each time the Customer services Department serve a customer, the resource cost alone is approximately;

Face to Face

£5.00

Telephone

£1.50

Web

15p

At present approximately 38,000 customers per month contact our contact centre and an overall contact within Customer Services is 50,000 contacts per month.

Given that feedback and analysis from previous consultation with Thurrock's population indicated that 86% of residents would be happy to utilise on line services, there is clearly the potential to make significant savings and improve customer satisfaction even further by improving options for contact that support their lifestyle needs

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The Go ON digital exclusion heat map which shows the likelihood of exclusion form digital at a Local Authority level is not high for Thurrock confirms that self-service wherever possible should be an appropriate direction of travel for our services The exercise summarises that:

- Only 4.6% of adults in Thurrock have never been on line

- 76% of adults in Thurrock have all five basic digital skills

- 91.10 % of households receive broadband speed of at least 2 megabits per second

What does this data tell us?

This data supports the fact that our customers in the main have the skills to utilise our self-service options and that we should be doing everything possible to encourage and support our customers to actively use the internet for straightforward transactions wherever possible.

This does not mean that improving the digital access options will mean that Thurrock stops providing services through traditional methods such as telephone or face to face but that these channels will be freed up for those people that need to use them –often residents with complex and sensitive needs.

We must aim to minimise the need for our customers to contact us but if they do, provide them with an excellent self-service experience that is quick and convenient and ensure we widely advertise our choice of other contact channels to hard to reach groups.

Consideration must also be given to the fact that increasing online is not beneficial unless the volumes for other contact channels reduces as otherwise this just becomes an increased cost to our organisation

To enable an effective strategy for channel migration key factors must be:

- Detail – process reengineering deliberate design for each service bearing in mind the level of human interaction required and the needs of the targeted customer base.

- Fluidity – constant reviewing of the effectiveness for each type of contact bearing in mind changing technologies and changing customer habits.

- Simplicity – the optimum channel for any organisation should be the easiest to use for the customer which will then naturally drive a shift in customer behaviour.

- Inclusion - no group should be denied access to a service because of disability, language or the cost of the access channel. Other options should be available to those that need it.

- Cost effectiveness – finding ways to deliver our service effectively but at a lower cost.

We know that experiences of contacting the Council can differ and that the customer experience can be mixed. Some of the best customer service within the Council is down to individual excellence rather than clearly embedded standards of High Quality Customer Service across all directorates.

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Where are we now?

The current Customer Services Department within HROD directorate consists of:

Contact Centre	Careline	Face to Face	Cashiers

Customer Contact Centre- dealing with incoming telephony calls across a variety of council services such as benefits, council tax, waste , environmental, highways, facilities, housing payments , housing , rents, homelessness, general enquiries etc. The contact centre promotes digital services and also set up My accounts for customers when they are experiencing difficulties or when they agree on the telephone

Careline Service - 24/7 monitoring and response for vulnerable residents within their homes through the use of lifelines and assistive technology to allow independent living. The team also complete emergency and routine visits to vulnerable residents and provide the council's emergency out of hour's service

Face to Face Service - dealing with all customer enquiries in person for face to face visitors at the civic offices. Supporting residents with self-service, particularly benefits and housing applications as customer can only apply for housing and housing benefit online.

Cashiers – Cash Management- of cash for services where this is still required i.e. Car parks. Management of the Council's suspense account and allocation of payments to the correct budgets.

There are various telephone access routes across all directorates such as contact centre, community solutions, MASH, Careline which results in a lack of consistency of service provision and customer care training throughout the organisation. There has not been any recent initiative to identify the best fit for call handling where digital is not available or appropriate and it is recommended this is reviewed as part of the service reviews and via the customer and Demand Management Board.

The council has no clear overall service standards or targets published on the web along with service targets set by individual departments not shared for publication on the web. This means that customers are not always aware of timeframes which can cause unnecessary contact. It is recommended that customers service standards and targets are reviewed, agreed and published for the council as a whole with departmental exceptions only permitted by further agreement form Directors Board

There is no common customer centric vision across the council and customer service is not included in all directorate service planning, objectives or reporting.

The contact centre Nortel telephony solution is due for replacement and the contact centre is currently operating with a temporary call recording solution and without a specialist scheduling tool due to the transfer from Serco to the council. This is planned for later this year and current solutions are being investigated including sharing a telephony platform with another local authority which would also support disaster recovery

The available web chat solution is not yet implemented which would be beneficial where customers are experiencing difficulties setting up their my accounts and this should be progressed ASAP

There is no single view of the customer and a customer services advisor cannot view all contacts for all services from the customer for all channels i.e. phone, email, social media, web etc.

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Technology is outdated and there are various solutions available on the market which should at least be explored including self-check for business visitors, automated voice recognition for switchboard type enquiries, advanced voice IVR, utilisation of available web chat to support My account registration/set up and single view of the customer platform. Full business case impacting should be completed as the cost may outweigh the potential benefits but these should at least be explored to establish any potential benefits

Current Customer Services Targets

- **Contact Centre telephony response time target -** 50% of calls answered within 20 seconds (this was reduced from 80% within 20 seconds to achieve a saving efficiency of 3.4FTE without a negative response or increased complaints) YTD achievement 63.7%- **Target exceeded** ✔

- **Contact Centre telephony call abandoned rate target -** < 12% abandoned calls (this was increased from 4% in line with service level reduction above) YTD achievement 4.54% - **Target exceeded** ✔

- **Contact Centre call quality target-** 85% combined quality score – assessed by combination of scoring calls against call monitoring criteria and automated Viewscount customer satisfaction survey YTD achievement 96.40% **Target exceeded** ✔

- **Contact Centre email response target –** target 100% to be responded within 2 working days YTD achievement 100% - **Target achieved** ✔

- **Face to Face Service average wait time target -** average wait < 10 minutes YTD achievement 8 minutes – **Target exceeded** ✔

- **Face to Face Service customer satisfaction target -** > 85% satisfaction from customers scoring the service provided YTD achievement 99.81% **Target exceeded** ✔

Previous contractual KPI targets from the strategic partnership with Serco and the council have been maintained as operational service targets to ensure high standards of service delivery are maintained.

All customer telephone calls are recorded for quality monitoring, training purposes and complaints investigation.

The customer services department complaint volumes are exceptionally low and for 2015-16 only 10 upheld complaints were received from a total contact volume of 651231 YTD across the overall customer services department (Face to Face, Contact Centre and Careline) which is 0.0015 % complaint ratio.

There is a high focus on quality monitoring which is scored via a combination of Viewscount scores. This is our automated customer satisfaction survey which gives customers the opportunity to rate the service provided and also leave a comment regarding the service if they wish. This is combined with the Customer Services Advisor call monitoring where the advisors calls are scored by their Team Manager and assessed against our customer Services Call Handling Criteria

There is a strong emphasis on promoting self-service within the call handling criteria and if an advisor does not promote this when it is appropriate for the transaction or customer this affects their score for their call quality scoring, which feeds into their PDR

Recognition

Excellent performance is recognised and wall displays within the contact centre demonstrate positive feedback from actual customer comments left on the satisfaction survey as below:

All advisors achieving 100% for quality in the month are recognised and certificates and displays for our 'Call of Fame' award created regarding their achievements.

Accreditation

The customers Services dept. was assessed by BSI in June 2016 for the CCA version 6 – Customer Contact Association Global standard for customer contact and achieved this with no non-conformances and an impressive audit report. This meets ISO9001 quality standards and is a new industry standard. There will be another assessment in 2017 to maintain this high standard of accreditation.

Implemented actions to support channel migration

Some additional activities have also been implemented to assist channel migration including:

- Self Service area established on the ground floor within the Face to Face area with floorwalker support for assisted self-service if needed and promotion of online services at every opportunity.
- Enhanced call monitoring and side by side call listening to identify suggestions for online activities and to understand the customer experience.
- Contact Centre has taken responsibility for the My Account enquiries line to support customers that are having difficulty logging in and accessing their accounts from home.
- Amended the automatic responses on generic public email accounts to promote the online functions.
- Reviewed and redesigned letters across service including Council Tax bills and Housing Benefit award letters, where online functionality is available to remove contact details and promote My Account.
- Included in Council Tax Annual Billing documentation detailed promotion of My Account for all Thurrock residents.
- Communications team produced a Housing Benefit postcard which was distributed across the borough to residents.
- Involvement with 3rd party providers to ensure that they understand the online functions to promote to their users i.e. Private landlords.

Organisational Design

Although there is a specific customer service department which covers the majority of resident contact for services there is still contact received via telephone from customers within service areas. This should also be reviewed to identify if there are potential savings opportunities by moving these transactions to the customer contact centre or joining up some of the other call handling for these services. If there are higher banded professional employees dealing with customer interactions there may also be a potential to make further savings. The contact center already deals with some complex call types and this is something that should be explored further where services cannot be completed totally on line. E.g. Children's and Adults signposting, general enquiries that do not need specialist advice

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My Account

The Thurrock Online project has provided customers with a web based information and transaction website that enables them to create a 'My account' and provides access to a range of information, advice and guidance about council services with 24/7 access via any PC, smartphone or mobile device.

There has been a significant take up of on line service provision and there are approximately 40,000 account registrations to date hover there is still much more that can be done to increase this.
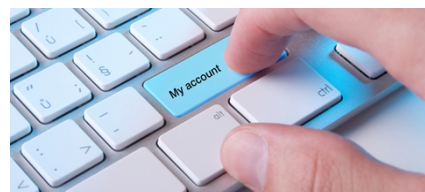
My Account Progress to Date

October 2013	Customers can now report Environmental issues online
December 2013	Customer facility to calculate possible benefit entitlement and apply online for Housing Benefits & Council Tax Support.
January 2014	Customer facility to report a change in circumstances online
March 2014	Housing Benefits New Claims - Forced Online -Customer Services withdrew the facility for customers to apply for Housing Benefits using the paper forms. Teams trained to provide an assisted service for vulnerable customers.
May 2014	Environmental reporting/Uniform integration - Additional Environmental services were added to 'Report It' online, including full end to end automation of reporting process.
July 2014	Housing Benefits New Claims Integration - Changes to the back office processing.
September 2014	Council Tax (excluding Move in, Move out function) - Council tax module went live; customers can now manage their council tax account online.
	Housing Benefits View - Customers can now access real time information on their claim i.e. payment dates/amounts check details of claim.
December 2014	Council Tax Move in, Move Out (excluding automation) - Enhancement to council tax module to include 'moves' customers can now register their move online
January 2015	Bulky Waste Launched - Customers can book and pay for their collection online
April 2015	Housing Benefits DHP - Customers can now make an application for Discretionary Housing Payment online
July 2015	Registrar Appointments - Customers can now book appointments to register a birth, death, give notice of marriage/civil partnership etc.
Nov 15	AD contact launched to allow Customer Services to assist customers with setting up accounts, reset passwords etc.
December 2016- Ongoing	Enhancements to existing products to improve the online services for customers i.e. upgrade of the Council tax move in, move out function
August 2016	School Admissions – single sign on for customers

Additional modules as follows:

- Billing Council Tax – 2016
- Licensing (TENS, Premises, Vary DPS)– 2016
- Licensing (Vary premises) – 2017
- Licensing (taxi renewal) - 2017
- My Notifications – 2017
- Single View of Debt – 2017

We also use digital to provide:

a) Information and advice – this is mainly through www.thurrock.gov.uk which in turn is the gateway to other information based services
b) Engagement – this is through our consultation website and social media
c) Transactional services – In addition to my Account, through many unaligned systems such as online payments, housing registration and bidding planning applications etc.

There has been a positive overall decrease in contact centre call volumes of approximately 11% from 2014/15 to 2015/16 although there has been an increase in handling times which is likely to be a result of online promotion.

For specific services which are available via My Account there have been some good reductions in most areas in call volumes as the graph below demonstrates and we should continue to identify additional online capability where this is not yet available:

Call volume comparison 2014/15 - 2015-16
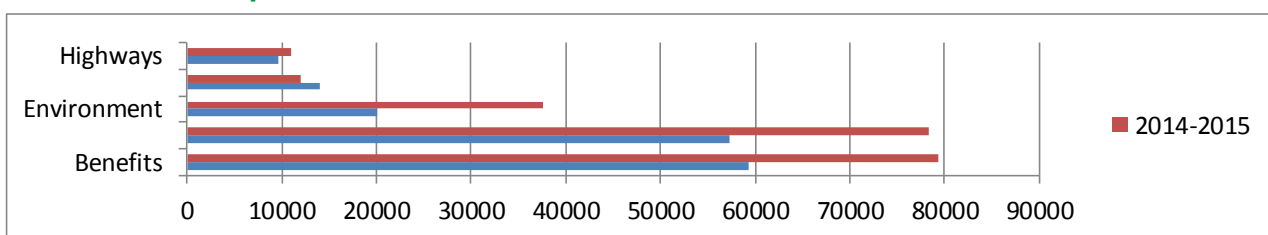
Handling times have generally increased for these services as the graph below demonstrates:

Average handling time (seconds) comparison 2014/15 - 2015/16
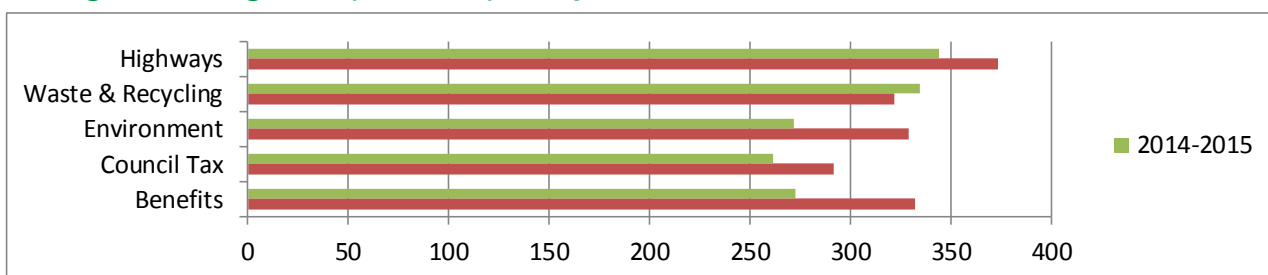
The council aspires to be a digital council providing digital services that are straightforward and convenient so that all those who can use then will choose to do so whilst those that cannot are not excluded

Community Hubs

In addition there has been some good progress with the community hubs programme. The vision of council voluntary sector and local community groups working together to identify and support the needs of the local community and help residents remain self-sufficient and independent for as long as possible is progressing well.

A community hubs programme board has now been established with clear terms of reference. The board will identify opportunities to investigate how Thurrock council can support communities through hubs linking in with the wider public, private and voluntary sector where possible. The ambition is to achieve social and economic benefit to all sectors whilst meeting the specific needs of our residents and developing a range of locality based opportunities that empower residents to support themselves. The board has strong links into the Customer and Demand management

board. The hubs provide a focal point for residents to access face to face support through trained volunteers such as registering for My Account, pay bills, apply for benefits on line etc.

Digital by Default

The necessity to embed the digital approach throughout the organisation is vital. This needs to become a business as usual activity going forward and not a perennial transformation activity. The previously approved digital principles need to be embedded within the organisation to improve the customers experience and reduce service delivery costs. This really means that all employees need to understand and adopt the principles. Customer contact reduction, excellent service delivery and channel migration must be part of everyday business and every new process decision made within the service should consider these principles.

By following the digital principles not only will this encourage our customers to use on line services but this will improve the end-to-end processes, and in some cases completely transform our delivery models. Online customers, mobile technology and digital service delivery all enhance our ways of working

Where our customers are able to use digital – we will aim to provide a wider range of high-quality digital services

Where our customers are unable to use digital - we will aim to meet their needs off line, often via an assisted digital approach

We should become come digital by default providing services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will use them, whilst those that cannot will not be excluded

Customer and Demand Management Board

To support the council's budget planning process and transformation programme from 2017-18 onwards, a new framework has been developed with new strategic boards established for; growth, performance, customer and demand management, commercial, ICT/digital, people, procurement, property and service reviews.

The Customer and Demand Management board will be the governance for the delivery of this strategy.

The purpose of the Customer Service and Demand Management Board is to provide the strategic direction and oversight for the development and delivery of customer services across the council. It will ensure that the importance of customer service is promoted to achieve high and consistent standards of delivery and customer satisfaction. The board will oversee initiatives to help manage and reduce demand on services by reducing avoidable contact and through prevention and early intervention.

Our response to our Customer Services principles and specific actions to get there
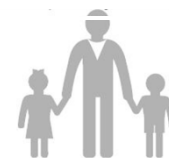
> **Principle 1:** To deliver consistent customer services with integrity – reducing the need for our customers to repeatedly contact us about the same issue by getting it right first time
>
> *We want our Customers to feel valued members of the community and deal with them honestly and with transparency whichever way we serve them .Being open is key to building trusted relationships with our customers*
>
> *Flexibility, tailored services and fairness are important to customers. This requires a common sense approach to our customers to enable the right outcomes without compromising our policies, priorities vision or mission*
>
> *We want to create services our customers will tell others about, we want to build relationships with our customers, where our customers talk to us and we work together to reach outcomes if problems arise. We want these relationships to help us to build a great Borough*

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 4
Customer care training programme to be widened to all service areas. Included in employee and members induction with CS mission, vision and principles. Convenient -Consistent- Cost Effective- Customer Care to be embedded. Encourage further NVQ's in customer service and develop customer care eLearning course *2017*	Maintain and review call handling quality checking procedures. Constantly reviewing the criteria to ensure is still up to date within current digital age. Identify process issues from this for re-engineering with an effective feedback mechanism to all depts. *2017 and ongoing*
Action 2	**Action 5**
Review existing Customer Services targets and then develop a customer Services charter so that our customers are aware of the standards and timeframes they can expect to receive when contacting us. *2017*	Maintain C and DM Board to maintain consistency regarding customer service standards across the council – a holistic approach to Customer Services to breakdown silos and align the customer services vision and principles with clear terms of reference *Ongoing*
Action 3	**Action 6**
Develop and publish specific service targets on the web pages for key services so customers are aware of timeframes and standards whatever channel is used Ensure employees aware of their responsibility in contributing to delivery of these and that results are published *2017*	Empower and engage our employees and customers in the design and provision of customer services, ensuring effective feedback mechanisms are in place for employees via employee forums, surveys and suggestion schemes and appropriate employee representation at C and DM board *2017 and ongoing*

> **Principle 2: To go above and beyond for our customers by encouraging and empowering our employees to take ownership and deliver positive outcomes**
>
> *Resolution is vital to provide a high quality customer service. Customers want to speak to the right person the first time to get their outcome. We need to ensure we take ownership of their issues, enquiries, applications and work together to reach an outcome. Employees must have the right training, resources and time to provide the best outcomes for our customers however they contact us*
>
> *Our employees must have the right authority and the right tools to make decisions, Research suggests that employees who are more satisfied in their roles give superior customer service – we aim for employees satisfaction by ensuring they have the right skills and tools to perform their jobs, the right support from management to do their jobs to the highest possible level. We will check in with our employees regularly to ensure they have what they need to provide excellent customers service*

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 4
Effective training, / cascade to embed the customer services mission, promise and principles within the organisation – culture change is required and the overall goals must be clearly understood throughout the organisation. Implement Development and change programme - ***2017 and ongoing.***	*Review the organisational design for Customer Services, ensuring initial necessary customer contact is in most cost effective place- calls within department that could be handled within the contact centre by using the transaction delivery matrix.* ***2017 and ongoing via service reviews***
Action 2	**Action 5**
Effective leadership message – senior managers must support and embed the Customers Services mission and principles throughout their departments along with the digital principles. The digital principles and strategy should be fully integrated into all service plans, Job descriptions, PDR's. ***2017***	*Continued and monitoring an review of incoming channels and action plan for all channels including post/ paper - Review letters across services to ensure these are not creating unnecessary demand* ***2017***
Action 3	**Action 6**
Creating a connection for customer services throughout the organisation – a common customer centric vision. Customer service to be an agenda at CWG and part of employee's satisfaction surveys to ensure any issues are identified. Continuation of C and DM board with appropriate representation. ***2017***	*All employees who are resident in the borough encouraged to sign up for my account – if they haven't tried it themselves – how can they promote the benefits to our customers – organise employee sign up planned activities and encourage employees to give feedback about the services.* ***2017***

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Principle 3: To provide up to date information and efficient processes, continually striving for improvement and innovative solutions

We must be proactive, ensuring our processes are easy to navigate, our information is correct and up to date and we are easy to interact with. We must be dedicated to continually improving our services and making a dedicated effort to ensure we are current, we are convenient and we are accessible 24/7 as an organisation

We will take an innovative approach to customer services. We will continue to use and enhance technology to make our services even more accessible and convenient to our customers but still ensure that there are options for our customers that cannot use the online methods

We want to provide a high standard of customer's services and also ensure that our employees are supported to give their best and we will keep up to date with new customer services initiatives and best practice within not only local government but customer's service organisations and accreditation.

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 7
Maintain Customer contact association v6 industry standard accreditation to maintain existing high standards within the Customer Services Dept. and identify any further areas for improvement. Maintain recognition scheme, displays in CS and support PCI compliance assessment. **Ongoing**	*Continue with investigation into a shared telephony platform with another council to reduce costs. Telephony system is due for replacement and this may be an effective solution which would reduce costs and support DR plans. Include web chat investigation* **2017**
Action 2	**Action 8**
Complete business process reengineering project for all customer touch points initially within the contact centre and customer service areas to reduce unnecessary contact and explore further digital solutions. Review high call volumes outside of the contact centre. **2017 an ongoing via service reviews**	*Following new telephony solution implementation, investigate the possibility for growth - Customer Services completing call handling on behalf of other local authorities. ICT to explore 'single view of the customer 'technology options and review of existing CRM system* **2018**
Action 3	**Action 9**
Continued development of online services and web content with a clear implementation plan so we are building a high quality customer focused digital services - ongoing monitoring of high volume transactions and tracker. **2017 and ongoing**	*Explore further opportunities with automated messages. E.g. if a customer calls to track progress on an application and the application is still within established timescales there is no benefit to the customer , messages could be played reiterating processing timescales* **2017**
Action 4	**Action 10**
Senior leadership sign off and support embedding of digital principles throughout the organisation with an effective governance process of these principles across all directorates and reducing isolated system implementation within directorates. **2017 and ongoing**	*Explore incentive opportunities or my Acct i.e. a Thurrock Deals programme where local businesses can offer exclusive deals to My Account holders via email alerts. Utilise behavioural Insight techniques in marketing promotions from digital services* **2018**
Action 5	**Action 11**
Implement an effective continuous documented Customer Services Benchmarking programme to ensure constant benchmarking of our organisation against the best in the business – look within and beyond the public sector, what, where and how to innovate. **2017 and ongoing**	*Explore marketing techniques to attract various digital user groups i.e. those who utilise digital for other activities, with different themes i.e. never phone, never queue, and never forget. Consider iPad pal volunteer programme* **2017**
Action 6	**Action 12**
Ensure all changes are backed with evidence, utilising customer research, and website usage data, MI. Fully impact all proposals with business cases before implementing solutions ensuring changes make financial sense and are measurable. If we can't measure it we can't improve it. **2017 and ongoing**	*Review MI to ensure consistency, timeliness, accuracy and scope to measure costs between services and channels. Consistent MI for services. and new measurement and reporting of failure demand* **2017.**

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Our response to these principles and specific actions to get there

Principle 4: To proactively engage our customers in developing services that respond to their needs and seek feedback on the delivery of those services

Feedback must be a vital part of our service. Customers should have an input into our current service and how we build our future services. Customer feedback is an important part of our service provision to both our customers and our employees. Customers must have a voice, an opportunity to give feedback across all service areas and it should be easy for customers to do this

It is important that we review, build and improve services with our customers input. Not only does it create valued relationships with our customers but it helps us to be efficient and deliver value for money, liaison with our customers is the best way we can find out whether the service we are providing is meeting expectations.

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 4
Maintain all customer satisfaction surveys and quality measurement across Customer Services departments ensuring appropriate actions in place for any identified issues and complaints. Feedback issues to all service areas. Monthly communication of results and complaint reporting. ***2017 and ongoing***	Ensure residents are involved in the service delivery process – involvement of customer segment in process design to understand their point of view. This should be part of any new process design – utilise digital tools and techniques to engage and consult ***2017 and ongoing as part of service reviews***
Action 2	**Action 5**
Establish a Customer Services residents group to identify issues and implement appropriate actions relating to Customer services across all council departments based on customer feedback. ***2017***	Review output from forthcoming Resident's survey and put in place an appropriate action plan for any feedback / issue received in relation to Customer Services with effective monitoring of action / implementation ***2017***

Action 3	Action 6
Continue to promote the benefits of our online services to customers at every	Utilise social media more effectively for customer engagement to obtain views re ..., feedback and proactive messaging. Build and implement an ... media strategy and actions ***2017***

Principle 5: To provide quality, cost effective choices that do not exclude members of the community and offer easy access to our services

Our services must be convenient, consistent and accessible to all. The choices of access must all be high quality, add value and make it easier for our customers to interact with us. We have to continue to provide solutions for our customers to make life easy for them and help with their busy lives, allowing them to make the best of their time.

Providing convenient and accessible services is also about ensuring we are inclusive of the whole community. We are proud our community is made up of a diverse range of people from different backgrounds with different life experiences .We want to ensure our community know the methods available to contact us and what to expect when they do. We want to ensure we are spending time with the people in the community who need a bit of extra help and recognise sometime that our processes and solutions don't suit everyone

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 7
Continued development of our website 'Contact us' page explaining available support for our vulnerable service users and including our customer service standards and charter to demonstrate the benefits utilising our digital channels **2017**	Investigate benefits and issues with self-check in system for business visitors at civic offices and complete appropriate business case if feasible and costs are not greater than potential benefits **2017**
Action 2	**Action 8**
Implement, monitor and measure an effective proactive strategy for customer contact via SMS, Gov direct, social media to avoid unnecessary customer contact i.e. missed collection, weather, payment due/ received etc. **2017**	Investigate Voice recognition solution for switchboard type enquiries where caller are ringing to contact an employee direct. Complete appropriate business case if feasible and costs/issues for the solution are not greater than potential resource benefits **2017**
Action 3	**Action 9**
Transform Face to Face Customer services in civic, increasing self-service desks, providing additional assisted support, documentation desks for verification/ scanning and appointment solution for vulnerable residents unable to utilise self-service options – Tie in with refurb **2017/18**	ICT to explore benefits / options of having a single view of the customer system to enable a joined up view across all services. . ICT to also review existing CRM solution **2018**
Action 4	**Action 10**
Amend Customer Services currently provided in community hubs to assisted self-service to support our customers utilising online services and help them enhance their digital skills -this should benefit them in their everyday lives - Link to our Community Hub plan **completed 2016**	Explore video kiosk solution at hubs to enable face to face communication with council customer's services advisors for complex enquiries and other potential community options / locations **2017**
Action 5	**Action 11**
Approve recommended services as digital only, maximise the use of resource for customers that really need our support This will allow an appt service for vulnerable residents and assisted self-service, phone or face to face where needed . Effective comms plan required **2017**	Implement a proactive process to contact our customers who have had difficulty registering for my Account to assist them in setting up their account. Sending auto email when abandoned with support details **2017**
Action 6	**Action 12**
Continue to provide assisted self-service for customers that telephone the contact centre , setting up My Accounts for them if they are experiencing difficulties and advising the of the benefits of utilising the online services . Monitor and track the effectiveness **2016 and ongoing**	Revisit cashiers project (phase 2) to identify further cashless options to enable efficiencies and make payment more convenient for customers **In progress 2016**

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Principle 6: To enable our customers to transact with the council when it suits them without having to phone and visit to enable the fastest possible service at the lowest possible cost

We want our Customers to have the flexibility to contact us when they need to and continue provide simple affordable systems that are available 24/7

Delivering services online at every opportunity and promoting and assisting our customers in utilising this option as their preferred channel will help to allow us to sustain relevant services whilst delivering savings for the organisation,

This allows much greater control for our customers and then enables us to utilise the alterative channels for our customers that really need our support and help

Understanding our customer journey is vital to further progression in this area as getting it right will mean that we may be able to reduce the channels for certain transactions for our customers that are able to access online

Information about what can be completed online and the benefits of doing this will be made as widely available as possible raising our customer's awareness   for our customers that just don't have the skills or equipment we can continue to plan and support them to build their skills in this area through a network of local facilities

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 4
Effective implementation and monitoring of existing communication plan for channel migration ensuring customers are aware of what is available. Utilise a variety of marketing techniques to attract customers to our digital solutions **2016 and ongoing**	*Change appropriate transactions to digital only i.e. report it; this will enable an enhanced service to customers that need our support. This will enable customers to realise the benefits, convenience and accessibility and support our financial challenges* **2017**
Action 2	Action 5
Initial support provided via telephone and face to face to give our customers that need help the confidence to self-serve in the future - this will then make our services more convenient for them in the future **2016 and ongoing**	*Process reengineering project to identify further ways to enhance the digital experience and avoid unnecessary contact from our customers* **2016 and ongoing as part of service reviews**
Action 3	Action 6
Maintain high focus on Customers services dept. setting up accounts for customers utilising AD contact, continuing to track volumes for registration and call reduction. Propose reduction challenges and efficiencies **2016 and ongoing**	*Ensuring channel migration action plan actions are implemented relating to eforms, digital principle etc. are embedded i.e. replacing PDF and downloadable forms with eforms, replacing leaflets with online info etc. Links to web pages with info* **2016 and ongoing as part of service reviews**

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Our response to these principles and specific actions to get there

> ### Principle 7: We offer support to help people be online and work with our partners and the community to improve access to services
>
> *We want to increase the use of online service and help support those that are isolated. Not only will this help develop their skills and increase access to services this would also be our most cost effective choice,*
>
> *Our staff will be trained to ensure they can fully support our customers that need help in this area*
>
> *We will continue to work with our communities to increase further the confidence of those that are digitally excluded and support them to increase their ability to utilise online services*
>
> *We will support people in setting up their online accounts over the phone or face to face with assisted self-service if they are having problems doing this and explain the real benefits of these solutions to them*

Direction and actions to deliver;

Action 1	Action 4
Implement a plan to enable proactive contact to residents with dropped searches, registration issues and transactions via MY Acct to assist and encourage future self-service. Financial benefits of digital solutions will only be achieved if customers make use of the digital service **2017**	*Ensure all face to face self-service PC's within civic and hubs also have telephone on desks with speed dials to the contact centre for assisted support if customers need assistance to self-serve* **2017**
Action 2	**Action 5**
Roll out training for AD contact to all customer services employees so that any Customer services Assistant can set up My Acct for any customer - .measure the impact on AHT and wait times **2017**	*Contact centre and face to face advisors to continue to promote My account/web after every call, /visit recommending the website and benefits and requesting an email address so that a link can be provided for the web. Monitor the effectiveness. Consider utilising my account for some members enquiries* **2016 and ongoing**
Action 3	**Action 6**
Implement a plan to identify and capture any existing forums and community groups to encourage and support our customer to utilise our website. **2017**	*Expand the communications and transactions that are available through social media sites such as twitter, explore IPTV options and identify further improvement and provision of mediated self-service options* **2017**

Draft Customer Service Strategy 2016-20 v6 T Heiser

Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

Convenient	Consistent
▪ *Our customer find it easy to access our services and information*	▪ *Maintenance of CCA version 6 accreditation*
▪ *We will have implemented a new social media strategy and more proactive contact with our customers*	▪ *Our senior managers will all lead by example supporting innovation and ideas from employees*
▪ *We will have implemented new MY Account services*	▪ *Our metrics will benchmark favourably against other local authorities*
▪ *We will have provided additional support to help our customers utilise digital services*	▪ *We will have high 1st contact resolution*
▪ *Enhanced service for our vulnerable customers*	▪ *Customer services will maintain all service level targets and achievement*
▪ *Improved community options available for our customers*	▪ *We will continue to recognise our employees for providing excellent customer Service*
	▪ *We will have excellent employee engagement scores*

Cost Effective	Customer Care
▪ *Our customers will contact us online unless vulnerable or service not available online*	▪ *A changing customer focused culture across the entire council*
▪ *Transactions will be dealt with in the most appropriate place within the organisation*	▪ *Our charter and promise, standards actions and results will be available to our customers*
▪ *Up to date technology will be in place*	▪ *Customer care training will embedded within the entire organisation*
▪ *Digital principles will be embedded with effective governance*	▪ *Our customer will be involved in our process design*
▪ *We will have reengineered our processes*	▪ *Our ground floor will be transformed into a bright modern space*
▪ *We will utilise metrics and information effectively , impacting fully before decisions*	▪ *Constant utilisation of customer feedback*
▪ *We will have, increased My Account registration*	▪ *Maintained our CSD high customer satisfaction scores*
▪ *We have identified opportunities for growth and realised efficiencies*	

We will be able to demonstrate or have metrics for all of the above

CONCLUSION: Final thoughts on out Customer Services strategy…………

*Delivering the vision, mission, actions and adhering to the principles within this strategy will help us transform our customers experience and at the same time enable us to meet our financial challenges. Our customers will have greater access to our services; will receive regular updates on service areas that are of interest to them and proactive contact to avoid them having to contact us. We will have a workforce with the right skills for the future and with the ability to guide our customers to the right services for them. We will be working closely with our communities to increase access and support to our services and will have strong partnerships in place that allow us to have local ambassadors to support local people. Success is **convenient, consistent, cost effective, customer care** for the residents of Thurrock*

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Convenient - Consistent - Cost Effective - Customer Care

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Contact Centre - Highest Called Services and Query Types
Excludes already online only queries for example: Housing Benefit claim, initial report of homelessness and housing registrations application

		Available online?	Contact Value To	Action: Advise Encourage Online Only			Comment
1	**Housing Benefits**						
1	Reporting Change of Circumstances	Yes	Council		E		Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to potential financial impact to the Council.
2	Chasing for progress/update on claim	No	Customer			A	Clarify what expectations we have set to the customer and introduce additional messages to advise on this. Provide advice or an appointment for vulnerable customers.
3	Discuss overpayment	No	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
4	Payment enquiry	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Provide advice or an appointment for vulnerable customers.
5	Discuss letter received	No	Customer	A			Carry out a review of the letters, introduce online guides to explaine i.e talking letters.
2	**Council Tax**						
1	Discuss Demand Letter	No	Council	A			Once recovery stages commence disucss with customer due to potential financial impact to the Council.
2	How much do I need to pay?	Yes	Council		E		Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to potential financial impact to the Council.
3	Discuss account/bill	No	Both	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
4	Make a payment	Yes	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
5	Apply for discount/exemption	Partially	Customer			O	Insist customers apply online where possible, as it is in their interest. However not all exemptions are available online i.e Students. Provide advice or an appointment for vulnerable customers.
3	**Rents**						
1	Make a payment	Yes	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
2	Check the balance	No	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
3	Make an arrangement	No	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
4	Request a statement	No	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
5	Request a rent card	No	Council	A			Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
4	**Environmental**						

1	Report fly tipping	Yes	Both			O	Insist customers report online as it is in their interest, however may deter customers from reporting. Provide adv for vulnerable customers
2	Report food safety/health	Yes	Both			O	Insist customers report online as it is in their interest, however may deter customers from reporting. Provide adv for vulnerable customers
3	Reporting lost/stray dog	Yes	Both			O	Insist customers report online as it is in their interest, however may deter customers from reporting. Provide adv for vulnerable customers
4	Reporting street cleaning	Yes	Both			O	Insist customers report online as it is in their interest, however may deter customers from reporting. Provide adv for vulnerable customers
5	Licensing enquiry	Yes	Both			O	Insist customers check online. Provide advice for vulnerable customers.
5	**Waste**						
1	Reporting missed collection	Yes	Customer		E		Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to service delivery failure. Investigate option for proactive management of missed collections - advise the customer before they realise we have missed their bin and advise at this point of the action. Reduce the need for customers to contact the Council.
2	Chasing a missed collection	Partially	Customer	A			Due to continued service failure assist customer as updates are not always available online.
3	Booking a buly waste collection	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers book online as it is in their interest. Unless vulnerable and need assistance.
4	Requesting a new bin	Partially	Customer	A			Assist customers with this as they are unable to make the payment online for this. Investigate the use of and cost to introduce a unique reference numbers and amendments payments system to facilitate this.
5	What can go in a bin?	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Unless vulnerable and need assistance.
6	**Housing Registrations**						
1	Reporting Change of Circumstances	Yes	Both		E		Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to potential impact to the Council.
2	How to join the waiting list?	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Unless require assisted self service or are vulnerable and need an appointment.
3	What band?	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Unless vulnerable and need assistance.
4	What proof do you need from me/have you received?	No	Customer	A			Assist customer with this as it's not available online and the window to provide this information is narrow.
5	What is my position on the list?	Yes	Customer			O	Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Unless vulnerable and need assistance.

Face to Face - Highest Services and Query Types - Currently managed by service desks

Customer Services Strategy Appendix 2

For those services availble online , assisted Self Service is provided at the Community Hubs and Civic Offices

		Available online?	Available via Contact Centre?	Contact Value To	Action: Assisted / Encourage / Online Only / Refer to Contact Centre				Comment
1	**Housing Benefits**								
1	Providing documents	No	No	Both	A				Introduce document desk for verification and self scanning facility based on risk based verification requirements
2	Query re claim	Partially	Yes	Customer			O		Insist customers check online as it is in their interest. Unless require assisted self service or are vulnerable and need to see and advisor.
3	Enquiry following the receipt of a letter	No	Yes	Customer				C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need an appointment. Carry out a review of the letters, introduce online guides to explaine i.e talking letters.
4	Reporting a change in circumstances	Yes	Yes	Council		E		C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless assisted self service or are vulnerable and need to see and advisor. Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to potential financial impact to the Council.
5	Requesting the progress of the claim.	No	Yes	Customer			O		Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless assisted self service or are vulnerable and need to see and advisor. Clarify what expectations we have set to the customer and introduce additional messages to advise on this.
2	**Council Tax**								
1	Discuss account/bill	No	Yes	Both				C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need to see and advisor. Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
2	Providing documents	No	No	Customer	A				Introduce document desk for verification and self scanning facility.
3	Advising of a move in/move out	Yes	Yes	Both			O	C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need an appointment. Insist customers complete online

4	Payment enquiry	Partially	Yes	Council					C	Encourage online at every opportunity but do not insist due to potential financial impact to the Council continue to refer payments to the Contact Centre if online is not an option.
5	Enquiry following the receipt of a demand notice	No	Yes	Council					C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need to see and advisor. Once recovery stages commence disucss with customer due to potential financial impact to the Council.
3	**Housing**									
1	Rent enquiry	No	Yes	Council					C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need to see and advisor. Discuss with customer due to financial impact on the Council.
2	Housing Registrations enquiry	Yes	Yes	Customer					C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre unless they are vulnerable and need to see and advisor.
3	Providing documents - for point of offer	No	No	Customer	A					Introduce document desk for verification and self scanning facility.
4	Contact estates officer	No	Yes	Both					C	Refer customer to the Contact Centre to notify the Estates Team.
5	Homeless enquiry	Partially	Yes	Customer					C	Assisted self service available and refer customer to the Contact Centre to notify Homeless Team.
4	**Regulatory Services**									
1	Issuing of parking permits	No	No	Customer	A					Investigate online electronic parking permits as used at other Councils i.e. Basildon.
2	Blue badge application	Yes	No	Customer			O			Unless require assisted self service
3	Bus pass application	Yes	No	Customer			O			Unless require assisted self service
4	School admission application	Yes	No	Customer			O			Unless require assisted self service
5	Issuing of essential living fund vouchers	No	No	Customer	A					Following an assessment to determine need, issuing of food vouchers - can only be issued in person following ID checks.

Thurrock LCTS consultation 2017/18

| Respondents: | 254 displayed, 254 total | Status: | Open |
| Launched Date: | N/A | Closed Date: | 26/09/2016 |

1. The Council is very keen that you have all the information you need to provide informed answers to this consultation. Details of the current scheme, how it is funded, and the proposed changes which are subject to this consultation can be reviewed here. Please confirm whether you have reviewed this information before completing this form:I have reviewed the background information about the Local Council Tax Support scheme

	Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes	33	89%	n/a	n/a
No	4	11%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents	37			
(skipped this question)	217			

2. Should the Council keep the current Local Council Tax Support scheme? (Should it continue to administer the scheme and have the same level of support as it does at the moment?)

	Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes	14	38%	n/a	n/a
No	8	22%	n/a	n/a
Don't know	15	41%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents	37	100%		
(skipped this question)	217			

3. Please use the space below to make any comments you have on protecting the Local Council Tax Support scheme from these changes:

1. could this form part of universal credit?

2. Consultation time too short

The changes need to be explained so we can meaningful express our views

3. It's important that the council tax remains affordable but it shouldn't be at the cost or reducing the reserves to fund it. The council should have a policy where it increase the tax year on year by the permissible 1.99%.

4. I am not working at the moment lost my job on 5th of august

Total Respondents	4	
(skipped this question)	250	

4. Do you agree with the option 1? Removing the Family Premium for all new working age applicants

	Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes	11	37%	n/a	n/a
No	9	30%	n/a	n/a
Don't know	10	33%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents	30	100%		
(skipped this question)	224			

5. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

1. A scheme which recognises the cost of raising children

2. Working families on low incomes should not pay more council tax whilst those on benefits pay less. Work should pay and that philosophy should be supported

Total Respondents	2
(skipped this question)	252

6. Do you agree with the option 2? Reducing the period for which a person can be absent from Great Britain and still receive Council Tax Reduction to 4 weeks

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		21	75%	n/a	n/a
No		3	11%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		4	14%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents		28	100%		
(skipped this question)		226			

7. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

No responses were entered for this question.	
Total Respondents	0
(skipped this question)	254

8. Do you agree with the option 3 Using a set income for self-employed earners after 1 year's self-employment .

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		10	38%	n/a	n/a
No		10	38%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		6	23%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents		26	100%		
(skipped this question)		228			

9. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

1. Income based on audited accounts as some self-employed people earn less than the living wage

2. This seems unfair and not encouraging of enterprise

Total Respondents	2
(skipped this question)	252

10. Do you agree with the option 4? To remove the element of a Work Related Activity Component in the calculation of the current scheme for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants.

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		17	71%	n/a	n/a
No		1	4%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		6	25%	n/a	n/a

Total Respondents	24	100%
(skipped this question)	230	

11. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

No responses were entered for this question.	
Total Respondents	0
(skipped this question)	254

12. Do you agree with the option 5? To limit the number of dependent children within the calculation for Council Tax Reduction to a maximum of two.

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		16	67%	n/a	n/a
No		4	17%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		4	17%	n/a	n/a
	Total Respondents	24	100%		
	(skipped this question)	230			

13. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

1. I think 4 children would be a more reasonable number.

Total Respondents	1
(skipped this question)	253

14. Do you agree with the option 6? To remove entitlement to the Severe Disability Premium where another person is paid Universal Credit (Carers Element) to look after them

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		17	71%	n/a	n/a
No		1	4%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		6	25%	n/a	n/a
	Total Respondents	24	100%		
	(skipped this question)	230			

15. If you disagree what alternative would you propose?

No responses were entered for this question.	
Total Respondents	0
(skipped this question)	254

16. Do you think we should choose any of the following alternative options rather than the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support scheme? Please select one answer for each source of funding

	Yes	No	Don't know	Response Total	Points	Avg
Increase the level of Council Tax	23.81% (5)	66.67% (14)	9.52% (2)	21	n/a	n/a
Find savings from cutting other Council Services	28.57% (6)	57.14% (12)	14.29% (3)	21	n/a	n/a
			Total Respondents	21		
			(skipped this question)	233		

17. If the Council were to choose these other options to make savings, what would be your order of preference? Please rank in order of preference byÂ selecting a number from 1 â€" 3 in the boxes below, where 1 is the option that you would most prefer and 3 is the least.

	1	2	3	Response Total	Points	Avg
Increase the level of Council Tax	23.81% (5)	14.29% (3)	61.9% (13)	21	n/a	n/a

Reduce funding available for other Council Services	23.81% (5)	52.38% (11)	23.81% (5)	21	n/a	n/a
			Total Respondents	21		
			(skipped this question)	233		

18. Please use the space below to make any other comments on the scheme:

No responses were entered for this question.
Total Respondents	0
(skipped this question)	254

19. Please use the space below if you would like the Council to consider any other options (please state)

1. Scrap council tax support

Total Respondents	1
(skipped this question)	253

20. If you have any further comments or questions to make regarding the Local Council Tax Support scheme that you haven't had opportunity to raise elsewhere, please use the space below.

1. This survey is somewhat convoluted, and poorly phrased at best. The council currently provides poor local services in Chafford Hundred. The removal of our local library and the complete absence of local services, as well as infrequent maintanence and scruffy parks and paths makes the idea of increased taxes highly unappealing.

2. How many voters/local residents know of this consultation

Total Respondents	2
(skipped this question)	252

21. Are you, or someone in your household, getting Local Council Tax Support at this time?

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		1	5%	n/a	n/a
No		18	90%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		1	5%	n/a	n/a
	Total Respondents	20	100%		
	(skipped this question)	234			

22. Are you...?

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Male		11	55%	n/a	n/a
Female		8	40%	n/a	n/a
Prefer not to say		1	5%	n/a	n/a
	Total Respondents	20	100%		
	(skipped this question)	234			

23. Age

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
18 - 24		1	5%	n/a	n/a
25 - 34		2	10%	n/a	n/a
35 - 44		6	30%	n/a	n/a
45 - 54		3	15%	n/a	n/a
55 - 64		5	25%	n/a	n/a

65 - 74		2	10%	n/a	n/a
75 - 84		1	5%	n/a	n/a
85+		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Prefer not to say		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents		20	100%		
(skipped this question)			234		

24. Disability: Are your day to day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
Yes		0	0%	n/a	n/a
No		18	90%	n/a	n/a
Don't know		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Prefer not to say		2	10%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents		20	100%		
(skipped this question)			234		

25. Ethnic Origin: What is your ethnic group?

		Response Total	Response Percent	Points	Avg
White British		15	75%	n/a	n/a
Other White		3	15%	n/a	n/a
White Irish		1	5%	n/a	n/a
White & Black Caribbean		0	0%	n/a	n/a
White & Black African		1	5%	n/a	n/a
White & Asian		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Any Other Mixed background		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Indian		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Pakistani		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Bangladeshi		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Any Other Asian background		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Caribbean		0	0%	n/a	n/a
African		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Any Other Black background		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Chinese		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Arab		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Prefer not to say		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Other, please specify		0	0%	n/a	n/a
Total Respondents		20	100%		
(skipped this question)			234		

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January 2017		**ITEM: 8**
Cabinet		
Local Council Tax Scheme		

Wards and communities affected: All	**Key Decision:** Key
Report of: Councillor Robert Gledhill, Leader	
Accountable Head of Service: Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT	
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Since 1st April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31st March 2013. Council Tax Reduction helps provide support to council taxpayers who have a low income. It supports the taxpayers by providing a reduction in the actual amount in Council Tax payable.

The current Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme was implemented on 1 April 2016. Thurrock Council agreed its current scheme through a public consultation exercise informed by cross party Members working groups. The resulting scheme was agreed by both Cabinet and the Council.

The proposed design of the scheme for 2017/18 builds on the existing scheme and the proposed changes align with central government changes to the Housing Benefit and Universal Credit regulations. These changes are reflective of incentivisation to seek employment which meets personal spending requirements while also simplifying the administration of the scheme. We have considered the proposed changes in consultation with other Essex authorities. We have also considered that the proposals balance cost savings with maintaining a scheme that is reasonable and fit for purpose.

There are six proposed changes to the existing scheme which are outlined in section 3.4. The proposed changes numbered 1, 2, 3 and 5 are likely to reduce the amount of support available to individual claimants under the scheme and hence members are asked to decide whether to support these proposed changes.

The proposed changes numbered 4 and 6 are not expected to impact on the support available to claimants. Hence members are asked to approve these proposed changes.

It is also noted that the proposed changes 4 and 6 if approved will align to the equivalent Housing Benefit regulations at the point they are approved by Central Government. Members are advised that in the unlikely event that these changes are not effected by Central Government by 1st April 2017, that the Council's Council Tax Reduction scheme will not be amended for 2017 but will be amended from 2018.

Could members please note that the scheme, together with all supporting papers, Equality Impact Assessments etc. must be considered before making any decision on the scheme.

1. Recommendation(s) for the proposed Scheme for 2017/18

1.1.1 Members are asked to specifically consider if they support the changes to the scheme detailed in section 3.4 in respect of proposed changes 1, 2, 3 and 5. This is in the context of the impact on individual customers and the cost to the council.

1.1.2 We have undertaken a public consultation on possible changes to the scheme for 2017/18. Members are asked to approve the proposed changes 4 and 6 as outlined in section 3.4 on the basis these changes are supported by the consultation response.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The design of each LCTS scheme must be finalised by 31 January ahead of the relevant year to which it relates. Failure to provide a scheme by this date will trigger the implementation of a default Government scheme. The default scheme would require the Council to revert back to the level of support that would have been provided under the national Council Tax Benefit arrangements.

2.2 Local authorities will take on the risk that liabilities under LCTS exceed the amount projected for at the start of the relevant financial year. This risk is shared between billing and major precepting authorities with about 15% of the council tax collected by the Council being paid over to the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Essex Police.

2.3 As the scheme impacts on the Council Tax Base, a key component in estimating the resources available to the Council, it is deemed prudent to agree a scheme prior to Cabinet agreeing the Council Tax Base in January.

The existing Scheme now contains the following elements:

• The first £25 per week of earned income will be disregarded when calculating levels of council tax support.

• The maximum capital limit is to be set at £6,000. This means anyone who has savings over £6,000 may not receive support with their council tax.
• For working age claimants, the maximum support that will be allowed will be 75% of their full council tax bill.

• Child benefit and child maintenance received will not be included as income in the calculation of council tax support.

• The maximum period a claim can be backdated under the scheme is 1 calendar month. A good reason for not claiming earlier has to be provided.

• There is a full disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments.

At the end of March 2016 the Council had collected 96.26 per cent of council tax due from those in receipt of support.

We now have to consider the LCTS scheme for 2017/18. We recommend continuing with the existing 2016/17 scheme amended for some changes which will align the scheme with the requirements of Housing Benefit and the Universal Credit system. Members will need to decide if each proposed change should be adopted.

3.   **Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

3.1   From 2014/15, any specific funding for the LCTS scheme is rolled up into the main Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as provided to local authorities by the Government. It will be entirely for local authorities to decide how much they are prepared to spend on their LCTS scheme. Officers have considered the findings from the consultation undertaken recently which supported the proposed scheme for 2017/18. Officers have also reviewed the structure of the scheme and noted the cost of the scheme has reduced from £8.5m to approximately £8.0m since 1 April 2013. This has increased the Council Tax Base and reduced the cost of the scheme since inception. Given these findings officers recommend continuing the scheme based on the same principles with adjustments as recommended below.

3.2   Officers have had to consider changes to Housing Benefit Regulations and the ease of administration by having corresponding regulations for both schemes as far as possible. As the roll out of Universal Credit has slowed nationally, with the completion date of the project now extended to 2022. New Housing Benefit legislation is now forming part of the Welfare Reform agenda, as this benefit will now continue until at least 2022. When Local Council Tax Support began in 2013 it was expected the Universal Credit would be rolled out by 2017 replacing Housing Benefit for Working Age customers.

3.3   Officers have maintained a close working relationship with other Essex authorities and have continued to work on the same principles that were originally agreed at the start of the LCTS schemes.

3.4   Some components of the LCTS scheme have been directed by Government such as:-

• All low income pensioners will be protected under the national framework as defined by DCLG.

• Consideration for protection for vulnerable working age groups will be allowed for.

• Each authority's scheme will maintain work incentives wherever possible. The Government continues to stress the importance of this principle given the current economic climate and their welfare reform agenda.

We have undertaken a public consultation on possible changes to the scheme for 2017/18, which began on 15 August 2016 and closed on 26 September 2016. The survey attracted 254"hits" and 37 responses were received. These results largely support how the scheme has been structured and delivered to date. But officers are aware that the number of respondents is low.

Officers have considered that some of the options driven by changes to Housing Benefit legislation will reduce entitlement to support for some recipients. Members will need to decide if these changes are to be adopted. These are the proposed changes that were consulted on.

Proposed Change 1- Should the scheme be amended to align with Housing Benefit, namely that the Family Premium will not be granted for all new claims and for any 'new' families?

Under this change existing recipients will continue to receive this premium as long as they continue to be entitled to LCTS. The removal of the family premium applies to new claims only by working age claimants. The family premium for new pension age claims was removed in May 2016 as part of the national scheme for pensioners administered by DCLG. If this change is implemented then new working age claimants will receive a maximum reduction in entitlement of £3.49 weekly.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 1
Yes	11	37%
No	9	30%
Don't know	10	33%
Total responses	30	

Proposed Change 2- Should the scheme change the temporary absence rules in line with Housing Benefit, to limit the timescale for Local Council Tax Reduction to be applied where an applicant leaves Great Britain for a period of greater than 4 weeks? Certain exceptions would be applied for armed forces personnel, mariners, continental shelf workers and for certain cases where an applicant is receiving care.

This change would mean if the Council is informed that a customer is traveling out of Great Britain for more than 4 weeks entitlement to LCTS would end. When they return to the country the claimant could submit a new claim. This aligns with Housing Benefit legislation and is supported by the consultation response.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 2
Yes	21	75%
No	3	11%
Don't know	4	14%
Total responses	28	

Proposed Change 3- Should the scheme set a minimum level of income for all Self Employed claimants (after a start-up period for newly self-employed of one year). This could be equivalent to National Minimum (Living) Wage multiplied by 35 hours per week. This is line with the assessment of Self Employed income in the calculation of Universal Credit.

This change would apply an income equal to 35 hours work at minimum wage for all self-employed customers. This would currently mean using an income before tax of £252.00 weekly for all self-employed customers. This will be used if the income declared is less than this amount. This option is proposed to address the difficulty in verifying the declared self-employed income of claimants. It would also align our scheme with the assessment of self-employed customers receiving Universal Credit. It is possible that by using this level of income that support under the scheme would significantly reduce or end for a high number of self-employed customers.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 3
Yes	10	38%
No	10	38%
Don't know	6	23%
Total responses	26	

Proposed Change 4- Should the scheme be amended in line with the regulations for claiming Housing Benefit and Employment and Support Allowance whereby the Work Related Activity Component will not be granted when calculating Local Council Tax Reduction for all new claims to Employment and Support Allowance on or after 1st April 2017? This amendment will not alter the amount of support awarded and is a change in line with Housing Benefit regulation amendments from April 2017.

Comment: This change will not affect the amount of the award. Customers who claim Employment and Support Allowance will lose their entitlement to the Work Related Activity Component. We will also take this component from the assessment of their needs when assessing their claim for LCTS. As both income and needs reduce by the same amount the resulting calculation will not change the amount of the award under the LCTS.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 4
Yes	17	71%

No	1	4%
Don't know	6	25%
Total responses	24	

Proposed Change 5- Should the scheme be amended in line with Housing Benefit to restrict the number of dependants assessed in the calculation of claimants needs to a maximum of two? This change will have specific exceptions and will only affect new claims and those applicants who have a third or subsequent child on or after 1st April 2017. This change is in line with Housing Benefit regulation changes from April 2017.

This change restricts the number of child dependants to a maximum of 2 when assessing the needs of the claimant. Currently the needs assessment for claimants is increased by £66.90 per child, with no limit to the number of children. A customers income is calculated and offset against the family's assessed needs. Hence the claimant will not receive increased support under the scheme if they have more than 2 children. This doesn't affect current claimants with more than 2 children and would only apply to new claims from 1 April 2017.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 5
Yes	16	67%
No	4	17%
Don't know	4	17%
Total responses	24	

Proposed Change 6- Remove the entitlement to the Severe Disability premium where another person is paid Universal Credit carers' element to look after them. This would treat the Universal Credit carers' element the same way as if there was an award of Carers Allowance. This amendment will not alter the amount of support awarded it is a change in line with Housing Benefit regulation amendments from April 2017.

Comment: Currently the Council award a Severe Disability Premium to customers who are currently living alone and have entitlement established by the DWP to a benefit to pay for medium to high rate care. This premium increases the needs used to assess an award of LCTS. We cannot award this premium if someone is claiming Carers Allowance to provide care for them. This change means if the claimant's carer has transferred to receiving the Carers Element of Universal Credit rather than Carers Allowance this will also mean that the Severe Disability Premium cannot be awarded. This change will mean that those customers who have previously qualified for the Severe Disability premium will continue to do so and is just aligning the system with the Universal Credit system.

Consultation response in favour of change		Option 6
Yes	17	71%

No	1	4%
Don't know	6	25%
Total responses	24	

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The changes proposed ensure the scheme remains affordable and easy to administer. They are not considered to impact significantly on collection rates. The collection rate for 2016/17 for council tax from those in the scheme was 96.26 percent. The design of the scheme, which builds in various protections and incentives, supports a high collection rate. In order to maintain collection rates many key elements of the scheme are unchanged in 2017/18.

4.2 The LCTS expenditure for 2015/16 was £7.9m. The expenditure for 2016/17 is estimated to be circa £7.9m of which circa £3.75m relates to claimants of pensionable age. The expected cost of the scheme for 2017/18 is proposed at £8.5m to allow for any potential additional cost to the scheme.

4.3 We have benefited in past years from an improving economy, with the movement of customers into work. It is harder to predict if this trend will continue through 2017/18, and hence we do not project these changes forward particularly given there is some economic uncertainty arising from Brexit.

4.4 The introduction of Universal Credit in the Authority for single unemployed people has not made any significant change to the amount of LCTS awarded to claimants.

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

5.1 The LCTS is subject to an annual public consultation to seek views on the design and operation of the proposed scheme.

5.2 Appendix 1 contains highlights the 7 questions asked as part of the LCTS consultation and the answers received.

5.3 Appendix 2 contains comments received as part of the consultation.

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

6.1 The Council is required to have a LCTS scheme and hence the proposed scheme meets this requirement. The scheme supports claimants in the community and ensures the revenue raised is collectible supporting the medium-term financial strategy.

6.2 The Council also has a fair debt policy and this is reflected in the collection of council tax from claimants in the scheme.

7. **Implications**

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Chief Accountant

The financial implications are set out in the body of the report. Any increases to the amounts billed to residents need to be balanced against likely collection rates. The overall amount to be provided by Government towards 2017/18 is now absorbed into the RSG. Consequently the scheme is funded within the overall grant funding but also needs to consider the fairness of individual measures and the financial needs of the Council. The projected cost of this scheme is expected to be £8.5m for 2017/18. This scheme is in line with the current MTFS assumptions.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Law and Governance

The Council Tax Benefit system was abolished by Section 33 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012. The Local Government finance bill prescribed certain steps in the design of a local scheme, such as consultation and publication, and enables the Secretary of State to introduce both regulations and guidance relating to local schemes. The Government has included regulations to ensure that pensioners will not lose or gain relative to the previous system.

The LCTS scheme must be ratified by full Council by the 31 January 2016 at the latest to enable the authority to implement the scheme from 1 April 2016.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities
Officer

The Council has a duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 to consider the equality impact of its policies and decisions. The LCTS can be claimed by anyone in the Borough meeting the eligibility criteria.
It is also noted a consultation on the proposed scheme has been available for all residents to respond to and these comments have been considered within the body of this report.

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

N/A

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

- Working Papers held by Corporate Finance

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 LCTS Survey Results October 2016

Report Author:

Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT

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22 November 2016	ITEM: 9
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Council Investments Paper	

Wards and communities affected: All	**Key Decision:** No
Report of: Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT	
Accountable Head of Service: N/A	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report provides Members with a briefing on the governance around treasury management, including investments, and demonstrates the benefits that treasury management has brought to the Council's financial position over the recent years of austerity.

Challenging the traditional approach and being entrepreneurial is now benefiting the Council by circa £10m every year and has facilitated many other income generating and cost reduction opportunities.

1. **Recommendation(s)**

1.1 **That the Committee receives this update on investments.**

2. **Introduction and Background**

2.1 Treasury Management is a service undertaken by all Local Authorities in the UK. CIPFA's Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes defines this as 'The management of the organisation's investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks'.

2.2 The Code states a Treasury Management Policy Statement and related practices must establish procedures to follow in the course of its treasury

activities including items such as lines of delegation, operational requirements and reporting requirements.

2.3   Within the Council's Constitution, Chapter 9, Part 3 – Finance Procedure Rules section 3.22, the Director of Finance & IT is given delegated authority to 'make investments and borrowings as he/she deems appropriate within the limits imposed by the Council'. The limits are calculated annually based on the capital programme and other known activity and incorporated in the Treasury Management Strategy approved by Full Council in February each year.

2.4   The Treasury Management Strategy for the forthcoming year is presented to Full Council for approval annually. The report includes potential borrowing and investment activities for the coming year along with all Prudential Indicators as defined under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance. These indicators set limits on borrowing, interest rate exposure, limits on long term investments and other indicators relating to capital expenditure. The report also includes details of investment limits and criteria to be assessed when entering into investments. This report forms the parameters for the Director of Finance and IT's investment/borrowing activity for the coming year under his delegated powers.

3.   Investments

3.1   Council officers maintain a cash flow forecast ensuring funds are available to meet all of the Council's payment obligations and takes into account all funds flowing in and out of the Council. The Council's cash flow is often positive due to the fact that cash is received in advance of spend, such as grants, business rates and council tax. The Council also maintains reserves and provisions which are earmarked for various approved purposes.

3.2   This means the Council often has surplus cash balances pending expenditure in line with approved budgets and the capital investment programme and these are invested to generate interest, forming part of the Council's budget. The table below, extracted from the 15/16 Treasury Management Outturn Report shows that investments raised equated to £2.41 billion and investments repaid equated to £2.54 billion and the total number of transactions involved totalled over 1,500. The majority of transactions were short term in nature hence the high turnover and volume of transactions.

	Fund Managers £000s	In-House £000s	Total £000s
1 Total at 1 April 2015	20,000	38,000	58,000
2 New Investments	30,000	2,458,450	2,488,450
3 Investments Redeemed	0	2,481,650	2,546,450

4 Total at 31 March 2016	**50,000**	**14,800**	**64,800**

3.3 The £50m under fund managers relates to three separate investments taken out over 2014/15 and 2015/16 with CCLA and further information is set out on this investment in section 5 to this report. These investments are for greater than one year and the £14.8m balance relates to short term investments and number some 1,500 transactions over a year.

3.4 One further investment has been made during 2016/17 that is for greater than one year and that is a £15m bond issuance to Rockfire Capital. Further detail is included in section 5.

4. Borrowing

4.1 The Council borrows to fund the approved capital investment programme in accordance with the Prudential Indicators. It also borrows to finance cash flows in the short term if required. The strategic aim for borrowing is to minimise the revenue cost of debt whilst securing the Council from unexpected revenue pressure caused by changes in interest rates. External Treasury Management Advisors are employed to advise on the course of interest rates amongst other matters.

4.2 The table below extracted from the 2015/16 Treasury Management Outturn Report shows that borrowings raised in 2015/16 equated to £315 million and borrowings repaid equated to £270 million and the total number of transactions involved were over 200. The majority of transactions were short term in nature as short term borrowing rates have been so low in comparison to long term borrowing rates that any borrowing required has been taken in the short end of the market.

Source of Loan	Outstanding Debt 1 April 2015 £000s	New Loans Raised £000s	Loans Repaid £000s	Outstanding Debt 31 March 2016 £000s
Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)	160,889	0	0	160,889
Market Loans	29,753	650	200	30,203
LT Debt	190,642	650	200	191,092
Temporary Market Loans	119,750	314,350	269,500	164,600

Total Debt	310,392	315,000	269,700	355,692

5. Treasury Activity – Supporting Cost Reductions and Income Generation

5.1 **Debt Restructuring** in 2010 – the council redeemed £84m of long term PWLB debt at an average rate between 5-6 per cent even though this attracted a premium of £17m.

5.2 The intention had been to replace this with fixed rate and term debt but, with interest rates so low, officers made the decision to remain in temporary debt for as long as possible with the benefit of lower interest rates. This has been proven to be the correct decision and the council is still on temporary debt some six years later with individual loans now ranging between 0.2-0.6 per cent. Estimated saving over the 6 years is approximately £22m.

5.3 **CCLA** – This is a 'not for profit' investment organisation for Churches, Charities and Local Authorities. One of CCLA's streams is a property portfolio for Councils.

5.4 Thurrock Council first invested £20m in 2014/15 and then a further £30m (two separate transactions) in 2015/16 bringing the total investment to £50m. This was carried under the delegated authority of the Director of Finance and IT within the parameters set by Council. In this case, the main parameter is the amount that can be lent for a year or longer.

5.5 CCLA own properties all around the UK and they are either retail or commercial based with strong tenants. Returns to Local Authorities come from the rental streams achieved and are circa 5 per cent and so return an income stream circa £2.5m pa.

5.6 **Swindon Solar Farm –** Warrington Council has an investment relationship with a solar investment company, Rockfire Capital, and had provided a number of loans for other sites to them. The Swindon opportunity came forward and, due to restrictions in the treasury prudential indicators, this opportunity was too big for any one authority. As such, other investors were required and Thurrock was approached due to its history of being entrepreneurial in its treasury approach.

5.7 The council started looking at the opportunity in detail towards the end of April 2016 and committed, subject to a number of safeguards that were put in place, on 19 May 2016. This was only formerly announced publicly in September after a commercially sensitive period had passed.

5.8 Under the same delegations as CCLA above, the Council entered a £15m investment over five years and will receive a 5% return over each of the first four years and then 8% in year 5. This is a gross return of £4.2m before financing costs of less than £0.5m over the five years. It may then be possible to extend the investment for a further five years at the higher rate.

5.10 **Minimum Revenue Provision –** MRP is the amount a council is required to set aside annually to meet the cost of debt.

5.11 Thurrock Council was one of the first in the country to take advantage of challenging the accepted norms of MRP, including:

- Challenging the annual calculation – this created a one off benefit of £6m in 2014/15 and an annual saving of £2.5m per annum thereafter;
- The £6m windfall above created the opportunity to terminate our Serco contract which had previously been unaffordable (leading to further savings of £3.6m per annum from the termination);
- Deferring repayment of MRP where a capital receipt will be achieved from a project further down the line which will repay the debt – this made Gloriana possible;
- Using capital receipts to pay for the MRP in exceptional circumstances – this paid the £3.5m pension costs associated with the Serco termination; and
- Now using the above to push further boundaries to make aspects of a capital programme that might normally be unaffordable possible.

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

6.1 Treasury management has a significant impact on the council's finances and has contributed through its investments and reduction in borrowing costs to protecting front line services over the recent years of austerity.

6.2 Treasury management has also helped the council directly achieve its priorities with the main example being house building through Gloriana.

7. **Implications**

7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**

Director of Finance and IT

The financial implications are set out in the body of the report. The actions set out in section 5 are contributing circa £10m per annum through investment returns and reduced costs.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**

Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

In determining its affordable borrowing limits under section 3 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council must have regard to the ''Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities'' (revised Edition 2007) published by CIPFA. In carrying out its functions under Chapter 1, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council must have regard to the code of practice contained in the document ''Treasury Management in the Public Sector : Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes'' (Revised Edition 2009) published by CIPFA.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**

Community Development and Equalities Manager

There are no specific implications from this report

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

None

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

- There are working papers within the Corporate Finance section.

9. **Appendices to the report**

- There are no appendices to this report.

Report Author:
Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT

22 November 2016	ITEM: 10
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Council Spending Review Update	

Wards and communities affected:	**Key Decision:**
All	Key

Report of:

Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT

Accountable Head of Service: n/a

Accountable Directors:

- All Directors

This report is public except for Appendix 4 which is EXEMPT

Executive Summary

This report summarises the main changes to the MTFS for the period 2017/18 through to 2019/20 and the governance structure for the Council Spending Review and Transformation Programme, including the budget planning table enabling agreement of the budget in February 2017.

This report specifically updates the committee on the proposals currently being considered that will affect central services budgets.

1   Recommendations

1.1   That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the revised MTFS position and the Council Spending Review approach and timetable.

1.2   That Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee comment on the proposals currently being considered within the remit of this committee

2   Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

2.1   The MTFS presented to Council in February 2016 shows the budget gap over the 3 years 2017/18 to 2019/20 as £18.443m. This already assumes delivery of £2.484m savings previously agreed for 2017/18 (see Appendix 1) and assumes a Council Tax increase of 3.99% in each year.

2.2   As part of the ongoing budget planning process, the MTFS has been updated to reflect latest assumptions. The table below sets out the movements from the previous position and revised budget gap.

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
February 2016	7.378	6.098	4.967	**18.443**
Business Rates	0.399	0.663	(0.463)	**0.599**
Inflation	(0.285)	(0.071)	(0.071)	**(0.427)**
Capital Financing	-	(0.042)	0.591	**0.549**
Government Grant	-	-	1.785	**1.785**
Revised Budget Gap	**7.492**	**6.648**	**6.809**	**20.949**

2.3 The key movements include:

- The position for 2017/18 and 2018/19 reflects a reduction in the provision for inflation but, adversely, also the possible impact of a significant category of business rate appeals that have been lodged;

- The majority of the increase is expected in 2019/20 and is largely as a result of further analysis on the four year funding settlement. It is prudent, at this stage, to reduce down the level of grant and business rate support in light of discussions on the removal or reduction of New Homes Bonus and further comments on grant levels; and

- The increase in Capital Financing reflects the likely interest rate increases towards the end of the MTFS period. This increased cost has been offset with significant savings in 2016/17 and smaller reductions over the following two years as a result of pushing back the impact in light of current economic forecasts.

2.4 One off funding has been identified to meet the costs of a Clean It, Cut It, Fill It pilot. The results of this pilot will be used to determine whether growth is required in the budget for a permanent increase to the Environment and Place budgets and this will be reported once known.

2.5 The position above includes the assumption of a 3.99% increase in council tax each year – 1.99% general increase and 2% adult social care precept. The table below sets out how any reductions to this assumption will increase the deficits set out in paragraph 2.2:

An increase of:	Increases the budget gap by (£m)			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
3.99%	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
3.00%	0.570	0.585	0.605	1.760
2.00%	1.140	1.170	1.210	3.520
1.00%	1.710	1.755	1.815	5.280
0.00%	2.280	2.340	2.420	7.040

3   Council Spending Review Process and Timetable

3.1 Given the level of saving previously delivered across the council, the pressures identified in 2016/17 and that there are minimal reserves to call

upon, it is essential that there is a clear strategy to close the budget gap set out in the MTFS. As a result, the focus will be on 3 key areas:

- Income generation – including increasing the Council's commercial trading base. Council Tax increases also fall under this category;
- Achieving more / same for less – including further transformational projects, contract reviews, spend to save initiatives and alternative delivery models; and
- Demand management / early intervention. Examples include the Local Area Co-ordinators and Community Hubs.

3.2 However, in reality, where the budget gap cannot be fully closed through the above, the likely solution will be reductions to, or full cessation of, service provision.

3.3 Crossing through all of these areas is the need to adapt our workforce and change our culture to be an organisation which is more entrepreneurial, digitally-minded and commercially-aware.

3.4 The Council Spending Review will be underpinned by the following principles.

- Becoming financially self-sustainable;
- A target of 15-20% efficiencies in each service;
- A review of all services by March 2019 using common design principles (customer / demand management, commercial, digital/ICT, people, procurement, property and process);
- Non-statutory income generating services should be cost neutral; and
- Outcome focused including consideration of prevention and early intervention.

3.5 There has been some discussion that the Service Review is a top slice approach. It is important to note that the intention of these reviews is to ensure a stable provider of services within a reduced financial setting.

3.6 The transformation framework for achieving this is set out in the governance structure in Appendix 2. The officer Transformation Board will oversee a number of Strategic Boards each with a specific focus and cross cutting membership. Each Strategic Board will be sponsored by a member of Directors Board and guided by the principles outlined above and strategic policy direction set by Members. The governance structure also includes the cross-party Council Spending Review Panel.

3.7 The timing of these reviews is set out at Appendix 3.

STRATEGIC BOARDS

Growth	Performance
Customer & Demand Management	Commercial
Digital / ICT	People
Procurement	Property
Service Review	

3.8 The Council Spending Review timetable has been prepared to achieve agreement of the budget by Cabinet and Council in February 2017. The main milestones are summarised below:

- July/August 2016 – Officer boards identify proposals and estimated savings for consultation with Cabinet Members;
- 7th September 2016 – Cabinet consider Q1 budget update including budget planning timetable and governance;
- September 2016 – Council Spending Review Panel (cross-party with Group Leaders and Deputies) consider savings options ahead of consultation;
- October/November 2016 – O&Ss consider proposals and public consultation where required;
- January 2017 – Cabinet agree proposals for implementation informed by O&S recommendations and draft budget referred to Corporate O&S; and
- February 2017 – Cabinet and Council budget setting.

3.9 At this stage, the £7.492m budget gap for 2017/18, set out in paragraph 2.2, has been reduced to circa £0.9m though this rises to £1.3m when the contribution to increase the general fund balance is added. This assumes:

3.9.1 A 3.99% council tax increase; and

3.9.2 No further investment in other services, including investment in Environmental Services, at this time.

3.10 Officers continue to work towards closing the remaining balance and identifying additional funds for further investment in services.

4 Savings Proposals from Boards 2017/18 – 2019/20

4.1 Management Actions Savings Proposals

4.1.1 The majority of the savings proposals are categorised as being "management actions" i.e. are operational matters under the responsibility of officers to implement without the requirement for member approval. For those areas relating to the remit of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the following management action savings are proposed:

Proposal	Category/ Type	2017/18 £K	2018/19 £K	2019/20 £K
WIFI/Small Cell & Rooftop Concession contract – Tender	Income	75	-	-

documents issued 23/9 target date for contract award Jan 2017				
Counter Fraud & Investigation – expansion of traded services	Income	35	190	23
Maximise use of external funding opportunities	Income	40	45	50
Further income from advertising/ sponsorship/ filming including roundabouts	Income	20	20	20
IT – expansion of traded services	Income	30	20	20
Treasury Vehicles – full year effect of the solar farm investment	Investment	350	-	-
Smarter Working - Equip staff with skills and technologies to deliver services more efficiently and effectively	Productivity Saving	-	140	40
Citizen Journeys - Enable citizens and customers to do business with the council digitally	Productivity Saving	30	100	100
Legacy Digital Programmes - Ongoing benefits realisation from completed projects	Productivity Saving	100	40	50
Agency staff – reduce use of high cost agency staff through recruitment and retention initiatives and service/workforce re-engineering	Staff Cost reduction	200	200	200
Sickness Absence – reduce overtime and agency costs through effective attendance management	Staff Cost reduction	100	100	100
Reduction to employment budget growth	Staff Cost reduction	200	200	200
Review of overtime spend – currently at £1.5m	Staff Cost reduction	200	200	200
ICT Category – Achievable savings on main contracts and rationalisation of smaller ones	Cost Reduction	110	90	100
Insurance – modest savings secured through renegotiation of existing contract	Cost Reduction	30	-	-
Creative use of Purchase Cards – savings from a reduction of 2 FTE plus rebate from supplier	Cost Reduction	55	5	-
Overpayment Review – use of specialist no-win, no fee consultants to identify overpayments to contracts	Cost Reduction	100	-100	-
Review of Translation and Interpretation Services – procurement exercise to improve consistency via a framework agreement at an agreed price	Cost Reduction	20	10	5
Reduction of Consultancy Spend	Cost Reduction	600	-	-
Rental income stretch target Annual 5% increase in rent roll (excluding Purfleet Centre)	Income	50	50	50
Further letting income – from Civic Offices 1 (rent and service charge)	Income	50	100	100
Further letting income – Thameside Centre (rent and service charge)	Income	30	50	50
Relocation of YOS from Corringham Police Station	Cost Reduction	50	-	-
Corporate Landlord ie centralised maintenance and management of all corporate assets – 10% reduction in running costs through economies of scale	Cost Reduction	25	25	-
Corporate Landlord – Additional income target	Income	25	50	-
Traded Services to Schools	Income	-	20	20

4.1.2 The above management actions fall into one of five headings; income generation; investment; productivity saving; staff cost reduction; or cost reduction.

4.1.3 Although these are management actions and therefore do not require member approval to be implemented, it is important that members are aware of the wider changes that are taking place in order to come within budget.

4.1.4 Most of the above proposals will not be obviously perceived by residents and customers as most are internally-focussed, looking at becoming more efficient through better use of technology, being more self-sufficient through commercialisation and shrewd investment opportunities.

4.1.5 However some will have an impact on staff either directly or indirectly. For instance, reducing spend on agency staff by £200K per year, reducing consultancy spend by £600K in 2017/18 and reducing spend on overtime by £200K per year.

4.2 Savings Proposals requiring Cabinet approval

4.2.1 The Corporate Boards have also identified some areas of potential savings which require Cabinet approval before being taken forward and on which Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment. These include:

Proposal	Category/ Type	2017/18 £K	2018/19 £K	2019/20 £K
Fees & Charges * this will come separately to Full Council in the usual way and does not have a separate savings proposal	Income	250		
Customer Services Strategy (and service review) *a full and detailed report on this is also on the agenda, and therefore there is no separate proposal	Cost reduction	100	100	-
Refer to Exempt Paper (Appendix 4)	Cost Reduction	175	-	-

4.3 Other considerations

4.3.1 Previously Agreed Savings – appendix one sets out savings that were agreed during 2014/15 for delivery within the period of the MTFS. Savings related to the remit of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee include additional Legal Services traded income and changes to staffing levels within corporate finance and revisions to prudential charges arrangements.

4.3.2 There are a number of cross cutting savings targeted including the reduction of the council wide spend on agency staff, consultants and overtime. The impact of these targeted reductions on services is currently being evaluated and will be in addition to any other service specific savings.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget annually and to review its adequacy of reserves. The report outlines the budget gap over the next three years as per the MTFS and the approach and timetable to manage the position.

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

6.1 The budget planning governance structure includes involvement and consultation with Officers, Portfolio Holders and Members. The timetable allocates October - December for Overview and Scrutiny committees to consider proposals and public consultation where required. The process also includes the Council Spending Review Panel, made up of cross-party Group Leaders and Deputies who will meet regularly during the budget planning period and ahead of key decision points.

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

7.1 The implementation of previous savings proposals has already reduced service delivery levels and our ability to meet statutory requirements, impacting on the community and staff. There is a risk that some agreed savings may result in increased demand for more costly interventions if needs escalate particularly in social care. The potential impact on the council's ability to safeguard children and adults will be kept carefully under review and mitigating actions taken where required.

7.2 The scale of future budget reductions as set out in this report are such that work is underway to follow a transformational approach to tackle the challenge.

8. Implications

8.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **Carl Tomlinson**
Finance Manager

The financial implications are set out in the body of this report.

Council officers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the Council can contain spend within its available resources. Regular budget monitoring reports will continue to come to Cabinet and be considered by the Directors Board and management teams in order to maintain effective controls on expenditure during this period of enhanced risk. Austerity measures in place are continually reinforced across the Council in order to reduce ancillary spend and to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance and value of every pound of the taxpayers money that is spent by the Council.

8.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Deputy Head of Law & Governance

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

There are statutory requirements of the Council's Section 151 Officer in relation to setting a balanced budget. The Local Government Finance Act

1988 (Section 114) prescribes that the responsible financial officer "must make a report if he considers that a decision has been made or is about to be made involving expenditure which is unlawful or which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency to the authority". This includes an unbalanced budget.

8.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

There are no specific diversity or equalities implications as part of this report.

A comprehensive Community and Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) will be completed for any specific savings proposals developed to address future savings requirements and informed by consultation outcomes to feed into final decision making. The cumulative impact will also be monitored.

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

Any other significant implications will be identified in any individual savings proposal business case to inform the consultation process where applicable and final decision making.

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

   - None

10. **Appendices to the report**
   - Appendix 1 – 2017/18 Previously Agreed Savings Tracker
   - Appendix 2 – Council Spending Review Governance Structure
   - Appendix 3 – Service Review Timetable
   - Appendix 4 – Exempt Paper

Report Author:

Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT

Previously Agreed Savings 2017/18

Adults, Housing and Health

Responsible Officer	Description	Target
Roger Harris	External Placements	500
Roger Harris	Public health – review of contracts	250
Roger Harris	Reduction in Voluntary Sector Core Grants	25
Total		**775**

Children's Services

Responsible Officer	Description	Target
Rory Patterson	Reduce and realign youth provision across Thurrock and related service through internal reorganisation and developing the services as a mutual/ outsourced service	232
Total		**232**

Environment & Place

Responsible Officer	Description	Target
Steve Cox	Transportation restructure and highways efficiencies	250
Steve Cox	Invest in modern highway maintenance	260
Steve Cox	Planning - increased income and/or efficiencies	35
Steve Cox	CEDU Restructure - Regeneration	300
Total		**845**

Legal Services

Responsible Officer	Description	Target
Fiona Taylor	Legal traded service income	50
Total		**50**

Finance & IT

Responsible Officer	Description	Target
Sean Clark	Further changes to staffing levels and revisions of prudential charges	582
Total		**582**

Total		**2,484**

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Governance Structure for Council Spending Review and Transformation Programme

Strategic Policy Setting

(Cabinet/DB Away Day and Portfolio Holder / Director discussions)

Growth Board

Performance Board

Customer & Demand Mgt Board

Commercial Board

ICT / Digital Board

People Board

Procurement Board

Property Board

Service Review Board

Directors Board

Transformation Board

Council Spending Review
(consult and challenge)

Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(consult and challenge)

Cabinet (decision making)

Council (decision making)

Officers
(Responsible / operational)

Members

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Appendix 3
Service Review Board: Proposed Projects

The following is an indicative timetable for the Service Review Board:

Directorate	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Environment & Place	Waste Street & grounds Specialist grounds Highway reactive maintenance Development management Building control Strategy & growth Highways infrastructure Special projects Heritage, arts & culture Libraries	Land charges Business improvement Highways & transport Transport development Economic development Regeneration Housing development/ Gloriana Registrars Sport & leisure	Corporate property Public protection
Children's Services	Grants programme review Care & targeted outcomes (iMPOWER) Commissioning Business administration Children's Centres		
Adults, Housing & Health	Domiciliary care Collins House Fieldwork services In-house provider services Careline Single point of access Public health Commissioning Integration with ASC & peer review	Welfare reform Investment in HRA stock Homelessness Private rented sector Anti-social behaviour & enforcement	Tenancy & neighbourhoods
Finance & IT	Fraud Debt collection Revenues	ICT Benefits	Corporate Finance Risk & insurance Internal Audit
HR, OD & Transformation	Executive support hub HR & Payroll People & OD Corporate Programme Team Customer Services	Recruitment Improvement GIS Information Management Strategy & Communications Performance, Quality, Business Support	
Legal	Democratic Services Member's Services Electoral Services	Legal Services	
Commercial Services	Procurement Commercial		

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Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2016/17

Dates of Meetings: 21 June 2016, 20 September 2016, 22 November 2016, 18 January 2017 (Budget) & 14 March 2017

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
18 January 2017		
Communications Update	Karen Wheeler	Members
Fees and Charges 2017/18	Laura Last	Officers
2017/18 Draft Budget	Sean Clark	Members / Officers
IIP Report	Jackie Hinchliffe	Members / Officers
Staff Survey Action Plan	Jackie Hinchliffe	Members / Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Members / Officers
14 March 2017		
Budget Update	Sean Clark	Members / Officers
Qtr 3 Corporate Performance Report 2015/16	Sarah Welton	Members / Officers

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