

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

Council

To the Members of Thurrock Council

The next meeting of the Council will be held at **7.00 pm** on **31 January 2018**

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL

Membership of the Council:

Tunde Ojetola (Mayor)
Michael Stone (Deputy Mayor)

Tim Aker
John Allen
Chris Baker
James Baker
Jan Baker
Clare Baldwin
Russell Cherry
Colin Churchman
Gary Collins
Mark Coxshall
Jack Duffin
Tony Fish
Leslie Gamester
Oliver Gerrish
Robert Gledhill
Garry Hague

James Halden
Graham Hamilton
Shane Hebb
Clifford Holloway
Victoria Holloway
Deborah Huelin
Roy Jones
Tom Kelly
Cathy Kent
John Kent
Martin Kerin
Steve Liddiard
Brian Little
Susan Little
Sue MacPherson
Ben Maney

Bukky Okunade
Terry Piccolo
Jane Potheary
David Potter
Joycelyn Redsell
Barbara Rice
Gerard Rice
Sue Sammons
Angela Sheridan
Peter Smith
Graham Snell
Luke Spillman
Pauline Tolson
Aaron Watkins
Kevin Wheeler



Lyn Carpenter
Chief Executive

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To receive any declaration of interests from Members.	
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9 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels	
The Council are asked to agree any changes to the appointments made to committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels, as requested by Group Leaders.	

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In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

17	Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies	
18	Minutes of Committees	

Name of Committee	Date
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Planning Committee	2 November 2017
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 October 2017
Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee	12 October 2017
Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Extraordinary Committee	15 November 2017
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	17 October 2017
Planning Committee	7 December 2017
Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 November 2017

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	16 November 2017
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Future Dates of Council:

28 February 2018 (Budget), 21 March 2018 and 30 May 2018 (Annual)

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Information for members of the public and councillors

Access to Information and Meetings

Members of the public can attend all meetings of the council and its committees and have the right to see the agenda, which will be published no later than 5 working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

Recording of meetings

This meeting may be recorded for transmission and publication on the Council's website. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be recorded.

Members of the public not wishing any speech or address to be recorded for publication to the Internet should contact Democratic Services to discuss any concerns.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Guidelines on filming, photography, recording and use of social media at council and committee meetings

The council welcomes the filming, photography, recording and use of social media at council and committee meetings as a means of reporting on its proceedings because it helps to make the council more transparent and accountable to its local communities.

If you wish to film or photograph the proceedings of a meeting and have any special requirements or are intending to bring in large equipment please contact the Communications Team at CommunicationsTeam@thurrock.gov.uk before the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will then be consulted and their agreement sought to any specific request made.

Where members of the public use a laptop, tablet device, smart phone or similar devices to use social media, make recordings or take photographs these devices must be set to 'silent' mode to avoid interrupting proceedings of the council or committee.

The use of flash photography or additional lighting may be allowed provided it has been discussed prior to the meeting and agreement reached to ensure that it will not disrupt proceedings.

The Chair of the meeting may terminate or suspend filming, photography, recording and use of social media if any of these activities, in their opinion, are disrupting proceedings at the meeting.

Thurrock Council Wi-Fi

Wi-Fi is available throughout the Civic Offices. You can access Wi-Fi on your device by simply turning on the Wi-Fi on your laptop, Smartphone or tablet.

- You should connect to TBC-CIVIC
- Enter the password **Thurrock** to connect to/join the Wi-Fi network.
- A Terms & Conditions page should appear and you have to accept these before you can begin using Wi-Fi. Some devices require you to access your browser to bring up the Terms & Conditions page, which you must accept.

The ICT department can offer support for council owned devices only.

Evacuation Procedures

In the case of an emergency, you should evacuate the building using the nearest available exit and congregate at the assembly point at Kings Walk.

How to view this agenda on a tablet device



You can view the agenda on your [iPad](#), [Android Device](#) or [Blackberry Playbook](#) with the free modern.gov app.

Members of the Council should ensure that their device is sufficiently charged, although a limited number of charging points will be available in Members Services.

To view any “exempt” information that may be included on the agenda for this meeting, Councillors should:

- Access the modern.gov app
- Enter your username and password

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non- pecuniary

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



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

PROCEDURE FOR MOTIONS

No speech may exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Mayor [Rule 19.8], except for the proposer of any motion who shall have 5 minutes to move that motion (except on a motion to amend where the 3 minute time shall apply) [Rule 19.8(a)]

All Motions will follow Section A and then either Section B or C

- | | | | |
|-----------|----|--|----------------------------|
| A. | A1 | Motion is moved | [Rule 19.2] |
| | A2 | Mover speaks | [Rule 19.8(a) (5 minutes)] |
| | A3 | Seconded | [Rule 19.2] |
| | A4 | Secunder speaks or reserves right to speak | [Rule 19.3] (3 minutes) |

Then the procedure will move to either B or C below:

B.		C.	
IF there is an AMENDMENT (please see Rule 19.23)		If NOT amended i.e. original motion	
B1	The mover of the amendment shall speak (3 mins).	C1	Debate
B2	The seconder of the amendment shall speak unless he or she has reserved their speech (3 mins).	C2	If the seconder of the motion has reserved their speeches, they shall then speak
B3	THEN debate on the subject .	C3	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply
B4	If the seconder of the substantive motion and the amendment reserved their speeches, they shall then speak	C4	Vote on motion
B5	The mover of the amendment shall have a right of reply		
B6	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply		
B7	Vote on amendment		
B8	A vote shall be taken on the substantive motion, as amended if appropriate, without further debate		

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

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100 Years in Memoriam

Remembering Thurrock's Fallen of World War One

Each month during the centenary period of the First World War, Thurrock Council will pay tribute to the 834 local residents known to have lost their lives due to causes associated with the war and their service. At each meeting of Council until November 2018, the 100th anniversary of signing of the Armistice with Germany, a Roll of Honour will be published with the agenda detailing the casualties from that month 100 years ago to commemorate the sacrifice made by Thurrock residents.

January 2018

DATE	SURNAME	FIRST NAME	AGE	WARD	RANK	SERVICE	DIED
07-Jan	SEWELL	WALTER WILLIAM	19	AVE	PTE	MGC	HOME
09-Jan	SIMPSON	WILLIAM GEORGE	18	G	STKR - 2	ROYAL NAVY	ATLANTIC
09-Jan	QUY	JIM	U/K	FOBB	STKR - 1	ROYAL NAVY	ATLANTIC
12-Jan	STOWERS	ALFRED CHARLES	29	S.OCK	PTE	YORK & LANCS - 9	ITALY
16-Jan	GROVER	GEORGE	37	MUCK	PTE	COLDSTREAM GDS - 3	FRANCE
20-Jan	OWLETT	DONALD	24	G	STEWARD	ROYAL NAVY	MEDITER'EAN
24-Jan	VAUGHAN	CHARLES FREDERICK FRANK	21	G	AB. SEA	ROYAL NAVY	NORTH SEA

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 29 November 2017 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Tunde Ojetola (Mayor), John Allen, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Tony Fish, Leslie Gamester, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, James Halden, Graham Hamilton, Clifford Holloway, Victoria Holloway (*arrived 8.10pm*), Deborah Huelin, Roy Jones, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Brian Little, Susan Little, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Bukky Okunade, Terry Piccolo, David Potter, Joycelyn Redsell, Barbara Rice, Gerard Rice, Sue Sammons, Angela Sheridan (*arrived 7.16pm*), Peter Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, Pauline Tolson and Aaron Watkins

Apologies: Councillors Michael Stone (Deputy Mayor), Tim Aker, Chris Baker, James Baker, Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Russell Cherry, Jack Duffin, Garry Hague, Shane Hebb, Steve Liddiard, Jane Potheary and Kevin Wheeler

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sharon Bayliss (Director of Commercial Services)
Steve Cox, Corporate Director Place
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

The Mayor invited Pastor Akin Laosun to lead those present in Prayer

84. Minutes

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on the 25 October 2017 were approved as a correct record.

85. Items of Urgent Business

The Mayor informed the Chamber that he had not agreed to the consideration of any items of urgent business.

86. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

87. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council

The Mayor invited all those present to reflect on and remember Thurrock's fallen of World War One.

The Mayor welcomed Members to the last Full Council of the year and wished everyone a Merry Christmas.

The Mayor thanked Well House Gallery and the artist, Phil Smith, for continuing to allow him to showcase their work in the parlour.

The Mayor held a 'best of Thurrock variety night' to promote the wide range of skills in Thurrock and to promote and raise funds for Contact the Elderly and Thurrock Community Chest. The Mayor commended the work of Thurrock Young Producers with the event being organised by 18 year old Franki McEwen. The event had generated around £1500 with about 150 people in attendance. The Mayor also thanked Members for the cross party support.

Thank you to Councillors Redsell and Maney for taking the time to plant a tree at St George's playing field to commemorate the Queen's 70th wedding anniversary.

Congratulations were given to Mr and Mrs England who had celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary this week.

The Mayor also commended Jasmine Collier, Thurrock's Head Cadet and the winner of Essex Police Cadet of the Year. That the Volunteer Police cadets had recently started in Thurrock and had been growing from strength to strength with Jasmine being a role model to young people across the borough.

That the Thurrock Highways Team led by Councillor Brian Little had recently won an Award for the Best Use of New Technology for Thurrock's collaboration on the Pothole spotter pilot scheme. That Councillor Sue Little and the Health Team had won the Local Government Information Unit Health and Care Award. The Mayor congratulated everyone involved.

The Mayor reminded Members that only a few days were left for nominations for the Thurrock Civic Awards 2018 with more information and how to make your nomination available on the Council's website.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, updated Members on the following:

Councillor Gledhill echoed the Christmas wishes made by Councillor Ojetola and thanked those that had helped with the switching on of the Christmas lights in Grays last weekend and all other events around the borough. That funding from the Community Economic Development Fund helped to assist with the lighting in Corringham and that the Tilbury lights would be switched on this Friday.

The fantastic partnership project of Give a Gift being run at Intu Lakeside where hundreds of hours had been donated by Officers, residents and Councillors to ensure the shop was well staffed. Councillor Gledhill encouraged Members to continue to volunteer for such a good cause.

An update on Fill It showed that since April 2017, 1276 potholes had been filled, with 124 potholes filled in November 2017.

The Leader thanked Councillors Redsell and Maney for taking the time to plant a tree at St George's playing field to commemorate the Queen's 70th wedding anniversary which demonstrated that Thurrock showed commitment to the Royal Family.

Congratulations were also given to Mr and Mrs England who had celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary this week.

That Lisa Holliday had made the finals of the prestigious annual social awards and although she had not won the Council should be incredibly proud of her hard work.

That Councillor Halden had also been shortlisted for the Local Government Information Unit national award.

That Inspection Coachworks had been awarded a £20,000 grant from the Low Carbon across the South East which had enabled them to invest a much greater amount in their company to reduce the electricity use and therefore their carbon footprint. This had meant they could use that money to employ more local people for local jobs supporting other local industries in the Thurrock area. That every opportunity should be made to get Thurrock businesses to make an application to help businesses reduce their footprint and make Thurrock a cleaner and greener place.

88. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

89. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that, in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, the requisite notice had been given by two members who wished to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Allen presented a petition on behalf of residents who are fully opposed to any future building on the King George's Playing Field.

Councillor Gerrish presented a petition on behalf of residents to review the parking situation in Angle Road, South Stifford.

90. Petitions Update Report

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council Meetings and Council Offices over the past six months.

91. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished for any changes to be made to the appointments previously made to Committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Chamber he had no further changes to make.

Councillor Snell, Leader of the UKIP Group, informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following changes:

For Councillor Duffin to replace Councillor Sheridan on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

For Councillor Spillman to replace Councillor Sheridan on the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Gerrish, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Chamber that he wished to make the following changes:

For Councillor Kerin to become a substitute Member on the General Services Committee.

For Councillors Gerrish and C Holloway to become substitute Members on the Lower Thames Task Force.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Councillor Duffin be appointed as Member of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**
- 2. That Councillor Spillman be appointed as Member of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.**

3. **That Councillor Kerin be appointed as substitute Member of the General Services Committee.**
4. **That Councillors Gerrish and C Holloway become substitute Members of the Lower Thames Task Force.**

92. Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment

Councillor Watkins, Cabinet Member for Environment, introduced the report and stated that it had been an honour to present his first annual portfolio holder report and believed that the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It had made Thurrock a proud place for residents to live in.

Councillor Watkins updated Members on the services provided and the work undertaken and quoted the following achievements from the Clean It, Cut It.

9000 acres of grass had been cut
1000 tonnes of rubbish collected
2400 fines for littering
100 people prosecuted for not paying fines
70,801 tonnes of household waste collected
10,422,828 number of domestic bins collection per year
622 miles of road swept

Councillor Watkins stated that the weekly bin review had been introduced and the commercial trade waste scheme will be introduced following Cabinet approval.

Councillor Watkins stated that he was proud with what the Council had achieved this year but more had to be done in 2018 and that it was important to get the services right first time.

Councillor Watkins thanked Senior Officers and the unsung heroes of the Environment Team for all their hard work.

Councillor Snell thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report and questioned what works were being undertaken on plain services such as ground maintenance of sports fields. Councillor Watkins stated that it had been identified that communications could be improved and that a specific email address was now available to report any issues and that a grounds maintenance action plan was now being put in place. With the winter maintenance work starting on cricket grounds to ensure they were ready for next year.

Councillor Gerrish thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report but stated the biggest concern was the poor performance of bin emptying on Thurrock's streets. Councillor Watkins stated that the Council was working hard to get the targets met and that route optimisation had been highly effective. That

investment had been made in purchasing further waste vehicles and that the Council were investing and making positive approaches.

Councillor Jones thanked the Portfolio Holder for his in-depth report and personally thanked Officers and crew members for all their hard work and although it was positive there was still some way to go. Councillor Jones questioned anti-social behaviour in parks and open spaces and how this was being addressed. Councillor Watkins stated that the Council was working with the Police on all issues raised by residents and that this work will continue.

Councillor Smith thanked the Portfolio Holder for his report and for his assistance with the failed bin collections in Aveley. Councillor Smith stated that tonnes of industrial waste had been dumped recently in Aveley and asked the Portfolio Holder what plans were in place to stop this happening in the future. Councillor Watkins stated he was working with Officers to address this area and that decisions from Cabinet and approval of planning application for the commercial trade waste scheme on the Linford Site were still awaited.

Councillor Watkins stated how impressed he was with the work already undertaken and thanked the Officers and teams again. That Members should contact him directly with any individual concerns and would be more than happy to attend site visits. Councillor Watkins wished Members a Merry Christmas.

93. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 7 questions to the Leader of the Council had been received and 9 questions to Cabinet Members.

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

At 8.00pm, the Leader requested Council Procedure Rule 14.18 to be suspended so that Member questions could continue. The Mayor asked consent for this and by implication suspension of Council Procedure Rule 11.1 for the meeting to continue to 10.00pm. Members voted 17 in favour and 13 against. The Mayor declared the Motion carried.

94. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

The Mayor informed the Chambers that no reports had been received.

95. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of Committees as set out in the Agenda was received.

96. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

Members received an information report updating the progress in respect of Motions received at Council over the last year.

97. Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor J Kent and seconded by Councillor Okunade. The Motion read as follows:

Care leavers who were looked after by the Council are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. As Corporate parents we should aim to keep young people safe and improve their life chances. Therefore Thurrock Council resolves that - to help ensure the transition from care to adult life is as smooth as possible, and to mitigate the chances of care leavers falling into debt as they begin to manage their own finances, that the executive bring forward plans and a decision to exempt care leavers from paying Council Tax up to the age of 25 from 2018/19.

Councillor J Kent introduced the Motion and stated that he would not be supporting the proposed amendment and urged all Members to vote against it. Councillor J Kent stated that it was the responsibility of Members as Corporate Parents to take this role seriously and to help and ease the care leaver's transition into independent adults. In some cases this was not always straight forward and some had poorer life chances than others. Councillor J Kent urged all members to support.

Councillor Okunade, as seconder to the Motion, stated the comments made by the Section 151 Officer should be considered and noted. That there was a lot of pressure on care leavers to pay this council tax and although independency was good it had to be financially stable.

Councillors Tolson and MacPherson left the Council Chamber at 9.10pm.

A proposed amendment to the Motion had been submitted by Councillor Halden and seconded by Councillor S Little. The amended Motion read as follows:

Care leavers who were looked after by the Council are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. As Corporate parents we should aim to keep young people safe and improve their life chances. Therefore Thurrock Council resolves that - to help ensure the transition from care to adult life is as smooth as possible, and to mitigate the chances of care leavers falling into debt as they begin to manage their own finances, that the executive bring forward plans in its "headstart housing paper - supporting care leavers", which is proposed for December Scrutiny, includes proposals for targeted Council tax relief and for Scrutiny to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding a whole package of support for these young people and that Council now adds it's support for an executive decision for start of the year 2018/19.

Councillor Halden stated the Headstart Housing Paper in Supporting Care Leavers should be considered by scrutiny at the December committee as a straight forward exemption for care leavers paying council tax may not be the best option. That he encouraged Members to take the amendment, work as a

cross party to look at options and ensure the balance was right that it was being offered to people based on what they need.

Councillor S Little stated her support for the Amendment and confirmed that the Council supported care leavers up to the age of 25 with a few having been extended beyond that age. That the paper should go to scrutiny to address all the different needs so that it creates a dependent culture.

Councillor Spillman stated this was a brilliant motion.

Councillor Huelin stated her support for the Motion provided Councillor Halden's amendment was made.

Councillor Halden stated it was a good motion which was going to be implemented in the future anyway. That the Policy had to be comprehensive so that it supported care leavers into independency and to help them get out of the system. That some care leavers may require more help than others and that a detailed target approach was required. Councillor Halden volunteered to attend the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to talk Members through the paper.

Councillor J Kent welcomed Councillor Halden's suggestion to widen and broaden the package but stated it had not meant that the Council could not make that decision tonight and agree that tax council should be exempt for care leavers up to the age of 25. Councillor J Kent had taken advice from two reports written by the Children's Society and that the amendment should be rejected to ensure that all care leavers got exemption.

The Mayor called a vote on the amended Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, 24 Members voted in favour of the Amendment with 10 Members against whereupon the Mayor declared the Amendment carried.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion as amended.

Following a clear majority in favour, the Mayor declared the Amended Motion carried.

98. Motion submitted by Councillor Snell

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Snell and seconded by Councillor Gledhill. The Motion read as follows:

This Council calls on government to reject the idea of piloting the re-integration of former extremists and returning jihadists by giving them priority on housing waiting lists which this Council would oppose.

Councillor Snell presented the Motion and stated that this pilot would cause great harm and stress to the residents of Thurrock. There are 8,000 decent

residents on Thurrock's housing waiting list who were expected to score points for social house but the pilot was suggesting that extremists would be given priority over those residents and this was so wrong. Those Thurrock residents should always come first and when the Government makes a request for Thurrock to do so, Thurrock will say no.

Councillor Gledhill stated this was a fantastic Motion and that it was a possibility not a fact that this would happen. That as Portfolio Holder for Housing he was contacted regularly by residents in need of housing and that Thurrock veterans were given priority for those in need of housing. Councillor Gledhill would continue to fight against those that have fought against those that had fought and have done the right thing. That Government should understand that Thurrock would not be supporting this policy locally or nationally.

Councillor Hamilton stated his full support on this Motion.

Councillor Smith stated his full support on this Motion.

Councillor Spillman stated his support for the Motion with the country already failing to prevent young people from extremists and that a proper plan had to be put in place.

Councillor Snell thanked Members for their support and agreed that it was a local matter for local people.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the Motion whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

99. Motion submitted by Councillor Jones

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Spillman. The Motion read as follows:

We call on Thurrock Council to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, and Essex Police to ask them to outline their strategy to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and violent attacks in Thurrock.

Councillor Jones presented the Motion and stated that crimes continued to take place every day in Thurrock and questioned why there was no police on Thurrock streets to deal with such crimes. That residents were continuing to report these crimes, with some being threatened by anti-social behaviour in their own premises. That Thurrock was an industrial hub and should be a special case for police presence. Councillor Jones stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner and Essex Police had to urgently re-evaluate the number of police on the streets of Thurrock.

Councillor Spillman, as seconder to the Motion, supported the Motion and stated that the Police had lost control of public places and that Thurrock had to make a noise to get this changed. Councillor Spillman stated that it was only luck that the situation had not got any worse.

Councillor G Rice stated his support for the Motion and stated that it was absolutely appalling that residents did not feel safe anymore following so many cuts made by the neglect of the Conservative Government. That the administration should speak to Thurrock Members of Parliament to ensure that they raised this issue with Government that more budgets are allocated to police resources.

Councillor Kerin stated his support for the Motion as he was campaigning against anti-social behaviour and questioned whether a letter had been received back from the Police and Crime Commissioner following Councillor B Rice Motion presented at September Full Council.

Councillor Snell stated that this issue continued to come back to Full Council and questioned why crime was getting worse when the Police are supposed to be getting smarter for less. That crimes never heard of were now taking place in Thurrock and that this was not good enough and offered no protection for Thurrock residents. That it was vital that the Police got the balance right soon.

Councillor B Rice welcomed this Motion and stated that anti-social behaviour was affecting all residents and it was a disgrace. That the Government had got it all wrong and that more police were required so that Thurrock could get back to being a civilised society.

Councillor Allen stated his support for the Motion and that the balance had to be found and more action taken before someone was seriously hurt or killed.

Councillor Gerrish stated the Police and Crime Commissioner had to acknowledge the position that additional police were required to deal with anti-social behaviour and that there was only so much the Council could do. Councillor Gerrish requested that the Police and Crime Commissioner be invited to a future Full Council.

The Mayor stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner had been invited to the 31 January 2018 Full Council.

Councillor Gledhill stated his support for the Motion and agreed that these issues should be addressed at Full Council. That Councillor Jones as chair of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee use his powers and call a special meeting to ask more in depth questions to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Councillor Fish stated that the attitude of residents had changed and that they felt they had to just accept it. That it was not acceptable and that a cross party decision had to be made to get something done.

Councillor Redsell reiterated the comments already made and that the Police and Crime Commissioner should be held to account.

Councillor Coxshall stated he met with the Police and Crime Commissioner this week to express his concerns and the issue of funding for more Police. It was vital to get the Police and Crime Commissioner on the same side as Thurrock.

Councillor Jones stated that the Police and Crime Commissioner had attended a community group meeting in Corringham and the points addressed to him had still not be resolved and that residents had requested he returns to explained why.

Councillor Jones thanked Members for their comments and support and stated that the Motion was not an attack on the Police only that more police were required on the streets of Thurrock.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Upon being put to the vote, Members voted unanimously in favour of the Motion whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

The meeting finished at 9.55 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

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Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 29 November 2017

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

5 questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. From Mr Byrne to Councillor B Little

Would the Council consider apologising to the residents of Stanford Le Hope for the ongoing issues at the King Street Car Park and the charges imposed on them and commit to a 100% guarantee of reintroducing free car parking by whatever means necessary?

Mayor

Councillor B Little?

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Byrne for your question. This is an important matter for the businesses and residents of Stanford-Le-Hope and this Council will apologise for the mistakes. And we do apologise for the mistakes that resulted in the loss of free parking prior to development at the time of the site's disposal. In response to a petition brought by Councillor Piccolo and discussed at our last meeting, the Council agreed unanimously that we should do everything in our power to return a 2hr period of free parking to King Street car park. I cannot give a 100% guarantee that free parking will return, it would be unwise to do so. However what I can guarantee is that we will do what we agreed to do at Council and explore every means possible.

Since our last meeting we have been working with the car park owners. We are expecting plans for the development of the car park to come forward shortly. If those plans are approved by Planning Committee, the Council will at that point aim to secure the return of a 2hr period of free parking at King Street.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor B Little. Mr Bryne, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Bryne

We're not asking for spades in the ground or even investment. It is disaster recovering, you have to commit to buying it and giving it back to its rightful owners.

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor B Little?

Councillor B Little

I didn't quite get the question there but I think I got a statement there saying we should get it back? That your original question was a valid question and the response I gave you was about that we're doing all we can currently and we're in conjunction with, talking to the car park owners. I will say, this wasn't this administration's problem, this was created by the previous administration and we're trying to recover from a situation where we're not – we weren't in control at the time. And, to that point, we have got pretty close to a commitment. But I hoped to have an announcement tonight but I couldn't have an announcement tonight so we're very close.

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill, you are probably aware that there is waiting period before the first payment of "Universal Credit". In some cases this could mean some people are left without any form of income for at least six weeks. Is there anything the Council can do to help them, especially over the Christmas and New Year holiday?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Perrin and thank you Mr Mayor. A very good question. Obviously, as we heard at the budget, there will be a reduction that no one will last more than five weeks but that is still an excessively long amount of time without any particular money. Certainly as you say, over this Christmas season.

Of course, the Council is not responsible for organising Universal Credit payments but we do work to support claimants through this process. Customer Service staff volunteer at Hubs all receive training on Universal Credit to enable them to signpost and support claimants who are experiencing problems and are not digitally enabled. So they can make the claim if they are not entirely sure how to use the computer. The Council is also offering support via the Financial Inclusion Team to assist claimants in general advice and provisions in budgeting support. This means again to enable people to juggle what money they do have in the right way.

Claimants who do not believe they will have enough money to live on between application and 1st payment are advised to apply for an advance payment from the DWP. This is a payment that will pay a small amount upfront to make sure they are covered until the full amount is paid. We are assisting people with that.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Mr Perrin, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Perrin

Always, Mr Mayor. Councillor Gledhill, I may be wrong but I doubt any Councillor in this Chamber has ever experienced what it is like to be without money for a prolonged period. Unable to buy food or other daily essentials such as rent or fuel especially if there are children suffering as a consequence. To believe that reducing the wait for the first payment to one week is somehow a step in the right direction and that claimants independents will only have to suffer for five weeks instead of six shows a lack of understanding – *(Mayor asks Mr Perrin to ask his question)*. Councillor Gledhill, will you and the 48 other Councillors take a personal hands on approach to ensure that claimants waiting for a payment of Universal Credit over the Christmas holiday are cared for and not without food and other essentials?

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin for your question. As I said, there is the ability for anyone who is going to be without any money to make the advance payment claim. That is over and above, obviously, the government trying to produce from six weeks to five weeks, I'm sure if you had to wait six weeks rather than five weeks, you're going to be happy about not having to wait quite so long. But, as I say, the Council does run a number of inclusion schemes to make sure people juggle the money they do have. We will refer people to food banks if that's the absolute necessity and we do all we can to support them through this change. There will always be issues when a government changes the way it deals with benefit payments however it is dealt with and whomever it is put in by. But obviously, we do what we can locally to ensure the distress is minimised.

Mr Perrin

Mr Mayor, may I take this opportunity to wish you and all the other Councillors a very happy Christmas and a very prosperous New Year.

Mayor

Thank you Mr Perrin. Same to you.

3. From Mr Fletcher to Councillor Gledhill

Given the current uncertainty over areas like the Culver and Dilkes sites in Belhus and Ockendon, will Councillor Gledhill please reassure us that the demand for new housing will be balanced with the need for local amenities and recreational space?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Fletcher for your question. Whilst there is an undoubtedly a significant need for new housing in the Borough, there is an equally important need to ensure that all new development are of the highest quality and includes spaces for people. So it is not just a space to live, but a space to work and enjoy. All of our local plans indeed have planning policies to ensure this does happen and will continue through the local plan process to ensure that we're not just putting in houses but we're making sure that the infrastructure and the facilities to enable the community to function are there too.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Mr Fletcher, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Fletcher

Thank you Mr Mayor. The South Ockendon forum meets on the 8th of January, assuming that the forum were to extend an invite, would the Councillor be prepared to come in and speak to the forum about these developments?

Mayor

Thank you. Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Mr Fletcher. The 8th of January is a family occasion for me. One that I cannot attend. But I will ask my Regeneration Cabinet Member to attend, Councillor Coxshall, should he be available. If not, one of us will.

4. From Mr Strange to Councillor Gledhill

In the light of the recent incursions by travellers on to the public parks in Ockendon. Could the portfolio holder tell me if there are any plans to secure Dilkes Park from any further incursions?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Mr Strange for your question. The unauthorised encampments in South Ockendon were at Dilkes Park and Bonnygate Wood happened. We have now put a further 4 concrete metal sleeved bollards to prevent further access at the location. But we have to do is try to give that openness whilst to allow people to come on and off the fields without those who wish to wreck the field going on and off. So we are working on what we can do to ensure that.

There is a wider programme of site hardening; I'm not going to go into which particular sites they are, I don't really wish to tip people off. But it is one of our main stage in the Borough to ensure that these are not happening again. We also don't stop at the physical; the physical is one way of dealing with it. The much better way is legislative and ensuring that there is enough support from the Essex County Traveller Unit and indeed Essex Police, to ensure they use the current legislation to move people on much faster and indeed, to get things like injunctions as we've seen in other Local Authorities in place to stop. I am pleased to say, it is part of the discussions with Essex Police and Essex County Traveller Unit and indeed, all the Leaders across Essex.

Essex Police have now set up a five man unit that will be helping to deal with this issue for an even and right understanding across Essex. So there will be no confusion as to when and when not the police can use their powers to move unauthorised encampments on faster.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Mr Strange, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Strange

Yes Mr Mayor. I understand that Bonnygate Wood has been secured but Dilkes Wood is completely defenceless. There's absolutely nothing to stop anything from driving on there and in fact, all through the summer, cars were parking on there, people were having picnics on there. Do you actually have any plans to secure that area? Because with the amount of traffic, there were actually cars driving straight across it in the summer. It's not just a matter of the travellers and people were having to take the children out the park because of it.

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your supplementary question. I know Dilkes Wood quite well, I've lived in Ockendon for most of my childhood and

whilst picnics are very, very acceptable on our parks, using it as a through route is definitely not. I will take this up with the Director of Environment and indeed my Portfolio Holder for that area. We will work, not only with the Officers but indeed with the residents to ensure that there is still the openness but without turning it into a car park or a cut one.

5. From Mr Akhigbe to Councillor Watkins

Please let me know how many public remembrance sites are maintained by the Council and how many have not been maintained in the last couple of years. Does the Council have a program of maintenance for these sites?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your question. Across the Borough, we have 17 memorial sites which are maintained. I will point out; many of the war memorial sites are maintained by community groups such as the Stanford War Memorial Group who has done an excellent job in the past.

The war memorial at Little Thurrock Rectory – I have a feeling you might know where this is going, was reported to us on Remembrance Sunday by the Leader and Ward Councillors as being unacceptable. That same day, the Director for Environment had also visited the site. By Tuesday, the cleaner for the memorial had been done; it is now back to an acceptable standard. However, this is not enough so in the run up to the remembrance of First World War, war memorial standards will be put in place to ensure all war memorials are at an acceptable standard. This will be working with the Royal British Legion and will include refreshing name plates on them.

Just a little bit of background information, each war memorial is different and unique. Each memorial can have up to three different variants of stone, as each stone is different, obviously, that can cause some problems to cleanliness, especially at the time of installation, depending on how those were installed. A series of test had been carried out on the site at Little Thurrock Rectory to ensure that the work we had carried out on the Tuesday were not going to cause any damage to the site and that's the reason why we carried that out because that was not going to be the case.

Obviously in light of the plan we have got coming forward, I'll ask all memorial groups to get in contact with us because we want to work with you. And I would also like to thank the team who are out and around cleaning the war memorials on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday in the morning and also on the Sunday after the service. Thank you.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Mr Akhigbe, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Mr Akhigbe

I'm quite happy with your response. That's good to know, at least you know the number of sites that we do have. I recognise that the Council has no statutory duty to maintain these sites but nevertheless, at the beginning of this meeting, the Mayor paid tributes to the war heroes. And I think it's an important thing for us to continue to do, not in works but in the actions of the Council. So, whilst that is not a particular question, it's more of a please keep doing what you are doing. Thank you so much.

Mayor

Thank you.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor. As I say, the standards plan has been put in place and has been worked on to ensure the higher maintaining standards that we expect are there for next year. We will be working with the Royal British Legion as I say to make sure we get it right and obviously, we want to be working with the war memorial groups out there as well so we can work together on that. Thank you.

Item 12 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 7 questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 9 questions had been received to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Back in 2016 the Leader of the Council appointed an external company to conduct a review of the Thameside Theatre. Will he give an update on their findings?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

(Councillor Gledhill requested a motion to extend the time limit for Members' questions to ensure all were answered. The Mayor agreed and also put forward the motion to extend the time of the meeting to finish at 10pm. Members voted and the motion was carried to end the meeting at 10pm and ensure all Members questions were answered.)

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. Consultants were appointed to advise on the sustainability and viability of the Thameside. A number of reports have been submitted to the Council to review what is currently provided at the theatre and what can be done to improve its future financial viability. In parallel, work is continuing to look at options for theatre provision in Grays in the context of the wider Masterplan. The commitment remains to a theatre provision continuing in Grays to support the local community. We are looking to bring forward an initial document to the Cabinet next year and then onto Overview and Scrutiny before making any final decision.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor J Kent, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor J Kent

Mr Mayor, that just did not answer my question. I begin to wonder what the secrecy is around this. Back in January, when the Leader of the Council put out a press release saying it appointed these consultants, I asked the Chief Executive what the brief was that had been given to the consultants when the decision to appoint the consultants to carry out the work that was made, when it might report, how much it was costing. The Chief Executive refused to tell me that. I'll ask the Leader – who are the consultants, when is the brief, when will they report?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor. I do actually have their names here somewhere. Sorry, I don't have their names here somewhere. I believe one of their names are Charcoal Blue, I cannot remember off the top of my head the second one, I'm more than happy to supply that to Councillor Kent.

I'm really quite concerned, when it comes to trying to find a conspiracy; Councillor Kent seems to be way, way up there with some other Members here. There's no secrecy about this, we couldn't be more open. The whole point of reviewing what's happening at the Thameside is: 1) ensure that as we move forward as a modern Local Authority, that all of our provision, whether it be entertainment and indeed, factual or actual from the Council, is fit for purpose. And that's exactly what these consultants have come forward with.

The last thing I really want to do is to rush out with a new decision and say, 'Right, we're going to throw x amount of money at this', and it not working like we seen in the previous administration. Indeed that Leader do repeatedly. I want to make sure that all our responses and what we do and how we spend council tax payers' money is accurate and actually deliver something that's fit for purpose.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor J Kent, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor J Kent

I don't think it's a conspiracy theory Mr Mayor, when I ask the Chief Executive in January for this information and was refused it. That, to me, looks like a culture of secrecy. Does the Leader recall that I met him face to face in January and asked him if he would provide me with that information? That he undertook to do so and still hasn't.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your supplementary. In that case, I'll be brutally honest with you. I had assumed it had been passed over to you after your request and our face to face meeting. Hence, I'm wondering where you get this idea of a secret society trying to keep everything from you. But the reality still remains; everybody knows we're reviewing the Thameside provision. Councillor

Snell and I sat on the original team that started to look at this in 2015 I think, and we realised then that there was a great deal to do to bring that particular part of the Thameside and indeed along with the rest of it, into the modern world. Quite frankly, that's a simple outline of it. If you want the downright specifics, I'm more than happy to supply them and will ensure commercial confidentiality rules that they are provided as soon as possible.

2. From Councillor B Rice to Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill will you support a cross party working group to investigate with officers and residents how we could raise funds to both purchase equipment for our recreational areas and maintain it thereafter?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Rice for your fantastic question. As we've heard already from Councillor Watkins, the Council is already progressing the improvement programme for our open parks and spaces. Officers have been reviewing the approach and developing a methodology for prioritising investments in the park and open spaces based on the following criteria:

- quality and value findings – the active place parks and open spaces,
- parks and open spaces public consultation,
- residents survey,
- health data,
- known operational requirements and issues including the problems of vandalism and anti-social behaviour as we heard from Councillor Jones earlier,
- health and safety,
- physical activity in adults and
- deprivation.

Capital funding to the tune of £1.35 million has been provided to support the delivery of this programme over the next three years. However, I couldn't think of anything worse than actually trying to sort out play equipment using those very dull and uninteresting terms. Play equipment should be fun, it shouldn't be something forced on the community. So, as part of that, we will be engaging with the community to try and get active leaders that will help decide what goes in, where it goes in and how the community can help to prevent vandalism. So yes, I will certainly be supporting this call. I think it's a fantastic thing to do, we need to improve the parks and open spaces to get our children out and in a safe environment and make sure that the place for Thurrock is exactly that. Not just a place where they live, but a place where they can work and play actively.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor B Rice, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

Yes please. The reason I ask this question, Councillor Gledhill, is because many of our residents actually do want to take it on board to raise funds and to start to be part of caring for their environment. And I think it's really important that we take this opportunity when they've come out to us to engage with them. Hence, my question is not a trick, it's not anything else, it's a straightforward question that I would like to work with all Members to set up a group to start to engage our residents and some are engaged. So I want the blessing of this Chamber to go forward and start to do that and explore ways.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Rice. I know it's never a trick question with yourself, it's always as it appears. It does so what it says on the agenda. It's actually fantastic, our residents want to raise funds to improve their area. I think we can all think back to a time where whatever it was, the Council will pay for it, the Council will pay for it, the Council will pay for it. Actually, you're quite right, the residents agree across the Borough that are making friends in certain names of parks which are really working well. And when people put their own money into it, there is that ownership as well. It's not just their own money, but their time and effort that ensure that what goes in is the right thing. When we redid the park in Little Thurrock Rectory a number of years ago, I was expecting half a dozen of slides, some swings, a roundabout maybe. I think the swings are still there, the slides have been repaired, there's no such thing as a roundabout anymore, there's so much more fun stuff and that's what the children want. So engaging with the residents and getting what they want in there is the right thing to do and as I said, I will support it and I'm sure so will the other Members in this Chamber will do so.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor B Rice, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

A very quick one please Mr Mayor. I just would also like to ask Councillor Gledhill if he would join with me in making sure that the bureaucracy isn't so grey and that we can't get through the red tape. Basically around insurances, health and safety etc. When we do form this group and start to purchase equipment. Thanks.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor. To be brutally honest, the only red tape I want to see is on the front of that park. You cutting that tape to make sure people can get on there as fast as possible.

3. From Councillor Smith to Councillor Gledhill

Is disrepair in council homes a factor in the appearance of black mould which is, as we know, a contributing factor to breathing difficulties experienced by many children in Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Smith for your question. Short answer is yes but only in part. There are a number of factors that aid the growth of black mould in a property. The World Health Organisation made clear in their 2009 report that the cause is excessive moisture in the air from a number of potential sources. They are such things as:

- leaky pipes;
- rising damp;
- water ingressment;
- leaky roof, windows;
- blocked guttering or drainage; and finally,
- condensation.

This is where excess moisture in the air forms water droplets which help the mould in the air to grow on surfaces. Whilst there is no definitive list of where this comes from, actions such as boiling water, cooking, bathing or showering, drying clothes inside, heated aquariums and of course, breathing in and out but only where there is insufficient ventilation to cope with the amount of moisture being produced. This applies to the work, the home or indeed, the school.

NHS website states that babies, children, elderly, those with existing skin conditions such as eczema, those with respiratory problems such as allergies and asthma, those with weak immune systems are more susceptible. So yes, whilst disrepair is one of the factors in the cause of the black mould, it cannot be taken into isolation. Equally, other groups and vulnerable people as well as the young are susceptible to the problems of black mould.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Smith, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Smith

Yes, sure. Regardless of the source of the black mould and these issues, we have a duty to these children. Could you confirm for me, that Council do everything, regardless of the source, to eradicate and put these problems away? And have there been improvements in these areas over the past 12 months?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Smith for your supplementary question. Yes there has been improvement across there. When I first took the portfolio shortly afterwards, we moved the way that we deal with damp mould in residents' properties. We now ensure, especially surveys done, rather than just going along and slapping some paint on there, the treatments on minor works are done so things like triple vents are put in and make sure that where major works are required that are done and where they are not required, that it's explained to residents how to operate these factors to decrease the amount of moisture in the air. As I say, where there are works that need to be done, they will be done in line with the major works programme and then ultimately, to advise the tenants to help reduce and prevent some condensation that happens because that is one of the major causes of damp and mould. So it's not just about the fabric of the building, it's about how they are occupied and what we do inside them.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Smith, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Smith

Yes. So, when we come back to Council in November 2018 and I come back to this question again, can I expect further improvements?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Hopefully, in November next year, if I'm still Leader and I'm still here, you're still here and asking the same question, yes I would love to be saying, 'yes there is a massive improvement.' Obviously, every single property that we go to and we get it right and we get it right first time, that makes it an improvement. We do have the outcomes of

the Stock Condition Survey, not going to go into them right now because they're at the preliminary stage.

I'm surprised at how low the amount of damp and mould issues actually are compared to what we get as Councillors in the form of complaints. But we will be using that to work out how best to put the resources in to ensure that everybody's getting a good service when it comes to clearing up these problems of black mould and the associated problems that that causes.

4. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Gledhill

Could the Leader outline the rules affecting Officers and Members on the extent of their party political activities?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor Collins. The answer for this is very quite long and I won't say uninteresting, obviously interesting for those involved. Basically, there are significant amount of guidance in relation for Officers involved in political activities. A lot of this revolves around those in politically restricted posts and the Local Government Officers (Political Restrictions) Regulations 1990 the Council is under a duty to draw up a list of politically restricted posts to ensure political neutrality; and to prevent advice and decisions from being made improperly or influenced by separate loyalties.

The Officers of the Council owe a duty both legally and in managerial terms both to the Council and to Corporate bodies as a whole to ensure they give a fair and equal service to everyone irrespective of their own political thoughts.

When it comes to elected Members, there are no restrictions on political activities, surprisingly enough, of elected councillors beyond those within the general framework of acting within the local Code of Conduct for Members and discharging their official duties. We'll get a very long and uninteresting lecture on this when we first become elected Members. We get very interesting updates, sorry, when the law changes but basically, these have remained very similar for the past five or six years.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Collins

I do Mr Mayor, thank you very much. Councillor Gledhill, unfortunately, my original question prepared, to what we see down here tonight, it would be difficult and a

follow on question. But do you feel, it is right, that when elected Members on whatever level, share platforms with extremists or help support those who take part in terror activities, that action should be taken against them?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor. Unfortunately, well say fortunately, unfortunately, when the Standards Board for England was disbanded, the sanction of removing someone from Office went with it. I do personally believe that these kind of activities, should be made public, invariably they are made public. Should action be taken against them? Unfortunately, now that's just solely down to the individual group for political parties but I'm sure all political parties act accordingly and would take the right actions in those circumstances.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Collins

I do Mr Mayor. I too, like Councillor Snell, saw the reports in the Daily Mail about giving former terrorists and jihadists preference on the council housing list among other things. Would you say this would be sharing a platform against those who do not have the UK interests at heart?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank Councillor Collins for your supplementary. I will be supporting Councillor Snell's motion just to make that very clear from the start. Obviously, the report in the Daily Mail was a report in the Daily Mail. Do I think that supporting jihadists and people working against us, not really my place to say. But, as I say, I will be supporting that motion and hopefully, everyone else in this Chamber will do.

5. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Will the leader give us an update on discussions about a devolution deal for South Essex?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. I am not entirely sure to what Councillor Kent is referring as there's been no discussion about any devolution deal for South Essex. However, one of my first actions as Leader in May 2016 was to attend a debate at Essex Leaders Forum which involved a proposed elected Mayor model for a devolution deal across the whole of Essex. The outcome of the vote was that the majority of the Essex Councils rejected it and that was by one vote. That includes my vote so it's just as well I had turned up there since had I not, we would be looking at a devolution deal across Essex with an elected Mayor, something that I personally could not stomach.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor J Kent, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor J Kent

Mr Mayor, it has been the policy of this Council, I thought, across administrations that we wanted to work more closely with authorities along the Thames Gateway South Essex area rather than working across the whole of Essex. Our travel to work area, our geographical locality along South Essex makes more sense. Is the Leader suggesting that that is no longer the case?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. That couldn't be further from the truth. Since approximately July 2017, I've been in discussions with colleagues across South Essex on work in the South in South Essex Vision 2050. A strategy that's along the Thames Corridor, one that makes economic sense for all of us. This is not a devolution deal, a city deal, a merger, a takeover bid or any other version or a form of arrangement that would take decision making away from the individual authorities. It is solely about ensuring that we are working collaboratively across those lines on the map that sometimes act as hurdles to progress.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor J Kent, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor J Kent

Yes. I'm grateful for that and I think that gives a lot of comfort. I think one of the difficulties that we will have is that we haven't been given updates on the devolution, locality, whatever we want to call it, since Councillor Gledhill became Leader of the Council and I would ask that there are more regular updates so that we actually know what's going on. Clearly, one of the big issues here is about the pooling of business rates. We read in the local press that there was an attempt made to put Thurrock in a pool with the whole of Essex, something that would have really been financially damaging to this authority. Can the Leader just give us an assurance that that is now dead and give us an update on where we are with pooling the business rates.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. You're quite right, we've always said we want to work locally with our South Essex colleagues and not with Essex as a whole. The plan that was put forward by Essex, we did withdraw from that as soon as I found out that was being suggested that we were going to take part in it. Quite frankly, that deal isn't its deal. It is a dead deal, it isn't going to happen.

Where we are with pooling rates, we are looking to extend the pool from the following financial year to ensure we get to keep more of our business rates just to make sure that the pilot that has been suggested and supported by Essex County Council may have seen 100% of the business rates across the whole of Essex being brought in. Unfortunately, there is no detail at all as to what extra responsibilities or indeed what extra grants we would lose, so you're quite right to point out that probably would have been somewhat detrimental to us in Thurrock. Nobody wants to see a return to a pre-98 even though I wasn't a Councillor, we still lived here, we still experienced the problems. Thank you Mr Mayor.

6. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Gledhill

What work has been done by the council to understand the potential impact of Universal Credit on Thurrock residents?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish. Universal Credit went live for new claimants on the 25th October 2017. According to DWP there have been 134 new claimants since that time. We have contacted them to offer support and advice from our financial inclusion officers.

We have set up a fast track APA (alternative Payment Arrangements) with DWP to support vulnerable clients so the rent comes direct to the rent account. Once Universal Credit is in payment we will be encouraging tenants to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments if they have any shortfall in their housing costs.

Personal budgeting support is being made available to tenants via the financial inclusion officers. We will be encouraging claimants to request an advanced payment to help in any delay of the first payment of Universal Credit.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thurrock food banks have sounded the alarm on the impact that Universal Credit might have on some of our poorest and most vulnerable residents. Does the Leader share their concern on the impact that Universal Credit might have?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish for your question. There have been many organisations indeed. Members of the press have sounded the alarm on a number of different issues on Universal Credit, some of them in which I share and some of them maybe hyped indeed as I saw at the weekend. One of the journalist apologising saying actually what he put forward was perhaps a bit too harsh, slightly skewed what was happening. I do share some of the concerns as said, we do need to ensure that people do have enough food to feed themselves. There are statutory requirements for them to pay debts, that's why we got our financial inclusion officers helping them out to make sure what money they have go further and that they can get the money in as soon as possible to ensure they themselves do not go hungry or lose their homes.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. I think one of the issues here is that when we talk about juggling the money they have, one of the issues here for these residents is that they

simply don't have any money to juggle. One of the things that neighbouring Basildon is considering, is a scheme run by the Council that leaves hardship residents who are out of pocket while they are waiting for Universal Credit. Is the Leader considering, or could consider any scheme here to help our residents in a similar way?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish for your question. As I say, the advanced payment system that's already in place should be the default situation where residents are in a particular circumstance where they need money now and won't have to apply for Universal Credit and we are supporting that. If you feel there is something specific from another local authority that may help, please feel free to pass it on to myself or indeed, Councillor Hebb who is absent this evening to see if it something that we could implement. But of course, what people must remember is that this is not a gift to people, at most, it would be a loan to get them through that first hurdle so would need to be paid back. Thank you.

7. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Gledhill

As the Lower Thames Crossing saga continues, is the Leader satisfied with the approach and performance of Highways England?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish. Short answer is no. No I'm not. As you know, all three group leaders met with Highways England earlier this year and set out expectations that were agreed by them. This included a week's notice about any letters or communication that would be sent out to our residents, details of consultation including documents that would be provided in advance and so on. However, since that meeting, I've been made aware a couple of times that meetings have taken place on very odd subjects including robo-technology and how the Lower Thames Crossing will improve this industry plus other meetings with business stake holders. Again, first I found out of that was a general invite to everybody. I know that my Deputy Leader attended the meeting in my stead with yourself and Councillor Snell, it was agreed that if this kind of approach continued, we will write to the Secretary of State to outline our concerns again. As you know, a letter setting out concerns of the Council has been sent about the approach former to Highways England on the Lower Thames Crossing that was signed by all three group leaders and indeed, the Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force on Monday 20th November. I do look forward to the response on that one.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. I think first of all, I would just associate myself with the remarks made by Councillor Gledhill on the performance of Highways England and I'm sure all Members in this Chamber would agree with the principle that actually they need to be much better in terms of the openness and clarity in the way in which they are working at the moment. Clearly, Mr Mayor, it's important to challenge and question government and government agencies on their approach and views on the Lower Thames Crossing. Can the Leader tell us what is said to challenge Michael Gove who said during his recent visit, the new Thames Crossing would be good for Thurrock?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish. Obviously, just to reiterate, everything that happens on Lower Thames Crossing, affects Thurrock the most. It doesn't affect the Kent County Council or the Kent authorities or indeed any of the other Essex authorities. So, you would have thought Highways England would be putting in an awful lot more resources and information and actually working with us downside closer than they are indeed, with other local authorities. As to what Mr Gove said when he was here, at the time he made that statement, I wasn't within earshot so I couldn't have responded.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Gledhill. Councillor Gerrish, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Gerrish

Thank you Mr Mayor. I just wonder if the Leader will undertake to take up correspondence with Mr Gove to put him right. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill?

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Gerrish. I don't know why I should stop at Mr Gove, I will be taking it up. Obviously, right across the board, everybody

knows what we feel as a united group in this Chamber and indeed, outside of this Chamber, we indeed as well. This is just a disaster that has been thrust upon us and it's not about managing it out, it's about managing it not to happen.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor Allen to Councillor B Little

Does Council accept the problem of vehicles parking on footpaths and pavements has become a serious issue here in our Borough?

Mayor

Councillor B Little?

Councillor B Little

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Allen for your question. The Council are aware that parking on the pavements and obstruction to the footways is an ongoing issue. Parking restrictions are regularly considered and investigated, also though, we have to be conscious that sterilising parking provision could push parking into further surrounding roads.

The parking demand from local residents in some locations vastly exceeds on-street provision, in particular properties that were built at the beginning of the last century, where road width is such that if residents do not mount the kerb, then they park on the street. They would obstruct traffic movement if that was the case.

Officers continue to consider options on a localised basis and enforce in areas that have yellow lines and Traffic Regulation Orders in place. Otherwise enforcement of pavement parking lies with Essex Police; under obstruction legislation.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor B Little. Councillor Allen, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Allen

If I may. Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Little. I'm not sure whether you are aware that since 1883, it has been illegal to drive on the pavement under section 72 of the Highways Act 1835, it's in our current highway code. Can I ask you, Councillor Little, to keep me informed of any further action on this matter so I can keep my residents in the know regarding Council's actions in supporting this very problem of pavement parking?

Mayor

Councillor B Little?

Councillor B Little

I will keep Councillor Allen informed on anything that we are doing but I would also ask him if there are specific areas that he would like to be looked at that we haven't looked at previously. If you would let me know, I will look at that as well. But, it is an issue and it's not going to go away. I'm appreciating the fact that we are generally growing this problem, it's not reducing. Thank you.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor B Little. Councillor Allen, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Allen

Yes please Mr Mayor and thank you for your reply with that Councillor Little. I'm aware that the law surrounding pavement parking is a complete grey area in the UK. But, in London, where the rules are with the Highway Code stating that drivers must not do so. The rule 244 of the Highway Code again states, 'you must not park partially or wholly on the pavement in London' and you should not do so elsewhere unless signs permit. Now, is it possible, that we can, in problem areas where we are facing this pavement parking, can we look into implementing such things, in all 32 boroughs in London that currently do?

Mayor

Councillor B Little?

Councillor B Little

We can look at things obviously. The Highway Code is not the law and one of the other parts of this is that people, at the moment, parking on pavement, causing an obstruction, should be able to be penalised by the police. And that's not happening very well and I have had some discussions about how we can start to look at our enforcement officers with police officers starting to go round and doing things. I think that is probably a more pragmatic approach than trying to put legislation in that we haven't got.

London is a separate entity in terms of Transport for London and how they manage to do things. For instance, I tried to get a yellow box junction on junction 31 and I put the last yellow lines on there and I want to enforce it but I can't because I don't have the powers to within Thurrock. So there are issues round what we can do and what we can't do. I take your points on board and it's something that we are working on. Thank you very much.

2. From Councillor B Rice to Councillor Watkins

As part of the clean-up promised by Councillor Gledhill, will you give a commitment to undertaking a full assessment of all the waste bins situated in our wards to see if we have adequate numbers and that they are where they have the most impact?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question. I like this question because I get to talk about the public street bin review. You probably all remember that in July when I waffled on, don't worry, not again. My report has actually already gone to Cleaner, Greener, Safer Overview and Scrutiny which was in October which was outlining the public street bin review.

As outlined in this review, we will be commencing to main stages. Stage one has actually already been completed which is looking at the current location of every single bin, condition of every bin, the types of bin we have. Also how much rubbish has been accumulated next to and around them and how many times they have been emptied.

Stage two, we would be looking at what new bins we could purchase to replace the old, damaged stock, we got much of that in the Borough. What types we would need and also we'll look more at what dual purpose bins as well. As we've already shown with the ongoing Big Belly Bin pilot, if we need to invest in something, we will invest in order to get the better ones out for our residents.

I have obviously highlighted in this, we would working closely with Street Services to kind of work out what the best types of bins will be. Those are the teams who are cleaning out and emptying the bins out every single day so want their input and expert advice on what we believe will be the best ones for the Borough. And yes, we will also be looking at the current locations, if they are in the location or if they need to be moved.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor B Rice, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

Yes please, thank you. Of course, it's very welcome that we are having a review of our bins and sooner rather than later because it appears bins are in a very, very poor state. A lot of them are rusted and I noticed in the foyer by the lifts, the battery bin's been overflowing for weeks, we need to get that sorted out. Batteries are on the floor in there, it doesn't give a very good impression when people come in.

Apart from that, the other thing I was going to ask the Portfolio Holder is, on our sports playing field, when we give – I've got two nice new bins, thank you very much, the Officers who has put them there on Orsett Heath. The Heath is looking in general, very nice especially with the park run. And the park run actually clean up their rubbish afterwards.

However, some of the football teams don't and I just wondered what we put in place for our football teams when they use our pitches? Is there something where we can say, 'you must clean up after you'. Otherwise, it's penny pounds foolish because we're getting money coming in for the pitches but we're having to clean up after them. So welcome an answer.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor. I've had two Councillors comment now about Clean It, Cut It, Fill It so thank you very much for that. And I'm glad you can also see the investment we are making is making a good difference to the Orsett Heath. Also, again thank you for informing us and being grateful for the bins on the site. Basically, there is an expectation for teams that do rent out spaces to clean up after themselves. Again, if you've got individual cases, let me know, we'll make sure we do something about it.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor B Rice, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor B Rice

No.

3. From Councillor Spillman to Councillor Halden

Is the Children Service's aftercare team fit for purpose?

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Obviously, as statutory service, it undergoes a number of investigations. No parts of the service are in special measures so by definition, yes it is a fit for purpose service. Obviously, the majority of cases this department sees tend to be some of the individuals in some of the most desperate circumstances. So of course, it is one of those departments that is under the most pressure and is facing some of the most tragic circumstance. So, yes it is a fit for purpose department but be under no illusion, it is not an easy to run department, I'm assuming you have somewhere to go with your supplementary.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Halden. Councillor Spillman, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Spillman

The Portfolio Holder must understand how many individual failings must have occurred for people supposedly under the supervision of the aftercare team who are under council properties to be falling under massive rent arrears facing warrants of eviction that I have to intervene in without any action being taken, any meaningful action being taken by Children's Services. And without any meaningful communication being had with the rent department and the benefits department. Can the Portfolio Holder please assure me that I won't be seeing any more cases of care leavers that have been placed in council accommodation as a transfer from care to independent living coming through my door with massive rent arrears that just haven't been picked up due to failings of supervision in the aftercare team. Thank you very much.

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Ok, the question is in two parts. Clearly, the social care team's job is to administer good social care for children, it is not to try and provide budget housing advice because they are not the experts. Equally, it is the housing department's job to provide housing advice and not to try and administer social care, they are not the experts. And there should be a very, very clear line of demarcation, in fact, a statutory line of demarcation, the incidences that Councillor Spillman is referring to.

If an individual comes into the council service and they are being seen by the social care team and it is obvious that they are falling behind in their rent payments, that they may be perhaps housed in inadequate premises. And if they are then only seen by the social care department and a referral isn't made to the housing team, then clearly, that is wrong and it is not acceptable. We have got all the skills in this building to administer these different services and we need to see people when they come through our front door as a whole person. They don't come through the front door as a social care case or a housing case. They come through as a whole person and the Council needs to see them as a whole person.

I know I've had conversations with the Director of Children's Services and he's looking at the type of joint resource that we put in place which will be the Child's Social Care Department and the Housing Department and the Aspire Team that does the aftercare service when people leave care which is under my portfolio, hence me answering the question, to make sure that there is that good join up. So while I don't think that the social care team or housing team should be trying to make decisions about each other's department because they are not the experts and that could cause great problems to the family. Clearly, if someone presents themselves

with acute housing issues and the social care team are not making those appropriate referrals, clearly that is not acceptable and it needs to change.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor S Little. Councillor Spillman, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Spillman

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you for that answer, I think the Portfolio Holder understands the problem and what we need to do to improve. One of the most profound things I've noticed is when – I'll come out of it, I'll ask this, what this administration is doing about it? We've got evermore specialist services who are specialising in certain areas and yet there seems to be this ongoing culture of compartmentalisation, where people are just not talking to each other, departments are just not communicating. And not only is it dangerous for people when those departments aren't communicating but it ends up wasting a lot of council money. These inefficiencies, can we please drive home the importance of proper communication and proper cooperation between departments?

Mayor

Councillor Halden?

Councillor Halden

Thank you Mr Mayor. Yes absolutely, the correct communication between departments is vital and as I say, that's why the Director is looking up what joint resource we can put in place between the housing and social care team to make sure the right people get the right advice at the right time.

And in terms of joint up service and you ask what the administration is doing about that, one of the undertakings that I gave and we had the debate over children centres, I said that the reason I wanted a policy of purely building better services is because I wanted a more joint up service between the health and education team to try and push up, the amount of children that we see. That the old social care – the old children's services, Children Centre Scheme, only saw about 75% of eligible people. Well I understand now that we are bordering on the 94% of eligible families in those reach areas are now registered with their children's centre. 94%, so that is what this administration is doing.

We're trying to push past old outdated systems, fewer buildings, better service, making sure that the people who need support are actually registered with the right services. Because as you say yourself Councillor, if a family actually has to look at severe housing changes to make sure they can look after their child, there's no way we should be making decisions that could possibly push up their rent arrears.

We need to be intervening faster and it's schemes like this, 94% of eligible families register with their children's centre making the Council more connected and the key

to doing that is making sure we see somebody as a whole person and not just as a social care case or a housing case. And that's the undertaking I can give you.

4. From Councillor Spillman to Councillor S Little

Would the portfolio holder agree that only offering accommodation to the children of homeless families, where no homeless duty is owed to the family and no other welfare issues are of concern, would be inhumane, unethical and potentially place children at threat of serious harm?

Mayor

Councillor S Little?

Councillor S Little

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you for your question Councillor Spillman. That's actually incorrect. Children's social care do offer accommodation to families and not just to their children under section 17 of the Children's Act. Duties for families have been found intentionally homeless, we do help. And we have 15 families on our books at present. So that's incorrect, we do help them.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor S Little. Councillor Spillman, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Spillman

I'm afraid there's been an attempted – maybe without your knowledge, there's been an attempted shift of policy from the sort of casework that I have been seeing. I'd just like to ask, can the Portfolio Holder, whether she considers the following acceptable:

- Families told to leave the Council by social services when they've got young children without social services having any idea where these children will sleep that evening.
- Families being told that the only option would be to give their children up if they accept help.
- Families being offered privately rented accommodation in Clacton, Southend, North East of England.
- Parents being told that if they can't find a property, then they risk their children being taken away.
- Families being offered privately rented accommodation by social workers in Southend that aren't remotely affordable due to Children's Services having no knowledge of the local housing allowance.
- Children's Services spending over £10,000 because they didn't realise the family could claim housing benefit when they were paying the rent for them.
- And a family that's already been dumped in Thurrock, now this Christmas face being evicted.

I don't think this is acceptable behaviour and please tell me this Portfolio Holder doesn't either.

Mayor

Councillor S Little?

Councillor S Little

Thank you for your reply, Councillor Spillman. What I'm beginning to get strong overtones for is that this is a specific case that you are talking about or several. Because, I've had 15 families on the books for quite a long time that we've been paying the rent for, supporting them and even offering to pay a month upfront for their deposit etc, to get them on the right road. And some of these people just will not be helped. Now, I'm sorry, I think what's happening is, these people now, was part of the 15, and two of them have now found further accommodation. Now, I know you have been speaking with the Director of Children's Services, but you haven't come – and I haven't had one email from you telling me what specific cases you have. And, I've been supporting quite a lot of these cases for well over a year. So, if you'd like to give me their details and the exact cases, or pick up the phone and say, 'Hi Councillor Little, can we meet up unofficially?' Thank you.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor S Little. Councillor Spillman, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Spillman

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Little. Will the Council please give a promise that this administration find the thoughts of losing your children has a means to gatekeep and reduce demand on services to be extremely dangerous, unethical and inhumane? And please explore all means to find a solution to this problem without this shocking, shocking potential policy that is – this change of policy that I'd seen in several cases as part of my casework?

Mayor

Councillor S Little?

Councillor S Little

Thank you Councillor Spillman, I'm glad you're going to take my offer up. No, this is incorrect. I haven't seen any cases where this has happened. So please bring them to me and I will look at them but there has not been a change in policy. Thank you.

5. From Councillor Allen to Councillor Watkins

Councillor Watkins, following our site meeting in Tilbury last month to look at the litter and abandoned cars, could you give me an update on these car parks and could your response also include the unmaintained land that divides Sycamore Close and Albany Road?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question. First of all, I'd like to thank you for allowing me to come out and meet with you on site. As eluded tonight, it's one of the best ways to get some action done. And thank you also for bringing it up before coming to Full Council meeting rather than just sitting on it for four weeks and then trying to get action on it afterwards as we see sometimes.

As you may have seen in a recent press release, 20 vehicles were flagged up by the DVLA and we will be ensuring these vehicles will be removed if they are not claimed. Even if they are claimed, all owners are getting fined with £200 each individual car for leaving vehicles in abandoned conditions. We will be monitoring very closely what happens and of course, if we see more abandoned cars. Thank you for your input and if you could continue to give that input to us as well, we will make sure that action again is swiftly followed.

Alongside this, once we had obviously met, the car park had a deep clean, I was there the day it was happening, had another walk around with the team to make sure everything we had discussed was being followed up on. I'm really glad to see that was the case and also, fortnightly, cleaning will be taking place on that. The electric company next to it who obviously have the fenced off area have been reminded of their cleanliness and maintenance. And if we need to, we will take enforcement action which is known as a Community Protection Process.

Again, going back to the areas of private land, whether this has been the case, we are making sure we are informing them of their responsibilities and again will be taking action against those should we need to. Further information as well based on it, I unfortunately have seen to have been across of town, shops were checked for their trade waste, documents which I'm glad to see most of them had. We're keeping a close eye on the commercial business around to ensure trade waste bins are in their designated areas and are maintaining their cleanliness standards which are expected and are using the land as they should be following on from obviously, what we saw that day. Along with this, as I've said, we've already had our enforcement officers.

After investigation again, of the bigger piece of land we saw, again, had a long site visit, saw some unfortunately, horrible stuff on that site as well, had to be very careful where we were all walking. We are making sure that the land owners again, are completely responsible for their actions and again, enforcement action will be taken. But please, continue doing what you've done and again, good work. Thank you.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Allen, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Allen

If I may, thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor Watkins for the update. First of all, I'd like to thank the officers enforcing the abandoned cars and I would appreciate that if the Portfolio Holder can assure Members that further and ongoing investigations will continue in regards to these two locations, thus keeping these two areas clear of both rubbish and abandoned cars. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor for your supplementary. I can inform that, obviously, in recent months, we were given more responsibilities and powers to go off on untaxed vehicles so that forms into part of the enforcement action that we do follow up on those sites as well. But 100%, we're doing that and we're doing that across the Borough as well.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Allen, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Allen

Thank you and I will keep you informed Councillor Watkins. Thank you.

6. From Councillor Snell to Councillor Hebb

The Money Advice Trust, as part of their Stop The Knock Campaign highlighting the trend in increased use of bailiffs by local authorities, recently sent in a FOI request for information about the use of Bailiffs by this Council. Unlike most neighbouring Councils, Thurrock did not respond. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why?

(Councillor Hebb was not present to answer this question so the question would be deferred to the next Full Council meeting).

7. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Watkins

Can the Portfolio Holder confirm what is being done to improve recycling in Thurrock please?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question. Obviously, it's environment night tonight. As I stated in my annual report this evening, we have been hard at work cleaning this Borough up, bringing it back from the neglect and mismanagement we saw under the six years of Labour. One of the priority areas is recycling, it's something we would be really looking into in 2018. One of the things that I wanted to mention is something of my recent investigations. Recycling rates have seen the biggest dip between 2013 – 14 to 2015 – 16, we went from 42% to 37% which was again, under the former administration and then looking at the annual reports and then hoping to do one better tonight because it seems to be on two separate reports. The only line is, we need to improve communication.

For those who don't know, we have to reach 50% target by 2020 and as I've already alluded to, this is something that I really want us to make headway on in 2018. Also for the fact is, it does use taxpayers' money due to increase in disposal costs. There are few quick wins we will be undertaking for the remainder of 2017. We will have a WEE amnesty over Christmas to ensure small electrical items are disposed of quickly and correctly. Additional clear recycling bags will be available for residents across the Borough in areas such as libraries so we will be allowing side waste of recycling across the Christmas period. And we will also be instigating greater communication over the social media channels to try and again encourage recycling. But also safety as well which is obviously key at Christmas time with people leaving boxes out, obviously, it can show people what they've had.

However, this is not enough. A project group has been set up with research being carried out over the last few months so we can go deeper and produce more direct messages to areas we see the worst recycling rates in. This communication will be going live from January and it will be a communication plan which will also continue to evolve. Last week, myself and Director in Communications met to go over a lot of new ideas we will be instigating again in 2018. A little too early to be mentioning those tonight, it will be coming back, please do ask me. I think there will be some very great ideas where we will be working with all members of society including Children for Education.

In regards to that as well, the 28 new waste vehicles will each be individually named by schools of our Borough so we will be actively working with the schools doing some photos, encouraging early education about recycling, about obviously, putting litters in the bin and obviously will be fed back to the parents. There is more to do to get recycling rates up, it is a main priority of 2018 and I welcome what we will do.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Collins

I do Mr Mayor, I'm afraid to ask. Can you very quickly give us more information on the developments of Linford Waste Site? It was touched upon in O & S.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor. In response to the Council over there, you already asked me a question about the Portfolio Holder report anyway so I think it's only fair if other Councillors have got questions that should be heard.

Obviously, as I've already alluded to tonight, there will be a series of changes hopefully going forward with the Linford site to improve access, accessibility for the residents and to stop trade waste abuse. We obviously procured the site in June of this year and a survey took place to see what was going on and we saw multiple times, trade waste abuse.

This is actually really important, you can laugh it off Councillor Rice but this costs the Council a lot of money, taxpayers a lot of money, people abusing this site. So this is something we are putting a stop to. There will be a permit system in place so vans and lorries can only access the site 12 times per year and they have to be residents of this Borough as well. If not, they will be turned away. As I say, this is coming to Cabinet in December, it will go to Planning for approval, to get their views and thoughts. Thank you.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Collins, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Collins

No.

8. From Councillor V Holloway to Councillor Huelin

Why have volunteers in Purfleet hub been told the hub can only open and operate when paid staff are present?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin?

Councillor Huelin

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question. Not actually sure where you got this information from, it's not correct. They haven't been told that volunteers can open and operate a hub without paid staff being there.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Huelin. Councillor V Holloway, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor V Holloway

Well that's a great response and that's what I want to hear. I was told directly by volunteers themselves who had been stopped on a couple of occasions from opening the hub when they were available. They were told on one day that because no staff member was present, they weren't able to open even though they were there. In following up with Officers, I was told this was because there were people at meetings and they couldn't open the hub and there was no follow up to my question about why volunteers weren't allowed. I just wanted to ask, that bearing in mind that, basically, what is happening, why have they been told this? Are there new rules in place with volunteers? I'm sure Councillors will agree that hubs have been a fantastic success and they're really important to a lot of our communities. The volunteers and I are concerned that the hubs not opening mean that the communities aren't involved in their environments when they should be. Can I ask if you are taking the hubs from volunteers?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin?

Councillor Huelin

Basically, on that particular occasion in question, it wasn't volunteers, it was a volunteer. And unfortunately, it's fantastic that she or he, I don't know which, wanted to volunteer but there wasn't any available staff that day and there wasn't another volunteer to go with them. Now we have a duty of care and health and safety to protect members of the public as well as staff. We can't have one volunteer opening a public building on their own, it's not safe to do so which why they were unfortunately, turned down that day. But when there are volunteers and what we are doing to make sure we get more volunteers is that we're in the process of recruiting a volunteer co-ordinator. That way, we can help to grow the number of volunteers and make sure that we can open more often.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Huelin. Councillor V Holloway, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor V Holloway

Thank you. I am concerned obviously, that there is misinformation and I am minded to believe, obviously our volunteers who came to me who were quite distressed even though we had different versions of what happened in that instance. Volunteers are obviously key to our hubs and staff aren't, shouldn't be essential to their running.

Can you promise our Officers are upholding the principle of the hub for communities, run by communities for the community?

Mayor

Councillor Huelin?

Councillor Huelin

I kind of thought I did when I said volunteers can open a hub without paid staff being present but if you feel that's not happening, then by all means, I'm happy to meet with volunteers, we'll talk with Officers, we'll make sure that is definitely in place. But I've been reassured by all Officers, Directors that it can open, but with volunteers, not volunteer.

9. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Watkins

It was great to see officers cleaning around the war memorial at Little Thurrock just before the service. The memorial itself was still in need of a clean, can the cabinet member explain why it was not cleaned before Armistice Sunday and who organised the clean up after?

Mayor

Councillor Watkins?

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, thank you Councillor for your question. Firstly I would like to thank you for your kind comments about cleanness and I will make sure they are passed on to the team who took great pride in making sure that it was cleaned around Armistice Day. I am not going to go into details that we have already eluded them already this evening but I can confirm that it was Councillor Gledhill who made the initial approach on Armistice Sunday to make sure that the memorial was inspected on the same day and it was him that ensured that the clean-up was followed on and standard plans are in place for next year.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Redsell, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Redsell

Thank you Mr Mayor, I have read with disgust that other political parties have tried to grab headlines and take credit for works that from what you see, or what you say, were justifiable delay and something that the leader took immediate action on. It was good to see the editor of Thurrock independent newspaper not only attended Turps Corner ceremony but to make clear the

difficult circumstances in relation to this particular memorial and promote the action to be taken over the next year to bring each and every war memorial up to scratch. Can the Portfolio Holder tell me when any other enquiry was made about this memorial.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor, other than the one obviously made by Councillor Gledhill on the Sunday I do believe the only other reported enquiry was on Tuesday by then tests had already been completed on the memorial site and the clean-up had already begun and all most finished.

Mayor

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Redsell, do you wish to ask a second supplementary question?

Councillor Redsell

Thank you Mr Mayor, I don't want to score any cheap political points, that aside, can you outline any other memorials that had had works already to improve them since the Leader's announcement.

Councillor Watkins

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you Councillor for your supplementary. Very quickly I can confirm that the Council will be picking up the costs of the new flagstone at the bottom of the memorial site.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There are 4 questions from members of the public.

1. From Ms Blackshaw to Councillor Gledhill

Please tell me why there is a holdup on letting properties on the new Treetops estate as many would be tenants (including myself) have been waiting a year since we were accepted.

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor B Little

What action, if any, does the Council take with regard to the parking of motor vehicles on the grass verges and green spaces adjacent to Council rented houses, flats and maisonettes?

3. From Mr Fletcher to Councillor B Little

In recent months we have seen murders in Dilkes Park and Dart Green. Only this month a local man was beaten up by a pack of youths in Derwent Parade. What concrete steps will Councillor Little take to reassure the residents of Belhus and Ockendon that their safety is a priority?

4. From Mr Strange to Councillor B Little

Residents in South Ockendon have recently been kept awake by road works into the night. Can you tell me why it was done in such a way to disturb the peace of numerous residents around Daiglen Drive?

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Item 8 : Petitions Update Report – 31 January 2018

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Portfolio Holder	Status Full copies of the responses may be obtained from Democratic Services
496	Relating to the poor state of road surface in Gordon Road, Corringham.	27 September 2017	Cllr Jones	<p>Over the last 12 months patching and pothole works have been undertaken in Gordon Road, Corringham. There are currently no intervention level defects as a result although the road surface is cosmetically poor.</p> <p>Gordon Road, along with other roads in a similar condition, have been assessed for prioritisation and it is not of sufficient priority to be included in the 2018/19 Programme, it will however continue to be monitored by our Highway Inspectors and should any defects occur, they will be addressed accordingly.</p>
497	Resident(s) of Hadfield Road, Rectory Road, Wharf Road and Fairview Avenue, Stanford-le-Hope request Thurrock Council (a) consult on the introduction of a one-way system around Hadfield and Rectory Road, and (b) introduce speed-calming measures down both roads (also looking to Fairview Avenue also).	27 September 2017	Cllr Hebb	<p>(a) The council previously developed a proposal for a one-way system around Hadfield and Rectory Road in 2015, however, this was not supported by local stakeholders at the time. This will be included for consideration on our programme for project feasibility work and consultation will be undertaken.</p> <p>(b) This will be included for consideration on our programme for 2018/19 with a feasibility study in Q1 of 2018/19 to determine the appropriate speed-calming measures that can be introduced.</p>

Item 8 : Petitions Update Report – 31 January 2018

498	Installing CCTV on a section of Seabrooke Rise.	27 September 2017	Cllr Kerin	<p>The Housing service is considering this proposal with input from the Community Safety team. A judgement about a specific new installation will be made when all the relevant information has been assessed in full, and residents and ward members will be advised of the decision within the next two months.</p> <p>The situation continues to be monitored to assess incidents and complaints which remain low. A final decision will be taken in early 2018, following discussions with relevant members.</p>
499	Council's proposal to introduce and extend service charges by up to £400 per year for all tenants.	27 September 2017	Cllr Gledhill	<p>Further to the motion agreed at the Council meeting this reconsideration will be taking place. An update report will be presented to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2017 setting out the proposed scope of the review, with a further report setting out a range of options for the Committee to consider to be presented at the December meeting, The final decision in relation to service charges will be made by Cabinet after the report has been presented to the Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>January 2018 Council Update – December Housing Scrutiny Committee recommended that GM Service Charges are not proceeded with. February Cabinet will make the final decision.</p>
500	Reconsider the unfair rent increase imposed on Council tenants.	27 September 2017	Cllr Jones	<p>Further to the motion agreed at the Council meeting this reconsideration will be taking place. An update report will be presented to</p>

Item 8 : Petitions Update Report – 31 January 2018

				Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 17 October 2017 setting out the proposed scope of the review, with a further report setting out a range of options for the Committee to consider to be presented at the December meeting, The final decision in relation to service charges will be made by Cabinet after the report has been presented to the Scrutiny Committee.
501	Against the installation of the yellow lines outside the shop, off licence and general store on 7 Browns Cottages, High Road, North Stifford, RM16 5UH	20 October 2017	Cllr B Little	Following a site visit with Cllr Hague (on 27 October) and having given further consideration to the accidents statistics in the area, it has been decided that the proposed double yellow lines at this location will not be progressed.
502	This is a Petition to Thurrock Council against the proposed permit parking scheme Mon-Fri 8am-6pm should not be imposed in front of our houses where we have been enjoying free parking for our cars.	13 October 2017	Cllr B Little	Following the consultation, officers are preparing a DDR to go to the portfolio holder for a decision on the proposed scheme. The petition has been placed on file and will be included in the DDR for the PfH to consider. The DDR will go to the PfH for a decision in January 2018.
503	We the undersigned residents call on Thurrock Council to review and improve the parking situation in Angle Road with an aim to provide more parking spaces.	29 November 2017	Cllr Gerrish	A response has been provided directly to the petitioner. Following site visits and further consideration by officers it has been determined that the creation of additional parking in and around Angle Road is unviable, due to the lack of available road space.

Item 8 : Petitions Update Report – 31 January 2018

504	We the undersigned wish the current administration of Thurrock Council to know that we fully oppose any future plans to build on The Recreational Grounds of The King George Playing Field otherwise known by the good people of Tilbury as 'The Daisy Field'.	29 November 2017	Cllr Allen	<p>A response has been provided directly to the petitioner and information has been provided to ward members.</p> <p>The significant value and importance of this park is understood and appreciated. All the ideas in the master plan are subject to further consultation and review, and any proposal to change any part of the park's use will require a range of approvals and consents including a formal planning application – there are no proposals at this time.</p>
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31 January 2018		ITEM: 11
Council		
Local Council Tax Scheme		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance		
Accountable Assistant Director: n/a		
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

Since 1 April 2013, the Council has maintained a local Council Tax Reduction scheme. This replaced the national Council Tax Benefit scheme, which ended on 31 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 2017. 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 proposal for 2018/19 is to continue with the current Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) scheme. We have considered this in light of no planned changes to Housing Benefit legislation for April 2018/19 and that the current scheme is reasonable and fit for purpose.

1 Recommendations

1.1 **That Council agree to maintain the existing scheme for 2018/19.**

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 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 circa 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 The existing Scheme 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 all military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments;
- The number of dependants assessed in the calculation of claimants needs is a maximum of two; and
- The maximum period of an award when temporarily absent outside the United Kingdom is 4 weeks.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 From 2014/15, any specific funding for the LCTS scheme was rolled up into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as provided to local authorities by the government. It is entirely for local authorities to decide how much they are prepared to spend on their LCTS scheme. 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.

3.2 The roll out of Universal Credit has slowed nationally with the completion date of the project now extended to 2023. New Housing Benefit legislation is now forming part of the Welfare Reform agenda with this benefit continuing until at

least 2023. 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. Universal Credit in Thurrock advanced to 'full service' on 25 October 2017. This will extend the range of customers who can make a new claim for Universal Credit from single non-working households to couples and families with less than 3 children. Officers will monitor the effects of this change over the next 12 months and this will inform the design of the 2019/20 LCTS scheme.

3.3 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; and
- 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.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The scheme remains affordable and easy to administer. The collection rate for 2016/17 for council tax from those in the scheme was 96.64 percent. The design of the scheme, which builds in various protections and incentives, supports a high collection rate.

4.2 The LCTS expenditure for 2016/17 was £7.8m. The expenditure for 2017/18 is estimated to be circa £8m of which circa £3.7m relates to claimants of pensionable age. The expected cost of the scheme for 2018/19 is proposed at £8.3m to allow for any potential additional cost to the scheme.

4.3 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

5.1 As no changes are proposed there has been no need for public consultation. The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered this report and had no issues other than ensuring it would have no impact on the ability to support care leavers with council tax support. As this can be achieved through discounts outside of this scheme, there were no concerns raised by the committee.

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

6.1 The Council is required to have an LCTS scheme and 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.

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 2018 at the latest to enable the authority to implement the scheme from 1 April 2019.

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**

- None

Report Author:

Sean Clark

Director of Finance and IT

Corporate Finance

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31 January 2018	ITEM: 12
Council	
A Sustainable Children’s Social Care System for the Future: Annual Public Health Report 2017	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Ian Wake, Director of Public Health	
Accountable Assistant Director: Tim Elwell-Sutton, Assistant Director and Consultant in Public Health	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Director of Public Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

It is the statutory duty of the Director of Public Health to prepare an independent report on the health and wellbeing of the local population each year. Last year’s Annual Public Report focussed on the sustainability of the adult health and social care system in Thurrock. This year, the report considers how to create a sustainable children’s social care system for the future. As part of creating a sustainable children social care system, Public Health has been working with the wider Children Services to influence a range of its activities which is evident by this report as well as its service transformation work within Brighter Futures.

The report analyses the reasons for growing pressure on the system, produces new forecasts for future demand, and makes a series of specific recommendations for making the system more sustainable. In particular, it sets out the need for a radical shift of focus towards services which reduce demand and prevent children from becoming looked after.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 That the contents and recommendations of the report be noted by Cabinet.**
 - 1.2 That Cabinet approve to hold a Mental Health summit to address emotional and mental health issues which contribute to the wider health and wellbeing issues amongst young people.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 One of the main goals of Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to make Thurrock a place offering "Opportunity for All". Central to this goal is making Thurrock a place where children can flourish and achieve their full potential in life.
- 2.2 It is increasingly understood that poor experiences in childhood can create intergenerational cycles of deprivation and poor health. People who have multiple adverse childhood experiences are also more likely to make poor educational progress, have unplanned pregnancies and be unemployed. This in turn can have a negative impact on their parenting ability, perpetuating the cycle across generations.
- 2.3 Pressures on social workers and the whole social care system are growing each year. There is evidence that a growing number of families and children are coming into contact with the social care system. The reasons for this have not been well understood but the pressures on the social care system are clear: social workers are increasingly over-burdened and the cost to the council is growing.
- 2.4 Furthermore, it is clearly evidence those children who have access to the social care system face increasing mental health and wellbeing need. The 2016/17 Brighter Futures Survey highlighted issues such as bullying, stress and online safety as major areas of concern for Children and Young People. These issues also contribute to the wider health and wellbeing issues currently faced by young people more so by children in care.
- 2.5 It is proposed that a high-profile Mental Health summit is held, led by the Portfolio Holder for Health, bringing together representatives of key stakeholders including: children and young people's representatives; schools and the wider educational settings; service providers; the CCG; voluntary sector, council officials and elected members. This summit will be an opportunity to showcase to partners a new joined-up approach to addressing Children and Young People's mental health and wellbeing and its contributory factors in Thurrock.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 These are set out in detail in the report itself.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 This report fulfils a statutory duty of the Director of Public Health (Health and Social Care Act 2012). The specific recommendations contained in the report arise from a detailed analysis of local and national data, as well as a thorough review of evidence about what works in children's social care.

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

- 5.1 A wide range of stakeholders were consulted and contributed to this report. These are set out in the acknowledgements section of the report. No other consultation has taken place.

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

- 6.1 The report makes the case for a strategic shift in investment within Children's Services towards services which reduce the number of children who require social care intervention. The analysis presented in the report suggests that unless this is made, there is a risk that spending in the high-cost part of the system (Looked After Children) will become increasingly unsustainable.
- 6.2 The result of following the recommendations would be a gradual easing of pressure on the children's social care system, with fewer children becoming looked after.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman**
Management Accountant

The report looks at potential future demand for children's social care. Future forecasting suggests that there is a risk of the costs of Looked After Children increasing by up to £6m per year by 2027 unless action is taken to manage effectively. The report also outlines a number of opportunities to manage demand and recommends a strategic shift in investment towards preventative services. The report makes a number of specific recommendations about invest-to-save opportunities in this area. For example, a new edge of care service which prevents 22 children from entering care each year could save the council £1.2m per year though this is an estimate only and would need to be quantified in more detail before an investment decision is made. Specific investment decisions arising from the recommendations in this report would be subject to the approval of detailed business cases for individual services and these would be approved through the normal governance processes.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Principal Solicitor Children's and Adults'
Safeguarding

There are no legal implications. This report has been prepared in accordance with the statutory duties of the Director of Public Health.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Strategic Lead: Community Development and Equalities

The report outlines evidence that ethnic minority families are over-represented in the children's social care system. The recommendations made in this report would reduce or prevent the escalation of social care cases and help to address this imbalance.

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):

Detailed references are given in the main report.

9. Appendices to the report

Appendix 1 - Annual Public Health Report 2017: Executive Summary
Appendix 2 - Annual Public Health Report 2017: Full Report

Report Author:

Tim Elwell-Sutton
Assistant Director and Consultant in Public Health
Public Health

A Sustainable Children's Social Care System for the Future

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Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2017
Executive Summary

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full form
CFAT	Child and Family Assessment Team
ciN	Child in Need
CPP	Child Protection Plan
LAC	Looked After Child
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NICE	National Institute for health and Care Excellence
PASS	Prevention and Support Service
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A copy of the full version of this report is available on the Thurrock Council website at:
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/healthy-living/health-statistics-and-information>

Foreword

Public Health as a professional discipline encompasses a unique skill set that includes epidemiological expertise such as the quantification of need, demand and supply, the assessment of evidence, and the predictive modelling of health and care systems. In the UK these skills have historically been applied to healthcare systems in order to assist the NHS to commission and deliver more efficient, effective and equitable health services. However the move of public health to local authorities has presented opportunities for these skills to be applied more widely.



My Annual Public Health Report last year used this public health skill set in answering the question, ‘what would make our adult health and care services more sustainable in financial and operational terms?’ By mapping how our residents, and the funding that accompanies their journeys, flow through different constituent organisations, we were able to understand how clinical and professional practice in each organisation impacted on the system as a whole. This led to a series of recommendations to reduce demand for the most expensive and high intensity interventions by improving clinical practice ‘upstream’ in primary and community care to prevent avoidable events such as strokes, heart attacks and falls. The findings and recommendations within the report were seized upon by our local clinicians and system leaders, and have resulted in a comprehensive programme of system transformation and improvement that will ultimately lead to a new Accountable Care Partnership for Thurrock, reduced demand on local hospital and adult social care services, and demonstrable improvements in the health of our population.

This year I asked my team to apply the same skill set to children’s social care services, with a view to answering a similar question: how can we make our children’s social care system financially and operationally sustainable, and more effective? There were two reasons for my choice of topic. Firstly, it has long been known that children and young people who enter the care system typically experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than those in the general population. Experiencing care as a child or young person is associated with poorer educational attainment, poorer mental health, an increased risk of teenage parenthood and an increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system. Indeed children and young people who become ‘looked after’ by the state experience some of the worst health inequalities of any group in society. Secondly, demand on children’s social care services is increasing at an unsustainable rate both nationally and locally. Modelling famously done in the London Borough of Barnet suggested that if action is not taken to address this, local authorities will need to spend their entire budget on social care by 2025.

This report aims to understand our local children’s social care system, the factors that are driving demand and most importantly, the actions that we can take to address that demand and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the children and young people we care for. The work has been led by Tim Elwell-Sutton, Consultant in Public Health and his team and I commend it as one of the highest quality and most detailed pieces of public health practice in this field. I trust that the findings and recommendations contained within the report will be useful to colleagues in children’s social care in understanding our care system, and will continue the conversation on how we improve that system and the life chances of children and young people who enter it in the future.

Ian Wake

Director of Public Health, November 2017

Why focus on children's social care?



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One of the goals of Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to make Thurrock a place offering "Opportunity for All". This means making Thurrock somewhere children can flourish and achieve their full potential in life. We now understand better than ever before that distressing experiences in childhood are linked to poor health and wellbeing throughout life.

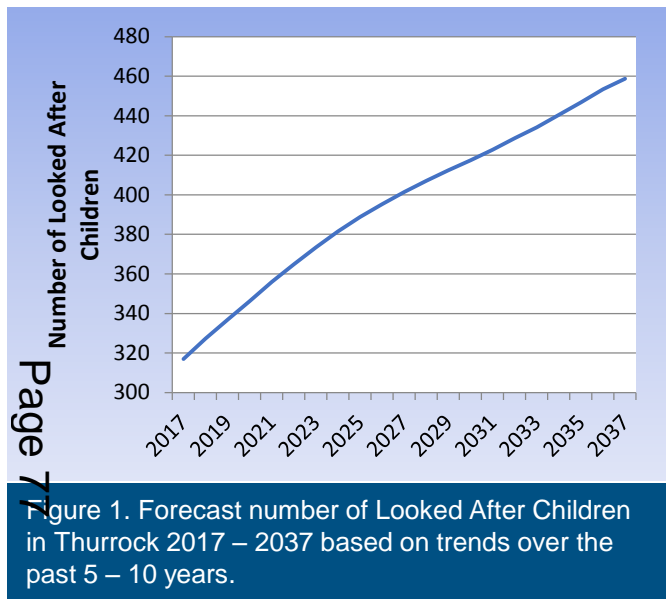
It is also increasingly understood that poor experiences in childhood can create intergenerational cycles of deprivation and poor health. People who have multiple adverse childhood experiences are more likely to make poor educational progress, have unplanned pregnancies and be unemployed. This in turn can have a negative impact on their parenting, perpetuating the cycle across generations.

The role of the children's social care system is to ensure that all children have the opportunities they deserve and that, when things go wrong, children are kept safe. Children's social workers have not traditionally been considered part of the public health workforce yet their work has at least as much impact on the health and wellbeing of some children as that of health professionals.

Pressures on social workers and the whole social care system are growing each year. Last year's Annual Public Health Report considered ways in which the adult health and social care system could be made more sustainable. This year, we consider the children's social care system, the pressures on it, and how we can create a system which gives every child in Thurrock the best possible start in life.

...poor experiences in childhood create intergenerational cycles of deprivation and poor health... social workers have at least as much impact on the health and wellbeing of some children as health professionals.

Strategic Recommendations



Unless action is taken to upgrade services which reduce demand, the cost of children's social care could become increasingly unsustainable. Work is already underway to make address this risk.

1. Make a long-term strategic commitment to invest in prevention

A high-level strategic commitment must be made to re-balance investment towards preventative activities. In recent years investment in preventative services has been eroded whilst spending on high-cost care placements has increased. By rebalancing investment towards preventative services, we can prevent children from ending up in care unnecessarily and, over time, relieve financial pressures on the social care system. This rebalancing has already begun but must be continued over the long-term to ensure sustainability.

2. Invest in the most effective preventative services

Making a strategic commitment to invest in prevention will only be effective if that investment is made in the right areas. We give specific recommendations about where to invest across the social care system and, where possible, we have made estimates of the cost-savings which would result from these investments.

3. Improve information on activity and spending

Reducing the number of children in the system and controlling costs can only be achieved if reliable activity and financial information are available, allowing us to understand current patterns of activity and spending. We make specific recommendations about how to improve our understanding of activity and spending.

Financial challenges and opportunities

Challenges

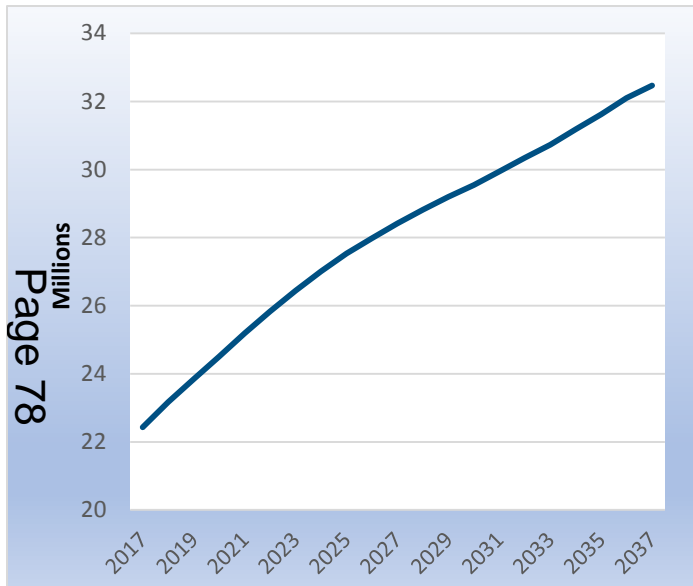


Figure 2. Forecast cost of Looked After Children in Thurrock 2017 – 2037 based on the past 5 – 10 years

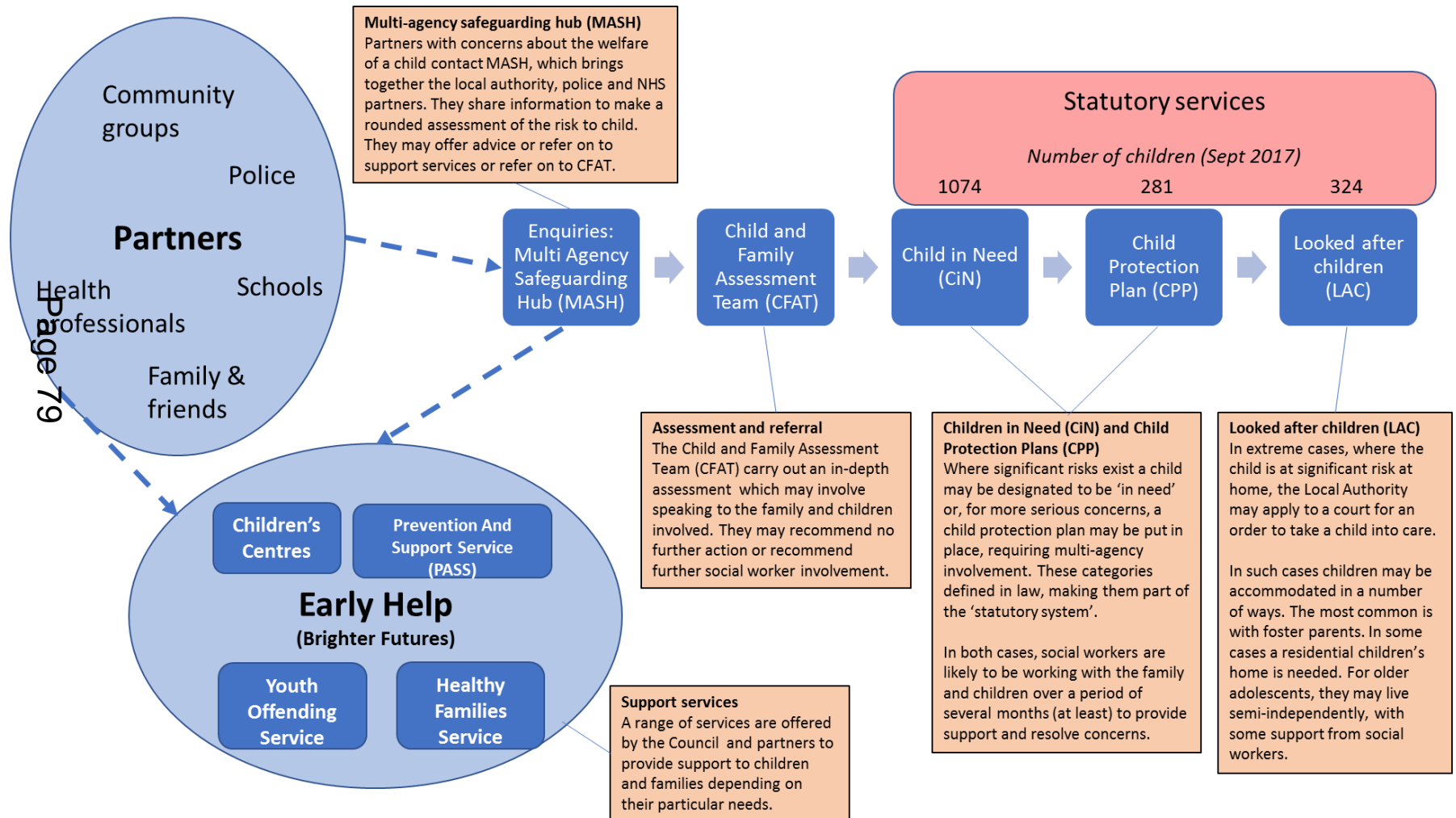
Based on trends over the past 5 – 10 years, we estimate that the annual cost of Looked After Children alone could rise by £6m over the next 10 years.

Opportunities

Impact and expected savings from investing in prevention

Intervention	Recommendation	Estimated Impact	Net savings
Edge-of-care service	A service offering intensive support to families where children are at high risk of coming into care. Estimated reach: 135 families per year	Preventing 22 children from coming into care per year	£1,225,153
Pause	A service working with 15 women per year who have had babies removed at birth	Preventing 2 –5 further children from being taken into care at birth.	£128,520 - £307,945
Domestic violence victims programme	Expand existing STEPS programme from current capacity of ~75 per year to ~135 per year	Preventing 144 additional incidents of domestic violence	£133,220
Domestic violence perpetrators programme	Expand current programme from 10 to 20 places per year	Preventing 19 additional incidents of domestic violence per year	-£7,293

How the children's social care system works in Thurrock



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Key questions addressed in the report

Questions not addressed in this report

The report focusses on ways of reducing the number of children in the social care system. Other ways of reducing the costs of social care are not covered. These may include, for example, reducing the number of agency staff and more efficient procurement of foster care places.

There is evidence that a growing number of families and children are coming into contact with the social care system in Thurrock and nationally. The reasons for this have not been well understood but the pressures that this puts on the social care system are clear: social workers are increasingly over-burdened and the cost to the council is growing. In order to help alleviate those pressures, this report attempts to answer some key questions:

What are the pressures on the social care system?

- Is the number of children in the social care system rising and is it higher than in other areas?
- Why are the numbers rising in Thurrock?
- How many children are likely to be in the social care system in future?

How can we reduce the number of children in the social care system?

- What works in early help?
- What works for Children in Need (CiN) and Child Protection Plans (CPP)?
- What works for Looked After Children (LAC)?

What are the financial opportunities related to reducing the number of children in the system?

What are the pressures? Is the number of children in the system rising?

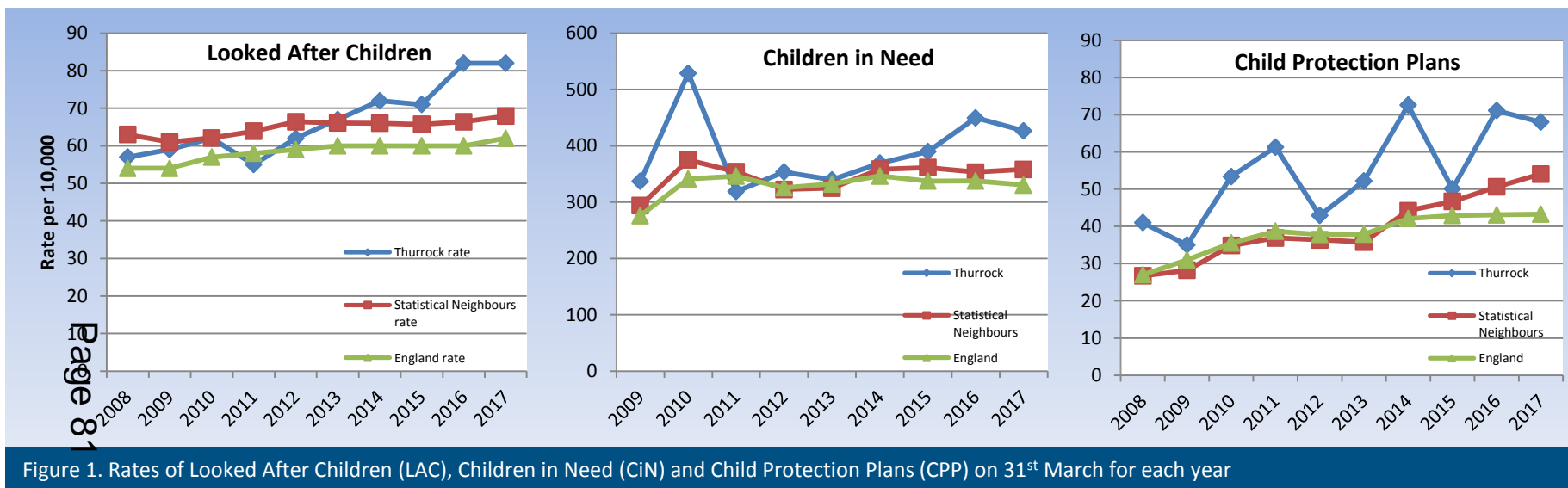


Figure 1. Rates of Looked After Children (LAC), Children in Need (CiN) and Child Protection Plans (CPP) on 31st March for each year

- There has been a significant increase in the number and rates of children in all parts of the social care system in recent years. Rates in Thurrock have risen faster than in other comparable areas in recent years though the most recent data suggests they are levelling off or even beginning to decline.
- The number of Looked After Children (LAC) has been growing nationally, though rates (per 10,000 children) have remained stable.
- In Thurrock the number of LAC has increased from 210 in March 2012 to 345 by March 2017

Rates in Thurrock have risen faster than in other comparable areas in recent years. The most recent data suggests they are levelling off or even beginning to decline though it is too early to tell if this is a long-term change in trajectory.

What are the pressures? Budget and spending

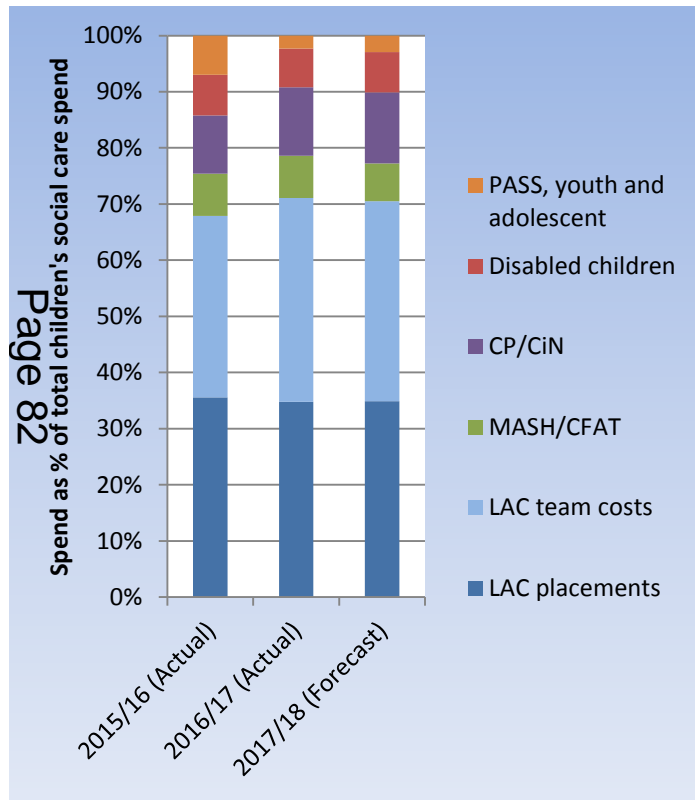


Figure 2. Spending in Children's social care by category from 2015/16 to 2017/18

The National Picture

Spending on children's social care has been rising nationally and many Local Authorities are struggling to continue to fund the current system. Analysis for the Department of Education (2016) found that the main strategy pursued by local authorities was to try to reduce the number of children in the system through greater emphasis on early help and service integration.

However, actual spending on early help services has declined in most areas, even as spending on statutory services (CiN, CPP, and LAC) has risen. The main reason for this is that cutting spending on early help is generally much easier than reducing spending on statutory services.

The Local Situation

In Thurrock, as nationally, investment in early help services appears to have declined as a proportion of spend in recent years. For example, spending on Early Offer of Help services in Thurrock has declined from £0.93 million in 2015/16 to £0.39 million in 2017/18. At the same time spending on external purchasing of placements for Looked After Children rose from £8.9 million to £9.3 million. Much of the reduction in early help services followed the withdrawal of £450,000 of NHS funding previously contributed by Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group.

We estimate that spending on Looked After Children now makes up around 71% of all children's social care spending.

Why have numbers been rising faster in Thurrock than elsewhere?



In trying to understand the rise that has occurred in recent years, it is helpful to consider two types of force which may result in children ending up in the social care system. It might be that more children need a social care intervention than in the past (demand factors), or it could be that the social care system is more likely to intervene than in the past (supply factors). Therefore, we can address this question by considering the demand and supply factors (Bywaters P, et al., 2017) which may be at work in Thurrock.

Based on a review of the research literature we have identified the factors shown below as a framework for understanding growing demand for social care in Thurrock. We have tried, where possible, to quantify the impact of each of these factors in Thurrock in recent years.

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Demand factors

- Population growth
- Deprivation
- Ethnicity
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Interact with



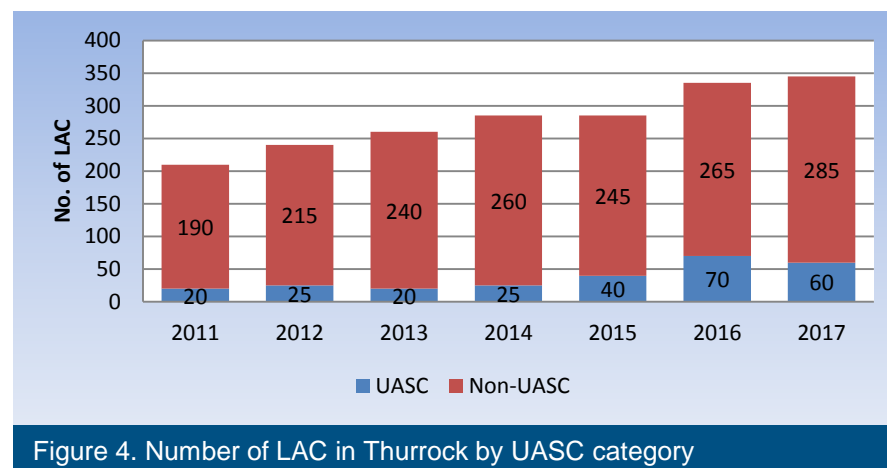
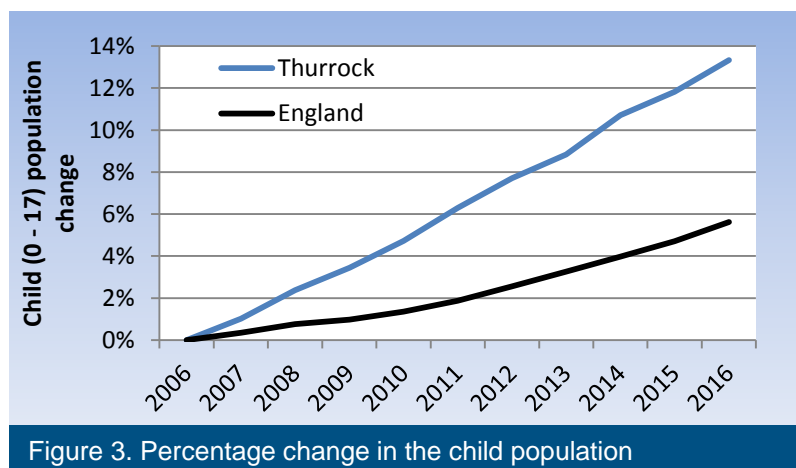
to produce LAC, CiN and CPP rates

Supply factors

- National legal and policy frameworks
- Risk tolerance
- Preventative services
- Re-referral (“failure demand”)

Why have numbers been rising faster in Thurrock than elsewhere? Demand factors

Demand factor	Possible impact in Thurrock
Population growth	Rapid economic and housing development make this a particularly strong pressure in Thurrock. Our child population grew by 13.3% from 2006 to 2016, compared to 6% for England as a whole.
Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC)	Thurrock has seen a large number of UASC become Looked After Children in recent years. At one point there were 103 UASC in the care system. A national agreement on the dispersal of UASC has helped to reduce the number to 38 (Aug 2017) and it is likely to fall further.
Deprivation	Evidence shows a strong association between deprivation and rates of social care intervention. There have been modest increases in child poverty in Thurrock in recent years.
Ethnicity	We found that the evidence linking ethnicity and social care activity is inconclusive.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	As child mortality rates decline, the number of children with complex needs is growing. A small number of these children become looked after but the costs of their care can be very high.



Why have numbers been rising faster in Thurrock than elsewhere? Demand factors

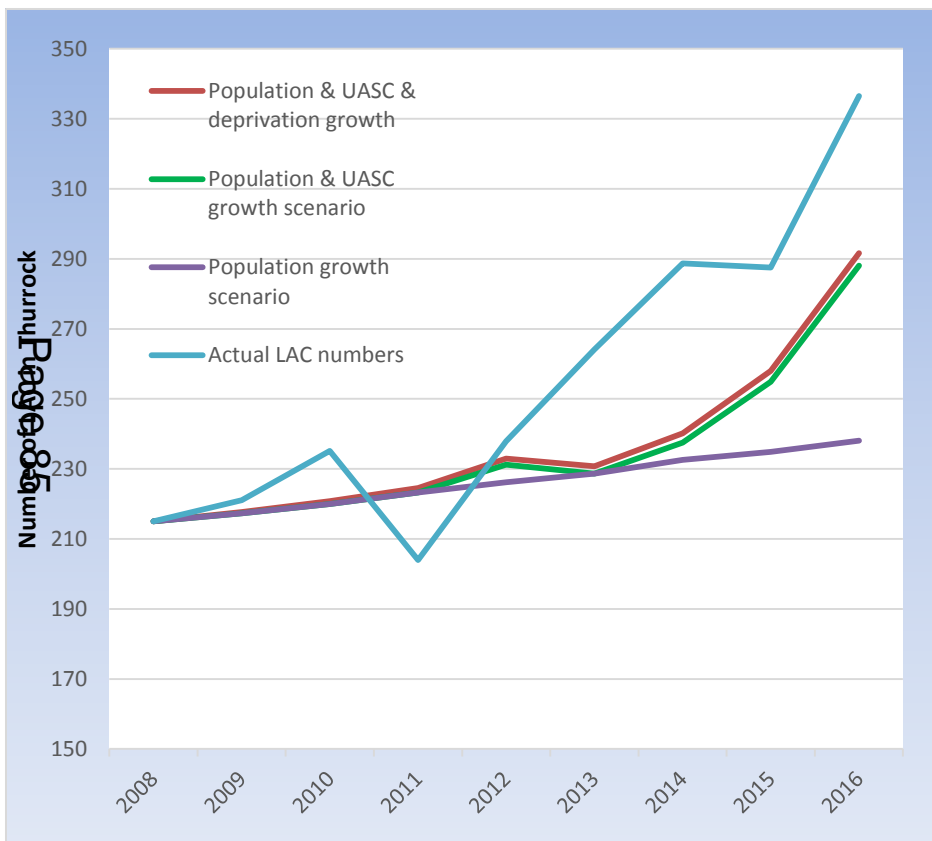


Figure 5. Actual number of LAC in Thurrock vs modelled scenarios for different demand factors, 2008 – 2016

Quantifying the impact of demand factors

To understand the impact of factors on the numbers of LAC in Thurrock, we modelled different scenarios.

In Figure 5, the blue line shows the actual numbers of Looked After Children on 31 March each year (2008 – 2016).

The purple line (population growth scenario) shows what the numbers would have been if the rate of LAC had stayed constant at 2008 levels. Population growth alone would have led to a modest rise in LAC numbers.

The green line (population & UASC growth), adds in the actual numbers of UASC who entered the system in those years.

The red line (population & UASC & deprivation) adds in an estimate of the impact of slightly higher levels of child poverty.

Other demand factors were not easily quantified in this way but are unlikely to make a significant difference.

Conclusion: Demand factors can account for some but not all of the rise in LAC numbers, it is likely that supply factors have also contributed.

Why have numbers been rising faster in Thurrock than elsewhere? Supply factors

Supply factor	Possible impact in Thurrock
National legal and policy frameworks & Risk tolerance	High profile, national cases of child protection failure have shaped the policy environment over a number of years. New policy and guidance may have contributed to a decline in risk tolerance amongst social workers. This is likely to have had a long-term affect on the number of children entering and staying in the social care system though the impact is hard to quantify.
Preventative services	The amount of money spent on preventative services has fallen significantly in recent years (see above). This has led to the decommissioning of services such as the Family Intervention Programme and community substance misuse services. Other services have had their capacity reduced. Within statutory services, social workers now have less time to focus on working with families who have had children removed from their care.

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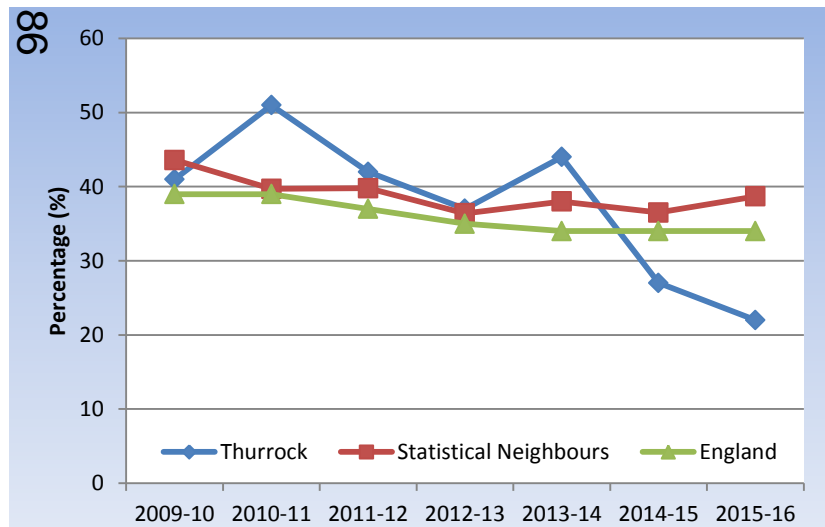


Figure 6. Percentage of children returning home after a period of being looked after

Even once children become looked it is sometimes possible for them to return to their own families once significant issues have been resolved. The proportion of children returning home decline from a peak of 51% in 2010/11 to just 22% in 2015/16. The reasons for this decline need to be investigated further but it is possible that the squeeze on resources has left social workers and support services little time to continue working with the families of children who have been taken into care. This trend has major consequences for the children and families involved as well as an impact on the number of children who remain looked after by the local authority.

How many children are likely to be in the social care system in future?

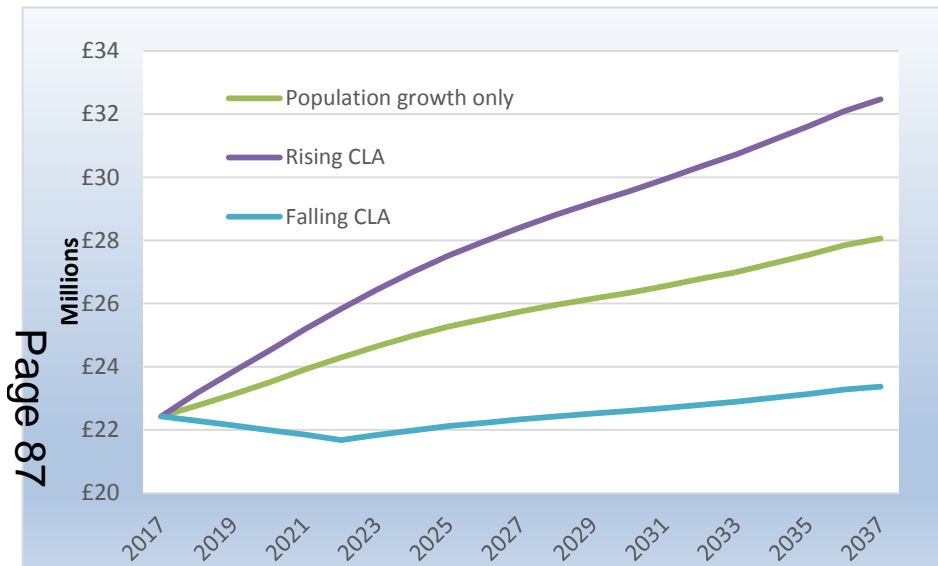


Figure 7. Forecast impact of changes in LAC rates and population growth on the cost of services for Looked After Children in Thurrock 2017 - 2037

How to forecast future numbers

Forecasting future numbers is challenging and involves a lot of uncertainty. We have developed a new forecasting methodology for Thurrock. The alternative scenarios presented here represent our best estimate of future costs if a given set of assumptions holds true.

The cost of doing nothing

Projected changes in LAC costs over the next 10 years

Scenario	3 years	5 years	10 years
Rising CLA	£2.08M	£4.01M	£5.98M
Population growth only	£1.07M	£2.22M	£3.32M
Falling CLA	-£0.44M	-£0.59M	£0.94M

Forecast scenarios

Rising CLA scenario: This is based on trends over the past 5 – 10 years and forecasts a 27% increase in activity over 10 years.

Population growth only: This scenario shows that even if LAC rates remain stable in future, population growth will drive up costs significantly.

Falling CLA: This shows the impact of bringing LAC rates down to the current national average over the next 5 years and then staying steady after that.

Action is underway to move Thurrock from the upper to the lower trajectory.

How can we reduce the number of children in the system?

Recent Trends and Action

A new Prevention and Support Service: this brings together a number of previous prevention services including the Early Offer of Help and Troubled Families. This has also been integrated into Brighter Futures.

Brighter Futures has been established to integrate Thurrock's early years and preventative services. Providing a more joined-up service is designed to prevent issues from escalating to the level where social worker intervention is required

Targeting social work. A data system called Xantura has been commissioned to provide 'predictive analytics'. The system uses data from a variety of sources to flag up children at high risk, allowing social workers to intervene earlier and more effectively.

Reductions in agency staffing have been pursued. Agency numbers now appear to be in steady decline.

Signs of Safety. This is a strengths-based approach to child protection work which is being rolled out in Thurrock to improve case work and risk assessment.

Service review. The council's Service Review Board is working closely with Children's services to find ways of working more efficiently.

LAC numbers may have started to decline according to the most recent data, since April 2017, the number of LAC in the system has started to decline. Much of this is due to reductions in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children.

Recommended * future developments on early help	Expected Impact
<p>Expand the capacity of parenting services by 90% to meet current demand.</p> <p>Review the referral system into early help and especially investigate the lack of referrals into Triple-P parenting programmes.</p>	<p>Expanding capacity of existing services will prevent escalation to CiN/CP/LAC stage or enable de-escalation for families already at those stages.</p>
<p>Consider expanding inclusion criteria of some early help services to families of CiN/CP children and families who have had children removed. Capacity may need to be expanded accordingly.</p>	<p>Prevent escalation to LAC and promote children returning home to their families.</p>
<p>Ensure end of Troubled Families (TF) funding is used to strengthen prevention</p> <p>Planned changes to TF funding should be treated as an opportunity to focus the service on preventing children from becoming looked after in line with the evidence base presented in the full report.</p>	<p>Ensure that the balance of investment is moving towards prevention rather than away from it, reducing costs in more expensive parts of the system.</p>

* All recommendations are based on an extensive review of research evidence for reducing numbers in the social care system

How can we reduce the number of children in the system?

Estimated financial impact of a new edge of care service

Plans are being drawn up to design an edge-of-care service. Based on a cost-effectiveness study of Multi-Systemic Therapy we estimated the possible costs and benefits for Thurrock

Eligible families	135.5
Cost per family	£2,285
Total cost	£309,618
No. of LAC prevented	21.7
Gross savings	£1,534,771
Net savings	£1,225,153
Directly cashable net savings*	£649,331

* "Directly cashable" savings can quickly be removed from budgets. Here, only placement costs are considered to be directly cashable. Other savings (e.g. staff time) may take longer to translate into reduced spending.

Recommended future developments on CiN and CPP	Expected Impact
<p>Establish an "edge of care" service to work intensively with children who are at risk of becoming looked after.</p> <p>Design this service based on Functional Family Therapy (FFT) or Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) which have the strongest evidence base.</p> <p>Put in place a robust evaluation plan to establish effectiveness and cost-effectiveness</p>	Prevent children in the social care system (CIN and CPP) from becoming looked after.
<p>Expand existing domestic violence programmes</p> <p>Expand the two existing programmes (for victims and perpetrators). An increase of 50% - 100% would be needed to meet current demand.</p>	Reduce: risk to parents and children who are victims of domestic violence; the impact of domestic violence on children; escalation within the social care system.
<p>Targeted drug and alcohol outreach to families of Children in Need or on a Child Protection Plan</p>	Prevent escalation and reduce the duration of social care intervention by dealing with underlying substance misuse

How can we reduce the number of children in the system?

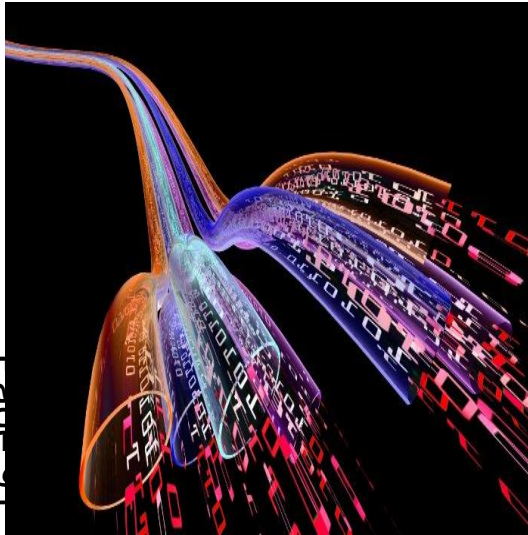
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For women aged 16 – 17, when their first child is removed, there is a 32% chance of this being repeated... and 40% of mothers who have multiple children removed at birth have themselves experienced being in care

Recommended future developments on Looked After Children	Expected Impact
<p>Invest in services which allow Looked After Children to return home</p> <p>Work systematically with families of children who have been taken into care to resolve problems and, where possible, to allow them to the children to return home.</p> <p>Consider including this within the remit of the edge-of-care service.</p> <p>Design of this service should begin with an in-depth analysis of why rates of children returning home to their families appear to have declined significantly in recent years.</p>	<p>Increase the number of Looked After Children able to return home to their families and reduce the amount of time they spend in care and reduce costs significantly.</p>
<p>Prevent mothers from having multiple babies taken into care</p> <p>Commission the Pause programme (or something similar) to provide intensive support to mothers who have had a baby removed.</p> <p>Put in place robust evaluation of the programme to assess effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.</p>	<p>Reduce the number of mothers who have multiple babies removed from their care and reduce the number of children taken into care.</p>

How can we reduce the number of children in the system? Improving information



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Monitoring trends in key cost drivers will help to control costs and evaluate the effectiveness of preventative strategies

Recommendation	Details
Monitor trends in key cost drivers	Key cost drivers identified are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The numbers of weeks of care provided by the Council over the course of a year; 2. The average length of stay of children in care; 3. The average cost of placements of different kinds.
Link data on activity and spend	Linking data systems recording activity and spend will allow more accurate understanding of why costs are changing.
Carry out a financial deep dive on Looked After Children	A more accurate understanding is needed of all the costs associated with Looked After Children.
Investigate the decline in the number of children returning to their families after a period of being looked after	This may be an important factor increasing the number of children in care and, therefore, costs. Further data analysis and case-note audit may be required to understand the rapid decline in recent years.
Develop and update the forecasting model	The forecasting here is based on a new modelling method which could be significantly improved in detail and accuracy.

Acknowledgements

- **Report authors:**
- Tim Elwell-Sutton, Assistant Director and Consultant in Public Health
- Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager – Children
- Maria Payne, Senior Public Health Programme Manager – Health Intelligence
- Annelies Willerton, Public Health Graduate Trainee

A large number of people contributed to this project and it would be impossible to thank them all. We would especially like to thank and acknowledge the important contributions made by the following people who have assisted in the production of this report:

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- Nicola Smith, Public Health Intelligence Analyst
- Nilufa Begum, Management Accountant

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A Sustainable Children's Social Care System for the Future

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2017



List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full form
CFAT	Child and Family Assessment Team
CiN	Child in Need
CPP	Child Protection Plan
LAC	Looked After Child
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NICE	National Institute for health and Care Excellence
PASS	Prevention and Support Service
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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Foreword

Public Health as a professional discipline encompasses a unique skill set that includes epidemiological expertise such as the quantification of need, demand and supply, the assessment of evidence, and the predictive modelling of health and care systems. In the UK these skills have historically been applied to healthcare systems in order to assist the NHS to commission and deliver more efficient, effective and equitable health services. However the move of public health to local authorities has presented opportunities for these skills to be applied more widely.

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This year I asked my team to apply the same skill set to children’s social care services, with a view to answering a similar question: how can we make our children’s social care system financially and operationally sustainable, and more effective? There were two reasons for my choice of topic. Firstly, it has long been known that children and young people who enter the care system typically experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than those in the general population. Experiencing care as a child or young person is associated with poorer educational attainment, poorer mental health, an increased risk of teenage parenthood and an increased likelihood of entering the criminal justice system. Indeed children and young people who become ‘looked after’ by the state experience some of the worst health inequalities of any group in society. Secondly, demand on children’s social care services is increasing at an unsustainable rate both nationally and locally. Modelling famously done in the London Borough of Barnet suggested that if action is not taken to address this, local authorities will need to spend their entire budget on social care by 2025.

This report aims to understand our local children’s social care system, the factors that are driving demand and most importantly, the actions that we can take to address that demand and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the children and young people we care for. The work has been led by Tim Elwell-Sutton, Consultant in Public Health and his team and I commend it as one of the highest quality and most detailed pieces of public health practice in this field. I trust that the findings and recommendations contained within the report will be useful to colleagues in children’s social care in understanding our care system, and will continue the conversation on how we improve that system and the life chances of children and young people who enter it in the future.

Ian Wake

Director of Public Health, November 2017

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Introduction

Why focus on children's social care?

One of the main goals of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy is to make Thurrock a place offering "Opportunity for All". Central to this goal is making Thurrock a place where children can flourish and achieve their full potential in life.

It is increasingly recognised that improving health and wellbeing for our population has to start early in life, even before birth. We now have a better understanding than ever of how distressing experiences in childhood are linked to poor health and wellbeing in adulthood. For example, it has been found (Bellis, et al., 2014) that adults who had several adverse childhood experiences, such as child abuse, parental separation, and household members with substance abuse are:

- nine times more likely to be incarcerated ;
- likely to have significantly worse mental health;
- three times more likely to develop diabetes ;
- six times more likely to have a stroke.

It is also increasingly understood that poor experiences in childhood can create intergenerational cycles of deprivation and poor health. People who have multiple adverse childhood experiences are also more likely to make poor educational progress, have unplanned pregnancies and be unemployed. This in turn can have a negative impact on their parenting ability, perpetuating the cycle across generations.

The role of the children's social care system is to ensure that all children have the opportunities they deserve and that, when things go wrong, children are kept safe. The local authority has a legal duty to intervene where there are concerns for the welfare of children in Thurrock. These can include cases of abuse or neglect. They also include situations where parents have problems with issues such as mental health or substance misuse which affect their ability to care for their children. In such cases, the social care system is there to safeguard the interests of the child. In the most extreme cases, courts may decide that a child should, for their own wellbeing, be taken into the care of the local authority and become a 'looked after child' (LAC).

Children's social workers have not traditionally been considered part of the public health workforce, yet their work has at least as much impact on the current and future health and wellbeing of children in Thurrock as that of health professionals.

Pressures on social workers and the whole social care system are growing each year. There is evidence that a growing number of families and children are coming into contact with the social care system. The reasons for this have not been well understood but the pressures that this puts on the social care system are clear: social workers are increasingly over-burdened and the cost to the Council is growing.

Last year's Annual Public Health Report considered ways in which the health and adult social care system could be made more sustainable. This year, we consider the children's social care system, the pressures on it, and how we can create a system which gives every child in Thurrock the best possible start in life.

How this report is organised

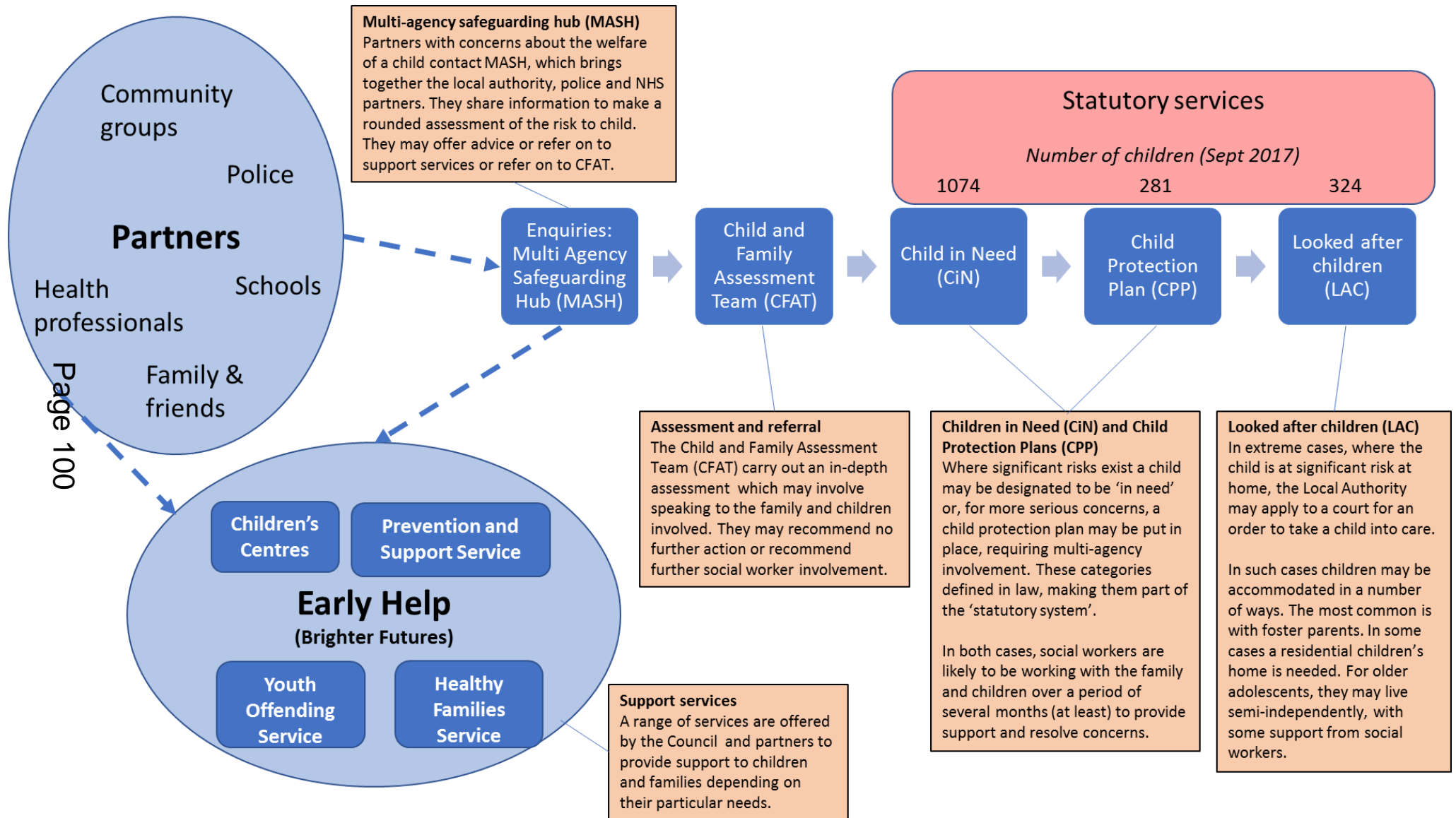
This report sets out to answer a number of key questions about the children's social care system and is organised the following way:

- A guide to how the children's social care system works;
- A summary of our recommendations and the financial opportunities identified by our work;
- Section 1 explores the pressures on children's social services. It aims to answer key questions including:
 - Is the number of children in the social care system rising faster in Thurrock than in other areas?
 - Why are the numbers rising so fast?
 - How many children are likely to be in the social care system in future?
- Section 2 looks at how we can reduce the number of children in the social care system. In particular, it considers what can be done to prevent children from being taken into care and finds that there are actions which can be taken at every stage of the system to prevent this outcome;
- Section 3 sums up the key findings and gives detailed recommendations.

Questions not addressed in this report

In this report we focus on ways of reducing the number of children in the social care system. Other ways of reducing the costs of social care are not covered. These may include, for example, reducing the number of agency staff or more efficient procurement of foster care places.

Figure 1. How the children's social care system works in Thurrock



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Summary of recommendations and financial opportunities

Summary of recommendations

Based on our analysis, we make the following three strategic recommendations for managing the pressures on the children's social care system in Thurrock:

1. Make a long-term strategic commitment to invest in prevention

To reduce the number of children in the social care system, a high-level strategic commitment must be made to re-balance investment towards preventative activities. In recent years investment in preventative services has been eroded whilst spending on high-cost care placements has increased. By rebalancing investment towards preventative services, we can prevent children from ending up in care unnecessarily and, over time, relieve financial pressures on the social care system. This rebalancing has already begun but must be continued over the long-term to ensure sustainability.

The change must be seen against the background of continuing cost pressures particularly due to rapid population growth. However, we have demonstrated that the cost of doing nothing is likely to be much higher than the costs of investing in preventative services.

2. Invest in the most effective preventative services

Making a strategic commitment to invest in prevention will only be effective if that investment is made in the right areas. Based on our review of evidence we recommend:

- **Early help:** Making efforts to expand the number of families benefiting from early help services by increasing capacity of existing services, strengthening referral systems and expanding inclusion criteria;
- **Children in Need & Child Protection Plans:** Investing in an 'edge of care' service to work intensively with children at greatest risk of coming into care; expanding the capacity of existing parenting and domestic violence programmes; more targeted drug and alcohol outreach to families of Children in Need or on a Child Protection Plan;
- **Looked After Children:** Working systematically with families who have had children removed to increase the chances of Looked After Children being reunited with their families; providing intensive support to mothers (especially young mothers) who have had babies removed from their care to prevent this from re-occurring in future.

3. Improve information on activity and spending

Reducing the number of children in the system and controlling costs can only be achieved if reliable activity and financial information are available, allowing us to understand current patterns of activity and spending. For the purposes of this report, a new way of forecasting future activity and spending has been developed. This kind of forecasting can help to make good strategic decisions and financial plans for the future. The model used here is relatively simple and its accuracy could be improved with more work in future. Moreover, a number of weaknesses in existing data systems have been identified during the course of this report, which hinder effective planning and cost control.

Further details on these recommendations are given in Section 3.

Financial Opportunities Identified

Implementing the recommendations above, especially investing in prevention, could have a measurable impact on costs on the cost of providing children’s social care services. We have identified three key drivers of cost in the system: the rate of Looked After Children; the length of stay in care; the cost of care placements. The table below shows the potential financial impact of changes in these key determinants of the costs of Looked After Children alongside the interventions which could influence these cost drivers.

Savings calculations include reductions in the amount of money spent on placements for Looked After Children. These are “directly cashable” – that is, the Council would immediately spend less money as a result. Other savings (e.g. reductions in staff time) are less easily cashable but can be translated into lower spending over time.

Table 1. Potential annual savings from changes in key cost drivers and interventions

Cost driver	Change	Savings per annum	Directly cashable savings*	Recommended Interventions
LAC rate	11.6% reduction (to the same level as statistical neighbours)	£2.58M	£1.38M	Implement a new edge of care service possibly including short stay residential care for adolescents; support for mothers who have had babies removed from their care.
	5% reduction	£1.13M	£0.60M	Increase referrals and capacity in: parenting services and domestic violence programmes. Targeted drug and alcohol outreach to families of Children in Need or on Child Protection Plans. Successor to current Troubled Families programme designed to reduce LAC numbers.
Length of stay in care	1-week reduction to 34 weeks	£0.65M	£0.34M	Targeted re-unification work carried out by a new edge of care service.
	3-week reduction to 32 weeks	£1.93M	£1.02M	Extending the remit of early help and CP/CIN services to work with families who have had children removed from their care.
Cost of care placements	5% reduction	£0.6M	£0.6M	Enhancing procurement of placements. Continued efforts to recruit more in-house foster carers.

* See box at the top of this page for an explanation of ‘directly cashable savings’

Where possible we have estimated the impact and financial savings that would result for implementing specific interventions.

Table 2. Impact and expected savings from investing in prevention interventions

Intervention	Recommendation	Estimated Impact	Net savings	More details found in:
Edge-of-care service	Based on Functional Family Therapy or Multi-Systemic Therapy, working with 135 families per year	Preventing 22 children from coming into care per year	£1,225,153	Section 2.3.3
Pause	A service working with 10 women per year	Preventing 2 – 3 children from being taken into care at birth.	£128,520 - £307,945	Section 2.4.2
Domestic violence victims programme	Expand existing STEPS programme from current capacity of ~75 per year to ~135 per year	Preventing 144 additional incidents of domestic violence	£133,220	Section 2.3.1
Domestic violence perpetrators programme	Expand current programme from 10 to 20 places per year	Preventing 19 additional incidents of domestic violence per year	-£7,293	Section 2.3.1

1. The pressures on children’s services

1.1. Is the number of children in the social care system in Thurrock rising and is it higher than in other areas?

We can understand the pressures on the children’s social care system in two main ways: the number of children in the system, and the amount of money being spent on it. In this section, we consider first the trends in numbers of children in the system in Thurrock and secondly the cost of the social care system overall. In order to understand whether the numbers in Thurrock are growing faster than in other areas, we make comparisons with both national figures for England, regional figures for the East of England, and with ‘statistical neighbours’; that is, a group of local authorities which are statistically similar to Thurrock in terms of their population, levels of deprivation and other relevant factors.

1.1.1. Numbers of Looked After Children

There has been a steady rise in the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Thurrock in recent years from 210 in March 2012 to 345 by March 2017 (Table 3). Numbers have also been rising in other areas. In one sense, then, Thurrock is not unique.

In order to understand whether the rise seen in Thurrock is greater than in other areas, however, we need to look at the rates of LAC per 10,000 children (aged 0 to 17). These rates are shown in Figure 2. This shows that for England and Thurrock’s statistical neighbours, rates have been fairly steady in recent years. In Thurrock, however, the rate began to rise after 2011 and has increased by almost 50% since then (from 55 to 82 per 10,000 population). More recently, the rate of LAC in Thurrock has levelled off. However, this is primarily due to reductions in the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the system (Figure 3). The underlying rates of non-UASC have continued to rise. This is discussed below (section 1.2.1).

The fact that the numbers of Looked After Children have continued to rise nationally and amongst Thurrock’s statistical neighbours, whilst the rates have stayed the same suggests that, in other areas, the rising number of LAC over the past 5 years has been driven primarily by population growth, whilst in Thurrock other, local factors have been at work, driving up the rates as well as the numbers of Looked After Children.

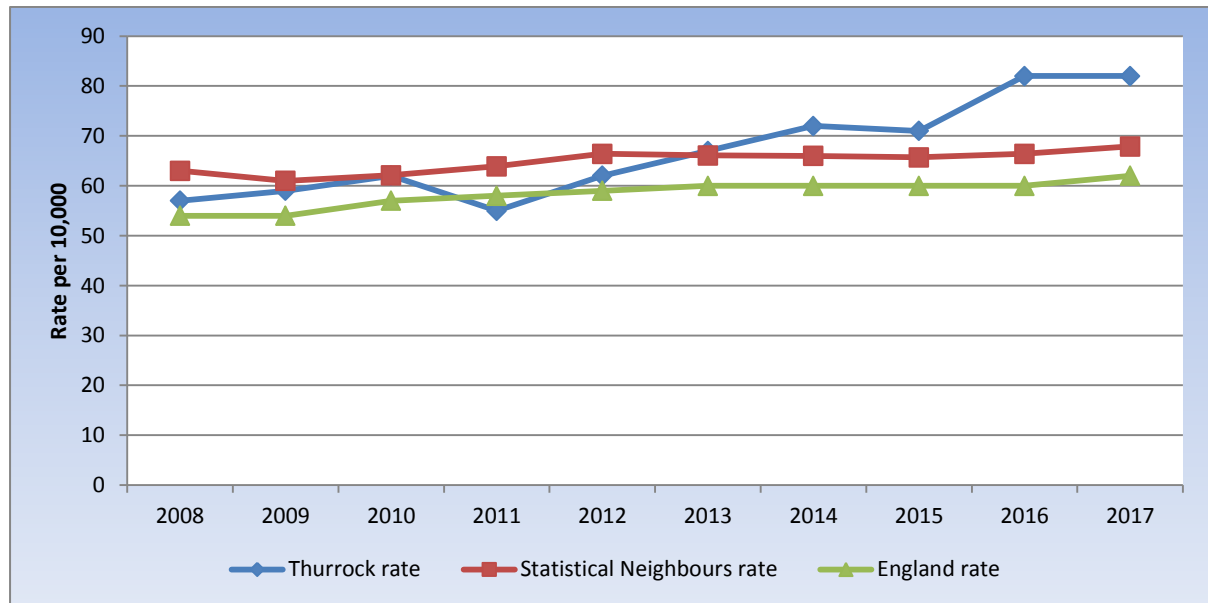
Table 3. Numbers of Looked After Children for Thurrock and comparator areas (2011 – 2017 – as of 31st March each year)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Thurrock	210	240	260	285	285	335	345
Statistical Neighbours	362	377	374	376	380	384	392.5
East of England	6410	6420	6300	6350	6140	6330	6460
England	65510	67070	68060	68810	69480	70440	72670

More recently, however, there does appear to be a levelling off in the rates in Thurrock which may suggest that the long-term upward trend is now coming under control. The latest data available at the time of writing is shown in Figure 4 below. This shows that since the start of this financial year (April 2017) rates have declined slightly from their 2016/17 levels. Much of this has been due to lower numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) though the non-UASC rates also

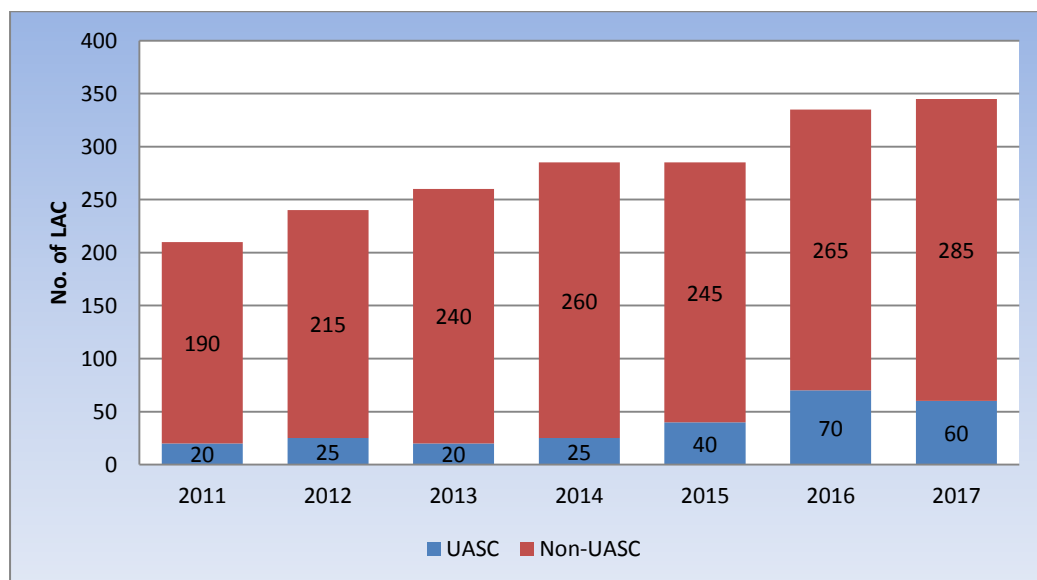
appear to be stable or declining. It is too early to tell at this stage whether these recent changes represent the beginning of a long-term change the trajectory of LAC rates but there are some encouraging signs.

Figure 2. Rates of Looked After Children in Thurrock, England and Statistical Neighbours at year end for 2008/9 to 2016/17



Source: LAIT

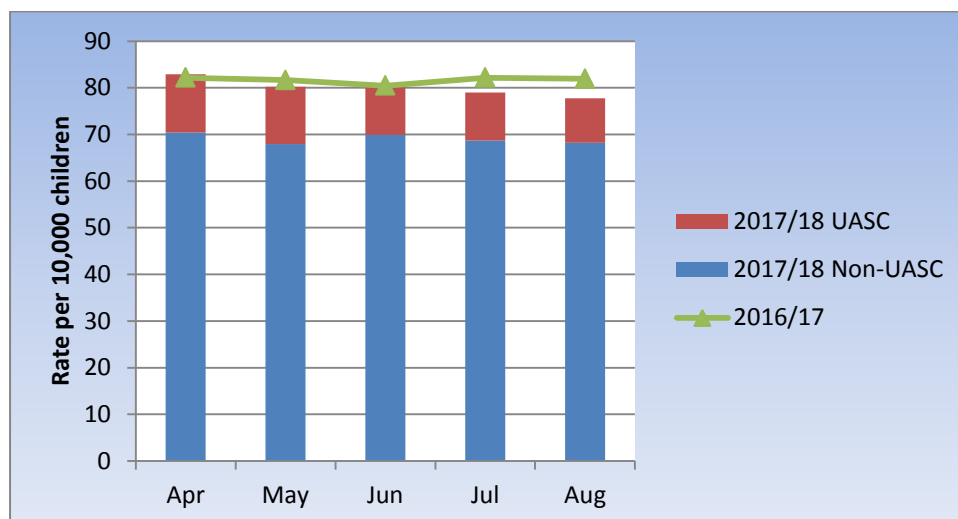
Figure 3. Number of Looked After Children in Thurrock by UASC* and non-UASC category, 2011 – 2017



Source: Department for Education Children Looked After Returns, 2011/12-2016/17

* UASC: Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Figure 4. Rate of Looked After Children in Thurrock by month for 2017/18.

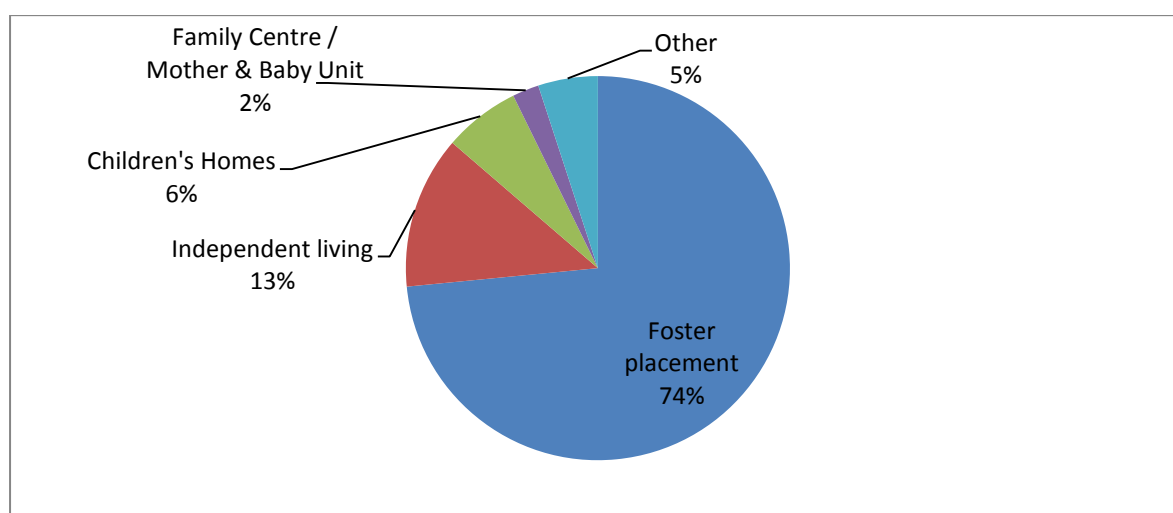


Source: Thurrock Council data

1.1.2. Caring for Looked After Children

Looked after children can be cared for in a number of ways. Figure 5 (below) shows that at the time of writing 74% of Looked After Children in Thurrock were in foster placements. In cases where a foster placement is either unsuitable or unavailable, children may be cared for in residential children's homes. Some older teenagers in care may be able to live semi-independently in settings where they are supported to learn important skills such as budgeting and cooking for themselves. In cases where a baby is at risk at home, it is possible for them to be accommodated in mother and baby unit which allows the bond between mother and baby to be continued in a safe environment.

Figure 5. Looked after children placements in Thurrock (August 2017)

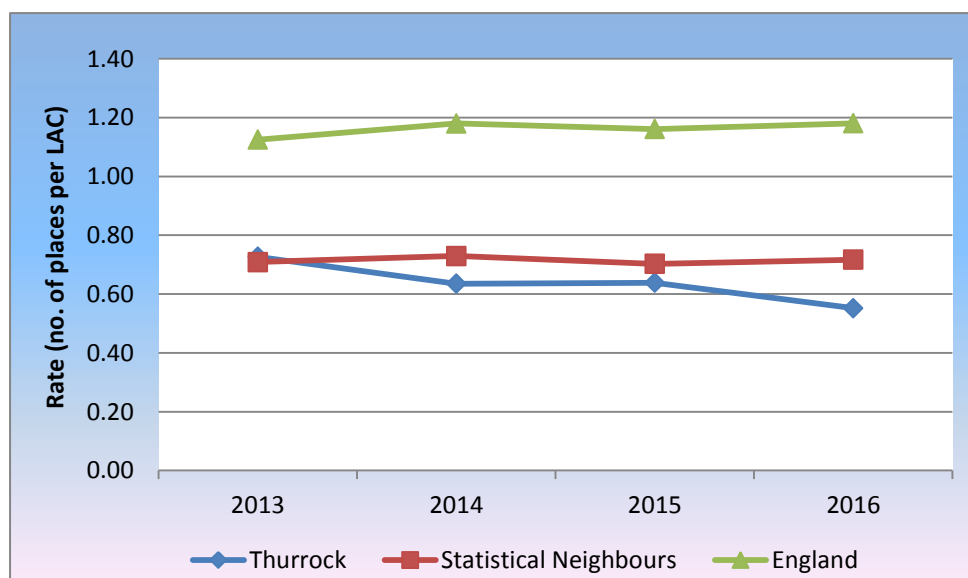


Recruiting and retaining sufficient foster carers is a major challenge for many local authorities including Thurrock. Some foster carers are employed directly by the local authority and others work through agencies known as IFAs (Independent Fostering Associations). It is significantly more expensive for the local authority to employ foster carers through agencies but a shortage of in-house foster carers sometimes makes this necessary.

Even taking into account agency provision, there is a shortage of foster carers available in Thurrock. Figure 6 indicates that this shortage has been getting worse for several years now, declining from 71 places available per 100 LAC in 2013 to just 55 in 2016. Thurrock now has the lowest rate of foster places available among all its statistical neighbours and a rate which is about half the national average. This can be attributed to an increase in the number of Looked After Children, alongside no significant change in the number of foster places available.

This shortage has implications for both the quality and the cost of care. The shortage of supply means that social workers have little choice when trying to match Looked After Children with suitable foster carers and often have to make compromises such as placing children far out of the borough. As Thurrock social workers have a duty to visit and support LAC even when they are living out of the borough, these arrangements take up a lot of social worker time and incur high travel costs.

Figure 6. Rate of approved foster places for Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours at year end, 2013 - 2016



Source: Fostering in England Statistics

1.1.3. Children in Need and Child Protection Plans

Although it is possible for children to become looked after soon after their first contact with the local authority, most children who end up being looked after have previously been classified as Children in Need (CiN) or, where concerns were more serious, have been on a Child Protection Plan (CPP). The length of these plans can vary from a few months to several years. In some cases they are ended when concerns are addressed and it is possible to 'step down' the care of that child (i.e. end social care involvement in their lives). In other cases, these plans end when the children reach the age of 18 or are taken into care.

During the course of a CiN or CP plan social workers are regularly involved with the child and their family with the aims of ensuring the child's safety and supporting families to make any changes needed to care for their child.

Similar to the trends for LAC, from a low point in 2011, the rate of Children in Need (CiN) appears to have risen in Thurrock in recent years and is now well above the national average and the average

for statistical neighbours (Figure 7). National rates, and those for statistical neighbours, meanwhile, appear to have stayed fairly stable over the same period.

The pattern for Child Protection Plans is similar, in that rates in Thurrock have increased over the past 6 – 8 years (Figure 8) and are higher than for comparators. One difference here, however, is that there does appear to have been a steady rise in CP plan rates nationally and amongst statistical neighbours over the same period. Overall, the data suggest that there are local factors at work keeping the amount of activity in Thurrock’s social care system high and rising.

Figure 7. Rate of Children in Need per 10,000 population (0 – 17) for Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours (2009 - 2016)

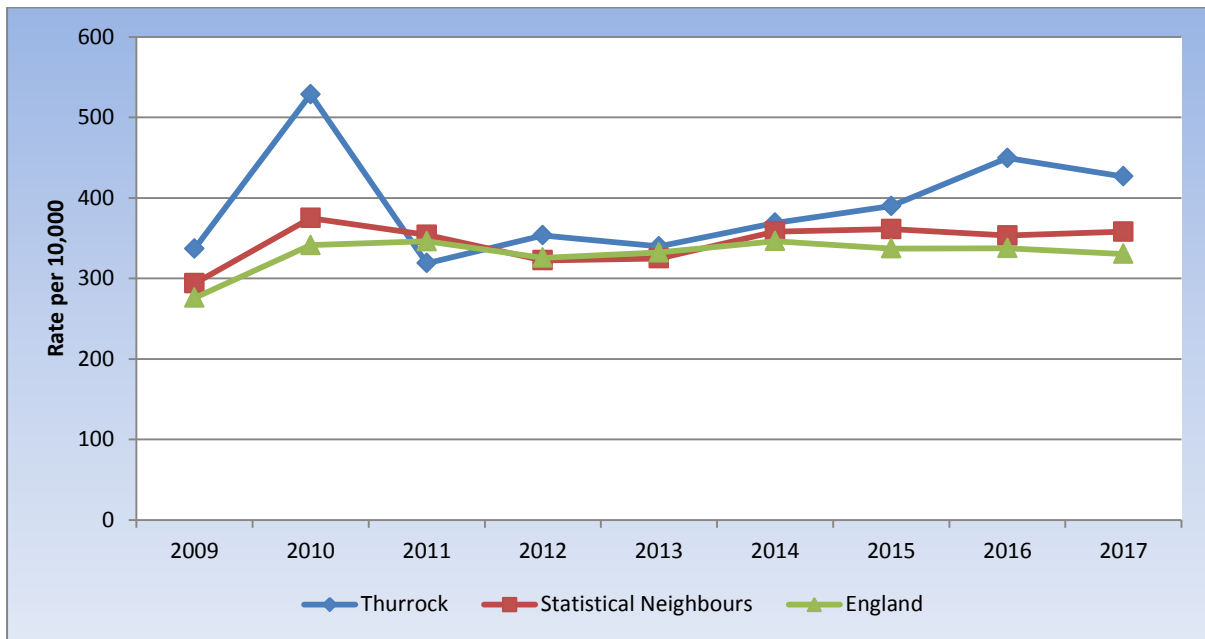
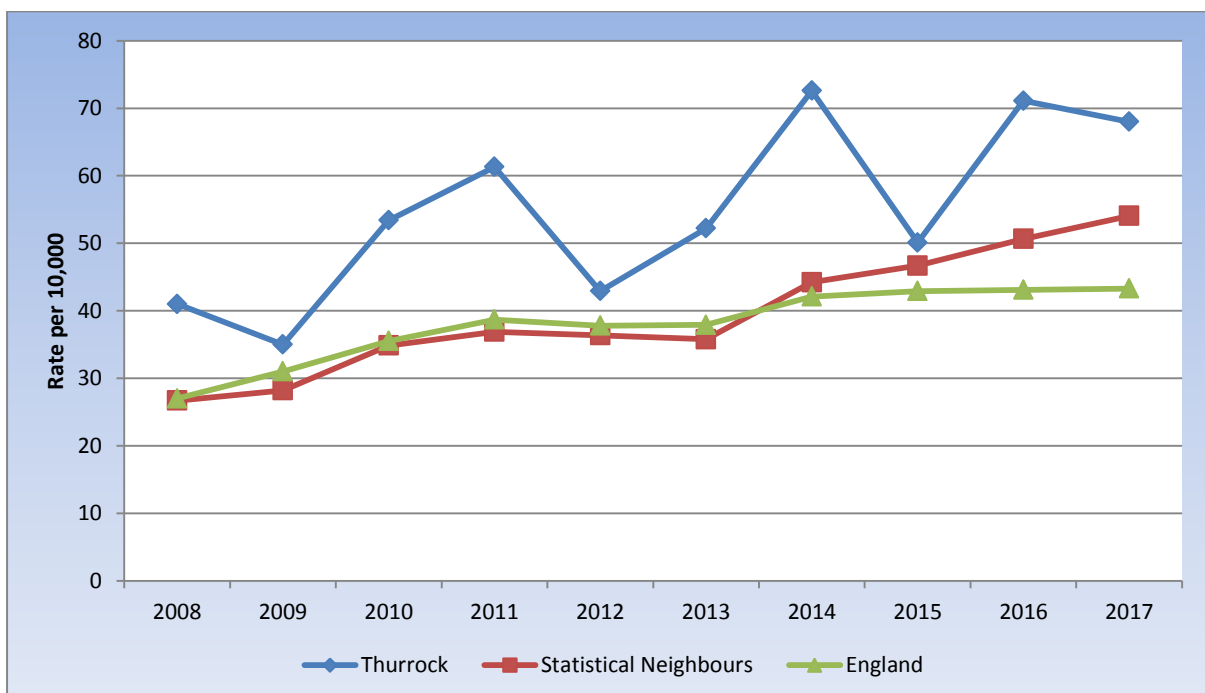


Figure 8. Rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan per 10,000 for Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours (2008 - 2016)



Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

MASH (the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) is the 'front door' for most children's social care work.

The MASH was established in 2014 with the aim of providing better inter-agency working and information sharing. As the first point of contact for most safeguarding enquiries, the MASH controls, to some extent, the flow of demand into the children's social care system. There is some evidence that the complexity of cases being referred into the MASH is increasing, with the proportion of enquiries rated as *Red* (the highest risk category) at the start doubling from 16.7% to 34.4% between 2015/16 and 2016/17. This has an impact on the workload of the statutory services, as the proportion of MASH enquiries that were transferred into social care increased from 64.9% to 76.2% in the same period.

1.1.4. Budget and Spending

The National Picture

Spending on children's social care has been rising nationally and many Local Authorities are struggling to continue to fund the current system. Analysis for the Department of Education (2016) looking at how Local Authorities have responded to these pressures since 2010 found that the main strategy pursued by most local authorities was to place greater emphasis on early help and integrating services. Both of these strategies are designed to reduce the numbers of children in the system and to prevent cases from escalating to the most expensive part of the system where children are taken into local authority care.

Although most authorities believe that early help (prevention) is vital for managing rising costs, analysis of actual spending shows a different picture. Between 2010/11 and 2013/14 national spending on statutory services (CiN/CPP and LAC) rose in real terms (from £5.659 billion to £5.890 billion) and as a proportion of total spending on children's services (from 57% to 65%) whilst spending on other areas decreased. One conclusion of the report was that:

Spending on some service areas was difficult or impossible for participating councils to change, for example where there were contractual constraints or statutory responsibilities, as for Looked After Children... however local councils had greater flexibility to decide spending changes on other areas, such as children's services early help. (Department for Education, 2016, p. 14)

The Local Situation

Analysis of local spending is not simple (see Data warning!) but the following conclusions are reasonably certain:

Data warning!

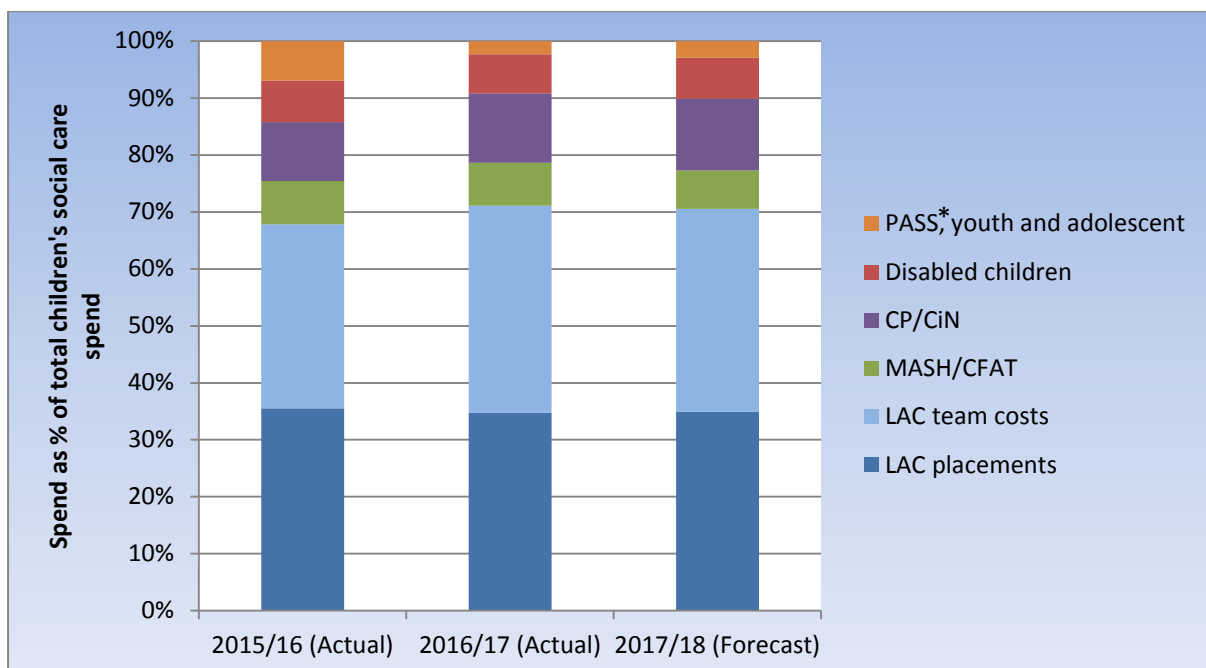
Analysing spending on children's social care is complex. It requires a number of assumptions to be made about what constitutes 'social care'. Moreover, categorisation of spending in this area has not always been consistent over the years, making it challenging to analyse trends over time. The analysis presented here, therefore, should be treated with some caution but represents our best estimate of how spending on children's social care has changed over recent years.

Also, for the purposes of this report spending on Looked After Children has been separated from other costs. This is based on a high-level analysis of budgets. A financial deep dive is needed to get a more accurate picture of the true costs to the Council of Looked After Children.

- In Thurrock, as nationally, investment in Early Help services has declined as a proportion of spend in recent years. For example, spending on Early Offer of Help services in Thurrock has fallen from £0.93 million in 2015/16 to £0.39 million in 2017/18. At the same time spending on external purchasing of placements for Looked After Children rose from £8.9 million to £9.3 million. Much of the reduction in early help services followed the withdrawal of £450,000 of NHS funding previously contributed by Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).
- By far the biggest area of spending on children’s social care is on Looked After Children (see Figure 9). Although the number of LAC at any one time is relatively small, the associated costs make up around 71% of all spending on children’s social care (see Figure 9). This is a rough estimate and further financial analysis is needed to obtain an accurate figure for the costs of LAC to the Council. Much of this cost is associated with ‘placements’ (e.g. the cost of foster care or children’s homes places).
- The most recent national data indicates that Thurrock’s rate of spend per looked after child has reduced over the last three years and is now similar to the average for England and for our statistical neighbours (Figure 10).

Overall, it is clear that controlling the costs of children’s social care in future will depend to a great extent on the ability of the Council to control costs associated with Looked After Children since this makes up the majority of spending. Reducing costs in this area, however, is likely to require greater investment in early help services and other strategies which reduce the number of children who end up being taken into local authority care.

Figure 9. Spending in Children’s social care by category from 2015/16 to 2017/18

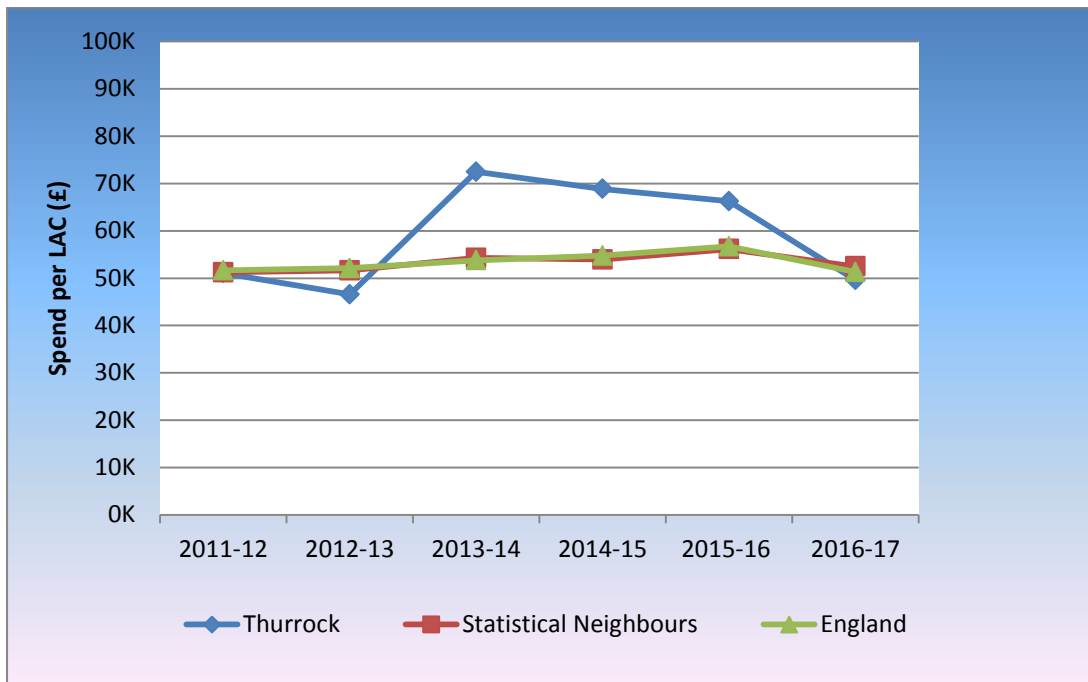


Source: Thurrock council finance

Note: “LAC team costs” are budgets for the social care teams working primarily with LAC. This will include some placement costs but further work is needed to separate these out from other team costs including staff and travel costs.

PASS: Prevention And Support Service

Figure 10. Spending on Looked After Children in Thurrock, and comparators, from 2011/12 to 2016/17



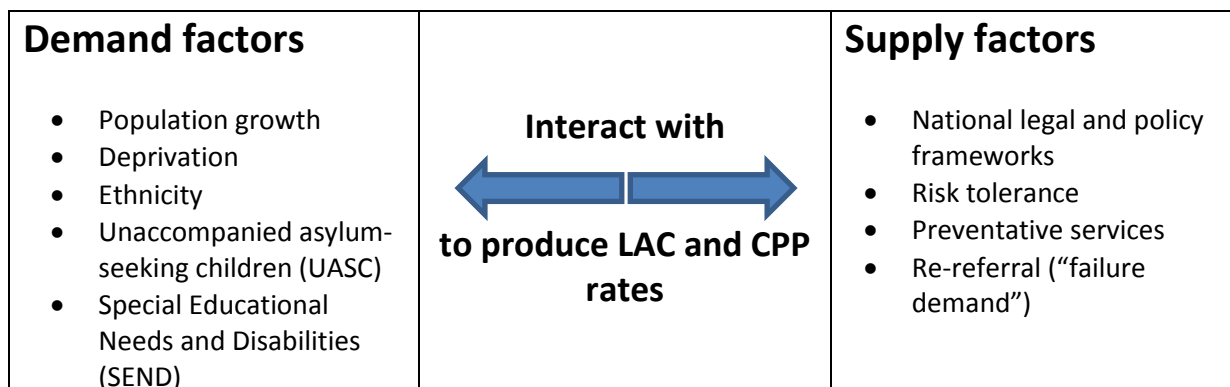
Source: Department for Education Local Authority and School Expenditure statistics and Children Looked After Returns, 2011/12-2016/17

1.2. Why are the numbers of children in the social care system rising in Thurrock?

We have seen that the numbers of children in the system are growing in Thurrock, faster than in other comparable areas. In trying to understand the rise that has occurred in recent years, it is helpful to consider two types of force which may result in children ending up in the social care system. It might be that more children need a social care intervention than in the past (demand factors), or it could be that the social care system is more likely to intervene than in the past (supply factors). Therefore, we can address this question by considering the demand and supply factors (Bywaters P. , et al., 2017) which may be at work in Thurrock.

Based on a review of the research literature we have identified the factors shown in Figure 11 as a framework for understanding growing demand for social care in Thurrock. The following sections try, where possible, to quantify the impact of each of these factors in Thurrock in recent years.

Figure 11. Demand and supply model adapted for Thurrock



Source: adapted from (Bywaters P. , et al., 2017)

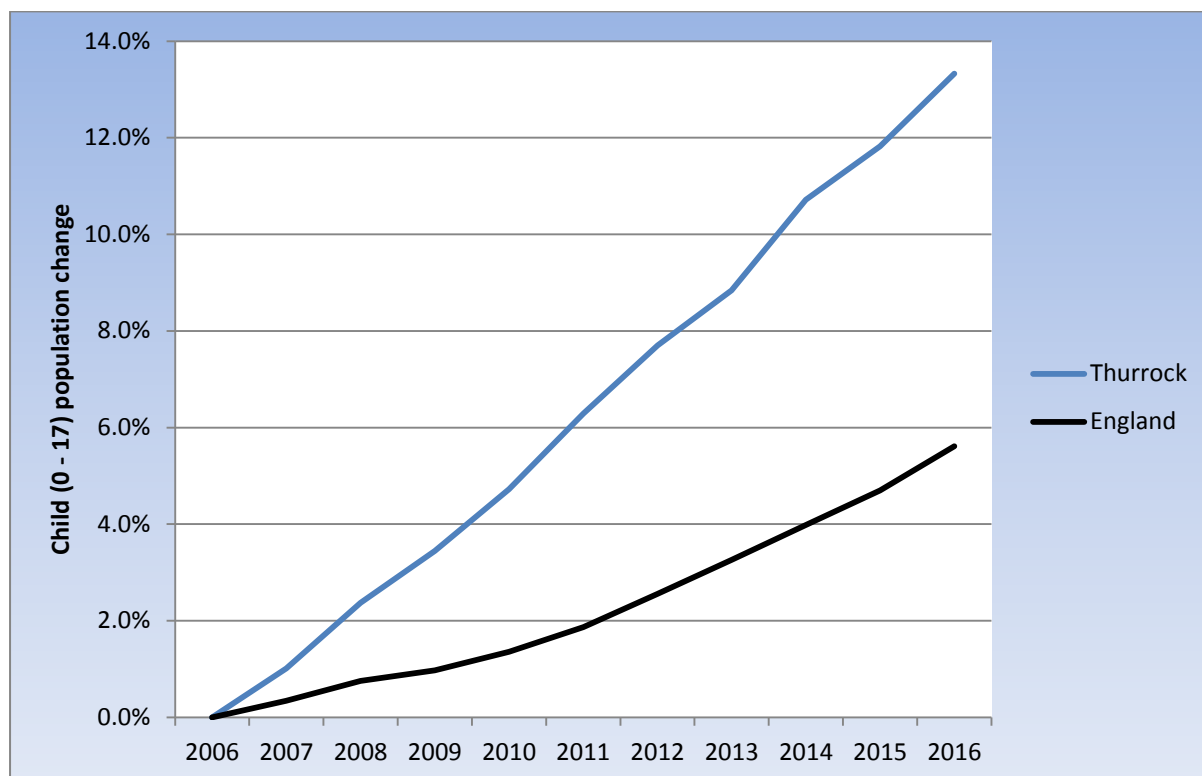
1.2.1. Demand factors

Population growth

Possibly the most important reason for the growing number of children in the social care system in Thurrock is growth in the child population. The high level of economic and housing development taking place makes this a particularly strong pressure in Thurrock. Moreover, this growth in population is likely to continue into the future, placing increasing pressure on the social care system and other services.

Figure 12 below shows the growth of the child (0 – 17) population in Thurrock and England between 2006 and 2016. This shows that the rate of growth in Thurrock has been much faster than the national average. Whereas England’s child population grew by 6% over that ten-year period, in Thurrock growth was more than double that at 13.3%. This, then, may account for a significant portion of the growth in the number of children in the social care system in recent years.

Figure 12. Percentage change in the child population in Thurrock and England, 2006 - 2016



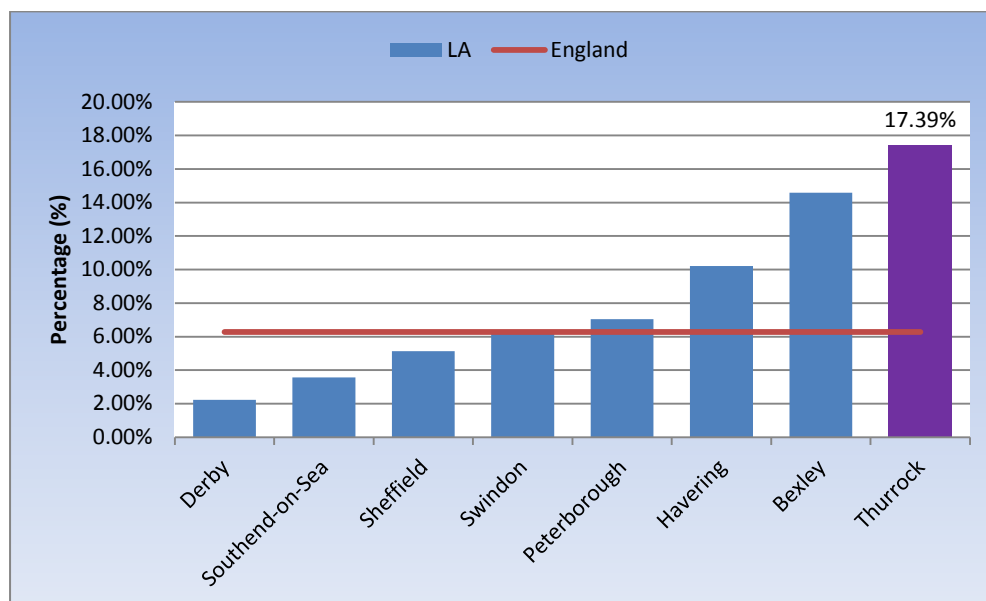
Source: Office for National Statistics mid-year population estimates

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Another factor which has certainly contributed to the rise in the number of Looked After Children in recent years has been a higher number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) arriving in Thurrock from abroad. Thurrock is particularly likely to receive such children due to the presence of two major shipping ports in the borough. If they are not accompanied by parents or guardians, asylum-seeking children become looked after by the local authority. Figure 13 shows that Thurrock has a much higher proportion of UASC in its LAC population than any of its statistical neighbours.

An arrangement to allow the dispersal of UASC across the region (the Interim National Transfer Protocol for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children) came into force in July 2016. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of UASC in Thurrock. From a peak of 103 in 2016, the numbers have fallen to 38 in August 2017. This agreement also means that over the next 1 – 2 years, the numbers of UASC are likely to continue to fall to around 28.

Figure 13. Percentage of Looked After Children who are unaccompanied asylum seekers (UASC), 2017



Source: Department for Education Children Looked After Returns, 2016/17

The high number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children entering Thurrock in recent years has had a significant impact on Thurrock’s headline rate of LAC. The financial impact, however, has been mitigated to some extent by the provision of central government funding for this purpose.

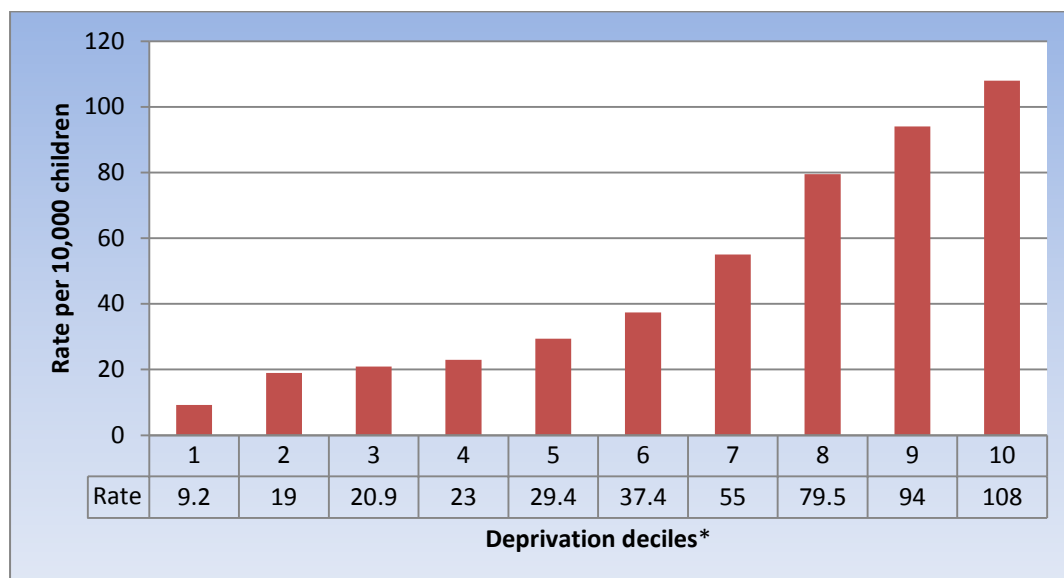
Nevertheless, there has been a significant impact on finances and on staff time, as the funding provided to the local authority for UASC does not cover the full cost of care.

Just as the financial pressure of rising UASC numbers was mitigated to some extent by central government funding, the potential benefits of falling numbers will, to some extent, be offset by a decline in this funding stream. Further work is needed to calculate the likely financial impact of this trend.

Deprivation

There is a large body of evidence showing that socio-economic deprivation is strongly associated with social care intervention rates. This is not only true in the UK, but internationally. A two-year project funded by the Nuffield Foundation found that children living in the most deprived areas of England were 13 times more likely to be on a Child Protection Plan and 11 times more likely to be looked after than children in the least deprived areas (Bywaters P. , Brady, Sparks, & Bos, 2016). This study also found that, on average, each 10% increase in neighbourhood deprivation levels was associated with a 30% increase in rates of Looked After Children (see Figure 14). The reasons for this strong association between deprivation and social care intervention are less clearly understood though there is evidence that both supply and demand factors play a part (Hood, Goldacre, Grant, & Jones, 2016).

Figure 14. Looked-after children rates per 10,000 children by deprivation decile*, midlands sample, 31 March 2012

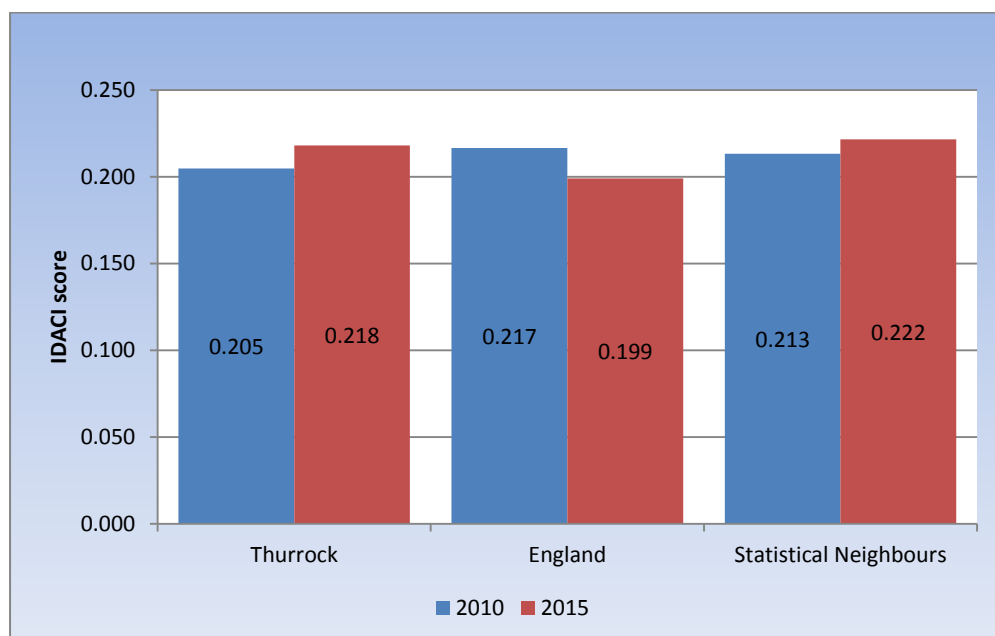


Source: (Bywaters P. , Brady, Sparks, & Bos, 2016)

* Deprivation deciles, 1 = most affluent, 10 = most deprived.

Given that deprivation is a strong driver of demand for social care, to what extent can this help to explain increases in social care activity in Thurrock in recent years? A useful measure of deprivation related to children is the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index) score which is a measure of the proportion of children (age under 16) living in low income households in an area. Figure 15 shows IDACI scores for Thurrock and comparator areas. The most recent data suggest that the level of child deprivation in Thurrock is slightly above the national average, though it is similar to statistical neighbours. Moreover, whereas nationally child deprivation rates appear to have declined between 2010 and 2015, in Thurrock and similar areas, child deprivation has become more common. We would, therefore, expect some increases in the level of social care activity in Thurrock due to increased levels of deprivation.

Figure 15. IDACI score for Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours (2010 and 2015)



Source: Department for Communities and Local Government

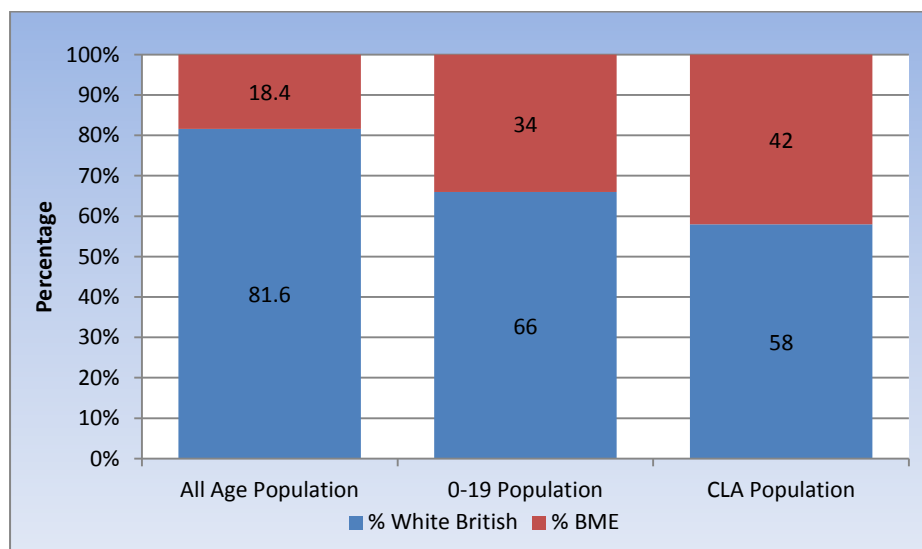
Ethnicity

A variety of evidence suggests that ethnicity is a major factor influencing demand for children’s social care services. For example, Harrow Council (2017) conducted a review of its Children’s services and concluded that the two key factors driving demand within the borough were population growth (particularly increase in wards with higher levels of deprivation) and increases in the diversity of ethnic groups within the borough. Similarly, it is clear in Thurrock that children from ethnic minorities are over-represented in the LAC population (see Figure 16).

However, we need to be cautious about assuming that greater ethnic diversity in the borough means that more children are likely to have contact with social care. Table 4, for example, illustrates that the relationship between ethnicity and social care activity is patterned by deprivation in a complex way. Further research is needed in this field to disentangle the effects of deprivation and ethnicity with any certainty.

If we were to assume that children from ethnic minorities are more likely to be known to social care, it might offer some explanation for rising social care activity in Thurrock. Data from the school census shows that the proportion of children from ethnic minority backgrounds in Thurrock is rising steadily at a faster rate than in England or Thurrock’s statistical neighbours. Similarly, future demand may be affected by how the ethnic make-up of the population changes in future though it is hard to be sure what effect (if any) this might have.

Figure 16. Ethnicity of Thurrock’s all-age, 0 – 19 and LAC populations



Sources: Census 2011, School Census 2017 and Thurrock Council

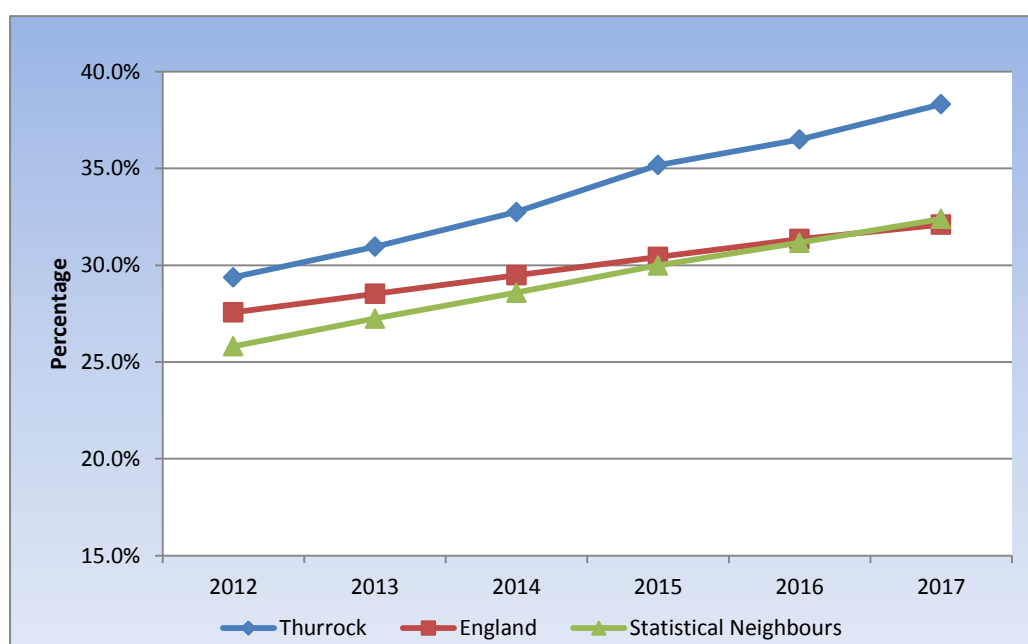
Table 4. Looked after children rates per 10,000 children by deprivation quintile and ethnic category, England sample

Deprivation quintile*	1	2	3	4	5	All
White	15	28	42	77	162	64
Mixed	27	47	62	103	164	99
Asian	7	18	15	21	34	22
Black	12	97	62	96	92	87
Other	46	90	52	41	111	74

Source: (Bywaters, Jones, & Sparks, 2017)

* 1= least deprived, 5 = most deprived

Figure 17. Proportion of primary school pupils from minority ethnic groups in Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours (2012 - 2017)



Sources: Department for Education School Census returns, 2012-2017

Special needs

There is a long-term downward trend in infant and child mortality rates in this country. Whilst this is extremely positive, one consequence is that the number of children with complex needs is growing as more children with severe health problems survive into later childhood. One recent report (Pinney, 2017) estimated that there has been an increase in the number of disabled children and young people of over 50% since 2004 (49,300 to 73,000). A small proportion of these children will become looked after because their disability is so severe that they cannot be cared for at home. At local authority level the number of such children is always likely to be small, meaning that the impact on the overall rate of LAC is modest. However, children with special needs may require highly specialised care, provided in high-cost placements meaning that a small change in the number of cases can have significant financial implications. Further analysis is required on this topic to understand the long-term trends, as well as the service and financial implications, locally.

Summary of the impact of demand factors on social care activity in Thurrock

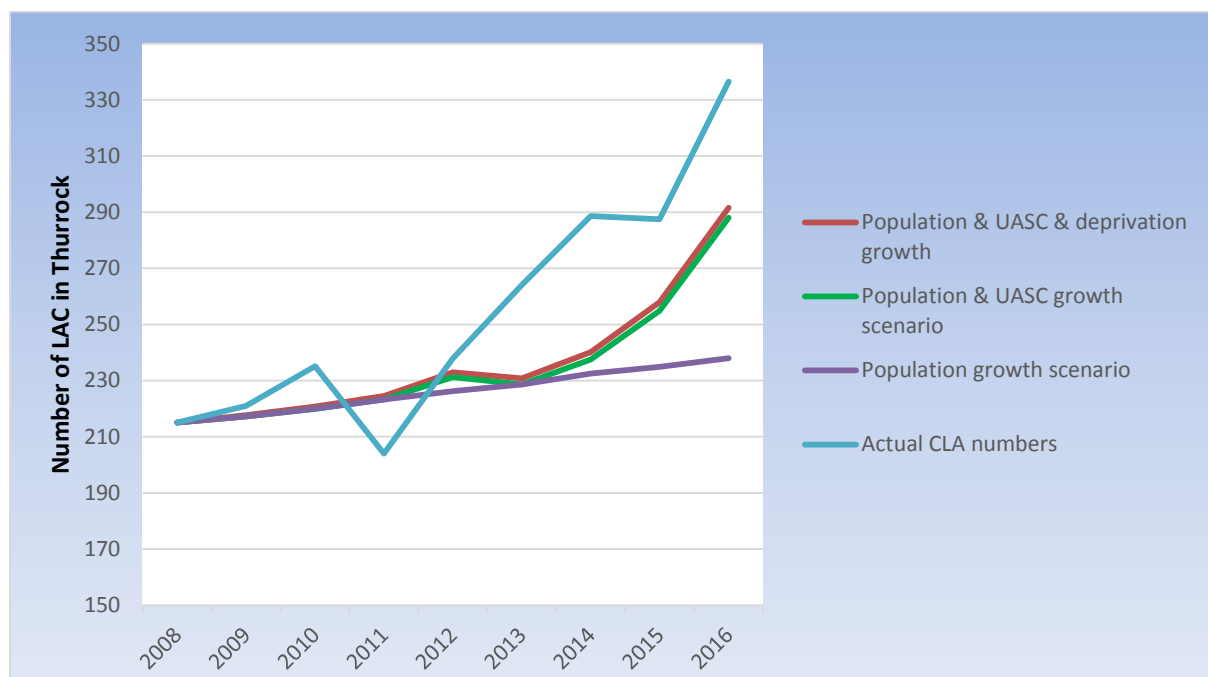
In trying to explain the growth in activity in children's social care in recent years, it is clear that a number of demand factors need to be considered. The most significant of these are population growth and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. A modest rise in the number of children living

in deprivation may also have contributed. More work is needed to understand the impact of a growing number of children with special educational needs and disabilities in Thurrock, though it is clear that this is likely to be a long-term cost pressure which drives up the complexity of care provided. The impact of increasing ethnic diversity is less clear. Further research is required to understand whether this is likely to increase demand.

In order to understand the potential impact of these demand-side factors on the numbers of LAC in Thurrock in recent years, we carried out modelling of various scenarios. The results are shown in Figure 18. This shows the actual number of LAC compared what might have been expected given known changes in demand factors. The impact of population growth on the expected number of LAC is illustrated by the purple line below¹. This suggests that a modest proportion of the rise in LAC numbers is likely to have been due to population growth.

The green line ('population & UASC growth') shows the number of Looked After Children that can be accounted for by population growth and UASC. The red line ('population & UASC & deprivation') additionally adds an estimate of the impact of increased levels of child poverty (see Appendix 1 for more details). Together these suggest that a significant proportion of the increase in numbers seen since 2008 can be attributed to these three factors: population growth, UASC, and increased deprivation. However, this leaves a significant amount of the growth unaccounted for. It is possible that unmeasured demand factors (such as ethnic diversity and SEND) contributed but it is also highly likely that supply-side factors have played a part in increasing the number of Looked After Children in Thurrock. Therefore, it seems likely not only that more children are in need of social care intervention than before but that the social care system has become more likely to intervene. The possible supply-side factors involved are discussed below.

Figure 18. Actual number of LAC in Thurrock vs modelled scenarios for different demand factors, 2008 – 2016



Sources: ONS (population data), Local Authority Information Tool (LAC and UASC numbers)

¹ The population growth model shows what the number of LAC been if the rate of LAC had stayed constant since 2008 and the population had grown in line with ONS mid-year estimates.

1.2.2. Supply factors

Our review of evidence found that the two main forces at work on the supply side are likely to be: changes in national policy frameworks and risk tolerance amongst staff; and reductions in key preventative services.

Policy change and risk tolerance

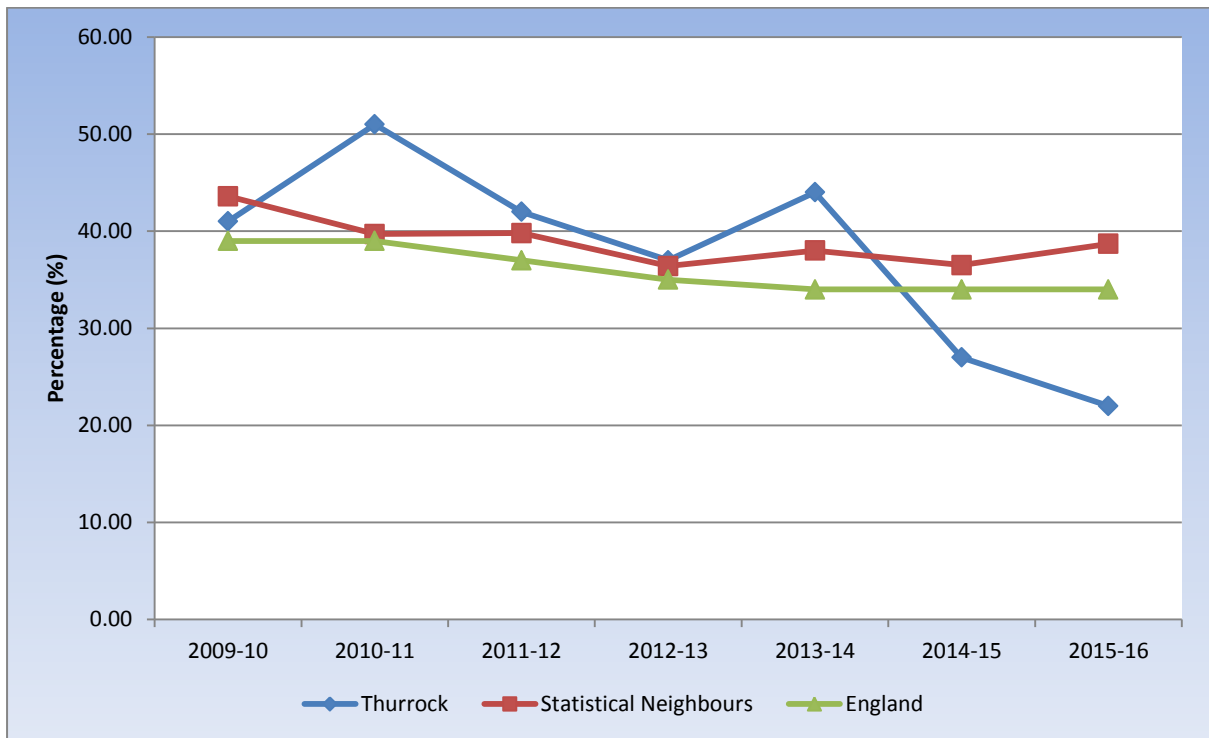
Nationally, new legislation, guidance and regulation have placed additional responsibilities on local authorities in recent years. Policy decisions of this kind are often informed by high profile, national events such as Serious Case Reviews or public inquiries. The widely-reported case of Baby Peter Connelly and the subsequent Munro Report on Child Protection (2011) are examples of how national policy responds to high profile events. Whilst it is hard to quantify the impact of such changes over the years, it is generally believed there has been a decline in risk tolerance in children's social care systems (Bywaters P. , et al., 2017) and that this has had an effect on the amount of activity in the national social care system. More specifically, the iMPOWER review of Thurrock's social care system commented on the existence of 'risk averse' culture in the Council and beyond, in the partners who refer into the social care system.

Preventative services

As noted above, investment in preventative services has been significantly reduced in recent years both nationally and in Thurrock. The most significant cut to preventative services occurred in 2015 after removal of £450,000 of CCG funding of early help services. This resulted in the decommissioning of services such as the Family Intervention Programme (FIP) and a tier 1 substance misuse service provided by Open Door. Quantifying the impact of such services is difficult but it is reasonable to assume that removing these preventative services (whilst at the same time spending more money on LAC) may have resulted in more children ending up being looked after, and that this might have been prevented if their families had been given more support at an early stage.

Even once children become looked after it is sometimes possible for them to return to their own families once significant issues have been resolved. There is evidence that this outcome is not as common as it used to be in Thurrock. Figure 19 shows a dramatic decline in the proportion of LAC returning to their families in Thurrock in recent years from a high of over 50% in 2010/11 to just 22% in 2015/16. More recent data were not available at the time of writing so further work is needed to understand if this trend has continued. The reasons for this decline also need to be investigated further. It is clear, however, that this trend could have had a significant impact on the number of children who remain looked after by the local authority.

Figure 19. Percentage of children returning home after a period of being looked after for Thurrock, England and statistical neighbours 2009/10 – 2015/16



1.3. How many children are likely to be in the social care system in future?

Forecasting future numbers is a challenging task. A survey of local authorities carried out by the Department for Education (Department for Education, 2016) found that most councils make limited use of forecasting methods or rely on simple extrapolations from previous budgets. However, attempting to understand future activity is crucial both for financial planning and for evaluating the impact of efforts to manage demand. For example, against a background of rapidly rising demand, it may be that modest growth is a sign that demand management efforts are having some effect.

For this report we have developed a new methodology for forecasting future activity. Technical details of the modelling methodology are given in Appendix 1. In summary, the models allow us to take into account not only historical trends but future factors such as population growth or changes to the cost of care. Inevitably, forecasting the future involves a significant degree of uncertainty. None of the forecasts presented below, therefore, should be considered definitive. Rather, the alternative scenarios represent a best estimate of what activity is likely to be in future if a given set of assumptions holds true.

1.3.1. The Thurrock Public Health Team Forecasting Model

A diagram representing the model used to forecast future demand and spend is shown below in Figure 20. The model forecasts activity and spend on Looked After Children only. Other elements of social care are not, at present included. However, given that it is estimated that around 70% of children's social care spending each year is directly or indirectly related to Looked after Children, modelling cost and activity in this area is particularly important.

The model presented here is designed to demonstrate the possible effects of changes in key factors which influence activity and cost. For example, as discussed above, one of the main drivers of increasing activity and cost in future will be population growth. Other factors include, the rate of children in care and the how long they stay in care, once they become looked after. Costs factors include the costs of placements (cost per week) and the staffing costs needed to work with the Looked After Children population.

Limitations of the forecasts

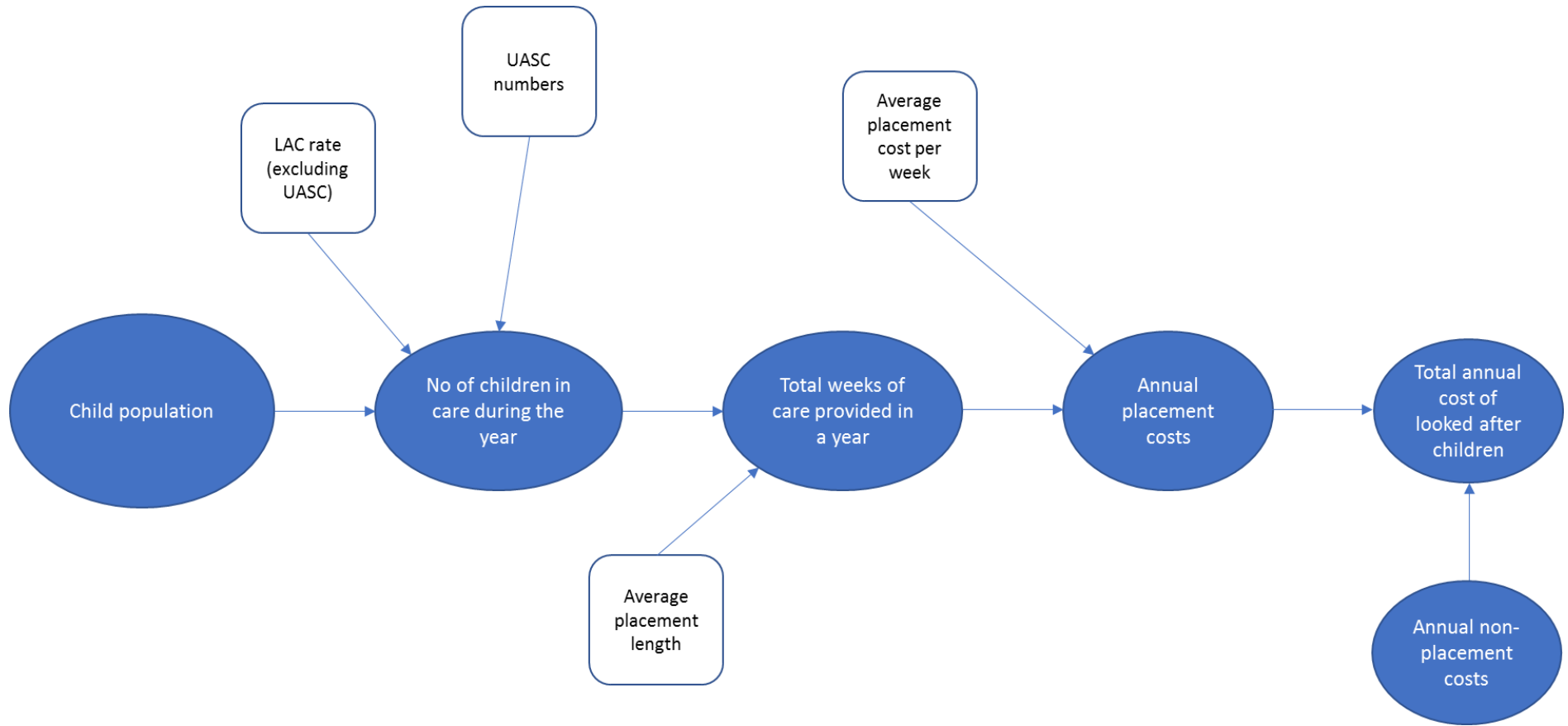
This model should be seen as a starting point, which illustrates possible future scenarios. A number of limitations should be kept in mind when examining its results:

First, the outputs from any model are only as accurate as the assumptions which are used to construct it. This model is no different. The assumptions underlying the models are set out in an appendix so that readers can examine them critically.

Second, modelling dynamic systems such as children's social care involves a huge amount of complexity. The model here is greatly simplified. For example, placement costs have been modelled as a single, average figure although the real cost of placements varies hugely. This means that the model cannot, at present, take into account possible changes in the complexity of placement needs.

Thirdly, some of the data underlying this model are incomplete. In particular gaining an accurate picture of the number of weeks of care provided by the Council at present (and historically) has been very challenging as has getting accurate figures on the costs of placements across all budgets. In places where data are limited, estimates have been made based on the best available information.

Figure 20. Thurrock children's social care demand and cost forecasting model 2017



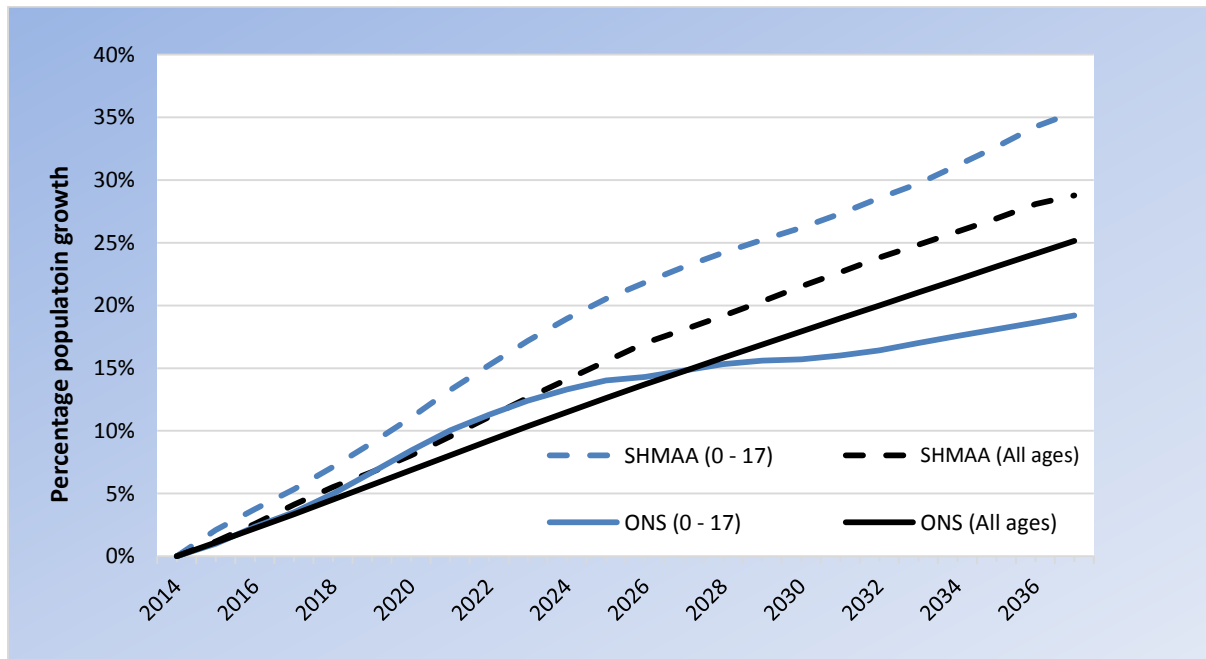
1.3.2. The impact of population growth

We have seen that Thurrock’s child population has grown at more than twice the national average rate over the past ten years. Forecasts for the future suggest that this rapid pace of growth is likely to continue. Figure 21 below shows projected population growth in Thurrock over the next 20 years. National estimates from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are shown alongside local projections created for Thurrock as part of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA projections take into account the high levels of job and housing growth expected to take place in Thurrock in the coming years and provide a more accurate forecast.

From the baseline year of 2014, SHMA projections suggest that the child population (0 – 17) will grow by 19 % by 2024 and 35.4% by 2037. By comparison, the child population of England is projected to grow by just 13.3% by 2024 and 19.2% by 2037 (Office for National Statistics, 2014); around half the rate of growth expected in Thurrock over the next 20 years.

...it seems inevitable that the rapid pace of growth of the child population expected in Thurrock... will continue to put significant pressures on the social care system over the next 10 – 20 years.

Figure 21. Projected population growth in Thurrock 2014 – 2037



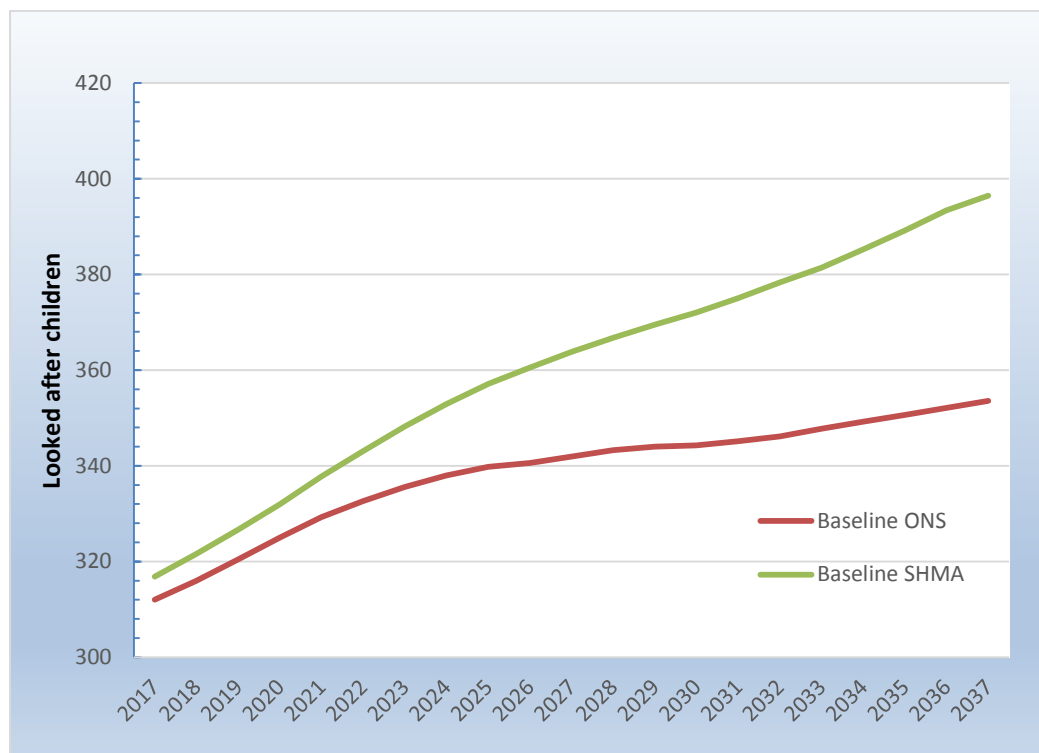
Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

It seems inevitable that this rapid pace of growth of the child population expected in Thurrock (around twice the national rate) will continue to put significant pressures on the social care system over the next 10 – 20 years. Moreover, this pressure will be much greater for Thurrock than is experienced nationally or in most other comparable areas since population growth is being driven by rapid economic and housing development.

All other things being equal, this rapid population growth will have a significant impact on the numbers of children in the social care system and the cost of providing social care services. Figure 22 and Figure 23 below show the potential impact of population growth on the numbers of Looked After Children in Thurrock and the resulting cost to the Council².

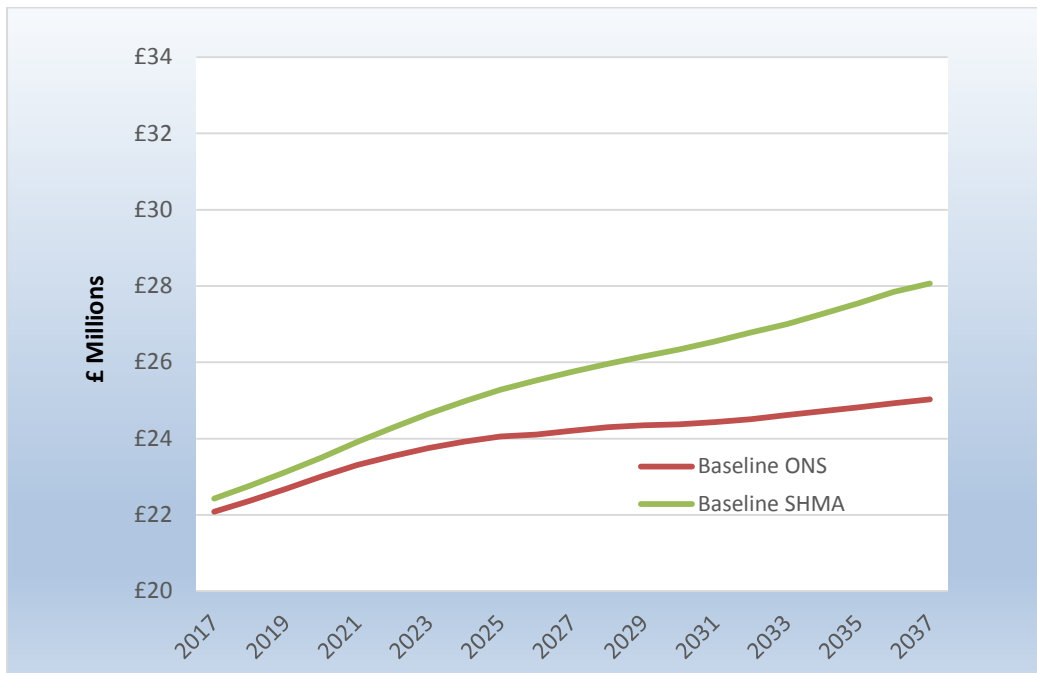
Even based on the (lower) ONS population projections, it is clear that the number of Looked After Children is likely to increase considerably in future. However, the forecasts based on SHMA population projections, suggest an even greater increase. The difference between these two forecasts can be taken as an indication of the impact of economic and housing growth in Thurrock beyond natural population growth. Based on the more realistic SHMA population projections Thurrock is likely to see 17% growth in the number of LAC and growth 15% in LAC-related costs over the next 10 years (2017 – 2027)

Figure 22. Forecast impact of population growth on the number of Looked After Children in Thurrock 2017 - 2037



² This model assumes that all other factors stay constant at the most recent available levels (August 2017). See Appendix 1 for more detail).

Figure 23. Forecast impact of population growth the cost of services for Looked After Children in Thurrock 2017 - 2037



1.3.3. The impact of changes in LAC rates

It is also possible to consider the possible impact of changes to the rate of Looked After Children in the Thurrock population. The factors affecting this rate are discussed above³. These models indicate what will happen if, as has happened over recent years, not only are there more children in the borough but those that live here are also more likely to end up being looked after.

Figure 24 below shows three possible scenarios illustrating the impact on the cost of LAC-related services in future. The 'Population growth only' scenario is the same as that presented in the section above on population growth. It assumes that LAC rates and costs stay the same but that the population grows in line with SHMA population projections. The other two scenarios show the impact of changes in the rate of children in care.

The 'Rising CLA' scenario assumes that LAC rates will continue to grow in line with the growth seen since 2011. The 'Falling CLA' scenario, on the other hand, assumes that over the next 5 years, LAC rates are brought in line with the current national average. Further details are given in Appendix 1.

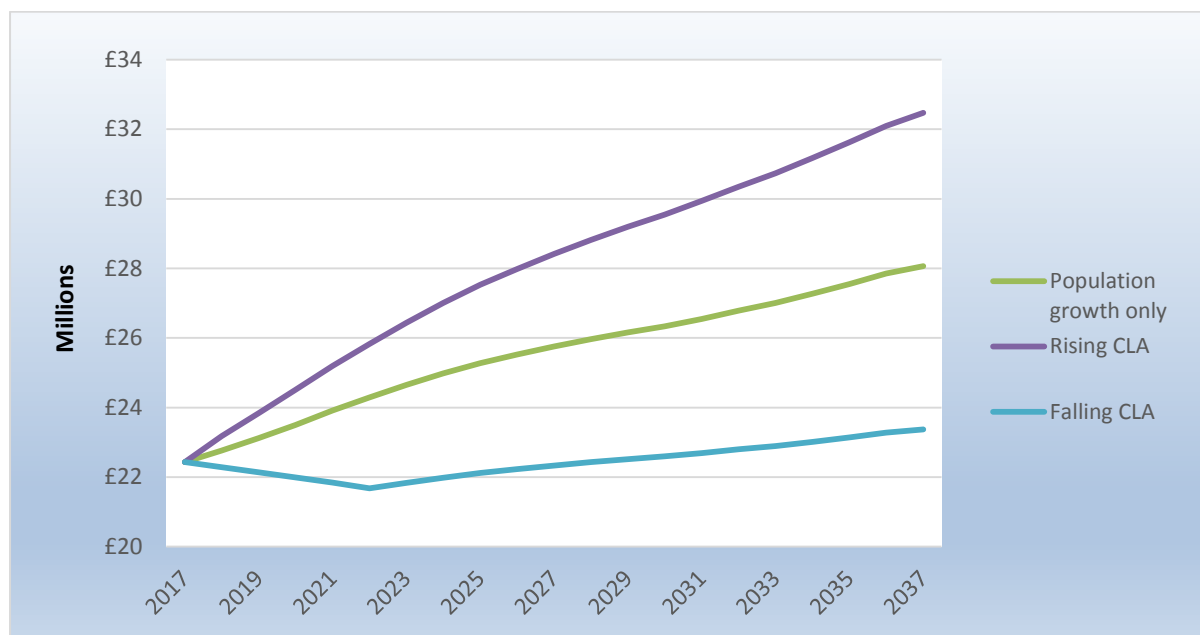
The results show that future costs are very strongly affected by the rate of children coming into care. Relatively small changes in rates can produce large changes in costs. The "Rising CLA scenario" illustrates the most likely course of future costs if trends over the past 5 – 10 years were to continue into the future. It forecasts a 27% increase in activity and cost over the next 10 years (17% due to population growth plus 10% due to increasing LAC rates). On the other hand, the Falling CLA scenario illustrates the potential gains to be made if LAC rates can be reduced to the national average⁴. Action is underway (detailed below in Section 2) to move Thurrock from the upper to the lower trajectory.

The "rising CLA scenario" illustrates the most likely course of future costs unless significant action is taken to reduce the rates of children becoming looked after. It forecasts a 27% increase in activity and £6 million of extra funding required in 10 years' time.

³ Here, the impact of changes in the LAC rate combined with population growth are illustrated without making assumptions about the specific demand and supply-side factors which might affect this rate. Further development of the model in future, would allow specific assumptions to be tested about factors such as deprivation rates and ethnic diversity.

⁴ This scenario assumes that the non-UASC rate of LAC is reduced to the current national average (56 per 10,000) over the next 5 years and then stays constant.

Figure 24. Forecast impact of changes in LAC rates and population growth on the cost of services for Looked After Children in Thurrock 2017 - 2037



Other demand-related factors, such as increasing numbers of children with special needs and changes in the ethnic make-up of the population, or deprivation rates are more difficult to quantify and have not, therefore, been included in the model at this stage. Further work could be done to incorporate the potential impact of these factors.

Potential future costs

If current trends in LAC rates over the past 5 – 10 years continue and if population growth is as expected, the cost of Looked After Children is expected to rise by £4M pounds over the next 5 years. By contrast, a reduction in CLA rates could see costs being reduced by £0.6M

Projected changes in LAC costs over the next 10 years

Scenario	3 years	5 years	10 years
<i>Rising CLA</i>	£2.08M	£4.01M	£5.98M
<i>Population growth only</i>	£1.07M	£2.22M	£3.32M
<i>Falling CLA</i>	-£0.44M	-£0.59M	£0.94M

2. How can we reduce the number of children in the social care system?

It is clear, then, that the number of children in the social care system is rising in Thurrock, faster than in other areas. Some of the reasons for this have been explored. It is also clear that the numbers in the system are likely to continue to grow in future unless significant action is taken. But what kind of action can be taken to prevent children from having to enter the social care system? This chapter attempts to answer that question.

First, we review the recommendations provided by iMPower following their analysis of Thurrock child social care system last year. Then, we present the results of an in-depth review of the research evidence in order to understand what works in prevention. In preparing this, the authors also met with key service leads across the social care system to understand how existing services operate and gather views on how services could be strengthened. The full results of the literature review are given in Appendix 2.

2.1. iMPower recommendations

The consultancy iMPower was commissioned by Thurrock Council in 2016 to identify opportunities to manage demand and cost in children's social services. Their review highlighted five main opportunities to influence demand and cost in Thurrock:

- 1. Ensuring the right demand is entering the system by working with partners**
This related to their finding that partner organisations such as schools and the police were making large numbers of enquiries and referrals into the Council when, in many cases, no action was required by social workers. Inappropriate referrals were taking up a lot of staff time.
- 2. Develop the prevention and early intervention offer**
An audit of Looked After Children cases found that in 49% of cases it might have been possible to prevent those children ending up in care if the right early support services were put in place. This highlighted the need for a more effective set of early intervention services.
- 3. Enable more active interventions to enable step down of care**
It was recommended that social workers' time should be freed up from carrying out large numbers of assessments, and allowing them to spend more time working with families to resolve their problems.
- 4. Reduce the proportion of agency staff;**
- 5. Increase the ratio of in-house foster care provision to reduce placement costs.**

The first three of these recommendations concern reducing the amount of activity in the system, whilst the last two are measures to reduce the cost of providing services.

2.2. Recent Developments

Following the review carried out by iMPower a number of developments have taken place in the service to improve sustainability. These include:

A new Prevention and Support Service: the new, integrated service brings together a number of previous prevention services including the Early Offer of Help and Troubled Families. This has also been integrated into Brighter Futures (see below).

Brighter Futures has been established to integrate Thurrock's early years and preventative services. The PASS service is part of Brighter Futures, which also includes Children Centres and the Healthy Families service (school nursing and health visiting). Efforts to create a more joined-up offer to children and families, with health, education and social care professionals working together, are designed to prevent issues from escalating to the level where social worker intervention is required.

Reductions in agency staffing have been pursued. Agency numbers now appear to be in steady decline. Efforts have also been made to recruit more foster carers from the local population, although the availability of in-house foster carers (and, indeed, any foster care placements) continues to be a significant challenge in Thurrock and nationally (see section 1, p14).

Targeting social work. A data system called Xantura has been commissioned to provide 'predictive analytics'. The system uses data from a variety of sources to flag up children at high risk, allowing social workers to intervene earlier and more effectively.

Signs of Safety. This is a strengths-based approach to child protection work which is being rolled out in Thurrock to improve case work and risk assessment.

2.3. What works in early help?

Early help describes interventions with children and families who are not at the stage of having statutory social worker intervention (CiN/CP or LAC). They are, by definition, preventative services designed to address problems at an early stage and prevent them from escalating. They are, therefore, critical to reducing the number of Looked After Children. Our review of evidence found a number of interventions which have been shown to work in this field.

2.2.1. Home Visiting

Home visiting programmes at the ante-natal and early post-natal stage can be effective in facilitating the development of a sensitive and empathetic relationship between the parent and young child which may forestall attachment and other relationship difficulties. There is enough evidence of its effectiveness for it to be recommended in NICE guidance (2017) as a form of early help for families showing possible signs of abuse or neglect.

Current provision of home visiting is provided to all families in Thurrock through the Healthy Families service which includes graded levels of intensity according to need. For those assessed as having greater needs, the service provides more intensive visiting from health visitors and a multi-agency response where appropriate, which may include social workers. Family Nurse Partnership, which used to be provided in Thurrock, is no longer commissioned as it was judged not to be cost effective in line with the results of UK trials (Barlow, Davis, McIntosh, Jarrett, & Mockford, 2007) (Robling, et al., 2015). To fill this gap, the newly commissioned Healthy Families Service provides an offer to young parents and more vulnerable families with more intensive support to replace this service.

2.2.2. Parenting Programmes

Parenting programmes aim to improve parenting skills and produce better outcomes for children. There is moderate to strong evidence that these can be effective in improving outcomes such as positive parenting behaviours, reduced behavioural problems in children and reducing risks of abuse and neglect. However, reviews of the evidence base also suggest that parenting interventions may be ineffective or insufficient in cases of high need and families with complex, multi-layered problems (Barlow, Johnston, Kendrick, Polnay, & Stewart-Brown, 2006).

Current provision includes three commissioned parenting programmes. Full details of the programmes and the evidence underpinning them can be found in Appendix 2. In summary:

- *Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities (SFSC)* is a 12-week group parenting course that covers all aspects of effective parenting, boundary setting, praise and warmth, and working with children's emotions. It uses peer support and includes additional support for the family in their home. In 2016/17, 252 families were referred into this programme but only 128 were able to go through the programme due to capacity constraints. This means some families were waiting for weeks or months before getting a place on the programme.
- *Mellow Mums* is an attachment and relationship based group intervention for mums who have babies and young children. In 2016/17, 21 mothers were referred into this programme and 18 went through the programme, with 10 on a waiting list. This suggests again that capacity is not sufficient to meet the current level of need.
- *Triple P* is a 13-week programme for parents with teenage children showing problematic behaviour. It seeks to avoid those behaviour patterns escalating further by giving parents practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships, and to enable them confidently to manage their children's behaviour. No referrals were made into this programme in the past year. Therefore, although the provider is able to offer this service, it has not been utilised. As the evidence base underpinning this programme is relatively strong (See Appendix 2) the reasons for the lack of uptake of this programme need to be investigated.

2.2.3. Troubled Families⁵

This is a national programme which comes with its own funding from central government based on performance. It is intended to change repeating inter-generational patterns of poor parenting, abuse, violence, drug use, anti-social behaviour and crime in the most troubled families in the UK. Troubled families are defined as those that have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs on the public sector. Specific aims of the programme are to:

- get children back into school;
- reduce youth crime and anti-social behaviour;
- put adults on a path back to work;
- reduce the high costs these families place on the public sector each.

The Thurrock Troubled Families programme has a target to work with 1,240 families over a five-year period (2015 – 2020) and this year is due to work with 370 families. The programme was judged to be good during Ofsted inspection. Nationally, the effectiveness of this way of working is, however,

⁵ Some, though not all, families in the programme have children who are in the CiN/CP category meaning that this programme provides both Early Help and CP/CiN intervention.

highly politically controversial with some evaluations suggesting that it has little impact. Funding for Troubled Families is due to be withdrawn from 2020.

2.2.4. Recommendations on Early Help⁶

There is moderate to strong evidence that the current early help offer of home visiting and parenting support is effective in preventing children from entering the social care system or preventing their situations from escalating. It is clear that the capacity of these programmes is not sufficient to meet demand and many families have to wait for long periods before getting a place on the programme. It is recommended that capacity should be increased in line with current demand and then kept under review. Meeting current demand would require a 90% increase in capacity.

However, demand for these services depends on the awareness and confidence of the professionals who refer into these programmes. It is possible that more families could benefit from these programmes if they were referred into them. In particular, the lack of uptake of the Triple-P parenting programme needs to be investigated as this is a commissioned and evidence-based programme which is effective in preventing the escalation of behavioural problems in teenagers. It is also recommended that a review of referral practice should consider whether there are families with children on CiN/CP Plans or the families of Looked After Children who could benefit from these programmes. If more families could benefit it may be necessary to expand capacity of these programmes accordingly. Ultimately, these services will reduce pressure on the most high-cost parts of the social care system.

The evidence base underpinning Troubled Families is weaker. This programme is funded by central government, on a pay for performance basis. It is recommended that the methods used to achieve Troubled Families outcomes should be reviewed to consider whether the evidence-base presented above could be put into action to achieve Troubled Families outcomes. It is also important to note that there is a very significant financial risk for the Council related to Troubled Families funding may end in its current form from 2020. It is unclear at present whether it will be replaced with an alternative/similar funding stream.

There is a risk that the withdrawal of Troubled Families funding from 2020 could result in a further overall reduction in the funding for preventative services. This would continue long-term trend which has had the effect of driving up costs in the most expensive part of the system. However, if the funding is replaced in full or in part by a less restricted funding stream, it may be an opportunity to invest in interventions (at early help or CiN/CP stage) which have a stronger evidence base. It is recommended that plans be put in place to ensure that, as far as possible, changes to Troubled

There is a risk that the withdrawal of Troubled Families funding from 2020 could result in a further reduction in the funding for preventative services. This would continue a long-term trend which has had the effect of driving up costs in the most expensive part of the system.

⁶ There is significant overlap between 'Early Help' services and those appropriate for those at the CiN and CPP level. This section has focussed on those interventions which are primarily focussed on the pre-statutory stage of intervention. The Prevention and Support Service provides a number of services which are targeted more at the CiN/CP stage and these are outlined below (Section 2.4).

Families funding are used as an opportunity to strengthen demand-reducing services, rather than

Financial impact of recommendations on early offer of help

Increasing the capacity of parenting programmes is likely highly likely to make savings in other parts of the system by preventing cases from being escalated to CiN/CPP or LAC level. Though the amount of savings this would make is hard to estimate, the table below presents the capacity and costs of the existing programme and the recommended programme. Based on the figures below, in order to be cost neutral the expanded programme would need to prevent an additional 3.4 children from becoming looked after in order to be cost-neutral. That means that it would be cost neutral if the programme successfully prevents a child being taken into care for just 1 in 50 families accessing the programme. This makes it highly likely that the proposed expansion of parenting services would not just be cost neutral but cost saving overall.

Table 5. Estimated costs and savings for recommended action on edge-of-care

	Current service	Recommended service	Difference
Capacity	148	283	135
Cost	£260,000	£497,162	£237,162

allowing them to be weakened.

2.4. What works for Child in Need and Child Protection Plans?

In cases which progress beyond the Early Help stage, children may be put into the statutory categories of Child in Need (CiN) or (for higher risk cases) be put on a Child Protection Plan (CPP). For children, short-term care is provided by five Family Support Teams, who work with children under 12, and 1 Adolescent team. The principal aim of intervention at this stage is to prevent the children becoming looked after and, ideally, allow the matter to be stepped down.

There are a large number of possible interventions which can be put in place at this stage and it is important that they are tailored to suit the needs and issues of the children and families involved in each case. The summary presented below is organised by issues which can cause children to be designated as CiN or on a CPP. These include: domestic violence/abuse, substance misuse, and multiple issue interventions or 'edge of care' services. However, it is important to note that families often present with multiple issues and need holistic support which is adapted to their individual situations. For example, the Ofsted's report *Learning lessons from serious case reviews 2009–2010* (2010) which looked at the evaluations of 147 Serious Case Reviews where abuse or neglect were factors, found that domestic violence was present in 31% of cases, mental ill health in 23%, parental drug misuse in 19% and parental alcohol misuse in 14% of cases.

2.3.1. Domestic violence/abuse

Children can suffer serious long term problems as a result of domestic abuse even if they themselves have not been directly harmed or abused. According to NICE guidance, support should be provided

for both the non-abusing parent and child (NICE, 2014). In Thurrock, there is also provision of a service for perpetrators of domestic violence.

There is moderate evidence to support programmes which support non-abusing parents including: advocacy, skill building, counselling, and group therapy. For interventions to support children, the evidence is strongest for those programmes which include mothers and children, rather than children on their own. These include: mother-child psychotherapy, shelter-based parenting interventions; and parent-child interaction therapy.

Current provision of services related to domestic abuse includes two programmes:

- **STEPS (Success Through Effective Parenting Support):** aims to decrease the impact of domestic abuse on parenting. This is an eight-week programme of therapeutic and practical one-to-one support. Following the course, 96% reported feeling safer, and 92% of women reported having a better understanding the impact of abuse and violence on their children. The programme received 135 referrals in 2016/17 and there were significant waiting times (3 – 4 weeks) to get on the programme. The current service appears not to have capacity to meet all demand in a timely way. It is estimated that increasing capacity by 50 – 80% would be necessary to meet the current level of demand.
- **Domestic Violence Perpetrators Programme:** This is an intensive 26-week programme commissioned for just 10 men each year. It aims to change the behaviour of men who have been abusive towards their families. It is targeted at those cases which represented the highest risk to children, usually where children are on a CPP or are CiN. There is moderate evidence showing that this is effective in reducing abusive behaviour in future (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Lewis, 1999) and local outcome data shows that 93% of partners report a cessation of abuse after completion of the programme. During interviews with service leads it was highlighted that the current number of places on this programme is not sufficient to meet demand and that many more people would benefit from this. There were 18 referrals to the service in 2016/17. This is beyond the capacity of the current service but it is also possible that social workers are not referring into the service because capacity is known to be an issue. The numbers who would actually benefit from the service are currently unknown.

Recommendation: Whilst this has not been identified as a major gap in existing services, there does appear to be scope to strengthen existing services based on the evidence available and it is recommended that an expansion of the capacity of the existing perpetrators scheme should be considered.

Financial impact of recommendations on domestic violence services

The cost of domestic violence to children’s social services has been estimated taking into account the fact that domestic violence has been found to be present in 40% of cases of child abuse (Walby, 2004). On this basis, it has been estimated that each incident of domestic violence costs, on average, £1,183 to social care (including the costs of social worker time and, in some cases, children becoming looked after), and a further £7,230 to the healthcare system. We estimate that implementing these recommendations would result in 163 incidents of domestic violence being prevented and associated cost savings (after the costs of the programme) of £125,926. In addition to the savings which would accrue to social care, a further £1.2M of savings are estimated for the healthcare system.

Table 6. Costs and savings for recommended action on domestic violence services

Programme	Current capacity	Recomm -ended capacity	Incidents of DV averted	Additional Cost	Estimated gross savings to social care	Net savings to social care
STEPS	75	135	144	£37,080	£170,300	£133,220
DV perpetrators	10	20	19	£30,000	£22,707	-£7,293
Total	85	155	163	£67,080	£193,006	£125,926

Sources: Walby (2009) Costs of domestic violence¹ and Dobash (1999)

2.3.2. Substance misuse

The evidence review found one programme, Parents Under Pressure (PUP), which addresses substance misuse as a component of children maltreatment. The programme addresses multiple domains of family functioning including parental psychopathology, child behavioural problems and parent-child relationships. A small trial of this programme in Australia found it to be effective in improving parenting, parent-child relationships and child behaviours in the families of parents who were on methadone treatment. An evaluation of the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of this programme is currently underway in the UK.

Previous service: Previously, a tier-1 (advice and support) substance misuse service was commissioned as part of the Early Offer of Help. This was decommissioned in 2015 following funding reductions. Service leads have identified tier 1 substance misuse support as a gap in existing services.

Recommendation: Further work is needed to determine the size, scope and cost of a potential new substance misuse intervention focussed on families where children are at risk of (or already in) the social care system. The public health team should work with social care to consider whether existing child/adult DAAT services could be adapted in line with the evidence base to provide interventions specifically targeted at children at the CiN/ CPP stage.

2.3.3. Edge-of care services and multiple-issue interventions

Service leads consistently identified the lack of an 'edge-of-care' service as a major gap in existing provision in Thurrock. An edge-of-care service provides intensive support for families where there is a high risk of the child becoming looked after. In most cases, it is appropriate for such a service to address a range of issues simultaneously. Two reviews of the evidence for edge of care services (Bowyer & Wilkinson, 2013) (Asmussen, Doolan, & Scott, 2012) both identified Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) as having the strongest evidence base as effective edge-of-care interventions:

- **Multi-systemic therapy (MST)** is a family and community-based treatment programme originally designed for young offenders or young people aged 11-17 at risk of care who were demonstrating anti-social behaviours. The intervention has also been adapted specifically for families where there is child abuse and/or neglect (MST-CAN). Trials from the US have demonstrated that this can be effective in reducing the number of children taken into care by more than half from 30% to 14%. MST-CAN is now being piloted in several sites in the UK. Though no UK evaluations have yet been published, MST has been recommended in recently published NICE guidance on Child Abuse and Neglect (2017).
- **Functional Family Therapy (FFT)** is an intensive family-focused intervention targeted at young people aged 10 – 18 years who are still living at home but have persistent behavioural problems and/or substance misuse. Weekly sessions over a 3-4 month period aim to reduce disruptive communication patterns and encourage positive interactions among the family. Trials from the US have demonstrated that it can be effective in reducing violent crime by 30% and reoffending rates by 21% (Sexton & Turner, 2011). The impact on reducing care proceedings in the UK has yet to be determined. An FFT pilot started in Brighton in 2007 and the first UK randomised controlled trial is currently being conducted by Kings College in partnership with Brighton and Hove Youth Offending Services (Dixon, Lee, Ellison, & Hicks, 2015). Currently, two randomised controlled trials are underway in the UK in Brighton & Hove and Croydon.

Other interventions with an emerging evidence base are:

- **Step Change** combines elements of MST with FFT (Blower, et al., 2017). It was piloted across three London boroughs. Evaluation of Step Change found some improvement in follow-up measures such as offending and engagement in education though the numbers involved were too small for reliable analysis.
- **Short stay residential care for adolescents on the edge of care**
The UK has traditionally operated a binary model of care: at home or out of home. In other, particularly European countries, short-stay residential care (also known as respite care) is a more established part of children's social care systems. In some cases it can prevent full entry into care by offering respite and space to improve young people's relationships with their families. A number of local authorities in the UK are trialling this approach though further research is needed to evaluate its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness (Dixon, Lee, Ellison, & Hicks, 2015).

Previous service: The Family Intervention Project (FIP) was an intensive programme for families with multiple and complex issues. Work was completed with a key worker allocated to each family, working with them for between nine and 18 months. Though no controlled trials have been

identified, both local and national evaluations of FIP services were very positive. The national programme, for example, found that serious conduct problems with children dropped by one third (from 59% to 40%).

When it operated, the service cost £300,000 per year and supported 40 families per year (a cost of £7,500) per family. The service operated a waiting list, with an average waiting time of 30 days, indicating that there was more demand than the service could comfortably accommodate. This service was decommissioned following the withdrawal of CCG funding in 2015.

Recommendation

There is a clear gap in existing services in providing support to families where there is a known risk of children being taken into care. Such services will have a direct impact on the number of children becoming looked after. It is recommended that a service be designed and implemented for Thurrock based on the evidence summarised above (see also Appendix 2). The evidence base for preventing children being taken into care appears to be strongest for MST and FFT so it is recommended one of these should form the basis of an edge-of-care service. In order to prevent children being taken into care it is important that an edge of care service is able to respond quickly. Delays caused by waiting lists or assessment are likely to significantly reduce its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.

Given the emerging nature of the evidence base in this field (particularly in the UK context) it is strongly recommended that a robust evaluation plan be developed (by children's social care in collaboration with public health) to ensure that the effectiveness and the cost-effectiveness of any new service can be demonstrated and that opportunities to learn from this are captured as fully as possible.

Financial impact of recommendations on an edge-of-care service

Implementing an MST-based edge-of-care service is likely to make savings through reducing the number of children being taken into care. A cost-effectiveness study of MST (Cary, Butler, Baruch, Hickey, & Byford, 2013) found that the intervention cost £2,285 per participant to implement. As of September 2017 there were 1,355 children in Thurrock classified as either CiN (1,074) or CPP (281). If 10% of them were suitable to receive the MST intervention, the total cost of the intervention would be in the region of £309,000.

Based on the estimated annual cost of a looked after child to the Council of £70,792, the service would only have to prevent an average of 4.4 children per year entering care to be cost-neutral. This would represent a 3.2% success rate for the service; that is, the service would only need to be successful in preventing 3.2% of the children it worked with from entering care each year in order to pay for itself. If we assume, in line with trials, that the intervention successfully prevents 16% of those in the programme for entering care, the net savings (see below) are estimated to be £1.2M per year, £650,000 of which would be directly cashable as reduced placement costs.

Table 7. Estimated costs and savings for recommended action on edge-of-care

No of eligible families	Cost per case	Total cost of service	Number of LAC prevented	Gross savings	Net savings	Cashable net savings
135.5	£ 2,285	£ 309,618	21.7	£ 1,534,771	£ 1,225,153	£ 649,331

2.5. What works for Looked After Children?

Even once children have been taken into care, it is possible to take action which will shorten their stay or prevent other children in the family becoming looked after. Our work has focused on two important ways in which this can be done and which have been identified as gaps in the current system.

First we consider ‘reunification’: the process of children returning to their families after a period of being in care. This was chosen as a focus because, as noted above (Figure 19, p27) there appears to have been a large and rapid decline in the proportion of children returning home to their families after a period of being looked after in Thurrock. iMPower also highlighted a cultural issue in Thurrock, where the journey of children through the system is seen as one-directional rather than opportunities to return children to their families being considered at every stage. Reunification work was also identified as a potential gap in existing services by some service managers and is an important way in which activity can be reduced in the most expensive part of the system.

A second issue explored in this section is preventing repeated occurrences of children being taken into care from the same family. This covers evidence relating to women who have repeated children removed from their care at birth. Again, this has been identified by service managers as a potential gap in existing services.

2.4.1. Reunification

Returning home is not always in the best interests of children in care (Wilkins & Farmer, 2015) (Biehal, Sinclair, & Wade, 2015) and the child’s welfare should be paramount in any decision to return a looked after child to their family. Nevertheless, there is evidence that certain practices and specific interventions can increase the likelihood of safe and effective reunification taking place. This includes:

Appropriate timing and thorough assessment

Reunification is less likely to be successful after a prolonged period in care (over 2-3 years) (Thoburn, Robinson, & Anderson, 2012). However, it has also been found that reunification is less likely to be successful if the child returns after a short stay in care (less than 3-6 months), perhaps because this may not allow sufficient time for change to occur in the family. This suggests that there may be an important window period between 6 months and 2 years in which reunification is most likely to be successful.

Assessing the suitability of a child and their family for reunification is a complex process. One study (Farmer, Sturgess, O’Neill, & Wijedasa, 2012) found that more thorough assessment was associated with greater stability for children returning home. In spite of this, 43% of children in their study returned home without a thorough assessment.

On-going work with parents and families of LAC

In most cases, if reunification is to be considered a possibility, significant changes have to occur in the lives of the parents or wider families of Looked After Children (Wade, Biehal, Farrelly, & Sinclair, 2010). At present there appears to be little systematic work with families who have had children removed; this was identified as a gap in existing services by some service leads. The evidence review supports on-going work with families after children have been removed as a way of promoting reunification. In particular the evidence supports:

- *Tailored support*: Matching services to underlying needs or problems, which may include mental health, housing, family counselling or substance abuse, has consistently been shown to improve family reunification (Choi & Ryan, 2007). The consensus is that programmes are also more likely to be effective if they are intensive and tailored to meet the needs of each member of the family (Ward, Brown, & Hyde-Dryden, 2014).
- *Timing and duration*: Support needs to commence as soon as possible after children are removed from the family, and should be proactive rather than reactive (Hyde-Dryden, et al., 2015). In order for reunification to be successful, interventions need to be delivered for long enough to bring about sustained changes in behaviour and the family situation.
- *Strong caseworker engagement* with the families whilst children are in care, increases the likelihood of reunification (Cheng, 2010).
- *Substance misuse support* for parents with substance misuse issues, support may help children to return home from care more quickly (Harwin, Alrouh, M, & Tunnard, 2014).
- *Parenting support*: There is some evidence from the US that parent mentoring programmes can be effective in promoting reunification (Enano, Friesthler, Perez-Johnson, & Lovato-Hermann, 2016).
- *Child emotional and behavioural support*: addressing emotional wellbeing of Looked After Children through Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services can be helpful for Looked After Children may be helpful in preventing re-entry into care (Thoburn, Robinson, & Anderson, 2012).
- *Ongoing monitoring and support post reunification*: Statutory guidance is clear that a child should continue to be supported and will often be treated as a child in need or under a Child Protection Plan once they return home. However, evidence reviews have found that interventions tend to end abruptly with no arrangements for long-term support or monitoring of children's circumstances (Hyde-Dryden, et al., 2015). Ongoing assessment of the family's needs is necessary as the full extent of many difficulties may not become apparent until some time into the return home.

Recommendation on reunification: Further work is needed to understand why the rates of children returning home after a period of being looked after appear to have fallen very significantly in recent years. There appears to be a gap in current services in working intensively with families who have had children removed. It is recommended that this should be considered within the design of a new edge-of-care service which could work intensively with families not only to prevent the removal of children but immediately following removal in order to promote reunification. This has the potential to reduce the length of LAC placements and thereby reduce the number of children in care. Extending the remit of other relevant services (e.g. drug and alcohol or domestic violence services) to work with families who have had children removed from their care should also be considered.

Financial impact of recommendations on reunifications

More detailed work is needed to understand trends in reunification in Thurrock in order to design a service which fits the needs in Thurrock. However, it is clear that increasing reunification could have a significant impact on costs by reducing the length of time that children remain in care.

Our analysis found that the average length of stay for children in care in Thurrock in any particular year is 35 weeks. This includes many children who stay for the full year (52 weeks) and some who stay for shorter periods. We estimate that reducing this average by just 1 week (to 34 weeks) would save £0.65M each year. Reducing the average to 32 weeks (an 8.6% reduction) would reduce costs by £1.93M per year, £1M of which would be reduced placement costs.

2.4.2. Repeated care proceedings

Recent research from the University of Lancaster has shown, for the first time, how common it is for mothers to have multiple children removed at birth (Broadhurst, et al., 2015). It was found that 24% of women who have a child removed at birth go on to have a second children removed from their care. Moreover, the likelihood of this happening is greatly increased for younger mothers. For women aged 16 – 17, when their first child is removed, there is a 32% chance of this being repeated. It also found that 40% of mothers who have multiple children removed at birth had themselves experienced being in care and substance misuse is a common reason for repeated care proceedings. In these cases only around 10% of children are ever reunited with their mothers compared to around 40% for the general population of Looked After Children. It is estimated that, at any one time in Thurrock's social care system, there are 10 – 15 women who have had multiple babies removed. Though the numbers are relatively small, these are both tragic and highly resource-intensive cases.

Our literature review found that there is a lack of robust evidence about what works to prevent repeated removals of children. However, an innovative programme called PAUSE has been piloted in a number of areas with central government funding. A national evaluation of the programme (McCracken, et al., 2017) found that it appeared to be effective in preventing women from going on to have further pregnancies and further removals of children. The programme worked by providing intensive support over an 18 months period to children who have had children removed at birth. Support was given by a dedicated practitioner though multi-agency support to address issues such as domestic violence, substance misuse and insecure housing was crucial to making this work. A cost-benefit analysis also found that this work saved large sums in social care costs after the initial 18 month intervention period. For a programme delivering Pause to 125 women, net savings (i.e. taking into account the cost of delivering the intervention) after 18 months were estimated at between £1.2 and £2.1 million.

Recommendation on preventing repeated care proceedings: A dedicated programme along the lines of PAUSE should be established for Thurrock. Given the relatively low number of women who are likely to require such a service, consideration should be given to working with neighbouring councils to commission this across a larger geographical area. Given that the evidence on this programme is emerging and that no controlled trials have been done, a robust evaluation plan should be put in place to determine effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the programme locally.

Financial impact of recommendations on repeated care proceedings

Based on a cost-benefit analysis of Pause pilot programmes (McCracken, et al., 2017), we can estimate the cost-savings which might be possible in Thurrock. The cost of implementing the intervention was estimated at £20,202 per woman supported over the 18 months intervention period. We estimate, conservatively, that 15 women per year in Thurrock might be eligible for support from the scheme. This would mean the cost over 18 months would be £303,030. For this price, we would expect 2.55 – 4.35 further pregnancies to be prevented. Taking into account the estimated local costs of care, we would expect the programme to be cost-neutral in the second year of operation and thereafter it would save between £128,520 and £307,945 per year, of which £68,116 to £163,211 would be directly cashable as reduced placement costs.

3. Key findings and conclusions

3.1. Key findings

In this report we addressed a number of questions:

Is the number of children in the social care system rising faster in Thurrock than elsewhere?

Yes. The numbers have been rising steadily in recent years, particularly the number of Looked After Children. This increase has been greater than in other, similar areas. Over the past 12 – 18 months, however, LAC rates do appear to have levelled off or even started to decline. Much of this has been due to reductions in the numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) though modest declines in the numbers of non-UASC looked after children have also been seen. It remains to be seen whether this is the beginning of a long-term change in the direction of trends.

Why are the numbers increasing in Thurrock?

Some of the increases in recent years have been due to more children being in need of support from social care (demand factors). In particular, the number of children living in Thurrock has increased and there has been a higher number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children entering the area in recent years. Over the last ten years, the child population in Thurrock has grown by 13.3% more than twice the national rate (6%) and Thurrock has had a much higher number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children entering the system than other comparable areas. At its peak in 2016, 21% of Thurrock LAC population was made up of UASC compared to a national rate of 6%.

It also seems likely, however, that the social care system has become more likely to intervene (supply-side factors). Some of this may be due to changes in national policy and guidance. However, the decline of investment in preventative services is also likely to have played a part; some children end up being taken into care when early and effective intervention might have prevented it. This is tragic for the children and their families involved and results in large, avoidable costs for the Local Authority.

How many children are likely to be in the social care system in future and how much will this cost?

There are huge potential costs if the trends of recent years were to continue unchecked. Based on local population projections and assuming that the trends of the past 5 – 10 continue, we estimate that the number of Looked After Children in Thurrock is likely to rise by around 27% to ~400, over the next ten years. That equates to extra costs of £4M per year in five years' time and nearly £6M per year in ten years' time.

Unless radical action is taken to upgrade demand-reducing services, the cost of children's social care could become increasingly unsustainable. Work is already underway to make this change.

Projected changes in LAC costs over the next 10 years			
Scenario	3 years	5 years	10 years
<i>Rising CLA</i>	£2.08M	£4.01M	£5.98M
<i>Population growth only</i>	£1.07	£2.22	£3.32
<i>Falling CLA</i>	-£0.44M	-£0.59M	£0.94M

Unless radical action is taken to upgrade demand-reducing services, the cost of children's social care will become increasingly unsustainable. Work is already underway to make this change.

How can the system be made more sustainable?

There are effective ways of preventing children from needing social care support. There are also interventions which can prevent their cases from escalating once they are in the system. Unfortunately, investment in preventative services has declined in recent years. This has had the effect of increasing costs in the most expensive part of the system (Looked After Children) and probably means that some children end up being taken into care when it might have been avoided. Making the system sustainable will require a significant rebalancing of investment towards prevention.

We estimate that around 70% of all social care spending is linked to the care of Looked After Children and that the majority of this (53%) of this is made up of placement costs (i.e. the cost of foster care, children's homes or other types of placement). Achieving financial sustainability will only be possible if these costs are reduced through a combination of preventing children from becoming looked after, reducing the amount of time that they stay looked after, and reducing the amount that is paid for placements.

3.2. Detailed Recommendations

Based on our analysis, we make the following three strategic recommendations for managing the pressures on the children's social care system in Thurrock:

1. Make a long-term strategic commitment to invest in prevention

To reduce the number of children in the social care system, a high-level strategic commitment must be made to re-balance investment towards preventative activities. In recent years investment in preventative services has been eroded whilst spending on high cost care placements has increased. By rebalancing investment towards preventative services, we can prevent children from ending up in care unnecessarily and, over time, relieve financial pressures on the social care system.

The change must be seen against the background of continuing cost pressures. It is likely that investing in preventative services will initially slow the growth in costs but may eventually lead to overall cost reductions. However, we have demonstrated that the cost of doing nothing is likely to be much higher than the costs of investing in preventative services.

2. Invest in the most effective preventative services

Making a strategic commitment to invest in prevention will only be effective if that investment is made in the right areas. Based on our review of evidence we recommend:

- **Early help:** Making efforts to expand the number of families benefiting from early help services by increasing capacity, strengthening referral systems and expanding inclusion criteria;
- **Children in Need & Child Protection Plans:** Investing in a new 'edge of care' service to work intensively with children at greatest risk of coming into care; expanding the capacity of existing domestic violence programmes; more targeted drug and alcohol outreach to families of Children in Need or on a Child Protection Plan
- **Looked After Children:** Working systematically with families who have had children removed to increase the chances of Looked After Children being reunited with their families; providing intensive support to mothers (especially young mothers) who have had babies removed from their care to prevent this re-occurring in future.

Table 8. Detailed recommendations for increased investment in preventative services

Stage in the system	Recommended action	Expected Impact
Early Help	<p>Expand the capacity of existing parenting programmes</p> <p>An expansion of capacity by around 90% is needed to meet existing demand and eliminate waiting lists.</p> <p>Keep capacity under review to ensure that it is meeting demand from other parts of the social care system.</p>	<p>These services will prevent escalation to CiN/CP/LAC stage or enable de-escalation for families already at those stages. Reducing waiting times is likely to make them more effective by ensuring that help truly is given early in the process. It will also give social workers more confidence to refer into these services and may, therefore, increase demand further.</p>
	<p>Review referral into parenting programmes</p> <p>Review practice of referral into early help parenting programmes to ensure that all families who could benefit from these services (at any stage of the social care process) are appropriately referred. In particular, investigate the lack of referrals into Triple-P parenting programmes.</p>	<p>Better use of existing services (especially Tripe-P) will prevent escalation to CiN/CP/LAC stage or enable de-escalation for families already at those stages.</p>
	<p>Consider expanding inclusion criteria</p> <p>Consider expanding the availability of some early help services to families of CiN/CP children and families who have had children removed. Capacity may need to be expanded accordingly.</p>	<p>Prevent escalation to LAC and promote children returning home to their families.</p>
	<p>Ensure end of TF funding is used to strengthen prevention</p> <p>Plan for changes to Troubled Families funding to ensure that this does not result in further disinvestment in prevention. Future changes to the service should be based on the best available evidence and designed to prevent children from becoming looked after.</p>	<p>Ensure that the balance of investment is moving towards prevention rather than away from it, reducing costs in more expensive parts of the system.</p>
Child in Need & Child Protection Plan	<p>Establish an “edge of care” service</p> <p>Establish a new “edge of care” service to work intensively with children who are at risk of becoming looked after.</p> <p>Design this service based on Functional Family Therapy or Multi-Systemic Therapy which have the strongest evidence base.</p> <p>Put in place a robust evaluation plan to determine cost-effectiveness.</p>	<p>Prevent children in the social care system (CIN and CPP) from becoming looked after.</p>

	<p>Expand existing domestic violence programmes Expand the two existing programmes (for victims and perpetrators) to meet demand. This would commissioning an additional 60 places for victims and an additional 10 places for perpetrators.</p>	Reduce risk to parents and children who are victims of domestic violence. Reduce the impact of domestic violence on children and prevent escalation of their cases within the social care system.
	<p>Targeted drug and alcohol outreach to families of Children in Need or on a Child Protection Plan</p>	Prevent escalation and reduce the duration of social care intervention by dealing with underlying substance misuse
<i>Looked after children</i>	<p>Invest in services which allow Looked After Children to return home Work systematically with families of children who have been taken into care to resolve problems and, where possible, to allow them to the children to return home. Consider including this within the remit of the edge-of-care service. Design of this service should begin with an in-depth analysis of why rates of children returning home to their families appear to have declined significantly in recent years.</p>	Increase the number of Looked After Children able to return home to their families and reduce the amount of time they spend in care and reduce costs significantly.
	<p>Prevent mothers from having multiple babies taken into care Commission the Pause programme to provide intensive support to mothers who have had a baby removed. Put in place robust evaluation of the programme to ensure effectiveness and cost-effectiveness.</p>	Reduce the number of mothers who have multiple babies removed from their care and reduce the number of children taken into care.

3. Improve information on activity and spending

Reducing the number of children in the system and controlling costs can only be achieved if reliable activity and financial information are available, allowing us to understand current patterns of activity and spending. For the purposes of this report, a new way of forecasting future activity and spending has been developed. This kind of forecasting can help to make good strategic decisions and financial plans for the future. The model used here is relatively simple and its accuracy could be improved with more work in future. Moreover, a number of weaknesses in existing data systems have been identified during the course of this report, which make effective planning and cost control difficult.

Table 9. Detailed recommendations for improving information on activity and spending

Recommendation	Details	Expected impact	Responsible
Monitor trends in key cost drivers	Key cost drivers identified in this report are: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The numbers of weeks of care provided by the Council over the course of a year; 2. The average length of stay of children in care; 3. The average cost of placements of different kinds. 	Monitoring trends in key cost drivers will help to control costs and evaluate the effectiveness of preventative strategies	Performance, quality and business intelligence team
Link data on activity and spend	Currently, data on activity and spending are kept separately. Work needs to be done to link these data systems and regularly analyse the data together	Improved understanding of the costs of different types of social care activity allowing more efficient ways of working to be devised and costs driven down.	Performance, quality and business intelligence team
Carry out a financial deep dive on Looked After Children	A deep dive is required to get a more accurate understanding of all the costs associated with Looked After Children including the costs of different types of placement, the costs of staff time and travel expenses etc.	A better understanding of all the costs associated with Looked After Children will allow costs to be controlled more effectively in this crucial area.	Finance
Investigate the decline in the number of children returning to their families after a period of being looked after	This may be an important factor increasing the number of children in care and, therefore costs. Up-to-date data is required to understand the most recent trends. Further data analysis and case-note audit may be required to understand the reasons for these changes	The results of this analysis should be used to increase the likelihood of LAC returning to their families.	Performance, quality and business intelligence team
Develop and update the forecasting model	There are several ways in which the model could be developed to be more accurate including: adding	The model can inform strategic planning as well as helping to	Public health and children's social care

	more detailed and accurate financial information on placement and other social care costs; modelling the impact of changes in deprivation rates and numbers of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	predict and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention strategies.	
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Appendix 1. Technical details of the Thurrock Public Health Team Forecasting model

Approach to modelling future demand for children's social care

The forecasts of future demand presented in Section 1.3 were developed using system dynamic modelling techniques. This approach uses a mathematical model to represent the forces which influence activity and cost in the children's social care system. Specialist software (*Vensim*) was used to develop these forecasts. The model included a simplified version of the factors which influence the number of Looked After Children (LAC) in Thurrock. The model is represented graphically below in Figure 26.

The rationale for this model includes the assumption that the size of the child population in Thurrock is a key driver of the number of children LAC. The exception to this assumption is the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in the LAC population. The number of UASC is assumed to be independent of the size of the local population. UASC numbers are influenced by the numbers arriving in Thurrock and the agreement to distribute UASC across the region. We modelled the size of the child population in future based on two population forecasts, the standard sub-national forecasts produced by the Office for National Statistics and the Thurrock-specific forecasts produced as part of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA). The SHMA forecasts take into account the projected economic and housing growth and are likely to be a more accurate estimate of future population.

The total weeks of care provided by the Council in a year is influenced not only by the number of LAC but also by how they remain in care, whilst annual placement costs are a function of the number of weeks of care provided and the average cost of placements. Both average placement length and the average placement cost were estimated based on real social data from the 2016-17 financial year.

Non-placement costs were estimated from real social care financial data (2016-17) by subtracting placement costs from the total estimated spend on Looked After Children. Our model assumes that non-placement costs represent a fixed proportion (47%) of the total spend on LAC and that they vary in line with placement costs.

Forecast scenarios

The results of any model are only as accurate as the assumptions which underlie it. Our modelling technique allowed us to simulate the impact of changes in key assumptions by running multiple scenarios and comparing the results. The model results are only as accurate as the assumptions (or inputs) underlying it. The forecasts presented here included four scenarios with different assumptions made for the inputs underlying each model. Details are given in the Table 10 below.

Table 10. Assumptions made in model inputs for forecasting models

Model inputs	Model			
	Baseline ONS	Population growth only	Rising LAC	Falling LAC
Child population	ONS mid-year	SHMA	SHMA	SHMA
Non-UASC rate	constant (66)	constant (66)	Rising logarithmic trend based on actual rates from 2011 – 2017 (see Figure 25)	Falls to national non-UASC rate (56) over 5 years then stays constant
Number of UASC	constant (38)	constant (38)	constant (38)	constant(38)
Average length of stay	constant (35 weeks)	constant (35 weeks)	constant (35 weeks)	constant (35 weeks)
Average placement cost per week	constant (£1,072)	constant (£1,072)	constant (£1,072)	constant (£1,072)
non-placement LAC costs	47% of total LAC spend	47% of total LAC spend	47% of total LAC spend	Constant at 2017 levels (£10.54M)

Figure 25. Non-UASC LAC rate, projected trend for Thurrock 2011 – 2037

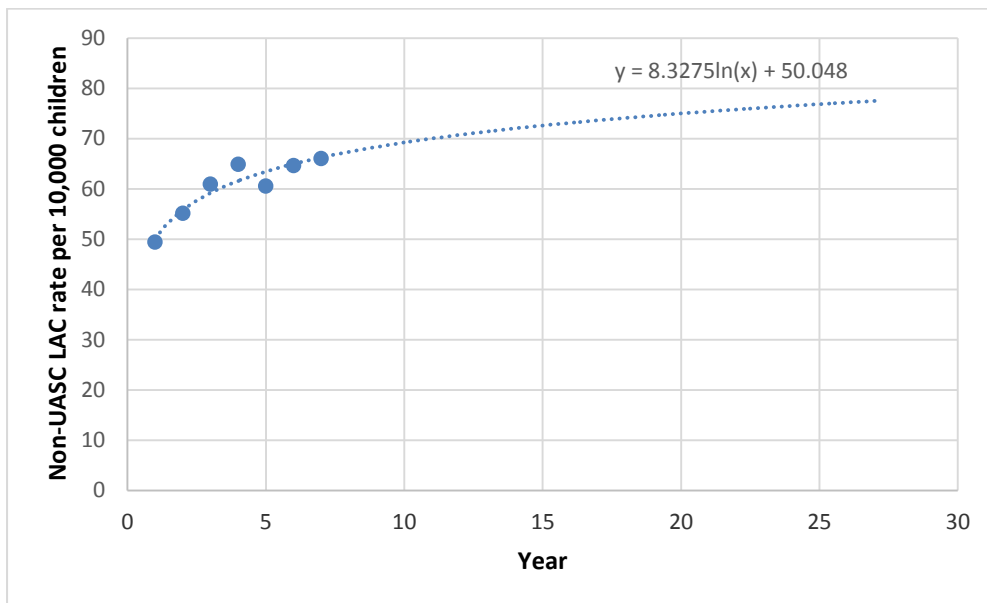
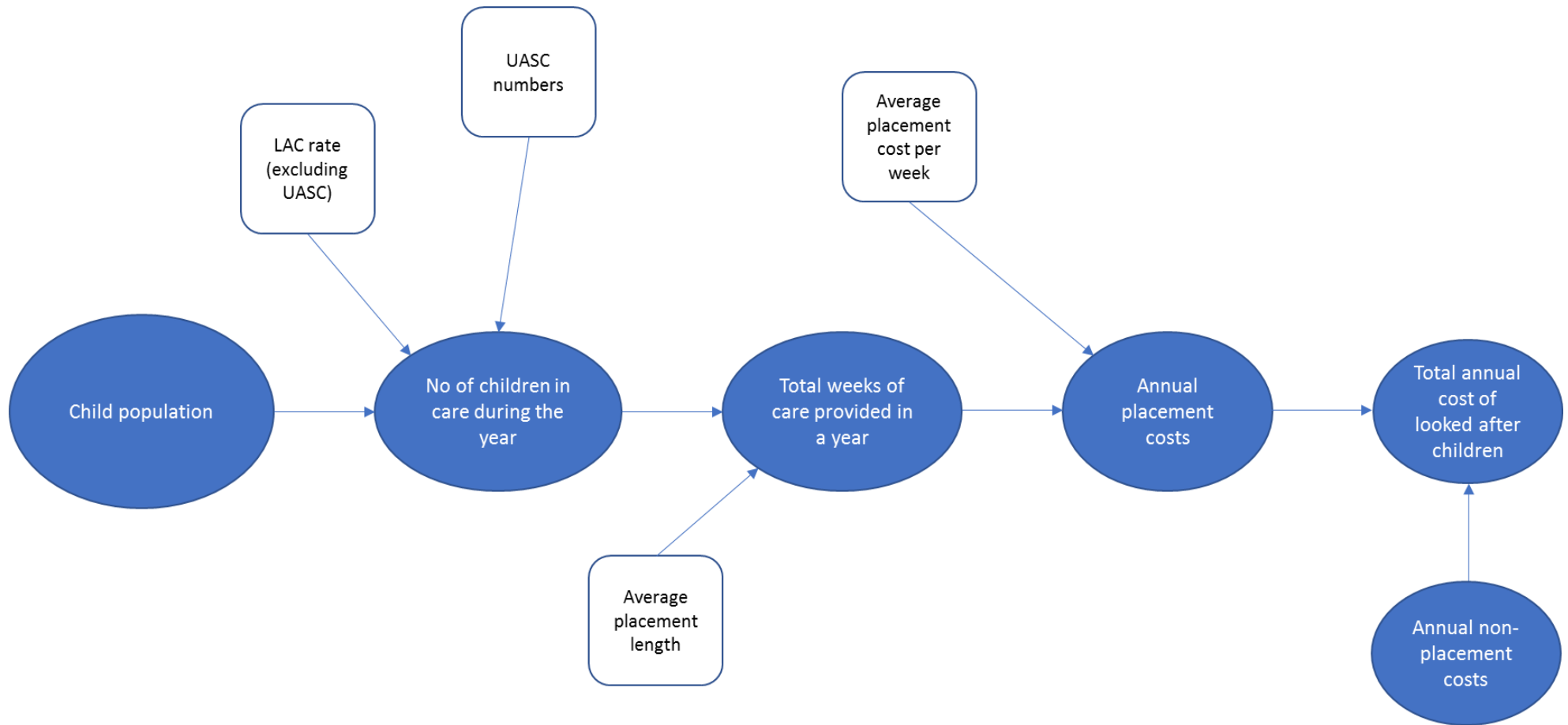


Figure 26. Thurrock children's social care demand and cost forecasting model 2017



Appendix 2. Literature review on what works in prevention and early intervention

Elozona Umeh, Senior Public Health Programme Manager
Annelies Willerton, Public Health Graduate Trainee

The literature supporting this review was searched using the Aubrey Keep Library Service. The search resulted in a range of articles which formed the major part of this review. Grey literature was also used to retrieve articles after an extensive search using the following sites;

- Early Intervention Foundation
- Research in Social Care Practice
- Community of Care Online
- Association of Directors of Children's Service

This section of this Annual Public Health report reviews what works in preventing children from accessing statutory children's care services as well as interventions that aid early identification and intervention. It is important to distinguish between prevention – stopping the problem happening in the first place; early intervention – getting in at the first signs of risk or trouble; treatment – responding once what has gone wrong has gone wrong. In Thurrock, there is a range of service to prevent risks, intervene early as well as respond to identified risky situations. A service mapping of the Thurrock Early Offer of Help Service was conducted. The below provides an insight to the current and formerly commissioned services within early help.

Service Mapping of Thurrock Early Help Services

A variety of evidence suggests early help or integration of services as part of ways to improve statutory response to families. There is an early help service known as the Early Offer of Help which is currently being delivered in Thurrock by a range of providers. A needs analysis was undertaken to identify the key factors present in Child in Need (CIN) and Child Protection (CP) cases and the services that were evidenced to have an impact in addressing these. In over half the cases childhood neglect was present and the underlying factors in many of these cases were substance misuse, poor parenting, domestic violence and sexual violence.

As a result the local authority in partnership with the Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) jointly funded and commissioned a range of services aimed at providing support at an earlier stage to reduce the risk of needs escalating and to improve outcomes for those most in need of support. In recognition of the impact on outcomes for children and financially for both organisations the following services were jointly commissioned in 2013 under the Early Offer of Help

- Domestic Abuse support services (a perpetrators program and a victim support program)
- Sexual Violence support service
- Substance Misuse support service
- Parenting program
- Family Intervention Program

However, in 2016 the CCG funding element was discontinued. An impact assessment and a Return on Investment(ROI) of the early help commissioned services was conducted. The exercise recommended that the CCG continue its £450,000 funding for Early Offer of Help as this will prevent excessive increased demand and future costs. As a result of this reduction in funding the Family Intervention Program and the Substance Misuse Programme were discontinued.

The table below attempts to map the services commissioned within the Early offer of Help banner, supported by outcomes achieved and evidence of effectiveness of these services is presented in the table below.

Service	Provider	Service Description	Outcome	Evidence of Effectiveness
Parenting Programmes	Coram	<p>Mellow Mums - Mellow Mums, part of the Mellow Parenting and family programmes, is an attachment and relationship based group intervention for mums who have babies and young children. This programme uses a combination of reflective and practical techniques that allow parents to address their personal challenges as well as the challenges they face with their children. Parents also reflect on their experience of being parented and how this affects their relations with their children. This is delivered over 14 weeks with both mum and baby/child with significant attachment issues. This programme now forms part of the Prevention and Support Service.</p>	<p>During the three years of delivery samples have been taken on two occasions to review the success rate of interventions at Social Care level. The sample size covered approximately 10% of the overall case load over the three year period.</p>	<p>Mellow Parenting evidence rating is 2 . Mellow Parenting has formative evidence of improving child and parent outcomes from a single study involving pre/post intervention comparisons of the mothers' behaviour. It has been effective in;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced likelihood of children remaining on the child protection register • Improving parenting skills (coded observation)
		<p>Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities - This service is an inclusive evidence-based parenting programme, designed to promote protective factors which are associated with good parenting and better outcomes for children. The service in Thurrock is a 12 week group parenting course that covers all aspects of effective parenting, boundary setting, praise and warmth and working with children's emotions. It uses peer support with distinct modules covered each week. It also includes face-face brief intervention with additional support for the family in their home. This programme now forms part of the Prevention and Support Service.</p>	<p>The outcomes of this programme were maintained one year on from the end of the programme.</p>	<p>The effectiveness of SFSC has been demonstrated by a variety of studies. A meta-analysis of 55 studies concluded that SFSC causes positive changes in the small to medium range for child behaviour problem, parent well-being and parenting skills; effect sizes increased with the intensity level of the programme with overall effect sizes (Cohen's d) ranging between 0.35 and 0.48 for between groups.</p>

		<p>Triple P - Triple P give parent's simple and practical strategies to help them build strong, healthy relationships to enable them confidently manage their children's behaviour and prevent problems developing. This is a 13 week programme which is utilised by parents with teenage children where there are particular behavioural patterns and seeks to avoid those escalating further in adolescence. It works over a 13 week programme. This programme now forms part of the Prevention and Support Service.</p>		<p>The evidence base for Triple P includes scientific papers that have contributed to the theory and development of essential procedures involved in forming part of the Triple P system of parenting interventions. This includes research related to the efficacy, effectiveness and dissemination of intervention programs, epidemiological studies, correlational studies, service-based research, and evaluation of professional training, large-scale population trials, and meta-analyses. It also includes observational studies of family interaction and independent program evaluations . Two large trials of Triple-P offered at all levels are among the few studies to have demonstrated impact of a universal and targeted approach combined. Barth suggests that the evidence-based Triple P approach offers a general framework that could be used to guide the future evolution of parenting programs</p>
Programme to Support Victims and Survivors	Changing Pathways	<p>Success Through Effective Parenting Support - – This programme offers an 8 week therapeutic and practical support 1-2-1 response covering service user-led group programme. The key focus of the STEPS programme is to raise awareness and decrease the impact on parenting of domestic abuse. The service in Thurrock is working to build a better understanding of all victims of domestic abuse, how this may have an impact on children and fast emotional recovery victims may need. In doing this, women who attend the programme gain support from both the facilitators and each other, and are empowered to address the issues affecting them and their children. As well as exploring the emotional impact of abuse on them and their children, the programme also provides an opportunity to develop/build on positive parenting after domestic</p>	430 women have accessed the 8 week 'STEPS' programme and 1360 sessions have been delivered for the drop-in service over the three year period that the contracts have currently run. The outcome of this programme indicated higher percentage of women understanding the impact of abuse and violence on their children and feeling safe.	

		abuse. This programme now forms part of the Prevention and Support Service.		
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	<p>Essex Community Rehabilitation Company (previously DVIP)</p>	<p>Domestic Violence Perpetrators Programme – This programme in Thurrock is an intensive 26 week programme (2.5 hours per week) and only commissioned for 10 men each year. It aims to help this cohort, who have been abusive towards their families, partners or ex-partners, change their behaviour and improve in their relationships. In Thurrock, the service delivers an intensive challenge and support peer programme which seeks to understand perpetrators childhood experiences and how they formed the attitudes that led to abusive patterns of behaviour. One of the key focuses is to address these behaviours and attitudes through providing understanding of power and control and its impact on partners and children, and exploring these via the group facilitators and peer challenge. All referrals to this service have been within Social Care, generally with children on a Child Protection Plan and sometimes on a child in need plan. For this reason it was intentionally targeted at those cases which represented the highest risk to children. Family intervention helps vulnerable families who may be facing issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poor physical and mental health; • domestic violence; • substance misuse; • a lack of basic and life skills; • Behavioural problems. <p>This programme now forms part of the Prevention and Support Service with a change of providers from January 2018</p>	<p>For the outcome of this programme, 93% of partners reported a cessation of abuse after completing the programme. Additional 93% of partners reported feeling safer where as 73% of partners reported the perpetrator had an improved relationship with children. Finally 83% of partners reported the changes had been sustained post intervention. This indicates a potential need to offer follow up support after closure to ensure that changes are sustained in the view of Social Care (this is not completely in line with the 83% of partners reporting sustained changes.</p>	<p>A cohort of men convicted and sentenced by the criminal courts was allocated to a DVPP programme. The impact of both types of sentence on women’s experiences of abuse and violence was measured and compared. The findings of the research included that there was a positive impact – men who had attended the DVPP recently were much less likely to continue abusive behaviour than men who had not (Dobash et al, 1999).</p>
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Family Intervention Project (FIP)	Catch 22	<p>FIP - The Thurrock service delivered an intensive programme for families with multiple and complex issues including: substance misuse, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and violence, teenage pregnancy, children not in school, no paid employment, housing issues, debt, inadequate parenting and others. Work is usually completed with a key worker allocated to a family working with them for between 9 and 18 months, with 12 months an average intervention time. The keyworker will seek to work in all areas, signposting where appropriate, and co-ordinate the family to ensure children are kept safe and remain in the family home. (This service has been decommissioned following reduction in funding from the CCG)</p>	<p>The programme has been effective and has received a positive outcome since it was implemented. For example 60% of parents gained employment after signing up to the programme, 23% completely moved off of benefits, 75% or more decrease in crime and anti-social behaviour whereas 59% of children has no school exclusions</p>	<p>An evaluation of family intervention projects (FIPs) has shown that this programme have reduced crime and antisocial behaviour. The research, commissioned by the government, found that the more time family intervention teams worked with families the greater the chance of a successful outcome. Overall they found that 79% of parents completing the courses showed improvements in mental well-being while three quarters of all parents reported reductions in either parenting laxness or over-reactivity. Serious conduct problems in their children dropped by a third from 59% to 40%.</p>
Substance Misuse P		<p>Substance Misuse – This service was based on a hybrid service which encompasses elements from Changing Trax, Options 2 and Hidden harm programme. The service involves delivery of a two levels of support – early intervention and an intensive support for families affected by substance misuse and where children at significant risk of becoming looked after. (This service has been decommissioned following reduction in funding from the CCG)</p>		

Sexual Violence Support Programme	SERICC	<p>Sexual Violence Support Programme - The service in Thurrock provides support to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women with children on the edge of care where sexual violence is or has significantly impacted on the welfare and wellbeing of the child / children. - Women whose children who are looked after, who have been referred as a result of a child protection conference where the intervention has been recommended before consideration is given to their children being returned.<i>(This programme forms part of the Prevention and Support Service).</i> 		
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Page 162</p> <p>Troubled Families Programme</p>	Thurrock Council (in-house provision)	<p>Troubled Families - This programme is a targeted intervention for families with multiple problems, including crime, anti-social behaviour, truancy, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse. The programme identifies a 'troubled family' and assigns a key worker. <i>This programme forms part of the Prevention and Support Team.</i></p>	<p>Troubled Families programme has had two phases of programme deliver.</p> <p>Thurrock TF target numbers for Phase I was to recruit 360 families on the programme between 2012 –2015. Thurrock met this target. Phase e II which started in 2015 runs until 2020. Thurrock is required to work with 1240 families which is broken down below;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 1 – 197 families were supported • Year 2 – 370 families were supported • Year 3 – 331 families were supported • Year 4 & 5 not yet known but will be broken up to cover the remaining 	<p>An evaluation of the programme was carried out in 2015 with a suite of evaluations at different stages . It is worth noting that funding from this service forms a huge part of the PASS service and is likely to be suspended after 2020. An implementation plan for post 2020 has been submitted to the DCLG for consideration. (Still waiting on Teresa Goulding for more information on outcomes etc</p>

			number to reach full target.	
<p>Page 100</p> <p>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub</p>	<p>Thurrock Council (in-house provision)</p>	<p>MASH was created to enhance information sharing across all organisations involved in safeguarding the welfare of children in Thurrock - encompassing statutory, non-statutory and third sector sources.</p>	<p>A summary of MASH outcomes;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MASH enquiries have decreased since the previous year • Police and Schools are biggest enquiry groups • 2016/17 saw more cases rated as Red than the previous year (i.e. increased severity) • 2016/17 saw a large increase in proportion of cases that were past their due date (is this a sign of increased demand on the system?) • 2016/17 saw an increase in the proportion of enquiries for non-White British children, e.g. White Other and African groups. 	<p>A Report by the Home Office on Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs underpins the setup of this offer. Thurrock model has been acknowledged by Ofsted as working well.</p>

	<p>North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT)</p>	<p>This includes universal and targeted offer through Health Visiting and School Nursing programs for children aged 0 – 19 years.</p> <p>Health Visiting – This is a universal offer to children and families led by Health Visitors (HV) and supported by teams of mixed professionals with multiple skills. The service in Thurrock work across a number of stakeholders, settings and organisations to lead delivery of the Healthy Child Programme 0-5 (HCP), a prevention and early intervention public health programme that lies at the heart of the universal service for children and families and aims to support parents at this crucial stage of life, promote child development, improve child health outcomes and ensure that families at risk are identified at the earliest opportunity. The model of delivery is termed 4-5-6 model which comprises of 4 levels of delivery, five mandated contact points (it involves key contact points families are expected to be offered an encounter with a Health Visitor) and six high impact areas. Safeguarding children cuts across this model to ensure risks are identified and outcomes are improved.</p> <p>The School Health Service – the core offer for school nursing include health promotion and prevention by multi-agency group with. This is done across four levels with contacts with all school children’s at Key stage 1, 2 and 3. Health assessments are carried out and risks identified. This service also provides defined support for children with additional and complex health needs as well as needs identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).</p> <p>The offer here also includes some offer for Young and</p>	<p>The Healthy Families Service is expected to contribute to the following overarching outcomes for children as well as contribute to the closing the gap in inequalities within Thurrock</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People are ready for Education and Learning • Children and Young People are in Good Physical Health • Children and Young People are able to make Healthy Lifestyle Choices • Children, Young People and their Parents have Good Emotional Mental Health and Wellbeing • Children and Young People Live Safely • Improved Parental Aspirations and Achievements 	<p>This service is underpinned by the Healthy Child Programme Pregnancy - 5 years old is an evidence based policy that underpins the home visiting service. Evidence base for this policy has been recently updated - Rapid review to support evidence for the Healthy Child Programme 0 - 5 published in 2015. The Healthy Child Programme 5 – 19 underpins the School Health Service</p>
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Vulnerable parents, healthy eating for infants and mothers including parenting programme to support positive parenting skills.

What Works for Early Intervention

Early help involves support provided ‘as soon as a problem emerges’⁷. The evidence reviewed on the effectiveness of early interventions to prevent abuse and neglect of children and young people was predominantly from outside the UK, and focused more on home visiting programmes and parenting programmes.

Home Visiting

Home visiting programmes at the ante-natal and early post-natal stage can be effective in facilitating the development of a sensitive and empathic relationship between the parent and young child which may forestall attachment and other relationship difficulties.

The NICE guidance on Child Neglect and Abuse (NG 76; 2017) suggests that home visiting programmes should be considered as a form of early help for families showing possible signs of abuse or neglect. This should be for a minimum duration of 6 months, for parents or carers at risk (or those with previously confirmed instances) of abusing or neglecting their children.

The recommendations required that home visiting programmes should include:

- support to develop positive parent-child relationships, including helping parents to understand children’s behaviour more positively, modelling positive parenting behaviours; observing and giving feedback on parent-child interactions
- Helping parents to develop problem-solving skills
- Support for parents with substance misuse and mental health difficulties
- Support for parents to access relevant services,

Although evidence around home visiting is well established, it is important to note that further research is still called for on effective components of a home visiting programme for preventing child abuse and neglect in the UK. The majority of the evidence base is from the US, with mixed findings of effectiveness as well as poor reporting of intervention details, making it difficult to ascertain the key components of a successful home visiting programme.

Two home visiting interventions have been conducted in the UK^{8 9}. In one of the studies, pregnant women receiving home visits were assessed as having a higher level of maternal sensitivity and infant cooperativeness compared to those receiving standard care, but no differences were identified in any other measures, possibly due to a lack of statistical power. There was also no difference in the outcome of being placed under child protection or into care – in fact, the intervention arm observed a slight increase in the number of cases of abuse, which the authors attributed to surveillance bias.

The other randomised controlled trial was conducted on a larger scale with a larger sample size of 1645 first-time teenage mothers in order to test the effectiveness of the US Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) programme as an intensive preventive home visiting service. Again potentially as a result of surveillance bias, those receiving the FNP intervention were significantly more likely to have a safeguarding event noted in GP records (AOR 1.85, 95% CI 1.02 to 2.85, p=0.005). Conversely, GP health records were used as opposed to data from children’s social care, and there were high levels of missing data in both intervention and control groups in relation to this outcome. No significant differences were found between groups in regards to parent-reported abuse and neglect or

⁷ Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013

⁸ Barlow J, Davis H, McIntosh E, Jarret P, Mockford C, Stewart-Brown S (2007) The role of home visiting in improving parenting and health in families at risk of abuse and neglect: Results of a multicentre randomised controlled trial and economic evaluation. Arch Dis Child 92: 229-33.

⁹ Robling M, Bekkers M-J, Bell K et al. (2015) Effectiveness of a nurse-led intensive home-visitation programme for first-time teenage mothers (Building Blocks): a pragmatic randomised controlled trial. The Lancet 387 (10014): 146-55.

maternal-child interaction outcomes. The authors suggested that benefit for child development outcomes would largely arise in children after the age of 2 years and called for a longer-term follow up to accurately determine the effectiveness of a home visiting intervention on these outcomes.

In the UK, an RCT¹⁰ of the Family Nurse Partnership programme, on the one hand found the programme to be successful in engaging with disadvantaged families and reaching vulnerable groups of young mothers. On the other hand, measures of effectiveness found no significant impact on neither the primary outcomes measure nor outcomes by key sub-groups (age, NEET, problems with basic life skills, area deprivation) or by variation in programme implementation. A wide range of secondary outcomes assessed also did not show significant benefits for this programme. As a result, Thurrock Council decommissioned this service and re-designed an offer for families to include a wider age range and population groups.

Other evidence based home visiting offer include; The Healthy Child Programme (HCP) which is the key universal public health offer for improving the health and wellbeing of children through health and development reviews, health promotion, parenting support, promoting screening and immunisations. A rapid review of evidence to update the Healthy Child Programme 0 – 5 in 2015 aimed synthesise relevant systematic review about ‘what works’ in key areas: such as parental mental health; smoking, alcohol/drug misuse; intimate partner violence; preparation and support for childbirth and the transition to parenthood; attachment; parenting support; unintentional injury in the home; safety from abuse and neglect. Evidence from the rapid review supported the design of the Thurrock Healthy Families Service.

Parenting Programmes

A range of parenting programmes have been documented to effectively support parenting in building positive parenting skills and sensitively required to improve children’s wellbeing. The Parenting Early Intervention Programme provided government funding to all England local authorities from 2008-2011 to test the effectiveness of several parenting programmes that have previously demonstrated trial efficacy in improving parenting skills and resultant improvements in children’s behavioural difficulties¹¹. The process tested four parenting programmes (Triple P, Incredible Years, Strengthening Families Programme 10-14 and Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities) and found all four were effective in improving outcomes for parents and children (in improving parenting skills, parent well-being and reducing children’s behaviour difficulties) across the range of demographic backgrounds, including SEN). Improvement in these areas was maintained one year on. However, outcomes in relation to risk of abuse or neglect were not measured. In Thurrock, Triple P and Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities are currently being commissioned within the Prevention and Support Service as part of early intervention to prevent children accessing statutory services.

An Australian study¹² found that participants in 2 variants of the Triple-P Parenting Program did show significant improvements across all measured indicators of risk potential for abuse and neglect, which were also sustained at the 6-month follow up. This study targeted parents who were experiencing anger management problems in relation to their child. The enhanced programme version contained additional content targeted at risk factors for abuse and neglect, and participating parents showed a significantly greater reduction compared to the standard programme in child abuse potential (measured via Child Abuse Potential Inventory scores, and unrealistic expectations scores, as measured by the Parent Opinion Questionnaire).

¹⁰ Robling, M et al, 2015, **Effectiveness of a nurse-led intensive home-visitation programme for first-time teenage mothers (Building Blocks): A pragmatic randomised controlled trial**, The Lancet , Volume 387 , Issue 10014 , 146 - 155

¹¹ Lindsay G, Strand S, Cullen MA et al. (2011) Parenting Early Intervention Programme Evaluation. Department for Education

¹² Sanders MR, Pidgeon AM, Gravestock F et al. (2004) Does parental attributional retraining and anger management enhance the effects of the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program with parents at risk of child maltreatment? Behavior Therapy 35: 513-35

Whalley and colleagues¹³ conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of Pathways Triple P, an NSPCC service tailored specifically to families where there are specific concerns about child neglect. This intervention was specifically delivered in the home on an individual basis for parents of children aged between 2 and 12 years old, who were not yet at the threshold for child protection interventions. Parents reported a reduction in severe emotional and behavioural child difficulties following the programme in addition to severe parenting difficulties. Improvements were noted in understanding of child's needs, parenting capability, parental commitment to child, greater parental sensitivity and helping to meet child's developmental needs. These outcomes were described in greater detail in the semi-structured interviews, where the relationship with the programme practitioner was described as the key facilitator to these outcomes (in particular the practitioner's communication style, approach, experience, flexibility and supportive encouragement).

It is important to note that, despite not being on a Child Protection Plan, children on entry to the programme were reported as still having very high levels of need, and almost half of the children still had clinical levels of need by the end of the programme, indicating that that further support may be required. A similar conclusion that parenting intervention may be ineffective or insufficient in cases of high need and families with complex, multi-layered problems has been reached during a recent literature review¹⁴ as well as earlier evidence reviews¹⁵¹⁶

Children in Need and Children in Protection Plans – Supportive Interventions

A child should be taken to be in need if:

- He/she is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him/her of services by a local authority;
 - His/her health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired without the provision for him/her of such services;
 - He/she is disabled.
- (Section 17(10), Children Act 1989)

Some parenting programmes have been found to be effective in preventing children from being taken into care. Effective programmes and interventions with children and families at the edge of care (this stage describes various stages before or as a child becomes looked after).

Two systematic reviews have identified interventions aimed at improving parent sensitivity and secure child attachment which have shown to be effective in children under the age of five (NICE 2015; Barlow 2016). Video feedback programmes and parent-child psychotherapy in particular have been recommended for parents of preschool-age children on the edge of care with, or at risk of, attachment difficulties. NICE (2015)¹⁷ recommends an alternative such as parental sensitivity and behaviour training for parent unwilling to take part in video feedback programmes. This should

¹³ Whalley P (2015) *Child neglect and Pathways Triple P: an evaluation of an NSPCC service offered to parents where initial concerns of neglect have been noted*. London: NSPCC.

¹⁴ Schrader-McMillan A and Barlow J (2017) *Improving the effectiveness of the child protection system - A review of the literature*. University of Oxford.

• ¹⁵ Barlow J, Johnston I, Kendrick D, Polnay L, Stewart-Brown S (2006) *Individual and group-based parenting programmes for the treatment of physical child abuse and neglect*. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* (3) CD005463. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD005463.pub2.

¹⁶ Ward H, Brown R and Hyde-Dryden G (2014) *Assessing Parental Capacity to Change when Children are on the Edge of Care: An Overview of Current Research Evidence*. London: Department for Education

¹⁷ NICE Guidinace, *Child Abuse and Neglect, NG 2017*; <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng76>

consist of a parent-only session followed by 5-15 weekly or fortnightly parent-child sessions over a 6-month period, to include the following:

- Coaching the parents in behavioural management (for children 18 months- 5 years) and limit setting
- Reinforcing sensitive responsiveness
- Ways to improve parenting quality
- Homework to practise applying new skills

NICE also recommend a multi-agency review for parents who decline the above interventions or made little improvement before going ahead with further interventions.

A recent review by Schrader-McMillan and Barlow (2017)¹⁸ has warned however that the evidence for the above interventions in cases of identified child maltreatment is generally based on limited research of low quality.

Interventions to support Physical abuse

Parent-child interaction therapy - Parent-child interaction therapy (PCIT) is an individualised intervention developed for parents and children aged 3-7 years with externalising behavioural problems. It aims to improve the quality of the parent-child relationship by helping parents to understand how their behaviour affects their child and by teaching behaviour management strategies that focus on positive reinforcement rather than power assertion.

While there is no evidence of its application in the UK, there is evidence of its effectiveness among Australian families at a high risk of, or already engaged in, maltreatment¹⁹. However, the difficulties in assessing the effectiveness of such interventions with families where a child has been physically abused should be acknowledged. The measured effect of the intervention could be imprecise as a result of a reliance on parent self-reporting and measuring risk factors associated with abuse such as parental behaviour and attitudes, as opposed to direct, objective measures of physical maltreatment.

The majority of the supporting evidence has relied on risk factors associated with child maltreatment as primary outcomes. Despite this, an earlier US RCT did show an intervention effect on abuse recurrence rates - after a 2 year follow-up, considerably fewer parents receiving PCIT had a re-report for physical abuse (19%) compared to those who received standard care (49%).

Multi-systemic therapy - Multi-systemic therapy (MST) is a family and community-based treatment programme originally designed for young offenders or young people aged 11-17 at risk of care who are demonstrating anti-social behaviours²⁰.

The intervention has recently been adapted specifically for families where there is evidence of child abuse and/or neglect (MST-CAN) as an intensive, multi-faceted intervention to address the multi-determined nature of child physical abuse. It has been evaluated in a US randomized effectiveness

¹⁸ Schrader-McMillan, A., & Barlow, J. (2017). Improving the effectiveness of the child protection system - A review of the literature. Oxford: University of Oxford.

¹⁹ Thomas, R., & Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J. (2012). Parent-child interaction therapy: An evidence-based treatment for child maltreatment. SAGE. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077559512459555>

²⁰ <http://www.mstuk.org/>

trial, where 86 families followed by Child Protective Services due to physical abuse were randomly assigned to receive MST-CAN or Enhanced Outpatient Treatment (EOT), which was the standard service normally offered with enhanced engagement and parent training.

Intention-to-treat analyses showed 16 months after programme entry, MST-CAN was significantly more effective than EOT improving risk factors closely associated with maltreatment from both youth and parent perspectives, and led to fewer out-of-home placements (14 versus 30%). Perhaps surprisingly, there were no significant differences between the groups regarding maltreatment outcomes (the youth experiencing another abuse was 4.5% in MST-CAN group compared to 11.9% in the EOT group). MST-CAN is now being piloted in several sites in the UK; however an evaluation is yet to be undertaken or published. Despite this, it is an intervention that will be recommending in the upcoming (currently out for consultation) NICE 2017 guidance on Child Abuse and Neglect for parents with children aged 10-17 if the parent has abused or neglected their child. It should involve the whole family and include a 24/7 on-call support service to help families to manage crises.

Gaps in the evidence

The draft NICE (2017) guidance on Child Neglect and Abuse recommends effective interventions to address abuse and neglect of children and young people. The guidance also states that the majority of evidence used to make recommendations was from outside the UK, as many UK interventions or approaches have not yet been evaluated using high-quality research designs hence posing a gap in evidence for effective interventions within the UK. The guidance also calls for more evidence to assess the potential effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of home visiting in higher risk families where abuse or neglect is occurring or has occurred. Home visiting is a tool often used for monitoring families as part of a Child Protection Plan, but little is known about what practices within this setting help families to change and address problematic behaviours.

Interventions to support child sexual abuse

Evidence suggest that plans for children who have been sexually abused need to take account of the overall needs of the child rather than focusing on the sexual abuse alone, and need to consider a variety treatment approaches to suit the individual needs. The draft NICE (2017) guidelines specifically emphasise, for girls aged between 6 and 14 who have been sexually abused and are showing symptoms of emotional or behavioural disturbance, professionals should discuss with the individual as to whether individual focused psychoanalytic therapy or group psychotherapeutic and psycho-educational sessions would suit her best.

Cognitive behavioural therapy - Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) currently has the strongest evidence base for benefitting sexually abused children. A systematic review by Macdonald et al²¹ assessed the efficacy of cognitive-behavioural approaches in addressing the immediate and longer-term adverse consequences of sexual abuse in children and young people. Across the ten included trials, results suggested that trauma-focussed CBT may have a positive impact on outcomes including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and child behaviour problems, but most results were not statistically significant. However, half of the studies included asymptomatic children which

²¹ Macdonald ,G, et al. (2012) Cognitive-behavioural interventions for children who have been sexually abused. *Cochrane Database Systematic Reviews* Issue 16:5.

may limit the ability to detect an intervention effect, as it is difficult to observe improvement in better-functioning individuals. The validity or applicability should still be questioned due to the generally poor reporting by the studies which were predominantly conducted in the US.

Letting the Future in - A psychodynamic, attachment-based therapeutic approach called 'Letting the Future In' is an example programme developed by the NSPCC and due to be recommended by NICE (2017), stating that such a programme should:

- emphasise the importance of the therapeutic relationship between the child and therapist
- offer support tailored to the child's needs, drawing on a range of approaches including counselling, socio-educative and creative approaches (such as drama or art)
- include individual work with the child (up to 20 sessions, extending to 30 as needed)
- involve parallel work with non-abusing parents or carers (up to 8 sessions)

The evaluation for this intervention²² included qualitative case studies and the largest ever RCT of a therapeutic intervention for child sexual abuse, with 242 children aged 6-16 years. Children were randomised to either an immediate intervention group or six-month waiting list group.

The proportion of children with clinical levels of symptoms or significant difficulties between assessment on referral, and 6 month follow up reduced significantly from 73% to 46% in the intervention group, while there was no significant reduction in the control group. It is important to note this was only for older children (over 8 years) and young people. No change was observed in the younger children (33% of the participants) who were unable to complete the self-report measures, emphasising the importance of considering the child's age and developmental stage when choosing an intervention.

Interventions to support Substance abuse

Along with domestic abuse and mental health problems parental substance misuse features in a large number of cases open to children's social care. It is clear that parental substance misuse can have an impact on child health and development from birth through to when they are adults. The potential for parenting capacity to be undermined and children's health and development harmed by parental substance misuse is considerable, particularly when other risk factors such as domestic abuse and mental health difficulties are present (Cleaver et al, 2011; Horgan, 2011; Barnard, 1999)^{23,24}. There is a serious risk that parents will neglect their children in these circumstances hence evidence suggested intervention below;

Parents Under Pressure - Child maltreatment tends to occur as a result of a complex interplay between drug use, maternal psychopathology, parenting practices, family environment and socioeconomic factors such as unemployment and poverty, as opposed to parental drug use specifically as a single risk factor. In recognition of this, an intensive, home based intervention named 'Parents Under Pressure' (PUP) was developed by Australian researchers to address multiple domains of family functioning including parental psychopathology, child behaviour problems, parent-child relationship difficulties, and social-contextual factors²⁵. The programme was designed

²² Carpenter J, Jessiman T, Patsios D et al. (2016) Letting the Future In: a therapeutic intervention for children affected by sexual abuse and their carers – an evaluation of impact and implementation. <https://www.basw.co.uk/resource/?id=5045>

²³ Cleaver, H; Unell, I and Aldgate, J (2011), *Children's needs, parenting capacity: The impact of parental mental illness, learning disability, problem alcohol and drug use and domestic violence on children's safety and development* (2nd edition), Department for Education

²⁴ Horgan, J (2011) *Parental substance misuse: Addressing its impact on children*

National Advisory Committee on Drugs

²⁵ Dawe, S. and Harnett, P. H. (2007) 'Improving family functioning in methadone maintained families:

for high risk families where a parent is receiving methadone maintenance treatment. The Australian randomised-controlled trial compared the 20-week intervention to both a 'usual care' group and another receiving a 'brief intervention' (two-session parenting education) service. Only parents who participated in the PUP intervention showed a significant decrease in child abuse potential (measured by the child abuse potential inventory), harsh parenting and parenting stress.

Despite this, 36% of the PUP group showed continued high-risk status over the course of the study, suggesting that not all parents are responsive to intervention and highlighting the need to examine each individual family's response (change in parenting capacity) to a parenting intervention.

The programme is currently being evaluated in a UK-based randomised controlled trial for families with a child under two and a half years old by the NSPCC and University of Warwick in regards to its effectiveness, cost-effectiveness and acceptability to service users.

Interventions to support domestic abuse

Children can suffer serious long term problems as a result of domestic abuse even if they themselves have not been directly harmed or abused. According to NICE guidance support should be provided for both the non-abusing parent and child²⁶. Services should be tailored to the level of risk and specific needs of people experiencing domestic violence or abuse.

Support for the non-abusing parent

There is moderate evidence to support the following forms of support:

- Advocacy services (to inform, guide and help victims access a range of services and supports)
- Skill building (teaching, training, experiential or group learning)
- Counselling interventions (based on brief educational, cognitive behavioural and motivational interviewing approaches) to improve a range of outcomes - PTSD symptoms, depression, anxiety, self-esteem, stress management, independence, support, re-occurrence of violence, birth outcomes for pregnant women, motivational level and/or readiness to change.
- Intensive therapeutic interventions such as group therapy may also be effective for many of the above outcomes in some cases may reduce likelihood of future IPV or re-abuse

The majority or all of the studies included in the evidence review conducted for the guidance²⁷ reported improvements in a number of the outcomes above that were measured.

Support for the child

The above review indicates the evidence is currently stronger for single component therapeutic interventions that are aimed at both mother and child, compared to child only. Intervention approaches include:

results from a randomised controlled trial.' *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 32, 381-390.

²⁶ NICE (2014) PH50: Domestic violence and abuse: multi-agency working

²⁷ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph50/resources/review-of-interventions-to-identify-prevent-reduce-and-respond-to-domestic-violence2>

- mother-child psychotherapy
- shelter-based parenting intervention combined with play sessions for children
- parent-child interaction therapy (including mother-child play, teaching of praise and discipline techniques)
- experiential, activity-based and interactive therapy intervention.

Outcomes that potentially improve as a result include child behaviour, mother-child attachment and stress and trauma-related symptoms in mothers and children.

Psycho-educational interventions (addressing skills such as: stress and conflict management, coping and relationship skills, understandings of violence, etc.) may also be effective in improving children's coping skills, behaviour, emotional regulation, conflict resolution skills and knowledge about violence, but the evidence is weakened by methodological weaknesses, such as small sample sizes, lack of detail on intervention.

There is also moderate evidence (i.e. most studies contain some methodological weaknesses) of effectiveness of multi-component interventions that:

- focus on advocacy, such as community-based service planning, nurse case management, and non-parental childcare for disadvantaged families, helping to reduce trauma symptoms and stress, and improving child behaviours such as aggression)
- include both therapy and advocacy
- focus on therapy and parenting

The review acknowledged that there is still a lack of evidence for general population interventions for children, and for community based educational interventions that offer more broad prevention.

Other Interventions

Short stay residential care for adolescents on the edge of care - An evidence scope conducted by Dixon et al²⁸ found support for a restructuring of the care system where short-stay residential care is an option within a continuum of child and family support, rather than simply a last resort. The authors suggested this option could be effective in preventing full entry into care by offering respite and improving young people's relationships with their families. It also suggests where care is considered to still be the most appropriate option, allow the opportunity for a more planned and smoother transition to care, which may in turn promote future reunification.

The combination of direct work with young people and support for their families may better meet the needs of some older adolescents and those with more challenging behaviours.

Functional Family Therapy - Along with Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is an intensive family-focused intervention originating from the US that is previously government funded in the UK. It targets young people aged 10-18 years who are still living at home but have persistent behavioural and/or substance misuse problems. It includes a focus on and assessment of those risks and protective factors that impact on children and young peoples as well as their environment. The weekly sessions over a 3-4 month period aim to reduce disruptive communication patterns and encourage positive interactions among the family.

²⁸ Dixon, J. et al. (2015) *Supporting Adolescents on the Edge of Care: The role of short term stays in residential care*. London: Action for Children

An FFT pilot started in Brighton in 2007 and with the first UK randomised controlled trial is being conducted by Kings College in partnership with Brighton and Hove Youth Offending Services. Other randomised controlled trials have equally started in parts of the UK for e.g. in Croydon Council in partnership with Queen's University, Belfast.

Integrated or multi-dimensional programmes - The need to offer a more integrated package of support in order to better meet the complex needs of children and their families has recently been acknowledged (Ward 2014).

With funding from the Department for Education (DfE) Innovation Programme, a project called 'Step Change' was created by Action for Children to bring together Multi-systemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Treatment Foster Care Oregon (TFCO) within 1 overall programme, operating across 3 London boroughs with a single referral pathway to provide adolescents and families with access to the most appropriate intervention from the three on offer. However, TFCO was removed early due to concerns about the involved costs and resources as well as the lack of evidence of its effectiveness in the UK. The evaluation found some improvement in follow-up measures (risk taking behaviours including offending; increasing engagement in education, employment and training; improving relationships between young people and families to avoid family breakdown; reduction in need for care or custody), although these were not completed in sufficient numbers to provide a reliable analysis²⁹.

Factors that appeared to improve outcomes emerged from the qualitative data with families and workers, including the consistency, frequency and accessibility of the therapy, the meaningful relationship formed with therapists and their perceived impartiality. While the project showed some initial signs of success, the organisations involved decided to close the project after the DfE funding finished, but did recommend that setting up joint commissioning arrangements (between health and social care) would help to maximise the chances of sustainable implementation.

In summary, the evidence base for effective interventions in the UK is generally lacking in robustness but innovative interventions are currently being piloted and evaluated, with findings to be published in the near future. As emphasised by NICE (2017), it is important to take the age and developmental stage of the child into account when selecting an intervention. Furthermore, it should be recognised that even if an intervention is noted as effective by the literature or guidance, it may not suit a particular person, family, and therefore where possible it is encouraged to give children, young people and families a choice of proposed interventions.

Reunification

Foster care is an intervention for children and young people experiencing abuse and or neglect in their home environment. The most common outcome for children leaving care is returning home to their parents or relative. However, evidence suggest that about half of children who come into care because of abuse or neglect suffer further abuse children if they return home, with up to half of those returning into care as a result. Gypen et al.'s (2017) systematic review reviewed 32 studies looking at multiple outcomes with the finding that outcomes were poor for these children across education, employment, housing, health, substance abuse and criminal involvement compared to their peers from the general population. Having a steady home base and getting a foothold in

²⁹ Blower S, Dixon J, Ellison S et al. (2017) Step Change: an evaluation. Department for Education. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585194/Step_Change_an_evaluation.pdf

education is shown to be important in outcomes for children growing up in foster care. Having a steady mentor who gives support when needed is a protecting factor³⁰.

A briefing published by the NSPCC 'Returning children home from care: learning from case reviews' identified a number of ways to improve practice for reunification, which are reflected in current legislation and guidance³¹ to include the following:

- Thorough assessments
- Clear conditions for return of child
- Preparation for and staged return of the child
- Sharing information and working with professionals in other agencies
- Good monitoring of the child before, during and after the return

Thorough Assessments

A thorough and careful assessment is needed to inform the decision as to whether Looked After Children should return to their family. In a follow-up of 3,872 children looked after by seven local authorities, Wade et al³² observed that well planned reunifications were associated with more stable reunifications, in particular those which were based on evidence of sustained change in parenting capacity and included provision of support services. Farmer et al³³ also noted greater stability for children returning home as a result of a more thorough assessment, but that 43% of children still returned home without a thorough assessment.

A recent review of the evidence on reunification³⁴ concluded that an assessment and care plan for reunification should include the following information:

- The types and number of family stressors/difficulties
- An agreement with parents about what needs to change before the child can return home i.e. the problems that led to care and require addressing
- A set of clear targets for parents to meet which are centred on what needs to change prior to reunification and over what timescales, including the consequences if these conditions are not met/risks are not removed
- Interventions and services to address known issues
- Contingency plans i.e. an alternative care placement if return home from care/accommodation is not possible
- Extent of family engagement, in particular compliance with conditions set out in the plan
- Family readiness/parental motivation (e.g. are the parents ambivalent about their child returning home)
- Reason for return home from care/accommodation
- When reunification should commence
- Preparation for reunification and support prior to return home from care
- Support and services post reunification
- Processes for monitoring and reviews following reunification

³⁰ Gypen, L., Vanderfaellie, J., De Maeyar, S., Belenger, L. and Van Hoken, F. (2017) Outcomes of children who grew up in foster care: Systematic-review. **Children and Youth Services Review**, Vol 76, May 2017, 74-83.

³¹ NSPCC Information Service, October 2015, Returning Home from care – Learning from case reviews.

³² Wade J, Biehal N, Farrelly N and Sinclair I (2010) Research Brief: Maltreated Children in the Looked After System: A Comparison of Outcomes For Those Who Go Home and Those Who Do Not. London: DCFS/DoH.

³³ Farmer, E., et al (2011) Achieving Successful Returns from Care: What Makes Reunification Work?, London, BAAF.

³⁴ Hyde-Dryden G, Gibb J, Lea J et al. (2015) Research report: Improving practice in respect of children who return home from care. National Children's Bureau

It is recommended that reunification plans for children in Thurrock consider the above assessment guide.

Gradual timing of reunification

Studies have found that a gradual, staged return home can increase chances of reunification and lead to a more durable home placement, as it allows time for well managed planning and proper consultation³⁵.

A review by Thoburn et al³⁶ found that reunification is less likely to be successful if the child returns after a short stay in care (less than 3-6 months), suggesting that a short timeframe may not allow sufficient change in the family environment or behaviour to take place. Equally, reunification is less likely to be successful after a prolonged period in care (over 2-3 years) where the child may have settled into a long-term permanent placement, experienced repeated placement disruption, or had minimal contact with their birth parents, impacting on their emotional and behavioural development which may be difficult for the birth parents to manage.

Caseworker engagement and family involvement

A longitudinal analysis of long-term foster care in the US found that relatively strong caseworker engagement with the family increased the likelihood of reunification³⁷. This suggests that that family reunification may be helped by promoting parents' active, positive engagement in the child welfare process.

Research conducted in the UK also concurs that a plan for reunification should also be inclusive of the views of the involved children and families (Hyde-Dryden et al., 2015). Wade et al. (2010) found this factor to be associated with a reunification continuing at six months.

The NSPCC Reunification Practice Framework was developed, implemented and evaluated as a result of collaborative working between the NSPCC, 14 local authorities and the Universities of Loughborough and Bristol, with the ultimate aim of improving outcomes for children in relation to return home from care. It is based on both a detailed literature review of the evidence reunification as well as the experiences of local authorities, and is designed to support practitioners and managers to apply professional judgement to the decision of reunification and how to ensure its success.

In agreement with the research by Biehal et al (2015) returning home will not provide the best outcome in all cases and therefore the Framework recommends that robust assessments of risk of abuse and neglect are necessary to decide whether or not reunification would be the best option based on parental capacity to change among other factors. Most importantly, the child's own interests should be at the centre of all decision-making. Furthermore, as already mentioned, ongoing support, monitoring and review is needed for children and young people who do return home.

An evaluation of the introduction of the Practice Framework in 3 local authorities was conducted by the University of Bristol³⁸. Questionnaires and interviews were conducted with practitioners and managers before and after the introduction of the Framework. Prior to its implementation,

³⁵ Biehal N, Sinclair I and Wade J (2015) Reunifying abused or neglected children: Decision-making and outcomes. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 49, pp.107-118.

³⁶ Thoburn J, Robinson J and Anderson B (2012) SCIE Research Briefing 42: Returning children home from public care.

³⁷ Cheng, T.C. (2010) 'Factors associated with reunification: a longitudinal analysis of long-term foster care', *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol 32, no 10, pp 1311–1316

³⁸ Farmer E and Patsios D (2016) Evaluation Report on Implementing the Reunification Practice Framework.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/evaluation-of-services/implementing-reunification-practice-framework-evaluation-report.pdf>

managers expressed awareness of issues in current reunification practice in their authorities, such as lack of timely assessments, inconsistent practice, lack of access to services and lack of data on outcomes. Practitioners reported that they found the Framework to be useful for all key tasks involved in reunification, and more practitioners felt more confident in conducting an assessment of a parent's capacity to change as a result of the Framework use. There was also an increase in the proportion of managers who established and used data to improve reunification practice to monitor returns home.

What works in promoting good outcomes for LAC and YP?

Good care planning and case management/tracking is fundamental to improved outcomes – this includes regular contact for the child or young person with a trusted key worker (usually a social worker) and effective co-working with other key professionals and carers. Recent research highlights the ongoing need for better quality decision making by social workers, and champions a blurring of the lines between the care system and community-based care to ensure that YP in particular can return home after brief spells in care (via adolescent support teams or other services such as treatment foster care)

Matching services to the underlying needs or problems, which may include mental health, housing, family counselling or substance abuse, have consistently been proven to improve family reunification in US studies³⁹.

A UK literature review has emphasised that support from services needs to commence as soon as possible, and should be proactive rather than reactive (Hyde-Dryden et al 2015). Concern has previously been expressed that supporting services tend to be of a short duration; in order for reunification to be successful, interventions need to be delivered for a sufficient duration in order to bring about sustained changes in behaviour/the family situation.

Currently, UK research is limited in regards to the types of interventions or services that work well to support families to enable children to return home from care, but there are ongoing studies being conducted. Below is a discussion of what already exists in the literature.

Effective substance misuse support services may help children to return home from care more quickly than those receiving usual services. An evaluation of the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) pilot found that families who experienced the court-based family intervention had higher rates of cessation of parental substance misuse and consequently were more likely to be reunited with their children in comparison to families who received the usual care proceedings (35% vs 19%). Most importantly, neglect and abuse in the year following reunification was significantly lower than the comparison group⁴⁰.

Substance-involved parents also tend to exhibit negative parenting practices and therefore evidence-based parenting interventions are likely to be an important additional service to improve chances of reunification⁴¹.

³⁹ Choi, S. and Ryan, J.P. (2007) 'Co-occurring problems for substance abusing mothers in child welfare: matching services to improve family reunification', *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol 29, no 11, pp 1395–1410.

⁴⁰ Harwin J, Alrouh B, Ryan M, Tunnard J (2014) Changing Lifestyles, Keeping Children Safe: an evaluation of the first Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) in care proceedings

⁴¹ D'Andrade, A and Nguyen, H (2014) The relationship between parents' use of specific services, treatment problems, and reunification with children placed in foster care. *Journal of Public Child Welfare* 8(1).

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) for substance-abusing families was created in the US to focus on three targeted areas: parenting skills training, child skills training, and family bonding/attachment with the aim of preventing child maltreatment. Interestingly, the analysis found that programme participation led to higher rates of reunification compared to matched families who did not receive the intervention, despite recovery from addiction not being the focus or requirement for programme participation⁴². This evidence suggests that for some families, parenting interventions which improve parental capacity may be sufficient to promote reunification.

The consensus from evidence reviews is that the programmes are more likely to be effective if they are intensive and multi-faceted, tailored to meet the needs of each member of the family (Ward et al. 2014).

Parent mentoring

Findings from a recent preliminary US study have suggested that a parent mentor programme may help to increase the likelihood of reunification⁴³. 98 parents involved in the US child welfare system were invited to participate in 'Parents in Partnership' (PIP), where parents who have successfully navigated the system provide support, information and mentorship to parents whose children are still in care. Of the 73 parents where reunification outcomes were measured, parents who attended the PIP orientation were 5.6 times more likely to be reunified. It is important to note no further data were regarded regarding programme participation, and the orientation attendance reflects the minimal level of involvement in the PIP programme. It is difficult to attribute the higher reunification rate solely to the intervention, as parents who are more motivated to reunify with their children may therefore have been more motivated to attend the PIP programme.

While the findings are in agreement with other US studies that have found promise for parent mentoring in the reunification process (Berrick 2011; Leake 2012), randomised controlled trials and larger sample sizes are needed in future research to determine effectiveness, and the application in a UK context would be welcomed.

Child emotional and behavioural support

As a result of abuse or neglect, Looked After Children and young people may exhibit difficult behaviours. Support from emotional well-being services such as CAMHS or its local equivalent should therefore be offered to address the underlying emotional wellbeing and/or mental health issues, and should continue for as long as needed after the child returns home (NSPCC).

A research briefing from the Social Care Institute for Excellence suggested that while it is not clear if emotional and behavioural support services are associated with reunification, they may be helpful in preventing reentry into care (Thoburn et al. 2012).

Ongoing monitoring and support post-reunification

Statutory guidance is clear that a child should continue to be supported and will often be treated as a child in need or under a Child Protection Plan once they return home. However, evidence reviews have found that interventions tend to end abruptly with no arrangements for long-term support or

⁴² Brook J, McDonald TP and Yan Y (2012) An analysis of the impact of the Strengthening Families Program on family reunification in child welfare. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(4), pp.691-695.

⁴³ Enano, S., Freisthler, B., Perez-Johnson, D., & Lovato-Hermann, K. Evaluating Parents in Partnership: A preliminary study of a child welfare intervention designed to increase rates of reunification. Accepted for publication September 2016, *Journal of Social Service Research*. doi: 10.1080/01488376.2016.1253634

monitoring of children's circumstances (Hyde-Dryden 2015). Ongoing assessment of the family's needs is necessary as the full extent of many difficulties may not become apparent until sometime into the return home⁴⁴.

In a prospective study with a two-year follow-up of 180 children returned to their parent(s) in six local authorities in England, involvement of another agency or professional in monitoring children was a key factor that contributed to return stability⁴⁵.

The reason this is particularly important for Looked After Children has been highlighted in a study by Biehal et al (2015). This study compared decision-making for 149 maltreated children in seven English authorities (68 reunified, 81 who remained in care) as well as outcomes six months and four years after the return home or decision to remain in care. The two key predictors of reunification were assessments that parental problems had improved and that assessed risks to safety of the child were not unacceptably high. However, one-third of children were returned home despite persisting concerns about unchanged or even worsened family circumstances. Consequently, 35% re-entered care within six months and 63% re-entered at some point during the four-year follow-up period, often due to recurring abuse or neglect. At the final follow-up, positive outcomes were more likely to be experienced by children remaining in care as opposed to those who had returned home, even once children's characteristics and histories were taken into account. Neglected children who had been reunified experienced particularly poor outcomes, regardless of whether reunification was stable or unstable. The authors concluded that due to the high rate of care re-entry and reoccurrence of abuse or neglect, appropriate monitoring and support should be provided after the return to ensure children's safety and well-being.

⁴⁴ Wilkins, M. and Farmer, E. (2015) *Reunification: An Evidence-Informed Framework for Return Home Practice*. Bristol: University of Bristol.

⁴⁵ Farmer, E. and Wijedesa, D. (2012) The Reunification of Looked After Children with their Parents: What Contributes to Stability? *British Journal of Social Work* 44 (2). p.348-366.

**A Sustainable Children's Social
Care System for the Future**

Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2017

31 January 2018	ITEM: 13
Council	
Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Vision and Priorities Working Group	
Accountable Assistant Director: 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.

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.

A proposed new vision and priorities were presented to Full Council in February 2017 for agreement following consultation including through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, community and business partners as well as council staff.

Council resolved to defer the recommendation to a working party to continue the piece of work already undertaken on refreshing the vision and priorities and to report back to Full Council in due course. This report presents the outcome of the working group and recommends a new vision and priorities to Council for approval.

The proposed new vision is “an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future”. The proposed new three priority headings are “People, Place and Prosperity”.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **Council agree the working group’s recommendation that the proposed new vision and priorities replace the existing vision and priorities and**

Community Strategy as part of the Policy Framework with immediate effect.

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, with some wording remaining consistent since before 2010. These priorities were refreshed in 2015 to take into account the changing relationship between the council and the community and our role in place shaping and community leadership. The current vision and priorities are:

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 A proposed new vision and priorities reflecting 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, were presented to Full Council in February 2017. This followed consultation and engagement including through Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2016, and the draft was also shared with a range of stakeholders including residents, staff, Members, community, public and private sector partners through:

- Tenants Excellence Panel
- Business Board
- Community and Voluntary Sector
- Health and Well Being Board
- Corporate Workforce Group
- Staff and Manager Conferences
- Staff Forums
- Directorate Management Teams
- All Staff via Insight

2.3 Feedback from consultations including the Health and Well Being Strategy, Local Plan and the Fairness Commission have given some clear opinions from residents of what they feel to be the most important issues for Thurrock.

2.4 This included questions asking what residents would like Thurrock to be like in the future (Local Plan consultation), what they would change in their local neighbourhood to make it a better place to live (Local Plan consultation) and

what quick wins could make a real difference to living in Thurrock (Fairness Commission).

- 2.5 Overwhelmingly, responses focussed on issues around the environment, particularly around the cleanliness and attractiveness of public spaces, but also around better planned infrastructure. Other common areas of feedback from these consultations were around community safety and pride. This was reflected in the consultation draft.
- 2.6 Feedback on the original consultation draft, including from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, can be summarised as follows:
 - Some of the terminology was considered jargon e.g. “placemaking”, “community empowerment”, “Team Thurrock”
 - There should be explicit references to education/children, safety and digital
 - Lack of clarity as to whether it was a vision and priorities for Thurrock or for Thurrock Council
 - Needed more people focus
- 2.7 Reflecting upon this feedback, an earlier revised draft vision and priorities was presented to Full Council in 2017. As a result of the debate on this proposed new version, Full Council resolved to defer the recommendation to a working party to continue the piece of work already undertaken on refreshing the vision and priorities and to report back to Full Council in due course.
- 2.8 This report presents the outcome of the working group and recommends a new vision and priorities to Council for approval.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1. In response to the resolution at Full Council a Vision and Priorities Working Group was established. Membership of the group includes Cllrs Macpherson, Piccolo, Gerrish, Fish, Duffin and Snell with partners and residents represented through Kristina Jackson, Chief Executive, CVS, Mandy Ansell, Accountable Officer, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group and Frank Jones, representing Tenants Excellence Panel. A representative was requested from the Business Board and Youth Cabinet.
- 3.2. The group considered the proposed vision and priorities shared at Full Council and felt that there were many areas of agreement but that the process for finalising a revised draft should be more inclusive including discussions at each of the political group meetings.
- 3.3. Comments on the draft at the working group meeting included:
 - Use of memorable straplines, however the initial proposal of “Striving, Driving and Thriving” was not preferred

- Simple and understandable language
 - Remove any jargon
 - More consistent in terms of outcomes rather than what we intend to do
- 3.4. The group also wanted to ensure that once agreed there would be a detailed communication plan in place to share the new vision and priorities as well as an action plan for delivery underneath.
- 3.5. During the course of the review, the working group has considered two further iterations of the vision and priorities. Feedback on both of these versions has been fed into the final recommended version for approval by Council.
- 3.6. The feedback from the CVS network has been positive and they are pleased with the opportunities they have had to be engaged in this review. Kristina Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, Thurrock CVS, is a member of the working group.
- 3.7. They were particularly pleased to see that strengthening communities through further joined-up working between the statutory and voluntary sectors is emphasised.
- 3.8. CVS recognises this stage is high level and have expressed an interest in the development of the detail that lies beneath. This narrative will be developed in the coming weeks, if the vision and priorities are agreed by Council. This will be largely based on the key strategies, plans and policies already in place which will be the delivery mechanisms, some of them are already produced with partners.

The diagram at Appendix 2 illustrates this.

- 3.9. The Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services attended the Youth Cabinet on 1 November 2017 to share the latest draft and get feedback. The main comments were that they:
- Liked the overall design but wanted the vision to stand out more
 - Learning, skills and jobs were important and it was good to see them reflected in the priorities
 - Environment and pride are linked – residents need a reason to keep the borough clean
 - It is too generic – could include more about Thurrock specific places
 - Would welcome a level of detail underneath to understand what will actually happen and change
- 3.10. Directors Board and Leadership Group reviewed the new version during November and December 2017.
- 3.11. Representatives on the working group were asked to feedback from their respective political Group Meetings. The feedback received has been reflected in the final version.

- 3.12. The final vision and priorities working group met on 4 January 2018 where all the feedback was taken on board and changes were made to the final wording of the vision and priorities.
- 3.13. The group felt that this new version reflected the changes that Thurrock has experienced over the last few years. It also looks to the future - together with the council's many statutory, community, voluntary, faith and business partners - about which the people of Thurrock can be proud and excited.
- 3.14. The revised new proposed vision and priorities for Thurrock are:

Our Vision

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

Our Priorities

People

A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

- High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

Place

A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future

- Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- Fewer public buildings with better services

Prosperity

A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

- Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- Commercial, entrepreneurial and sustainable public services

- 3.15. Full Council is asked to agree the proposed new vision and priorities as recommended by the vision and priorities working group and supported by the portfolio holder.

- 3.16. Appendix 1 shows how these three priorities fit together and are interconnected to reflect how all components are equally weighted and important, and intrinsically dependent on each other to succeed.
- 3.17. Any change to the vision and priorities needs to be agreed by Council which has overall responsibility for the Policy Framework (Constitution: Chapter 3, Part 3).
- 3.18. The new vision and priorities have been developed alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and have a stronger narrative around where the council is now, the direction of travel and ambition. This is in parallel to the work on the Council Spending Review (CSR) and, as such, they align with the move towards commercialism, transformation and an investment approach.
- 3.19. Once agreed, the vision and priorities will be progressed and delivered through key strategy action plans, service plans, objective setting and performance management tools. It will be supported by an engagement and communications campaign internally and externally to share the new vision and priorities widely.
- 3.20. There will also be wide communication with partners in Thurrock and they will be encouraged to sign up to this vision and priorities.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The vision and priorities are key to articulating the strategic direction for the council and the borough. They are regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to be relevant and reflective of residents' views. The council's Constitution states that Council need to agree any change to the vision and priorities as part of the Policy Framework (Constitution: Chapter 3, Part 3).

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 new vision and priorities has been consulted on with a wide range of partners and stakeholders and is based upon feedback from a number of resident consultation and engagement exercises, such as the Health and Well Being Strategy, Local Plan and Fairness Commission, and most recently through the work of the vision and priorities working group.

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. If agreed, wide communication will be undertaken and the changes will be fed into the 2018/19 business planning cycle.

6.2 The council has the lead role in the borough for place-making. Whilst the council has not explicitly asked partners to adopt this vision and priorities, they do reflect partners' views as expressed through our many networks, and a wide range of partners and stakeholders have been consulted on them. This vision and priorities is intended to be for Thurrock as a whole. There will be a level of detail that sits underneath setting out the council's role in delivery.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Yetsie Adeboye**
Management Accountant

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 vision 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**
Assistant Director Law and Governance
and 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 other direct legal implications arising from this report. However, individual projects to deliver elements of the priorities 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 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.

The new vision and priorities have been consulted upon with stakeholders and the community including via the Chief Executive of CVS. They were also written taking account of the extensive feedback from residents and other members of the Thurrock community through the Fairness Commission, Local Plan engagement and via the Health and Well Being Strategy consultation, which, in themselves, had extensive consultation exercises.

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):

- Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities Report, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, November 2016
<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=163&MId=5049&Ver=4>
- Review of Vision and Corporate Priorities Report, Full Council, February 2017
<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=134&MId=5025&Ver=4>

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Proposed Vision and Priorities Diagram
- Appendix 2 – Delivery model diagram - vision, priorities and key strategies

Report Author:

Sarah Welton
Strategy Manager

OUR VISION AND PRIORITIES FOR THURROCK



People - a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

- High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

Place - a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future

- Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
- Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
- Fewer public buildings with better services

Prosperity - a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

- Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
- Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
- Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

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Appendix 2 - Delivery model diagram - vision, priorities and key strategies

Our Vision:

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

People

A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

Place

A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future

Prosperity

A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

Key existing strategies for delivering the vision and priorities

Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

Health & Well Being Strategy

Local Plan (Local Development Framework)

Economic Growth Strategy

Growth Hub Masterplans

Housing Strategy

Transport Strategy

Asset Strategy

Digital Strategy

Customer Services Strategy

Community Engagement Strategy

Single Equality Scheme

Communications Strategy

People Strategy

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31 January 2018	ITEM: 14
Council	
Thurrock Regeneration Ltd – Proposed Development of Belmont Road Site, Grays	
Wards and communities affected: Grays Riverside	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Leader - Cllr Rob Gledhill; Portfolio Holder for Regeneration - Cllr Mark Coxshall	
Accountable Assistant Director: Detlev Munster - Assistant Director, Property & Development	
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL - formerly, Gloriana Thurrock Ltd) was originally anticipated to develop between 350 and 500 properties when it was set up in 2013. The objective of Gloriana was to intervene, strategically, in the housing market, developing housing on key sites in the borough. It was to act as a catalyst for private sector investment, where stalled sites and low market confidence was a real block to delivering Thurrock’s vision.

It is proposed that TRL look to establish an increasing development pipeline of homes which will take the company beyond its initial 350-500 home target. Consideration will be given to ensure an optimum level for a functioning, compelling business plan that effectively balances the competing issues of development/financial risk, delivery capacity and commercial returns whilst achieving its main aim of supporting the house building market.

This report provides details of TRL’s proposals to develop the Belmont Road site in Grays with the recommendation that the Council agrees to lend the funds to TRL to deliver the scheme.

This is the final Gateway stage in the pre-construction process. The scheme proposed for the Belmont Road site, has received full planning approval. TRL is working towards a start on site with enabling works as soon as possible and a full site commission by the proposed developer by June 2018.

Officers have worked with the scheme employer’s agent and financial consultants to produce a best possible final cost estimate for the scheme, including contingency,

which will be finalised through the contractor procurement process. The use of Right to Buy receipts is also discussed as an option for the HRA to help purchase Belmont Road affordable units which will result in 28 new council homes for those on the Council's waiting list.

It is proposed that delegated authority be given to the S151 Officer, in consultation, with the Chief Executive, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Leader, to approve the scheme funding to TRL and related amendment to the Council's finances. This delegated authority will be subject to the scheme meeting key financial parameters.

Recommendation(s)

That Council:

- 1.1 Agrees that Thurrock Regeneration Ltd develop the Belmont Road, Grays site in accordance with the consented planning application.**
- 1.2 Agrees that authority be delegated to the S151 Officer, in consultation, with the Chief Executive, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Leader, to agree the final funding to TRL, and to enter into legal agreements as required, subject to the financial parameters as set out in the report.**
- 2. Information and Background**
 - 2.1 The scheme consists of 80 terraced and semi-detached houses, following the existing street line with a courtyard of bungalows at the centre of the development. There are three pocket parks incorporated within the proposed scheme, one of which will host children's play facilities. Natural surveillance is achieved throughout the development making the scheme feel secure. Thus the scheme proposed will remove the existing untidy and unmaintained land at the end of the Belmont Road cul de sacs, provide much needed, quality homes which will improve the street scape and deliver usable open space which can be enjoyed by all. There are ten, 2 bedroom bungalows with the rest of the development predominantly 2 and 3 bedroom houses.
 - 2.2 The proposed tenure mix is planning policy compliant with 35% affordable housing, a mix of affordable rented and shared ownership with the remaining housing being for the private market.
 - 2.3 A final fixed price tender is expected in April 2018 and enabling works will start as soon as possible with a full start on site by the proposed contractor by June 2018.
 - 2.4 Assuming Full Council approval is forthcoming, the next step is that the Land Transfer, Management and Funding Agreements between the Council and TRL are entered into and TRL enters into a construction contract.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The development scheme received planning permission on 28th September 2017. The alternative options for the Council to consider are to sell off the land with planning permission to a private developer, or the possibility of the HRA investing in or building out the site. Summary of key risks and opportunities:

Option	Opportunities	Risks
Transfer the land to TRL to develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulating the vision • Control of design and place making • Long term investment • Generation of returns / pursuit of mutual objectives • Revenue receipts • Dividend at the end of the development • Cross subsidy for affordable housing • Certainty in the delivery of homes • Potential opportunity for Council to own affordable units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market uncertainty • Competing demands (company vs corporate)
Disposal to a private developer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up front capital receipt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of different scheme coming forward due to viability • Uncertainty of delivery • Less control over the development
HRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased Council housing units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Borrowing capacity in the HRA and therefore not a current option

3.2 Provision could be put in place in a disposal to a private developer (with regards to the contract) to restrict the development to the conditions set out in the planning permission. However, as the financial modelling suggested, it is unlikely to be attractive to other developers due to viability. Therefore, there could be a delay in building out the scheme or at the worst case scenario not at all.

- 3.3 Agreement to the recommended option for TRL to gain the funding and land transfer would provide the Council with a revenue stream via the repayment of interest on the loan over several years as well a dividend at the end of the business term.
- 3.4 Members are aware that increasing stock within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is limited due to the current debt cap regulations. Government announced in the 2017 Autumn Budget its intention to put in place a process for the HRA debt cap to be lifted in high demand areas from 2019/2020. However, despite the ring-fence that separates the HRA from the General Fund (GF), it is possible to use GF capital receipts to pay for HRA capital expenditure.
- 3.5 This offers a further benefit that Thurrock Regeneration Ltd (TRL) can bring. Whilst receipts from the St Chads development needs to be used to repay TRL debt back to the council, all forecasts result in a dividend in excess of £3m by the project end after all debt liability has been repaid. With a receipt due from the disposal of the affordable housing units, this allows for an amount equivalent to that dividend to be freed up now that can then be part matched against the one to one receipts the council already holds.
- 3.6 The Government introduced a new Right to Buy (RTB) policy in March 2012 “Reinvigorating RTB”. As part of this policy Councils could retain all surplus RTB receipts (rather than just 25% as previously) if the receipts were used for one-to-one replacement. In order to retain these surplus RTB receipts, Thurrock Council entered into a RTB Agreement with the Government. However, the RTB receipts can fund no more than 30% of the total scheme cost of new affordable rented housing. The receipts must also be spent within three years or there are returned to the Government with interest.
- 3.7 Therefore, assuming an excess in the region of £3.2m, a budget to the HRA of £4.8m becomes available with the one to one receipts policy (that is an additional 30% of total scheme cost of affordable rented housing). This could be used to purchase Belmont Road affordable units. By capitalising the receipts from the St Chads site and using the one to one receipts from RTB TRL will be able to build 28 new council homes for the HRA for those on the Council’s waiting list which should become available in late 2019. This can be achieved without lifting the HRA borrowing cap.

Risk Assessment

- 3.8 The risk register approved by Cabinet at FBC stage has been kept under review. All site related risks will be dealt with, now the scheme has gained planning approval. The key risks at this stage are financial viability and state aid compliance due to a worsened financial situation since Gateway 2. Full site investigations have taken place to test ground conditions.
- 3.9 The financial position is discussed in more detail below.

- 3.10 The state aid regulations are complex and intrinsically related to the financial viability. However, whilst the financial position is less favourable than that projected at gateway 2 this does not preclude meeting state aid requirements. The Council's legal officers are taking expert advice and the scheme will not proceed unless the scheme is state aid compliant. Initial indications are that this should not be an issue.

Financial Projections

- 3.11 The Council's financial advisers have developed a financial model to assess whether TRL and its developments can be established on a viable basis. This model considers the cashflow, tax and accounting implications of TRL's proposed developments and also considers the cashflow and accounting entries impacting the General Fund. It can be used for each scheme on a stand-alone basis to examine whether the viability tests are met.
- 3.12 The model has been refined since the report, TRL is now receiving income that could potentially finance development activity, which could reduce the loan requirement from the Council. As a result, TRL now has a robust model capable of being updated on a regular basis, with current data, as the Belmont Road site is developed out. This will enable up to date progress and financial reports to be produced for TRL and the Council as required.
- 3.13 The inputs and assumptions for Belmont Road have been reviewed and will be subject to continuing review as construction progresses. Key changes are as follows:
- Overall development costs for the Belmont Road scheme have increased since the previous report reflecting continuing price increases in the construction sector.
 - Scenarios with regards to sales and market rent have been tested to ensure the most financially viable option. Prudent assumptions throughout the modelling have been used.
 - Borrowing costs have fallen reflecting current interest rates and interest rate projections.

3.14 Sales Assumptions and Affordable Housing

The financial model currently assumes the market housing will be, initially, rented out for a period of three years to ensure the sales will benefit from house price inflation (a 2.5% increase is assumed per annum). The model then assumes that private units are sold off at approximately four units a month. The sales rate and spread will be monitored to ensure the optimum rate and return for TRL is realised. The model will be kept under review during the construction period to keep other options open, such as the immediate sale of private units.

A narrative summary of the current position is set out below:

Input	Commentary
Tenure Mix	65% of the development will be for market rent/private sale. 35% will be affordable housing a mix of affordable rent (let at 80% of market rent) and shared ownership. No sales are assumed initially.
Construction Programme	1st June 2018 to 1st February 2020.
Land Cost	Independent valuation prior to land transfer.
Construction Costs	Based on employer agent's latest cost estimates and include planning and design costs. Costs have increased since the last report reflecting demand in the construction sector continuing to outstrip supply.
Sales Profile	Over time it is assumed that all market rent properties are sold.
Sales Values & Overall Sales Income	Sales values are based on recent market information and will be uplifted by house price inflation to the sale date.
Rental Income	Rents are based on recent market information. Affordable rents, of which there are 28 units, are set at 80% of current market rents and are in all cases within current Local Housing Allowance figures. They will be uplifted by inflation (CPI – see below) plus 1%, in line with government policy for affordable rents, until the final sale date.
Operating Costs	Management and operating costs reflect the cost of the services provided by the Council to TRL on a full commercial basis. Therefore this arrangement should lead to a small net income within the General Fund resulting from the margin charged on top of direct costs to TRL. Maintenance and lifecycle costs reflect industry norms.
Bad Debts & Void Losses	This reflects a prudent allowance and is informed by the Council's experience of managing its own stock and experience of other providers.
Central running	An annual sum is included to cover accounting, insurance, IT and other central support costs which will

costs	be payable to third parties.
Inflation	Factors general inflation (CPI) and other inflation factors including house price inflation assumptions are based on relevant independent data.
Interest Rates	The interest rate which the Council is assumed to pay on its borrowing reflects the rate that the Council will be borrowing at. Funds on-lent to TRL will attract a margin which is based on current prescribed margins for state aid compliancy.

Financial Parameters

3.15 In looking at the results of the financial modelling, the following underlying principles and parameters were agreed at FBC stage:

- **Impact on General Fund.** Interest payable in the General Fund, as a result of the PWLB loans taken out to provide loans and equity finance to TRL, should be covered by interest receivable from the loans to TRL.
- **Council equity return.** From a commercial perspective the Council needs to be satisfied that best value is generated by investing cash and land within TRL and that the return reflects a position that does not involve the provision of unlawful state aid.
- **TRL financial viability.** TRL will be consolidated into the Council's group accounts and, therefore, the Council must be satisfied of TRL's overall financial position and ability to repay its loans.

3.16 At this position, the financial implications are as follows, taking each parameter in turn:

- The financial model shows that the interest payable by the Council, in respect of loans taken out to fund TRL, will be met from interest payable by TRL to the Council. In summary, this parameter is met.
- The returns which the Belmont Road site can be expected to generate are at the lower end of the acceptable range, reflecting the high cost of developing given the market conditions. However, this is not out of line with market trends. The current development estimates, with an element of contingency included, does meet this parameter. When TRL receives the final tender for the scheme the projected return must meet state aid requirements and this will be a key parameter in relation to approval to proceed.
- The latest projections confirm TRL's financial viability and also that it will be able to operate as a going concern and repay its loan from the Council

based on current known information and assumptions utilised within the model. The final parameter is therefore met.

- 3.17 In summary, when the final financial position is known following receipt of the construction tender, the above three parameters will be re-assessed and all three will need to be satisfied for the scheme to proceed.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 Development of the Belmont Road site will provide quality housing to meet housing needs and improve the lives of Thurrock residents. The development will also contribute to place making and enhancing Grays town centre regeneration. The recommendation in this report is designed to allow there to be no delay to the scheme start.
- 4.2 It is proposed that Council give delegated authority to the S151 Officer, in consultation with the Chief Executive, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Leader, to agree the final financial position when the construction tender is submitted but subject to meeting the financial parameters set out in this report.
- 4.3 The estimated cost of construction and thus the level of borrowing that the Council will have to undertake has been analysed and the final figures will be shared as part of the delegated authority process for approval.
- 4.4 TRL will provide an income return to the Council which can support regeneration projects which can meet the aspirations and desires of local people.

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

- 5.1 The General Services Committee (cross party) as representatives of the Council (the shareholders) have been kept informed of the progress through the General Meetings of the Company. Planning Committee has granted permission for the scheme following consultation. Resident community consultation has taken place on the site proposals and Property Board has been kept updated as the scheme progressed.

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

- 6.1 TRL will support the Council's place shaping agenda and will help deliver a range of housing tenures and other projects. By enabling TRL to develop quality housing on land that it owns the Council will provide an alternative route to private sector led regeneration which may otherwise be constrained by market conditions. Such housing will contribute to improving, and creating great places where community pride, good health and wellbeing and economic prosperity will thrive.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Director of Finance and IT (S 151 Officer)

The financial model needs to demonstrate any development is both viable for the Company and the Council. It is critical that any authority delegated by Council requires the scheme to meet the financial parameters set out in this report. At its budget meeting in February 2014 the Council agreed that approval for any financial borrowing for the purpose of providing funding for TRL should also be sought at the time of scheme approval and this recommendation has been included in this report. There is also pressure to capitalise the HRA's RTB receipts. The receipts must be spent within three years or they are returned to the Government with interest.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Assaf Chaudry**
Major Project Lawyer

TRL's activities are within the Council's powers. Assuming Council approve the recommendations in this report, the final position will be checked with external legal advisers to confirm that state aid requirements are met. The legal agreements, including the formal Council guarantee, will be finalised, also with external legal advice, in preparation for signature between the Council and TRL. Approval will constitute a confirmation of the Council's approval of the FBC in the light of the updated circumstances.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

Development of the Belmont Road site in Grays will have a positive impact on Grays, in terms of tenure mix. TRL objectives include not only quality housing but also holistic objectives around health and wellbeing, improving education and job creation and improving economic prosperity. TRL's developments will follow Council policies in relation to diversity and equality and, in particular, will ensure that contractors bidding for work from the Company will follow the Council's Equality Codes of Practice on Procurement.

Contractors and developer partners will be required to have relevant policies on equal opportunities, be able to demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity and to supporting local labour initiatives that achieve additional social value.

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

None

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report**

- Final Business Case for Commencement of Operations by Gloriana Thurrock Ltd, Cabinet Report, March 2014
- Cabinet Report - Gloriana Thurrock Ltd. - Proposed Development at Belmont Road, Grays, Gateway 2 Report June 2015

9. **Appendices**

None

Report Author:

Detlev Munster

Assistant Director, Property & Development

31 January 2018	ITEM: 15
Council	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation	
Report of: Councillor Brian Little, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation	
This report is Public	

I am pleased to introduce my second report as Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation. These services lie at the heart of shaping the quality of residents' lives and facilitate a vital growth and regeneration of Thurrock, as well as the South East of England.

As in previous years, rising congestion trends have been a major concern. I have placed real effort to develop strategies for highways infrastructure and traffic management to ensure delivery of the outcomes necessary to enable transformation and to take a more 'resident focused' approach and our efforts were recognised.

Following the Public Satisfaction Survey 2017, carried out by the National Highways and Transport (NHT) Network our Highways Team received an award for the 'Most Improved Authority' in the Highway Maintenance theme; with customer satisfaction showing an improvement of around 8%. Additionally, the council's £6 million investment project in LED retrofit of street lighting, completed in July 2017, was shortlisted for an award at the Highways Awards 2017 in the Highways Maintenance Efficiency category.

The Clean it, Cut it, Fill it 'campaign' has continued to be a high priority, with over 4,500 potholes being filled throughout the road network so far this year.

In my last Portfolio Holder report, I informed you that to improve the free flow of traffic across local and strategic networks steps were taken, as part of the Congestion Task Force work stream, to migrate from a highway noticing regime to a highway permitting scheme. I am pleased to advise that Thurrock Council is a permitting authority as of October 2017 and we have since, served over 280 Fixed Penalty Notices for noncompliance and over 90 penalties for works that have over-run. This is just a beginning, but we have already seen an improvement in provision of real time information to the residents about the road works on our network (visible on roadworks.org) which allows for better journey planning and management of the traffic disruptions.

In regards to strategic projects, the business case for the A13 widening scheme was approved and £66 million was allocated to it by the Department for Transport (DfT). The South Essex Active Travel bid worth £3.3 million was successful, which will help deliver sustainable access to jobs at the ports and within the Lakeside basin.

Finally, there has been an addition to the Highways and Transportation Portfolio which now includes parking services. I am pleased to inform that a pilot of cashless machines was introduced in November 2017, allowing drivers to pay for their parking fees by debit/credit or contactless card, phone or watch, as well as cash.

This report is essentially split into two parts. The first part outlines the responsibilities of the key areas of the Portfolio and some of the key successes. The second part focuses on the main challenges in the months ahead.

1. THE KEY SERVICE AREAS – RESPONSIBILITIES, PERFORMANCE AND PRIORITIES

The main service delivery units within Highways and Transportation Portfolio are:

- Transport Development Management;
- Major Projects;
- Highways Infrastructure Management; and
- Highways and Transportation Services.

Transport Development Management

The Transport Development Management team co-ordinates, funds and delivers transport improvements to make Thurrock a safe, accessible and attractive place to live, work and visit.

The team deals with day to day transportation-related enquiries from the public, businesses and Members. It also provides advice and support to other Council services and other local authorities. It provides the highways and transportation interface with Thurrock's planning teams and external stakeholders with an interest in development. This is to help deliver acceptable new development projects; ensuring that they are properly integrated within the highway and transportation network without risk to safety, efficiency or the environment, in accordance with the council's and government's policies and guidelines. Additionally, the team assists in formulating and implementing appropriate measures to mitigate current issues on the borough's transportation network.

Through development proposals, the team promotes sustainable transport and optimises opportunities for the funding of transport infrastructure. The team commissions and project-manages capital transport schemes secured through developer funding. The team also checks engineering drawings and supervises adoptable highway works to ensure that new transport infrastructure is designed and constructed to appropriate standards. The team advises and assists in the preparation of highways and transportation policies, including the Local Development Framework and Thurrock's transport policies.

In regards to strategy, the Transport Act 2008 places the duty for each Local Highway Authority to produce, develop and implement a Local Transport Plan (LTP). The latest LTP was produced in 2011 and is a vital tool to help the Council work with

its stakeholders to strengthen its place-shaping role and its delivery of transport services to the community.

The Thurrock Transport Strategy (which sits above the LTP) has been developed to ensure that the key strategic objectives for transport are addressed. The strategy document was refreshed for the period 2013 – 2026 and was approved by Cabinet in February 2013 to ensure that the council's key priorities are appropriately emphasised, i.e. improvements to J30/31 of the M25 and A13 widening.

Air Quality and Health Strategy

In recognition of poor air quality in many parts of the borough and the ongoing health issues arising from this, we took the decision to develop an integrated Air Quality and Health Strategy, which will tackle the health problems associated with and exacerbated by air pollution within the borough.

The Air Quality & Health Strategy has framed the authority's approach to improving air quality and reducing air pollution exposure to safe levels for human health across the borough. The strategy provides the context for the council to manage air quality through a suite of borough-wide policies to prevent new Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) from arising as well as outlining a number of actions and measures to improve air quality in each AQMA, with a view to moving towards advisory limits and future revocation.

The overall strategic aim of the Air Quality & Health Strategy, as approved by December 2016 Cabinet, is to improve air quality in the borough to reduce the health impacts of air pollution.

The strategy will be delivered through three main approaches:

- a) By implementing measures for managing air quality throughout the borough to prevent new AQMAs from arising; and
- b) By implementing measures contained within the action plans for existing AQMAs; and
- c) By working with external bodies to reduce background pollution from inside and outside the borough.

A number of the actions adopted in the Air Quality and Health Strategy have been implemented by the council during 2017/18, including AQMA-specific and borough-wide actions, such as weight restrictions, width restrictions, HGV routing, and the introduction of enforcement cameras. These measures are achieving success in reducing the air quality impacts of HGVs.

On 15th June 2017, officers organised events in recognition of National Clean Air Day (NCAD), to raise awareness of the adverse impacts to air quality arising from cars idling outside of schools. The events on NCAD included giving presentations at two (2) primary schools and involving pupils and staff in an anti-idling campaign outside of these schools. The momentum of the NCAD events has been maintained. At the beginning of the school year operators of school transport were reminded of

their contractual obligations for no idling outside of schools. It is believed that this is having some success in reducing poor air quality outside of schools.

South Essex Active Travel (SEAT)

In 2016, along with Southend-on-Sea and Essex County Council, Thurrock Council submitted a joint bid for £3.3m to support walking and cycling across the borough. This bid was successful, with the formal decision by Department for Transport (DfT) announced in March. The amount of funding secured under the SEAT bid equates to roughly one-third (1/3) for each of the three partner authorities.

The South Essex Active Travel (SEAT) bid will support key groups across the borough, including jobseekers and young people, so that they can use active travel to access work, training and educational opportunities.

The SEAT programme brings together the transport authorities of South Essex (Thurrock Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Essex County Council) and key delivery partners (including London Gateway, Port of Tilbury, Intu Lakeside and Southend Business Park).

A key aspect of the SEAT programme is the Targeted Travel Engagement initiative. This initiative seeks to provide access to the employee target audience, particularly for new jobs and recruits. The SEAT partners will help to facilitate engagement with prospective and new employees through the provision of travel advice and support during the recruitment and induction processes. Whilst much of the work will be delivered by a trained team of volunteers, the programme will offer the opportunity to train and build the capacity of staff across our partner organisations. This targeted travel engagement will be supported by a package of travel interventions and services such as cycle provision, adult cycle training, cycle maintenance, public transport promotion and route planning.

The SEAT programme commenced in May 2017 and will run for three (3) years to 2020.

Measures to Manage HGVs

I recognise that the freight and logistics sector is a key part of Thurrock's economy, making a significant contribution to the wealth of the borough, and providing thousands of jobs. However, inappropriate HGV routing and parking create significant problems for local residents. The 2016/17 financial year saw a review of HGV routing across the borough and the development of proposals for a number of locations to deter HGVs from residential streets.

I have worked closely with officers to introduce schemes in and around the borough where HGV access is causing particular problems and are developing schemes to reduce the impact of HGV movements, as identified below:

1. Upgrade of the North Stifford width restriction to enable ANPR bus lane enforcement, which include civil works as well as the installation of a camera system by Essex County Council.
2. Upgrade of the South Stifford width restriction to enable ANPR bus lane enforcement, which includes civil works as well as the installation of a camera system by Essex County Council
3. Installation of a width restriction and bus lane on Stifford Road, Aveley, which includes civil works and the installation of a camera system by Essex County Council
4. Installation of one-way routing on Cement Block Cottages and Towers Road, Grays.

Thurrock Freight Logistics and Transporting Partnership

In October 2017, the Freight Quality Partnership was re-launched, and renamed “Thurrock Freight Logistics and Transporting Partnership”. The partnership is intending to bring together organisations and agencies with an interest in the safe and efficient movement of freight and logistics across the borough and will provide a forum for representatives from across the industry. The intention for these meetings is to create an inclusive environment that promotes partnership – for both large and small operators – as well as key freight origins and destination facilities, and agencies at a local, regional and national level.

It is intended that the partnership will encourage an open discussion of issues impacting the industry in Thurrock, and to develop and promote solutions and best practice amongst partners. We will also use these meetings to identify and implement practical solutions to enhance the movement of freight and logistics throughout the borough.

The Partnership will (i) seek to establish a freight action plan, which can enable short term deliverables supporting the movement of freight within the borough, (ii) set a strategic context for the industry in Thurrock via the freight strategy, and (iii) seek to influence the wider freight agenda beyond the local area.

Thurrock Intelligent Systems (ITS) Strategy

In recognition of the existing congestion issues resulting from incidents and events at the existing Dartford Crossing, and the need to future-proof the local road network, we have pursued a number of collaborative actions with key stakeholders, such as a Highways England and adjoining highway authorities including the establishment of a Congestion Task Force in April 2016. In addition to the actions agreed by the Congestion Task Force, I am working closely with officers to develop and deploy technology-based solutions to better manage the local road network.

The use of information and communications technology in transport systems and infrastructure is now commonplace and offers cost-effective solutions for managing transport networks. The term Intelligent Transport System (ITS) refers to the application of information and communications technology to transport systems and infrastructure, enabling data to be collected and shared to maximise the efficiency of

the highway network. The technology used in ITS vary in complexity and functionality but are designed to: monitor and capture data, manage and control systems and communicate valuable information to end users through an array of mediums (e.g. variable message signs). An ITS Strategy for Thurrock that sets out the approach for the deployment of cloud based Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) has been developed and was approved by Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 14th November 2017 – with the final document for submission and adoption at January 2018 Cabinet.

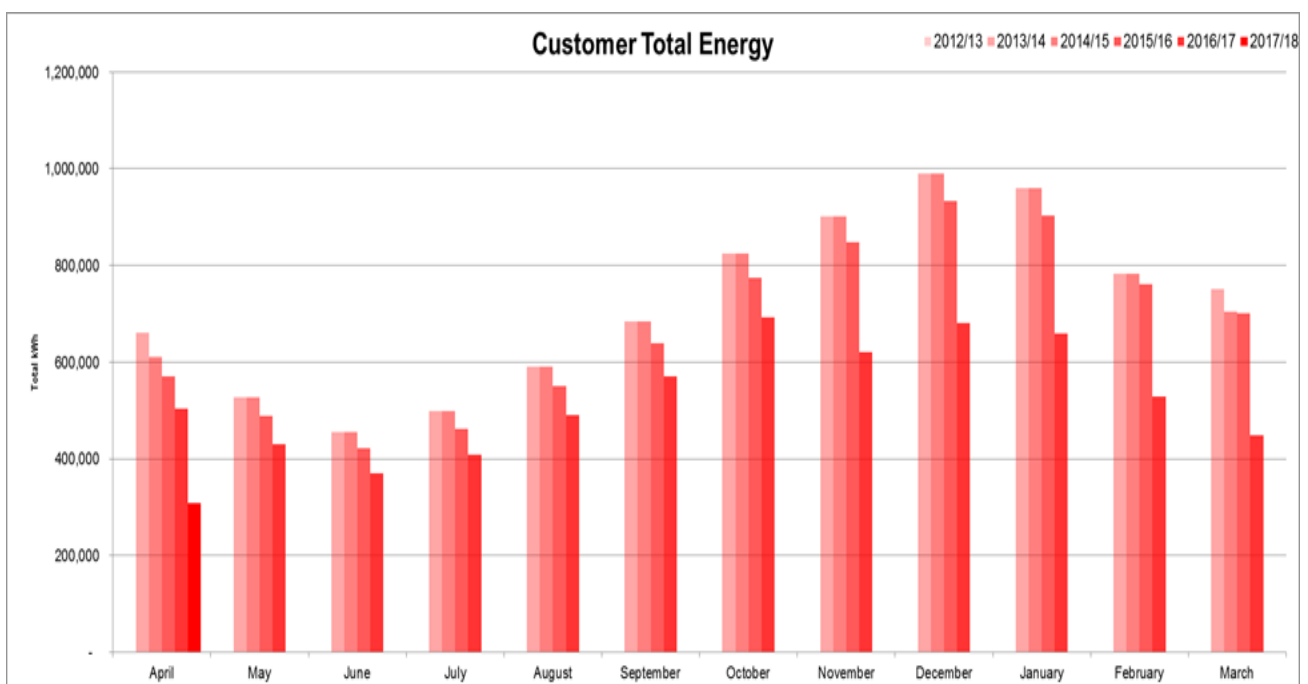
ITS for Thurrock’s road network will involve utilising open standards that will enable integration with the systems of adjoining highway authorities. The main element of the ITS in Thurrock will be the creation of a Thurrock owned and operated cloud-based Urban Traffic Management Control (UTMC) system, that will provide the platform for integration with other systems and allow Thurrock to manage its own road network.

The ITS Strategy will help to provide a step change in congestion management and enable innovative collaboration with Highways England, neighbouring authorities and local stakeholders to improve congestion in the area.

Major Projects

Street Lighting

This £6 million project involved the replacement of approximately 17,500 expensive and inefficient street lights with light emitting diodes (LEDs) and was funded through prudential borrowing. LEDs provide a better quality of light and are more energy efficient and more durable than the sodium lights that they replace. At the start of this programme, all street lighting columns in the borough were tested for electrical and structural integrity. This programme was completed in July 2017. Taking account of the interest charges and the reduction in energy bills and maintenance costs, the LED retrofit programme will result in a net saving of £250,000 per year from 2017/18 onwards.



Together with delivery partners Kier, Estate Lighting Solutions Ltd, Scape Procure, Urbis Schreder and Thorn, Thurrock Council was shortlisted for an award at the Highways Awards 2017 in the Highways Maintenance Efficiency category.

A13 Widening

After securing the necessary funding and approvals for the major capital project, the preliminary design work including surveys and contract preparation was completed in 2016. A competitive tendering process was also undertaken to procure a detail designer and contractor from the Highways England framework. Further approvals were given to:

- Enter into an agreement with the Department for Transport (DfT) with respect to funding provided by the DfT for the A13 Widening Scheme
- Award contracts for the detail design and construction of A13 Widening
- Award any further contract(s) for the provision of works and services to progress the A13 Widening scheme
- Acquire or accept dedication of any land required for A13 Widening

In April 2017, DfT announced retained scheme funding of £66 million for A13 Widening. This is on top of the £5 million scheme development funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government and a contribution of £8 million from DP World London Gateway Port.

In May 2017, the Council awarded two separate contracts for A13 Widening. The detail design contract was awarded to Atkins and the construction contract was awarded to Kier. These contracts started at the end of June and beginning of July respectively. Since that time, both organisations have worked together to develop a joint programme and prepare for commencement of works.

In June 2017, DP World London Gateway Port Ltd acquired most of the land needed for the scheme using its powers under the London Gateway Port Harbour Empowerment Order 2008.

Advance works, including site clearance, temporary fencing and site investigations have begun. The main works are programmed to commence in May 2018 and be completed by March 2020.

Stanford-le-Hope Transport Interchange

The Stanford-le-Hope project comprises of a multi-modal transport interchange with bus turn-around, enhanced cycling facilities, new footbridge and lifts, enhanced station building with improved accessibility and passenger handling capability and customer information system. This will greatly enhance the arrival experience for people visiting Stanford-le-Hope and/or travelling onward to the Port.

The project received the provisional allocation for delivery in 2016/17 in July 2014 when the Government announced first round of Local Growth Fund (LGF) allocations, known as Growth Deal, to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership

(SELEP). The project has been let under the Eastern Highways Alliance (EHA) Framework 2 as a 'design and build' NEC 3 Engineering and Construction Contract (ECC) Main Option C – Target Price with Activity Schedule where Thurrock Council is the Contracting Body and Morgan Sindall is the Supplier. To date, Morgan Sindall provided the pre-construction design services and developed the recommended feasibility design options which informed the pre-planning and planning application and the Target Price submission for the next phase of the project.

The budget is set at to £12.62m. The efforts are now made to prepare the scheme for construction, subject to planning application process and successful consultation with local residents.

Cycle Infrastructure Delivery Plan

In July 2014, Thurrock was awarded £5 million towards cycle route improvements to be delivered across the borough by 2019. The cycle infrastructure enhancements support active lifestyles and therefore improve health and wellbeing of residents and reduce obesity. The council is committed to enhancing Thurrock's cycle network; making it easier and safer to get around the borough by bike, connecting routes, providing access to key employment and residential centres; offering an attractive alternative to using the car. In the long term, sustainable transport modes such as cycling will have positive impact on reduction of congestion and improved air quality.

The cycle plan has been developed in collaboration with the Local Access Forum and cycle groups. The programme was approved by the Cabinet in January 2016 and public engagement was undertaken on the emerging feasibility designs in June 2016 through an online consultation to seek feedback on the proposals.

This programme comprises of 41 schemes, of which 14 are at feasibility stage, 8 are at final design stage, 6 are under construction and 3 have been completed. All efforts are made to minimise the disruptions to the traffic and complete the construction before the end of March 2019.

Highways Infrastructure Management

Highways Assets

The Council, as Local Highways Authority, is responsible for maintaining highways infrastructure assets used by Thurrock residents and visitors. This includes:

- 560km of carriageway;
- 1000km of footway;
- 133 structures;
- 168 roundabouts;
- 50 traffic signals;
- 17,500 lighting columns;
- 3,500 illuminated signs;
- 1,500 illuminated bollards;
- 30,000 signs; and

- 26,500 gullies.
- 170km Public Right of Ways

To maintain our assets, in 2017-18 we procured a £40 million Highways Maintenance Term Contract which has been successfully mobilised and in operation since May 2017. Already we have ordered £4m worth of highway work through this new contract.

We have worked hard to improve the appearance of highways across the borough and to be more responsive to the residents' needs and requests. We have filled over 4,500 potholes between April and December 2017. The high number of potholes reflects the limited investment in the maintenance of roads over recent years, and the large number of locations where road surfaces are at or close to the end of their design life. Therefore, we have taken steps to increase capital investment and move towards proactive and preventive operations.

In addition, over 500 street lighting reports have been received and actioned.

Thurrock is responsible for 170km of Public Rights of Way. Of the 170km, 153km have been kept free of obstruction. A programme is in place to improve upon this until 100% of the routes are fully passable at all times.

Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme

The Highways Infrastructure Team has been working on a modernisation programme as part of the wider agenda supporting Thurrock becoming a digital council. This is also necessary for compliance with a number of quality issues principally related to the Highway Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) ensuring eligibility for DfT's incentive funding.

From 2016/17 to 2020/21 an increasing share of the funding (incentive funding) will be allocated on the basis of compliance with the HMEP. This means that by 2020/21 low performing authorities lose 20% of their maintenance funding. Authorities in the highest band would receive 100% of incentive funding. I am pleased to announce that our endeavours have enabled us to be on target to achieve Band 3, currently the highest level, and thus maintained the annual funding allocation from central government for 2018-19. The highways improvement plan will continue next year to enable us to show continual improvement and efficiencies in the way we deliver our service.

The hard work undertaken this year has enabled us to receive well earned recognition with the Highways Team winning an award in the 'Most Improved Authority' in the Highway Maintenance theme; with customer satisfaction showing an improvement of around 8%.

Highways Inspectors

The council has a statutory duty to maintain its highway network. This involves having clear policies in place and a regular highway inspection regime. Since April 2017 over 2,000 safety inspections have been carried out resulting in over 2,200 maintenance works orders being issued.

With the implementation of a Highways Asset Management system, this service has moved from using a paper based process to digital mobile working representing a major change in our processes and improved efficiency. Additionally, the 'Report It' platform that was implemented in 2016 and allows residents to report defects on Thurrock's highways network from their mobile phones is being improved as well to provide an even better resident focused customer service approach.

The Dft allocated an additional £153k to Thurrock for potholes. So far this year a total of over 4,500 potholes have been filled throughout the road network. A further £481k was allocated from DFT's National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF), this enabled the team to deliver an additional 20,000 square metres of road surface improvements.

Network Management

Work to tackle the congestion problems around the West of the borough are continuing with increased collaboration with stakeholders through the Congestion Task Force that was set up in 2016. With traffic volumes increasing, this is an evolving work stream and we are committed to easing congestion particularly when there are incidents on the Dartford Bridge that bring additional problems to Thurrock's road network. One of the biggest improvements made by Highways England is the time it takes to put the tunnel contraflow in place when the bridge is closed. Over the last 12 months or so, the time to implement the contraflow has been reduced from 4 hours down to 90 minutes. This was achieved by reviewing the resources available and seeking alternative suppliers / resources that are located more locally to the Bridge, hence reducing travel time to site.

In addition to the above, efficiencies have been made to the time usually taken to repair barriers on the central reserve of the motorway. Lane closures on the M25 in the vicinity of Thurrock impact our local roads and Highways England has been working collaboratively with stakeholders and have been successful in obtaining an approved temporary barrier to replace damaged sections that can be installed relatively quickly in comparison to the length of time it took previously when lanes had to be kept closed until full repairs could be arranged.

Congestion builds very quickly and once the circulatory area of J31 becomes gridlocked, the impact on the surrounding road network rapidly becomes evident with even local roads becoming impassable. To help alleviate this, yellow box markings have been installed on the entry points to J31 to enable traffic to escape the roundabout. This enables traffic on the local network to continue flowing. 5 mobile variable message signs have also been deployed at key points around the borough

to warn local drivers of the congestion around J31 in order that alternative routes can be taken.

Thurrock Council has in the past coordinated street works under the NRSWA legislation through Notices submitted by the Statutory Undertakers. However, due to growing demand on Thurrock's network and necessity to relieve the congestion, a Permit Scheme was introduced in October 2017, with over 1,200 permit applications being processed so far.

Highways Objectives

- Safety - a network of roads in poor condition has a direct correlation to highway safety. As the local highway authority, the council has a legal duty to maintain the network to a reasonable standard. Furthermore, an asset in poor condition is likely to promote a lack of pride in the community, and can be a precursor to crime, fear of crime and anti-social behaviour. Clearly, the Authority and relevant senior managers have a duty of care where any part of the asset is life expired and is prone to failure, which could result in members of the public being seriously injured.
- Promoting Healthier lifestyles - an asset in poor condition, particularly footways and cycleways, curtails promotion of sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling. Conversely, assets in good condition increase the safety and attractiveness of these modes, with the resultant health benefits and the reducing need to access healthcare.

Highways and Transportation Services

The highways and transportation services include the Passenger Transport Unit, Road Safety and Parking Services.

Passenger Transport

The Passenger Transport Unit is responsible for procuring and managing the Education Transport responsible for the safe travel of 2,160 students, including more than 420 with complex needs to many and varied education establishments both in and out of the borough. The Unit is required to respond to changing demands due to the increased number of residents moving into the borough and the nearest school unable to offer places for the students who are then required to be transported to the nearest establishment with spaces.

Tilbury Ferry -The Council continues to financially support the Ferry in Partnership with Kent County Council. A new operator was secured last year with Jetstream Tours Ltd who operated the service under emergency procedures up to November 2017 and following a successful procurement exercise was awarded the contract for a five year period. The majority of passengers it seems are very happy with their service as there has been a reduction in the number of complaints over the past 6 months, as is the Port of Tilbury, who own the landing stage, which the Council leases.

We have maintained a good standard of turnaround when issuing bus passes to the elderly and those with disabilities, with residents receiving their bus pass within ten working days of application. There are currently over 23,000 pass holders and we have continued to support bus services in our more rural areas where operators have no commercial services.

Thameside Rail Franchise - c2c continue to implement the requirements of the 15 year franchise awarded in 2014.

Buses and Community Transport - in 2017/18, within the limited resources available, the council has continued to support bus services to more rural parts of the borough, notably bus routes 11, 265 and 374. First Essex now operates service 11 and 374 while Trans Vol continues to operate service 265.

Ensign and First Essex Buses have made no network changes since last April although Ensign will be making some minor changes in January 2018; No bus services have been withdrawn. Six communities would not receive a bus service without council support - Bulphan, Fobbing, Horndon on the Hill, Linford East and West Tilbury. .

The Bus Users' Group has met bi-monthly, enabling residents to raise bus issues directly with elected members relating to services timetables and infrastructure. The council continues to manage the concessionary cessionary fares scheme with 23,340 passes on issue.

Road Safety

The Council's Road Safety Team has carried out Crucial Crew training for to over 1,250 year 6 pupils from 21 Primary Schools. This training enables pupils to be offered advice to integrate and transition their journey from Primary School into their new Senior School, with essential skills to keep them safe for the transition to senior school. Campaign aims: To focus on skills, abilities and attitudes both from a personal and practical point of view, to keep themselves safe and the need to develop their judgment, decision making and risk assessment skills in order to increase their self-esteem and confidence. in relation to Road Safety. The training has been provided by various partners and includes safety information regarding the Fire and Ambulance Services, Public Protection and health and safety advice.

The service also visited the Orsett Show to highlight services in Thurrock for local children and residents and demonstrates how Road Safety officers teach road safety and provide cycling instruction. The Road Safety Team carry out service reviews with each school ensuring that feedback, by way of questionnaires, are carried out regularly. Feedback illustrates that continued support for School Crossing Patrols is welcomed by our Primary Schools and staff members are respected by schools, parents and children alike.

School travel plans continue to be successful with the first Senior School, The Ockendon Academy, receiving a bronze accreditation and Arthur Bugler receiving a gold accreditation in the Primary School category demonstrating excellence in

supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel. Schools have invested hard work and dedication in relation to School Travel Plans and with the support of the Road Safety Team has managed well with an age group which can be difficult to engage with.

The “Surround a Town days”, working with Essex Police and our other partners within SERP (Safer Essex Road Partnership) have proven successful. Vehicles have been stopped, in and around the borough, for such offences as wearing no seatbelts, using mobile phones whilst driving and driving without tax/insurance.

Parking Services

Parking Services Team (back office systems), were brought back in house in December 2016 and can now manage the recovery of debt owed in a more streamlined and robust manner, working closely with Civil enforcement Officers. A pilot of cashless machines was introduced in November 2017, allowing drivers the opportunity to pay their parking fees by debit/credit card, Apple I-Pay (via phone or watch), contactless as well as cash.

HGV Enforcement has continued to be successful due to the new twilight shift implemented in 2016 and the service is now focused on recovering foreign HGV debt which is a growing nationwide issue. A pilot scheme with Penham Excel, High Court Enforcement Officers and Agents focuses on recovering debt mainly held by foreign vehicles in relation to unpaid penalty notices. Four separate scheduled events since June 2017 have resulted in the recovery of £32,305 of unpaid penalty notices, an income of £22,000 after costs.

The Parking Services Team in partnership with the Debt Recovery Team continue to make this a priority over the next twelve months ensuring Thurrock roads are kept clear of illegally parked HGV's and to promote our message that HGV parking in residential areas and areas with restrictions is unacceptable and a zero based tolerance will apply.

2. THE MAIN CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

Since taking responsibility for this Portfolio, I have consistently promoted my view that the services within my Portfolio should now concentrate on making the good intentions in all our strategies actually happen. I have emphasised that projects supporting job creation for local residents, growth for local businesses and inward investment must be priorities for the months, and indeed years, ahead.

However, highways and transportation provide services enjoyed by all residents of the borough, and can make a major contribution to the quality of place enjoyed by today's residents and businesses. Key challenges are to improve the condition of roads and streets, including the delivery of our ongoing ‘fill it’ campaign, and mitigate the environmental impacts caused by vehicle emissions, especially around schools.

I will continue to work with partners to improve routing for lorries in the borough, and seek to ensure that the success of our freight and logistics sector does not undermine quality of life for local residents.

In this way, I am seeking to ensure that Thurrock is well placed to maximise the opportunities available to it, that we will compete to be an attractive location for investment and that local residents will directly benefit from our successes.

In the coming months, the significant areas of work will be:

a) Securing maximum benefit through the Local Enterprise Partnership

With almost all transport funding now contained within the devolved Local Growth Fund (LGF) it is vital that Thurrock, together with the rest of Thames Gateway South Essex, progresses LGF project for which funding was secured. The projects such as Stanford-le-Hope Station Transport Package, Cycle Infrastructure Delivery Plan, A13 widening will improve the capacity of local infrastructure and support the delivery of our ambitious growth agenda. In addition, a good record of on time and on budget project delivery will support future bids.

b) Progressing the Transportation Agenda

The provision of an effective, free-flowing transportation network is an essential requirement if the council's regeneration ambitions are going to be achieved. In this regard, there are four key priorities that will be pursued with vigour; tackling congestion through the work of the Congestion Task Force, delivering the capacity enhancement schemes already secured in the Local Growth Fund, improving modal choice in the borough by supporting increased capacity for public transport, and encouraging Highways England to re-think their plans for a Lower Thames Crossing in Thurrock.

c) Refreshing Thurrock's Transport Strategy in the context of the Emerging Local Plan

Having a clear and positive policy framework in place is critical in ensuring that future land uses in Thurrock are supported by adequate and sustainable transport provision. This analysis will also give us the evidence base to bid for government funding for any future infrastructure which may be required.

d) Continue to tackle congestion through the Congestion Task Force

The Congestion Task Force made good progress in 2016, but much more needs to be done. Our challenges will be to continue to improve incident response, to improve highways network management in the borough, and to progress plans to meet future transport needs.

e) Improve road maintenance

In addition to working towards our target of meeting HMEP Band 3 by December 2017, we will also work to improve our response to residents' concerns and the general level of maintenance of roads in the borough.

As previously stated roads have been neglected and it will take time to bring them back into good order.

f) Improve the management of lorry movements in Thurrock

We will work with partners to develop a Freight and Logistic Strategy and progress schemes to reduce adverse impacts from HGV movements.

g) Improve transport and parking services

We take active part in x-cutting transport review which includes parking services to find more efficient ways of providing these services.

3. FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Revenue

	2017/18 Budget	2017/18 Forecast	Forecast variance
Highways and Transportation services	1,183,886	1,183,886	0
Highways Infrastructure and Management	4,673,721	4,673,721	0
Transport Development	209,882	209,882	0
Major Projects	19,996	19,996	0
Total	6,087,485	6,087,485	0

The Highways and Transportation service has a net revenue budget of £6.087m and is currently forecasting to spend to budget. Financial risks continue to be managed within the service and significant efficiency savings, such as the street lighting efficiency initiative, have been delivered. In addition to this, the service is delivering a capital improvement programme in excess of £100m.

Capital Project	Revised Budget
Mardyke Bridge Works	110,896
Highways works to Purfleet Bypass	42,553
Highways Improvements in Oliver Road	306,184
Bus Link between Tesco's Lakeside and Intu Lakeside	58,566
Improvement works between Thurrock Park Way and Manor Road	652,298
East Tilbury 1st payment (CCTV / Anti-Skid / VAS / Bus Stop upgrade)	10,906
East Tilbury - Walsh development contribution	9,828
Butts Lane improvement works	10,646
Mayflower Road parking management and capacity improvements	57,764
West Thurrock Crossings and Bus Lane	250,000
Parking Restrictions on Park Lane and Bus Lane Improvements	16,084
Footway and Cycleway Extension from Development to Romford Road	131,211
South Road / Stifford Road Junction Improvements	190,012
Upgrade of Sandowne Road to adopted highway	173,776
Improvements to Towers Road - Grays	20,980
Improvements to the Manorway Interchange	76,262
Total S106 Funding	2,117,966
Congestion	276,398
Traffic Management	164,461
Safety Management Schemes	559,793
Safer Routes to Schools	111,686
Walking and Cycle Facilities	170,116
Public Transport Infrastructure	31,096
Highways Improvements	51,919
Rights of Way	95,487
Parking Restrictions	272,383
Air Quality Monitoring Equipment and Initiatives	75,000
Total Integrated Transport	1,808,339
Structural Maintenance A Class Roads	840,000
Structural Maintenance B and C Class Roads	682,000
Bridge Repair and Strengthening	750,000
Safety Fencing	79,667
White Lining	59,569
Traffic Signals	341,027
Road Signs	66,651
Pot Holes	153,000
Illuminated Signage Upgrade	400,000
National Productivity Investment Fund	481,000

Structural Maintenance Unclassified Roads	422,000
Footway Maintenance	379,784
Street Lighting	94,249
Other Infrastructure	591,941
Street Lighting LED Replacement	1,844,071
A13 Widening (Development)	2,263,448
A13 Widening (Works)	75,024,000
Stanford Le Hope Interchange	7,387,204
Local Growth Fund Measures	5,122,944
Total Highways Maintenance	96,982,555
Grand Total	100,908,860

CONCLUSION

I hope that from the contents of my report, Members will acknowledge the scale and breadth of the activities contained within this Portfolio. I am very aware of the importance of each of those services in contributing to the improvement of the quality of life for the residents of Thurrock.

There are particularly difficult challenges to my ambitions to ensure that those improvements are made, but no one should be in any doubt about my determination to deliver this important agenda, whatever the circumstance.

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QUESTION TIME

Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

There is 1 question to the Leader and 5 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

1. From Councillor Liddiard to Councillor Gledhill

Could the Portfolio Holder for Housing please update Members on the lettings, sales and vacant properties on the St. Chads site.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor Snell to Councillor Hebb

The Money Advice Trust, as part of their Stop The Knock Campaign highlighting the trend in increased use of bailiffs by local authorities, recently sent in a FOI request for information about the use of Bailiffs by this Council. Unlike most neighbouring Councils, Thurrock did not respond. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why?

2. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Halden

Can the Cabinet Member outline the process of the Headstart housing scheme please.

3. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Snell

Can the Chair of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee outline how his committee plans to ensure a robust review of the current NHS Orsett Hospital consultation process?

4. From Councillor Fish to Councillor B Little

Can the Portfolio Holder for Transport please tell Full Council how many of the pothole that are filled are in fact refills that have had to be repaired?

5. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Hebb

Can the Portfolio Holder for Finance update the chamber on his approach to balancing the budget over the next five year period?

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Item 19 - Update on Motions agreed by the Council – 31 January 2018

Date	From	Motion	Status	Accountable Director
22/02/17	Cllr J Kent	The Thameside Theatre is held in great affection by residents across Thurrock. Therefore the sudden announcement that the theatre is likely to close by April 2019 is causing real concern in many quarters. Council is of the collective view that the Thameside Theatre should remain open until a new civic theatre for Thurrock, situated in Grays, has opened.	Work is ongoing to review what is currently provided at the theatre and what can be done to improve its future financial viability. In parallel, work is continuing to look at options for new theatre provision in Grays in the context of the wider Grays master plan. The commitment remains to theatre provision continuing in Grays to support an evening economy. The theatre will not be closed until there is a replacement.	Steve Cox
29/03/2017	Cllr Hebb	Thurrock Council resolves to thank HM The Queen, for her selflessness and grace as monarch of the United Kingdom for 65 years, and it thanks her for her years of dedicated public service and advocacy of our great nation. In the spirit in which HM The Queen has herself taken with the Sapphire Jubilee, this council also seeks to recognise the memory of our former monarch George VI, for his unwavering patriotism during our nation's darkest hours. This council therefore resolves to rename a suitable park within the borough to be identified after public consultation - to the George VI Memorial Park in honour of the former King and his years of service to our country.	The consultation commenced on 24 November 2017 and concluded on 8 January 2018. Residents were asked if they wish to name a park after the late King George VI and if so which park would they like renamed, or would they like a new park in the future to be given this title. Consultation Outcome - The majority of responders agree to the naming of a new park.	Julie Rogers
28/06/2017	Cllr Gerrish	Council calls on the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee to conduct a full review of fly tipping in private alleys, in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the scale of the issue across the borough. Review the impact on residents of the council's policy on fly tipping in private alleys. 	The Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee formed a member-led panel at its meeting of 13 July to address the Council Motion. The lead member updated the committee at its meeting of 12 October with a view to presenting a final report to the committee at the December meeting, prior to a report to Cabinet recommending any policy adoption coming out of the review. This report has now	Steve Cox

Item 19 - Update on Motions agreed by the Council – 31 January 2018

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate potential policy responses, including understanding the cost to the council of taking action and exploring new, more innovative solutions. • Make recommendations on the best approach to improving the situation. 	<p>been put back to the 22 February 2018 meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee.</p>	
28/06/2017	Cllr Halden	<p>Thurrock Council would oppose any closure of Orsett Hospital until new and modern facilities are put in place first to ensure that clinical services are maintained and improved in Thurrock and urges that Council resist attempts to move clinical resources or capacity from Orsett Hospital out of Thurrock.</p>	<p>We are awaiting details from NHS England on when the consultation will commence but we expect it to be sometime during the Autumn. The Council, with its NHS partners, is proceeding with its plans for the four Integrated Medical Centres and is out to tender for the design team for the Tilbury IMC.</p> <p>October Update : NHS England have indicated that the consultation on the STP will start in late October / early November and include consultation on the future of Orsett Hospital. We have appointed the design team to lead on the Tilbury IMC</p> <p>November Update – We are anticipating consultation on the STP to start at the end of November. Planning work is underway on all four of the proposed Integrated medical Centres.</p> <p>January Update – Consultation process has started and runs until 9 March 2018. The matter will be considered at HOSC and the Health & Wellbeing Board.</p>	Roger Harris
27/09/2017	Cllr B Rice	<p>This Council calls on the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex to fully review and evaluate Police numbers in Thurrock in light of the serious nature of crimes that are we are experiencing in the Borough.</p>	<p>A letter has been sent to the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner advising of the motion of Thurrock Council and inviting a response on how the issues raised would be taken forward. The Police Fire and Crime Commissioner is attending Full Council on 31 January 2018.</p>	Julie Rogers

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27/09/2017	Cllr Spillman	<p>Council calls on Cabinet to work with local arts and music groups to assist them in looking at options for establishing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A not-for-profit community arts and music multi use venue open to all arts, crafts and music groups across Thurrock which will be able to secure relevant licenses that will allow the venue to be financially sustainable by raising revenue through ticketed music and performance events, and • A not-for-profit, open air, "Festival of Thurrock" to provide an opportunity for a wide range of artists and musicians in Thurrock to showcase their talents. 	<p>The Cabinet recognises the value of arts and culture in supporting our local communities and creating pride in Thurrock. Meetings have been held with Cllr Spillman and arts and heritage groups to discuss ways to work together to support the sector in Thurrock.</p> <p>Cllr Spillman and the local groups involved in discussions have been invited to participate in the next round of consultation on the Arts and Heritage (Cultural Economy) strategy. Following the next round of consultation the strategy will be presented to Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting in March. .</p> <p>Festivals do require significant resources to organise, produce and manage however the Council continues to work with groups on a range of arts activities and events and is willing to consider new financially viable ideas.</p>	Steve Cox
27/09/2017	Cllr B Rice	<p>Members in this Council Chamber to call on the Cabinet to re-evaluate the need for £5 per week charge for grounds maintenance to Council tenants as this will cause many residents further hardship.</p>	<p>The Grounds Maintenance service charge has been temporarily suspended pending a review. This will be reported back to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in December and Cabinet in January/February.</p> <p>January Update – December Scrutiny Committee recommended that the charges are not proceeded with. The final decision will be made at February Cabinet.</p>	Roger Harris
25/10/2017	Cllr Jones	<p>We call on Thurrock Council to write to the Secretary of State to express many residents' views that in its present state the police service contact number 101 is not fit for purpose.</p>	<p>A letter was sent to the Secretary of State on Wednesday 8 November to express the views of residents in relation to the 101 contact number. We have yet to receive a response to the letter sent, and have sent a reminder letter.</p>	Julie Rogers

Item 19 - Update on Motions agreed by the Council – 31 January 2018

25/10/2017	Cllr J Kent	Thurrock Council believes the, so called, "dementia tax" is unfair and would be damaging to many older residents of Thurrock. The Council calls on the care minister, Jackie Doyle-Price, to rule out forcing older people to pay for their care with their home.	Motion has been sent to the Care Minister on Wednesday 8 November 2017.	Roger Harris
25/10/2017	Cllr Gerrish	<p>Thurrock Council calls on the Government to provide the necessary resources and rule changes which would allow councils to build additional council housing at a scale proportional to need, in particular removing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap. Council resolves to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to the Prime Minister, Chancellor and DCLG setting out our concerns and seeking urgent action to enable the building of council housing at necessary volumes. • Write to Thurrock's MPs seeking all possible Parliamentary support. • Request that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider whether there are any additional local opportunities to increase our supply of new council houses in Thurrock. 	<p>Letters have been sent to those requested. Meeting with DCLG officers has also been arranged for 9 November 2017 and Housing Overview and Scrutiny will be considering this at its December meeting.</p> <p>January Update – The December Budget indicated that there will be further resources available, including allowing Councils to borrow more through the HRA. We await further details from the HDCLG.</p>	Roger Harris
29/11/2017	Cllr J Kent	Care leavers who were looked after by the Council are amongst the most vulnerable groups in our community. As Corporate parents we should aim to keep young people safe and improve their life chances. Therefore Thurrock Council resolves that - to help ensure the transition from care to adult life is as smooth as possible, and to mitigate the chances of care leavers falling into debt as they begin to manage their own finances, that the executive bring forward plans in its "headstart housing paper - supporting care leavers", which is proposed for	The Head Start Housing Paper to provide housing and holistic support for care leavers contains a proposal for targeted Council Tax relieve for care leavers up to the age of 21 and discretionary provision up to the age of 25. This has been consulted with Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Corporate Parenting Committee. This report is being presented to February Cabinet for implementation from 1 April 2018.	

Item 19 - Update on Motions agreed by the Council – 31 January 2018

		December Scrutiny, includes proposals for targeted Council tax relief and for Scrutiny to make recommendations to Cabinet regarding a whole package of support for these young people and that Council now adds it's support for an executive decision for start of the year 2018/19.		
29/11/2017	Cllr Snell	This Council calls on government to reject the idea of piloting the re-integration of former extremists and returning jihadists by giving them priority on housing waiting lists which this Council would oppose.	The Council will be responding to any formal consultation document in line with the terms of this motion and will be writing to the relevant government department.	
29/11/2017	Cllr Jones	We call on Thurrock Council to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, and Essex Police to ask them to outline their strategy to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and violent attacks in Thurrock.	A letter was sent to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst on the 19 December 2017. The letter invited Mr Hirst to outline his strategy for Essex Police to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime and violent attacks in Thurrock. The PCC will be attending full Council in January 2018.	

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