

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

## Council

To the Members of Thurrock Council

The next meeting of the Council will be held at **7.00 pm** on **29 January 2020**

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

### Membership of the Council:

Terry Piccolo (Mayor)  
Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor)

Qaisar Abbas  
Abbie Akinbohun  
John Allen  
Alex Anderson  
Chris Baker  
Gary Byrne  
Daniel Chukwu  
Colin Churchman  
Gary Collins  
Mark Coxshall  
Jack Duffin  
Tony Fish  
Mike Fletcher  
Oliver Gerrish  
Robert Gledhill  
Garry Hague

James Halden  
Shane Hebb  
Victoria Holloway  
Deborah Huelin  
Andrew Jefferies  
Barry Johnson  
Tom Kelly  
Cathy Kent  
John Kent  
Martin Kerin  
Angela Lawrence  
Steve Liddiard  
Susan Little  
Sue MacPherson  
Ben Maney  
Fraser Massey

Allen Mayes  
Sara Muldowney  
Bukky Okunade  
Jane Potheary  
David Potter  
Shane Ralph  
Joycelyn Redsell  
Gerard Rice  
Elizabeth Rigby  
Sue Sammons  
Jennifer Smith  
Luke Spillman  
David Van Day  
Aaron Watkins  
Lynn Worrall



**Lyn Carpenter**  
**Chief Executive**

Agenda published on: 21 January 2020



## **Agenda**

Open to Public and Press

		<b>Page</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>7 - 44</b>
	<p>To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 23 October 2019.</p> <p>To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on 27 November 2019.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Items of Urgent Business</b>	
	<p>To receive additional items that the Mayor is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Declaration of Interests</b>	
	<p>To receive any declaration of interests from Members.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Questions from Members of the Public</b>	<b>45 - 46</b>
	<p>In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors</b>	
	<p>In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2(Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.</p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Petitions Update Report</b>	<b>47 - 48</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels</b>	
	<p>The Council are asked to agree any changes to the appointments made to committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels,</p>	

as requested by Group Leaders.

<b>10</b>	<b>Police Fire &amp; Crime Commissioner (Presentation and Q&amp;A Only)</b>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Local Council Tax Scheme</b>	<b>49 - 54</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Review of Members' Allowances - Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel</b>	<b>55 - 84</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2019/20</b>	<b>85 - 124</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2018/19</b>	<b>125 - 138</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Purfleet: Changing name to Purfleet-on-Thames</b>	<b>139 - 142</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Central Services and Communities</b>	<b>143 - 178</b>
<b>17</b>	<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's and Adult Social Care</b>	<b>179 - 200</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Questions from Members</b>	<b>201 - 202</b>

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

<b>19</b>	<b>Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies</b>	
<b>20</b>	<b>Minutes of Committees</b>	

Name of Committee	Date
General Services Committee	7 October 2019
Planning Committee	19 September 2019
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education	5 June 2019
Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 September 2019
Planning Committee	24 October 2019

Standards and Audit Committee	12 September 2019
Corporate Parenting Committee	10 September 2019
Planning Committee	28 November 2019
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	3 September 2019

<b>21</b>	<b>Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year</b>	<b>203 - 206</b>
<b>22</b>	<b>Motion submitted by Councillor Huelin</b>	<b>207 - 208</b>
<b>23</b>	<b>Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent</b>	<b>209 - 210</b>

**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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

**Future Dates of Council:**

26 February 2020 (Budget)

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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 will be recorded with the audio recording being published on the Council's website. The meeting will also be filmed and live streamed. Members of the public not wishing to be filmed the Mayor will give them the opportunity to leave the chamber. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be recorded.

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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](mailto: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.

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- 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.

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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.

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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)]			
<b>All Motions will follow Section A and then either Section B or C</b>			
<b>A.</b>	A1 Motion is moved A2 Mover speaks A3 Seconded A4 Secunder speaks or reserves right to speak	[Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.8(a) (5 minutes)] [Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.3] (3 minutes)	
Then the procedure will move to either B or C below:			
<b>B.</b>		<b>C.</b>	
<b>IF there is an AMENDMENT (please see Rule 19.23)</b>		<b>If NOT amended i.e. original motion</b>	
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	<b>THEN debate on <u>the subject</u>.</b>	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.		

## Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

1. **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
  
2. **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
  
3. **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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## Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 23 October 2019 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin (*arrived 7.09pm*), Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, James Halden, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Pothecary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day (*arrived 7.03pm*), Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall

**Apologies:** Councillors Gary Byrne, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, Shane Hebb, Barry Johnson and Gerard Rice

**In attendance:** Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property  
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services  
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation  
Andrew Millard, Interim Director of Place  
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways  
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service  
Tim Hallam, Acting Head of Legal, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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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 the Acting Leader, Councillor Halden, to present a statement.

*"This morning, the Police arrested an individual in West Thurrock, just outside of Lakeside, tragically discovering 39 dead bodies in the back of his lorry. My first statement is of course one of tremendous remorse for the loss of life of these tragic 39 souls at the hands of a criminal. This was a terrible crime and as a Council we will do whatever is needed and put in place whatever is needed to support agencies eradicate this evil.*

*Members can be assured the business continuity plan worked as it should have done. Our emergency command officers were notified at once by the Police, and I*

was informed early this morning by the Chief Executive. From here myself, Roger Harris, and relevant staff were in place all day to ensure the emergency plans were carried out as expected and support offered to the Police, Group Leaders and MP's were notified.

From here, Council reached out to do the following:

- We ensured that despite the traffic issues that our care providers were able to get to vulnerable residents.
- Schools were contacted to ensure the adolescent mental health services was in place for the rest of the week to support children and any scared young people who had seen the news.
- We worked with the Red Cross and Lakeside businesses to make sure comfort on the scene facilities and support were in place for the emergency services.
- While our planning and highways teams were working with emergency services to review how we could best return the area to a degree of normality, we ensured the priority was supporting the Police in need for space and time for the Police investigation.
- We have offered alternative accommodation wherever possible for locally effected businesses within the cordoned area.
- We worked with the Police to ensure that community and media outlets reaching out to both communication teams from across the world were updated.
- And we guaranteed that we worked hand in glove with the Police to share relevant information regarding CCTV and other security information.

I know everyone was clamouring for more information throughout the day from the Council, but the responsible thing for us to do was work diligently with our partnership, but ensure the only line of communication was from Essex Police. Speculation, while exciting for some, gets in the way of people doing their jobs.

Mr Mayor, I want to put on record my thanks to all partners. From health partners such as the Ambulance Service, CCG and Basildon and Broomfield hospitals who stepped forward to support necessary arrangements for the deceased, to the businesses in Lakeside and charities who supported the men and women in our emergency services, to the Council staff who ensured the organisation still functioned during such a terrible situation.

To this end, Thurrock Council will make a corporate donation to the Red Cross to thank them for their help and support, and I and the Acting CEO will visit the area tomorrow to thank staff.

Of course, my biggest thanks go to the Police. We see the Police each and every day, but it's only when you sit on the other end of a phone and hear them talk about the most gruesome events and approach it with such professionalism and clarity that you truly see the depth and breadth of the work they do for the community.

They saw and dealt with things today which we all have the good fortunate of being kept away from, and we salute them for that.

*Mr Mayor, events like this, events that assault our understanding of humanity, test our faith. It feels like our community had been violated. And it had. An area we all know as an area of leisure, surrounded by well-known businesses, schools and services, became a horrific scene as a result of this monster.*

*However, when you see business leaders interrupt their day to come forward to ask if they can support the emergency services with hot drinks, when your health leaders and school leaders make the approach to see if we need anything, and when you, as an elected member, receive texts from our local church community offering their prayers, we know the Thurrock community is strong, resilient, generous, and united.*

*Mr Mayor, clearly this situation had some way still to unfold. Thurrock Council will remain in constant contact with the Police to support their investigation and ensure the vital services in the area functioning. This will be a lengthy investigation and I can ensure you that the Council will work with all services to understand what else can be done, if anything, to better work holistically in the future to prevent such awful events.*

*The Council had for some time been working with the Home Office via the LGA in terms of support for the refugee programme. In light of today, I have asked the Corporate Director to intensify this work.*

*There had been a huge amount of commentary in the media regarding the victims, and while we do not yet have a clear picture, what is clear is that these people were indeed victims of an appalling crime. As such a condolence book had been placed in the Civic Offices reception for members and the public.*

*The Thurrock community will do what the Thurrock community does, which will offer our heartfelt prayers to all those involved in this situation. "From the Thames, to the people of the worlds" was this boroughs motto, this event had darkened our day, but will not undermine the ethos of this magnificent community."*

The Mayor invited Reverend John Guest to lead those present in prayer which followed by a minutes silence.

#### **60. Minutes**

The minutes of the Meeting of Council held on the 18 September 2019 were approved as a correct record.

#### **61. Items of Urgent Business**

No items of urgent business were received.

#### **62. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

#### **63. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor of the Council**

The Mayor was pleased to announce that a donation of £600.00 had been received to his charity "Giving for Thurrock" from the Thurrock Nepalese Women's Community.

#### **64. 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.co.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

#### **65. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors**

Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, one requisition of notice had been given to present a petition at the meeting.

Councillor Redsell presented a petition on behalf of the residents of Woodside to note that the plans for the 300 pupil special needs school on the existing Tree Top site. Whilst residents supported the new school they were concerned about the traffic and air pollution this would cause in the area. The residents therefore asked for the construction of a new access road to the schools in order that existing and additional traffic be averted away from Woodside.

#### **66. Petitions Update Report**

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council meetings and Council offices.

#### **67. 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 by Committees and Outside Bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Acting Leader of the Council, Councillor Halden, informed the chamber that he had no changes to make.

Councillor Potheary, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the chamber that she would like to make the following changes:

For Councillor Potheary and Councillor Gerrish to be removed from the Standards and Audit Committee and replaced with Councillor Muldowney and Councillor C Kent.

Councillor Spillman, Leader of the Thurrock Independence Group, informed the chamber that he would like to make the following change:



For Councillor Spillman to be removed from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**68. Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19**

The Mayor referred Members to the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018-19 as published in the Agenda.

**RESOLVED**

**That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.**

**69. Amendments to the Constitution**

Councillor Halden presented the report and stated at the General Services Committee held on the 17 October 2019 it had been agreed across party that the constitution be amended to reflect some changes to processes at Full Council and in the recruitment and appointment of certain officers.

Councillor Potheary thanked Councillor Halden for the report and stated that the review had been a good start, in the right direction, but there was still a long way to go. Councillor Potheary stated her support to the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Spillman welcomed the report and in particular the amendment to increase time for portfolio presentations and questions. Councillor Spillman stated that the Council should look further to deliver Council and Committees outside of the Chamber so that more residents could engage.

Councillor Redsell questioned whether any consideration had been made to increase the time that members of the public got to present their questions to allow more time for residents to get their views heard.

Councillor Halden summed up and thanked Councillor Potheary for her support. The new process of recruitment would be tested with the new senior appointments currently being undertaken.

Councillor Halden stated the change Councillor Spillman had requested was not a constitutional change and stated that should chairs and vice chairs of committees require more information they should ask for more meetings or for more reports to be presented.

Councillor Halden stated that the Constitution Working Group could consider Councillor Redsell request to increase time for public questions.

**RESOLVED that:**

- 1. The appointment of all Directors and Assistant Directors on a permanent, interim or acting up basis, be carried out by the General Services Committee.**

2. **The appointment of all permanent Directors and Assistant Directors then be ratified at a meeting of the Full Council.**
3. **All formal non-minor (1) restructure, permanent or temporary, that impacts on the line management or breadth of responsibility of any Director or Assistant Director, and (2) any role title change to Director or Assistant Director, be notified to members of the General Services Committee for early engagement.**
4. **Formal recognition of the Shadow Cabinet from the largest opposition group – including the right to ask the first three questions of the Portfolio Holders on their annual reports.**
5. **Amend the time allocated for the presentation of the Portfolio Holders' annual reports to Council to twenty minutes with a limit of seven minutes in total to cover both the introduction and summing up by the Portfolio Holder.**
6. **Amend the Constitution regarding the delegation to the Leader in approving acquisitions and disposals up to a value of £500,000 to a limit of £200,000 with all other approvals to be considered by the Cabinet.**
7. **Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer and Director of HR respectively to make the relevant amendments in the Constitution and to the Pay Policy created by recommendations 1 to 6.**

**70. Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Report of Consultation**

Councillor Coxshall presented the report that provided Members with an update on the preparation of the Thurrock Local Plan and set out the key messages received in response to the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation Document which had been published for consultation in December 2016. Councillor Coxshall stated that between December 2016 and March 2019, 700 organisations and individuals had responded to the Issues Options (Stage 2) Consultation with nearly 3,000 separate comments having been made in response to the 40 questions set out in the Consultation Document. In agreement with the recommendation, the consultation and review would be published. Councillor Coxshall stated that it was critical to move forward onto the next stage of the plan making process to prepare a full Draft (Regulation 18) Local Plan.

Councillor Kerin as Chair of the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, thanked Councillor Coxshall for the report and asked for a guarantee in the Local Plan that Thurrock would benefit from helping other boroughs with their housing needs.

Councillor Potheary thanked Councillor Coxshall for the report and was heartened to see responses being reflected in the consultation responses. Councillor Potheary questioned how these responses would be developed and tackled and to ensure that any further consultation included the engagement of all residents.

Councillor Spillman stated the report was helpful but only told Members what was already known and requested that the Council be more vocal on national housing, affordable and social housing.

Councillor Halden stated with the impact from all 49 Members would enable the vision of the Local Plan to be moved forward and to ensure that the Local Plan was in conjunction with other Council policies.

Councillor Worrall welcomed the report and stated that there was still a long way to go and had been mindful of how housing would dominate the Local Plan and to ensure that when consultations took place that key workers were engaged with as key worker housing would be a vital part of the plan.

Councillor Redsell stated that the Local Plan across parties was coming together and stated that the River should be used more diligently which would take some of the strain off the roads.

Councillor Okunade commended where the Local Plan had got to but stated that the final consultation should be more balanced for the communities to ensure residents did not feel deprived.

Councillor Ralph echoed the comments made about the River Front and was disappointed this was not in the Local Plan. Although there was a need to build more new homes it was essential that green spaces, parks and open spaces were not lost. Councillor Ralph also stated there had been no mention of road links to rail networks and these should be considered going forward.

Councillor Little agreed that it was vital that engagement with communities took place and thanked those Officers who had spoken with her ward residents.

Councillor Coxshall thanked Members for their helpful comments and how well the Local Plan had progressed in the last 18 months. Councillor Coxshall briefly replied to Members questions and concerns by stating it was vital for all 49 Members to get involved with the Local Plan Group. That as plans developed consideration would be given to green spaces and would protect these for residents. The Council had a duty to co-operate and would work with colleagues to ensure that Thurrock benefited. That funding for new homes would follow but Thurrock had to show ambition. The Local Plan could deliver great communities and engagement would be undertaken with communities, residents and key workers. With work on the River front being discussed as part of the Local Plan Group.

## **RESOLVED**

**That Council agreed the publication of the Issues and Options 2 Report of Consultation on the Council's website and agreed the approach to preparing a new Local Plan.**

### **71. Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment and Sports & Leisure**

Councillor Watkins stated he was pleased to be presenting his third Portfolio Holder report and updated members on the services as part of this portfolio, the successes and future plans:

- Waste collection services configuration had remained largely unchanged with three wheeled bins being collected from every household each week.
- Recycling KPI had been achieved.
- Recycling Pilot had been successful.
- Delivering the best service to ensure cemeteries remain clean, tidy and respectful.
- Address those Keep Britain Tidy scores not met.
- Waste Management Working Group had been set up.
- Roll out of the Sports and Leisure Strategy.
- Park Engagement Officers had been recruited and engaged with sport groups.
- Work will continue on improving and refreshing the Air Quality & Health Thurrock Strategy.
- Fleet Management service continued to provide key support to Environment and Highway teams.
- Address road changes where being inappropriate used.

Councillor Watkins thanked Officers, teams, community groups and residents for the work undertaken.

Councillor J Kent stated that £3.4 million had been committed to the new development of the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre and questioned what temporary or alternative site had been consideration whilst the development was underway. Councillor Watkins stated the Council were working with contractors to ensure that as many of the services stayed on site as much as possible whilst the work was being undertaken. The new development would be bigger, safer for residents and other services available such as reusable items for charities.

Councillor Potheary commented on the successful pilot for supporting recycling in flats within the borough and questioned the Portfolio Holder whether funds would be committed to have the same facilities in all the flats in the borough. Councillor Watkins stated further sites had been identified following resident engagement and comments had been taken on board. The cross party Waste Management Working Group had been established which would like at those options. That better engagement with residents would be undertaken to understand what needed to be done. A consultation would shortly commence to seek the views of residents.

Councillor Spillman stated that not enough was being done to promote sport groups in the borough and asked for the Portfolio Holder assurance that this was not the case and what action would be taken to promote such groups. Councillor Watkins stated he had attended the sports awards two weeks ago and was committed and passionate about sport groups. Work would be

undertaken with those groups and the community to get a better understanding on what was needed. Park Engagement Officers would also continue to work with the community on park equipment.

Councillor Holloway questioned whether the policy had changed in allowing non Thurrock residents to use the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre.

Councillor Worrall questioned when the Park Strategy would be complete and what clear action would be undertaken to all the parks in the borough.

Councillor Muldowney commented on the poor response times of fly tipping being reported in Chadwell and how performances were being monitored.

Councillor Allen questioned what the long term improvement would be on air quality for Tilbury residents.

Councillor Fletcher questioned the Park Strategy should integrate all the work being undertaken and ensure that the Council worked alongside all parties on this.

Councillor Redsell stated the borough was looking good and thanked the Portfolio Holder and questioned what was taking place in schools to educate young children on the importance of recycling.

Councillor Ralph stated that the results of the air quality assessment should be published.

Councillor Watkins thanked Members for their comments and responded as follows:

Councillor Holloway was advised that only Thurrock residents could use the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre and would investigate as to what documentation was required to be shown.

Councillors were referred to paragraph 5.4 of the agenda that listed the transformations that have taken place in the borough. The recruitment of Park Engagement Officers had engaged with the community and would play a vital part going forward.

Councillor Watkins apologised to Councillor Muldowney for the unacceptable time for fly-tipping to be removed and would investigate. Members were advised that fly-tipping issues could be reported to Officers or either himself or Councillor Huelin.

Councillor Allen was referred to the Air Quality Strategy where more robust conversations were being held with agencies and engagement was being undertaken with partners so that issues could be dealt with and resolved quicker.

Councillor Fletcher was advised that the work being done was transparent and there had been no public concerns. That a report on Park Strategy had been presented to the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee where it had been agreed that more community groups/forums should be created.

Councillor Redsell was advised that work had been undertaken with schools but this element would also form part of the strategy plan.

## **72. Report of the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

Councillor Maney stated he was pleased to be presenting his first Portfolio Holder report and updated members on the services as part of this portfolio, the successes and the future plans:

- The Council maintained and managed road networks that were fit for purpose.
- The Capital Programme had seen 19 roads been resurfaced so far this year.
- 1156 network inspections had taken place.
- 3285 pot holes had been repaired.
- 98% of those pot holes repairs had been carried out within agreed timeframes.
- Updates on the successes of the Clean It Cut It Fill It initiatives.
- 629 gullies had already been attended between January and August 2019.
- £1m of funding had become available this year to deliver the Kerb It scheme.
- Kerb It scheme would be explored into other areas.
- £971,000 investment in the Integrated Transport Block which will deliver improvements in the Council's priority areas across the borough and work to continue to install the long-awaited east-facing slip roads at the A126 junction of the A13.
- The broad range of exceptional education and practical road safety initiatives.
- Priority given on the safety of school children.
- Enforcement – should be firm but fair.
- Pilot of new means of enforcement such as CCTV and create width restrictions.
- Address HGVs parking on pathways.
- Parking Permit Schemes had been reviewed and recommended.
- Committed to 2-way traffic scheme in Grays town centre.
- Winter gritting will be monitored.

Councillor Maney stated he would be happy to speak individually to residents or Members outside of the meeting.

Councillor Kerin, as chair of the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee, thanked the Portfolio Holder for the report but questioned whether the Portfolio Holder agreed that the number of Civil

Enforcement Officers should be increased. Councillor Maney stated he was passionate about enforcement with enforcement rules in place and that any surplus monies would be reinvested. The current enforcement team was small with the Portfolio Holder agreeing to support an increase should there be a need for the team to expand.

Councillor Potheary questioned whether the Administration were determined to see that the key transport projects being undertaken in the borough were finished. Councillor Maney stated that the Administration were determined to deliver and was confident that the major undertakings would be finished with Officers leading on these projects.

Councillor Spillman stated that the A13 widening project had been poorly managed and asked the Portfolio Holder how much the project was over budget and delayed by. Councillor Maney stated that delays had occurred as costs had spiralled but confirmed that the right people were now in place to put this project back on track with the focus to deliver the project as quickly as possible.

Councillor Duffin questioned progress on the Stanford Le Hope rail station and asked for an update when the project would start and projected completion times.

Councillor Fletcher questioned whether there was money available to implement the Kerb It scheme into other areas of the borough.

Councillor Okunade commented on the poor condition of the roads in the borough.

Councillor Allen questioned whether there was any plans for the bus stop near Bretts Farm in Tilbury to be closed as this was currently being used for parked HGVs and trailers.

Councillor Ralph questioned why the Stanford le Hope rail station had been knocked down before final plans had been in place.

Councillor Coxshall referenced the funding for the A13 East Facing Slips Scheme.

Councillor Coxshall also referred Members to the opportunity created by the Government to address other congestion points across the borough but relied on Members to be involved in the submission of an expression of interest.

Councillor Collins stated that since the speed camera system had been implemented in Southend Road in Stanford le Hope traffic was now speeding down Branksome Avenue and questioned whether extra speed cameras could be installed down this road.

Councillor Maney thanked Members for their comments and responded as follows:

Councillor Duffin was advised that the project could have been managed better but this was before his time as Portfolio Holder. Councillor Maney stated he had now been fully briefed and confirmed there had been problems with the acquisition of land. Members were reassured that the project would be delivered as soon as possible.

Councillor Fletcher was advised that there had been an overspend and hoped there may be surplus in the budget as more schemes were required and that capital bids had been made for more Kerb It schemes.

Councillor Okunade was advised that daily inspections took place and defects repaired as found and advised Councillor Okunade that she should report any defects in her ward to Officers.

Councillor Allen was also advised to report any illegal parking.

Councillor Coxshall was thanked for his comments and would support the initiatives.

Councillor Collins was advised that debates had taken place whether traffic was now using Branksome Avenue but agreed this road would be assessed.

### **73. Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions to the Leader had been received and six questions to Cabinet Members. Those questions not heard would receive a written response.

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

At 9.30pm the Mayor called time on this item.

Councillor Mayes requested his two questions be resubmitted to November Council.

Councillor Fish requested question be resubmitted to November Council.

Councillor Worrall requested a written response.

Councillor Collins requested question be resubmitted to November Council.

*Councillor Jefferies left the chamber at 9.23pm.*

### **74. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.

### **75. Minutes of Committees**

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.



**76. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year**

This item fell due to time limit of meeting being met.

**77. Motion received from Councillor Gerrish**

Councillor Gerrish in presenting his motion made reference to some alterations made to the version published in the agenda which reflected some amendments from Councillor Spillman's Amendment.

The Motion now read as follows:

*"Thurrock Council therefore resolves to:*

- 1.1 Declare a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action;*
- 1.2 Request that the Council's activities become net-zero carbon by 2030;*
- 1.3 Request that the Council embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities;*
- 1.4 Request that the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Climate Change convenes a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and a Climate Change partnership group, involving Councillors, residents, young citizens, climate science and solutions experts, businesses and other relevant parties. Over the following 6 months, the Group should consider strategies and actions being developed by the Council and other partner organisations and develop a strategy in line with a target of net zero emissions by 2030. It should also recommend ways to maximise local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy. The membership of this group should be agreed in consultation with Group Leaders;*
- 1.5 Request that all reports in preparation for the 2020/21 budget cycle and investment strategy will take into account the actions the Council will take to address this emergency;*
- 1.6 Request that the Leader write to the UK Government asking them to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and ask local MPs to do likewise."*

Councillor Gerrish was proud to present the Motion and recognised the need in Thurrock to address climate change due to the increase of air pollution, potential flooding, the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, proposed 13,000 new homes to be built in the borough and that this was the perfect time to make this statement. That Thurrock Council should take the lead on this and hoped that it would be tackled across party.

Councillor Gerrish was happy to take some of the amendments from Councillor Spillman Amendment Motion and agreed to accept 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; altered the wording on 1.4 to say 6 months and added "membership of

this group should be agreed in consultation with group leaders”; agreed to accept 1.5 and 1.6 but did not accept 1.7.

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

*“Thurrock Council therefore resolves to:*

- 1.1 Declare that climate, pollutant and ecology issues require real action;*
- 1.2 Request that the Council’s activities aim to become carbon neutral by 2050, in line with the government target;*
- 1.3 Request that the Council embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible and practical, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council’s activities;*
- 1.4 Request that the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Climate Change convenes a Cross Party Council Working Group on climate issues. Over the following 6 months, the Group should consider strategies and actions being developed by the Council and other partner organisations and develop a strategy in line with a aim of net zero emissions by 2050. It should also recommend new KIP’s to the cabinet, within 6 months, and ways to maximise local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy;*
- 1.5 Request that all reports in preparation for the 2020/21 budget cycle and investment strategy will continue to take into account the actions the Council will take to address this work;*
- 1.6 Request that the Leader write to the UK Government asking them to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and ask local MPs to do likewise;*
- 1.7 Council condemns the activities of the “extinction rebellion” movement, which have wasted Police time, harmed people’s working day, caused crime, vandalised public places, encouraged children to skip school and such. Members wish that “Extinction Rebellion” and their extreme behaviour have nothing to do with the Council.”*

At 9.38pm, Councillor Halden called Point of Order questioning whether Councillor Gerrish could amend his motion once it had been moved.

At 9.41pm, Councillor Redsell called Point of Order questioning whether the Motion be taken away and worked on amongst all three groups.

Sean Clark stated that Councillor Gerrish was altering his own motion and was taking into account those amendments whilst putting the motion forward.

Councillor Halden presented his Motion by welcoming the spirit of all three groups and explained the ecology issues required action; the aim to become carbon neutral by 2050 instead of 2030; convenes a cross party council working group to ensure that it had members to take on the responsibility and in turn recommend KPIs to cabinet within six months; condemns the activities

of the extinction rebellion movement as this wasted Police time, they broke the law, vandalised and encouraged children to skip school.

The Mayor called a vote on the Amendment.

At 9.46pm Councillor Halden requested a requisition vote.

For: Councillors Anderson, Churchman, Collins, Coxshall, Halden, Huelin, Kelly, Lawrence, Little, Maney, Massey, Mayes, Piccolo, Redsell, Rigby, Sammons, Van Day and Watkins (18)

Against : Councillors Abbas, Akinbohun, Allen, Baker, Chukwu, Duffin, Fish, Fletcher, Gerrish, Holloway, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Muldowney, Okunade, Potheary, Potter, Ralph, Shinnick, Smith, Spillman and Worrall (23)

Abstain: (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared the Amendment lost.

The Mayor called a vote on the Substantive Motion as amended.

Upon being put to the vote 25 members voted for the Substantive Motion with 16 Members voted against, whereupon the Mayor declared the Substantive Motion carried.

Councillor Spillman was asked whether he wished to pursue with his Amendment to which Councillor Spillman withdrew his Amendment.

**The meeting finished at 9.50 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](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**

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## **Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 23 October 2019**

### **Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.**

There were 6 questions submitted from members of the public.

#### **1. From Mrs Saunders to Councillor Watkins**

I would like to ask the Council why so many trees are being removed in Thurrock in particular Dell Road, this is near where I live, I'm in Rectory Road, the Orsett Cock roundabout, Rectory Road, Chadwell Road and we noticed some had been taken down near Coalhouse Fort whilst out walking. Thank you.

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Watkins, please respond to the question.

#### **Councillor Watkins**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, and thank you to yourself as well Mrs Saunders. Trees can be removed for a multitude of different reasons, such as development or issues specifically related to that tree or for particular safety issues as well. I would just like to point out, and I'm not sure how you feel, but I don't like seeing trees being taken down. They will only ever get taken down if there was ever an actual need to do so. In case you were wondering where, Cabinet in February, thanks to a motion which was passed actually through Council, approved of a Tree Planting Strategy, which would replace trees taken down on public land, tree planting within that was also back-dated as well, so there were sixty six trees being replaced in total. There's also been additional ones, since the storm for example we've had this year, and in which trees which came down within that, those ones will equally be replaced. Regarding specific sites which you've mentioned in here, the Orsett Cock has had trees taken down, which is part of the A13 road widening scheme, they will be replaced as part of the – once it's been finished, and obviously, that's a multi-million pound project which is being done to improve congestion across the A13, up to Highways England's section. Dell Road, which I know you've also mentioned specifically as an area you've got an interest in, that's actually a private developer, so the Council has no power over what residents do with those particular trees, unless a Tree Preservation Order is in place in a particular time, which I'm not sure if that land has. Any trees removed at Coalhouse Fort would be from recommendations made by Natural England, who at this point in time, we do believe that they would be outside of the Coalhouse Fort boundaries, which would be in private areas as well, but we are just looking into that to be doubly checked. As I say, any trees which would be taken down from Coalhouse Fort would be through the recommendations made by Natural England. But I hope that fills some confidence, but equally as I say we don't like trees being taken down. Any trees which were taken down by the Council, would be replaced.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Mrs Saunders, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

**Mrs Saunders**

Yes please. It's mainly now about replacement, and if you could explain what the ratio of replacement is please, and bearing in mind that not all of them survive because they're not watered apparently - the trees, and some are damaged as well. So you need to replace more than one for each tree because they don't all survive, I'm afraid. Thank you.

**Mayor**

Councillor Watkins.

**Councillor Watkins**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor, and equally thank you very much for your supplementary. I can completely understand what you're saying regarding new trees being planted, and then the life expectancy of those trees. We don't actually plant the small, sapling ones, we actually try to plant grown trees as much as we can do, to ensure that survival rates have increased. We have an excellent tree specialist here at the Council, who I'm sure Members across the Chamber this evening will know and have dealt with previously. She does take the job seriously, as we do. Every single tree which is currently in council land or which is planted by council is monitored closely, and we do continue to, as I say, replace like-for-like at this period of time. We also announced as part of that Cabinet paper as well, which as I say did come from a motion from Councillor Redsell, that we would also be exploring what further opportunities are available through the Local Plan for mass tree planting expansion. And also, which is in my report as well, there is mention as well, that we are still exploring as part of the re-development of the Air Quality Strategy, what further planting of trees we can be looking into as well for particular sites and areas. But equally, it's not just always down to the Council, we do have some Councillors as well who do their own tree planting in their particular wards. I'm not trying to make this joint with Ben and I, but I know that they have planted a lot of trees, also Councillor Pothecary and also Councillor Kelly as well. I know a lot of Councillors themselves plant trees in their own wards, which they do on their own and with the community.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Watkins.

**Mrs Saunders**

Thank you very much, that's it. Thank you.

## **Mayor**

Question two from Mr Jones has been withdrawn, so we now move on to question three from Mr Perrin. Mr Perrin would you please read out your question to Councillor Maney, as set out on page thirty three of the agenda.

## **Mr Perrin**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Councillor Maney, would the Council consider outlawing the practice of parking motor vehicles on pavements?

## **Mayor**

Councillor Maney.

## **Councillor Maney**

Thank you Mr Mayor, good evening Councillor – Mr Perrin, thank you very much for your question. The first thing that I'd like to say is that I and the Council fully recognise and understand the problems and inconvenience associated with pavement parking. Aside from the problems it causes for pedestrians and wheelchair users, it also leads to damage to our pavements, and that also costs to the council. This is something we take seriously and we know the concerns that local people have. Your question asked 'would we consider outlawing pavement parking', I think it's fair to say that per se the Council doesn't have the recourse to the law to do that, there are no legal provisions which allow an outright ban, as much as we might like to. Enforcement of paving parking rests primarily with the police. That's not to say there aren't things we can do, obviously if there is a road that has waiting restrictions in, if people park on the pavement those waiting restrictions apply, and we will enforce them. There are things we can do in terms of physical measures, we can put in barriers, talked about tree planting. I've found that planting trees on grass verges were a great way of stopping people parking there. As I say, we can put physical measures in place which prevent that. We - I want to talk about 'Kerb It', and I'll talk about that more later, but I think where you live the Council is actively installing extra parking provision on places like grass verges which become more than damaged, because vehicles keep parking on them. That in turn provides extra parking provision, and hopefully deters people from parking on the pavement. Lastly, there are things we can do from a community behaviour perspective, like in Section 43 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, we can – but that's very much in localised circumstances, where there is evidence that it is causing nuisance to the wider community. So, I hope I've given you a flavour of some of the things we can do, but in answer to your question unfortunately there isn't any provision available to us which allows us to implement a ban per se, or a Thurrock-wide ban. Thank you Mr Mayor.

## **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Maney. Mr Perrin, do you have a supplementary

question?

**Mr Perrin**

Yes please Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Maney for your answer so far. I ask the question because some pavements in Thurrock have become obstacle courses, and in some cases downright dangerous. Pavements are now used by some as parking areas for their cars, vans etc. Others use the pavements as permanent parking for their waste bins, some of which are overfilled and the rubbish spills onto the pavement, and the dumping of large items such as fridges, washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Such conduct can be dangerous when vehicles are parked on bends, thereby obstructing pedestrians and other driver's view of approaching traffic. So will the Council ensure pavements are safe, free of obstacles, and are for the exclusive use of pedestrians?

**Mayor**

Councillor Maney

**Councillor Maney**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Again, I would re-state that everything you say I agree with. I think, you know, in some parts of the borough there are a few parking pressures, and, you know, to be fair, it's hard to see where people would otherwise park if they don't have off-street parking of their own. But I regard it firmly as anti-social behaviour. I have a particular loathing for people who park on grass verges and, I agree with you, people who park on pavements and damage those pavements are causing anti-social behaviour; pure, plain, and simple. I think I've already said, where the Council can act, we will act. Unfortunately, we don't have the powers that we would like to have. You mentioned obstacles that are fly-tipped or left on the pavement, I think, you know, where they're reported to us or we know about them, of course we'll remove them. We spend a lot of taxpayers' money, needlessly in my opinion, repairing pavements and frankly we're fighting a losing battle. That's money we could be spending on other services, if we weren't repairing pavements needlessly. So, I can only give you my personal assurance that I think we should take, as fast as we can, a very dim view of people that park inconsiderately on our pavements. Pavements are for walking on, they're not for parking on or driving on. I do have to restate we're limited in what we can do, but where we can take action and that's feasible, I would always fully support that. Thank you Mr Mayor.

**Mr Perrin**

Thank you Mr Mayor.

**Mayor**

Thank you. Question four from Mr Arnold has been withdrawn, so we move



onto question five. Mr Rikowski, would you please read out your question to Councillor Watkins - sorry I should have waited for you to get to your seat – as set out on page thirty three of the agenda.

**Mr Rikowski**

What is Thurrock going to do to address the toxic levels of pollution in the air, which damages and negatively impacts people's health in the area?

**Mayor**

Councillor Watkins

**Councillor Watkins**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor again, and thank you Mr Rikowski for your question this evening as well - a very important topic which I know we'll be talking about later in the motion, and no doubt in my annual report later as well. But as my report hopefully, if you've had a chance to read it, and has - will demonstrate this evening is that we have laid out many ways in which the Council has already previously, and is currently tackling in order to try and improve the air quality across Thurrock. And we as the Council, especially myself as well, does take the tackling of air pollution, and trying to improve as much as we can do, very seriously. Just to give you a bit of background information, we do actually have some monitoring air pollution stations in Thurrock. We do that in two different ways, with fixed sites, and we also have some mobile monitoring tubes as well which we put up. The information we receive from the monitoring is imperative in us coming up with both strategies to tackle the air pollution, so that any strategy which we put in place actually has a starting base for us to compare against at the end of that test or within that test to see whether the improvements are being made. There was a previous – there was a strategy which was produced by this administration back in 2017, which using the data collected from the monitoring has multiple strategies already in place. Some of the work that has been carried out from that strategy, just to give you some background, is we have introduced new weight restrictions for HGV movement management across the borough, as they're quite high in producing toxic pollution, so those schemes are in place and are currently being used. I know Councillor Maney with his annual report this evening has got reference within that around school travel plans, so those are in use by a multitude of schools, but there are still some school's out there which would be very grateful in taking them up, which can also play a part in reducing air pollution. The new A13 east-facing slips which will be installed, we've mentioned previously and it's in my annual report, will be dealing with severe congestion that's built up within that particular area to help relieve that. The A13 widening project equally is to try and help traffic move freer and reduce congestion. We are also going to be introducing some further electric car charging points, which the Leader is currently working with myself to hopefully promote more of an electric vehicle take-up use. And also equally through the Local Plan which will play a large role. We're both pushing and promoting and making sure there's a more holistic approach taken with

climate change in mind. And also in the building we're currently sitting in as well, as part of the Grays regeneration and also leading from the front, we will also be improving the green, the cleanliness and air quality which this council produces, which will be a BREEAM outstanding building as well. There is more but I've gone on enough, and I could go on for longer, but equally importantly as I announced to Cllr Fish's question a few months ago, we have re-opened up the strategy. We're looking at ways in which we can improve that. We are having a cross-departmental look into this, taking into the data as well from Public Health to ensure that any of the strategies that we put in place also – will have an impact and improve the environment, but equally have an impact and improving people's lives as well.

### **Mayor**

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

### **Mr Rikowski**

Yes, the UK Parliament and over half of the boroughs have declared a climate emergency, as a response to escalating climate change and loss of bio-diversity. Will Thurrock declare an emergency and act upon that declaration?

### **Mayor**

Councillor Watkins.

### **Councillor Watkins**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. Thank you Mr Rikowski for your supplementary. As you may have seen from the amendments this evening, no I will not be supporting a climate emergency. The reason being for that is because I think it's quite well clear that the UK government is the first, I believe, in the world, at least in Europe to actually enshrine in law a commitment to have net zero emissions by 2050. We're doing substantially more as a UK government, and that's the UK as a whole not just the government, but the people themselves, than any other of our neighbouring boroughs – neighbouring nations should I say, both here and across the world as well. So I personally believe, that in my point of view, our resource could be spent actually improving the air quality and we're doing something right here in Thurrock, which is exactly what we are doing with a commitment that we will become climate – well carbon free as soon as we physically can. As soon as technology growth permits, and obviously as soon as policies, both from a UK government point of view, and also what we're doing locally come into play. But as I say, I do stress equally that I won't commit and say that I will support the climate emergency terminology. We are as a borough taking improving the climate seriously.

### **Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Watkins. We now move onto question six. Mrs Sisterson, would you please read out your question to Councillor Coxshall as set out on page thirty-three of the agenda.

**Mrs Sisterson**

Yes, it's related to the others really. Please can Councillors tell residents how the damage caused with the widening of the A13 is to be compensated for in terms of the carbon capture lost with the destruction of the trees?

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall.

**Councillor Coxshall**

Thank you. The trees that you are talking about were removed to facilitate the road widening construction of the new bridges which obviously reduces massive congestion we've had to suffer for many years there. And in fact one of my first questions to Council, to Councillor Rice when he was Highways, when are we going to sort the A13 out to get rid of this congestion in Stanford, so I'm glad it's moving forward. But on completion of the trees will be planted in a suitable locations where the widening is done, where they were removed during the clearance. So we are actually going to get out trees back in the long-term. Hopefully by the end of next year the trees will be back again after the road widening. We take seriously the benefit of trees on the environment, and like you've heard previously with Councillor Watkins, in the previous question. So Cabinet have approved a new Tree Strategy, I repeat again, in February 2019 this year, that every tree removed from public land will be replaced, and the aim, well I would like to aim, to actually increase that through the Local Plan process again. We need to think about how we use spaces to increase the amount of trees here and protect our woods, particularly Belhus woods as the areas there are great woodlands, which will actually need to be protected more than what we are. I hope tonight when you see the Local Plan coming through that will be part of it. It's not just about the development which yes we've looked into, but we've got to think about the tree planting, the woodlands, the extra green spaces here, not just green and a large chunk of meadows. We need to think about how we develop these great woodlands. Belhus woods I've mentioned previously is now, because it's very old woodlands, these historic woodlands need protecting, need looking after and that's part of the duty of this council.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Coxshall. Mrs Sisterson do you have a second question?

**Mrs Sisterson**

Yeah – just quickly, I'd like to take issue when you say the widening of the

A13 will improve the road traffic. Road widening's tend to increase traffic, because more roads you get more traffic, so I'll just take issue with that. About the trees, I had an answer to a question about the number of trees felled and the number of trees planted since 2015. In that four year period we've had 299 trees felled apparently, and including an extra year since 2014, we've only had 155 planted. So I'd like some assurances that that shortfall is going to be met in the future, so those ones we've lost in the past will be replaced. And also I'm concerned about the loss of the wildlife habitat, for example in Aveley where I live we're having a big, new distribution centre put on the Purfleet Road and, at the moment, that's shrub land and it's going to be full of wildlife. There's going to be rabbits, foxes, all sorts of things living there, so my big concern is the loss of that habitat, because it's not just other countries in the world that are destroying their wild habitat, we're doing it here in Thurrock too, so that's my issue.

## **Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall

## **Councillor Coxshall**

Yes, I agree with you and that's why I mentioned Belhus Woods because it's obviously close to Aveley, it's really important. It's a great habitat that's undiscovered really and what we really need to do is improve that. I take issue about the road, when the Dartford Crossing – I take issue about the traffic. When the Dartford Crossing was congested, and the power station then had people coming down there down Bricks Lane with their emissions, they actually found out that only happened when there was congestion of the Dartford Crossing. So when cars are stopped, slow in traffic, that causes it, and that's what was happening around Stanford junction. It took you half hour to go through Stanford through there. If we can get it free-flowing, cars and traffic can reduce emissions. I take your point that the more you build it, the more they'll come. I think we need – we do need a holistic approach on that and how we deliver that, and I think we're fully aware of that. But we do need to deliver the congestion and next year we will deliver a more congestion free A13 as we go forward. The tree-planting, I'm not the Cabinet Member for environment, but what I do like – I can point out, and I think you've seen, that Councillor Redsell, Councillor Maney, Councillor Potheary, always plant trees and we're trying to do that. One of my first things when I moved here many years ago, I walked down and I saw avenues without trees. Now an avenue, as far as I can see, should have a tree that's why it's called an avenue not a road. We've got put back the trees and that's really important. I understand it demolishes car parks – the pavement, but it is important to our communities and it is nice to see the trees and avenues. It's nice to see trees. We do need to do that and during our building processes, to move onto your last point, about building and how we go through construction. Building – construction companies have a duty to make sure that habitat, regardless if it was greenfield beforehand or brownfield, because habitat changes immediately on a brownfield. We must continue to have a duty to protect the wildlife on them, and if you see over and over again, I'm quite proud to see

that – before they have to do cultural surveys, surveys on every bit of land. And I'm sure Ponds Farm construction, and I will take it back and speak to the Cabinet – to the relevant people tomorrow morning to make sure there is a thing – a duty on that Ponds Farm development that they do have to look after the habitat and transfer the animals that were there before they started construction. I'm sure that will have been part of the provisions of the planning application.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Coxshall.

## **Item 15 – Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 6 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 Pothecary to Councillor Gledhill**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on joint working between the Council and other agencies to ensure we are working to prevent those at risk of being drawn into gang activity or taking appropriate enforcement action against gang members?

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**

Thank you very much Mr Mayor. So I haven't actually had the full opportunity to congratulate Councillor Pothecary on the upcoming birth of her child and I'm sure it gives us some comfort to know 100% of the early years centre's in her ward are rated 'outstanding' and we're building a thousand new school places. And it is my personal pledge to your unborn child that this administration will stay in power for as long as humanly possible to give your child the best start in life. Mr Mayor, we're doing a number of things to work with partner agencies, we have – we built the Youth Offending Service that was cut under the previous administration, establishing brand new gang functions very specifically within the service. As you know our reoffending rates amongst young people is lower than the national average, with a now expanded team to raise capacity. Our youth offending service is doing far more work interacting with schools, and you'll see this year the Annual Public Health report is going to be dedicated to the issues of vulnerability. So how can we bring our public health services, such as mental health together with schools and together with the Youth Offending Service to provide that holistic support. In addition to that, we've provided over £1billion of joint working with the police to go after youth gangs. Having served well over a dozen injunctions we have virtually crippled a youth gang in this borough and we have substantially more work – more joint working with the police, with special operations due to come forward in the very near future.

**Mayor**

Thank you. Councillor Pothecary, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

**Councillor Pothecary**

Yes please Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Halden, and thank you for your good wishes I think. In January, I asked Councillor Gledhill what he was doing to work with the Home Office to co-ordinate with other areas about resettling gang members in Thurrock. And I guess my question is what has Thurrock Council been doing since January on this specific issue?

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well first of all it's important to view this in a context. You know Thurrock's not an island in itself, we have to work in a broader relationship with Youth Justice Board to ensure that people who are settled either inside Thurrock or very near to Thurrock are properly monitored. We've secured over £140,000 from the Essex Vulnerability Unit to aid this work. We are doing additional work to ensure that if gang members are resettled here, or if people, more critically who could be susceptible to being drawn into a gang are settled here, we have the right resources in place. I've already made the announcement that we intend to bring forward an exciting plan to bring our inspiring youth services, together with the youth offending service, along with out mental health services, to ensure that we're doing proactive outreach to the type of young people who we know are at risk of being groomed by gangs. In addition to that, at the last Head-teachers Briefing we rolled out a new protocol with the Youth Offending Service regarding the existing powers that schools have for stop and search in schools, in relation to gang-related activity. And what the correct pathway is, so both Thurrock Council and the police can intervene with appropriate sanctions against potential gang members. But, also so we can intervene to ensure that the presence is in the classroom, in the corridors, and in the playground to ensure that those who may be susceptible to this type of grooming are appropriately supported to give far better life chances than they otherwise would have had.

**Mayor**

Councillor Potheary, do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

**Councillor Potheary**

Thank you Mr Mayor and thank you for your response, I do appreciate Councillor Halden that you may not have – that you may not be fully sort of over this brief. All of what you've talked about sounds very positive in dealing with one particular aspect of this. The aspect that I'm quite interested in is the – what occurred - what was shared in the Vice article in summer 2018, where the specific issue was identified, but we just didn't know, and other agencies didn't know that members of gangs were being resettled as part of a kind of rehabilitation programme in Thurrock. And we had, you know, people from rival gangs on our streets, obviously probably not actually far enough away

sometimes from the original gangs. We've got fairly good transport links into London etc. So the issues seem to be that the agencies just didn't know that they were here and weren't able to either mediate that process or give them the support and put in safeguarding arrangements where needed. Can I ask what we are doing about that specific issue?

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Well first of all I would say that obviously it wouldn't be genuine for me to say that co-ordination between agencies isn't a problem, of course it is. It's a very complex issue. What I'm trying to be very conscious of is that I don't want Councillor Pothecary to inadvertently draw me into certain specifics because that wouldn't actually be helpful for the outcome she's trying to achieve. The example I would draw is, prior to us serving over a dozen injunctions against youth gangs in the borough, we were asked questions month after month after month by opposition Councillors in regards to what we were doing. And at times it seemed that our answers were actually quite lightweight. In reality, there is certain information that we would rather not have in the public realm, but in terms of the very specific you're asking about the relocation, it is a problem co-ordinating between different agencies. I can assure you that in regards to us giving out and announcing over a dozen youth injunctions, there is a reason that we have a massively expanded Youth Offending Service, there's a reason we have joint resources in place with Essex Police. Work is happening behind the scenes, if she would like a more comprehensive briefing I'm more than happy to meet with her privately. I'm not willing to go into certain specifics that would be counter-productive.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Halden. We now move onto question two. Councillor Pothecary would you please read out your question as set out on page 123 of the agenda.

**2. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Gledhill**

When will Police Officers funded by Thurrock Council start walking the beat in Thurrock?

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**



Thank you Mr Mayor. Obviously we have dramatically more police officers on the beat now, we are seeing those far more frequently, with additional investment from the council paying for more delegated police officers we are seeing them more on the beat more regularly. Again though I would draw Councillor Potheary to the previous answer that I have given, there is a reason that we have a reoffending rate in Thurrock of young people 10% lower than the national average. There is a reason we have virtually crippled youth gang in this borough that is because there are certain issues that are tackled behind closed doors between partners agencies with the council to the police, there are certain issues that aren't always dealt with by the bobby walking around the town centre. There are issues of gang related activities; there are issues of domestic violence. These are the types of issues that frankly are dealt with in the shadows so yes we do have more bobbies on the beat than we did before, we are investing heavily with the police crime commissioner, this council and the government equally there is a huge amount of activity that you would not necessarily see happen on the streets but if you have a look at some of the figures, driven down some of those horrendous crimes like gang and domestic violence that is where some of the core activities are taking place.

**Mayor**

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

**Councillor Potheary**

Yes please. Thank you Councillor Halden. I do again appreciate that you are standing in tonight and that this might not be your particular area. I was actually hoping that you were going to give me a really straight forward answer of next month. That was what I was looking for. There was a lot of faff and I take your point about certain things that don't make the public domain etc, but you know, the council funding of those officers services was very much trumpeted, we had countless press releases there had been a lot of lovely photos of Councillor Gledhill in the High Street surrounded by people in uniforms. We have all of that and this is which something that residents thought was a very firm promise and to be honest I thought this was a firm promise, yet they are not there yet and I would really love to know when they are going to be there. Please.

**Mayor**

Councillor Halden

**Councillor Halden**

Thank you Mr Mister. I would just like to say to Councillor Potheary first of all that after nine and half years as a councillor, three and half years in the cabinet I am not entirely sure when I misled Councillor Potheary by making her believe that I give straightforward answers. But if you really want a straight forward answer let me give her one. We have got brand new town centre

police teams in Grays, in Ockendon, in Stanford and now with thanks to the investment of Thurrock Council there will be brand new dedicated officers for Tilbury and Purfleet in January next year. 3218 police officers in total in Essex by 2020 this council has put more officers on the streets than we committed to in our 2018 election and now additional 20,000 coming national from the Prime Minister. Is that straightforward enough for you?

### **Mayor**

Councillor Potheary do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

### **Councillor Potheary**

Again in slight capacity in that are those additional officers, we have got the town centre funding police teams which have come out from Essex police and I am very very specifically interested in the money committed from Thurrock Council so I would just like some clarity around that. Are those officers arriving in January 2020, a year after they were announced, are they actually the ones that are being paid for by the council and secondly how much say, it would be really useful for councillors if we can understand how this scheme is going to work for example how much say do we have where those officers go, can they be drawn into Essex at any time. Do we get impact, can we influence and shape where they go into our communities.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Halden

### **Councillor Halden**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Councillor Potheary is right about one thing yes it did take a little bit of time. Obviously we wanted to invest more into policing which when we took over the council we had a slight matter of the books we had to deal with by the last administration and of course when you put police on the street it is a point of fact you do have to train them, so yes it does take a little bit of time to roll them out. But lets me clear the money that Thurrock Council is committing is over and above the previous commitment they are new officers they are additional officers. In terms of the operational nature that you are requesting well like I said there is a degree to which we have partnership action, the £1 million we put in place working with the police to tackling youth gangs that is a good example of some of the influence. And it's because of the financial strength of this administration is why we have the financial clout to wield some of that work with the police and your specific question about can officers be drafted into Essex well the officers that we paid for are Thurrock officers but there are certain instances that you will see police officers drafted out of this borough, instances like that include when the police have to on mass attend Westminster to protect the general public from extinction rebellion protests when they have to prevent extinction protesters from committing crimes, vandalising public buildings those are the type of incidences when you will see police forces allocated. So we are investing in

the police force in Thurrock we are putting more police on the street and I welcome your support in making sure that the police stay here and don't have to go to deal with the type of lunatic protests we have seen recently.

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

### **1. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall**

With the announced £25 million Government investment in Tilbury, what are the real improvements that residents can expect to be delivered to make Tilbury become a more desirable place for people to live and work?

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall.

#### **Councillor Coxshall**

Thank you for this great question. It is really important to actually talk about how this announcement came about. We are obviously it was a great announcement made by the Conservative Government after us today there has not been enough lobbying of Government money from the leader of the third party that I continuously mentioned that we are being funded. This is obviously funding again another £25 million after the lobbying from this council and the MP the local MP to make sure we benefit and stand up for Tilbury and that Tilbury will benefit from this £25 million for town funding. We must remember this is on top of the injection of other town funding money into Grays which is up to £47.5 million we are going to be spending, spending in Grays town fund and the high street fund. There are a lot of confusion over the two different funds as they got announcements very closely together over the summer. So this is fantastic, we are in the early stages of developing, deciding what to do with these plans and we are waiting for a prospectus from the government what the scheme can include. But what I would say is that we are looking to engage with a wider area as possible in the Tilbury area to engage with partners, residents, ward colleagues around what councillors and businesses around there want. There have been some great plans; what we have got is this great opportunities over the next couple of months to think about what we would like around the delivery of these town centres funding especially not just Tilbury and in Grays as well. What we can do the Council has developed is fantastic up to £50 million that allocated, if we can come up with a good bid, we could get that money. We have got to come up with some good suggestions that are innovative and what we can do. I have got some ideas. I really like them. Councillor Redsell has many times mentioned about how we deliver and how we use the river and how we get connectivity. There is a river there. There are two bids for the river in Grays and how we use them and how we can deliver river buses, seek the fantastic opportunities that I can see in London that you can get from Greenwich into Westminster very easily using the river bus and accept that the river buses will come here at night and

park up in Tilbury and then go off to London, why are they going off. I know Gravesend are doing that but we have an opportunity there but that is my suggestion for some of it but what we need to do is engage everyone here, it is really open, the officers are here, there are a few meetings being tried to be arranged with businesses to see what is available in Tilbury and what we can do with that. This is an opportunity and I would say its once in a life time and what we don't want to do with it is what happened many years ago when I first spoke to the people of Tilbury what happened to that millions of millions of pounds that came in the early 90s, late 90s. It just disappeared we didn't know where it went. Well I am sure, I haven't looked, it was spent and it's just residents not seeing it. But this is a large sum of money and we actually do need to we don't want to give out this is what we are going to spend money on what I want to do is what does Tilbury want and how we move forward with that. That is what we want. What does Grays need and hat does Grays want so it doesn't look top down like that we were doing in the process is how we engage is really critical to that so that the people of the wider community actually see the benefit of nearly £50 million of the town funding that Thurrock has got.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Okunade, do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

### **Councillor Okunade**

Yes, thank you Councillor Coxshall. It is very good that you admit that you do not know what you are going to spend the money on it is very (*unclear due to coughing and talking*). It seems to me that there is some confusion about the £25 million, the real reason for this I can tell you is that the original announcement in July of this year from the Government they said that 100 England towns including Tilbury were named in the £3.6 million town fund money to get improved transport and brought back connectivity. Is it not misleading, misleading, that we have stuff in the papers, you know that, that, yes I can wave it yes, that Tilbury you are going to make lives of individuals people better in Tilbury, whereas the money is for transport and connectivity so I want to ask you is this not misleading to the community.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall

### **Councillor Coxshall**

No, it is actually £25 million. What this is, let's be brutally honest the towns centre fund was invented as a Brexit dividend if you want to call that. What happens is that there was 100 towns across this vast country that have been left behind and Tilbury was a left behind town over many, many years. This administration acknowledges that Tilbury needs some love. Tilbury is one of the 100 towns that had been vastly left behind across the country. You look at the towns and you see how interesting where they are and you look at them

and they are left behind towns. The full prospectus, you haven't seen it that is just the starting thing, that's not the full prospectus we are still waiting for the full prospectus as I said in my answer so I think you are a bit presumptuous to think this is all we can do. We need to think about we can do and come up with initiative ways of using that money and that is what I said. Initiative ways of using up money and wait for the full prospectus. Think your being too quick and you keep on waving that thing this conservative administration is going to give some love to Tilbury. And what I would really like to say, to try and make my point is that my advice is that anyone in Tilbury at any upcoming election, any upcoming elections in the next few months we make sure don't put this £25 million at risk, so vote conservative.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Okunade do you have a second supplementary question.

### **Councillor Okunade**

Yes please, thank you. Well I was brought up not to tell lies. It is a false hope you are giving Tilbury residents, don't make a fool of them there are a lot of issues in Tilbury. I mean we are talking about the result of the air pollution there and we are talking about the transport, making transport better you respect people to ... yes sorry I am not supposed to be making a statement. I just want to ask you is it possible for you to use the money earmarked for something else to get our people lives in Tilbury like do other things like get create jobs for them or do whatever people of Tilbury want. What do you think is the top most priority of Tilbury people is to think bringing more traffic into the town.

### **Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall

### **Councillor Coxshall**

It is an initiative way of using this money we have the prospectus and then let's see what happens. But what I can say is that clearly if you don't want that £25 million around that is madness. The ward councillor is not welcoming this £25 million, it's crazy, I can't believe it, its phenomenon (*members jeering and then the Mayor ends the response*)

## **2. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson**

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me why it has taken over 8 months to try and fix the vehicle gate to the Tilbury high rise car park?

*Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.*

**3. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson**

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how long residents should expect to wait for repair jobs to lifts within flats?

*Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.*

**4. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Johnson**

Are residents on Seabrooke Rise Estate entitled to the same standard of caretaking as other similar areas of the borough?

*Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.*

**5. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Huelin**

Can the Portfolio Holder please update the chamber on the results of the Thameside Theatre review?

*Councillor Worrall requested a written response.*

**6. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Maney**

Would the Portfolio Holder confirm that the proposed yellow lines which are due to be painted on the roads in Homesteads will be delayed until the full impact on the parking displacement it will cause is assessed and the resulting problems are remedied?

*Question resubmitted to 27 November 2019 Council.*

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Extraordinary Council held on 27 November 2019 at 7.00 pm

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**Present:** Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Gary Collins, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby (*arrived 7.02pm*), Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day and Lynn Worrall

**Apologies:** Councillors Colin Churchman, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Sue MacPherson, Ben Maney, Bukky Okunade, Joycelyn Redsell and Aaron Watkins

**In attendance:** Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive  
Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property  
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation  
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer  
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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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.

### **78. Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

### **79. Senior Management Appointments**

The Leader introduced the report and sought the approval from Council to appoint two senior appointments. Following a robust and thorough process the General Services Committee had recommended that Andy Millard be appointed as the Director of Place and Ian Hunt as the Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer.

The Leader announced the selection panel for the Corporate Director of Children's Services had not taken place with the advert going back out in

January to look to appoint to this role. With that recommendation 1.3 would be removed.

Members were also sought to approve the interim arrangements for the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the interim Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer until the permanent appointees had commenced their roles.

Councillor Potheary thanked Members, Officers and the Stakeholder Panel for their time and advice and stated that it was disappointing that the Corporate Director of Children's Services appointment had not been filled. Councillor Potheary stated the recruitment process had been robust and had confidence in senior managers to take this recommendation forward.

Councillor Massey echoed the comments made by Councillor Potheary and looked forward to meeting the new Officers in the New Year.

Councillor Gledhill also echoed the comments made by Councillor Potheary and stated the Stakeholder Panel had played a valuable part in the process and this would be taken forward for the Corporate Director Children's Services appointment.

The Mayor called a vote on recommendations 1.1, 1.2 and 1.4 to which the Members voted unanimously in favour.

**RESOLVED That Council:**

- 1. Approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution the appointment of Andy Millard as permanent Director of Place.**
- 2. Approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution the appointment of Ian Hunt as permanent Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer.**
- 3. Approved the extension to the interim arrangements for the Corporate Director Children's Services and the Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer until the permanent candidates commence employment with the Council.**

The Mayor thanked Members and wished them the best of seasons.

**The meeting finished at 7.10pm**

Approved as a true and correct record



**CHAIR**

**DATE**

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact  
Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)**

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## QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were 2 questions from members of the public.

### **1 From Mr Perrin to Councillor Coxshall**

When the new Council Office is built, will the Council ensure that the public gallery in the Council Chamber is sited so that members of the public are facing Councillors?

### **2. From Mr Hayes to Councillor Johnson**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing tell me what provisions Thurrock has in place for homeless people?

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## Petitions Update Report

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Presented (by)	Responsible Officer	Status
529	Council to consider replacing the grass area in Heathview Gardens with hard standing for parking.	18 September 2019	Cllr Redsell  Presented at Council	Andy Millard	This request has been sent to the Transport Development team so that it can be assessed and considered within the Kerb-it programme. A capital funding bid is currently being prepared in order to identify the additional funds required to assess and implement Kerb-it requests over the next 2 years. If this funding bid is successful all requests will be assessed and prioritised for implementation with the available funds. If Heathview Gardens is identified as a priority residents will be notified and engaged through a statutory consultation process.
530	Strongly against the implementation of parking permit within SS17 until a suitable solution is found we also ask Thurrock Council to abandon this project which is not in the best interest of the community.	18 September 2019	Cllr Byrne  Presented at Council	Julie Rogers	The petition has been reviewed by the service and the concerns raised have been carefully considered. These schemes are kept review following their implementation to ensure they are meeting the needs of local communities. In accordance with normal procedure following receipt of a petition against a Parking Permit Area, a Delegated Decision Report (DDR) has been progressed for the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to consider a number of recommendations for decision. Local residents and businesses will be kept informed and updated.
531	Wild flower borders for Thurrock - Request the council implement wild flower borders in SS17 along the Manorway and other areas of Thurrock. To improve the look of the area and provide habitats for wildlife. This	1 October 2019	Karen Raja  Presented On-Line	Julie Rogers	The Environment and Highways Department are tabling a Public Land Strategy to Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview & Scrutiny in January 2020. One of the key recommendations and methods of delivery will be the sowing of wildflowers / meadow planting in appropriate locations, including consideration of the suggested area, The Manorway. The use of wildflower and meadow planting will increase biodiversity and habitats, improve presentation, while reducing

## Petitions Update Report

	will also save the Council on maintenance costs.				maintenance and allowing resources to be targeted in other areas enhancing the overall presentation of the borough.
533	20mph limit zone outside East Tilbury Schools	10 October 2019	Cllr Massey Presented On-Line	Andy Millard	This would be covered under the Safer Routes to School programme; a 5 year programme to treat every school in the borough. At present, this school is not identified as a priority on the list. For reference, the priority list is based on Personal Injury Accidents (PIA) data from the Police, Travel Plan and officer site evaluations. However, site visits have identified that 20mph speed limits would have a limited impact on road safety for children in this area, considering that vehicle speeds on Gloucester avenue is relatively slow and Princess Margaret Road is located away from the school.
534	We the residents of Woodside note that the plans for the 300 pupil special needs school on the existing Tree Top site. Whilst we support the new school we are concerned about the traffic and air pollution this will cause in the area. We therefore ask for the construction of a new access road to the schools in order that existing and additional traffic be averted away from Woodside.	23 October 2019	Cllr Redsell Presented at Council	Andy Millard	A feasibility study has been commissioned for the possibility of alternative access arrangements to the school, made directly from the A1013 Stanford Road. This report was completed in November 2019 and has been used to inform the ongoing consideration of funding options including the Council's capital programme.

<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 11</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Local Council Tax Scheme</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Shane Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Transformation	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director Finance	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
<b>This report is</b> Public	

## Executive Summary

Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) helps support council taxpayers who have a low income by providing a reduction in the actual amount in Council Tax payable.

On 1 April 2013, LCTS replaced the national Council Tax Benefit Scheme (CTB). Unlike CTB, which was wholly funded by Central Government and administered by local authorities, for LCTS each council was required to design and implement its own scheme against a backdrop of 10% reduction in central funding.

In order to keep the process as simple and efficient as possible Thurrock and the majority of other authorities made the decision to keep the Local Scheme aligned as closely as possible to Housing Benefit Legislation, this was to be reconsidered once Universal Credit had been fully rolled out.

Initially, Universal Credit was to be fully implemented for all new and existing Working Age claimants by 2017, however this has now been extended nationally and the Government's latest forecast suggests the project will not complete before 2023. In view of this, new Housing Benefit legislation is now forming part of the Welfare Reform agenda with this benefit continuing until at least 2023.

The Council is, however, required to consider its scheme annually. The current LCTS scheme was implemented on the 1 April 2017 following consultation and was subsequently agreed for the 2019/20 financial year with no changes.

This report provides details of Thurrock's scheme which is currently considered to be fit for purpose. There are therefore no proposals to amend the scheme for 2020/21, however it is proposed a full review is undertaken within 2020/21 and on receipt of clarity regarding the future of Universal Credit.

## **1. Recommendations:**

### **1.1 That Council agree to maintain the existing scheme for 2020/21.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

2.1 The design of each LCTS scheme must be finalised by the 11th March 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. With regards to current caseload, reverting to the national scheme would result in an additional cost to Thurrock of circa £1m per annum.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

## **3. Analysis/ assessment of current scheme**

### **3.1 Overview of existing Scheme**

The existing Scheme contains the following elements:

- To ensure work pays, the first £25 per week of earned income is 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;



- To assist those with families the 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 one calendar month. In order to qualify for this the claimant will need to provide good reason for not claiming earlier;
- There is a full disregard of 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 four weeks.

### 3.2 Administration of the scheme and impact of Universal Credit

The numbers of UC claimants claiming LCTS are being monitored. As at the July 2019 there was a total LCTS case load of 9,740; of this 2,003 claims were for people in receipt of Universal Credit.

Due to the design of UC any related LCTS claims have to be reassessed more frequently. This is due to Universal Credit awards being reassessed on a monthly basis to reflect changes in income, whereas legacy benefits were generally awarded on a fixed term. However this process has now been automated to negate any additional administration.

At this stage the introduction of Universal Credit in the Authority has not made any significant change to the amount of LCTS awarded to claimants.

### 3.3 Accessibility

The application process for LCTS is linked to other national benefits such as Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This means that people who claim these benefits are automatically considered for LCTS and do not need to make a separate application. Where a separate application is required these can be made online. Assistance is available via customer services, community hubs and various other organisations for those who need help in completing a claim.

### 3.4 Cost of Scheme and caseload.

The number of people claiming LCTS continues to reduce, this is attributed to improving employment factors.

Within Thurrock the number of LCTS claimants within the period 1 April 15 to 31 March 19 reduced by 12.7%. This reduction compares favourably to the national average for the same period of 10%.

As a result of the reduction in claimants the cost of the scheme has also fallen from £9m to approximately £8.0m since the 1 April 2013. This has increased the Council Tax Base and reduced the cost of the scheme borne by wider tax payers.

The expenditure for 2019/20 is estimated to be circa £7.9m. The breakdown of current claimants by claimant type as at July 2019 is as follows:

Claimant Type	Number of Claimants	CTS Awarded	Average % of Liability Awarded
Working age - Employed	1281	£751,039	51.93%
Working age - Not Employed	4541	£3,503,493	72.27%
Pension Age	3918	£3,731,741	89.28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9740</b>	<b>£7,986,274</b>	<b>76.25%</b>

The expected cost of the scheme for 2020/21 is proposed at £8.2m this allows for any potential additional cost to the scheme as a result of Council Tax increases or economic downturn.

### 3.5 Affordability and Collection

In the interests of claimants and wider tax payers the scheme needs to balance the overall cost of the scheme against affordability for claimants.

In order to achieve this, in combination with the principle that all working age claimants should contribute something towards their council tax liability, the local scheme remains means tested, and provides support up to a maximum support level of 75%.

The amount each claimant is required to pay is therefore subject to their individual circumstances and is reassessed for any reported changes in circumstances to ensure the level of support remains appropriate. The table below compares the weekly council tax charges and minimum amount (assuming 2 adults in occupation) that Thurrock claimants are required to contribute to their council tax against the average of comparable Essex authorities:

Average of Comparable Essex Authorities (Based on 2 Adults in Occupation)								
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Band Charge	£22.61	£26.38	£30.15	£33.92	£41.45	£48.99	£56.53	£67.83
Working Age - Amount left to pay	<b>£5.01</b>	<b>£5.84</b>	<b>£6.68</b>	<b>£7.51</b>	<b>£12.60</b>	<b>£17.68</b>	<b>£22.77</b>	<b>£30.40</b>

Thurrock - (Based on 2 Adults in Occupation)								
	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Band F	Band G	Band H
Band Charge (Weekly)	£19.91	£23.23	£26.55	£29.87	£36.51	£43.15	£49.78	£59.74
Working Age - Amount left to pay	<b>£4.98</b>	<b>£5.81</b>	<b>£6.64</b>	<b>£7.47</b>	<b>£9.13</b>	<b>£10.79</b>	<b>£12.45</b>	<b>£14.93</b>

Setting the minimum contribution too high would make the scheme unaffordable to claimants and this would lead to a reduction in collection rates.

The design of the current scheme builds in various protections and incentives and supports a high collection rate. For 2018/19 council tax collection rates for those in receipt of LCTS was 96.22%, against an overall collection rate of 98.91%.

Levels of payment default for council tax are therefore broadly comparable between LCTS claimants and those not receiving support. Whilst collection rates for LCTS are not available to compare nationally, overall Thurrock has one of the best collection rates for council tax in England ranking 16<sup>th</sup> of 328 councils measured.

### 3.6 Complaints

There have been no specific complaints recorded regarding the council's scheme in 2018/19.

### 3.7 Additional Support

Alongside the LCTS scheme various other mandatory and discretionary discounts and exemptions are in place to provide assistance and support to specific groups. These include: Care Leavers' exemption to the age of 21 (25 in exceptional circumstances); Severe Mental Health Exemption; and Single Persons Discount. The council also considers its wider discretionary power in exceptional cases to reduce the council tax owed where appropriate.

## 4. Future Considerations

- 4.1 Most authorities continue with a scheme closely linked to the Housing Benefit assessment process however some have implemented schemes designed to simplify the assessment process, such as incorporating a low verification of income requirement. Whilst the benefits of such schemes could eventually lead to administration efficiencies as Universal Credit roll out increases, there is also a potential risk of increased fraud which needs to be carefully considered.

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

- 5.1 The report and recommendations were reviewed by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on 14 January 2020.

## 6. Implications

### 6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**  
**Assistant Director of Finance**

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

## 6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**

**Acting Head of Law, Assistant Director of Law  
and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

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. The bill also enables the Secretary of State to introduce both regulations and guidance relating to local schemes. The Government has included regulations to ensure pensioners will not lose or gain relative to the previous system. The LCTS scheme must be ratified by full Council by the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 at the latest to enable the authority to implement the scheme from 1st April 2020.

## 6.3 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.

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

N/A

## 7. 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 and Revenues and Benefits.

## 8. Appendices to the report

None

### Report Author:

Andy Brittain

Strategic Lead for Revenues and Benefits

<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 12</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Review of Members’ Allowances – Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> N/A	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-key
<b>Report of:</b> Robert Gledhill – Leader of the Council	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Tim Hallam – Assistant Director of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sean Clark – Director of Finance, ICT and Legal Services	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

The Council are presented with the report and recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, following its review of the Scheme of Members Allowances.

The Council is required to “have regard” to the report and recommendations of the Panel which is attached at Appendix 1 and, whilst it must act reasonably, it is not obliged to follow the recommendations that have been made.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Agree all recommendations presented in the Independent Remuneration Panel’s report at Appendix 1 and the subsequent Scheme of Allowances at Appendix 2.**
- 1.2 The Council implements its recommendations from 1 August 2019.**
- 1.3 For officers to investigate and implement alternative IRP arrangements for future years.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The power under which schemes of Members’ Allowances are made is contained in Section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, Section 99 of the Local Government Act 2000 and in the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (“the Regulations”).**

- 2.2 The Regulations impose a duty on local authorities to establish an Independent Panel to provide advice on its scheme of allowances and the amounts to be paid. In April 2005, the Council agreed to establish a Joint Panel with Southend-On-Sea Borough Council, consisting of 5 independent members. Since that time, the Panel has met on five occasions (June 2007, August 2010, June 2011, June 2015 and June 2019).
- 2.3 On 24 and 25 June 2019, the Panel met to undertake a review of the Scheme of Members' Allowances for both Southend and Thurrock councils, in accordance with the law which requires a new scheme to be put in place. The terms of reference for the review are set out as follows:
- (a) The amount of Basic Allowance that should be payable to elected Members and the expenses it should include.
  - (b) The responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.
  - (c) Those Co-optees who should receive a Co-optees' Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance.
  - (d) The duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and as to the amount of this allowance.
  - (e) As to whether Dependants' Carers' Allowance should be payable to Members, and as to the amount of such an allowance.
  - (f) As to whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years, before its application is reviewed.
  - (g) The implementation date for the new Schemes of Members' allowances and as to whether, in the event that the schemes are amended, any such amendments should be backdated to the beginning of the municipal year.

In addition, the Joint Panel was asked to make recommendations on:

- (h) The Civic Allowances and amounts payable.
- (i) The payments made to the statutory post of Independent Persons.
- (j) Any other issues that are brought to the Panel's attention.

- 2.4 In reviewing the Scheme, the Panel had regard to statutory guidance in relation to allowances, previous reports of the Panel and the results of a benchmarking exercise. It also received a number of representations in writing and in person from councillors from both authorities.
- 2.5 The report of the Panel is attached at **Appendix 1** with the associated scheme of allowances at **Appendix 2**.

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

- 3.1 It is for the Council to determine to what extent it wishes to have regard to the recommendations made by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, but it must implement a new Scheme by virtue of the relevant statutory requirements.
- 3.2 If the Council accept the Panel's recommendations Thurrock Council will not see an increase in overall basic allowance payments. In respect of special responsibility allowances the cost of Vice-chairs of scrutiny will decrease by approximately £5,521 (based on 2019-20 figures and all 6 SRAs being claimed) while there would be an increase of £2,300 for the new SRA for Chair of Corporate Parenting.

### **4. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 4.1 All Members were invited to submit written representations to the Panel and all Group Leaders were invited to attend an interview with the Panel on the days they met.
- 4.2 A copy of the final report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel has been sent electronically to Group Leaders for their information.

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

- 5.1 A Scheme of Members' Allowances provides financial support for councillors in undertaking their role and must reinforce the culture of the modern council and address, as far as possible, any disincentives to serving in local politics.

### **6. Implications**

#### **6.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**  
**Assistant Director Finance**

The Financial Implications are contained within the body of the report. The establishment of a new IRP solely for Thurrock would have additional cost implications as current costs are shared with Southend Council. Additional costs would need to be set out when considering the options for future IRPs.

## 6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**  
**Assistant Director of Law and Governance**  
**(acting)**

Whilst there is a duty on the Council, before it makes or amends a scheme, to have regard to the recommendations made in relation to it by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP), it is for the Council to decide, subject to it complying with the usual public law requirements, whether or not it accepts all, some or none of the recommendations made by the Panel. The Council must though make a new Scheme by virtue of the relevant statutory requirements.

The Council is able to establish a 'replacement' IRP to solely consider Thurrock's allowances under the Local Government Act 2000 (Section 99)(amending section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) and more specifically under the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (Regulation 20), which requires a minimum of 3 panel members.

## 6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project**  
**Monitoring Officer**

The Panel have been guided by the overarching principle that it should seek to minimise barriers to public service to enable a wide range of individuals to become a Councillor without incurring undue personal financial cost. This principle is maintained through the recommendations referred in section 1 of this report.

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

None

## 7. 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):

- The papers considered are referred to in the report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel.

## 8. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel



- Appendix 2 – Revised Scheme of Allowances 2019-2023

**Report Author:**

Matthew Boulter

Democratic & Governance Services Manager

Legal Services

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**A Joint Review of**  
**Members' Allowances for**  
**Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**  
**&**  
**Thurrock Council**

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**A Report by the**  
**Joint Independent Remuneration Panel**

Mr Colin Sivell (Chairman)	Joint Southend /Thurrock Councils Appointee
Mr R. Ferris	Thurrock Council Appointee
Mr N. Gayner BEM JP	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Appointee
Mr W. Robb	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Appointee
Mr Ray Smallcombe	Thurrock Council Appointee

July 2019

## **A JOINT REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES**

**For**

**Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

**AND**

**Thurrock Council**

### **A Report by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel**

**July 2019**

#### **Introduction: The Regulatory Context**

1. This report is a synopsis of the proceedings and recommendations made by the statutory Joint Independent Remuneration Panel appointed by Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Borough Councils to provide advice to each Council on its current Members' Allowances scheme.
2. The Panel was convened under *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 1021)* (the 2003 Regulations). These regulations, which arise out of the relevant provisions in the *Local Government Act 2000*, require all local authorities to maintain an independent remuneration panel (also known as an IRP or Panel) to review and provide advice to Councils on Members' allowances.<sup>1</sup> This is in the context whereby elected Members are able to determine their own levels of remuneration, and much of the scope and levels of other allowances/reimbursements payable under the 2003 Regulations
3. All Councils are required to convene their Panel and seek its advice before they make any changes or amendments to their members' allowances scheme and they must 'pay regard' to the Panel's recommendations before setting a new or amended members' allowances scheme.
4. In particular, the Panel has been reconvened under the *2003 Regulations [10. (50)]*, which states:

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<sup>1</sup> Paragraph 20 (1) (b) also provides for two or more Councils to have a joint Panel as in this case.

Where an authority has regard to an index for the purpose of annual adjustment of allowances it must not rely on that index for longer than a period of four years before seeking a further recommendation from the independent remuneration panel established in respect of that authority on the application of an index to its scheme.

5. This mechanism is utilised to oblige all Councils to reconvene their Panel, usually at least once every four years, as a means of ensuring a degree of public accountability vis-à-vis their members' allowances schemes. It is under this requirement that the Joint Panel has undertaken this joint review of members' allowances for Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Borough Councils.

### **The Joint Panel**

6. Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Borough Councils reconvened their joint independent remuneration Panel consisting of the following members:

- Mr Colin Sivell (Chairman) Southend/Thurrock Borough Council Appointee
- Mr R. Ferris Thurrock Council Appointee
- Mr N. Gayner BEM JP Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Appointee
- Mr W. Robb Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Appointee
- Mr R. Smallcombe Thurrock Council Appointee

7. The Review was supported and serviced throughout by the following Officers:

- Colin Gamble Head of Democratic Services  
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
- Matthew Boulter Democratic Services Manager,  
Thurrock Council

8. The Panel was also supported by Declan Hall (PhD), a former lecturer at the Institute of Local Government, The University of Birmingham and currently an independent consultant specialising in Members' Allowances.

### **Terms of Reference**

9. In accordance with the 2003 Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations (21. 1) and the 2006 Statutory Guidance on Regulation for Local Authority Allowances (61) the Joint Panel was asked to produce a report to make recommendations on the following:

- (a) The amount of Basic Allowance that should be payable to elected Members and the expenses it should include
  - (b) The responsibilities or duties which should lead to the payment of a Special Responsibility Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance
  - (c) Those Co-optees who should receive a Co-optees' Allowance and as to the amount of such an allowance
  - (d) The duties for which a travelling and subsistence allowance can be paid and as to the amount of this allowance
  - (e) As to whether Dependants' Carers' Allowance should be payable to Members, and as to the amount of such an allowance
  - (f) As to whether adjustments to the level of allowances may be determined according to an index and if so which index and how long that index should apply, subject to a maximum of four years, before its application is reviewed;
  - (g) The implementation date for the new Schemes of Members' allowances and as to whether, in the event that the schemes are amended, any such amendments should be backdated to the beginning of the municipal year.
10. In addition, the Joint Panel was asked to make recommendations on:
- (h) The Civic Allowances and amounts payable
  - (i) The payments made to the statutory post of Independent Persons
  - (j) Any other issues that are brought to the Panel's attention

### **The Joint Panel's Approach and Evidence Reviewed**

11. The Joint Panel met at the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Civic Centre on the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 to hear and consider oral and written evidence from Members. To ensure that no Member was denied a voice in the review process the Joint Panel invited all the Group Leaders from each Council and representatives of non-aligned Members to interviews and all Members of both Councils were also invited to make written submissions. Relevant Officers were also invited to meet with the Joint Panel to provide factual briefings on any constitutional and governance changes since the last review in 2015.
12. The Joint Panel also reviewed further written information pertinent to the review, such as current allowances schemes from both Councils, committee terms of reference, meetings schedules, benchmarking data, statutory guidance, etc.
13. For details of whom the Panel met and full range of information reviewed see:
  - [Appendix 1](#) for a list of the full range of evidence considered by the Joint Panel
  - [Appendix 2](#) for Members and Officers who met with the Joint Panel
  - [Appendix 3](#) for Members who made written submissions to the Joint Panel

## **Principles and Observations**

### **Reducing Barriers and Providing Recompense**

14. The Joint Panel continues to be guided by the overarching principle that underpinned its previous joint reviews; namely, that it should seek to minimise barriers to public service to enable a wide a range of people to become a Councillor without incurring undue personal financial cost. Consequently, the allowances should provide a degree of recompense for time spent and responsibility carried by Members.
15. On the other hand, the Panel recognises that an element of Members' input should be voluntary, given freely as a public service so that Members do not stand for and remain on either council primarily for financial reasons.

### **Transparency**

16. The Joint Panel has always tried to ensure that the allowances schemes should be transparent so to understand how and why the allowances are being paid and for the schemes to be simple to operate. This transparency principle has led the Joint Panel to take a consistent approach in how it has arrived at its recommendations so as both elected Members and the public understand the logic of the allowances payable.

### **Alignment of Allowances**

17. In the interest of equity, the Joint Panel remains convinced that the allowances payable for the equivalent role in each council should be the same. No evidence was received to suggest there should not be equity across the board. As such, the Panel notes there are some marginal discrepancies in the levels payable for the same role and different type of allowance, arising out of different implementation dates of the main index. The Panel has decided that there is no case for these marginal differences and in its recommendations has equalised them. The Joint Panel does accept however that there are a couple of borough-specific roles that need addressing in their specific context.

### **Recognising Current Economic Context and the Role of the Panel**

18. While there was some evidence indicating that some of the allowances might merit a meaningful revision such evidence was by no means substantial. Overall, the evidence received by the Joint Panel confirmed that the current schemes of both Councils were still fit for purpose. Moreover, the weight of the representations received by the Joint Panel indicated that general increases in allowances or

numerous additional remunerated posts could not be justified. Likewise, as the means by which the Councils are publically held to account vis-à-vis their allowances the Joint Panel has to be cognisant of the broader economic context.

19. Consequently, the role of the Joint Panel during this review has been to address any anomalies arising due to legislative and structural changes over the last four years. The Panel has sought to correct any incongruities that are apparent rather than undertake a resetting of the whole allowances scheme.

## The Joint Panel's Recommendations - The Basic Allowance

### Recalibrating the Basic Allowance

20. The Panel, in line with the 2003 Statutory Guidance (paragraphs 67-69) revisited the original variables utilised in arriving at the Basic Allowance but updated those variables for the most recent values available.
21. The 3 variables and their respective values are as follows:
  - **Input:** 130 days per year
  - **Public Service Discount:** 33%
  - **Rate of Remuneration:** £94 per day
22. The expected minimum annual input of 130 days was arrived at by taking the most recent figures from the 2018 Councillors Census (LGA) which shows that 59.3 per cent of English Councillors put in up to 20 hours per week (see Table 4 page 14) The 2018 Councillors Consensus also shows that 53.5 per cent of English Councillors hold at least one position of responsibility (Table 2 page 14). As not all Councillors who hold positions of responsibility are paid an SRA it is reasonable to assume based on the 2018 figures that 20 hours per week or 130 days per year is a reasonable estimation for the time required to fulfil the roles associated with the Basic Allowance.
23. The 2006 Statutory Guidance also requires that the Basic Allowance recognises the public service principle. The Public Service Discount (PSD) is the element of a Members' time that is not remunerated and is given freely as public service or *pro bono publico*. The size of the PSD utilised by this Joint Panel and most commonly used by other IRPs is 33 per cent, often conceptualised as the element of a Councillors time that is spent dealing with constituent, ward and community issues. Thus, out of the 130 days per year expected input for Members 43 days have been assumed to be unremunerated, leaving 87 remunerated days.
24. The updated rate of remuneration is based on the 2018 median daily pay (gross) for



all full time employee jobs in Southend and Thurrock Borough Council areas.<sup>2</sup> Such a locally based rate of remuneration is typically utilised by Panels in recommending a Basic Allowance as it links the Basic Allowance to the median earnings of local residents and therefore has a logic that is reasonable and robust.

25. The recalibrated Basic Allowance has been arrived at by applying the following formula as laid out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance:
- 130 days minimum annual expected average input – 43 days per year as the Public Service Discount  
= 87 remunerated days per year
  - 87 days per year x £106 per day  
= **£9,222**
26. Thus, by and large the current Basic Allowance (Southend £9,204 and Thurrock £9,202) is in line with the recalibrated Basic Allowance.

### **Benchmarking the current Basic Allowance**

27. As a further test, the Joint Panel benchmarked the current Southend and Thurrock Basic Allowance (£9,204 and £9,202 respectively) against that paid in the comparator councils utilised for the Southend/Thurrock benchmarking group. The benchmarking, or comparator, group of 15 Councils plus Southend and Thurrock, utilised were those unitary councils that have similar sized populations to Southend and Thurrock. This exercise was carried out as a further checking mechanism to ascertain whether or not the Basic Allowance in Southend and Thurrock was in line with that paid to peers.
28. The average Basic Allowance paid in the benchmarking group is £9,970 which would suggest that the current Basic Allowance has fallen behind peers somewhat. However, this is tempered by a median Basic Allowance of £9,426.
29. Bearing in mind the weighting of the triangulation process of recalibrating the Basic Allowance, benchmarking and Members views the Panel is content that the current Basic Allowance represents a fair remuneration and the only minor adjustment required is to align them for both Councils. The Joint Panel has done this by simply rounding it down to £9,200.
30. **Consequently, the Joint Panel recommends that Basic Allowance payable for both Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Borough Councils is aligned at £9,200.**

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<sup>2</sup> Based on 2018 median weekly pay (gross) for all full time employees living in Southend of £512.40 and £547.40 in Thurrock, which produces a joint median figure of £29.90, which then equates to £105.98 which the Panel rounded up to £106.00 per day. See Annual Survey of Hourly Earnings (ASHE), Table 7.1a Weekly pay (gross) for all full time employee jobs, UK 2018, Office of National Statistics.

## Recommended Special Responsibility Allowances – Maintaining current ratios

31. The Joint Panel received no evidence that the majority of SRAs merited revision. The following SRAs set out in Table 1 below are those that the Joint Panel has recommended to maintain their current levels but have been aligned through application of the current methodology, namely arrived at as a percentage of the recommended Basic Allowance.

**Table 1 – Recommended Aligned SRAs with no change in methodology**

<b>Recommended SRAs – No Change in percentage ratio</b>		
<b>Basic Allowance</b>	£9,200	
<b>SRAs</b>	<b>BA X %age</b>	<b>Recommended SRA</b>
Leader	350%	£32,200
Deputy Leader	180%	£16,560
Other Cabinet Members	125%	£11,500
Mayor/Chair of Council <sup>3</sup>	150%	£13,800
Deputy Mayor/Chair of Council	35%	£3,220
Leader of Largest Opposition Group	100%	£9,200
Deputy Leader of Largest Opposition Group – where Group has at least 17 Members	25%	£2,300
Leader Other Opposition Groups – where Group has at least four Members	25%	£2,300
Chairs of Scrutiny	75%	£6,900
Chair of Licensing	60%	£5,520
Vice Chair of Licensing	55%	£5,060
Chair of Planning	100%	£9,200
Vice Chair of Planning	25%	£2,300
<b>Southend Only SRAs</b>		
Chair of Audit	25%	£2,300
Chair of Appeals	25%	£2,300
<b>Thurrock Only SRAs</b>		
Chair of Standards & Audit	25%	£2,300

<sup>3</sup> While Southend pays its Mayor and Deputy Mayor a SRA Thurrock pays its Council Chair and Deputy Chair a Civic Allowance. This is purely an administrative choice and for the purposes of this review their allowances have been treated as a SRA.

## Recommended Special Responsibility Allowances – Changing current ratios

### Vice Chairs of Scrutiny Committees – both Councils

32. The Vice Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees are currently paid an SRA set at 15 per cent of the Basic Allowance. The Joint Panel considered whether they merited an SRA on the grounds that there was limited evidence that they met the test of having “significant responsibility” as set out in the 2006 Statutory Guidance (70-73). In contrast, the Vice Chairs of Licensing have a significant role in chairing the Licensing Sub-Committees and the Vice Chair of Planning will have to step in when for instance the Chair has a conflict of interest and is required to have specialist knowledge. The Planning Vice Chair will also attend briefings as routine and take part in site visits. The Vice Chairs of Scrutiny do not have any assigned discrete responsibilities beyond standing in on the odd occasion.
33. Nonetheless, the Joint Panel has decided to retain this SRA, partly as it has not accepted the case for an ‘acting up’ SRA (see below) as in most instances that is a Vice Chair’s function. Instead it has decided to reduce the percentage utilised in arriving at the recommended SRA from 15 per of the Basic Allowance to five per cent.
34. **The recommended SRA for the Vice Chairs of Scrutiny has been reset at five per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200), equating to £460.**

### Vice Chairs of Appeals Committees A and B - Southend

35. For similar reasons outlined above, the Joint Panel has also reset the SRA (currently set at 6.25 per cent of the Basic Allowance) for the Vice Chairs of the Southend Council Appeals Committees A and B at five per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200), which equates to £460.
36. **The recommended SRA for the Vice Chairs of Southend Council Appeals Committees A and B has been reset at five per of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200) which equates to £460.**

### Chair of Standards Committee - Southend

37. Currently, the Chair of the Standards Committee receives an SRA set at 20 per cent of the Basic Allowance. It is noted that while Thurrock has a combined Standards and Audit Committee with the Chair paid an SRA set at 25% of the Basic Allowance Southend has chosen to maintain 2 separate committees, Audit plus Standards, with both Chairs receiving an SRA set at 25 and 20 per cent of the Basic Allowance respectively.

38. It is not the Joint Panel's role to comment on how Southend Council organises its governance arrangements but rather to assess the relative worth of respective roles. In the case of the Standards Committee it is only scheduled to meet annually. The evidence reviewed by the Joint Panel does not support paying an SRA for the Chair of the Southend Standards Committee. It is no longer a statutory committee and since the implementation of the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011 its remit and powers have been much reduced. Most of its former remit is now carried out by the Monitoring Officer, typically in consultation with the statutory post of an Independent Person.
39. Consequently, the Joint Panel has decided to reset the SRA for the Chair of the Southend Standards Committee at zero per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance.
40. **The Joint Panel recommends that the SRA for the Chair of the Southend Standards Committee is reset at zero per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200), which equates to £0.**

## Recommended additional Special Responsibility Allowances

### Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee - Thurrock

41. The one significant development in governance arrangements has been in Thurrock in that the Corporate Parenting Committee has become more prominent since the previous review. It is a standing committee that has four scheduled meetings per year. It is responsible for bringing together all elements of work by Thurrock Council to ensure that looked after children are receiving an improved service. Its work now reflects the importance that the Council assigns to corporate parenting, e.g., all Thurrock Members are promoted as corporate parents by the Committee and the enhanced importance that corporate parenting has at a national governmental level.
42. Representation was received that the Chair of the Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee merits an SRA, and the Joint Panel agrees that the Chair does meet the test of significant responsibility. As such, the Joint Panel has decided that the SRA should be set on a par with the SRA paid to the Chair of Standards and Audit, which is 25 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance.
43. **The Joint Panel recommends that the Chair of the Thurrock Corporate Parenting Committee is paid an SRA set at 25 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200), which equates to £2,300.**

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<sup>4</sup> Southend also has corporate parenting arrangements in place but prime responsibility is assigned to the relevant Cabinet Member.

## **Additional Special Responsibility Allowances considered – not recommended**

### **Chairs of Task Forces, Working Groups and Panels – both Councils**

44. Similarly, representation was received that there was merit in paying an SRA to Chairs of Task Forces, Working Groups and Panels that while time limited are expected to undertake an intensive period of work reflecting Council priorities or particular issues of current concern. While accepting the importance of these type of bodies to the work of both Councils the Joint Panel did not accept that the role of chairing them merited an SRA. By their nature they are more indefinite than a standing committee, with no or limited formal constitutional recognition in that they are not required to have formally scheduled meetings, are not required to publish minutes and often include wider stakeholders who also undertake a lot of the work. It is not unreasonable to expect all Members in a term of office to chair similar types of bodies, which is recognised in the payment of the Basic Allowance. The Joint Panel would also not be able to monitor the relative importance of such a body even if it was to put a cap on the number of SRAs payable at any one time. Finally, as the benchmarking showed, such SRAs are not typically paid in other authorities.
45. **The Joint Panel recommends that an SRA for the Chairs of Task Forces, Working Groups and Panels should not be paid.**

### **An ‘Acting Up’ SRA – chairing in absence of Chair and Vice Chair**

46. Representation was also received arguing for a one-off or acting up SRA for when an ordinary member of a committee had to chair that committee in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair. The Joint Panel was informed that such occurrences were very rare and to pay such an SRA would then question the rationale behind paying SRAs to the majority of Vice Chairs. Moreover, as with the expectation that all Members could be called upon to chair working groups, task forces, etc. it is not unreasonable to expect that a Member may on occasion have to chair a formal committee in the highly unlikely event that the Chair and Vice Chair are unable to do so. It does not meet the test of significant responsibility.
47. **The Joint Panel recommends that an “acting up” SRA should not be paid.**

### **Confirming the “1-SRA only” Rule**

48. In line with good practice **the Panel recommends that the allowances schemes for both Councils continues to prohibits the receipt of more than 1 SRA regardless of the number of remunerated posts a Member may hold.**

### **The Independent Person (IP)**

49. All English councils are required to appoint at least one Independent Person (IP) whose role is to act as a source of advice to the Monitoring Officer when a complaint is made against a Member and to provide further advice in any subsequent hearings and appeals. The Independent Person has to have some legal expertise and to be able to exercise objective judgement. They are not a formal co-opted Member of the Council and their remuneration does not fall within the 2003 Regulations but the Joint Panel has been asked to provide a view in the absence of any other external validation.
50. Currently, the IP in Thurrock is paid £500 per year which was simply set as a starting point but was never revisited, while the Southend IP is paid an annual fee of £1,084, set at 12.5% of the Basic Allowance at the time. The discrepancy in the remuneration of the IPs in the respective councils arises out of it being set separately.
51. However, both IPs perform broadly similar roles, the only difference being the number of times they may be called upon by their respective Monitoring Officer. In line with the Joint Panel's principle of aligning allowances it has decided that both IPs should be paid the same and set their remuneration at 12.5% of the recommended Basic Allowance of £9,200.
52. **The Joint Panel recommends that the annual remuneration of the Independent Person for both Southend and Thurrock Councils should be reset at 12.5 per cent of the recommended Basic Allowance (£9,200), which equates to £1,150.**

### **Other Allowances – The Co-optees' Allowances**

53. Currently both Council pay a Co-optees' Allowance to their Co-optees on their Standards and/or Audit Committees set at 12.5 per cent of the Basic Allowance and to their statutory Co-optees on Scrutiny Committees, set at three per cent of the Basic Allowance. No evidence was received to indicate that these rates required revising. There is however a slight discrepancy in how the Co-optees are listed in each scheme that could cause some confusion on which Co-optees are eligible for a Co-optees' Allowance and the definition of eligible Co-optees should be aligned in the interests of clarity and equity.
54. **The Joint Panel recommends that the following Co-optees Allowances are paid and that each scheme describes the two categories of Co-optees as set out below:**
- **Co-optees on Audit** £1,150 (set at 12.5% X BA - £9,200)
  - **Statutory Co-optees on Scrutiny** £270 (set at 3% X BA - £9,200)
55. The Joint Panel considered whether there was a case to extend the Co-optees' Allowance to other Co-optees that each Council may decide to appoint from time to time. The Joint Panel decided against making such a recommendation.

Benchmarking showed that the Co-optees' Allowance is typically restricted to Audit Co-optees, who are appointed for their financial expertise and statutory Co-optees on Scrutiny. To go beyond these two categories of Co-optees can lead to divergence in the scope of Co-optees who are remunerated.

### **The Dependants' Carers' Allowance (DCA)**

56. No representation was received to suggest that the scope and level of reimbursements claimable under the Dependants' Carers' Allowances needed revising except in one respect – the hourly rate that may be claimed for the 'Basic Sitters' allowance. This is the rate that may be claimed for child care by a baby sitter. The current rates are out of date and the trend now is to simply link it to the 'National Living Wage.'
57. **The Joint Panel recommends that the current scope and level of reimbursements payable under the Dependants' Carers' Allowance are unaltered with the exception of the 'Basic Sitters' rate, which should be changed to read payable at the "National Living Wage"..**

### **Subsistence Allowances**

58. No issues were raised regarding the Subsistence Allowances. However, the Joint Panel noted that there are slight differences in the rates of subsistence allowances payable in each Council with Southend paying a marginally higher rate. In accordance with the Joint Panels' principle of aligning allowances it is recommended that both Councils adopt the Southend rates as set out below:

#### **Subsistence Allowances**

(a) Breakfast Allowance	<b>£6.72</b>
(b) Lunch Allowance	<b>£9.28</b>
(c) Tea Allowance	<b>£3.67</b>
(d) Evening Meal Allowance	<b>£11.49</b>
(e) Overnight Subsistence	
• London/LGC Conference – B&B	<b>£124.97</b>
• Any other location – B&B	<b>£109.56</b>

### **Travel Allowances:**

59. No issues were raised with the Joint Panel regarding Travel Allowances. It is noted that in regards to the mileage allowance both Councils now pay HMRC rates. However, it is becoming increasingly common for Councils to make provision for a mileage rate for electric/hybrid vehicles and the Joint Panel is making a recommendation in this regard. **The Joint Panel recommends that current rates**

and conditions for claiming travel allowances are maintained at the following rates:

**Table 2: HMRC Authorised Mileage Approved Payments (AMAPS)**

Mode of Transport	First 10,000 miles in year	Additional miles
Cars and vans	45p	25p
Motor cycles	24p	24p
Bicycles	20p	20p

### Electric/Hybrid Vehicles

60. To future proof the allowances schemes the Joint Panel considered appropriate mileage rates for electric/hybrid vehicles. It is noted that the Office for Low Emission Vehicles in advice issued 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 (paragraph 12.2) states that “electric and hybrid cars are treated in the same as petrol and diesel cars for the purposes of AMAPs.”<sup>5</sup>
61. Consequently for the sake of clarity **the Joint Panel further recommends that in line with advice issued by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles that mileage rates for electric and hybrid vehicles are paid at the same AMAP rates as set out above in table 2.**

### Indexation

62. **The Panel recommends that the following indices are applied to the remuneration and allowances paid to Members of both Councils:**
- a. **Basic Allowance, SRAs, Co-optees & IP Allowances:**
    - Indexed to the annual percentage salary increase for local government staff (at spinal column 49) to be implemented from the start of the municipal year, rather than financial year, for which year it is applicable.
  - b. **Mileage Allowance:**
    - Adjusted in line with applicable HMRC rates
  - c. **Subsistence Allowances:**
    - The day subsistence allowances and overnight subsistence allowances should be indexed to the same percentage increase that may be applied by the Council to Officer day and overnight subsistence rates.
  - d. **DCA:**
    - **Child Care rates:**

<sup>5</sup> [ultra-low-emission-vehicles-tax-benefits.pdf](#)



- Indexed to national living wage

### **Implementation of Recommendations**

- 63. The Panel further recommends that both Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock Borough Councils implement the recommendations contained in this report from 1 August 2019.**

## **Appendix One:**

### **Information received by the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel**

1. Terms of Reference for JIRP
2. The Joint Independent Remuneration Panel for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Borough, Review of Allowances Report, July 2015, including
  - a. Report of Corporate Director for Corporate Services to Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, "Review of Members Allowances" 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 and Council Minutes recording decision
  - b. Report of Chair of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel "Review of Members' Allowances – Report of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel", Thurrock Borough Council, 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2015 and Council Minutes recording decision
3. Copies of written submissions from Members
4. National Joint Council for Local Government Services Local Government Staff Pay awards 2018/19 and 2019/20
5. Benchmarking data from other comparable unitary authorities
6. Statutory Instruments: 2003 No. 1021 – The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003
7. Statutory Guidance on Consolidated Regulations for Local Authority Allowances May 2006. Introduction + paragraphs 1-90
8. Power point presentation to JIRP by Declan Hall PhD, advisor and JIRP support, "JIRP Briefing/Update – reviewing allowances, the Southend and Thurrock model of remuneration, including benchmarking, issues of concern and options
9. National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2018, Local Government Association, March 2019

### **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Information**

10. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Members' Allowances Scheme, 2019-20
11. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Annual statutory publication of allowances and expenses received by Members 2018/19
12. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Schedule 2 - The Constitution and Terms of Reference of Cabinet, Committees, etc., January 2019

13. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Political Structure Chart
14. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, Schedule of Council meetings 2019/20.

### **Thurrock Borough Council Information**

15. Thurrock Borough Council, Members' Allowances Scheme, 2019-20
16. Thurrock Borough Council, Annual statutory publication of allowances and expenses received by Members 2018/19
17. Thurrock Borough Council, Constitution Part Four, Terms of Reference for Cabinet, and Committees, 5 April 2016
18. Thurrock Borough Council, Political Structure Chart
19. Thurrock Borough Council, Calendar of Council Meetings 2019/20

## **Appendix Two:**

### **Members and Officers who met with the Joint Panel**

#### **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council:**

##### **Members:**

Cllr S. Aylen                      Non-aligned Councillor

Cllr I. Gilbert                      Leader of the Council and Labour Group

##### **Officers (Briefings):**

Colin Gamble:                      Head of Democratic Services

#### **Thurrock Borough Council:**

##### **Members:**

Cllr R. Gledhill                      Leader of the Council and Conservative Group

##### **Officers (Briefings):**

Matthew Boulter                      Democratic Services Manager

## **Appendix Three:**

### **Written Submissions Received by the Panel**

#### **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council:**

Cllr B. Ayling	Vice-Chairman Licensing Committee A and Independent Group Member
Cllr J. Beck	Labour Group Member
Cllr I. Gilbert	Leader of the Council and Labour Group
Cllr C. Walker	Conservative Group Member

#### **Thurrock Borough Council:**

Cllr D. Huelin	Cabinet Member for Performance Communities and Culture and Conservative Group Member
Cllr S. Little	Cabinet Member for Social Services, Chair of Health & Wellbeing Board and Conservative Member
Cllr J. Potheary	Leader of the Labour (Main) Opposition Group

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## Appendix 2

### Thurrock Borough Council – Summary of Allowances for Financial Year 2019/20

Type	Allowance Per Annum
<b>BASIC ALLOWANCE</b> (“BA”) (for all Members x 49)	£9,200
<b>SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCES</b> (“SRA”) <p>Note: SRAs are paid in addition to BA, but no Councillor shall be entitled to payment of more than one SRA regardless of the number of remunerable posts they hold. If a Councillor holds more than one post which attracts an SRA, it will be assumed they will be paid the higher SRA.</p>	
Leader	£32,200 (350% of BA)
Deputy Leader	£16,560 (180% of BA)
Cabinet Members ( <u>other than</u> Leader and Deputy)	£11,500 (125% of BA)
Leader of the Main Opposition	£ 9,200 (100% of BA) (If two main opposition groups are equal in size, each group leader will be paid 100% of BA.)
Deputy Leader of the Main Opposition	£2,300 (25% of BA) (But if opposition group has less than 17 members, namely one third of the Council, then this SRA is not payable.)
Leader of Other Opposition*	£ 2,300 (25% of BA) (But if opposition group has less than 4 members then this SRA is not payable.)
Chairs of Scrutiny Committees (x 6)	£ 6,900 (75% of BA)
Vice-Chairs of Scrutiny Committees (x 6)	£ 460 (5% of BA)
Chair of Planning Committee	£ 9,200 (100% of BA)
Vice-Chair of Planning Committee	£ 2,300 (25% of BA)
Chair of Licensing Committee	£ 5,520 (60% of BA)
Vice Chair of Licensing Committee	£ 5,060 (55% of BA)

Type	Allowance Per Annum	
Chair of Standards and Audit Committee	£ 2,300	(25% of BA)
Chair of Corporate Parenting Committee	£ 2,300	(25% of BA)
<b>CIVIC ALLOWANCES</b>		
The Allowances for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are payable under sections 3(5) and 5(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.		
Mayor	£13,800	(150% of BA)
Deputy Mayor	£ 3,220	(35% of BA)
<b>CO-OPTED MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE</b>		
Audit Committee	£ 1,150	(12.5% of BA)
Statutory Co-opted Members on Scrutiny Committees	£ 270	(3% of BA)
<b>INDEPENDENT PERSON(S) ALLOWANCE</b>		
Independent Person(s)	£ 1,150	(12.5% of BA)
<b>TRAVELLING ALLOWANCES</b>		
Mileage to be claimed for out of Borough approved duties only	<p>Rates:</p> <p>Cars: 45p per mile (up to 10,000 miles), 25p per mile thereafter (such allowance to also apply to electric/hybrid vehicles).</p> <p>Motor cycles: 24p per mile</p> <p>Bicycles: 20p per mile</p> <p>Standard rates for public transport wherever possible, but first class fares may be claimed in exceptional circumstances.</p>	
<b>SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCES</b>		
For out of Borough approved duties only	<p><b>Day rates (actual):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakfast (away from home before 6.00am) - £6.72</li> <li>• Lunch (away between 12.00 noon and 2.00pm) - £9.28</li> <li>• Tea Allowance (attendance at a venue between 3.00pm – 6.00pm) - £3.67</li> <li>• Evening (away after 8.00pm) - £11.49</li> </ul>	



Type	Allowance Per Annum
	(unless leaving home after 6.00pm). <b>Overnight:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normal - £109.56</li> <li>• London and conferences - £124.97</li> </ul>
<b>DEPENDANTS' CARERS' ALLOWANCE</b>	
Basic "sitters" allowance	To be linked to National Minimum Wage
Professional carers	Up to £10.00 per person cared for per hour
Specialist carers	Up to £15.00 per person cared for per hour
Booking fees	Actual up to £10.00.

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<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 13</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations 2019/2020</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key
<b>Report of:</b> Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive and Returning Officer	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Not applicable	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report requests Council to consider and approve the recommendations of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive in relation to the statutory Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
  - 1.1 That the existing arrangements for Aveley and Uplands be confirmed.**
  - 1.2 That the existing arrangements for Belhus be confirmed.**
  - 1.3 That the existing arrangements for Chadwell St Mary be confirmed.**
  - 1.4 That the existing arrangements for Chafford and North Stifford be confirmed.**
  - 1.5 That the existing arrangements for Corringham and Fobbing, polling districts O and Q, be confirmed**
  - 1.6 That Corringham Evangelical Church, Fobbing Road be confirmed as the polling place for Corringham and Fobbing, polling district P.**
  - 1.7 That the existing arrangements for East Tilbury be confirmed.**
  - 1.8 That the existing arrangements for Grays Riverside be confirmed.**
  - 1.9 That the existing arrangements for Grays Thurrock be confirmed.**

- 1.10 That Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane be confirmed as the polling place for Little Thurrock Blackshots, polling district AA.**
- 1.11 That the existing arrangements for Little Thurrock Blackshots, polling district AB, be confirmed.**
- 1.12 That the existing arrangements for Little Thurrock Rectory be confirmed.**
- 1.13 That the existing arrangements for Ockendon be confirmed.**
- 1.14 That the existing arrangements for Orsett be confirmed.**
- 1.15 That the existing arrangements for South Chafford be confirmed.**
- 1.16 That the existing arrangements for Stanford East and Corringham Town be confirmed.**
- 1.17 That the existing arrangements for Stanford-le-Hope West be confirmed.**
- 1.18 That the existing arrangements for Stifford Clays be confirmed.**
- 1.19 That the existing arrangements for The Homesteads be confirmed.**
- 1.20 That the existing arrangements for Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park be confirmed.**
- 1.21 That the existing arrangements for Tilbury St Chads, polling district BC, be confirmed**
- 1.22 That the Fruitful Land Church (The Anchor Pub), Tilbury be confirmed as the polling place for Tilbury St Chads, polling district BD, subject to monitoring feedback from electors and further review if required.**
- 1.23 That the existing arrangements for West Thurrock and South Stifford be confirmed.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1 The report sets out the legal requirements of the Review, the methodology used and the conclusions drawn, together with the proposed changes that have been recommended by the Returning Officer.**
- 2.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a full review of all polling districts and stations to improve accessibility. Additional Statutory Instruments were issued in late December 2006.**
- 2.3 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and**

polling places. The next compulsory review must be started and completed between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 inclusive.

- 2.4 The statutory responsibility for reviewing UK Parliamentary polling districts and places rests with each relevant local authority in Great Britain for so much of any constituency as is situated in its area. A relevant local authority is, in England, the council of a district or London borough, in Scotland, a local authority, and, in Wales, the council of a county or county borough.
- 2.5 Depending on the structure of the local authority, it may not be the full council which makes the decisions on any changes to polling districts or polling places. Some local authorities may have delegated that function, in which case the decision on polling districts and polling places becomes the responsibility of a committee or sub-committee. This will be set out in the council's constitution.
- 2.6 The function has been delegated to General Services Committee and General Services are requested to approve the recommendations detailed in this report.
- 2.7 Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:
  - each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply
  - in Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more separate polling districts, unless special circumstances apply
  - the council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
  - the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district)
  - the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station
- 2.8 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:
  - seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances
  - seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled
- 2.9 The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

2.10 Consultation with the electorate and elected members was an integral part of the review process:-

- A communications plan was agreed.
- The formal commencement of the review requires the local authority to give notice of the holding of a review. The notice was published on the Council noticeboard and website.
- A press release was issued at the start to inform residents about the consultation, and another near the end to remind residents to take part.
- Regular promotion using the hashtag #Thurrockpollingreview across Thurrock Council's social media accounts sharing the online consultation link. There were opportunities for messages to be re-shared by other related social media channels.
- E-newsletters – one story was planned for inclusion in Thurrock News once in July and once in August
- Posters – these were distributed to libraries and hubs for display.
- Group Leaders and ward members were informed by email of the consultation and asked for their comments on the existing polling places and to provide suggestions for new polling places.
- The consultation was sent to the Member of Parliament for Thurrock and the Member of Parliament for South Basildon and East Thurrock.
- The consultation was available for completion via the consultation portal from 1 July to 18 August.
- Political Parties and ward members were asked to comment on the proposals in this report. The Acting Returning Officer for South Basildon and East Thurrock has also been consulted and responded.
- Feedback from elections held in 2019 were included. This includes comments from Inspectors and Presiding Officers.

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

3.1 The issues, options and analysis for each polling station and district is detailed in Appendix 1.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 The reasons for recommendations are informed by the consultation and the analysis in Appendix 1.

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

5.1 The consultation exercise was extensive to maximise inclusion and input into the review. The consultation arrangements were outlined in paragraph 3.0 and the political parties and MPs have been apprised of the Returning Officers recommendations.

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

- 6.1 The Council continually seeks to ensure services are accessible by all users and the review will help to ensure that those electors who wish to vote will not be put off by inaccessible polling stations. The proposed changes have been reviewed to actively encourage participation.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Dammy Adewole**  
**Senior Management Accountant – Central Services**

All costs associated with the changes in polling places or polling stations are contained within the electoral services budget.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**  
**Acting Head of Law, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer**

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a periodic full review of all polling districts and stations throughout their area

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. Both the 2006 Act and the 2013 Act amended the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The 2013 Act stated that the review must be started and completed in a 16 month period every five years after 1 October 2013. The current review period is between 1 October 2018 and 31 January 2020 inclusive.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Price**  
**Team Manager - Community Development and Equalities**

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote equal opportunities. These considerations should sit alongside the statutory obligations set out in the Electoral Administration Act. The Electoral Administration Act (2006) and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 seeks to improve the engagement in the electoral process, by ensuring that polling places are accessible to all. The proposed changes will

improve access to the electoral process, in line with the objective of the legislation.

The proposals contained in the report will aid community participation in elections, by bringing the polling stations nearer to the voters and ensuring adequate facilities are available. The consultation gave consideration to the use of religious buildings and access requirements

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

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):

- The Electoral Commission – Reviews of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Returning Officer recommendations
- Appendices 2, 3, 4 – location maps

**Report Author:**

Elaine Sheridan

Electoral and Member Services Manager

Electoral and Member Services



## Appendix 1 - Returning Officer Recommendations

### Aveley & Uplands

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
A	1776	1813	1035	1035	Aveley Methodist Church Hall, Shannon Way
B	2411	2444	1272	1269	Aveley Public Hall, Purfleet Road
C	1812	2469	1362	1494	The Sycamores, Dacre Avenue
D	636	694	463	463	Hugh Delargy Hall, Wood Avenue
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant.</p> <p><b>Polling District A</b> The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District B</b> Two responses received to the public consultation agreeing this was a suitable location. The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District C</b> The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to a polling station. The elector level is below this and the figure will be lower when taking into the number of electors who choose to vote by post. The polling station is large enough to accommodate this number of electors.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District D</b> The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<b>Financial Impact</b>					
None					

## **Belhus Ward**

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
E1	687	658	332	333	All Saints Church Hall, Foyle Drive
E2	1490	1497	874	874	Royal British Legion Hall, Faymore Gardens
F	2767	2868	1745	1764	Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Daiglen Drive
G	2023	2268	1056	1098	Temporary Structure-South Parade
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District E1</b> The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District E2</b> The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District F</b> Holy Cross School is a fairly new polling station, following the closure of the Culver Centre. After initial concerns the school is welcoming and accommodating and they consider the use a benefit to the school. The dates of future elections (on a 4 year cycle) are given to any school designated as a polling station.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District G</b> In 2013 the use of a temporary polling station on South Road was agreed. Previously the Ockendon Scout and Guide Hall was used followed by Thurrock Garden Centre. Members did not consider that these sites were suitable.</p> <p>Two responses were received to the consultation. One response said it was very convenient to walk to but parking was also available. The other response referred to a school and appears to be discussing another polling station.</p> <p>A temporary polling station is not ideal in terms of cost however the site is central and accessible for the geography and electors</p>					

of the district. Presiding Officers are comfortable with the space and no elector complaints have been received. The temporary location has been in use through elections with a higher than average turnout (Parliamentary Election in 2015 and 2017) and the venue has proved suitable.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Chadwell St Mary**

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
H	716	679	376	382	Alf Lowne OAP Complex, Loewen Road
I	2574	2589	1533	1572	Delargy Close OAP Complex, Delargy Close
J	1675	1731	915	932	Chadwell St Mary Working Mens Club, River View
K	2247	2254	1216	1245	Chadwell Village Hall, Waterson Road

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant.

**Polling District H**

One response was received to the consultation agreeing this was a suitable location. The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District I**

One response was received to the consultation agreeing this was a suitable location. The use of Delargy Close complex was raised in May 2019 and in previous years by the Inspectors as the polling station is a fair distance from electors in Godman Road. The suggested solution was to use a room in the tower blocks. The Returning Officer has considered this and notes the following.

Delargy Close is fairly central from east to west within the residential area of the polling district and located off of the main Brentwood Road which runs from north to south through the district. This provides good access and is on a bus route. Relocating the polling place to the far north of the district in Godman Road would not provide an accessible location for the

majority of the electors and may even disenfranchise some as it would move the polling place away from the direction of travel to school and local shops. All electors have equal access to postal voting should they find accessing a polling station difficult.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District J**

The Returning Officer and members are keen to avoid the use and closure of schools where possible and where suitable alternative sites exist. Members agreed in 2011 to move the polling place to The Working Mens Club, Riverview. The polling place is fairly central within the main residential area, on a main road and a bus route and parking is available. There have been no negative comments regarding the use of this venue and one response was received agreeing this was a suitable location.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District K**

The Returning Officer has not received any complaints about the current polling arrangements. The polling station is on a road that runs through the residential area and has transport links and parking facilities. One response to the consultation agreed it was a suitable location. Parking is available onsite.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Financial Impact**

None

### **Chafford and North Stifford**

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
L	530	535	255	265	The Pavilion, North Stifford Rec. Ground
M	2960	3071	1639	1639	Chafford Gorges Visitor Centre, Drake Road
N	1957	2005	1016	1026	Drake Community Centre, Drake Road
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Presiding Officers and Inspectors comments have been referred to.					

**Polling District L**

The Pavilion is a central and suitable location within the residential area. Staff feedback raised the issue of the locked carpark gate however this is locked only for approximately the first hour of the day. As a small village it is anticipated that electors know this (there were no complaints from electors) and presumably they walk or park outside of the grounds until the gates are open at 8am. One response to the consultation outlined the station was suitable, easy to walk to and central to the village with easy access.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District M**

The Essex Wildlife Centre (Chafford Gorges Visitor Centre) was designated in the review of 2013/14. Members expressed a preference to find a location central to the polling district but acknowledged this was not possible. Transport links and parking are available at the Visitor Centre. The elector numbers are above the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission and the Returning Officer operates two polling stations at this venue to accommodate this. Two responses were received to the consultation agreeing this was a suitable location, with a free car park and on the main road through Chafford Hundred.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District N**

Drake Community Centre was designated the polling place for polling district N in 2011 after concerns continued to be raised about the use of Tudor Court Primary School. Drake Community Centre is not within the polling district but it is within the ward boundary and its use is permitted within legislation. Polling districts M and N are built up areas with few buildings to use as polling stations. The current polling stations appear to suit the electorate whilst working with the facilities available in the area. One response was received to the consultation confirming this location was suitable. Parking is available to the side and rear of the hall.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

## Corringham & Fobbing Ward

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
O	1549	1576	796	810	Thurrock Christian Fellowship, 2-4 Chase Road
P	2276	2308	1227	1235	Pegasus Country Club Ltd, Herd Lane <b>(CLOSED)</b>
P					Corringham Evangelical Church, Fobbing Road <b>(PROPOSED NEW POLLING PLACE)</b>
Q	597	576	307	305	Gardner Hall, High Road

### **Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant. The MP for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.

#### **Polling District O**

Members agreed in 2011 review to designate the polling place as the Christian Fellowship Centre in Chase Road. Staff of the Returning Officer have not been able to find alternative venues within the polling district and note that no complaints have been received regarding the use of the Christian Fellowship Centre. The Christian Fellowship Centre is outside the polling district and the ward but on the boundary.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District P**

The Pegasus Club was designated as the polling place following several changes of polling places in this district. Three responses to the survey commented that The Pegasus Club was a suitable polling station.

In September 2019 the Pegasus Club closed and is no longer available to hire, at least in the near future. There is a requirement to find a new polling place. The Returning Officer recommends that members agree the use of Corringham Evangelical Church, Fobbing Road. The Church is centrally located in the main residential area and is fully accessible. A small number of parking spaces are available off-road, however there is parking on Fobbing Road and in a nearby side road (Recreation Ave). The Leader and ward members were consulted and agreed on a temporary change to put in place emergency arrangements in the event of a Parliamentary Election. A map of the proposed location is attached at Appendix 2.

**Other Options considered.**

Members responded to the Returning Officer recommendation with concern about the use of Corringham Evangelical Church and parking along Fobbing Road. Other polling options were subsequently considered.

- The Fire Safety Community Room, Fobbing Road – this building was used in 2012 and the working fire station was subsequently deemed not suitable for polling due health and safety issues. It was not considered further although Electoral Services staff did contact the Fire Station to discuss the use of the room and parking in case of any changes.
- The Scout Hall, Herd lane – demolished
- Ortu Primary School, Herd Lane – this has been used previously and it was considered as an alternative to Corringham Evangelical Church. The Returning Officer has the right to use a room in a school for polling however the school wished to remain open on polling day and the polling place was to the rear of the school with no on-site parking or separate public access. When contacted the school did not think they had a suitable building / room for polling. A later meeting with the Headteacher confirmed that the pre-school building is to be demolished Easter 2020 and due to the school being a split site both sites will need to be closed if polling was held in the school due to the kitchen arrangements and the number of siblings. As the Pegasus club is shut there is also no outside lighting at the end of the lane.
- Ortu Pre-School, Herd lane – this building is separate to the main primary school with parking to the front of the building. However it is due for demolition Easter 2020. For this reason designating the building as a polling place would not be a useful way forward.
- The Bowls Club, Corringham Recreation Ground. Electoral Services have left voicemails and emailed the Club but have not been able to make contact with a member of staff to determine if they would hire it out and if any rooms are suitable. A site visit was made. The building is located in the middle of a Recreation Ground and electors would be required to walk along a footpath, next to the graveyard. There is lighting along the footpath but the ground is uneven and not particularly accessible. A car park is available next to the Recreation Ground tennis courts but electors who wished to cast their vote would not be able to pull up directly outside of the building. Polling staff would need to carry the equipment and ballot boxes some distance from the car and signposting would need to begin from Fobbing Road and along Recreation Avenue. Electoral services consider this venue would deter electors from voting, it is not on a main route or thoroughfare and we would have concerns for staff working in an isolated location.

The Returning Officer notes the concerns of ward members with regard to parking along Fobbing Road however after consultation with ward members all current options have been considered. There is a suitable polling place with some on-site parking. The Returning Officer recommends that Corringham Evangelical Church, Fobbing Road is confirmed as the polling place and station for Polling District P. Electoral Services will monitor the Pegasus Club for future use if it re-opens.

**Polling District Q**

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

The use of Corringham Evangelical Church would result in a saving of £45 when there is a standalone local election in this ward.

### **East Tilbury Ward**

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
R	2916	3418	1916	1993	East Tilbury Village Hall, Princess Margaret Road
S	1401	1364	667	668	Linford Village Hall, Lower Crescent
T	393	395	234	235	West Tilbury Village Hall, Rectory Road
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant. The Member of Parliament for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District R</b>            There has been an increase in electors in Polling District R since 2015. The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to one polling station. The elector level is above this (3418) but the figure will be lower when taking into account the number of electors who choose to vote by post. The current number of postal voters is 339. The Returning Officer operates two polling stations within the polling place to accommodate the number of electors. No responses were received from the consultation.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District S</b>            No responses were received during the consultation.            The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District T</b>            No responses were received during the consultation.            The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<b>Financial Impact</b>					
None					



## Grays Riverside Ward

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
U	3179	3463	1987	2175	Belmont Village Hall, Parker Road
V	1268	1324	834	864	Grays Central Library, Orsett Road
W	3069	3424	2427	2504	Civic Offices, New Road
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District U</b></p> <p>There has been an increase in electors since 2015. The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to one polling station. The elector level is above this (3463) but the figure will be lower when taking into account the number of electors who choose to vote by post. The current number of postal voters is 572. Two comments were received from the public consultation raising parking as an issue, whilst the other commented that it was easy to access with on street parking. The Returning Officer operates two polling stations within the polling place to accommodate the number of electors.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District V</b></p> <p>No responses were received during the consultation.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District W</b></p> <p>There has been an increase in electors in Polling District W since 2015. The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to one polling station. The elector level is above this (3424) but the figure will be lower when taking into account the number of electors who choose to vote by post. The current number of postal voters is 454. The Returning Officer operates two polling stations within the polling place to accommodate the number of electors. One comment was received during the public consultation which confirmed it was a suitable location.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<b>Financial Impact</b>					

None

### **Grays Thurrock Ward**

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
X	2313	2364	1266	1268	Attlee Court OAP Complex, Lucas Road
Y	1542	1611	795	885	Stanley Lazell Hall, Dell Road
Z	2633	2727	1590	1605	St Thomas Parish Room, John Street

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation and consultation with ward members did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections have been included if relevant.

**Polling District X**

There has not been a major increase in electors since 2015 and the number of electors is below the maximum level recommended by the Electoral Commission. One response was received to the consultation commenting that the station is suitable and located in an accessible area.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District Y**

One comment from the consultation suggested that Stanley Lazell Hall has problems with parking and suggested other locations in Bradleigh Avenue and the Methodist Church Hall in Hathaway Road. There have been no reported problems on polling day with Stanley Lazell Hall. Bradleigh Avenue is on the far east boundary of the polling district and not within the main residential area. The Methodist Church Hall in Hathaway Road is on the boundary of the northside of the polling district and would be a private hire. Whilst Stanley Lazell Hall is located to the south of the polling district there have been no major concerns; members have not raised any issues and as a council owned building there is an element of control when booking the venue.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District Z**

There has not been a major increase in electors since 2015. Three comments from electors confirmed that the polling station was in a suitable location. One also added that there was not enough parking. However the polling place has its own car park. The number of electors is above the number recommended by the Electoral Commission but the large hall accommodates two

polling stations.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Little Thurrock Blackshots Ward**

**Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AA	3362	3328	1768	1768	Deneholm Primary School, Culford Road
AA					Socketts Heath Baptist Church <b>(PROPOSED NEW POLLING PLACE)</b>
AB	1417	1865	967	970	Woodside Academy, Grangewood Avenue

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from both ward members included.

**Polling District AA**

There has been a small decrease in electors in Polling District AA since 2015 however the elector total is still above the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to one polling station.

The Returning Officer operates two polling stations within the polling place to accommodate the number of electors. One comment was received from the public consultation stating the existing polling station was suitable however other comments are considered in this review.

Deneholm School has very restricted parking and access arrangements. The school is keen to continue to operate on polling day and for safeguarding reasons they restrict the access arrangements for voters. This affects accessibility, parking and convenience. Both ward members expressed views that the polling arrangements in 2018 were far from satisfactory and the room provided for polling was not accessible for electors with limited mobility. During the European Election of 2019 it was not possible to confirm the voting arrangements at Deneholm School and the Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane was used. Several electors gave verbal feedback that the Civic Hall was more accessible than Deneholm School.

The Returning Officer has considered alternative venues in the polling district. A map of the proposed locations is attached at Appendix 3.

A) The Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane

The Civic Hall has a large carpark, it is well known within the polling district and it is fairly centrally located from north to south along Blackshots Lane. It is a very large venue and potentially could already be hired out in the event of a snap election. There is the potential to use either the hall or the foyer area (as long as this is cordoned off). The hire fee for the European election was £850.

B) Sockets Heath Baptist Church, Premier Avenue.

Socketts Heath Baptist Church is at the southern end of the polling district however it is within a main residential area and centrally located if you consider the polling district from east to west. A few parking spaces are available on the church forecourt and in Premier Avenue. There is a large well lit accessible room and facilities for staff. The Church have confirmed they are willing for the room to be used for polling and would ask for a contribution of £150.

Both proposed venues would provide suitable voting locations for electors in the polling district. The Returning Officer also considers that Socketts Heath Baptist Church welcomed the community use, offers better value for money and the Church would make the room available by moving community events if unplanned elections are required. The Civic Hall would not be able to be so flexible in regards to their pre-booked events.

Ward members were consulted on the Returning Officer's recommendation for Little Thurrock Blackshots (AA); their preference is The Civic Hall, Blackshots Lane. Alternatively they suggest the Church of the Latter Day Saints in Blackshots Lane.

The Returning Officer recommends that Socketts Heath Baptist Church be confirmed as the polling place for polling district AA, however polling would be accessible from either the Civic Hall or the Socketts Heath Baptist Church. The final report will recommend the use of the Civic Hall. Alternative locations will be explored if the Civic Hall is agreed but not available at the time of an election.

### **Polling District AB**

There has been an increase in electors in this polling district but it is still within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission for one polling station. Two comments on this station were received during the consultation which said it was suitable although parking was limited but central enough for the electors in question to walk. The Returning Officer notes that Woodside Academy remains open on polling day and the Academy is given advance notice of scheduled elections.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact****Polling district AA**

Deneholm School - £55

Civic Hall - £850

Socketts Heath Baptist Church – £150

**Little Thurrock Rectory Ward****Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AC	1816	1844	947	955	Grays Spiritualist Church, 168 Rectory Road
AD	2773	2799	1607	1624	Tyrells Hall, 67 Dock Road

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included.

**Polling district AC**

Three comments were received during the public consultation. All electors selected that the station was in a suitable location but the additional text of one elector was not in agreement that a religious building be used for this purpose. Two electors suggested that Little Thurrock Primary School could be used. One ward member responded that the current voting arrangements were suitable. Members have previously expressed a preference not to use schools for polling when alternative locations were available.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling district AD**

The elector count for this polling district has remained fairly static but is slightly above the recommended limit of voters set by the Electoral Commission. The Returning Officer provides two polling stations within the building. Two comments were received as part of the public consultation. One comment said it was a suitable location, easily accessible and plenty of room. The other comment said it was not a suitable location, the rooms were like a working men's club and they felt unsafe in the venue, which also had no parking. The Returning Officer does not agree that the location is unsuitable and the hall has a carpark directly outside. The ward member did not comment that this was unsatisfactory.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Ockendon Ward**

**Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AE	1824	1959	1091	1091	Belhus Village Hall, Daiglen Drive
AF	1730	2172	1344	1687	Bonnygate Primary School, Arisdale Avenue
AG1	1896	2008	1259	1303	Benyon Court OAP Complex, Peartree Close
AG2	1659	1673	855	856	Brandon Groves Community Hall, Brandon Groves

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included.

**Polling District AE**

Belhus Village Hall is located in the main residential area of the polling district in the shopping parade. It is accessible and a car park is available for the hall and the nearby shopping precinct. One resident responded to the public consultation and commented that they would prefer the polling station to return to Erriff Drive (possibly meaning Beacon Hill School). The resident also suggested All Saints School and Ockendon Academy. Belhus Village Hall is able to cope with the current number of electors and no other issues were raised. Whilst the Returning Officer is able to use a room in a school for polling the use of schools as polling stations has declined in recent years in Thurrock unless there is absolutely no alternative location.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AF**

Bonnygate Primary School is located centrally within the polling district and it is the only accessible building for use as a polling station within the boundary. No comments were received during the public consultation but several comments were passed on at the 'snap' European Election and from the Labour group leader, because the school shut for polling day, unplanned. Parents do not like that the school is shut on polling day but the decision to shut is taken by the school. The Returning Officer requires a room in the school and a four year schedule of planned elections is provided to schools to assist them to plan a training day on polling day.

There has been an increase in the elector numbers at this polling station but the numbers are still within the recommended number set by the Electoral Commission.

As there is no suitable alternative location within the polling district, the Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AG1**

Benyon Court OAP complex is fairly central to the residential part of the polling district from east to west. Other polling stations have been used in the past including South Ockendon Methodist Church which became unavailable a few years ago. The complex is a council owned property which assists Electoral Services to book the facility and ensures it is available at election time. One resident responded to the public consultation and considered this a suitable location. No other comments were received.

The elector numbers for this station have increased since 2015 but they are still below the level recommended by Electoral Commission.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AG2**

Brandon Groves Community Hall is located centrally in the residential part of the polling district. The elector numbers have remained consistent within the district and are below the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

## Orsett Ward

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AH	784	815	379	414	Bulphan Village Hall, Church Road
AI	1596	1608	797	893	Horndon Village Hall, Mill Lane
AJ	1544	1546	826	827	Orsett Village Hall, High Road
AK	1019	1020	505	514	Whitmore Hall, Bristowe Drive
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included. Both ward members responded that they were happy with the current voting arrangements. The Member of Parliament for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District AH</b> Bulphan Village Hall is centrally located within the polling district. One comment was received during the public consultation stating the station was suitable and accessible with good parking whilst another commented that it was ideally placed for use as a polling station, with good parking, facilities and access although community events such as the Post Office and Community Café were disrupted and cancelled on polling day.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District AI</b> Horndon Village Hall is located within the main residential area of the polling district. No comments were received from the public consultation.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling station and location.</p>					
<p><b>Polling District AJ</b> The elector numbers have not changed considerably since 2015. Orsett Village Hall is located within the village making it accessible. No comments were received from the public consultation.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					



**Polling district AK**

Whitmore Hall is located within the residential area of the polling district and elector numbers are within the limits recommended by the Electoral Commission. No comments were received from the public consultation.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**South Chafford Ward****Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AL	1613	1761	1057	1057	The Chafford Hundred Brewers Fayre, Howard Rd
AM	3099	3288	1824	1823	Harris Academy, Mayflower Road

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included. Both ward members responded that they were happy with the current voting arrangements.

**Polling District AL**

The Brewers Fayre at Chafford Hundred is located on the edge of the polling district but it has been an accepted polling station since 2011. It is located near the commuting route for the area and near to the train station. No issues were raised in the public consultation or by members. The Brewers Fayre do not charge for the use of this facility.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AM**

Harris Academy is located in the south of the polling district but it is convenient for electors as it is within the residential area and on one of the main roads out of Chafford Hundred. Two comments were received from the public consultation confirming this was a suitable location and station but they did comment on the lack or suitability of disabled parking as the school remains open on polling day.

The elector numbers have increased since 2015 and they remain above the number recommended by the Electoral Commission for one polling station. The Returning Officer operates two polling stations within the building to accommodate the number of electors and meet the Electoral Commission recommendations.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Stanford East & Corringham Town**

**Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AN	3081	3098	1697	1699	O'Donaghue House, Thors Oak
AO	1780	1812	1017	1017	Tom Wood Hall, Bellmaine Avenue
AP	1621	1634	921	956	Corringham Hall, Springhouse Road

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included. The Member of Parliament for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.

**Polling District AN**

The number of electors at this polling place is above the number recommended by the Electoral Commission and the Returning Officer operates two polling stations at this polling place. No comments were received during the public consultation.

O'Donaghue House is not centrally located within the polling district but it is a suitable location and as a council owned building there is flexibility to book the polling place.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AO**

The number of electors at this polling station has remained fairly constant since 2015 and although it is on the edge of the polling district boundary the station is fairly centrally located. Schools are available within the polling district but members have previously preferred not to use a school when there is an alternative building. Security at Tom Wood Hall was identified as an issue during the European Election 2019 and the Returning Officer will address this if the polling place is confirmed.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District AP**

Corringham Hall on Springhouse Road is located within the main shopping area of Corringham town with onsite car parking plus parking at the nearby shops and leisure centre. The elector numbers are within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission and no comments were received during the consultation.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling station and location.

#### **Financial Impact**

None

### **Stanford-le-Hope West Ward**

#### **Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AQ	1454	2134	1209	1365	Allott Hall, Park Road
AR	1925	2022	1194	1236	St Margaret's Church Hall, The Green
AS	1292	1327	668	686	Kynoch Court, Billet Lane

#### **Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included. The Member of Parliament for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.

#### **Polling District AQ**

There has been a large increase in electors and properties in this polling district since 2015 but the elector number is within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. Allott Hall is quite central within the polling district and has an onsite car park. No comments were received during the public consultation.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District AR**

St Margaret's Church Hall on The Green is located quite centrally within the polling district and has parking to the rear of the

church. The allocation of electors is within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. No comments were received during the public consultation.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling District AS**

Kynoch Court is within the residential area of the polling district and run by Thurrock Council which assists with booking arrangements. No comments were received during the consultation period. The allocation of electors is within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Financial Impact**

None

### **Stifford Clays Ward**

#### **Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AT	2662	2692	1393	1406	Headon Community Hall, Crawford Avenue
AU	2476	2444	1250	1255	Stifford Clays Social Club, Crammavill Street

#### **Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included.

#### **Polling District AT**

The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to a polling station. The elector number is slightly above this and the Returning Officer operates two stations in this polling place. One comment during the consultation confirmed this was a suitable location.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

#### **Polling district AU**

The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to a polling station. The elector

number is slightly below this and will be less if the number of absent voters are taken into account. One comment was received during the consultation confirming it was a suitable location with easy access and parking available.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**The Homesteads Ward**

**Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AV	1963	1955	1017	1019	Homesteads Village Hall, Dunstable Road
AW	2474	2483	1219	1219	Temporary Structure, Balstonia Rec Ground
AX	1267	1283	605	604	Gable Hall School, Southend Road
AY	893	887	447	447	Temporary Structure, Gardner Avenue

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included. The Member of Parliament for South Basildon and Thurrock confirmed that he was happy with current arrangements.

**Polling District AV**

One comment was received during the consultation agreeing that the polling station was in a suitable location. All the ward members responded agreeing that the location was suitable.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AW**

The Electoral Commission recommendation is that no more than 2500 electors are allocated to a polling station. The elector number is slightly below this and will be less if the number of absent voters are taken into account but two polling stations (cabins) are allocated to this location to accommodate voters. Ward members confirmed that they either had no problem with the current arrangement or that whilst the cabins were not ideal they provided a suitable polling place. There is no other suitable location in this polling district, no comments were received from the public consultation and electors are used to voting in this location.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AX**

The polling station at Gable Hall School, Southend Road was introduced to reduce costs and stop resident complaints. The previous location was a portacabin on land at Kenneth Gardens, Southend Road.

One comment was received during the consultation confirming that the school was a suitable location and all ward members confirmed that the school was suitable with one comment mentioning congestion during school run hours. Whilst members have not always wished to use schools as a polling station there are no permanent buildings in the polling district. The school is slightly outside of the polling district and ward (by being on the wrong side of the road) but polling is held in one of the sixth form buildings and the school does not shut on polling day.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District AY**

The temporary structure at Gardner Avenue is located in a layby outside of a parade of shops. One ward member commented that this gets congested but the two other ward members did not raise the location as an issue. A suggestion was received to combine the voting with polling at Gable Hall School (AX) but as the ward member mentioned congestion at Gable Hall School this would potentially increase any congestion, move voting away from a central area within the polling district to outside of the ward and increase the risk to using Gable Hall for AX if elections are held during exam time and space is at a premium. Although there is a lack of permanent buildings in this polling district the current location is central and if it is busy, could encourage electors to vote. No elector complaints were received.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

## Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
AZ	494	483	241	241	Temporary Structure, Churchill Road
BA	2411	2336	1575	1718	The Hall, Alexandra Road OAP complex
BB	1810	1875	1104	1112	The Sunshine Centre, Civic Square

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included.

**Polling District AZ**

The temporary structure is located in a non-residential part of the Thurrock Park estate. It serves a small electorate and no comments or issues were raised during the consultation.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District BA**

One resident responded to the consultation and agreed that this station was suitable for voting. The electorate has reduced slightly since 2015 and remains within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. The Hall is centrally located within the polling district.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District BB**

Two residents responded to the consultation. One agreed that this was a convenient location and accessible for wheelchair users whilst the other responded it was not suitable, not private and no parking. The Returning Officer does not agree with the comment that it is not private as the polling booths are situated to enable voting in private. There is no requirement to provide parking but this location does have parking available locally and its location within the Civic Square facilities voters who drive, walk and arrive by bus.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Financial Impact**

None

**Tilbury St Chads Ward****Existing Arrangements**

Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
BC	2281	2573	1281	1419	The Hall, Lansbury Gardens OAP Complex
BD	1854	1876	1073	1075	Tilbury Pioneer Academy, Dickens Avenue
BD					Sure Start Flagship Children's Centre or The Fruitful Land Church / Anchor Pub <b>(PROPOSED NEW POLLING PLACE)</b>

**Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals**

The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered plus feedback from ward members included.

**Polling District BC**

One comment was received during the consultation that agreed this was a suitable location but further text suggested that although it was accessible it was too small and as a sheltered housing complex it left the residents feeling vulnerable. There have been no complaints from residents or the manager of the complex and whilst it may be a busy station if the voting was moved from this location it potentially disenfranchises a lot of the residents. There are no other suitable buildings in this polling district and as the venue is a council run property it ensures that a polling location is available when required at a minimum cost.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District BD**

Tilbury Pioneer Academy (nursery unit) is designated as the current polling place. One comment was received during the consultation which confirmed this was a suitable location. A ward member responded to the consultation commenting that the Academy had construction work at present and parking is always congested. Parking and access to the Academy is always an issue which is raised at each election by voters and Inspectors.

The guidelines suggest that the polling place should a) preferably be in its own polling district unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district) and b) Polling places should be "logical"; that is, electors should not have to pass another polling place to get to their



own place.

There are no other polling locations within the polling district. The Academy is located at the far north of the polling district. One ward member suggestion was to use the Anchor Pub, now operating as a church on Civic Square. Electoral Services would prefer to suggest the use of the Sure Start Flagship Centre. Both buildings are outside of the polling district and the Sure Start Building is outside of the ward (the ward boundary runs through the street). A map of the existing and proposed locations is at Appendix 4.

### **Sure Start Flagship Centre**

This building is also outside of the polling district and the ward however it appears slightly nearer to polling district BD. The service manager has confirmed that the building would be available to Electoral Services if required. The building is accessible, there is a large room for polling, local parking and onsite facilities for staff are good. The cost would be minimal however Electoral Services would need to cover the cost of opening and closing outside of normal business hours.

### **Fruitful Land Church / The Anchor Pub**

There is a large accessible space for voting and parking to the rear of the building, with CCTV and outdoor lighting. The building has the appearance of being disused as it is boarded up. This may cause confusion and deter electors from voting. Electoral Services are concerned that electors may have slightly further to travel than if the Sure Start building is used. The Pastor has confirmed they would welcome voting taking place at their facility and would ask for a donation in the region of £150.

Members have the following options

- a) No change – voting to remain at Tilbury Pioneer Academy or
- b) Change voting to Sure Start Flagship Children’s Centre or
- c) Change voting to The Fruitful Land Church / Anchor Pub, Civic Square

The Returning Officer’s recommendation is to move polling arrangements to Sure Start Flagship Children’s Centre. However following consultation with ward members the Returning Officer would also be minded to agree to recommend to move polling to the Fruitful Land Church with the caveat that polling arrangements and elector feedback is monitored at the next election.

### **Financial Impact**

Tilbury Pioneer Academy - £134.30  
 Sure Start – not confirmed  
 Anchor Pub - £150

## West Thurrock & South Stifford

<b>Existing Arrangements</b>					
Polling District	Electors 2015	Electors 2019	Properties 2015	Properties 2019	Polling Place
BE	2352	2302	1460	1456	Mulberry Drive OAP Complex, Mulberry Drive
BF	1575	1566	1161	1161	The Fleet Public House, London Road
BG	1478	1649	928	1196	Cowdray Hall, London Road
BH	2287	2585	1558	1670	St Clements Health & Community Centre, London Road
<b>Returning Officer's Comments and Proposals</b>					
<p>The online public consultation did not highlight any major issues with polling stations in this ward. Feedback from Presiding Officers and Inspectors at recent elections has been considered. Two ward members responded to the consultation. One member was satisfied with the existing arrangements whilst the other ward member responded that the polling stations are not clearly marked, it was very difficult to see where the polling stations are and lots of residents has complained about this. Whilst the Returning Officer takes on board any feedback these issues were not raised on polling day by the member, electors or Inspectors when they could have been remedied. The Returning Officer will look at the signage however this does not reflect on the polling place and whether it is suitable.</p> <p><b>Polling District BE</b></p> <p>Five responses were received to the online consultation, three confirmed this was a suitable location whilst one response stated it was not suitable as it was not a public location. The other response did not provide an answer. The complex is a suitable location and provides a large room for polling. As a council building the cost is minimal and the building is available for elections when required.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p> <p><b>Polling District BF</b></p> <p>One response was received to the consultation which suggested that this polling station was not in a suitable location. The reason given was that the station is further away than a closer polling station (Hugh Delargy Hall) for residents in North Road and new Watts Wood estate. The Fleet is an established polling place located along the main London Road, Purfleet and whilst it may not appear suitable for the respondent no other complaints were received.</p> <p>The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.</p>					

**Polling District BG**

There has been an increase in electors in this polling district but it is still within the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. Parking is available to the rear of the hall.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

**Polling District BH**

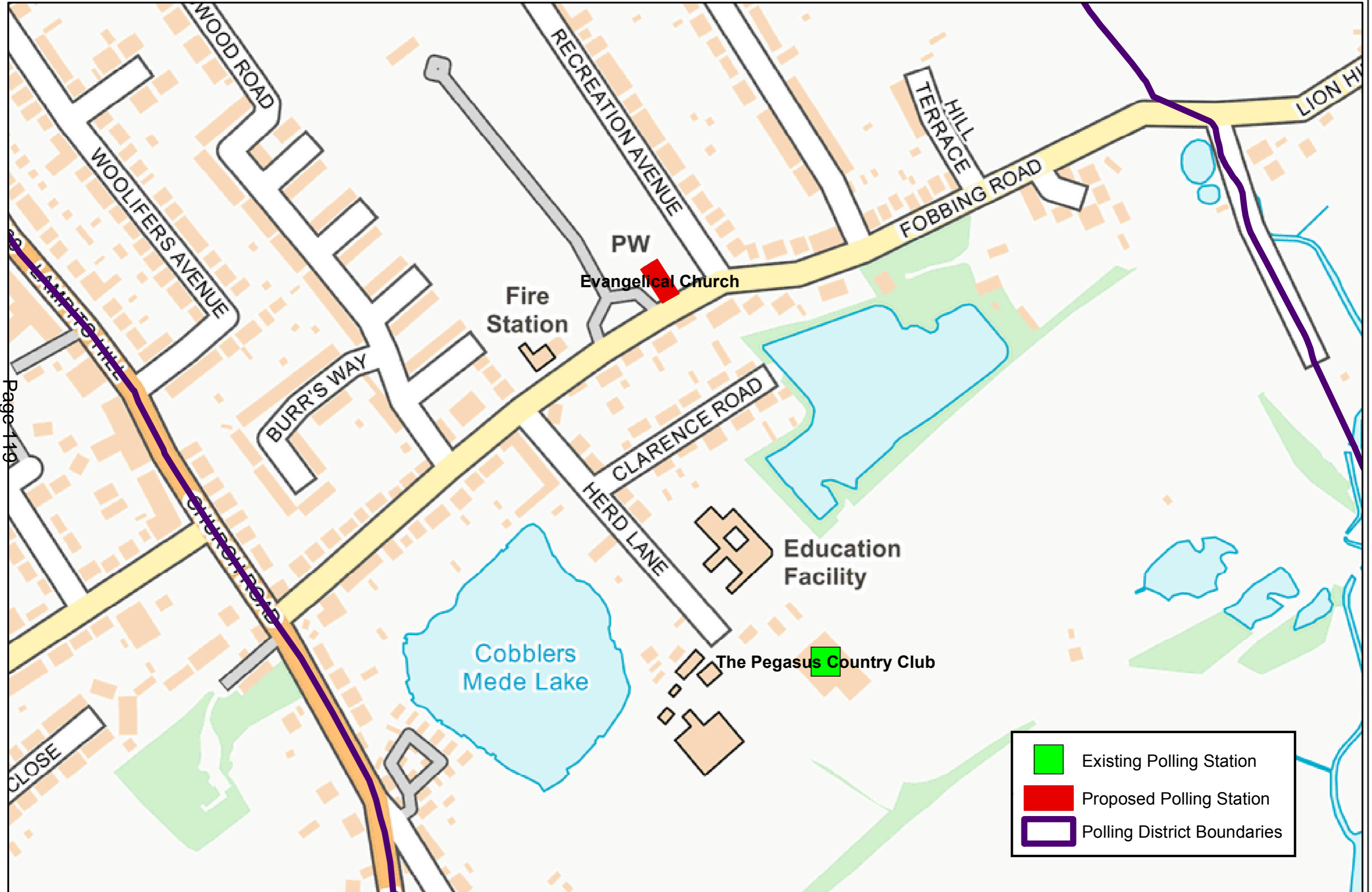
There has been an increase in electors in this polling district since 2015 and it is just slightly over the limit recommended by the Electoral Commission. The hall is large enough to accommodate the size of the electorate. Parking is available of road.

The Returning Officer recommends no change to the existing polling arrangements.

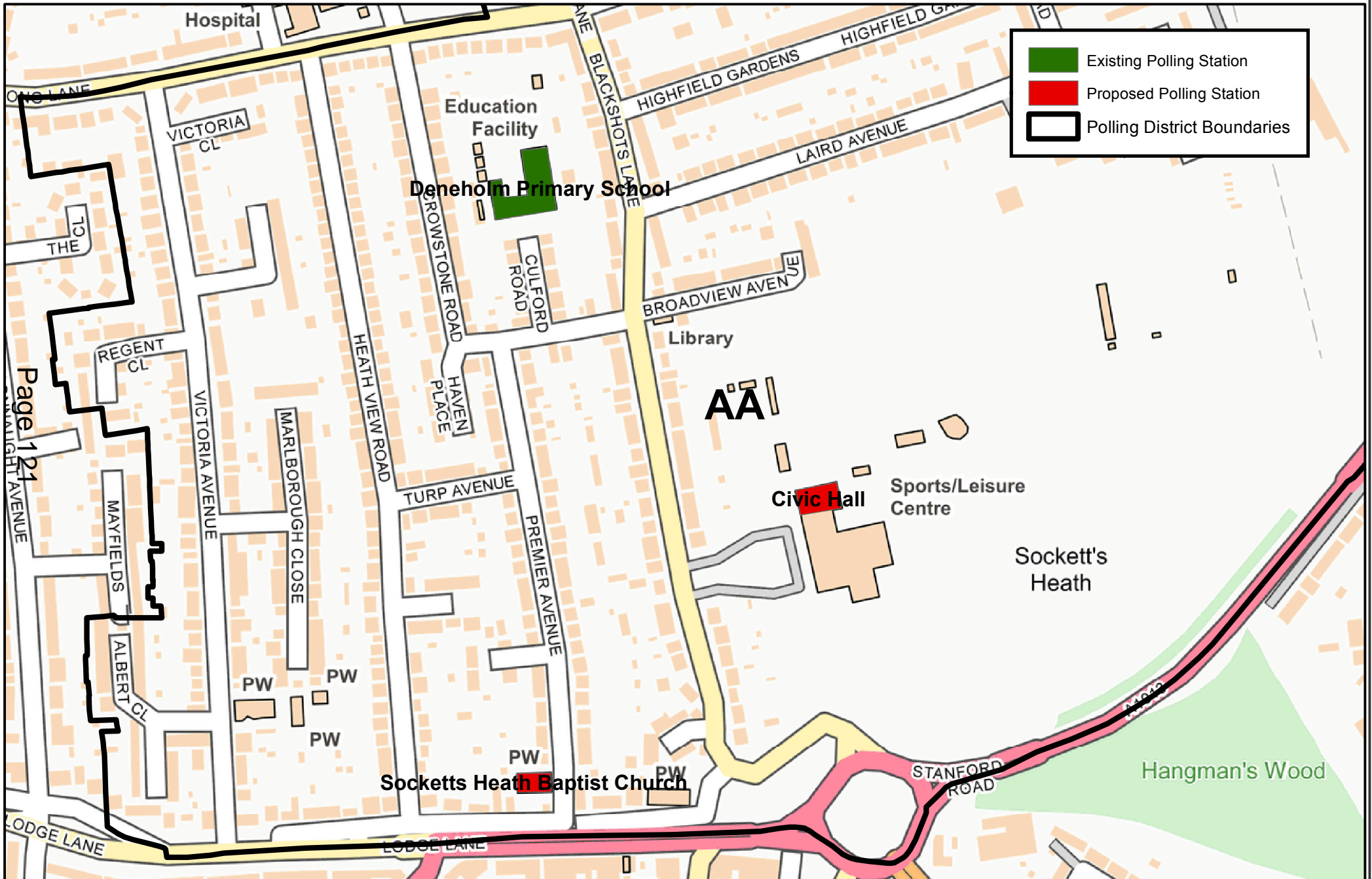
**Financial Impact**

None

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Page 121

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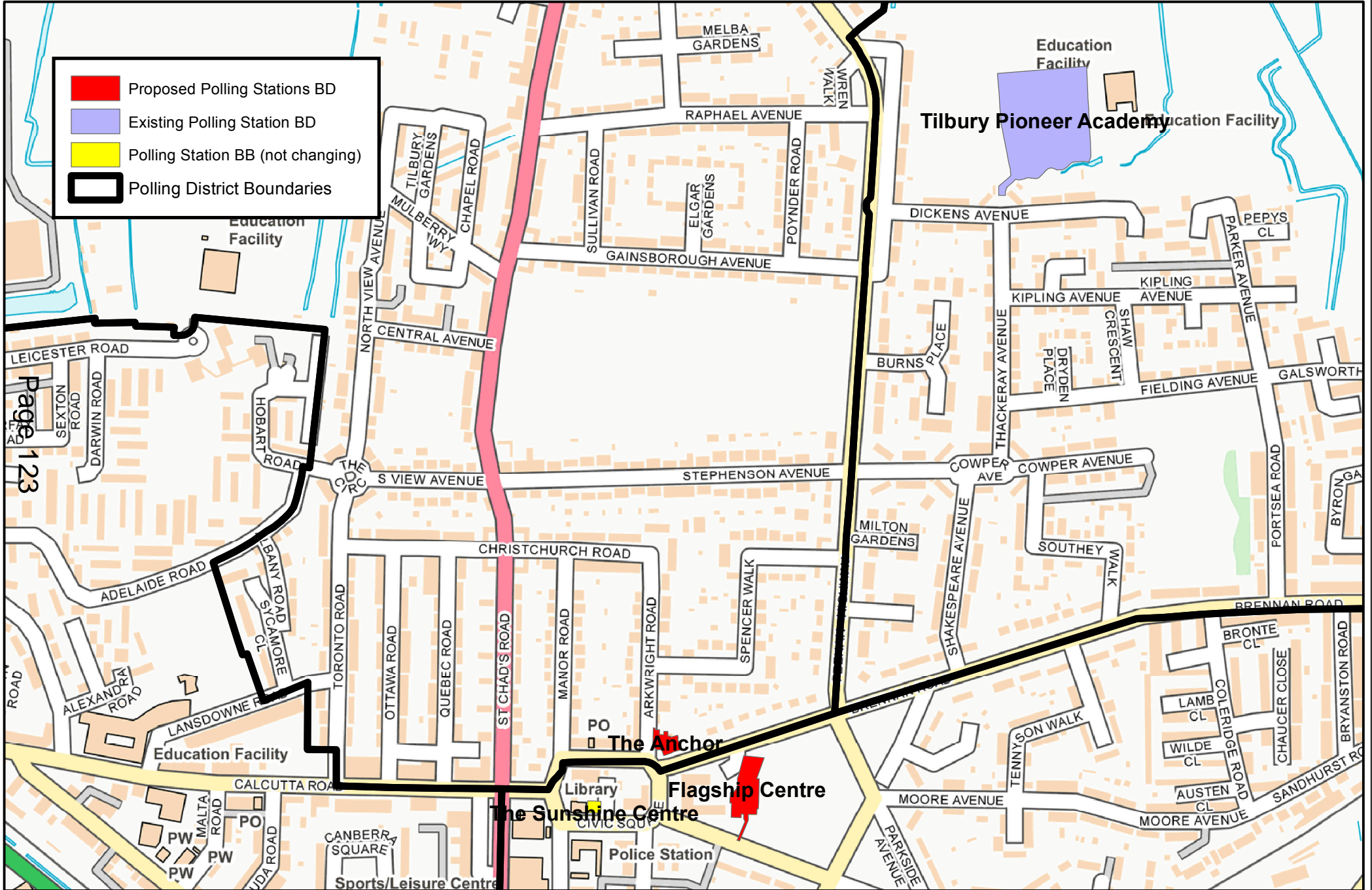




Polling Station BD - Proposed Polling Stations



- Proposed Polling Stations BD
- Existing Polling Station BD
- Polling Station BB (not changing)
- Polling District Boundaries



Page 123

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<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 14</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Corporate Parenting Committee Annual Report 2018/2019</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Corporate Parenting Committee	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Shelia Murphy, Assistant Director of Children's Services	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Roger Harris Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health and Interim Director for Children's Services	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report introduces the Corporate Parenting Annual Report which following being presented to the Corporate Parenting Committee, was recommended it should be presented to the Council.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That the contents of the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/2019 be noted.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Each year Members are invited to a variety of training sessions, to assist them with their roles sitting on Committees. Following the Corporate Parenting Training held Wednesday 17 July 2019, it was requested that an Annual Report be produced detailing the work of Committee and their main achievements for that municipal year. The report is designed to inform residents of this work in an accessible and engaging format.

2.2 The last municipal year has seen the Corporate Parenting Committee tackle a wide range of topics, with Members leading on issues that have come to the fore both through their own research but also by understanding the issues that have arisen in the community.

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

- 3.1 It is hoped that the format of the Annual Report will highlight to residents and Members how the Corporate Parenting Committee have picked relevant community issues and how Members undertook work to form recommendations that positively affected these issues.
- 3.2 The report will be published on the Council's website and key community groups and participants from last year's work will be made aware of its publication directly.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The report outlines the positive work that has been undertaken during 2018/2019 and will be referred to Council for review in order for Members to comment on the overall work of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

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

- 5.1 The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee has been consulted on the contents of the report.

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

- 6.1 The positive impact of the work of the Corporate Parenting committee for 2018/2019, in driving forward issues in relation to looked after children and care leavers to ensure Members are fully involved and engaged in their Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

### **7. Implications**

#### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**  
**Strategic Lead Finance**

There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report.

#### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**  
**Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but it is good practice to produce an annual report reviewing the work of the Corporate Parenting Committee.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

The Corporate Parenting Committee recognises the importance and role of diversity and equality issues. All work in 2018/19 sought to include looked after children and care leavers as appropriate.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or Impact on Looked After Children)

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):

- Agenda, Reports and Minutes of meetings of the Corporate Parenting Committee are available from:

<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/>

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2018/19

### **Report Author:**

Kenna-Victoria Healey  
Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Legal and Democratic Services

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# Corporate Parenting

Annual Report

2018-2019

## Content

Overview	Page	3
Role of the Corporate Parent	Page	4
Membership	Page	4
Corporate Parenting Committee	Pages	5-8
Looking Forwards...2019/2020	Pages	9



## What is Corporate Parenting?

Corporate Parenting describes the collective responsibility of the local authority to provide the best possible care and protection for children and young people who are Looked After. Effective corporate parenting requires a commitment from all council employees and elected members. This responsibility was first set out in the Children Act 1989. Councillors have a lead role in ensuring that their Council acts as an effective corporate parent for every child in care by actively seeking high quality outcomes that every good parent would want for their child. Councillors need to aspire for looked after children in the same way that you would for your own children.

The role of the corporate parent is demanding. It requires energy, attention to detail and a willingness to engage with looked after children and care leavers in order to improve the services they use and their future outcomes. It is challenging to form a listening and learning relationship with vulnerable children but this is what we instinctively do for our own children and what we must consciously do for children entrusted to our care. As Officers of Thurrock Council we welcome scrutiny and challenge from Elected Members. By holding us to account we will continue to improve services and outcomes for looked after children and care leavers.

## Every Member should:

Every elected Member and manager within the Council, in conjunction with members of governing bodies of partner agencies, needs to:

- Be aware of their 'Corporate Parenting' role
- Have some knowledge of the profile and needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers
- Understand the impact on looked after children and young people of all Council decisions
- Receive information about quality of care and services children and young people are experiencing and consider if this would be 'good enough' for their own child
- Ensure that action is being taken to address any shortcomings in services and support for looked after children and young people and strive to continually improve outcomes

## Key to improving the Outcomes for looked after children

- It is with the corporate parent that responsibility and accountability for the wellbeing and future prospects of looked after children ultimately rest
- A good corporate parent must offer everything that a good parent would including stability
- It must address both the difficulties, which looked after children experience, and the challenges of parenting within a complex system of different services
- Equally, it is important that children have a chance to shape and influence the parenting they receive

## What makes Corporate Parenting effective?

An effective Corporate Parent makes sure that looked after children and young people and care leavers have as good care, nurture, health and well-being and life chances as they would expect and want for their own child. The Corporate Parent must act as a responsible parent. We believe that good, responsible parenting involves, but is not limited to:

- Making sure that children and young people have a strong sense of belonging
- Ensuring that they are cared about as well as cared for
- Supporting children and young people through school, college or work, being ambitious for them and helping them develop a sense of aspiration and belief
- Making sure children and young people are healthy and health-aware
- Making sure children and young people are actively listened to, respected and valued
- Encouraging them to develop and participate as citizens
- Encouraging them to form and sustain a range of healthy relationships
- Supporting them to manage their feelings and behaviours

In Local Authorities where services were effective Ofsted found articulation of the leadership, ambition and objectives for looked after children.

In these authorities, they found that the corporate parenting board/panel:

- Demonstrated a strong cross-party commitment to looked after children, championing their rights.
- Had high aspirations for their Children Looked After and monitored their progress

- Planned for and prioritised the needs of Children Looked After, resulting in a greater focus on improving outcomes
- Actively engaged with their young people

## **Membership**

The membership of Thurrock's Corporate Parenting Committee is made up of eight Councillors drawn from all the political parties of the Council. It also includes the Co-Opted members appointed by Council:

- A nominated representative from Open Door
- Chair and/or Vice-Chair of the Children in Care Council
- Chair of the Foster Carers Association
- Vice-Chair of the Foster Carers Association

# Corporate Parenting Committee

It has been a pleasure to Chair the Corporate Parenting Committee in what has been a busy and inspiring year. The Committee started the year with a focus on external placements for young people during which the Committee were informed that there had been a reduction in the number of looked after children this year and that this was largely attributed to the reduction in Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) remaining in the borough.

It was explained that this period had continued the consistent decrease in UASC placed in Thurrock and that this was due to the Eastern Region Protocol. The Eastern Region Protocol saw local authorities allocated a 0.07% of population number (for Thurrock this is 28) which determined the number of UASC that could reasonably be accommodated within borough, and as Thurrock was above this number, further UASC were distributed amongst the Eastern Region local authorities who were not at their 0.07% number.

The Committee were further briefed that:

- The majority of Children Looked After were in foster care placements and a focus had been placed on the recruitment of additional foster carers.
- There had been stabilisation in the use of residential placements and an emphasis had been placed on the review of the suitability of these placements and whether the needs of the young people could be better met in foster care.

Members requested continuous updates on the Children's Social Care Performance throughout the year. In June, it was explained that Thurrock had experienced a high level of demand placed on its statutory social care service for children within the last year and considerable work had been undertaken by the department in managing this demand. This had seen a reduction in the number of contacts and referrals; easing the demand pressure of children becoming looked after and children being placed on a child protection plan.

The Committee were also informed most indicators had shown improvement and the service was coming in line with its statistical neighbours. During the September update of the report, Councillor Liddiard congratulated the service on the good results on care leavers in education and training.

The Committee also acknowledged a report on unregistered and private homes of multiple occupancy for young people in Thurrock, during which Members were informed of the measures that had been implemented to ensure owners are required to register with the Council. The report also highlighted that there is no requirement for providers of Supported Accommodation for 16-18 year olds to be registered with Ofsted but that steps had been taken to implement local quality standards for this type of placement for young people.

Throughout the year, Members requested a number of reports on a range of topics, such as:

- Independent Reviewing Officer Annual Report
- Looked After Children Health Report – this was a detailed report on the health needs of looked after children.
- Report on Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) – The report explained the process and protocol for UASC that also covered missing UASC.
- Children in Care Council Updates – Highlighted the change in Chair of the Children in Care Council which now has a joint arrangements of 2 Chairs but would continue to work as before.
- Transition - Preparing Care Leavers for Adulthood – The Committee praised the success of the Headstart scheme which was helping care leavers in their transition from care to independence.
- Report on Merton Assessments – The report clarified how a Merton Assessment was undertaken with UASC which gave reassurance to the Committee on the ethical nature of the assessment.
- Families Supported By Early Help – the Committee had been pleased to see that the Early Help Intervention service worked well due to its strength-based model of intervention.

Finally, there had been a strong focus on the raising achievement in all areas of education for Children Looked After which was a key priority for Thurrock Council. It is a statutory duty for the Council to have a Virtual School Head. The Council has a Virtual School team who champion the educational progress and attainment of our most vulnerable children who are in care and fulfil this duty for all children aged 3 – 18 years irrespective of where they are placed in the country. This was achieved through working closely with educational establishments, foster carers, social workers and local authority departments to ensure that our children attend school, make progress and achieve.

Thurrock children looked after are achieving well educationally. The educational attainment data for our children was better than the national looked after data in all reported areas from the Early Years through to Key Stage 4. Our children are performing better than other boroughs in the Eastern Region and compare favourably against our top five statistical neighbours. The Council's attainment data was improving year on year with more pupils meeting age related expectations and the national standards for all children.

There have been no permanent exclusion of Thurrock children looked after in over 5 years. The rate of fixed term exclusions is the lowest it has been for 5 years. This compares favourably against other local authorities who have high rates of excluded children.

Last academic year saw 94% of our children with high attendance rates and there was a reduction in unauthorised absence. This compares broadly in line with the national data of 95%.

Thank you to Officers, Democratic Services and the outside organisations who sit on the committee for all their hard work and to fellow Councillors on the Committee.

***Councillor Joy Redsell***

***Chair of the Corporate Parenting Committee***



## Looking Forward...2019/2020

Corporate Parenting Committee Members are dedicated to being Corporate Parents and are looking forward to working with Officers and the outside organisations who sit on the committee on new and updated reports in 2019/2020. Some of the topics to be explored are:

- Fostering & Adoption Reports
- Intensive Foster Carer Training Action Research
- Looked After Children Pledge
- Annual Report of the Virtual School
- More direct engagement with children who are looked after and care leavers

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<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 15</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Purfleet: Changing name to Purfleet-on-Thames</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> West Thurrock and South Stifford, and Aveley and Uplands	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Rob Gledhill, Leader of Thurrock Council	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Services	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## Executive Summary

On 30 January 2019 a petition from 611 residents of Purfleet was presented to Council requesting that the current name of the town of Purfleet be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames.

Group Leaders agreed to a public consultation which ran for 12 weeks from Monday 22 July to Sunday 13 October, offering everyone an opportunity to give their views about the proposed name change to Purfleet-on-Thames.

84% of respondents thought that the name should be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames. 185 responses were received.

It is a function of Council to alter or change the name of an area and Full Council are therefore asked to agree to the name change following the outcome of the public consultation exercise.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

#### 1.1 That Council agree to change the name of the town of Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames.

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The proposed name change originated from a residents' petition submitted to Full Council on 30 January 2019. There is no legal status in a town name and unless Her Majesty the Queen grants a charter for any town then the name of a town is derived from custom and practice. It therefore follows that if there is no legal status in a town name, then there is no formal legal process which dictates how it may change and changes are subject to custom and practice. The Council itself can, after due consultation, propose to make such a

decision on behalf of the community and seek to persuade other stakeholders to do likewise. The Council is entitled to do this because the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything which they consider likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area. This is augmented by powers under the Authority's General Power of Competence.

- 2.2 In this report, Full Council is now being asked to progress a name change from Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames following public consultation.
- 2.3 Group Leaders agreed to a public consultation which ran for 12 weeks from Monday 22 July to Sunday 13 October, offering everyone an opportunity to give their views about the proposed name change to Purfleet-on-Thames.
- 2.4 Businesses, community groups and residents were all engaged throughout the process, and posters promoting the consultation were displayed in the Purfleet Community Hub, local bus stops and by local organisations as well as publicised in press releases and on social media with a link to the online survey. Hard copies of the survey were also made available.
- 2.5 84% of respondents thought that the name should be changed to Purfleet-on-Thames.
- 2.6 185 responses were received including 126 from residents, 4 from businesses and 14 on behalf of a community group or organisation.
- 2.7 The majority of the respondents were positive about changing the name to celebrate the history of the area, formally recognise the link with the river Thames, help promote the planned regeneration activity, reflect the new aspirations of the people and place, and to support raising the profile of Purfleet.
- 2.8 Respondents who did not support the change were mostly concerned about the cost and that it was unlikely to make a material difference to the area.

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

- 3.1 The Council is entitled to make this decision because the Local Government Act 2000 allows the Council to do anything which they consider likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic well-being of their area. This as indicated is augmented by powers under the Authority's General Power of Competence. However it is necessary in order to properly inform such a decision that appropriate consultation be undertaken with residents and relevant stakeholders.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 **Accountability** – as a community leader the Council needs to be responsive to requests from its different communities but ensure that it responds in an open and accountable manner by giving all a fair chance to comment.

- 4.2 **Self-reliance** - the objective of the petition appears to be around raising and / or improving the profile of Purfleet by emphasizing its proximity to the Thames and to return to an earlier description of the town as Purfleet-on-Thames during the Victorian era.
- 4.3 **Community** – the Council as a community leader needs to recognise and be responsive to the various communities which exist within the borough or impact upon it. With respect to the sought for name change for the town, there may be a number of local communities which are likely to be particularly interested in the proposals and change e.g. the Purfleet Community Forum, other Purfleet specific groups and schools.
- 4.4 **Tradition** – the proposal at its core appears to be seeking to embrace the traditional relationship between Purfleet and the River Thames.
- 4.5 Reflecting on the above it is believed that progressing the name change to Purfleet-on-Thames following an appropriate consultation is supportive of the Council's vision and its community leadership position.

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

- 5.1 As set out in the report.
- 5.2 Highways England responded to the consultation and stated that they did not have any issue in principle to changing the name of Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames. However, this may have implications for signage in the area and asked to be notified of the outcome as soon as possible.

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

- 6.1 As set out above, this is in line with the Council's community leadership role.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by **Jo Freeman**  
**Finance Manager**

There is no direct cost to change the name to Purfleet-on-Thames, however, there would be some cost to the council to change things like signage. Exact costs to replace signage have not yet been calculated and would require a survey of the current signage across the borough if the decision is made to change the name. Entry signs to the town will be replaced at the earliest opportunity but other signage will be changed as the redevelopment of Purfleet progresses.

The cost of communication activity to promote the consultation was estimated at £500 and is from existing budgets.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by **Courage Emovon**  
**Ag Strategic Lead / Deputy Head of Legal Services / Deputy Monitoring Officer**

The legal implications are set out in the body of the report and Legal Services is on hand to advise on any legal implications arising as and when required.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by **Rebecca Lee**  
**Strategic Lead – Community Development**

The consultation was open to all residents, businesses and other stakeholders with provision made for those who were unable to access this online. This allowed all interested parties to have a say including those outside of Purfleet itself.

The name change to Purfleet-on-Thames is likely to have a positive impact on the local community and reflects the desired outcome from the petition and consultation response.

## 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):

- Relevant local government legislation
- Purfleet on Thames petition

## 9. Appendices to the report

None

## Report Author:

Karen Wheeler

Director of Strategy, Communications & Customer Services

<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 16</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Central Services and Communities</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Deborah Huelin, Cabinet Member for Central Services and Communities	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## **Introduction by Cabinet Member**

I am delighted to present to Council my report which details many of the areas of work and achievements within my Portfolio.

The core services covered by my portfolio include:

- Corporate strategy and performance
- Customer services
- Communications
- Transformation
- HR, OD and payroll
- Information governance
- Libraries
- Community development and equalities
- Arts, culture and heritage
- Procurement and contract management
- Internal audit
- Legal, democratic, electoral and Member services

I am passionate about the diverse range of services included within my Portfolio which are delivered across six directorates many of which have been recognised by the industry and nationally for the great work and projects they are delivering.

The Legal Services team has successfully obtained Lexcel Accreditation again this year – making 11 consecutive years of excellence in legal practice.

The Information Governance team won two gold performance awards in the Geoplace Exemplar Awards for management of street and address data.

The council was shortlisted for four awards at the Municipal Journal (MJ) awards in June 2019, including Local Authority of the Year and was commended for Innovation in Communications for the Give a Gift campaign. Give a Gift also won the award for best community and neighbourhood initiative.

The council's award winning Give a Gift returned for its fourth year in December and received, wrapped and delivered presents to more than 2,200 Thurrock children in need. Coordinated by the Strategy and Communications teams, the #GiveAGift store where donations were made was open at intu Lakeside for just 2 weeks from Monday 25 November through to Sunday 8 December. Volunteers saw hundreds of visitors choose a star off the Christmas tree, each representing a child in need in Thurrock before shopping for an age appropriate present to donate.

Customer Services is having a great year following the joint project with the Corporate Programme team to physically and digitally transform and modernise the face-to-face area in the Civic Offices which now includes a private area for those needing housing advice. A private, confidential space for customers to have a personal conversation and get help.

The improved self-service facilities have reduced the average waiting time to around just one minute and enabled increased focus and dedicated advisors for vulnerable residents requiring one-to-one face-to-face support.

Customer Services have received the accolade of Level 7 of the customer service industry standard for their quality framework and have been recognised as an example of leading practice. They have also been shortlisted for UKCCF Improvement Strategy of the Year award.

The Thameside Theatre has also had a successful year with more shows and events being staged and the resident Young Producers group receiving great recognition, including from Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Our work on community development and equalities has also had some very positive results in the last year, including the brand new Engagement HQ consultation portal, which supports a much more interactive engagement with residents, more volunteers, supporting high profile events such as Windrush and the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of World War One. Our continuing good relationship with Thurrock CVS was highlighted at a joint conference last October, at which I had the honour of speaking to a packed audience.

Not only are services being recognised externally for their great work, but staff are also feeding back positively internally. The recent Staff Pulse Survey showed a big improvement in staff feeling valued, being proud to work for the council and recommending the council as a great place to work – all much higher rates than the industry average. There is also a huge 22% increase of those feeling positive about their job security compared with 2016, and very high rates of commitment to council goals. There are of course areas for improvement, and teams will work to identify issues and actions required.

Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to remind members that Thurrock Civic Awards 2020 is taking place on Friday 28 February 2020 at Thurrock Civic Hall. We are privileged in our roles as ward members to come across some amazing people in our communities, and the Civic Awards is a perfect opportunity to acknowledge and thank those individuals and groups who do so much to improve the lives of others in the borough.

# CORPORATE STRATEGY and PERFORMANCE

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

This part of my portfolio is primarily concerned with the council's vision and priorities and ensuring the council is delivering against those priorities and objectives through the corporate performance framework.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The performance of the priority activities of the council is monitored through the Corporate KPI (Key Performance Indicator) framework. The indicators are reviewed every year and have been chosen to be as clear and simple to understand as possible, whilst balancing the need to ensure the council is monitoring those things which are of most importance, both operationally and strategically.

This is the fourth year that corporate performance indicators have been reported simply as having "Achieved" or "Failed" to meet their target with an arrow that clearly shows the direction of travel of the service. This has proved to be much clearer and more transparent than the previous system, as seen by the positive and continual improvement:

At end of 2016/17	59% Achieving
At end of 2017/18	66% Achieving
At end of 2018/19	68% Achieving

To date in 2019/20 we're hitting 74%. It is only right Thurrock Council strives for the best services for Thurrock residents and aims for continual improvement. Our focus must continue and to that aim "route to green" has been introduced for failing areas not on target. This highlights the actions that are being taken to improve the performance and gives more understanding about the issues and processes involved.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank colleagues on the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their ongoing scrutiny as part of the strong governance in place for key performance indicators.

The council does not just measure itself against statistics. The council's projects and outcomes have been recognised many times in the last 12 months, locally, regionally and nationally. This includes:

- FINALIST Municipal Journal Awards, Local Authority of the Year
- FINALIST Municipal Journal Awards, Senior Leadership Team
- FINALIST Municipal Journal Awards, Innovation in Finance
- FINALIST Municipal Journal Awards, Care and Health Integration
- FINALIST APSE (Association of Public Sector Excellence) awards - Best Commercialisation and Entrepreneurship
- FINALIST APSE awards - Best Efficiency and Transformation Initiative (Customer Services)
- WINNER APSE awards - Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative award (Give a Gift)

One of the council's members of staff has also had their hard work and dedication to the people of Thurrock recognised in HRH The Queen's New Year's Honours List. Natalie Smith, Thurrock Council's Community Development and Equalities Manager, has been awarded a Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (British Empire Medal - BEM) for services to the community in Thurrock. This is a fabulous achievement. For Natalie to receive such a high honour for her work in the communities across Thurrock is one of the best recognitions of the value of working with our residents on projects that affect them.

A full list of the awards which the council has won or been shortlisted for can be found at [www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-we-are-doing/awards](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/how-we-are-doing/awards)

## ► FUTURE

The governance for the corporate performance framework is embedded and as such this approach will continue. This governance is multi-layered – individual teams, lead officers, Directors, portfolio holders and member scrutiny through the Corporate O&S and Cabinet work programme. Teamwork will ensure the “route to green” is achieved and improvements made.

## CUSTOMER SERVICES

### ► SERVICE OVERVIEW

This part of the portfolio includes all front line customer contact including the contact centre, Careline, out-of-hours, registrars and face to face on the ground floor of the Civic Offices. The contact centre staff are able to deal directly with calls rather than residents being transferred to different departments.

### ► REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

A major project within this part of my portfolio was the continuation of delivery of the customer services strategy action plan for 2017-2020. Key highlights include the continued cascade of the Right First Time - Customer Excellence Training and approximately 850 employees have already attended this training since April 2018. This has been developed to include service specific scenarios and the flexibility to meet the needs of all services, receiving excellent feedback from attendees.

Our performance has again been recognised externally with accreditation of the CCA (Customer Contact Association) Version 7 new global standard in July 2019, where no non-conformances were reported. We received an excellent audit report from the CCA Standards Board who also recognised our Customer Services Quality Framework as leading practice, which means we can offer training to other organisations. This is an independent audit of our customer services operation against industry developed and approved requirements and includes an assessor listening to calls from residents.

The Customer Services Team were also runners up and achieved silver award for the best public sector improvement strategy in the UKCCF awards in October and in the APSE awards for best efficiency and transformation initiative in September.



The Civic Offices ground floor changes and new customer services delivery model have made significant improvements to customer service with vastly reduced wait times and excellent feedback from residents. The changes have enabled us to dedicate more time and resource to support our most vulnerable residents including those who are unable to utilise online/phone services and need dedicated one-to-one face-to-face support.

We recognised that standard formatted letters have a place – however one size does not fit all and they can appear to lack compassion - the opposite of the council's intention. The Customer Service team often go above and beyond to help, full of care and compassion and are aware that sentiment is not always portrayed in our letters. To this end, we have developed a new writing quality training course 'Better letters – write first time' to help all services improve the standard of letter and email communication to our customers. This training commenced in November 2019 and is continuing via a targeted approach initially.

The Registration Service is now part of Customer Services providing valuable statutory and discretionary registration services to a fast-growing community from its current base at the Thameside Complex, Grays. The Register Office not only registers and issues certificates for all births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships which occur in the Thurrock district, but also conducts a number of ceremonies.

In the last financial year 186 marriage ceremonies were held in the Register Office Statutory Room and 292 at our Approved Premises. There were also 127 private citizenship ceremonies and 16 group ceremonies (25 new citizens and their guests) held last financial year. The service has received 100% Good or Excellent customer satisfaction feedback consistently over the years and our reputation is extremely high.

## ► FUTURE

Throughout 2019/20 the team is continuing to complete customer services quality assessments with others services utilising our newly developed framework to help guide and implement actions to improve customer service delivery.

We will continue to support and organise activities such as National Customer Service week to ensure we maintain a high focus and momentum on providing good customer service and staff being an ambassador for the council.

We are also continuing with work to support our most vulnerable residents to ensure that all services can be aware of when people are facing particular challenges so that they can be supported in the most appropriate way with early intervention wherever possible. This work will ensure contacts between the different council services and the same customer are joined up, thereby providing a better service for the customer and more efficient use of our systems and processes.

# COMMUNICATIONS

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

This portfolio covers the council's communications functions including media liaison (proactive and reactive), social media, marketing campaigns, design and the council's website as well as internal communication with staff.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Between October 2018 and October 2019 the team dealt with nearly 600 media enquiries on a wide range of topics from the local, regional, national and even international media and issued press releases regularly to support priority messaging and specific communication campaigns.

The council continues to make good use of social media with more than 7,000 social media posts shared on Facebook and Twitter over the course of the previous year averaging a daily reach of more than 140,000. The council's Instagram account, launched in July 2018 now has a following of over 1,000 people, has received hundreds of likes and is being used in campaigns including Discover Thurrock to promote events and great places to visit in the borough, and the recently launched plastics recycling campaign.

Over the year the team has created and delivered a number of high-profile campaigns which ran across multiple media channels, including advertising in local newspapers and libraries /hubs and all include a key digital element to ensure messages reach as wide an audience as possible. Campaigns carried out include fly-tipping emphasising the consequences fly-tippers will face and encouraging residents to be the council's eyes and ears in reporting fly-tips; foster carer recruitment building on the huge successes enjoyed with the campaign launched in 2018 which saw a 214% increase in enquiries in January 2019; launched the Bad Behaviour Follows You campaign which encouraged people to think about the consequences of anti-social behaviour; and successfully promoted the award winning Give A Gift initiative for its most successful year yet.

The council's bi-weekly e-newsletter reaches around 13,000 residents with a mixture of news and events. This is one of a range of e-newsletters including Business Buzz, Thurrock careers and issue specific updates like the A13 road widening e-newsletter. The team has also introduced weather and traffic news alert emails which inform residents of adverse conditions for which there are nearly 1,900 subscribers. We regularly post on social media to encourage more subscribers as well as promote the various e-newsletters in other alerts. Internal communications channels include a weekly #TeamThurrock email, printed newsletters for staff who are not office based and the team have introduced a new intranet in October 2019 which will further increase staff engagement.

## ▶ FUTURE

We'll be continuing with the delivery of the communications strategy with a review due for 2020, increasing the reach of our digital channels and working to make sure that our residents are kept well informed of all council services and new initiatives, as well as having a chance to have their say on major projects via our new on-line consultation portal. I would encourage all councillors to sign-up for our e-newsletters and follow our social media channels to keep updated on the huge amount of work the council is doing.

# CORPORATE PROGRAMME TEAM (TRANSFORMATION)

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Corporate Programme Team is responsible for the delivery of the council's Corporate Transformation Programme. This ambitious programme ranges from enhancing the way residents interact digitally with the council, via Thurrock On-Line, to implementing new ways for employees to work and deliver services more efficiently through agile working and modern HR, Procurement and Finance systems.

To help us deliver the best possible services the Corporate Programme Team are actively engaged in the council's Service Review Programme to look at how we can do things differently, driving continuous efficiency improvements throughout the whole organisation.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

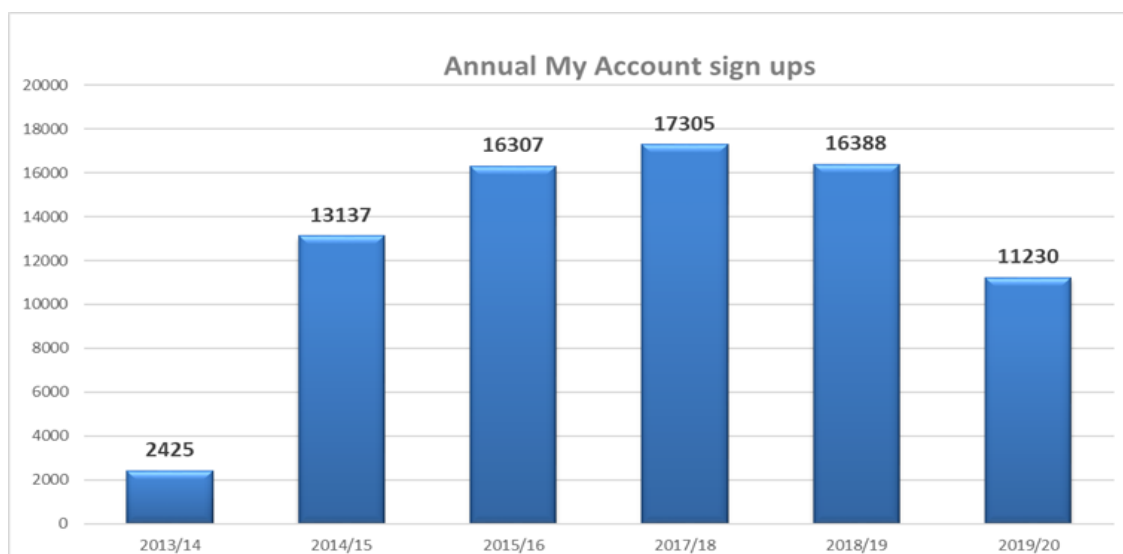
The focus over the last twelve months has been the delivery of the Digital Programme, providing the foundation for transformation:

### Thurrock On-Line

Over 92,000 individuals/households are registered with MyAccount, over 95% of households, demonstrating that our residents are choosing to interact with us on-line. Reporting online is the most effective method for issues regarding graffiti, abandoned vehicles, fly-posting, fly-tipping, missed waste collections, litter, overgrown trees/vegetation, grass cutting, dog fouling, potholes, street lights, road markings, noise complaints and pollution, providing residents with a quicker response and the ability to monitor status.

Since MyAccount was implemented we have seen:

- Over 300,000 online views of Council Tax
- 14,000 direct debits set up online
- 13,000 Council Tax moves
- Over 44,000 'reports' online



Our on-line services have been enhanced this year with the introduction of:

- On-line submission of evidence to support benefit claims – this can be managed through mobile phones
- Council Tax change of address – major improvements to mover process
- On-line applications for licences

### **Oracle Cloud**

Going live on 1 April 2019 Oracle Cloud provides the modern technology to support internal transformation. All staff now have access to a mobile App to carry out Employee Self Service tasks such as booking absence/leave, pay slips and claiming expenses.

Automated transactions improve efficiency and governance and as new modules are implemented they will provide improved reporting, people and career management.

### **Data Modelling**

Using a modern, efficient approach to analysing data, Phase 3 of this exciting project has seen:

- A dashboard with a single view of a resident's debt to the council and a link to vulnerability to ensure we offer the most appropriate support
- The Community Safety Partnership testing a dashboard indicating the top 10 ASB areas enabling us to target activity
- Housing supporting potential homelessness with targeted intervention

### **► FUTURE**

Innovation and new ways of working are constantly on our radar in order to deliver the best possible services to the residents and businesses of Thurrock. Over the next year we will be focusing the Transformation Programme on the delivery of three key principles:

- Getting it right first time, every time
- Excellent customer services
- Collaboration and co-production of services

### **Agile Working**

Supporting organisational transformation, embedding agile working across the council to drive the benefits of technology, property and ways of working.

### **Thurrock On-Line**

Commence the market testing for a replacement digital platform to continue to support channel shift and customer services.

# HUMAN RESOURCES & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (HR & OD)

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

The focus of HR & OD is to ensure the Council has the high performing, engaged and confident workforce it needs to deliver excellent services and positive outcomes to our residents. The service consists of:

- HR, Resourcing and Improvement – ensuring the council is effectively resourced with the right people to deliver services to residents and providing the employment framework for excellent people management.
- Pay and Operation – ensuring staff are paid appropriately and the council complies with appropriate legislation and statutory requirements.
- People and Organisational Development – ensuring our workforce is equipped with the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed to deliver the council's priorities and the organisation embraces change.

Activity and interventions are aligned to deliver the Council's People Strategy which is focused on the key themes of **Capacity** – a customer first approach and a workforce that has the capacity to deliver what is required; **Confidence** - a confident workforce who are free to innovate and take managed risks; and **Culture** – a 'one team' culture of inclusion and engagement with excellent management and trust driving a climate of continual improvement.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

### Pay Review

The team successfully developed, negotiated and delivered a new, fit for purpose pay structure and agreement that provides a flexible and fair foundation for further modernisation over the next few years and improves our market competitiveness.

### Oracle Cloud

Oracle Cloud provides a modern system which will underpin business transformation and improvement across HR & OD. Oracle went live on 1 April and the team have consolidated processes to improve efficiency through automated transactions, improved employee and manager experience, whilst supporting change across the organisation. Once fully functional Oracle will provide:

- Enhanced business intelligence to support workforce planning and talent management
- Improved Employee Self Service through an App
- Improved Manager Self Service and dashboards
- Efficiency in internal processes supporting improved customer service

### Capacity

The council has:

- Recruited over 300 staff in nine months
- Reduced last year's spend on agency staff by over £500k
- Exceeded our target for recruiting apprentices
- Re-procured the managed service for agency staff with reduced costs paid to agencies

## **Confidence**

Aiming to have the best workforce and the best and most exciting opportunities for staff we have:

- Built confidence and capability by delivering 544 different learning and development events in the past 12 months reaching nearly 6000 participants
- Improved Customer Services by taking people through the 'Right First Time' programme
- Delivered over 100 sessions of Leadership & Management Development to 650 people

## **Culture**

Organisational culture is critical to success, the way we do things is the ultimate determinate of how we treat our customers. This year we have:

- Developed and published our new organisational values – launched in July they followed extensive engagement with staff to help define both the values and the behaviours that exemplify them
- Conducted our Pulse Survey to determine the impact of our actions and inform the development of our People Strategy
- Improved our wellbeing offer, promoting health and ensuring staff are supported - reducing sickness absence, supporting mental health and improving our staff survey outcomes

## **► FUTURE**

Key priorities for the year ahead include:

- Pay Review Phase 2 – a full review of our reward and benefits package to further modernise our approach and ensure an inclusive approach
- Oracle Cloud Phase 2 – embed Employee and Manager Self Service to realise benefits and efficiencies and underpin business transformation
- Values – embed in our policies, processes and practices
- Talent Management – develop talent management and succession to support effective workforce and career planning
- Review and refresh our People Strategy for the next three years

## **INFORMATION TEAM**

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

This team is responsible for ensuring compliance with information governance regulations and protection of the council's reputation, including information security (policies and procedures), data protection, Freedom of Information (FOI), records management, complaints and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) including Local Land & Property Gazetteer (LLPG) / Local Street Gazetteer (LSG).

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

During 2018/19:

- Recorded compliments from residents regarding our services have nearly trebled (927 in 2018/19 compared to 356 the previous year) as the team are now capturing those submitted through the contact centre.
- The council processed 95% of the 1093 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests within the legal timeframe. The volume of FOI requests have doubled since 2014/15, however performance remains strong.
- 83 Subject Access Requests (SAR) were received under the Data Protection Act. This is a significant increase compared to the previous year which is due to the removal of the £10 fee in May 2018. Of the 83 requests, 73% of requests were processed within the timeframe (1 month).
- 43% of complaints received were upheld, however complaint volumes have reduced.
- 89% of complaints were responded to within the timeframe, which shows an improvement compared to the previous year.
- During the same period 4400 enquiries were received from MPs, MEPs and Councillors of which 96% were responded to within timeframe.
- As part of the Transparency Agenda and to support a reduction in FOI requests the Information Governance Team is working with all services to ensure an increased amount of data is identified for routine publication online.
- To enhance and improve the council's data protection performance, and protect us from fines, all staff and members have undertaken GDPR training and all new staff have to complete and pass within 5 days.

## ▶ FUTURE

The focus for the team over the next year will be:

- Driving a learning from complaints culture with robust learning action plans across council services
- To implement changes required as part of the Data Protection Act and Information Governance Legislation
- Progressing a digital approach to complaints to improve the service to residents. This will enable residents to check complaint status online.

## LIBRARIES

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

Thurrock's Library Service includes nine authority run libraries and one self-serve library within Purfleet Community Hub. The principal purpose of the library is to provide equality of access to accurate and up to date information through provision of printed material and increasingly, access to information online.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Four hubs now operate from within libraries, South Ockendon, Chadwell, Tilbury and, more recently, East Tilbury. A new build – Aveley Community Hub, incorporating the local library service, will open in the coming weeks.

In December 2018, Cabinet approved the 'Communities First' Libraries and Hub strategy which seeks to place libraries and hubs at the heart of the community.

A Peer Review of the Library Service took place in July 2019. We were delighted to receive positive feedback from the team and praise for our committed, passionate and knowledgeable staff and volunteers.

Recommendations from the Library Peer Review include continuing to develop the hub programme, increasing the profile of Thurrock and its libraries locally, regionally and nationally and recognising the contribution that libraries can make to literacy, digital literacy and educational attainment. A copy of the final Peer Review report is attached to this report. A delivery plan for the strategy has been updated to incorporate the recommendations from the Peer Review.

We have much to be proud about in relation to our library service. We have the highest ratio of members within our comparator group of authorities which is evaluated annually at a national level. Our library service is well regarded by residents. The service continually strives to ensure residents benefit from a range of events and opportunities including the Summer Reading Challenge, literacy competitions with schools, and hosting reading events including the Essex Book Festival.

Supporting the digital agenda remains a priority for the service. Capital funding has been approved to update technology within all libraries from October 2019 through to April 2020. Staff and volunteers continue to assist residents to become digitally enabled supporting completion of online forms including registration and access to MyAccount. Use of our online services has grown with more residents aware that they can access 24/7 free learning courses etc. and borrow e-books and e-audio via their phones and tablets. Support for reading continues to evolve especially encouraging children and young people to read for pleasure and benefit from the opportunities being able to read well can bring.

Provision of information and signposting to support agencies remains a core offer. Library staff receive on-going training and work with the hubs to ensure information is easy to access.

## ▶ FUTURE



The Library Service will continue to develop alongside the Community Hubs programme. The Communities First Libraries and Hubs Strategy sets out our commitment to keep library services open whilst modernising and aligning the service alongside community hubs. This will support the alignment of community hubs and libraries, ensuring our offer supports a proactive collection of community anchors in Thurrock, helping neighbourhoods meet local needs and providing safe, friendly places to meet and network. I encourage all members to ensure they visit their local library and to keep their membership up to date.

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT and EQUALITIES**

### **▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW**

The Community Development Team works with services and residents to help people come together to take positive action on what is important to them. The team cover a wide range of functions including community engagement, volunteering, community funding, voluntary sector development and liaison with community forums.

The team provide corporate support to services around equality and diversity, ensuring our decisions and processes are informed by our duties as a public body under the Equality Act 2010. Building strong, resilient communities that enable integration and cohesion in a growing borough underpins the wide and varied work of the service.

### **▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS**

Understanding the aspirations of communities – for their neighbourhood and for specific groups across our borough – is a central requirement of all council services. We are committed to improving community engagement, provision of information, consultation and co-production. In April 2019 we adopted a new, interactive and multifunctional consultation portal – Engagement HQ! I am excited about the potential of the new portal and encourage all residents to sign up via <https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk>

A Collaborative Communities Framework is being developed to set out our vision and commitments to empower citizens and to work together to realise ambitions for our communities and resolve societal challenges with the support of services. Thurrock's rich tapestry of cultural activities, support networks and activities to bring people together around common goals is largely achieved through our voluntary, community and faith sector.

We are exploring how our services can better enable community led action. A joint conference with Thurrock CVS was held on 7 October 2019 to explore this further, and valuable feedback was given for us to consider including reducing red tape when communities want to develop local initiatives, reviewing the Compact with the voluntary sector, and ensuring partnerships are open to all so that communities can raise new ideas to support innovation and improvement.

Supporting communities to access the resources they need to deliver locally is a key aspect of the team's work with grants programmes. The Voluntary Sector Development Fund is administered through CVS and I have been impressed by the flexibility that

working in partnership can achieve through this fund to support a wide range of voluntary sector organisation. The Community Environmental Development Fund is very well subscribed. Applications to the fifth round of bids will open later this year. 15 organisations benefited from the last round of applications including projects from Thurrock Play Network who are improving the space they use to increase activities to support play, and Thurrock Harriers who are remarking their eight lane track. Council can be assured that the funding we make available is allocated fairly, targeting ideas with the greatest impact.

We have supported a wide range of events over the year including Holocaust Memorial Day, the anniversary of the Windrush and centenary of the end of World War One.

Supporting volunteering is a key priority for the service. As well as working with communities to encourage volunteering, the service oversees the council's volunteer programme. As we continue to monitor and streamline the process for involving volunteers, it is anticipated the programme will go from strength to strength.

Thurrock's Community Hub programme is a partnership across communities, the voluntary sector and Thurrock Council led by the Community Development and Equalities team. Community hubs help to articulate a vision for its area's future and this year a great deal of progress has been made including by the Aveley Hub in pursuing the first purpose built hub in Thurrock.

Over 140 nominations for the upcoming Civic Awards were received – and the final shortlist is now being produced for the awards ceremony in February 2020.

## ► FUTURE

The Community Hub programme will continue to develop alongside the library service where there is opportunity to do so, helping people access support to digital skills and information resources in libraries.

As the Library Service and hubs programme align, we will build on this opportunity for residents to Influence local decisions and shape the future of their borough through hubs. The team will also support the delivery of future Your Place Your Voice engagement activities and help residents with a passion for active citizenship to develop the skills and confidence to take an active role in their neighbourhood.

## ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Arts, culture and heritage have an important role to play in improving wellbeing, quality of life and place-shaping. The service consists of the Thameside Theatre, a small arts development budget and the Thurrock Museum and Heritage Service.

### ► SERVICE OVERVIEW

As a council we strive to improve quality of life for our residents. The arts and our rich heritage have an important role to play in this regard, helping us to learn, to engage in our community and to have fun.

I am proud of our local history – from the earliest settlements in the area through our rich maritime and industrial heritage to the present day. Our history helps us to understand who we are. In the past year our Heritage service has sought to share the story of the borough and to act as our guardians of the local history collection and archive.

The service has completed a Heritage Lottery Funded project - Thurrock's Attic – which has focused on improving our understanding of and access to the museum collection and archive. The project included beginning the digitisation of our collection to improve access, training for staff and volunteers and a public vote on local residents' favourite items in the museum collection. The top three items have now been part of a touring exhibition across the borough. The project has left a legacy of trained staff and volunteers who are continuing to digitise our collection and improve access to more than 250,000 years of local history.

Alongside work to improve the management of the museum collection the service has worked with the Royal Opera House Trailblazer programme to offer a number of education enrichment activities at Coalhouse Fort, in the Museum and schools. This includes sessions on history, maths and English delivered using local stories, places and items from the collection.

I am particularly pleased to see more volunteers supporting the service and helping to share our history with residents. Volunteers are now supporting many aspects of work in the museum, from dealing with enquiries to sorting and digitising the collection, conducting research and, most importantly, putting together exhibitions on display in the Thameside and elsewhere. I am sure you will want to join with me in offering our thanks for the work that they do.

The Thameside Theatre is more popular than ever, with more shows and events taking place. The improved ticketing and marketing systems introduced last year are starting to reap benefits, making it easier than ever for residents to book tickets and to see what the theatre has to offer.

While the theatre has focused on income generation to help pay its own way it also takes its commitment to the local community seriously and hosts relaxed performances, Liam's Club for customers of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions, the Beautiful Minds Cinema Club, foreign language films and other events and activities to engage our whole community.

Like the museum the theatre has been able to attract a number of volunteers to support its work. The Thameside Young Producers are a particular credit to the theatre and to

Thurrock – a group of young people with an interest in the performing arts they have run the stage at the Orsett Show for the past two years and have supported a number of the Mayor's events among many other things. Their good work has been recognised by none other than Andrew Lloyd Webber who wrote a letter of commendation to the group. The lead Producer has also been offered a scholarship at Mountview Academy, London – one of the leading drama schools in the UK - based on her portfolio of work at the theatre over the past 5 years.

## ► FUTURE

I have been particularly keen to encourage the development of community based arts activity in Thurrock. I am pleased that the Council has been able to work with local artists, community groups and other stakeholders to support the development of a bid for Creative People and Places (CPP) funding which could provide a multi-million pound cash injection to support the arts in the borough. The CPP process is incredibly competitive and the group did so well to reach the final stages of the application process – in the top three for the Arts Council Eastern Region in 2019. While we missed out then, the really positive feedback from Arts Council England means the group are determined to have another go and submit a revised application in the current bidding round.

Work is underway alongside our partners and communities to develop the Creative People and Places proposals, which are helping us shape the shared vision and priorities for the arts in Thurrock.

In the meantime we have been able to work with the Thurrock CVS and combine our arts development funding with some underspend in the Voluntary Sector Development Fund to launch a bidding round and distribute around £25,000 to local artists and arts groups to help deliver community based projects that help build strong and well connected communities. Organisations have been able to submit an Expression of Interest for up to £4,000 and through a shortlisting process a number have been asked to submit a full application. I hope our residents will engage with and enjoy the projects that receive funding which will deliver community based arts activity across Thurrock throughout the next year.

# PROCUREMENT and CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

## ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

The service leads on all procurement processes across the council providing a structure to support all areas in adopting a fair, consistent, transparent and robust approach to procurement stretching every pound we spend to deliver great value for money while at the same time delivering the best possible outcomes for residents.

## ▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Key outcomes for the year were:

- Implementation of a challenge process through Procurement Scrutiny Board for contract renewals and significant single source tenders
- Development of a Contract Management Framework and Handbook
- Creation of a Joint Commissioning Board

The upgrade to Oracle Cloud has meant a significant opportunity to review how the procurement team provides support, innovation and cost control on spend activity across all areas. All contracts are timed and dated, so are flagged for renewal in plenty of time to enable the council to get the best value and quality and giving reassurance to our residents. Reduced costs, whilst maintaining standards and quality are built in.

The number of procurement exercises and contracts processed across the council continues to rise.

2016	2017	2018	2019
256	330	360	435

Moving forward, there will be a greater emphasis on the establishment of framework contracts where Thurrock Council can buy quickly and compliantly for a number of services and supplies and ensure that there is no 'off-contract' spend.

Significant tenders completed or progressing during 2019/20 include interim and agency staff, children's transport, redevelopment of the Household Waste Recycling Centre, Living Well at Home out of hours service, corporate building cleaning and a number of school capital projects.

The team continue to work to ensure that local businesses are able to tender for opportunities as appropriate. The training programme, 'What Makes a Winning Bid' continues to be popular. During the past year there have been four sessions of the training course held, attended by SME suppliers, including one specifically for the Voluntary Sector and one to support children's transport providers. The feedback received from attendees has been very positive with a general view that those attending now understand the process and feel better equipped to respond more fully for future opportunities.

To support tendering opportunities further, training on Oracle has been provided to the voluntary sector and will be rolled out more widely free of charge to local (and other businesses) able to attend.

## ▶ FUTURE

## **Contract & Supplier Relationship Management**

Across the council there are great examples of good contract management, the intention is that the process and practice of contract management will be reviewed across the council in order to identify best practice and recommend a way forward for Thurrock that will ensure high quality and consistent management in all areas.

## **Procurement Strategy**

Following the publication of the National Procurement Strategy in July 2018 the service has reviewed its performance against the criteria set out. Generally results were good, however the remaining areas for improvement will be set out in a new strategy for Thurrock completed during 2020. Key will be performance reporting – which we will address using Oracle, financial risk management in difficult market areas, such as social care, and greater emphasis on reporting of delivery of social value and public value benefits.

## **Social Value**

Leveraging social value through the council's purchasing power is a key priority for the service. In conjunction with the Community Development and Equalities Team and Thurrock CVS, officers are reviewing how and what we ask suppliers to deliver in terms of community benefits through procurement activity, and how performance can be reported and evidenced. A new framework for social value is under development which, it is proposed, will allow bidders for council contracts to select and commit to specific activities across a range of targets and outcomes.

## **INTERNAL AUDIT**

Internal Audit is an independent assurance function that primarily operates in accordance with best practice professional standards and guidelines. It reviews on a continuous basis, the extent to which the internal control environment supports and promotes the achievement of the council's objectives, and contributes to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

### **▶ REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS**

The external Chief Internal Auditor's Annual Report confirmed the council's frameworks for governance, risk management and internal control were all "green" (positive). The Internal Audit team has provided regular progress reports to the Standards and Audit Committee on the work carried out and highlighted any key findings.

### **▶ FUTURE**

The 2019/20 plan was developed with senior managers taking into account the key risks identified within the council's Corporate Risk Register, External Auditor's Annual Audit, the Annual Governance Statement and Report and agreed at Standards & Audit Committee. The service will also be undertaking a self-assessment review against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards, prior to an external evaluation in 2020/21.

## **LEGAL SERVICES**

The restructure of Thurrock Legal Services has addressed the introduction of client aligned team structures, improved reporting lines and a reduction in the level of spend on locum or agency lawyers to build increased legal capacity, resilience and internal expertise and achieve significant savings. There are now four legal teams covering Regeneration, Safeguarding, Litigation and Housing and Legal Practice.

Key activities in the last year have been creating permanent capacity to potentially trade our services to smaller district authorities and successfully obtaining Lexcel Accreditation for the past 11 years. This accreditation has recently been renewed following a full independent inspection of the legal services team. Robust practice management is a key factor in delivering excellence in legal services, retaining good legal talent and consequently giving reassurance to our residents.

### ► FUTURE

Thurrock Legal Services will continue as an in-house team addressing principally the needs of Thurrock Council but will continue to explore potential collaborations with South Essex authorities where this would be cost efficient and build resilience.

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

The service continues to support all of the council's public committees. In the 2018/19 year there were additional meetings created to allow Members closer involvement with the Lower Thames Crossing project and a task force was established to look in detail at the Local Plan. The Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee also established a time limited task and finish group on the future of Orsett Hospital.

Staff learning is still a focus of the team and two members of staff are currently undertaking study to gain a certificate in Democratic Services awarded by our professional body, ADSO (Association of Democratic Services Officers).

## **ELECTORAL AND MEMBER SERVICES**

The Electoral team successfully ran an unscheduled by-election in March 2019, the scheduled local elections combined with a by-election on 2 May 2019 and the unscheduled European Election on 23 May 2019. Subsequently a snap Parliamentary General Election was called which was managed successfully.

The statutory annual canvass commenced in July 2019. With the possibility of an early General Election, the team took action from September to ensure electors were registered early in the process. A revised register was published in December 2019 with a further revised register to be published in February 2020 as required. The annual canvass will undergo a radical change in 2020 to streamline the process, reducing the heavily paper-based system and the team is working to understand the impact and changes it will bring to the process.

The Members service team work throughout the municipal year to ensure Civic functions are well organised and the Mayor and elected members are supported and receive the assistance they require.

## ► FUTURE

Planning for the scheduled May 2020 local elections and Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner election is underway although at an early stage. The PFCC poll will be led regionally by Colchester.

The team continues to extensively 'data mine' using other local authority data sources to keep the electoral register up to date and encourage residents to register to vote when they move or become eligible. This is a statutory duty of the Electoral Registration Officer. A statutory Polling District and Polling Place review is also underway.

Members Services team is currently planning the Mayors Civic Dinner in April 2020 to commemorate the end of the Mayor's year in office.



## PERFORMANCE 2019/20 – Corporate Performance Indicators

Service Area	KPI Title	2018/19 Outturn	Month 6 2019/20	2019/20 Target	Status
HROD	No of new apprenticeships started (incl current staff undertaking new apprentice standards)	60	39	59	ACHIEVING
Customer Services	Contact Centre - Face to Face average waiting times (minutes)	3:56 mins	0:59 mins	Less than 3:00 mins	ACHIEVING
Customer Services	Contact Centre - Face to Face - no of visitors	68,822	29,964	n/a	n/a
Community Development	No of placements available within the council for volunteers	-	240	210	ACHIEVING

Service Area	KPI Title	2018/19 Outturn	Month 6 2019/20	2019/20 Target	Status
Community Development	% of volunteer placements filled within the council	85%	90%	96%	FAILING

Following unexpected changes within the team leading the on-boarding of volunteers, there have been temporary delays associated with the processing of new applications in the second half of the quarter leading this KPI just failing to reach target.

### Route to GREEN

A volunteer recruitment action plan has been developed with adequate resourcing now in place to ensure that the target returns to green in Quarter 3 2019/20. Actions include the allocation of resource two days a week to cover the ongoing on-boarding requirements as well as any backlog. In addition, resource is in place to ensure DBS checks, where applicable, are progressed swiftly.

NB. Latest data shows that since September this has improved and will be GREEN for quarter 3, which will be reported to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March.

Service Area	KPI Title	2018/19 Outturn	Month 6 2019/20	2019/20 Target	Status
Libraries	Number of library members (signed up and active within 12 months for loans / PC use)	25,756	25,865	26,785	FAILING

Libraries have joined 2,490 new members July-Sept 2019. This is in comparison to 2,248 in the same period last year which shows an increase of 242 members. However, some customers became 'inactive' as they have not used the service in the last 12 months. The increase in new members is largely due to the Children's Summer Reading Challenge. The vacant post of Children's Learning Services Officer was recruited to in late July.

### Route to GREEN

The Summer Reading Challenge took place in August-September and was successful in increasing membership. Class visits have resumed from September and families are encouraged to join their children during these visits. All libraries have a daily new member target and all staff are being reminded to maintain the impetus and continue to promote library membership wherever possible, for example through outreach activities.

## FINANCIAL INFORMATION 2019/20

Service Area	Full Year Budget (2019/20)	Full year Forecast as at Month 6	Variance
	£0	£0	£0
Internal Audit	278	238	-40
Legal Services	1773	1692	-81
Democratic Services	217	198	-19
Electoral Services	491	446	-45
Member Services	746	744	-2
Strategy Team	298	298	0
Communications	475	499	24
Customer Services	1036	860	-176
Procurement and contract management	757	795	38
Corporate Programme Team	902	902	0
Information Team	492	492	0
HR, OD and Payroll	3429	3329	-100
Arts Development	13.5	13.5	0
Theatre – Arts (Cultural Services)	143	143	0
Theatre - Promotions	-163	-163	0
Museum	103	103	0
Community Development Projects	670	670	-1
Libraries	1,058	1,058	0

**Appendix to report:**

**Library Service LGA Peer Review report July 2019**

# Thurrock Council



## Library Peer Challenge

Report of the Peer Challenge Team

Date 8 - 9 July 2019

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# 1. Executive Summary

Thurrock Council Library Service (TL) was awarded a peer challenge through the Arts Council England (ACE) and Local Government Association (LGA) partnership. Nine library peer reviews were funded by the Arts Council this year for the first time in addition to three culture peer challenges. The scope and focus for this library challenge is set out in section three of this report.

On 12 December 2018 Thurrock Council's Cabinet agreed a "Communities First Strategy for Thurrock Libraries and Community Hubs." This is the first ever plan for Thurrock Libraries. It sets out the ambition for service development within the context of the agreed council vision for Thurrock, the place. TL are considering how to make the strategy a reality and are working up delivery plans, whilst continuing with an ongoing programme of refurbishment and renewal of the library buildings. The accompanying report states that additional funding will be required to secure the service at current levels. One off funds will be allocated to support the development of individual business plans and financial implications will be considered at that stage. A key aim of this will be to develop an investment plan for the long term future, by considering all development opportunities to enhance future provision.

The strategy was produced following public consultation that took place in June 2018. This guarantees that all nine of Thurrock's libraries and the self-serve community hub will remain open, and seeks to enhance and improve the offer to residents by continuing to develop community hubs within library buildings. The intention is to develop libraries and hubs as an "anchor" in which to extend support to residents.

The strategy also looks to extend the services on offer in libraries and build on the excellent work already being done. As well as providing books, libraries will:

- offer support to those looking to learn and enhance their skills
- support health and well-being
- provide a range of cultural experiences and arts events
- provide excellent digital resources, including access to PCs and Wi-Fi
- give children and adults the skills they need to become skilled digital operators ready to take advantage of the latest technological advances.

There is a strong cross party political commitment to the library service. The council has stated that it will not close any libraries. They will remain in their current locations, although some of the library buildings may change this will be to enhance services.

The peer team met with a very welcoming, passionate and committed group of staff, volunteers and Portfolio Holder. TL managers recognise that some staff feel undervalued, and this impression is compounded by the need to restructure the service, to align with the desired outcomes of the new strategy.

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The service is self-aware and describes itself as “being at the crossroads” and recognises that it is time to realise the full potential of the service. TL is not alone in holding aspirations for the library service, with support evident at the most senior levels of the council. The peer team recommend that you use the peer challenge process to support your forward planning. The team offered both individual and organisational support to assist TL on its journey. There are other library authorities that are further down the line of library/community hub development that will be able to share their experience with Thurrock.

Most commentators’ feel that TL have found a suitable home in the Adults, Housing and Health Directorate of the council. The peer team was told that “Being in the adult services directorate is the best fit we have experienced.” This organisational arrangement has helped stabilise the service and provides comfort to staff and users that the council is serious about its library service provision. Prior to this libraries had been located in range of different directorates and this had proved unsettling.

During the visit the peer team visited the South Ockendon library/hub. We learned that in 2012 three groups using separate buildings merged into one community hub. This included the library, the housing office and South Ockendon Community Forum shop front. The model appears to be a good prototype for other similar developments. TL are currently building a replacement for a branch library in Aveley, refurbishing East Tilbury and working up proposals for an integrated health, hub and library in Tilbury. Other buildings are in phase 2 of a development programme and early thoughts are being given as to what a virtual library/hub could be. It appears that the library service provides the anchor around which other services/community led support can be provided to suit local need as defined in community profiles and by the refinement of further detailed consultation with the local community.

Thurrock is an exciting place to be with great potential. TL need to find a way to engage in the wider place agenda.

## **2. Key recommendations**

The peer team recommendations are grouped under the three priorities set out in the council’s vision, agreed in January 2018. These are People, Place and Prosperity.

### **1. Develop a clear plan to roll out the new library strategy (People)**

The recently agreed library/hub strategy “Communities First” sets out a five year plan to improve the service and place it at the centre of the communities that live in Thurrock. The council is aware that it needs to decide how it is going to deliver these aspirations and work is well underway on investing in infrastructure improvements.

### **2. Consider appropriate timing for staff restructure (People)**

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Time now needs to be spent on bringing staff and volunteers fully into delivering the aims of the strategy. This will require consideration of the timing of the staff restructure to ensure alignment with the skills required to deliver the strategy. The current structure and job specifications, role descriptions are out of date and will be reviewed as a necessary consequence of implementing the strategy. Once a delivery plan is agreed, it should be shared with staff, properly resourced, timetabled and implemented at pace. Some staff are feeling “unloved” and would like to welcome a greater recognition by senior council officers and councillors.

### **3. Increase the profile of Thurrock and its libraries locally, regionally and nationally (People)**

TL has a lot to be proud of and now is the time to consider how to better promote TL as a progressive library service. In particular the success of the South Ockendon community hub, with its core library offer combined with the delivery of other offers seems an appropriate model for wider recognition. As Thurrock continues to develop the model it would be useful to commission an independent evaluation. This will provide a useful basis from which to roll out the infrastructure improvements set out in the TL strategy. The South Ockendon success story would be suitable for a case study. Both the LGA and ACE will help Thurrock promote this story. It would be good to see Thurrock appear in a future edition of Arts Council’s Libraries as Community Hubs: Case Studies and Learning<sup>1</sup> and as a case study in the LGA/ACE online culture hub

It would be useful to collect and use impact stories, and build this into the new performance management framework, perhaps by making this a performance indicator. The new libraries campaign can use these stories to raise the profile of libraries. Consideration should be given as to whether the current KPIs are the correct ones to inform on the value of Thurrock Libraries. Consideration should also be given to improving data collection to support TL’s work and profile.

### **4. Continue to develop and network (People)**

TL has some valuable alliances locally, resulting in good collaboration within the library/hubs. These can be further developed and matured for the benefit of the Thurrock communities. Much effort has been expended in consultation and it would be useful to consider how to maintain this relationship. One idea would be to consider developing a Friends network, building on responses to recent consultation and providing a platform for continuing dialogue with the public.

### **5. Develop one brand with shared understanding (Place)**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Libraries-CommunityHubs-Renaisi.pdf>

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The presentation of the library/hub service is confusing and much effort is being expended to try and describe what goes on within the library/hub buildings. This requires a discussion and agreement about developing the one brand for TL.

## **6. Recognise the contribution that libraries can make to literacy, digital literacy and educational attainment (Prosperity)**

As the strategy develops it will be important to explore the libraries contribution to increase prosperity in Thurrock e.g. supporting business development. This area appears to be underdeveloped and may be a consequence of no libraries voice being heard at the "top table."

## **3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach**

### **The peer team**

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Thurrock were:

- Carol Stump – Chief Librarian, Kirklees Council
- Helen Parrott – Senior Manager Strategic Partnerships, Arts Council England
- Mark Harrison – LGA Peer Challenge Manager

### **Scope and focus**

The peer team considered the following areas three core questions:

- is the council getting best value from its library assets?
- how effective is the library service's contribution to cross cutting agendas of other services?
- what is the role of the library service and council in the local community?

In addition, Thurrock asked the peer team to consider the following questions:

- what are the relationships and role that the service has within the wider council?
- what opportunities are there for income generation, what can TL learn from other councils?
- is Thurrock getting the balance right between its community and its traditional roles?

### **The peer challenge process**

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement-focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement focus. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented

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to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent two days onsite at Thurrock, during which they:

- spoke to more than 34 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders
- gathered information and views from more than 13 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading
- collectively spent more than 80 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than two weeks in Thurrock.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (8 - 9 July 2019). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

## 4. Feedback

### **Is the council getting best value from its library assets?**

TL staff are working hard to get better value from the library assets. There is more work to be done as some of the building stock is not fit for purpose and opening hours have been reduced as a consequence of budget reductions. The council is addressing this through a planned programme of infrastructure investments and is considering how to realign opening hours to better suit public requirements.

Despite this TL are bucking the national trend on visitor numbers, with a high number of active borrowers and physical visits (CIPFA stats comparative profile February 2019). TL has high levels of computer use and high take up on the Summer Reading Challenge strongly supported by young volunteers.

There is an emerging recognition that libraries are so much more than buildings and the recently adopted strategy sets out for the first time a forward plan for library improvements. This is ambitious and although the proposals for building improvements is clearly stated there needs to be further consideration given to the capacity and revenue budget necessary to deliver on the aspiration.

The council is investing capital, as it rolls out a programme of library/hub renewal. More work is



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required to explore opportunities for existing branches that are not currently within scope for redevelopment. We were pleased to learn that communities will be actively involved in this process. There is also work required to assess the impact of the major developments within Thurrock, including 30,000 new homes.

There is a clear recognition the TL contributes to social cohesion and community wellbeing. However the value of this work is not recorded or measured, therefore it is difficult to assess if the council is getting best value from its library service in this area. So the question that arises is TL measuring the right things?

We were told that spaces/rooms could be better used and this would increase engagement by the wider community. Staff feel disempowered and would welcome the opportunity to take risks, within boundaries and without the fear of sanction. It may be time to think of a different approach to room hire within the library buildings. It may be that the income targets are preventing the best use of the assets by the community. A shift toward offering the use of the space to community groups and partners in pursuit of delivering library strategy outcomes is worth considering.

Many people commented about inadequate corporate support e.g. I.T and assets. This seems to be a long term issue and is using up much time, goodwill and capacity that would be better directed to the front line and library/hub development activity.

During our focus group sessions a number of improvement ideas were identified by staff and volunteers, and these require consideration and resolution. They are:

- staff feel undervalued by the rest of the council and some are circumspect as previous reviews and reports have not led to any improvement
- action is required to improve opening hours, especially on Saturday afternoons
- investment is required in digital infrastructure and related training/skills development
- opportunities to improve skills and capability to better respond to user requirements
- focus required to improve marketing, image and profile of the library service/hub
- clarification about the role of volunteers
- unified management approach across the network i.e. one manager for library/hub
- better promotion of library activities and events, including inter-generational activity
- refocus on literacy and educational attainment
- realism about the budget
- progress on restructuring and recognition of the contribution that staff make, maybe a celebration of success
- improvement to stock and its presentation
- better access, both physical and reading materials.

We were pleased to meet a passionate and knowledgeable group of library staff. Despite budget constraints they are fully committed to doing the best they can for their communities.

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## **How effective is the library service's contribution to cross cutting agendas of other services.**

There is lots of potential in this Directorate and beyond for TL to demonstrate its contribution to the wider agenda of the council and partners. Some excellent work is in place, but it remains under celebrated and the opportunity exists to ensure that the outcomes that will be described in the library/hub delivery plans can be developed in a way that better reflects TL's contribution to Place, People and Prosperity aims.

Libraries could underpin so much more of the Council's work, and the strategy sets out a number of offers that reflect this, as follows:

- reading
- learning
- wellbeing and community
- cultural and arts
- digital.

It appears that libraries have not featured when new developments are being shaped. This opportunity should not be missed in future, the potential of libraries/hubs should be a part of the prospectus for future housing growth and other suitable regeneration initiatives. The inclusion of a library/hub space in a new leisure centre or school can be a low cost/high impact solution.

The ambition expressed in "Communities First" is not matched by the current resources. Consideration is required to stabilise the library revenue budget and to provide additional capacity and capability to work out how best to deliver the strategy.

TL need to develop and share a compelling narrative. Much of this is set out in "Communities First" and we understand that there will be a media campaign to raise awareness of the library/hub offer under the championship of the Portfolio Holder for Communities. Staff are very excited about the future and it is important both to recognise this and to find a way to better equip staff to contribute ideas. They should be involved in the continuing infrastructure improvements and helped to acquire the skills necessary to deliver on the strategy.

We recognise that the Book Start scheme is well understood in Children's Centres. This initiative makes a significant contribution to children's development and literacy.

## **What is the role of the library service and council in the local community?**

The role of libraries in Thurrock is a provider of books and reading opportunities, and also learning, literacy and information. Above all libraries are about communities and people and responding to their needs. Libraries can help people to live independent, happy and fulfilled lives in line with the emerging ambition expressed in "Communities First".

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TL is very much part of the council vision this means that libraries/hubs should aim to provide

(People)

- high quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
- the opportunity to build on partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
- the library/hub model that helps empower communities to make choices and be safer and stronger together

(Place)

- accessible public spaces that connect people and places
- fewer public buildings with better services

(Prosperity)

- 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.

Libraries are a safe and neutral space in which the above can be provided. The contribution to the people and place elements of the council vision are evident, and could be better documented to demonstrate the connections. The prosperity element is less evident and therefore requires further consideration and promotion to ensure that TL clearly understands its potential contribution to the prosperity of Thurrock.

The success of the library/hub model demonstrates the appetite to make co-location and co-production work. Despite some teething problems this model is maturing and the benefits of working in a new way focused on the local community is proving to be beneficial for residents.

The national Universal library offers support the “Communities First” strategy. Some work needs to be done to ensure that staff understand the connection between TL and the wider council and national agendas.

Thurrock understands that its libraries offer an inclusive environment and a safe space in which bespoke activities can be developed to respond to local needs. There is a common understanding that Thurrock consists of a number of “urban villages” each having its own unique characteristics. This profile needs taking into consideration as each new community/hub reflects the specific requirements of its own local community.

### **What are the relationships and role that the library service has with the wider council?**

TL is moving in the right direction and is well positioned within the Adults, Housing and Health directorate. This has helped the council, at a corporate level, to develop an understanding of the

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potential of libraries.

TL has been undervalued as a resource corporately and is playing catch up. Much valuable work has been carried out in the last 18 months to improve the service and to roll out the continuing infrastructure improvements. The scene is now set for the next five years and will be mapped out in business plans that deliver on the “Communities First” strategy. More work is required to make the strategy a reality and TL staff are key to its successful implementation.

It would be useful for TL to develop a narrative to assist in the marketing and promotion of the library offer. Part of the development of the narrative will describe clearly TL’s contribution to the wider council agenda.

Now is the time to recognise and share strengths, to be aspirational and to communicate and celebrate success.

As TL raises its profile in the council, staff would value more contact with senior management and councillors.

### **What opportunities are there for income generation, what can Thurrock learn from other councils?**

We are aware of the existing proposal to recruit to a business development post for TL. This is a specialist area and one where libraries have not been particularly successful. We think that a One Council approach is necessary. That is a review of the income generation potential of library/hubs in the context of the Thurrock estate and a recognition of the value of the other TL assets (people, stock, acquisitions, and services) as social capital.

TL has realised the clear potential in new developments of raising capital from S.106, public health and the council’s community hub capital funds. It would be useful to explore other funds and this requires time and resource to do so effectively e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility/sponsorship, ACE and other grants, working with the economic development team.

Funding partners will be looking to develop sustainable relationships, with pay back more likely in the medium to long term. It is not envisaged that any new income generation would cover the current revenue gap. To fully realise the ambition set out in the new strategy, the council needs to fund the service properly and consolidate the current operation.

The untapped potential of volunteers represents a significant potential resource for TL. Currently volunteers are active in home delivery, summer reading schemes and library assistant roles. However, the role of the volunteer varies across the service and staff have a range of views about the benefits of volunteers. Now is the time to reconsider the relationship with volunteers. For example advantages of volunteering include:

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- work experience and expanding your CV
  - helping your local community and giving back to society
  - meeting new people and making friends
  - staying active and feeling appreciated
  - improving your wellbeing and discovering new purpose.

All of the above are opportunities that are provided within “modern” library services. Now is the time to work together to provide an expanded role for volunteers within TL in partnership with volunteers and their representative organisations, such as Thurrock CVS. One important point is to consider how to better match the skills of the volunteer cohort with the aspirational outcomes of Thurrock’s new library strategy. An exemplar is Norfolk library service that has progressed the opportunities available for volunteers by developing nearly 40 role descriptions. Thereby clarifying and expanding the volunteer role and creating a better alignment with the work and desired outcomes of the Norfolk library and Information service.

### **Is Thurrock getting the balance right between its community and its traditional role?**

The peer team’s view is – is this the right question to ask given the ambitions of the council and its partners? The development of the community hub model with the library anchor reflects a good combination of a new integrated service. A key role of community hubs is to galvanise communities around the issues they feel passionate about; supporting opportunities to improve local conditions including health and wellbeing, community safety and helping people into work. As the library service and hubs programme align, the council aims to build on this opportunity for residents to influence local decisions and shape the future of their borough through hubs.

The library/hub will help support the delivery of Your Place Your Voice engagement activities and support residents with a passion for active citizenship to develop the skills and confidence to take an active role in their neighbourhood.

There is an awareness amongst library staff and senior management that work remains to be done to ensure that the library service is better positioned to contribute fully to the achievement of the Thurrock ambition. In particular the following require attention:

- develop and document a shared understanding of the contribution libraries can make to Thurrock outcomes
- frame the library service in the context of the library universal offers
- engage and inspire colleagues through leadership, direction and vision.

As well as the national agencies, Thurrock should work with various local and regional partners to achieve the ambitions of “Communities First”. The strategy conforms to good practice, as it includes a clear vision for the future outlining what the service should achieve and deliver. We note that DCMS approve the approach taken in Thurrock in developing the library/hub model.

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Networking opportunities are not being maximised and learning is not being migrated to help with the TL response to the Thurrock vision. Currently there is an opportunity to take a pause, reflect on work to date and identify the capacity and capability to fully engage with the national, regional and local agendas. The following may be of assistance as you move towards a new plan for TL to become fit for the future.

Library Taskforce publications/Blog. The Taskforce was set up to enable libraries in England to exploit their potential and be recognised as a vital resource for all. On this **blog**, members of the Taskforce talk about their work. <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/>

Arts Council is the development agency for libraries in England. The focus is on public libraries, which operate within a wider framework of library provision and local and national government services. They have taken on the work of the Libraries Task force until 2020.  
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-libraries>

ACE/LGA online culture hub:  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/culture-tourism-leisure-and-sport/good-practice-culture>

Two case studies from Peterborough Libraries currently on the culture hub, both for their content on the use of technology and as examples of published case studies.  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/new-delivery-model-peterborough-city-councils-library-service>

<https://www.local.gov.uk/peterboroughs-open>

Libraries Connected. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) has become Libraries Connected as part of its new role as a Sector Support Organisation with Arts Council England (ACE) funding. The new role will see Libraries Connected support and advocate for public libraries, building on successes such as the Universal Offers. The name change is part of a broad rebranding that has seen SCL adopt charity status, as part of the ACE funding deal worth £500,000 a year.  
<https://www.cilip.org.uk/page/LibrariesConnected1>

The Reading Agency is a charity that works throughout the United Kingdom to harness the proven power of reading to tackle life's big challenges like literacy, health and wellbeing and isolation and loneliness. Its vision is for a world where everyone is reading their way to a better life. It works closely with [partners](#) including public libraries, colleges and prisons to promote the benefits of reading among children and adults. <https://readingagency.org.uk/>

CIPFA Nearest Neighbours. Allows councils to download reports comparing each English library authority that returned data (134 of the 150 councils in England have been published: reports updated March 2017) with their family group, as defined by the CIPFA Nearest Neighbours Mode. Thurrock has a near neighbour comparator in Peterborough, and this may be worth progressing a conversation between the two library authorities. The peer team can facilitate this

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introduction.

JISC champions the use of digital technologies in UK education and research. It provides a range of online services and training to education, learning and research communities in the UK. Providing shared services, infrastructure and advice to help you manage your library resources, research publication lifecycle and research outputs. <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>

LGA is a founder member of the Libraries Taskforce and has oversight of cultural activities through its Culture, Tourism and Sport Board. It provides guidance and case study material as well as blogs, leadership conferences and peer challenges. [https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/12.6\\_LGA%20Cllr%20handbook\\_Delivery%20local%20solutions%20for%20public%20library%20services.pdf](https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/12.6_LGA%20Cllr%20handbook_Delivery%20local%20solutions%20for%20public%20library%20services.pdf)

CILIP is the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. It is a professional body for librarians, information specialists and knowledge managers in the United Kingdom. <https://www.google.com/search?q=CILIP&oq=CILIP&aqs=chrome..69i57j35i39j0l4.2367j0j8&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

LOCALITY (funding and income) is the national network supporting community organisations to be strong and successful. <https://locality.org.uk/>

Both peers on this team offered the ongoing support as individuals and on behalf of their respective organisations, Libraries Connected, Kirklees Council and Arts Council England. Kirklees Chief Librarian will share information and support around volunteer recruitment and roles, the Libraries of Sanctuary awards and national opportunities for recognition.

Finally the peer team evidenced much good practice internally, it is important to find a better way of sharing this across the service and council. The Library Services Manager produced an excellent narrative and supporting documents for the peer team. It would be useful to share these as appendices to this report when it is reviewed by the council's overview and scrutiny committee.

## 5. Next Steps

### Immediate next steps

We appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Gary Hughes, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government



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Association (LGA). His contact details are: [gary.hughes@local.gov.uk](mailto:gary.hughes@local.gov.uk)

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

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<b>29 January 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 17</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Children’s and Adult Social Care</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Sue Little, Cabinet Member for Children’s and Adult Social Care	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## 1. Introduction

I am honoured to deliver my fourth Cabinet Member report to Council as Portfolio Holder for Children’s and Adult Social Care. The report gives me the opportunity to reflect on what both my departments have achieved over the last year and detail the future of the services.

I am very proud of the progress we have made over the last year with an Ofsted Inspection rating of GOOD being achieved by Children’s Social Care and impressive progress continuing to be made on Adult Social Care Transformation.

I would like to thank both Director’s past and present and the staff across my senior officer team and all staff for their fantastic commitment to improving services for the people of Thurrock.

## 2. Children’s Social Care

I have been the Portfolio Holder for Children’s Social Care since May 2016, I inherited a service that had been judged by Ofsted to be ‘Requiring Improvement’.

As a member of the Fostering and Adoption Panel I understand the strengths and vulnerabilities of the service well and I am totally committed to ensuring that we deliver the best possible services to vulnerable children and their families. I attend the children’s social care development board on a monthly basis, something I championed as best practice, which ensures that I provide both challenge and support to the service, which helps to ensure best possible outcomes for vulnerable children. I have every confidence that my officers have the commitment and drive to continue to move the service in the right direction.

This confidence has been vindicated in the very recent Ofsted full inspection of children’s social care services during the weeks 11–22 November 2019. The external independent regulator, Ofsted, gave the service a resounding GOOD across all four judgement categories – a copy of the Ofsted report is included as an appendix to this report. This is particularly pleasing given the negative publicity the service and individual Officers have endured over the last 2 years. This adverse and

negative reporting of the service has not been supported by the independent regulator, Ofsted who have described:

*‘Effective and stable senior leadership has led to considerable improvement in the quality and impact of social work practice for children in need of help and protection, those in care and care leavers since the Ofsted 2016 single inspection.’*

*‘The assistant director and the recently retired director of children’s services have shown remarkably strong leadership in, addressing considerable deficits in practice reported at the last inspection. Together with the unstinting support of the current Interim DCS, the Chief Executive, elected members and strategic leads, they have created a culture of high expectation, support and challenge. Listening to children and acting on their views are practices that are becoming strongly embedded in practice.’*

Since I became Portfolio Holder in May 2016 I have achieved the following:

- An improved Ofsted judgement for children’s social care from Requires Improvement to Good
- Increased the number of permanent social workers and reduced the use of agency social workers;
- Increased the number of in-house foster carers and enabled more Thurrock children to be placed with Thurrock carers;
- Joined the Eastern Region Adoption Alliance to ensure pooling of resources and increasing the number of adopters available for Thurrock children;
- reduced the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children from a high of 103 down to 25 and
- Safely reduced the number of children in care and the number of children with a child protection plan; improved educational outcomes for looked after children.
- Paragraph 27 of the Children’s Social Care Ofsted report acknowledges the fact that 26 looked after children are currently studying at University.

### **3. Context**

The Children & Social Work Bill (2016), published in May 2016, provided a wide-ranging and significant change in legislation for the social work profession. The Bill covers the care system, adoption, corporate parenting and rights of care leavers.

In addition, it includes the introduction of a Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel; significant changes to social worker accreditation, regulation, registration, and training; as well as publication and sharing of information, and a duty for agencies to co-operate when children are at risk of harm.

There is clear evidence nationally that the demand for children’s social care services continues to rise, with domestic abuse, parental mental ill health and substance misuse being key drivers behind the rise in the number of children with a child protection plan and children in care.

Thurrock continues to have high rates of children being supported by social care but numbers have dropped in the past year to bring us more into line with our statistical neighbours. We have seen a decrease in the number of contacts and referrals, and the number of children in care has reduced from a high of 353 in 2016 to the current number of 287. The number of children with a child protection plan has reduced from 293 to 164, as a less punitive and more strengths based approach has been adopted by the department and its partners. Further work will be undertaken by officers with partners to further safely reduce the number of children with a child protection plan and the number of children in care.

Ofsted reflected that:

*‘Appropriate action is taken to safeguard and protect children who are at immediate risk of significant harm.’ ‘Assiduous management reviews and close monitoring of children’s cases where child protection plans have been in place for more than a year have resulted in the number of plans appropriately reducing.’*

For looked after children, Ofsted said:

*‘Children and young people benefit from help and support provided by dedicated, ambitious and determined professionals who work well together, helping children to remain safe and achieve well in life.’*

Most importantly Ofsted reflected that;

*‘The local authority is a highly ambitious corporate parent. There is a palpable sense that staff across all directorates want to do the right thing.’ Also that ‘Elected members are ambitious for children and young people in their care and have ensured that their vision for outstanding quality services is underpinned by appropriate financial resources.’*

## **4. Service Developments**

### **Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children**

The last 3 years has seen an unprecedented rise in the number of refugee children arriving in Thurrock and entering care.

Young people generally enter the UK via the ports at Purfleet and Tilbury. As they present themselves in Thurrock they automatically become the responsibility of the authority. The Home Office has sent out guidance suggesting that local authorities should be able to accept a number of refugee’s equivalent to 0.07% of their overall child population. In Thurrock’s case, this should be 28 children. In 2016 resources were being stretched to the limit supporting over 100 children which is over 3 times the threshold.

So it is positive to note that tremendous progress has been made in reducing the number of unaccompanied asylum seeking children looked after by the council. Under my direction and leadership, officers have worked with colleagues in the

Eastern Region authorities to establish a transfer protocol so that the financial burden of looking after refugee children would be shared equally across all authorities in the region. As a result at the time of writing this report there were only 25 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in our care with numbers continuing to fall month by month. Down from 35 in my last report.

## **5. The Social Care Workforce**

One of the key areas of concern from our 2016 Ofsted Inspection was the instability of the social care workforce. The high number of agency social work staff was also contributing to an unacceptably high overspend in Children's Services.

I am delighted to report that we have made great progress in recruiting more permanent social workers while at the same time reducing the rate we pay the remaining agency staff. In July 2016 we employed 70 agency staff with 56 paid over the Memorandum of Cooperation rate. Today we have employed 39 agency social workers and only 2 are paid over the Memorandum of Cooperation rate. This is positive news for both Thurrock and the region as a whole, as together we have been able to reduce spending on high cost agency social workers.

Ofsted in the recent inspection commented;

*'Successful workforce planning and staff development in Thurrock have increased the number of frontline practitioners supporting children. This has increased capacity to sustain a good-quality service and is a substantial improvement since the last inspection.'* *'Newly qualified social workers receive exceptional support. A strong emphasis on developing and nurturing all staff encourages more to remain the authority. A diverse workforce of practitioners and managers who reflect the community is a real strength, leading to better engagement by young people and their parents.'*

Ofsted also reported that;

*'Staff consistently feel well supported in their work and their professional development by highly visible, approachable and involved managers at every level. Senior leaders take the time and trouble to nurture talent. There is a tangible culture of professional accountability and respectful challenge devoid of blame across teams. Morale is good. Supervision is frequent and mostly effective.'*

*Social workers and managers are fittingly proud of the work they are doing in Thurrock. They know their children and families very well and speak with passion and enthusiasm about the often exemplary work they undertake with them. They work in an environment where caseloads are manageable and where leaders support them to do their jobs effectively.'*

Creating this culture within the service, is making us an employer of choice for social workers and social work managers.

## 6. Service Reviews

Since my last report we have reviewed the operation of key parts of the service which have resulted in improvements in the quality of our provision. Ofsted commented on the impact of these services;

*'Leaders and managers have facilitated a range of evidence-based improvements, making a discernible difference to helping vulnerable children and their families sustain change. For example, additional investment in solution-focused 'families first' team, and in 'families together' edge of care team, is resulting in persistent relationship-based work that is making a positive difference, enabling very vulnerable young people to remain living securely with their families. This effective and authoritative practice, while recent, adds value and leads to better experiences for children.'*

These developments include:

- **Adoption Service** – The main focus on this business case is to concentrate on the adoption service currently provided and will change the approach at Thurrock and increase the staffing resources in Children's Service
- **Edge of Care** - This service has been developed as part of our early intervention and prevention strategy to provide support to enable more children and young people to remain safely within their families. The service is based on schemes that have been successfully implemented in other authorities. As part of an Early Help strategy to intervene early when families are in difficulty to offer evidence based support and help in order to improve outcomes for children and young people and also reduce demand for high cost children's social care statutory services.
- **Fostering** – Our key focus will be on developing and growing our in-house fostering service and reduce our dependence on high cost independent fostering agencies. It specifically seeks to provide up to 100 extra in-house places for looked after children to reduce Independent Fostering Agency purchases and associated costs
- **Signs of Safety** – Is a strengths based social work practice model which enables social workers to work more collaboratively with parents and ensuring that their views and the views of their children are a key part of any care planning. It is an internationally respected model of practice and has been implemented in numerous Local Authorities across the UK during the past 10 years. It is already being used by a number of local authorities in the UK and worldwide, and is an innovative approach to statutory children's social work. We plan to adapt it and make it our own, with our own front-line experts shaping how and when it is used.
- **Two for One** – This is an innovative new initiative to support recruitment of permanent social workers. The service receives many applications from newly qualified social workers. Through this scheme, new inexperienced staff will be supported by experienced agency staff up to the point where

they are able to hold a full caseload. This has accelerated our success in recruitment of permanent staff.

## 7. Fostering and Adoption

Ofsted commented very favourably on our adoption and fostering services;

*'Children and carers benefit hugely from highly experienced and dynamic social workers and senior managers in Thurrock's fostering and adoption services. Staff take great pride in their work. Foster carers and adopters are positive about the support they receive. Excellent therapeutic support is available for foster carers and adopters. Trauma-based learning is integral to the authorities extensive fostering and adoption training programmes.'*

*'Since moving its adoption service back in-house in 2018, the local authority has widened the adoption options available for all children who need them, not just babies and toddlers. A creative, far-reaching recruitment strategy is increasing the range of placements available to meet children's diverse needs. The assessment process is well organised and responsive. Senior managers listen to and regularly consult with foster carers. Foster carers use their expertise to influence the organisation in a positive way. Their input during training and recruitment events, initial visits and mentoring of new carers is invaluable. Extensive investment in life-story work is greatly appreciated by adopters and birth families. This work is being extended to children living with special guardians and foster carers.'*

However, fostering recruitment continues to be a priority for the service. There were 16 new fostering household approvals between April 2018 and March 2019. Between April 2019 and December 2019 there have been 14 fostering household approvals and 5 households will be presented to panel within the next month with a recommendation of approval. The fostering recruitment team is now fully staffed which is supporting our ambition to place more children in or close to Thurrock so that they can continue to access local services and remain close to their families and communities.

During the recent inspection, Ofsted commented;

*'A creative far reaching recruitment strategy is increasing the range of placements available to meet children's diverse needs'*

The Fostering and Placement Service has been successful at maintaining the reduced number of children and young people placed at a substantial distance from the borough. In 2018/2019, 83.9% of children looked after were placed within a 20 mile radius of their home. Those children not placed in the Borough of Thurrock are generally placed in neighbouring authorities such as Essex, Southend, London Boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge. Placements over 30 miles tend to be of a specialist nature where there are few providers available to meet specific needs.

We are continuing in our drive to improve permanence for children in care including securing permanence through Special Guardianship and Child Arrangement Orders which allow children to be cared for within their family or wider network and through matching children with their foster carers long term.

Where adoption is the final care plan approved by the Court we strive to find an appropriate adoptive placement. 14 children were adopted in 2018/19, an increase from 8 in 2017/18. Between April 2019 and December 2019 12 children have been adopted and a further 4 children have been matched and placed in an Adoptive placement awaiting a final order. Thurrock ended our partnership with Coram in September 2018 and brought the adoption service back in house. 5 Adoption households have been approved since April 2019 and a further 13 households are at various stage of the assessment process.

We have increased access to the Adoption Support Fund for children who are adopted or who have Special Guardianship Orders from £85,000 in 2018/19 to £290,000 between April and November 2019. The Adoption Support Fund helps to pay for therapies for children who have been adopted or subject to an SGO when they need it. The Adoption Support Fund helps adoptive and Special Guardianship Orders families provide support they otherwise couldn't provide on their own to improve relationships; engagement with learning; emotional regulation, confidence and behaviour management.

## **8. Child Sexual Exploitation**

Child Sexual Exploitation continues to be understood and addressed across the service in collaboration with partner agencies.

An extensive training programme has continued to be coordinated by the Child Sexual Exploitation Manager in children's social care. Centrally, this acknowledges the contextual nature of exploitation, and importance of engaging with partners in the identification of, and response to exploitation in the borough and across Essex and Southend.

To this end, bespoke Child Sexual Exploitation, and trafficking awareness training has been written and delivered in collaboration with Essex Police, Open Door and South Essex Rape Incest Crisis Centre to a range of professionals. This includes a total of 356 Children's Social Care staff to date, and 108 Thurrock Foster Carers in 2019 alone.

Elected Members are key partners in identifying potential perpetrators as well as victims of exploitation, and in understanding and communicating locations of concern in the Borough. Training has sought to reinforce existing knowledge, and reinforce reporting pathways for Elected Members. Commitment to collaborating with Thurrock Licenced Taxi Operators, Drivers and Passenger Assistants remains strong: 406 licensed Taxi drivers have been trained; the currently 16 remaining new drivers will be trained via sessions scheduled for 2020. It remains a condition of Thurrock Taxi Drivers to be trained within 3 months of their attaining their license in the Borough.

Staff in two local Hotels have received training with the Child Sexual Exploitation Manager to raise awareness regarding exploitation, missing children and trafficking within their industry's context. To check application in practice, the Child Sexual Exploitation Manager Piloted an Operation with Grays Police and Thurrock Licensing in Thurrock. Assessed impactful, this pilot Operation was replicated across Southend, Essex and Thurrock between September and November 2019. The findings are informing a unified partnership approach to embedding sustained collaboration with Hotel staff across Southend, Essex and Thurrock with a view to improving our safeguarding response to exploitation in the community.

A five year Southend, Essex and Thurrock Missing People Strategy has been written for Southend, Essex and Thurrock by the Child Sexual Exploitation Manager in collaboration with partners. This forms part of suite of four inter-connected Strategies, including Gangs and Exploitation. Reflecting national recognition of the importance of identifying and protecting adults as well as children who go missing and at times are vulnerable to exploitation, the Strategy includes adults as well as children in its scope. Currently being signed off, the Missing People Strategy will be launched in early 2020.

An innovative, multi-agency development to supporting children aged thirteen plus, who are at risk of exploitation, but who may feel currently unable to provide an evidential account to the Police or to access the services of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre, is being Piloted in Thurrock. Project Goldcrest is being piloted for up to 18 months by Thurrock Children's Social Care in collaboration with Essex Police and the Brentwood Sexual Assault Referral Centre. At its heart, it gives children and young people choice and control, also focusing upon disruption of potential perpetrators. Project Goldcrest will be independently evaluated, and if successful, extended across Essex and Southend, and potentially nationally.

At Thurrock Children's Social Care request, Essex Children's Services were invited to Thurrock in September 2019, to undertake a Child Sexual Exploitation, Child Exploitation and Missing 'Deep Dive Diagnostic' of our response to these interlinked areas of harm. The Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILAC) then took place in November 2019. These findings combined, are being used to inform our thinking and response around the alignment and effectiveness of systems which support children at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation and children missing from home and care. At the heart of our response, will be enabling children to tell their stories. To achieve this, from January 2020, a full review of the service and its delivery will be undertaken.

## **9. Youth Offending Service**

Despite increasing pressure in relation to gang related offending, and consequently an increasingly higher risk cohort, Thurrock Youth Offending Team continues to perform well across its key performance indicators especially its reoffending rate.

The Youth Justice Board data summary for April to September 2019 confirms that the latest aggregated reoffending rate for Thurrock Youth Offending Team is 28.9% This evidences strong performance especially when we compare this to the national average of 38.9%. When we compare the performance against the Eastern Region



at 37.2% and the Youth Offending Team Family benchmark at 35.5% it further evidences Thurrock's position as one of the best performing youth offending teams in the region.

Our actual number of first time entrants into the youth justice system for 2018/19 was 43 which equates to a rate per 100,000 of 244. Although our performance in this domain is relatively static due to the good work done by our out of court disposal team this is an improvement on last year's figure of 46 and stronger than the Youth Offending Team Family average.

Thurrock Youth Offending Team saw 8 young people sentenced to custody in 2018/19 this equates to a rate per 1000 of 0.45 and is a slight increase from the previous year. If we compare it to the Youth Offending Team family average of 0.41 we are slightly underperforming. However, if we compare this to our nearest geographical YOT Family member, Havering, we have significantly outperformed their custody rate of 1.01. It is important to note that due to the very small numbers in this cohort our custody rate can be volatile.

Thurrock Youth Offending Team remains central to the coordination of the Gang Related Violence work ensuring an effective multi agency approach to managing offenders involved in gang related crime. Recently this work has been identified by the Youth Justice Board as good practice and is now published nationally in their Effective Practice Library.

Youth Offending Team continues to work with victims by offering support and the opportunity for restorative justice to all of those affected by youth crime in the borough. Additionally, we continue to support the local community by supervising young people to complete reparation projects. We also work closely with the community by recruiting volunteers who live and work in the borough to meet with our young people and discuss ways in which they can repair the harm they have caused, this is facilitated through our Youth Offender Panels.

Thurrock Youth Offending Service was last inspected in April 2015, with an outcome graded as Good. We can expect a Youth Offending Service Inspection at any time and Youth Offending inspections are randomly selected. The Youth Offending Service inspection will begin with a phone call to the Council on a Friday from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP). There will then be 3 weeks of planning and preparation before the field work part of the inspection starts on week 4 after the notification of the inspection.

## **10. Brighter Futures**

The prevention agenda of Brighter Futures continues to develop across the partnership and has brought together a wide range of services to provide help to children and families in Thurrock as their needs emerge. Brighter Futures offers a range of preventative services to support families in Thurrock, allowing children and young people to achieve their full potential. It supports the education, health and wellbeing of children and young people in a coordinated way, preventing problems from developing and, when they do, intervening early to stop them from escalating.

Ofsted commented;

*‘Judicious, targeted investment in the newly reconfigured locality-based preventative and support service (PASS) as part of Thurrock’s Brighter Futures strategy means that early help is carefully prioritised for the most vulnerable families. The pathway into the preventative and support service is clear: a ‘team around the family’ and well-being model takes a holistic, multi-agency perspective in addressing families’ needs. As a result, children and families get the right level of help and protection at the right time, delivered by caring and skilled professionals, and this is making a difference to their day-to-day lives and protecting them from harm.’*

The revised Brighter Futures Strategy and Governance brings together all of Thurrock Council’s universal and targeted prevention services for children and young people and their families. The Core elements of Brighter Futures include:

- Brighter Futures Children’s Centres: open to all families offering a range of education, health and play activities;
- Brighter Futures Healthy Families: includes, among other things, Health Visitors who give advice and guidance to all new parents in Thurrock, and School nurses work to keep children healthy in schools;
- Brighter Futures Prevention and Support Service: provides targeted help to families which have specific needs encompassing issues such as parenting support, domestic abuse, sexual violence and continues to focus on families where worklessness, poor school attendance, parental physical and mental health issues and Anti- Social Behaviour are featured.

Families all have an allocated Lead Professional who knows the family best and regular Team Around the Family Meetings are held to ensure that individual, time limited, task focussed plans make a real difference to the lives of families. Feedback from families accessing brighter futures services, undertaken independently by Healthwatch Thurrock, was overwhelmingly positive about the service provided directly to families.

## **11. The Way Ahead**

Whilst delighted, I am not complacent about the Ofsted outcome and I remain committed to obtaining outstanding services going forward. I endorse the comment Ofsted made, when they wrote;

*‘There is no complacency. Instead, a strong culture of continuous learning, professional accountability and responsibility enables staff to flourish in a safe but challenging environment.’*

There were three areas to improve in the Ofsted report and we are already working on making those improvements. We will continue to strive to ensure our services provide excellent outcomes for vulnerable children in Thurrock. I would like to thank our foster carers and staff for their hard work and dedication they’ve shown over the past year, I am truly grateful for their dedication and passion.

## Financial Information

### Children Services

Service	2018-19 Outturn £'000	19/20 Revised Budget £'000	19/20 Forecast Outturn £'000	Variance £'000
Central Administration Support and Other	1,044	1,464	1,418	(46)
Children and Family Services	31,084	31,189	31,928	739
Head Start Housing Service	25	598	670	72
Learning & Universal Outcomes	3,173	4,195	4,180	(15)
School Transport	2,597	2,552	2,774	222
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>37,923</b>	<b>39,998</b>	<b>40,970</b>	<b>972</b>

# Adult Social Care

## 12. Adult Social Care

Moving onto Adult Social Care, for 2019-20 Adult Social Care was provided with £2.038m new funding which comprised:

Improved Better Care Fund (pooled with the NHS)	£0.825m
Winter Pressures Gant	£0.654m
Social Care Support Grant	£0.559m*

\*(split between Adults & Children's Services, total allocation £1.117m)

There was also £0.250m of funding carried forward through the Better Care Fund which we have used to support timely discharge from hospital through the provision of the Bridging Service based at Basildon Hospital. This has helped us to manage our waiting lists and also have one of the best delayed discharge from hospital performances in the region.

The overall funding has helped us to mitigate the growing demands for adult social care, continue to support stabilisation of the market through continued funding for domiciliary and residential care but also to meet some of the rising costs of providers for such increases as the rise in the National Living wage. There remains considerable budget pressures within the provision of external placements which we are working hard to mitigate through a combination of both individual package reviews and also overall process reviews.

Funding levels announced for 2020-21 include the option to raise the Adult Social Care precept to the value of £1.336m. This funding will be essential for us to be able to meet current demand and also future demographic growth. An additional £2.6m has also been made available in the form of a social care support grant which will be allocated between Adult & Children's Services.

## 13. Place Based Working

I remain as steadfast as ever to ensuring that Thurrock's communities are resilient and self-supporting, ensuring that the people living within them are able to achieve a good life regardless of whether or not they require our help and support.

I am also committed to ensuring that when people do require our support, they receive a response that focuses on improving their health and wellbeing and not solely a plan to meet their immediate needs. I believe that this is best achieved by taking a place-based approach to the design and delivery of health and social care.

We continue to work in close partnership with Thurrock's Voluntary and Community Sector to identify and maximise the strengths that exist in our communities and to identify how those strengths can play an important part of any solution we offer. Focusing on the strengths and assets held by communities is helping us to transform Health and Social Care as part of our Better Care Together programme, ensuring

that our approach embeds a place-based approach that builds a responsive and flexible system that wraps itself around people and communities.

This section of the report details Place-Based working highlights for 2019-20.

## **Social work**

Our social work teams are our professional leads in adult social care. They support and protect some of the most complex and vulnerable adults in Thurrock. We continued to maintain a low turnover of qualified social work staff and that stability has a positive impact on the lives of those we support. In September 2019 Skills for Care published their state of social care workforce data. This estimated turnover in adult social work at 13%. Thurrock has a turnover of only 4%. This is one of the lowest in the Country. We continue to 'grow our own' and offer opportunities to our social work staff that contributes to keeping our turnover low. As part of this approach, in October 2019 we successfully created two social worker apprenticeships posts. We are pleased to offer two of our support planners the opportunity to become qualified social workers over the next three years. We successfully recruit, retain and progress our social workers which in turn leads to consistency of care and the ability to offer long term support through building strong relationships with those who need their support.

The main development in the delivery of social work over the past year has been the further strengthening of strength-based social work – ensuring that people requiring additional support have solutions that help them to achieve what matters most to them. Starting in October 2018 with a 'test and learn' pilot in Tilbury and Chadwell, we are now in the process of shifting all adult social work to a 'Community-Led Support' model. Teams are located within the community and are easily accessible – offering regular drop-in sessions known as 'Talking Shops'. Team members are encouraged to be innovative – providing a service when required, but looking first at the role assets within the community can play, friends and family, and technology. The approach has been extremely successful with a second team launched at the start of November 2019 (South Ockendon, Aveley and Purfleet). The remaining two teams covering Grays and Stanford and Corringham will be delivered in the first half of 2020.

Finally, last year I proudly reported that Fran Leddra, our principal social worker for Adult Social Care, had been asked to chair the National Principal Social Worker Forum. This year I can go one better by proudly reporting that Fran has become Chief Social Worker for England – jointly with Mark Harvey from Hertfordshire County Council. Fran and Mark are jointly carrying out the role for a year whilst the existing Chief Social Worker (Lyn Romeo) takes a career break. Fran's achievement cannot be underestimated with this being the most prestigious post in the Adult Social Care world. Whilst I am delighted for Fran, I'm equally delighted that Thurrock has the opportunity to influence at a national level and I know that Fran is keenly flying the Thurrock flag.

## **Shared Lives**

This scheme enables adults with complex needs to live in a family setting in the community, avoiding a residential home placement. Residential placements for adults with complex needs are few and far between – with some being available only ‘out of borough’ at a very high cost. The Shared Lives scheme is part of our strategy to build capacity, flexibility and diversity in the adult social care market place.

The Shared Lives Contract has been in place since March 2017 and 4 Shared Lives care arrangements have been made. Successfully developing Shared Lives schemes has taken time and growth has been slow. In September, following discussions with the Shared Lives provider, Ategi, it was mutually agreed that the contract would be terminated as it was no longer financially viable given the low number of arrangements.

The Council remains committed to having a Shared Lives scheme in Thurrock and as an interim arrangement, we have asked Bettertogether to manage the scheme whilst we explore our options for the scheme. Bettertogether is a Community Interest Company that has recently been spun out from Newham Council following a number of years as an established in-house service. The scheme has an ‘excellent’ rating from CQC.

The transfer of service users and carers has taken place and has been carried out in collaboration with the council and both providers.

## **Micro Enterprises**

When I introduced my report last year, I spoke about how we were aiming to provide people with greater choice and control through expanding the market place for care and support with the introduction of Micro Enterprises.

At the time of writing last year, we had helped 18 Micro Enterprises to be established. I’m extremely pleased to say that this initiative is continuing to prove extremely successful for a number of reasons. We have now helped to establish 106 Micros (at the time of writing) and these numbers are continually increasing with an expanding range of services being made available.

Residents do not have to be eligible for social care support to access the wide range of services that are offered by a Micro however many eligible residents do use a Direct Payment to purchase the services that they need. There are a wide range of services on offer from home care to counselling, gardening, companionship and pet sitting to name just a few and they all contribute towards ensuring that local residents have a wider choice of services which in turn supports their independence.

Our work to help Micros to form has enabled the establishment of 68 paid employment opportunities and 35 volunteering opportunities. Micros are self-employed and this factor means that this way of working suits many people who wish to work flexibly, maybe through personal choice but sometimes also due to caring commitments or due to health-related reasons. Micros offer very personalised services and can tailor their offer to meet the needs of the people employing them.

Therefore they can often help to fill gaps in service provision. Much of the feedback from residents using express high levels of satisfaction based on these factors.

## **14. Care Home Development**

In January Cabinet gave approval for a new residential care facility to be built on the Whiteacre / Dilkes Wood site in South Ockendon.

The new facility will provide social care and nursing care in a specialised setting. It will include 45 self-contained dwellings for single people and couples. Additionally 30 ensuite bedrooms for intermediate care will be provided. The facility will also include shared lounges, a restaurant, laundry room, and treatment rooms as well as accessible dementia friendly gardens.

The development is progressing well. A design team has now been appointed and the necessary ground surveys are being undertaken. I am pleased to report that work is now about to start to engage with potential service users to ensure that the new facility can fully meet their requirements.

Following consultation with the potential service users initial plans will be created for public consultation before a planning application is submitted later in the year.

## **15. Integration With NHS and community partners**

Last year I reported that our Better Care Fund (consisting of Adult Social Care and Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group budget) for 2017-18 was £42 million and that having previously focused on Older People, with the development of a place-based approach to the delivery of health and social care, the focus of the Fund would be broadened to include all adults.

This year, the Fund grew to £48.6 million. Whilst a significant amount of the Fund's focus is still on older people, we have expanded our approach – for example using some of the Fund to provide a greater focus on prevention and early intervention.

We have had examples of real success during 2019-20 as a result of our integrated approach to deciding how available resource should be deployed. One such example is the way we've continued to lower Delayed Transfers of Care numbers – making us the best performing area in the region and also significantly below the national average. The way we have invested Better Care Fund monies into the services that help to ensure people can leave Hospital when fit to do so has made an impressive impact. These investments include a 'Bridging' Service – where people are fit to leave Hospital but not fit to return home; additional investment in domiciliary care to ensure that we have sufficient capacity for people coming home; and also a successful pilot service called 'By Your Side'. By Your Side is run by Thurrock Community and Voluntary Service and provides people with practical support when they leave Hospital – for example making sure they can get the shopping they need and turning the heating on. It's often these small things that mean that people are unable to return home or return to hospital quickly after returning home.

As we move towards 2020-2021, we will continue to develop how we use our Better Care Fund so that it can continue to impact on our ability to prevent, reduce and delay the need for care and support.

## **16. Better Care Together Thurrock - New Model of Care**

I spoke to you last time about our integrated Health and Social Care Programme known as Better Care Together Thurrock. Better Care Together Thurrock's purpose is to redesign Thurrock's health and care system – with a focus on shifting the system towards prevention and early intervention and on working as one with the community to ensure that our processes and systems deliver outcomes and solutions – focusing on what matter to people.

We have moved forward considerably over the last year and I want to highlight some of the successes of our approach to you:

### **Community Led Support**

As I have already mentioned, we are now in the process of rolling-out Community Led Support Social Work Teams to all areas of the Borough. Due to the success of our Tilbury and Chadwell pilot team we have recently launched our second team and they are actively making strong connections in the area they cover – South Ockendon, Aveley and Purfleet. The final two teams will be launched during the first half of 2020. We have very positive results from our first team, and I'm extremely excited about the difference this approach will make to our communities.

### **Wellbeing Teams**

We are piloting Wellbeing Teams as a means of testing an alternative model of delivering care in the home. This is in the response to the ongoing fragility of the domiciliary care market and the desire to shift away from the existing 'time and task' model.

We have launched two pilot teams – one in Chadwell and one in Tilbury. The benefit of launching the teams in Tilbury and Chadwell is that they can make strong links with our other pilot approaches and help to develop the right approach to health and social care from the ground upwards. The teams deliver care requirements to people who would ordinarily have received a service from a domiciliary care provider, but they use the hours allocated to the individual flexibly and also look to build a relationship with the person receiving support - find out what matters to them. They also look to reduce the reliance on a service but using resources creatively – seeing what can be provided from the community itself, family and friends, and also the application of technology.

People receiving a service from the two teams have been extremely pleased with the experience and we will continue to evaluate its impact over the life of the pilot. Our next steps include looking at how we can develop the teams so that they could carry out some tasks currently carried out by health colleagues – reducing the number of visits by professionals to one individual. We also envisage the teams, who operate in a very small geographical patch, identifying and providing connections and



support to those people not in receipt of a service. It is imperative that we always look at ways to prevent crisis and to keep people away from needing services wherever possible.

### **Technology Enable Care Solutions**

I am pleased to report that as a result of our drive to raise awareness of Technology Enabled Care solutions, we have seen an increase in people using technology enabled care including the more traditional range of falls sensors and care alarm pendants as well as newer products on the market such as Brain in Hand.

With the Community Led Solutions Team and Wellbeing Teams up and running, from January 2020 they will be increasingly putting Technology Enabled Care solutions at the centre of their conversations with residents in Tilbury and Chadwell. These conversations will explore what matters most and what gets in the way of achieving the things that matter. And, if it is felt that technology has a role to play – whether the more traditional assistive or a newly developed app might be relevant, the Community Led Solutions and Wellbeing teams will discuss these options and help people to both obtain them and ensure they know how best to use them. This new approach is to be trialled and evaluated in the first part of next year, before making decisions about rolling it out.

I am also pleased that a pilot project using an app call Brain in Hand has made a significant impact on young people's lives. Ranging from 17 -25 years old, our Brain in Hand users have been helped to gain confidence in navigating day to day activities including travel to college, shopping and cooking, living independently, as well as taking up volunteering. The pilot project is due to be independently evaluated.

### **17. Provider Market**

The social care market in Thurrock remains fragile but manageable. Although a great deal of work has been done to stabilise the market and increase capacity, we are now grappling with a significant increase in both the numbers of people requiring care and the complexity of their need.

Older People entering residential care are far more complex than they were a decade ago (80% of service users have both a physical and cognitive impairment compared with only 47% ten years ago). As a result of this, we are now responding to a much higher number of safeguarding events within older people residential care due to this complexity and the homes ability to meet this growing need.

Our contracts for home care are now well embedded and I am pleased to advise that our in-house service, Thurrock Care at Home, received a CQC rating of GOOD following being inspected on 20 November 2019. However, I should also advised that this year has seen another homecare provider withdrawing from the local market. To combat some of this pressure, a home from hospital scheme is helping us to discharge people from hospital in a timely manner. However, this year has found us delivering an additional 1000 hours of home care to 125 more people as a result of demand in the community. A recent review has shown that home care is

mirroring residential care, in that we are supporting increasing complexity within people's own homes.

We recognised some time ago that the location of specialist schools in-borough for young people with disabilities would result in additional demand for services when they transitioned to adulthood. We are in the process of opening a purpose built supported housing scheme for people with autism in response to that identified need. We are trying to encourage a greater variety of provision and type of providers (including successfully growing the number of micro providers) to meet the needs of an increasing number of young adults with complex learning disabilities who will be coming into adult social care every year.

It has been a challenging year, with increasing demand in both older people and adult services putting significant pressure on the whole system. However, we are trying to meet this challenge not only with new services such as the purpose built supported accommodation scheme but by reviewing our current pathways, removing unnecessary bureaucracy and introducing new and innovative ways of working.

### **Recruitment and Retention**

One of the continuing challenges for adult social care is the ability to meet demand particularly concerning domiciliary care. This is compounded by a high turnover of care staff, and difficulty recruiting and retaining those essential staff members. In turn this places significant pressure on the sustainability of the domiciliary care market. Recent analysis by Skills for Care shows that turnover of care staff in Thurrock stands at 50% per year.

We are taking an approach as part of our transformation programme that looks at how we can address the workforce challenge. We are doing this as a local authority, but also in conjunction with the NHS through the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) and in conjunction with other local authorities across the region. We need an integrated and cohesive approach to tackling some of the workforce issues that currently exist – which means looking at addressing a number of aspects including: the branding of carer roles – making working within the care sector a profession and a profession that young people in particular aspire to; career pathways – including across and into the NHS; terms and conditions – looking at the factors that contribute to a person staying with a particular employer or in a particular role.

In Thurrock, our work to change how care is provided in the home (Wellbeing Teams) provides us with an opportunity to contribute towards the workforce challenge. For example testing a self-management model and placing staff on salaries and fixed shifts as opposed to hourly pay and split shifts. With Wellbeing Teams, we also changed our recruitment approach – focusing on values as opposed to skills. This approach attracted a greater mix of people with a different range of experiences.

Work will progress throughout the year and I will report on progress made next year.

## **Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC)**

Delayed Transfers of Care (or DTOCs) are where someone is medically fit to leave hospital but there is no-where for them to move to.

Although DTOCs are an issue Nationally, Thurrock is performing very well in this area. We are currently the BEST performing authority in the region. Thurrock's rate of 3.5 per 100,000 population, is significantly better than the national (10.5) and regional (9.6) averages.

This has been achieved by the whole health and social care system working together. However, to achieve this high level of performance, significant investment was required.

## **18. Thurrock Integrated Care Partnership**

There are a number of existing and forthcoming changes to the NHS structure – in response to the NHS Long Term Plan published in January 2019 and I remain concerned about NHS England's proposals to merge the existing five Clinical Commissioning Groups across the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership footprint. I, alongside other members of Cabinet, believe that the current local arrangements of a single Clinical Commissioning Group which is conterminous with a single Unitary Local Authority area provides the optimum structure for Health and Care integration and transformation.

It is therefore essential that we secure the arrangements that provide our residents with the best outcomes. Our ambition is to provide an integrated Health and Social Care system for Thurrock. Achieving this means establishing strong integrated governance and partnership arrangements that will provide strategic direction as well as representing Thurrock's interests on the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. We have done this by implementing an Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) for Thurrock. Our Integrated Care Partnership includes senior executives from Adult Social Care, Public Health, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group, our Community Health Provider, North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT), our Mental Health Provider Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust, and Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital Foundation Trust. The Voluntary and Community Sector are also represented through Thurrock Community and Voluntary Sector to ensure that the interests of our communities are reflected in decision making. Our Integrated Care Partnership will also be the main focus for local, placed based developments.

Partners will work to build a Population Health System which aims to reduce the number of unplanned hospital and residential care admissions; reduce avoidable Accident and Emergency attendances; reduce the number of delayed transfers of care; keep people as independent as possible for as long as possible; and move more services out of hospital and into the community. Much of this will be achieved through the ongoing development and delivery of our Better Care Together health and social care transformation programme.

## **19. Safeguarding (LPS)**

Safeguarding adults who may be at risk of abuse or harm has long been an absolute passion of mine and remains a priority for adult social care. The statutory Board led by Thurrock Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Essex Police is now well established and the Safeguarding Team provide skilled and person-centred interventions.

In 2018-19 we received a total of 835 safeguarding alerts, which is a noticeable increase on the 628 alerts received in the previous year. But, I am pleased to inform you, we continue to work closely with individuals, local communities and other agencies to ensure that those at risk have the support they need to live lives free from harm or abuse. The Board, of which I am a member, actively promote the Making Safeguarding Personal agenda, and, as is evident in our activity report, and, in 9 out of 10 cases individuals supported have achieved their desired outcomes.

The Safeguarding Team is also responsible for managing the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Service. Our main focus going forward will be implementing the new Liberty Protection Safeguards scheme, which is due to replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Service in October 2020. The two schemes will run alongside each other for the first year post implementation. The team are currently in the process of putting the necessary systems and processes in place to ensure effective implementation of this new scheme. Thurrock Council have always been proactive in ensuring that the necessary procedural safeguards are in place for those at risk of being deprived of their liberty; and we are confident that this strong Human Rights based practice will continue under Liberty Protection Safeguards.

## **20. Preparing for Adulthood Strategy**

We know that effective preparation for adulthood for disabled young people has a very positive effect on prevention, helps young people and families manage change and promotes independence.

I am pleased to advise that we are currently working in partnership with Thurrock Coalition, young people and their families and other agencies to co-produce a Preparing for Adulthood Strategy.

The Thurrock preparing for Adulthood Strategy will be a 3 year plan that is relevant for all agencies and staff who work with disabled young people between the ages of 14-25 years in Thurrock.

This Strategy will be guided by the principles of the children and families Act, Care Act and the guidelines recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), which provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. It will be supported by an action plan on to ensure positive outcomes for our disabled young people, their families and carers.

I will be launching the Strategy later this year.

## **21. Mental Health Service Transformation**

The challenges faced within our support offer to residents with poor mental health were well-documented in [a report presented to Cabinet](#) in March 2019. The findings of this report have underpinned the programme of adult mental health system transformation. Appointment to a new Strategic Lead position to work with colleagues across the Council has enabled a greater level of focus on this agenda, which has included several specific work programmes:

### **Improving urgent and emergency mental health care**

I am delighted to be able to inform you of improvements to our Mental Health Crisis Responses services achieved through working in close collaboration with colleagues in the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership. This service is based upon one implemented successfully in Cambridge and Peterborough, and we will be monitoring the success of its launch in Thurrock. The programme is on track to go live from 1st April 2020, with Thurrock hosting one of the newly-funded mental health Sanctuaries.

### **Integrated Primary and Community Care Mental Health**

This is another exciting programme of transformation, looking to focus mental health care on prevention, resilience and early intervention, and bringing together clinical and non-clinical services to work in a more person-centred approach, initially in Tilbury & Chadwell, and Aveley, South Ockendon & Purfleet. Complimenting this is the *Open Dialogue* pilot, which a number of our social workers within Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust are taking part in. Open Dialogue is a Finnish holistic strengths based approach to treating people with psychosis that is currently being piloted in the UK. It is humanistic and non-hierarchical, and medication is kept to an absolute minimum. This is due to commence in January 2020, and will be undertaken with support from researchers from University College London.

### **Mental Health Social Work**

We have been working to develop a new Section 75 Agreement with Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust based on a longer term contract. This is underpinned by a revised performance and budget framework, which provides an improved view of activity and outcomes. An action plan is being developed to develop social work practice in line with the [Social Work for Better Mental Health](#) principles, as well as integrating the approach with the Community Led Support teams.

We have also successfully re-procured our Floating Support service to enable those with mental ill-health to remain living independently. The Floating Support service provides a flexible service that adapts to meet individual needs. The new service commenced within October 2019.

## Earlier identification of poor mental health

In July 2019, Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Board pledged to sign the national [Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health](#), meaning our focus on prevention and reducing inequalities in mental health support was nationally recognised. We have also worked on identifying opportunities in non-mental health settings for introducing depression and anxiety screening tools, with an onward referral pathway to the local IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service if required. Finally, this year has also seen the secondment of a mental health social worker into the Housing Solutions team, in order to better upskill the front line housing staff regarding recognising and supporting those with poor mental health who present to the team, and to improve awareness of wider support options.

I trust you will agree that this amounts to an exciting and innovative set of new developments that should significantly improve the support available to Thurrock residents who experience episodes of mental ill-health.

## And finally.....

I continue to be extremely proud of what Thurrock staff have achieved to support our Children's Social Care Ofsted Inspection outcome and to transform the way in which Adult Social Care is provided to the people of Thurrock to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

## Financial Information Adult Social Care

Service	2018/19 Outturn £'000	2019/20 Revised Budget £'000	2019/20 Forecast Outturn £'000	Variance to Budget £'000
Assistive Equipment & Technology Total	568	559	459	(100)
Commissioning & Service Delivery Total	2,749	3,529	3,133	(395)
External Placements Total	23,319	23,877	24,764	887
Fieldwork Services Total	3,074	3,351	3,324	(28)
Provider Services	5,872	5,827	6,042	215
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>35,583</b>	<b>37,142</b>	<b>37,722</b>	<b>580</b>

## 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 are 2 questions to the Leader and 9 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

## QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

### 1. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Gledhill

Can the Portfolio Holder provide an update on the role the CCTV played in the recent arrest of off-road motor bike riders on King Georges Playing Field in Blackshots?

### 2. From Councillor Rigby to Councillor Gledhill

Please can the Leader outline what the Council is doing to protect residents from misuse of fireworks?

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

### 1. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me how long residents should expect to wait for repair jobs to lifts within flats?

### 2. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Johnson

Are residents on Seabrooke Rise Estate entitled to the same standard of caretaking as other similar areas of the borough?

### 3. From Councillor Collins to Councillor Maney

Would the Portfolio Holder confirm that the proposed yellow lines which are due to be painted on the roads in Homesteads will be delayed until the full impact on the parking displacement it will cause is assessed and the resulting problems are remedied?

### 4. From Councillor Abbas to Councillor Watkins

Following the success of the bins and storage areas in Chadwell and Stanford cemeteries, can the Portfolio Holder confirm when we will see them installed in West Thurrock cemetery?

**5. From Councillor Shinnick to Portfolio Holder for Education**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Education please inform me if there are any plans to build any new schools in Ockendon?

**6. From Councillor Mayes to Councillor Johnson**

Can the Portfolio Holder explain to me why 180 homes in the Tilbury high rise flats can only use 50 car park spaces?

**7. From Councillor Ralph to Councillor Watkins**

When will the broken pathway across Corringham Park be repaired as this has been the cause of many trips and falls to residents?

**8. From Councillor Ralph to Councillor Watkins**

What is the timeline for the repairs to the play equipment in Corringham Park?

**9. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Maney**

Can the Portfolio Holder please update the chamber on the A13 Widening and the Stanford Le Hope Station Projects?



## Update on Motions agreed by the Council

Date	From	Motion	Status	Director
18/9/2019	Cllr Jefferies	<p>This Council notes with concern the alleged violation of planning regulations at Buckles Lane in South Ockendon, which includes unlawful development in the greenbelt. Members therefore call on the Council to bring forward a report detailing violations, what action has been taken to date and how the authority will address planning infringements at Buckles Lane, including via the use of further enforcement proceedings, whilst protecting the Showmen community.</p>	<p>Part of the site is long established and is allocated as a Show people site, however in recent years the site has been sub-divided and extended with further unauthorised development and non-Show people have found accommodation on the site without permission which has created cramped living conditions and incidences of public disorder. Recent attempts to introduce further mobile homes onto the eastern part of the site without permission have been prevented by the Council through injunctive action. Through the Council's review of the site, genuine Show people have been receptive and keen to engage with the Council to achieve a permanent permission for the site. The Council has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach to the case and is committed to working with land owners to bring forward planning applications to create a safe and well-designed residential environment for the Showmen Community in Thurrock. This approach is supported by the Showmen's Guild who we have been closely liaising with. The Council recognises its role as part of a wider collective to ensure all aspects of the case are addressed. A cross-service group of officers will consider the full range of issues affecting the site, the action which has been taken as well as future plans and will report back to Members.</p>	Andy Millard
23/10/2019	Cllr Gerrish	<p>Thurrock Council therefore resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency' that requires urgent action;</li> </ol>	<p>As agreed by Group Leaders on the 13 January 2020, a Task Force containing business and resident's representatives will be established to consider the recommendations included within the motion, evidence</p>	Andy Millard

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		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Request that the Council's activities become net-zero carbon by 2030;</li> <li>3. Request that the Council embed this work in all areas and take responsibility for reducing, as rapidly as possible, the carbon emissions resulting from the Council's activities;</li> <li>4. Request that the relevant Portfolio Holder with responsibility for Climate Change convenes a Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change and a Climate Change partnership group, involving Councillors, residents, young citizens, climate science and solutions experts, businesses and other relevant parties. Over the following 6 months, the Group should consider strategies and actions being developed by the Council and other partner organisations and develop a strategy in line with a target of net zero emissions by 2030. It should also recommend ways to maximise local benefits of these actions in other sectors such as employment, health, agriculture, transport and the economy. The membership of this group should be agreed in consultation with Group Leaders;</li> <li>5. Request that all reports in preparation for 2020/21 budget cycle and investment strategy will take into account the actions Council will take to address this emergency;</li> </ol>	<p>from experts within the field and what actions are required to be taken. Terms of Reference for the Task Force are being drafted.</p>	
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## Update on Motions agreed by the Council

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|  |  | <p>6. Request that the Leader write to the UK Government asking them to provide the powers, resources and help with funding to make this possible, and ask local MPs to do likewise.</p> |  |
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## Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

### Motion 1

#### Submitted by Councillor Huelin

The Motion calls on Council to adopt the below definition of antisemitism as set out by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and its guidelines giving working examples of antisemitism.

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

This Council is also called on to pledge to combat this pernicious form of racism and that it expresses alarm at the rise in antisemitism in recent years across the UK. This includes incidents when criticism of Israel has been expressed using antisemitic tropes. Criticism of Israel can be legitimate, but not if it employs the tropes and imagery of antisemitism.

We therefore welcome the UK Government's announcement on 12 December 2016 that it will adopt the internationally recognised IHRA definition of antisemitism (above) and its guidelines (below) on antisemitism which give examples of the kind of behaviours which could depending on the circumstances constitute antisemitism.

The guidelines highlight manifestations of antisemitism as including:

- Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
- Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
- Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
- Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
- Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
- Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
- Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour.
- Applying double standards by requiring of it behaviour not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.

- Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
- Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
- Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.”

This Council also welcomes the cross-party support within the Council for combating antisemitism in all its manifestations.

**Monitoring Officer Comments:**

The motion relates to a matter which affects the Authority or the Authority’s area and for which there is a relevant function.

**Section 151 Officer Comments:**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion.

**Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?**

Yes

## **Motions Submitted to Council**

**In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution**

### **Motion 2**

#### **Submitted by Councillor J Kent**

This year's Holocaust Memorial Day marked the 75th anniversary of the end of the Holocaust. Thurrock Council understands the importance of remembering the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust and the genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

The Council calls upon Cabinet to explore the opportunity to work with schools to facilitate visits to former Nazi death camps, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, to help learn first-hand the consequences of hate. A future programme should seek to work across schools in Thurrock.

#### **Monitoring Officer Comments:**

The Council would have to comply with its duties under the Equality Act 2010 in relation to any policies or decisions it develops or takes in relation to this Motion.

#### **Section 151 Officer Comments:**

Cabinet would need to consider any financial consequences that come from the outcome of the review.

#### **Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?**

Yes

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