

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

Due to current government guidance on social-distancing and the COVID-19 virus, Council on 8 July 2020 will not be open for members of the public to physically attend. Arrangements have been made for the press and public to watch the meeting live via the Council's online webcast channel: [www.youtube.com/user/thurrockcouncil](http://www.youtube.com/user/thurrockcouncil)

**Venue – Hybrid meeting Council Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL (restricted numbers of Councillors) and virtual attendance**

### 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: 30 June 2020



## Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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<b>1 Apologies for absence</b>	
<b>2 Minutes</b> To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Council, held on 26 February 2020.	<b>7 - 48</b>
<b>3 Items of Urgent Business</b> 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.	
<b>4 Declaration of Interests</b> To receive any declaration of interests from Members.	
<b>5 Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council</b>	
<b>6 Questions from Members of the Public</b> In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.	<b>49 - 50</b>
<b>7 Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors</b> In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2(Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.	
<b>8 Petitions Update Report</b>	<b>51 - 52</b>
<b>9 Revised Political Balance</b>	<b>53 - 58</b>
<b>10 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels</b> The Council are asked to agree any changes to the appointments made to committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels, as requested by Group Leaders.	
<b>11 Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20</b>	<b>59 - 80</b>

**12 Full Council Meetings**

Members are asked to agree the following schedule for Full Council meetings for the 2020/21 municipal year:

30 September 2020, 28 October 2020, 25 November 2020, 27 January 2021 and 24 February 2021.

**13 Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance 81 - 102**

**14 Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Care 103 - 118**

**15 Questions from Members 119 - 120**

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

**16 Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

**17 Minutes of Committees**

Name of Committee	Date
Corporate Parenting Committee	7 January 2020
General Services Committee	3 February 2020
General Services Committee	10 February 2020
General Services Committee	24 February 2020
Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	23 January 2020
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	14 January 2020
Extraordinary Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	23 January 2020
Standards and Audit Committee	19 December 2019
Lower Thames Crossing Task Force	10 February 2020
Planning Committee	13 February 2020
Corporate Parenting Committee	3 March 2020

Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education	4 March 2020
Planning Committee	19 March 2020
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	23 January 2020
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	10 March 2020
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11 February 2020
Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 March 2020
Planning Committee	8 June 2020

- 18 Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year 121 - 124**
- 19 Motion submitted by Councillor Kerin 125 - 126**

**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)

**Proposed Future Dates of Council:**

30 September 2020, 28 October 2020, 25 November 2020, 27 January 2021, 24 February 2021 (Budget)

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## Information for members of the public and councillors

### Access to Information and Meetings

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Members of the public 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. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is to be recorded.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Democratic Services at [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

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

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

### Thurrock Council Wi-Fi

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

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

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

### Evacuation Procedures

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

## How to view this agenda on a tablet device



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

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

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

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



# DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

## Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

## **Pecuniary**

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

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

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

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

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

## **Non- pecuniary**

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



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

## PROCEDURE FOR MOTIONS

No speech may exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Mayor [Rule 19.8], except for the proposer of any motion who shall have 5 minutes to move that motion (except on a motion to amend where the 3 minute time shall apply) [Rule 19.8(a)]			
<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 26 February 2020 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, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Colin Churchman, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Oliver Gerrish, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, James Halden (*arrived 7.24pm*), Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, 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 and Lynn Worrall

**Apologies:** Councillors Chris Baker and Angela Lawrence

**In attendance:** Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive  
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health/Interim Director of Children's Services  
Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property  
Jackie Hinchliffe, Director of HR, OD & Transformation  
Andrew Millard, Director of Place  
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.

### **103. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 29 January 2020 were approved as a correct record.

### **104. Items of Urgent Business**

There were no urgent items of business.

### **105. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **106. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor or the Leader of the Council**

The Mayor announced he had held a fund raising event at Amazon for his charity, Giving for Thurrock (GiFT), where mayors from as far as Folkestone had attended.

The Mayor thanked all Members for their contributions this year, thanked those Members who would be retiring at the upcoming elections and sent good luck wishes to those Members up for re-election.

The Leader also thanked those Members who would be retiring at the upcoming elections.

The Leader stated the Council's working relationship with Essex Police had some excellent results taking drug dealers off the streets of Thurrock and securing convictions. Another eight criminals had been arrested and either pleaded guilty or been found guilty thanks to the excellent work carried out by Essex Police Operation Raptor Team. During Op Raptor Essex Police had arrested 42 people, they had seen a 12% decrease in reports of Anti-Social Behaviour in Grays and Lakeside areas and in the last year alone had managed to secure a total of 42 years jail time for 16 C17 members. With Thurrock Council playing a significant role in providing funding and supporting the work being carried out by the team and would continue to work closely with Essex Police to see excellent results taking criminals off our streets.

The Leader referred to two consultations taking place in Grays. Plans for the regeneration of Grays Town Centre, which the Council wanted to get residents feedback on. Grays was set to be transformed with redevelopment stretching from the banks of the Thames to the very heart of the town. With £200m investment already secured including an underpass at Grays Station, which had received £11m funding from the Government through the Local Growth Fund. A further £49m had been bid for via the Future High Street Fund and the Towns Fund for Grays.

The other consultation was the Grays Public Space Protection Order and again would like to hear views from local residents and businesses who want to live and work without being affected by those intent on street drinking. The Leader reminded Members that both of these consultations can be completed through the Council website 'Have my Say' pages.

The Leader stated Highways England had launched a new round of consultation on their proposals to build the Lower Thames Crossing in Thurrock. Their first consultation had received more than 28,000 responses and had been instrumental in them making some significant changes to the proposals including scrapping plans for a rest, service and maintenance area. This new consultation was another opportunity to make sure residents of the borough had their voice heard and had another opportunity to make Highways England reconsider their proposals. The Council would continue to challenge Highways England and provide constructive feedback and objection to their

proposals. The Leader reminded Members the consultation was available online until 25 March 2020.

The Leader was delighted to say in commemoration of VE Day the Council had planned to install a memorial in Grays Town Park, this would include renewing the ringed garden area paths, a new low level wall in the same style as the memorial in Grays Town Centre to give a commonality of look and feel, linking the two memorials. There would be a centre monolith, with new planting that would dramatically improve the look of this area. Work would commence in early March to give the maximum amount of time for any planting to establish prior to May Bank Holiday with a joint celebration with the Royal British Legion.

The Leader stated the Council had been working with the Police over the noticeable increase of tagging and graffiti across the borough and was pleased to announce on the 30 September 2019 a Grays resident had been cautioned and issued a Fixed Penalty Notice in relation to graffiti on Anchor House, Grays. On 25 October 2019 a Grays resident had been charged after partnership working with Essex Police in relation to a series of graffiti offences and this matter awaits court appearance with compensation costs having been requested by the Council with another piece of partnership working another significant Tag offender in Thurrock had been identified and this was subject to an ongoing investigation in partnership with Essex Police. The Leader stated the amount of criminal damage one person could cause in a night was significant and not only unsightly it meant residents and businesses had to go to the expense of clearing it up. If this happened on a Council building or property it would be the taxpayer who footed the bill for its removal therefore this was not a victimless crime it was a crime all ended up paying for.

The Leader provided a Clean It, Cut It, Fill It update since April 2019:

- 2,241 potholes filled, more than 99% within agreed timeframes
- 1,017 fly-tips cleared
- 3,383 tonnes of waste cleared from our streets
- 3,737 fixed penalties have been issued for offences such as littering, dropping cigarette butts and various forms of anti-social behaviour
- 227 £400 fly-tipping fines issued
- 268 people prosecuted at court for not paying their on the spot fines
- 3 traveller encampments moved under our new interim injunction powers granted last September

#### **107. 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.

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

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

Councillor Little presented a petition on behalf of residents requesting Council and the Portfolio Holder to remove the Ridgwell Avenue proposal from the consultation document that went to Overview and Scrutiny on Tuesday 11 February and to Cabinet on 12 February 2020.

Councillor Potter presented a petition on behalf of residents calling Thurrock Borough Council to carry out a public consultation on parking in the following roads: Lime Close; Copper Beech Road; Church Crescent; Cliff Place; The Green; Peartree Close; Tyssen Place; Cheelson Road; Wilsman Road; Nelson Road; Hall Lane; and Canterbury Parade.

#### **109. Petitions Update Report**

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

#### **110. Revised Political Balance**

Councillor Gledhill presented the report that requested Council to confirm the calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees following Councillor Allen becoming an Independent Councillor on 3 February 2020.

The Mayor called a vote on this item to which Members voted unanimously in favour.

#### **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the political balance and allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix 1, was approved.**
- 2. Council noted the manual adjustment requirements outlined in 2.8 and 2.9 and agreed those adjustments proposed by Group Leaders at the meeting.**

#### **111. 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 Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, informed the Chamber he had the no changes to make.

Councillor Potheary, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the Chamber she had the following changes to make:



For Councillor Abbas to replace Councillor Rice on the William Palmer College Educational Trust.

Councillor Spillman, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group, informed the Chamber he would like to relinquish seats on the Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Licensing Committee.

For the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, Councillor Spillman gifted the vacant appointment to Councillor Allen to which Councillor Allen accepted and agreed by Members.

#### **112. Appointment of Director of Children's Services**

Councillor Gledhill stated that following a robust search and selection process, the General Services Committee had unanimously agreed to recommend Sheila Murphy be appointed Corporate Director of Children's Services. The report presented this evening was to seek the agreement of Council. Councillor Gledhill thanked Roger Harris for covering the interim period.

Councillor Potheary extended her best wishes and congratulations to Sheila Murphy on her appointment and stated this would be a good opportunity to look at processes on the recruitment of directors to ensure processes in place were the best.

Councillor Spillman congratulated Sheila Murphy on her appointment and also thanked Roger Harris for this hard work during the interim period.

Councillor Okunade thanked Roger Harris for covering the interim period and congratulated and wished Sheila Murphy well in her new role.

Councillor Little stated Sheila Murphy had been the best person for the job and sent her congratulations. Councillor Little also thanked Roger Harris for the work undertaken during the interim period especially with the Ofsted inspection.

Councillor Redsell thanked Sheila Murphy with the work undertaken on the Corporate Parenting Committee.

Councillor Gledhill summed up by thanking the stakeholder panel members and members for their contributions.

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

#### **RESOLVED**

**That Sheila Murphy be appointed the Director of Children's Services.**

#### **113. Annual Pay Policy Statement 2020/21**

Councillor Huelin, Portfolio Holder for Central Services and Communities, presented the report which sought the approval of the Council's Annual Pay Policy Statement. That Thurrock's statement included a pay policy for all categories of employees which reflected the existing employment terms and conditions.

Councillor Potheary thanked Councillor Huelin for the report and welcomed the increase across the Council and thanked the Council's front line staff for all the work they undertook for residents.

The Mayor called a vote on this item to which Members voted unanimously in favour.

## **RESOLVED**

**The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 was agreed in line with the Council's obligations under the Localism Act 2011, the Collective Agreement, the recommendations by the independent market assessment and the output of the pay review project (as agreed by General Services Committee on 8 October 2018).**

### **114. Capital Strategy 2020/21**

Councillor Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance, presented the Capital Strategy report that covered the Council's borrowing for capital purposes and included investments which were instrumental in financing capital programme that was designed to regenerate the borough and improve the borough's open spaces. Last year the Council had received over £31m income from investments and projected for the coming year to be over £33m which equated to around 25% of this Council's non grant income. Councillor Hebb stated the Investment Strategy had worked since October 2017 with statutory services safe and secure until at least mid-2023 and would fund additional services for the benefit of local residents such as £1m new fully warranted Police Constables, £0.5m injection funding to help primary care and education sector, front line environmental and highways department and £0.5m to help improve air quality in the borough.

Councillor Potheary thanked Councillor Hebb for the report but had concerns on the high level of debt which had risen without a huge amount of democratic oversight and there being a lack of transparency of the level of debt the Council was currently in. The Capital Strategy Review had met and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny had made recommendations to improve member involvement to scrutinise the process and would not be agreeing to any increase until these recommendations had been fully implemented and would be voting against the capital strategy at this time.

Councillor Spillman thanked Councillor Hebb for the report and stated he had been very supportive of the investment strategy with demand rising and the Council had looked at more initiative ways to bring money into the borough to

ensure the level of services continued. Although there were still questions to be answered such as the overspend on the A13 widening project.

Councillor Rice raised concerns the Council would be looking to borrow over £2m and asked for reassurance this had been managed in the proper manner. Councillor Rice also requested information on the capital programmes such as the A13 widening and the Stanford Le Hope rail station which was both overspent and questioned when the projects would be completed.

Councillor Duffin thanked Councillor Hebb and Officers for the report and voiced his support for the report. The report had been positive and proved how well things were going and the Council should be proud of this and should continue the trend to raise more investments to bring money into the borough.

Councillor Gerrish expressed this concern on the staggering level of debt that had arisen without any democratic oversight which was very risky and as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked for more accountability had been disappointment the report contained no clear plan. Councillor Gerrish suggested that an investment committee be formed to overview and scrutinise those decisions.

Councillor Halden referenced the majority of the Council's investments were short term and all the debts the Council had incurred were stable debts and Members should be proud of the capital plan delivered this evening by Councillor Hebb.

Councillor Gledhill stated the democratic oversight was being addressed and understood the concerns of Members when they saw such large numbers and suggested members asked appropriate questions at overview and scrutiny committees rather than relying on press coverage. Councillor Gledhill had some nervousness on the investment committee but understood some committee could be formed that would give steerage on individual investments. Councillor Gledhill reiterated the 82% of the debt was short term and would be paid back within a couple of years.

Councillor Mayes expressed his support for the report and stated investments made had been able to fund services for residents. With two external auditors giving positive opinions on Council's finances which was a tribute to the Council.

Councillor Hebb responded as follows:

To Councillor Potheary question – the levels of debt were managed well with 82% of debt being short term and paid back and Councillor Potheary attendance at the Capital Strategy Review had been noted.

To Councillor Spillman appreciated his support but stated the report was about investment income and not so much around the capital programme and information on the A13 widening would come out in due time.

To Councillor Rice a report had been already been presented to Cabinet, Council and Overview and Scrutiny and stated without the investment, £30m would need to be cut from services and challenged Councillor Rice to say what services his residents would want to be cut.

To Councillor Duffin thanked him and appreciated the support given.

To Councillor Gerrish reference had already been made to the short term debt and how that debt was being managed well with two independent external auditors giving positive opinions on the Council's finances. Councillor Hebb took Councillor Gerrish point on scrutiny and oversight and stated that some research could be useful to see what worked well.

Councillor Hebb summed up and stated that Members voting in favour of the recommendations would continue to fund the services that residents of the borough used and demanded and to start to fund the services that residents want.

The Mayor called a vote on this item to which the majority of Members voted in favour.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That the Council approved the Capital Strategy for 2020/21 including approval of the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement; and**
- 2. That the Council approved the adoption of the Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 1.**

### **115. General Fund Budget Proposals**

The Mayor invited the Leader of the Council. Councillor Gledhill, to introduce the budget and advised he had 20 minutes to do so.

#### Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Mister Mayor and it is at this point that I really wish I would have visited Specsavers about three months ago, or indeed brought my reading glasses.

Yet again it is my pleasure to present to this chamber a budget that sees no cuts in services. What it is a budget for, is a budget that delivers more money to be spent on social care, more money to be spent on the environment, and more money to be spent on tackling anti-social behaviour across the borough. This is all done at the same time as having the maximum recommended

amount in reserves at £11m for this year, but also...quite clearly I need to give up...but at the same time as the £11m in reserves, earmarked reserves of a further £10m to deliver transformation and ensure budget resilience as we move forward as a council.

So now to some of the detail. Members will see at appendix 2, page 115 a comprehensive list of the revised current budget envelopes and the proposals for next year's spend in those areas. You will note in Adults, Health and Housing, an increased spend of £1.95 million; in Children's Services, half a million; Environment £1.1 million. Indeed, with the exception of corporate cost, which covers council tax and benefit administration budget, all areas are seeing more money spent on them to deliver the services that residents need and expect. Indeed, overall it was about £5million extra spend across the board.

I would of course remind Members that this increase is on the current revised in-year budget totals. So, if we compared them to the original budget totals in 2019/20, so the beginning of this municipal year, we would see the increase as such: social care increase £4m, £1 million... sorry one third of £1 million in general fund homelessness support, and £1.2m extra spent on the environment team. So as we know social care for both adults and children is a very complex matter, and it just takes a few extra cases can put extreme pressure, not just on the services workload, but also on their finances. We are very fortunate to have a surplus at the moment that can absorb this in-year unexpected increase in demand, and this was a demand over and above the increase that we put in the end of the last financial year into these budgets. This is one of the reasons we are increasing the budget envelopes in these areas to ensure that as we move forward our most vulnerable are still looked after. Obviously, it is not just those in social care; it equally applies to those presenting themselves as potentially homeless, under our new duties under the Homelessness Prevention Act. Of course no one likes to see an overspend in a budget, but equally I'm sure not one of us here would not want to see us as a Council failing some of our most vulnerable adults, children and indeed residents who fall to be homeless.

So, how are we doing this? Well its simple by not just relying on the tax payer to dig deeper and deeper into their pockets each year, or by death through a thousand budget cuts as we've seen under previous administrations, but it is our long and short term investment strategies, as we've just agreed, which brings in over £30 million per year. However in line with spending rules, as I've pointed out in response to Councillor Duffin, we're unable to spend all of that income on keeping council tax down, although we are obviously doing exceptionally well in doing so. Indeed our medium term financial strategy produced and approved in previous years has relied on an increase of 1.99% each year. However, despite this recommendation as we know last year we agreed a zero percent council tax increase, and in front of us tonight is an increase of only 1.49% in the general fund Council Tax amount. Indeed, if agreed this evening, since taking administration in 2016 the Conservatives will have increased the general fund council tax amount by 5.47%. This is some 2.5% lower than originally forecast. In doing so our residents in a Band D

property keep a further £46 of their hard earned cash in their pockets, rather than giving it to us and our coffers. On top of this, also as mentioned, in the past couple of years, no cuts other than those agreed by the previous administration and, at the same time, seeing a whopping 85% of our key performance indicators now being met or exceeding targets.

But, of course, I cannot and will not just brush over the social care precepts that we have applied to help ensure our most vulnerable adults and elderly receive the care that they need. This year we are also seeking a maximum 2% or 53 pence per week on a Band D council tax bill to help meet these costs. All of the money raised by this precept is ring fenced and goes directly to the adult social care. These precepts have meant a further £1.3m spent on adult social care, which has allowed, for instance, to maintain our record of 'good' across our internal services, such as Collins House, extra care, and the joint re-enablement team. This means we will not have to increase the cost of service charges to our users in care homes and other services, and the three levels will be frozen at 2019/20 levels. It will also allow us to pay for our residential homecare, care home providers, with a slightly higher uplift to cope with the national living wage. That means we will hopefully be able to keep the carers that are working for us and have done over the many years.

It does mean that the average council tax rise for all council services will be 68 pence per week for over 70% of our residents. I'm going to say that again, 68 pence per week, of which the largest share will go to support our elderly and vulnerable.

Now I know there's been lots of discussion in the past about how the increase in adult social care should be funded, with some proposing it should be in income tax. However, if one thing I've learnt in local government for over 20 years of service and 14 years as an elected member has taught me: if money goes into a central government pot, it's a hell of a job trying to get it back, it involves all sorts of formulas to get it back where it's needed. So I stand by the decision made by government and indeed this chamber in the past, that raising this precept locally is the right thing, with the majority of council tax payers across the borough only paying an extra 39 pence per week to ensure our most vulnerable adults get the support they need.

Further to these increases, and increases outside of our control, we have the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner precept to help pay for the police and fire service across the whole of Essex. This year, instead of going for the maximum increase, which I believe was £10, he has decided to go for a much lower percentage, as he feels that now with the maximum, sorry with police numbers over 3,000 police officers, which is the highest since 2010, all he needs to do is increase to cover the cost. That works out at 11 pence per week for the average Band D property increase this year. So as I said last year, it's the same, taxpayers will be paying coppers for coppers. We will also see a 3% a week increase for our fire and rescue service; again, I'm sure nobody in this chamber will complain about a 3% increase for those brave firefighters who work tirelessly to make sure we're safe.

We also again are in the enviable position to have a one off surpluses which we can spend to enhance our borough and I am pleased to announce that we agreed at Cabinet a fortnight ago:

- £660k on our Kerb It Programme to help protect our verges and pavements; and we heard very eloquently Mr. Perrin say why this is so much needed
- £500k to support mental health outcomes
- £320k on environmental enforcement officers to help tackle ASB including £50k increase to tackle the scourge of graffiti on council owned spaces. Everyone will remember from my opening speech, there's already been two prolific taggers charged in relation to the damage they've caused and this is ongoing. However, this money will be used to help clean the cost these vandals caused in their nightly pursuits
- £230k for over 1,000 trees to be planted across the borough but I will touch on that again a little bit later
- £250k to look at our leisure and tourism offer across Thurrock
- And further support for our youth offending team, again keeping our youngsters out of reoffending, and hopefully keep them much more productive as they go through their adult life.

We also have a Capital Programme, which will see money invested into:

- Bridge maintenance across the borough, whilst not the sexiest of spend, we will agree that this will help keep our borough moving and ensure the safety of all of our residents
- More creative work spaces and repair to High House Production Park. The borough should pride itself in its creative industries that we have here and this vital work spaces will help as part of the Thames production corridor
- Improvements to Coalhouse Fort in East Tilbury, something long overdue and will help the trustees of the fort move forward with new exciting possibilities to make this more attractive to visitor from around the world.
- Also, to increase in size and access to our waste and recycling centre to make it more accessible to our residents
- Increasing the ability for our residents in flatted accommodation to be able to recycle and enjoy the benefits of the three-bin system the rest of us do. This will help not only drive up recycling rates, but therefore reduce the amount of landfill or incineration for our waste
- Better access put in place for new schools and existing schools in Little Thurrock Blackshots area.
- An increase in cycle routes

Which now leads me nicely into the climate change agenda voted on earlier in this year.

As we have already mentioned, Cabinet voted over a fortnight ago for another 1,000 trees to be planted across the borough and to help clear our air, and in

the Capital Programme, if agreed this evening, will expand our cycle routes across the borough. This will be a total spend of £900,000 next year to improve our environment. But we cannot forget that on top of this we have a significant amount of our investments in the green energy sector. So not only are making money from these investments to supply the services that residents expect we are also playing a bigger part in supplying renewable energy sources across the country, something that I hope will benefit even more our residents in the coming year, and again something we will be able to speak about as positive news in the coming year or so.

There are many more small schemes that I'm sure Members will find interesting in Appendix 7, and I'm sure they'll talk about it as they go through the meeting.

As Members are aware, Cabinet has already agreed the Dedicated Schools Grant that is included within tonight's report for information only. The main headline being a £10.1m extra towards the education of our children across the borough. You'll see as part of this report, something I mentioned earlier, about money held centrally going through very complicated formulas to get it back. But to be clear, even as it stands now, the £10.1m extra comes to Thurrock schools from our government.

So to sum up on this Mr Mayor, what will residents see for this modest increase in tax, from our allocation of the one off spends from Cabinet, and indeed from our government?

Should this budget be approved, this evening our residents will see:

- A council delivering on its Clean It, Cut It, Fill It priorities: with thousands of potholes filled; fly tips cleared; thousands of more tonnes of waste removed from our streets; more fixed penalties issued for those offences such as littering to improve the look of our area; more people prosecuted in court for not paying their on the spot fines; more £400 fly-tipping fines.
- A council increase - its met or exceeded performance indicators beyond the record 85% that have met targets this year.
- A £10.1m spent on children across the borough
- They will see more trees planted
- More money for our most vulnerable residents
- More investment in tackling anti-social behaviour
- More help for mental health outcomes across the borough
- Another year of one off surpluses and
- Most importantly Mr Mayor, it will see a council still delivering the lowest Council Tax bills in the whole of Essex.

Thank you.

The Mayor then invited the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Potheary, to respond and advised she had 15 minutes to do so.



## Councillor Potheary

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Gledhill for presenting the budget report. I am not planning on taking the 15 minutes.

A very rosy picture of the Thurrock Council has been painted for us but the truth is there is a very very different reality about living in Thurrock today. Many residents listening this evening simply won't recognise the story being told. The Tilbury resident paying service charges for a lift that doesn't work. The West Thurrock resident living day-in and day-out with choking air pollution and congestion. The Corringham resident too scared to visit the town centre out of fear for their own safety. The older resident who relied on receiving care at Orsett hospital, now forced to travel to Brentwood for appointments. The Ockendon resident fearing the loss of the green space outside his home. Another motorway ripping through our borough and destroying our health.

This borough needs a council that is on the side of its residents, that understands their needs and their aspirations. Thurrock is a place of great potential but we need to start getting the basics right and ensuring our residents can see every day we are working for them, to improve their lives. At the moment, our residents tell us the gulf between rhetoric and reality is too great.

We cannot keep increasing council tax year on year at a time when wages are stagnating and the cost of living continues to rise. Therefore Thurrock Labour opposes a rise in Council Tax. An increase of 1.49% doesn't sound like much. But add to it the 2% in adult social care precept and an almost 5% rise from the Conservative Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, band C properties will be paying an nearly £1,500.00 a year.

This comes on top of years of hikes by this Conservative council. If this new rise goes through, the increase in Council tax since the Tories came to power will also be 15%. By contrast, the last Labour council froze bills nearly every year.

I would also remind the chamber, that five current members of the Conservative Party, elected under a different banner, were elected on a pledge to cut council tax, not just freeze it, but actually cut it.

I would suggest those five members consider very carefully the promises they made to their residents when they were elected under different colours, before they vote through yet another increase.

It cannot be stated clearly enough, that this increase does not mean necessarily new services. It increases a surplus. An item listed in section 5.3 such as the kerb-it scheme are actually being funded from the 2019/20 surplus not next years. We also don't trust this Conservative Council to spend that surplus in the best interest of our residents. £10 million pounds (at the

very least) so they can sit in plush new offices, whilst the borough's services see no additional investment, against the wishes of our residents.

Further to the council tax increase, this Conservative Council is determined to continue their assault on council tenants and leaseholders with whopping increases to both rents and service charges. Whilst it is true the council was forced to cut rents by 1% in previous years, the burden of this was placed on tenants living in high and low rise flats.

Lifts, communal lighting, a safe and secure main door, and cleaning the lobby floors were all charged in addition to rent. Essentially a tax on walking to your front door. Both tenants and leaseholders complain consistently and bitterly of poor service and overstretched staff, lifts and communal front doors out of action for days, sometimes weeks in one case months. Year on year we have seen 3% increases in these charges, yet no discernible improvement in the quality of the service being received. Indeed, the complaints in our inboxes and at our surgeries and at our community forums just go up.

On the subject of rents, the council now has the ability to start raising rents again. After the length of time these haven't been rising Thurrock Labour believe it is downright irresponsible of this Conservative Council to impose a major rent hike straight out of the gate. A more sensible and fairer approach would be a freeze this year, followed by a commitment to fair rents in the future.

A large percentage of our council tenants pay their own rent from the wages they earn, often working for minimum wage or low pay.

This year, the Conservatives are taking more money straight out of their pocket, in council tax, service charges, rents, the precept, the police precept and the fire precept. We're talking about families who are working hard and only just managing to get by. In-work poverty is a huge problem in this country and in our borough, and this budget, plus the extras, will only make the situation worse.

So everything's going up but what do our tenants and leaseholders gain? What do these increases do to improve their lives? There is nothing additional being offered to justify these increases. Like with the council tax increases, residents are gaining nothing. That is why Thurrock Labour is proposing a triple freeze. A freeze on council tax, a freeze on rents and a freeze on service charges.

Nationally, we continue to count the cost of this Conservative Government which has presided over nearly ten years of devastating cuts, set to dole out even more. They've failed to get a grip on spiralling costs for local councils in children's and adult social care, homelessness provision, school funding and supporting children with special educational needs and the new money from Government for schools just makes up what has been cut over the last 10 years.

Not only do these failures have an acute impact on council spending, they have a huge human cost too, too often being paid by those in our society who deserve the most help.

And there are also failures closer to home that will make residents question why they are paying more for incompetence. Major infrastructure projects like the A13 widening the overspent which the question members ducted early is delayed, hugely over budget and has clearly been mismanaged, through a shocking lack of oversight by the portfolio holders since the Conservatives came into power.

The budget is when we reflect on our vision for Thurrock and the priorities for our borough. We know our borough faces huge challenges, but it also has huge potential. In setting the budget envelope here tonight, this is the opportunity for elected members to have their say on the priorities we want to see the council delivering on.

Three key priorities loom large for our residents at the moment: tackling crime and antisocial behaviour; saving our open spaces from over development; and ensuring every community in the borough can enjoy clean streets and clean air.

The council needs to get a grip on the spiralling levels of crime and antisocial behaviour that are holding our borough back and making our residents' lives a misery. Last year saw reports of violent crime increase by almost 45%. Our residents deserve to feel safe.

The council needs to save our open spaces from inappropriate development. We recognise that green spaces are vital to our health and wellbeing, and must be protected. Development needs to be evenly spread across the borough and align with areas of economic growth. In other words, it needs to make sense and it needs to be fair. It also needs to make an "offer" to existing residents, prioritising their needs and using development to fulfil these. This needs to be the starting point, not an afterthought.

The council also needs to take bold action to tackle the scourge of fly tipping to ensure our public spaces are clean, tidy and inviting for our residents, including communal spaces such as shared alleyways. Thurrock has some of the worst rates of COPD and related diseases outside of London. We need definitive action on this. We need to explore the feasibility of introducing a low emission zone and continue the fight against the Conservative Government's pet project, the Lower Thames Crossing. We need to deliver clean streets and clean air for all of our communities.

So as we set the budget envelope for the forthcoming year, we would like to stress Labour's key priorities of tackling crime, saving our open spaces, clean streets and clean air.

The Mayor invited Councillor Gledhill to respond to Councillor Potheary and advised he had 10 minutes to do so.

## Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Councillor Potheary for your response.

I've got to say, this is as confusing as ever and we hear that you're not going to back this budget. A budget that's tackling air pollution, something that's actually on your budget that wants to do that as well. And tackling crime and anti-social behaviour, more to the point, that was in your speech as well. Pretty much everything that you want to put forward is what's in our budget, but yet you wish to vote that down.

I'm going to say some of the things that you did mention, as I say, air pollution, in our budget, being tackled. Anti-social behaviour, in our budget, being tackled. With the NHS as our partners in relation to the closure of Orsett Hospital, something started, of course, under a Labour government, you seem to be very, very quiet upon, for new integrated medical centres coming, by working with our partners.

You say that wages are stagnating. According to the Office for National Statistics, actually they are on the rise and indeed, on the highest we've seen since Labour were last in power nationally. And again, you mentioned 'Oh when we were in charge, we froze Council Tax'. The only reason you had the ability to freeze Council Tax is because the Conservative government were matching it every time you were putting it up by 1%, they would give us 1% extra. So if it had not been for that, there would have been monstrous Council Tax increases year on year as we saw the last time you were in administration.

You mention the surpluses. Obviously we spend the surpluses that we raise rather than trying to spend them in advance. We've already been accused of borrowing and not repaying but actually we wait until we finally got the money to spend it.

This ridiculous £10 million on the new Council offices, let me remind everybody, yet again. Money put aside by the Labour Group, when they were in charge, to build, no sorry, to improve the offices. So would you rather, an office that is decaying and dying in the way that the offices are here. Or a much more efficient, fuel efficient and indeed, more importantly, a greener building being delivered and 82 new properties on a brownfield site. Or we pour more and more and more money into a building that is quite frankly, as dead as a parrot.

As I was quite rightly saying, ASB tackled, air pollution tackled, NHS working with us to deliver four new integrated medical centres, wages up. I'm just seeing how far we've got down now. That's it, an office that's dying but rather than having it as a much better facility, 82 extra houses, yet again we see Labour saying 'No, no, no'.

Council rents are now up from four years' worth of 1% national cut but they are still lower than they were under the previous Labour administration. And

yes, we have introduced service charges for those residents that are using services such as lifts and I will pay for the services that they are using. I'm not happy as well, I'm very not happy that they are not being provided with the service that they should do. Again, you've got the share of Overview and Scrutiny for Housing, perhaps this is something that needs to be looked into. Because, I'm not happy with it, residents are not happy with it, probably the only thing that we agree on this evening.

But when it comes to building houses, it's always the same. Labour – 'Let's build more Council houses, let's build more Council houses. Let's build some up there, ooh no, no, not there, not there.' But they never ever, ever, where. So please, stop saying, 'no' and start saying, 'yes'.

So in response to the elected Member, perhaps all this dog-whistle politics that seems to be going on in relation. So we want to do something else which actually, most of it, is exactly what we want to do indeed. All of it is what we want to do, plus go a bit further, plus ensure, that we are trying to meet the green agenda, something that they voted through, that again, they wish to say, 'no, no, no', every single time we do it.

And finally, who is going to pay for this mythical triple lock? I'll tell you who is going to pay for it. It's going to be residents. The only reason that residents will end up paying for it, not in cash, were it wise, they will be paying for it through poorer services. Where are the cuts that you are going to make to match those funds, every single thing that we need to provide as a service. You, again, have no idea where it's going to come from. Perhaps you're going to be planting except just ordinary trees, these magical money trees that you seem to think can pay for everything that's there. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

*At 8.25pm, Councillor Halden called Point of Order, requesting further information from Councillor Potheary on the elderly resident referred to in her speech who was now forced to travel to Brentwood for appointments.*

*At 8.29pm, Councillor Potheary called Point of Order, requesting Members stopped banging the tables as this was disrespectful and rude to all in the Chamber.*

The Mayor asked Members for any questions.

Councillor Spillman stated he did not believe general fund council tax should be raised rather the Council should be looking at investments and providing better services more efficiently. Councillor Spillman was opposed to the Civic Offices redevelopment and there was no guarantee the 82 houses being built would go to Thurrock residents. Councillor Spillman expressed his surprise on the Labour's response to the "triple lock" on tax, rent and service charges and would be abstaining on the increase of 1.4% on council tax but would be supporting the 2% increase towards the cost of Adult Social Care.

Councillor Duffin stated he would be voting against the recommendation. All 49 members had failed residents by raising council tax. Members should not

be congratulating themselves on the 1.49% increase; a freeze on council tax would be worthy of some congratulations. Councillor Duffin stated that going forward there should be more investments, more commercial ventures or different means of raising money.

Councillor Watkins stated his support on the report stating the budget had been strong and successful for residents with money being spent on the borough to ensure it was cleaner and greener. Those investments had been made to the environment of the borough over the last four years such as weekly bin collections, new tractors, street bins, tree planting, Kerb-It, fly tipping and street cleaners. Councillor Watkins stated the 2% increase towards the cost of Adult Social Care was right to deliver the services to those in need and supported the 1.49% council tax increase that would allow investments into the Council services and keep those services residents depended on.

Councillor Kerin referred Members to the 12 major schemes that had been committed to under the Current Programme and stated these should be good news to residents but with millions of pounds overspend this had been mismanaged and residents deserved better value for money.

Councillor Ralph welcomed the investments being made to Coalhouse Fort.

Councillor Mayes stated there seemed to be some confusion how Labour Members were voting this evening and stated that should the budget not be approved the £0.5m set aside for improving air quality in the borough would be frozen.

Councillor Johnson referred Members to the average weekly rent now compared to the higher weekly rent when Labour was in Administration in 2015/16.

Councillor Redsell stated a lot of negativity had been received this evening but Members should be mindful of the positives from the budget such as the transforming homes, tree planting schemes, A13 and new schools being built in the borough.

Councillor Maney referred Members to the three year Kerb-It programme where residents could benefit from slab replacements on kerb edges. Councillor Maney emphasised as this was part of the budget proposal Labour Members should be very mindful of how they voted.

Councillor Worrall welcomed some good aspects within the report which included the increase spend on homelessness but had some questions on how much of the £2.217m would be for homelessness and how much would be to bail out TRL. That mental health spends should always have money available and should not be dependent on council having to agree to a council tax rise and understood the Council had received grants to tackle this problem and hoped the monies referred to in the report was new money and not identified funding streams. Councillor Worrall welcomed money that could be

spent on programmes such as the Kerb It programme across the whole of the borough as there were verges in very poor condition that needed to be addressed. Councillor Worrall referred to capital receipt, disposal of land and buildings and the recent publicity on the rights and wrongs of disposal of green spaces. That part of the land once released would be to build affordable housing to rent as part of the HRA and had raised land disposal at the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and asked for some clarity on any disposal of Thurrock owned space to TRL had to follow strict rules and that best value must be achieved from the sale. That any disposal of land should be agreed in the Chamber by all 49 members and not just within Cabinet.

Councillor Gerrish stated that residents would be hit with six separate taxes when the cost of living had also risen and the Council had a wellbeing to balance the finances of the Council services so that residents had the ability to pay. Councillor Gerrish questioned why residents were being asked to pay more when the surplus of the Council would stand at £4.1m next year and could not understand why the Council was asking residents to pay such increases. Councillor Gerrish stated that instead of increasing council tax but to cut out the waste and mismanagement of the Administration who were wasting money on new offices for councillors, spending millions of pounds on the A13 widening and was the right time to put residents first.

Councillor Halden answered Councillor Worrall's point on the mental health spend. The £1m allocated for schools was additional money with the funds being voted on this evening. The work to expand general practitioner surgeries was also additional money.

Councillor Hebb stated it was clear that Labour would be cutting services if they were to get into Administration and that this should never happen.

Councillor Gledhill thanked Members for their questions and thanked Councillor Spillman for his consistency in his approach, there were clear rules to prevent all investment money to hold down council tax increases and would like to see this changed nationally. There had been significant stand against fly tipping and stated that an external audit would be carried out on the A13 to which when completed would be shared with everybody. The chair of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had been informed that the consultation was not predetermined with Labour members seeing this consultation process as planning consent which it was not. The Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny was reminded a one off spend was a one off not a continual spend.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.1. Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.1 to be carried.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.2 the result of which was:

For: Councillors Abbas, Akinbohun, Anderson, Byrne, Chukwu, Churchman, Collins, Coxshall, Duffin, Fish, Fletcher, Gerrish, Gledhill, Hague, Halden, Hebb, Holloway, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Little, MacPherson, Maney, Massey, Mayes, Muldowney, Okunade,

Piccolo, Pothecary, Potter, Ralph, Redsell, Rice, Rigby, Sammons, Shinnick, Smith, Spillman, Van Day, Watkins and Worrall (46)

Against: (0)

Abstain: Councillor Allen (1)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.2 to be carried.

A recorded vote took place on recommendation 1.3 the result of which was:

For: Councillors Akinbohun, Anderson, Churchman, Collins, Coxshall, Gledhill, Hague, Halden, Hebb, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, Little, MacPherson, Maney, Mayes, Piccolo, Potter, Ralph, Redsell, Rigby, Sammons, Van Day and Watkins (25)

Against: Councillors Abbas, Allen, Chukwu, Duffin, Fish, Fletcher, Gerrish, Holloway, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Muldowney, Okunade, Pothecary, Rice, Shinnick and Worrall (18)

Abstain: Councillors Byrne, Massey, Smith and Spillman (4)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendation 1.3 to be carried.

A non-recorded vote took place on recommendations 1.4 and 1.5. Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.4 and 1.5 to be carried.

Finally, a recorded en-bloc vote would take place on recommendations 1.6 to 1.11 the result of which was:

For: Councillors Abbas, Akinbohun, Allen, Anderson, Byrne, Chukwu, Churchman, Collins, Coxshall, Duffin, Fish, Fletcher, Gerrish, Gledhill, Hague, Halden, Hebb, Holloway, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Little, MacPherson, Maney, Massey, Mayes, Muldowney, Okunade, Piccolo, Pothecary, Potter, Ralph, Redsell, Rice, Rigby, Sammons, Shinnick, Smith, Spillman, Van Day, Watkins and Worrall (47)

Against: (0)

Abstain: (0)

Whereupon the Mayor declared recommendations 1.6 to 1.11 to be carried.

## **RESOLVED**

**That the Council:**

- 1. Considered and acknowledged the Section 151 Officer's (Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property's) S25 report on the robustness of the proposed budget, the adequacy of**



the Council's reserves and the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 1, including the conditions upon which the following recommendations are made;

2. Agreed a 2% council tax increase towards the cost of Adult Social Care;
3. Agreed a 1.49% council tax increase to meet the increasing costs and demands of all other services and to move the council towards greater financial sustainability for the medium to longer term;
4. Approved the new General Fund capital proposals, including the allocation for feasibility work on future and aspirational proposals, as set out in section 10 and Appendix 6;
5. Delegated to Cabinet the ability to agree schemes (a) where it can be evidenced that there is a spend to save opportunity or (b) that use any unbudgeted contributions from third parties, including those by way of grants or developers' contributions, and these be deemed as part of the capital programme.

#### **Statutory Council Tax Resolution**

*(Members should note that these recommendations are a result of the previous recommendations above and can be agreed as written or as amended by any changes agreed to those above).*

6. Calculated that the council tax requirement for the Council's own purposes for 2020/21 is £69,168,853 as set out in the table at paragraph 5.8 of this report.
7. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2020/21 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - (a) £477,989,694 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the Act.
  - (b) £408,820,841 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the Act.
  - (c) £69,168,853 be the amount by which the aggregate at 1.7(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 1.7(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).

- (d) £1,332.81 being the amount at 1.7(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (Council Tax Base of 51,897), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
- (e) £0 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act.
- (f) £1,332.81 being the amount at (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (e) above by Item T, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

8. Noted that the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has issued precepts to the Council in respect of Essex Police and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated in the tables below.
9. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts Page 91 shown in the tables below as the amounts of council tax for 2019/20 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

**2020/21 COUNCIL TAX FOR THURROCK PURPOSES EXCLUDING  
ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY AND ESSEX POLICE AUTHORITY**

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2020/21							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
888.54	1,036.63	1,184.72	1,332.81	1,628.99	1,925.17	2,221.35	2,665.62

10. That it be noted that for the year 2020/21 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council in respect of Essex Police for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2020/21							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
132.42	154.49	176.56	198.63	242.77	286.91	331.05	397.26

11. That it be noted that for the year 2020/21 Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Fire and Rescue Authority has stated the following amounts in precept issued to the Council in respect of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service for each of the categories of dwellings as follows:

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2020/21							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
49.26	57.47	65.68	73.89	90.31	106.73	123.15	147.78

**2020/21 COUNCIL TAX (INCLUDING FIRE AND POLICE  
AUTHORITY PRECEPTS)**

Amounts for the Valuation Bands for 2020/21							
A £	B £	C £	D £	E £	F £	G £	H £
1,070.2 2	1,248.59	1,426.96	1,605.33	1,962.07	2,318.81	2,675.55	3,210.66

*At 9.21pm, Councillor Potheary called Point of Order to suspend standing orders until 10.00pm and seconded by Councillor Kerin. Members agreed to continue.*

*At 9.22pm, Councillor Churchman left the Council Chamber.*

**116. Questions from Members**

The Mayor informed the Chamber no questions to the Leader had been received and nine questions to Cabinet Members.

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

The Mayor stated those Members whose questions were not heard a written response would be provided.

*At 9.36pm, Councillor Maney called Point of Order in regards to Council Procedure Rules, 14.17, Supplementary Questions that Members may ask two supplementary questions but must not extend into a statement. Councillor Maney stated that Members were abusing this rule.*

*At 9.50pm, Councillor Holloway called Point of Order in regards to Article 5, 3.1 (d) of the constitution, Mayor's Functions and Responsibilities, (d) to ensure that the Council meeting was a forum for the debate of matters of concern to the local community. Councillor Holloway stated that the Mayor was not allowing Members to have such a debate.*

*At 9.54pm, Councillor Byrne called Point of Order to notify the Mayor that he was still waiting for a written response from the Portfolio Holder to a question submitted at January Council.*

**117. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies**

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

**118. Minutes of Committees**

The Minutes of Committee as set out in the Agenda were received.

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

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

**120. Motion submitted by Councillor Halden**

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

*The Chamber thanks those members retiring at the upcoming election for their service to the borough.*

Councillor Halden presented the Motion by stating when Members were elected they sign up for a period of four years and within that time they are committed to the role and the functions associated with it and Members often had to take compromises on family life when undertaking the role in representing their constituents.

Councillor Halden specifically mentioned Councillor Gerrish, Councillor Spillman, Councillor Duffin and Councillor Watkins who would be retiring in May 2020 and wished them well.

Councillor Halden summed up by stating that on behalf of all 49 Members and residents he thanked all those retiring members for their service.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion to which the Mayor announced the Motion carried.

**121. Motion submitted by Councillor Redsell**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Redsell. The Motion read as follows:

*Council calls on Cabinet to consider a new wood and bluebells to be planted on a piece of land at the edge of Woodside.*

Councillor Redsell stated the plans would be for a place for trees and greenery to grow which would lead to a wood being created for the future of Thurrock's children. That planting trees was a way to tackle air pollution, a great way to reduce carbon footprint and for the health and wellbeing of residents. This was now a good time to start with plans which could only getting bigger over time. Councillor Redsell stated conversations were taking place with the developers who owned the piece of land.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion to which the Mayor announced the Motion carried.

#### **122. Motion submitted by Councillor Rigby**

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Rigby. The Motion read as follows:

*The high use of fireworks in the borough was causing distress and injury to pets and wildlife with an impact on air quality. Members therefore call on the Council to request the Government; via a letter to George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with copies sent to our two local Members of Parliament, Jackie Doyle - Price and Stephen Metcalfe; review current legislation to include the following:*

- *Reduce the time period fireworks can be purchased.*
- *Reduce the decibel level of fireworks for private use.*
- *Restrict use of fireworks to official dates such as Bonfire night, Diwali, New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year. All other times, for example weddings, requiring a licence.*

*We also request the Council provide improved notification of big scheduled events.*

Councillor Rigby stated the Motion was not seeking to ban fireworks but to have more control over when fireworks could be used. To have reduced time periods and fixed dates when fireworks can be used and to have tighter controls.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion to which the Mayor announced the Motion carried.

**The meeting finished at 10.05 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)**

## **Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 26 February 2020**

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

There was 1 question submitted from members of the public.

#### **1. Mr Perrin to Councillor Watkins**

I congratulate the Council on being named “Team of the Year” at the “Keep Britain Tidy” Awards 2020. However, at risk of raining on the Council’s parade, would you agree that there are some areas of the Borough where there is an urgent need for improvement to the environment, especially with regard to the Council’s policy for a “Cleaner, Greener Thurrock”?

#### **Mayor**

Councillor Watkins

#### **Councillor Watkins**

Thank you very much Mister Mayor and very good evening to you Mr Perrin. Firstly I would like to thank you for your kind words and equally congratulate Thurrock as you have already mentioned in your question being named Keep Britain Tidy team of the year. Keep Britain Tidy who like the residents are seeing the benefits of the conservative run Thurrock, we have improved services being delivered thanks to our financial control otherwise we would not have won this award, and I believe would be award number 17 now actually for this administration since 2017. And what exactly are those improved services been that the residents are benefiting from and ensuring areas are clean and tidy. Well since 2016 as Keep Britain Tidy have seen over £10m has been reinvested back into clean it cut it fill it and stop it. New tractors have been brought back in to cutting the grass, barrow beats back on our streets cleaning our streets and towns, new sweepers cleaning out roads and pathways which you may have seen out and about which came in November we have some great new sweepers out there, capped weekly bin collections, our fleet vehicles replaced with newly compliance, over 600 street bins have been replaced and the final stages to come this year. Increased enforcement activity across our high streets tackling litter and graffiti amongst many other things. Increased enforcements in regards to fly tipping as well, a brand new fly tipping campaign launched whilst working with our increased enforcement officers and police to stop those from doing it and also more police thanks both to the amazing work this council has done lead by Councillor Gledhill in his role as portfolio for anti-social behaviour and also for the police fire and crime commissioner as well. Again with financial control and surplus investment into policing and I would also like to thank our government as well for the manifesto of pledging 20,000 new police officers across the UK as well. And it is delivering on the streets and the most recent Keep Britain Tidy scores which saw us reach a whole new high score of 5.36% only 0.36% away from our final scoring. We have seen massive crack down on our gangs and also new police on the streets and I would happily

argue that our borough is better than it has been for a many number of years. We have achieved a lot over the last four years recovering from the devastation that labour left us in with cut after cut. Heading today with financial awareness. But Mister Mayor I am modest although we have had many successes I am humble enough to say there is more than we can do. I have always said that we strive to do better in Thurrock and we must continue to innovate and improve where that needs to happen. I am fully supportive of the budget to ensure that we continue to do that we have been investing in our borough to keep it clear safer and greener. We will be going over in greater detail later this evening of the full ins and outs as this is announced but we continue to have a cleaner safer Thurrock with such initiatives such as tree planting strategy where planting over a 1000 new trees, a new air quality strategy work has kicked off alongside the carbon neutrality, testing modelling being undertaken this year and £150,000 surplus being put forward for new schemes to help it and even tonight we will be seconding a motion to in due course to have a new wood. Extra policing and enforcement and numerous parking improvements plans in place alongside many other things we continue to be ambitious where improvements or changes are needed.

**Mayor**

Mr Perrin do you have a supplementary.

**Mr Perrin**

Yes please Mister Mayor. Protection of the environment is not just about fly tipping and littering important though those issues are. The Council should be equally concerned about preserving grass verges and green spaces. Drivers of motor vehicles park on unprotected grass verges and green spaces simply because they can. Such behaviour is every bit as anti-social as fly tipping. I would go to so far as to say it is vandalism. If the Council is seriously committed to keeping Thurrock cleaner and greener will it protect all grass verges and green spaces and clamp down on offenders. I am assuming most Councillors and Council officers own or drive a motor vehicle so I feel I may be rolling a very large boulder up a very steep hill and I fear it is likely to rollback and crush me.

**Mayor**

Thank you Mr Perrin. Councillor Watkins.

**Councillor Watkins**

Thank you Mister Mayor I will keep it brief this one. What I am going to say Mr Perrin is that you are completely correct in that verge parking which has absolutely ruined certain parts of our borough where there has been grass verges there up to now but are no longer grass verges but mud baths and equally aware that consistent parking over a many number of years as well which has meant a lot of the pathways themselves are now cracked and obviously (*coughing*) more importantly. Hopefully you may have seen it, some



wards will have briefly seen this, we launched only last year our “Kerb It” scheme which was a million pounds worth of investment through our surplus which again thank you was for the stronger financial control I would like to say some whereby we saw some roads and pathways repaired with new parking measures put in place in order to stop inappropriate parking taking place. Just to name some of those were Webster Road in Stanford, Dell Road and Dean Path in Ockendon, Woodford and Lampits Hill in Corringham and you may have seen if you haven’t already is in there we are putting forward another over £600,000 worth of surplus budget if people decide to vote for it, which they are apparently not going to so they are saying no to this scheme funny enough whereby we would be putting more money into to try and stop this inappropriate parking and repairing, quite rightly so, those pathways where they have been damaged in the past not just with concreted over but sometimes we have been using that grass seed protection so that it can still be grass where cars can still park to get the best of both worlds. But we are doing something about it quite rightly so and we are also exploring what other measures are available to us through enforcement as well.

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

The Mayor informed the Chamber that no questions had been received to the Leader of the Council and 9 questions had been received to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

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

#### **1. 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?

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson

**Councillor Johnson**

The answer to that question is undoubtedly yes.

**Mayor**

Councillor Fish do you have to pose a supplementary question.

**Councillor Fish**

Yes please Mister Mayor. My question should not be taken as a criticism of the individual care takers that work on Seabrooke Rise, the residents feel they do the best that they can. My question is more on how the services are delivered strategically so what residents have to put up with is landings not moped, green areas that aren't cleaned properly, litter in the green areas, graffiti in lifts, drug use in lobbies and no weekend care takers. The residents tell me this is caused by someone being pulled away to deal with other areas to cover for sickness and holidays. Therefore what I am asking for is what I would like the portfolio holder to do is to carry out a review of the service, not just in Seabrooke Rise but right across the borough to make sure that it is fair and equitable for someone in the borough.

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson

**Councillor Johnson**

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you for your supplementary. Just to say there is a care taking service charter that covers the standards all residents

receive across the whole of Thurrock. The Council is committed to maintaining high standards of cleanliness across all communal land, areas and buildings in the neighbourhoods we manage. This question was in last month and it has now come to this month's council, if there are real problems going on councillor who don't you come to me and we can sort them out hopefully rather than bringing it to council and asking general questions so my answers back to you, I think there was a question, that a review has been undertaken already and I am quite happy with the review that has been done. If there are any problems on that estate come to me and speak to me and we will try and do something about it.

**Mayor**

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

**Councillor Fish**

Yes Mister Mayor. The portfolio holders talks about a review of the service and I know people having been walking the estate with residents looking at improving the service in the last few months since my question was raised in fact. No improvements have taken place and these things are still happening. As far as I am concerned that review is inadequate and wont the review done properly.

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson

**Councillor Johnson**

No there wasn't a question there Mister Mayor. As I have said to you just a little minute ago come and speak to me if there are problems.

**2. Councillor Byrne to Councillor Mayes**

Can the Portfolio Holder assure us that related STP proposals satisfy the health needs of Thurrock residents for emergencies and walk in patients?

**Mayor**

Councillor Mayes

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Byrne. In light of the question that was asked commissioning and provision of these services are primarily a matter for the NHS. However, members will be aware that the Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding back in 2017 when all partners, the Council and the NHS, committed to ensuring that all services

currently on the Orsett Hospital site will be relocated elsewhere to more local sites within Thurrock, principally the proposed four Integrated Medical Centres. That includes the Minor Injuries Unit which is proposed to move into the Thurrock Hospital site.

There are no proposals from the NHS to scale down wider emergency services in fact quite the opposite. Thurrock residents will be able to continue to access necessary emergency services due to the A&E department remaining at Basildon and Thurrock University Trust. The STP reconfiguration of services strengthens the position of Basildon Hospital with the expansion of the stroke service and the development of the radiology hub.

**Mayor**

Councillor Byrne do you have to pose a supplementary question.

**Councillor Byrne**

Yes, will there be adequate resources for the ambulance services when the extra pressure has been put on with moving patients around with treating transfers. You know Basildon Hospital will not be their local hospital any more, it will Chelmsford or Southend where ever they choose it to be. Is it also true that it falls well short of vehicles and crews and be heavily reliant on St Johns Ambulance to cover the number of flaws in this proposal?

**Mayor**

Councillor Mayes

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you for your supplementary question. In terms of the STP as I said it is not an NHS matter and how they provide their ambulances and what they do in return to that would be up to their service but of course we would lobby and work with our partners across the many partners that we work with across the NHS to ensure we get the best services which would obviously improve the transport between the services.

**Mayor**

Councillor Byrne do you have a second supplementary question.

**Councillor Byrne**

I didn't get an answer to that one. St John's Ambulance was the question.

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you Mister Mayor. I repeat this is primarily an NHS matter and not a council matter therefore it would be up to them to sort this issue and will lobby

our partners as I said to get the best results for our residents within the STP proposal. Thank you.

**3. Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration confirm that the £25M Government funding for Tilbury Town has now been received by Thurrock Council?

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall.

**Councillor Coxshall**

I can't say thank you for the question because it's the same thing and I have to repeat the same thing over and over again.

Tilbury Board has to be constituted and it has to say what it wants with the money. It's not my job, it's not anyone else's job to say it. The government said it's offered us up to £25 million to the people of Tilbury and for the Board to decide how we run with the money. This is a Conservative government giving us £25 million, not a Labour government, thank the Lord. It means that they don't just throw money at £25 million, they've got to know what we're going to spend it on first and then the £25 million would be coming.

If the Tilbury Board comes up with good suggestions, it will get £25 million to spend in Tilbury. But I must say this again, you asked me lots and lots of questions about it, so.

**Mayor**

Councillor Okunade, do you have a second question?

**Councillor Okunade**

Yes. Just a quick comment that I wouldn't have been asking that question, I did, being, you did not say to the public that yes you have that money or you are receiving that. So, my question, supplementary question, will be that, can you assure all Tilbury residents that you will deliver on your promise regarding this money and also to spend it on what the community needs.

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall.

**Councillor Coxshall**

I can answer that simply, no. It is not my decision to spend the money or how to spend the money. It is the Tilbury Board that are constituted to spend the money. If the members of the Board decide what they would like, the

government would necessitate their great ideas. I'm pretty confident of any bids that we've put in in the last 10 years, we've been exceptionally lucky and got fantastic results. Millions and millions, in fact, hundreds of millions from the government. This is money specifically for Tilbury, it would be spent on Tilbury, with subject to what the Board wants to do.

**Mayor**

Councillor Okunade. Do you have a second supplementary question?

**Councillor Okunade**

No, thank you.

**4. Councillor Okunade to Councillor Coxshall**

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us the composition of the Tilbury Town Fund Board that has recently been set up?

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall

**Councillor Coxshall**

Yes, I can obviously send you the papers that were published by the government if you really want to see what they look like. I am glad you are interested because the ward member for Grays has been invited and I hope he turns up tomorrow night for the meeting in Grays as well. If he didn't turn up last time I hope he can turn up as well to find out. But the paperwork for that is out and about for it but the Tilbury members is set out by the majesty's government published last year it has to have a Member of Parliament and the Member of Parliament is Jackie Doyle-Price after December. The local representative from the CLLD was Simon Harper, representative from Greater Skills and Places is Lucy Harris, a representative from the community is Yewande Kannike, a local ward councillor which is Councillor Allen Mayes there are two business representatives which are on there which is someone from Amazon site, who haven't provided a name yet, and the Port of Tilbury which is Peter Ward and of course myself.

**Mayor**

Councillor Okunade do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

**Councillor Okunade**

Yes please Mister Mayor. Thank you for giving the list of those on the board. I just want to ask if you can tell us what rights you have for excluding the elected Labour Party Tilbury councillors.

**Mayor**

Councillor Coxshall

**Councillor Coxshall**

As set out in the majesty's government the people on the board, it is a small board but you are more than welcome after last year you did not think it was interested, there was no interest at all as you said it would not happen and there was no money coming in. There is an advisory board, I am very happy for you to be on the wider advisory board and will make sure you have an invite to the advisory board.

**Mayor**

Thank you Councillor Coxshall.

**Councillor Okunade**

I must really mention that you have been really really disrespectful, you have, for saying that, you know, if I feel like coming, I can come. You know you are really really very disrespectful and I am sure you are using the council officers, you are putting them in trouble because you are using council officers to do something for you. Did you use council officers to personally dedicate these and knowing that council officers have to be inclusive when they have to think about who and who should be representing a local area because I am the elected member and have been the elected member for Tilbury for a long time. You have been very disrespectful and you will get council officers into trouble. He is rude and needs to apologise.

**5. Councillor Fletcher to Councillor Johnson**

Regarding the plans for new build in South Ockendon, and particularly the Culver and Callan sites, what consideration has the Portfolio Holder given to the infrastructure, including school places, medical facilities and shops, that such an increase in population will require?

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson.

**Councillor Johnson**

Thank you Mr Mayor. Thank you Councillor Fletcher for your question.

I have to begin by pointing out that the Housing Development List was agreed at Cabinet earlier this month has made no definite plans to build anywhere in the Borough. As we await on the results of public consultation in order to decide where the 500 new council homes proposed by this administration are best placed. With regards to the infrastructure, I will say should we reach the

point of a planning application I am sure the suitability of any site will be considered on a number of criteria with appropriate financial contributions towards education and health care through section 106 agreements. But I must point out that schooling in the area is very adequate. In fact, the Benyon School is already in the process of converting to a two form entry. There's also a strong possibility of a dedicated medical hub in Ockendon.

However, as you have specifically mentioned the Culver Centre and Callan Grove, I do believe this will be an appropriate time to show how this administration's consultation policy is putting residents at its very heart. As you may be aware, that a round of consultation began previously on both sites and I am pleased to say that under the strapline of, 'you said, we did'; an amended site plan will be offered up for further consultation very soon regarding the Culver Centre site. With regards to Callan Grove, I have revisited the latest consultation feedback with Officers and I've had several meetings with residents. I've seen for myself how this site is a really very, very well used amenity within the close community and does not need to go through a second round of consultations and I will therefore announce that this site will not be considered for housing development.

**Mayor**

Settle down please. Councillor Fletcher, do you have a supplementary question?

**Councillor Fletcher**

Thank you Mister Mayor. Councillor Johnson, I think I love you.

**Mayor**

That was a statement, rather than a question.

**6. Councillor Kerin to Councillor Johnson**

Does the Portfolio Holder believe that building 89 flats on the Grays Beach car park is a good idea, please consider the previous answer?

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson

**Councillor Johnson**

I don't want you telling me you love me. Thank you for the question councillor. However as I have said before I must point out the Housing Development Options List that went to Cabinet earlier this month highlighted sites that are technically possible to be considered for development. Which could be part about infrastructure first high quality commanded approach for development. Therefore until the consultation with residents is returned and analysed the



only good idea that I am fully backing is for this administration to build 500 new council homes for the people of Thurrock. The Labour Group would do well to understand unless they do not agree with 500 new council homes they should ensure that the residents in their wards are given help and encouraged to return the consultants with as much detail as possible. I would refer you to a motion presented by Councillor Gerrish back in July 2018 which called for and was agreed asking for our asset disposal process to include consultation with ward councillors and be more open and inclusive decision making process which I believe I have done. The introduction of the criteria process paper on how we select sites followed by an open and transparent called for sites and indeed I remember you, Councillor Kerin seeing you sitting there nodding your head in agreement when I explained this process when questioned in my portfolio presentation. We don't want to see any more sites inclusions such as Kings Street being put forward by your administration whereby public consultation was either ignored or not even sought.

**Mayor**

Councillor Kerin do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

**Councillor Kerin**

Yes please. Thank you for that answer obviously very disappointed I thought I was going to get a moment like Councillor Fletcher did. I'll have to wait I have another question later it might happen. It was a simple question really I asked you for you whether you think it was a good idea to put 89 flats there, you know, I don't think that is going to be answered. But as a supplementary what I am really worried about is not just individual sites but how they make up a collective whole in the sense that we all that we also have Darnley Road and Crown Road on the agenda only 90, 32 flats proposed for Argent Street, we have 82 proposed for the civic offices ..

**Mayor**

Councillor Kerin please get to your question.

**Councillor Kerin**

I wish he would get to the answer in the first place then we would have more time. Those are only in my ward in Grays Riverside but taking it up with the whole of Grays you have 20 units in Bridge Road and 60

**Mayor**

Councillor we understand there is a list of what is going, please get to your question.

**Councillor Kerin**

Next time we will wait for their clarity of their answers as well. Ok. Which brings me to my conclusion. 373 proposed unit across the whole of the Grays Riverside Grays and Grays Thurrock so my question is does Councillor Johnson believe that those 373 units across Grays is a good idea.

**Mayor**

Councillor Johnson

**Councillor Johnson**

It sounds like an old record here I'm sorry but my idea is good that we are building new council homes. We have put it out to public consultation, we will be putting out for public consultation and we will get the view of the people that really really matter then us 49 councillors can then discuss it as much as you like. I am sorry that I keep repeating myself but you said it these are proposals they are not stuff we are going to do they have been brought forward so much earlier now. You will have a lot more time to discuss this where you know the consultation will bring it forward to have time to talk about it was your administration you talked about it when it was at planning that is not the case now and like I said you sat there and agreed to the process that I have put in place.

**Mayor**

Thank you councillor. Can you get to the question please?

**Councillor Kerin**

Ok, get to the question. Do you personally believe that these sites are a good idea, yes or no? I hope that was brief enough.

**Councillor Johnson**

I am not going to give you a yes or no answer because we are waiting for the people that matter to come back to give us some form of consultation feedback.

**7. Councillor Holloway to Councillor Mayes**

What consideration has been given to the health implications of removing green spaces from our borough?

**Mayor**

Councillor Mayes

**Councillor Mayes**

Thank you Mister Mayor. Thank you Councillor Holloway for your question. The Council's emerging Local Plan will be supported by a suite of evidence based documents which identify the needs within Thurrock and how future policies should be designed in order to meet these and support growth. All the policies and proposals to be set out in the Local Plan will be subject to a Health Impact Assessment as part of the Integrated Assessment process which will ensure that both individually and cumulatively the Plan has positive impacts on Health and Wellbeing considerations.

At the point of any planning application the suitability of each site is considered on the basis of a number of criteria, including accessibility to services. Planning policy also considers the impact of development proposals on the local community with appropriate financial contributions towards education and healthcare facilities amongst others negotiated through a Section 106 agreement as a commitment between the applicant and developer and the Local Planning Authority.

**Mayor**

Councillor Holloway do you have a supplementary question.

**Councillor Holloway**

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you for your response. It was a bit planning heavy in regards to the response rather than health focused. Numerous studies have pointed to the direct benefit of green spaces to physical and mental health wellbeing. Studies which I am happy to send references to so that you can read in detail they are about 27 which say that green spaces have been associated with the decreased health complaints including blood pressure and cholesterol, improve mental health and reduce stress levels, receive better general health and the ability to face problems. The presence of green space also has indirect benefits it encourages social contact and integration, provides space for physical activities and play and it improves air quality. My question is as portfolio holder for health will you agree with your Tory colleagues who have recently come out against the destruction of our green spaces just one this evening from removing it from a list of destruction sites and say that residents health and wellbeing is up most important and we need to save our green spaces.

**Mayor**

Councillor Mayes would you like to respond.

**Councillor Mayes**

In relation to the site planning I believe my colleague, Councillor Johnson, answered that accurately and think that is where we are with that one. In terms of obviously green spaces to help air quality there is a bigger impact with the planting of 1000 trees that we are planning to do than green spaces not disregarding green spaces obviously they are important. However this

clearly says that there will be an health impact assessment of any green space so it is not just that there is a green piece of land we are going to do that with it, it is the ability to see what is going to happen with the health of the area and also the accumulative plan, the health and wellbeing consideration so therefore is not just a straight pave over greens so that I believe you are trying to suggest it is consideration taking health and wellbeing as well. Thank you.

**Mayor**

Councillor Holloway do you have a second supplementary question.

**Councillor Holloway**

I do thank you Mister Mayor. It is not ok to remove green spaces from one place and plant trees in another. Mister Mayor it is important I think to highlight the destruction of our green spaces will impact on some of our most important residents of our borough children and older people and providing some context for the new portfolio holder. Children's physical activity are increased when they live closer to parks, play grounds and recreation areas

**Mayor**

Councillor can we get to the question otherwise we wont get through the questions.

**Councillor Holloway**

I am raising some context with which residents have raised with me.

**Mayor**

Councillor. Councillor I won't the question please.

**Councillor Holloway**

Yes Mister Mayor ... the survival of older people

**Mayor**

I am sorry Councillor, please be seated. I asked you for the question you never asked it.

**Councillor Holloway**

My question to the cabinet member is the original question a yes or no answer will he agree with his Tory colleagues who have recently come out on the destruction of our green spaces and state for the resident's health and wellbeing we need to save our green spaces. Yes or no.

## **Councillor Mayes**

They are my conservative colleagues and I would encourage everybody residents and everybody to engage in the processes and consultation which would give the actual answers the residents want. It is not up to me, it is not up to Councillor Johnson give a yes or no answer, it's up to the residents they know best, not us.

## **Mayor**

Thank you councillors.

## **8. Councillor Redsell to Councillor Watkins**

Could the Portfolio Holder inform the Chamber what we are going to achieve in the next phase of tree planting in the borough?

## **Mayor**

Councillor Watkins

## **Councillor Watkins**

Thank you for the question Councillor Redsell and congratulate you on your continued persistence and passion on the work done in helping to shape the Councils tree planting into the agenda. With the right questions and motions to this Council you can get policy through. As you are aware and as from your motion we have a policy to replace trees like for like so the recent storms which unfortunately did see trees fall will be replaced alongside any tree that needed to be replaced. However, as you have seen this evening from our past budget agenda our surpluses will be used however to be reinvest into Thurrock for Thurrock residents. Over the course of the next two years we will be planted in the excess of over 1000 new trees. These new trees will be planted back down our avenues and can't wait to see our avenues repopulated with trees once again. We will also be working with transport and air quality teams to ensure that trees are planted at existing acre main sites and any new sites identified under the new round of data modelling commissioned by this council. Ensuring that we are planting trees in our poor air quality areas both existing air quality as it currently stands and also what the air quality monitoring also says. The surplus will enhance the maintenance of our trees also. I will also be supporting your motion this evening which if passed will feed into the tree planting strategy separately looking at the inclusion of the new wood and lastly we hope to have our new ambitious strategy working with educational colleagues and what further we can do with our schools on tree planting. Mr Mayor we are doing an awful lot of tree planting over the coming two years.

## **Mayor**

Councillor Redsell do you have a supplementary.

**Councillor Redsell**

No thank you Mister Mayor.

Time fell on this item. Councillor Kerin will receive a written response to his question.

## **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions received from members of the public.

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## Petitions Update Report

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Presented (by)	Responsible Officer	Status
535	We, the above residents of Orsett Village would request Council and the Portfolio Holder to remove the Ridgwell Avenue proposal from the consultation document that went to Overview and Scrutiny on Tuesday 11 February and to Cabinet on 12 February 2020	26 February 2020	Cllr Little Presented at Council	Andy Millard	The Ridgwell Avenue proposal has since been withdrawn from the Housing Development Options List presented to Housing Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet.
536	We, the undersign call upon Thurrock Council to carry out a public consultation on parking in the following roads: Lime Close; Copper Beech Road; Church Crescent; Cliff Place; The Green; Peartree Close; Tyssen Place; Cheelson Road; Wilsman Road; Nelson Road; Hall Lane; and Canterbury Parade. On completion, Thurrock Council should then implement the findings.	26 February 2020	Cllr Potter Presented at Council	Andy Millard	Officers are engaging with Councillor Potter to obtain further information to be able progress this petition.

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<b>8 July 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 9</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Revised Political Balance</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> None	<b>Key Decision:</b> Not Applicable
<b>Report of:</b> Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Ian Hunt, Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
<b>This report is public.</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report requests the Council confirm the calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees following Councillors Spillman and Duffin becoming Conservative councillors on 11 May 2020.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That the political balance and allocation of seats, as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.**
- 1.2 **Council note the manual adjustment requirements outlined in 2.2 and 2.4 and agree those adjustments proposed by group leaders at the meeting.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The political balance of the Council was last confirmed at its meeting on 26 February 2020 following a Member becoming an independent Councillor. The new political balance is:

Conservatives: 28  
 Labour: 16  
 Thurrock Independent: 3  
 Independent: 2

## **Manual Adjustment**

2.2 To increase accuracy in the political balance and to properly recognise ungrouped members, Members should apply a manual adjustment. The revised manual adjustment is as follows:

- Labour lose 1 seat across committees
- Conservatives gain 2 seats across committees
- Thurrock Independents gain 3 seats across committees

2.3 In previous times when a political balance report has been brought to Council group leaders have gifted or bartered seat allocations to create a varied seat entitlement.

2.4 Group Leaders have been informed of the adjustments needed to align with the new political balance and will propose their preferred manual adjustments at the meeting to be agreed by Council.

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

3.1 Manual adjustments are discretionary and are based on agreement between all group leaders as to how these adjustments should be made.

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

4.1 For transparency the Council are encouraged to have sight of any changes to political balance and agree or note them.

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

5.1 Consultation has been undertaken in respect of this report with the leaders of each of the political groups represented on the Council. Their agreement has been obtained to the calculations relating to the allocation of seats on committees and their respective nominations can be put before Council for approval.

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

6.1 Appointing members to committees in accordance with the political balance of the Council and associated allocation of seats on committees will enable the Council to properly discharge its functions.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**  
**Director of Finance, Governance and Property**

There are no direct financial implications related to the change in political balance. The cost of servicing committees will be met through the existing budgets.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**  
**Assistant Director of Law and Governance**

The duties on Councils (under sections 15- 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989) are to review the representation of different political groups on Committees and, as soon as practicable after such reviews, determine the allocation to different political groups and give effect to allocations. This is so as to ensure that the overall political composition of the Council is, so far as reasonably practicable, reflected in the appointment of Members to Committees and Sub-Committees.

A review should be undertaken where the overall political balance of the Council changes during the course of the municipal year.

If following a review it's considered that any changes need to be made to Committee and/or Sub-Committee allocations then a report needs to go to full Council setting out the recommended changes. This report highlights the implications of that review.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

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

There are no direct implications for this report.

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

None.

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

None.

- 9. Appendices to the report**

There are the following appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 – Revised Political Balance Calculations

**Report Author:**

Ian Hunt

Assistant Director of Law and Governance

Legal and Democratic Services

Thurrock Council  
**No-Majority  
 Proportionality**

Party Group  
 Number of members  
 Overall proportionality  
 Total strict entitlement  
 Total rounded  
 entitlement

**Committee**  
**Size of  
 Committee**  
 Children's O&S  
 Cleaner & Greener  
 O&S  
 Corporate O&S  
 Health O&S  
 Housing O&S  
 Planning, Transport &  
 Regeneration O&S  
 Planning  
 Licensing  
 General Services  
 Corporate Parenting  
 Standards & Audit  
**Total seats**  
 Adjustments

		Conservative		Labour		No Party		Thurrock Independents		Ungrouped / Seats to allocate	
		28		16		0		3		2	
		0.571428571	57.14%	0.326530612	32.65%	0	0.00%	0.06122449	6.12%		
		46.28571429		26.44897959		0		4.959183673			
		46		26		0		5		77	
		Strict entitlement	Rounded Entitlement	Strict entitlement	Rounded entitlement	Strict entitlement	Rounded entitlement	Strict entitlement	Rounded entitlement	Total Rounded Entitlement	
Children's O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Cleaner & Greener O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Corporate O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Health O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Housing O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Planning, Transport & Regeneration O&S	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
Planning	9	5.14	5	2.94	3	0.00	0	0.55	1	9	0
Licensing	15	8.57	9	4.90	5	0.00	0	0.92	1	15	0
General Services	7	4.00	4	2.29	2	0.00	0	0.43	0	6	1
Corporate Parenting	8	4.57	5	2.61	3	0.00	0	0.49	0	8	0
Standards & Audit	6	3.43	3	1.96	2	0.00	0	0.37	0	5	1
<b>Total seats</b>	<b>81</b>		<b>44</b>		<b>27</b>		<b>0</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8</b>
Adjustments			2		-1		0		3		

Total  
49

Notes:

- 1 The total rounded entitlement of each party group is compared with the total number of seats allocated to that group. The allocations are then adjusted manually to ensure that the number of seats allocated to a particular group matches their entitlement.
- 2 Compare total rounded entitlement of each party group (Row 7) with the total number of seats allocated to that group in Row 20. Then adjust the allocations manually to ensure that the number in Row 20 matches that in Row 7





<b>8 July 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 11</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-Key
<b>Report of:</b> Overview and Scrutiny Chairs	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance, and Monitoring Officer	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sean Clark, Director of Finance, Governance and Property	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

This report introduces the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which in accordance with the Council's Constitution, should be presented to the Council.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20 be noted.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Each year an Annual Report is produced detailing the work of the six Overview and Scrutiny committees 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 Overview and Scrutiny tackle a wide range of topics, with Members leading on issues that have come to the fore both through their own research and through the recommendations of Council officers.

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

3.1 It is hoped that the format of the Annual Report will highlight to residents how the Overview and Scrutiny committees 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 2019/20 and is being referred to Council for review in order for Members to comment on the overall Overview and Scrutiny function of Thurrock Council.

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

5.1 In accordance with Chapter 4, Part 1, Rule 7.1 of the Constitution, the annual report is submitted to Council for their consideration and comment.

5.2 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs were consulted on the contents of the report in May 2020.

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

6.1 This report has a community impact as the work of the Overview and Scrutiny committees for 2019/20 allows residents to participate in decision making and tackling key issues of local concern, which is clearly documented in the annual report.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

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

There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report. If any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for adoption by the Council have financial implications they are identified separately in each report.

##### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**  
**Assistant Director Law & Governance, and Monitoring Officer**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. It is good practice to produce an annual report reviewing Overview and Scrutiny activity, and meets the requirement of the Constitution to report.

### 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities**

The Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out with due regard to equality and inclusion legislation and specifically the Equality Act 2010.

### 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):

- Agenda, Reports and Minutes of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish Reviews, available from:

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

### 9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2019/20

### Report Author:

Lucy Tricker

Democratic Services Officer

Legal and Democratic Services

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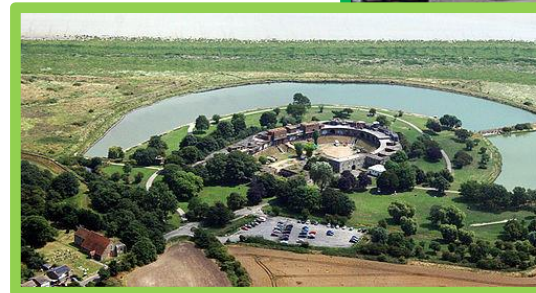
Appendix 1

Overview and  
Scrutiny

Annual Report

2019-20

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## What is overview and scrutiny?

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

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

## Work Programme

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

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

The agendas and associated reports of each Committee can be accessed by the following link:

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

## Committees

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

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

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee can also form Working Groups or Task and Finish Groups to focus on particularly important issues.



## Membership

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

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

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

## The decision making process

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

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



## How have we helped you?

### Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



#### Ofsted Inspections

We worked hard this year to make sure that Thurrock's education provision was the best it could be.

At the beginning of the municipal year we received an Ofsted Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Inspection, with weaknesses highlighted such as lack of staff training, poor quality Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and more 19-25 aged SEND students repeating level one courses.

We called an extraordinary committee to consider the response and the

Written Statement of Action (WSOA), as well as scrutinising the new management structure, the new training systems for staff, and improved governance plans.

We approved the draft WSoA, and this was submitted in the summer of 2019. In October 2019, we heard that Ofsted had requested a more detailed WSoA, so the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee met with the Director of Children's Services to ensure the right information was provided, and the document was successfully re-submitted.



Later on in the year we also considered the Local Authority Children's Services Ofsted Inspection, which we were happy to see received a 'good' rating. We wanted to strive to do better though, and therefore requested that updates be provided regarding the areas which needed improvement, such as the collaboration with adult service's for disabled young people and care leavers. We also wanted to see the proposed Development Plan, and we look forward to seeing it this municipal year.



**Cllr Bukky Okunade,  
Chair of Children's  
Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

**The work of the Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year helped to improve SEND provision across the borough for children and young adults, as well as improving our Children's Services department.**

## Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Thurrock Active Parks Programme



At the beginning of the municipal year, we approved the Thurrock Active Parks Programme and the introduction of new Park Engagement Officers to organise activities for residents to get the borough active. We were pleased to meet with the Chief Executive of Hardie Park to discuss the scheme, and its financial implications.

We also recommended, that the best way to spread the word for the scheme was for the new Park Engagement Officers to attend community forums to discuss ideas for sessions and advertise the new programme.

### Thurrock Waste Strategy



Throughout the year we received numerous queries and questions regarding waste, bin collections, and recycling in Thurrock, and thought it was time to update and review the waste strategy.

We agreed to form a Cross-Party Waste Management Working Group to undergo consultations, and produce a new strategy for agreement in 2020. We're proud of the work they've achieved so far, and hope to hear more from them in 2020/21.

#### PREVENT Strategy

As the number of terrorist incidents around the world increases, we felt it necessary to discuss the PREVENT Strategy in Thurrock, which forms part

of central government's counter-terrorism strategy. We learnt that the country currently has a 'high' terrorist threat level, and some of the sources of these terrorist threats.



Cllr John Kent, Chair of Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview & Scrutiny Committee

We therefore agreed that, as a Committee, we would undertake the government's PREVENT training, and agreed to promote the important role that Councillors can play in countering terrorism.

**The work of the CGS Committee this year helped keep the borough active by kick-starting the Active Parks Programme; and tried to keep the borough safer through our PREVENT training. We're proud of the work we've achieved this year, and look forward to this continuing.**

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Corporate Performance

Throughout the year we have been scrutinising the performance of the Council, on a strategic and operational level.

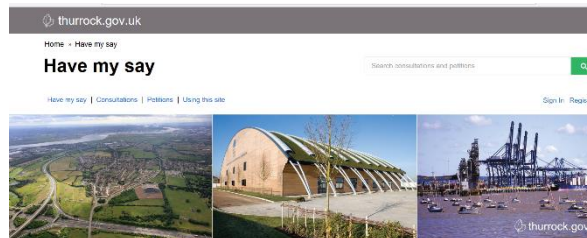


Last year we successfully implemented the ‘route to green’ which highlighted when and how targets would be achieved, and we wanted to carry on this good work. In the first meeting of the municipal year we scrutinised the proposed targets for the upcoming year, and felt we could be more ambitious. We therefore added an additional recommendation for the draft 2019/20 targets, such as gross external income, to be more ambitious. We were therefore pleased to see that by the end of the municipal year 85% of key performance indicators were on target.

## Community Engagement

We also wanted to ensure that local communities were being heard by the Council, and therefore requested a report from the Strategic Lead for Community Development. We were pleased when she explained that a new consultation portal had recently been launched, and highlighted how this would help residents.

We also decided to invite Community Forum Chairs to the Committee so they could share their experiences. Although we could not meet with them in 2019/20 due to the COVID19 pandemic, we look forward to this meeting in the next municipal year.



## Capital Strategy 2020/21

This year we called an extraordinary committee so we could scrutinise the budget in detail.



**Cllr Oliver Gerrish,  
Chair of Corporate  
Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

One area of the budget that saw much attention was the Council’s investment strategy, and we wanted to ensure that we carefully scrutinised this area. Following our thorough debate, we recommended that Cabinet consider the best way to increase the democratic oversight of investments. We were pleased that Cabinet agreed to work towards adopting a new oversight structure, and look forward to seeing this develop.

**This year we’ve helped residents by holding the Council’s financial decisions to account, to make sure it uses its income (including your taxes) wisely. We’ve also ensured that your views can be heard, especially via the new consultation portal.**

## Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

This year the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to look at a huge range of topics which impact the lives of Thurrock residents.

COVID-19 was escalating as the Committee held its last meeting of the year and Thurrock's excellent Public Health team were already very much on top of managing our local response when we were briefed at the beginning of March.

A key focus of the committee's work throughout the year was our opposition to the proposed merger of the five Mid and South Essex CCG's into one regional CCG. The committee argued against the merger as we felt it would reduce the level of influence that Thurrock would have over commissioning decisions, and reduce the quality of local healthcare. The Committee were particularly worried

that the merger could result in further funds being diverted from the balanced Thurrock CCG budget to other surrounding CCGs, following Thurrock CCG being forced to provide £290,000 to bail out Cambridge and Peterborough's financial mismanagement.

The committee were presented with an outstanding piece of work on tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse in its Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. In a detailed piece of research over many months, survivors and service providers were spoken to in detail about what the system to support survivors want to see. These important conversations, facilitated by HealthWatch resulted in detailed recommendations for action. This important piece of work will be taken forward as a priority in the coming year.

All the reports which were presented to the committee were important. Including, mental health emergency response and crisis care services, a

whole system obesity strategy, services for people with personality disorders and needs, updates on social care transformation and a pilot scheme, ensuring that people who were most at risk could access lung health checks. Each report proposed work that will change the health and wellbeing of Thurrock's residents.



**Cllr Victoria Holloway, Chair of Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**It has been an important year. Thank you to Officers and Democratic Services for all their hard work and to fellow Councillors on the Committee for their dedication and constructive contributions.**

## Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### Housing Development Options List

This report was one of the most controversial reports that we considered this year, as it related to potential home building sites across the borough.

We received lots of questions from residents and Members, particularly from the South Ockendon areas of Callan Grove and Culver Fields, who were concerned about the potential loss of nearby open spaces. We listened to their questions and concerns, and decided to review each site listed within the report.

The report then followed due governance process and went to Cabinet, where it also received much attention, with more questions from members of the public. Although our committee was divided over certain



potential sites, we were pleased that we had been able to have such thorough debate with Members and residents.

### Homeless Hostels, Housing First & Crisis Intervention

One of our main concerns this year has been how we can help to prevent homelessness across the borough. Therefore, we listened to our procurement team regarding the re-procurement of three contracts relating to homelessness and crisis intervention.

The proposal from the procurement team was to merge the three contracts, to ensure a streamlined service. We invited the Chair of Children’s Overview and Scrutiny to participate in this debate, as one of the most vulnerable groups to homelessness are young adults leaving care. We therefore made sure that the proposed contract would include provision for young adults leaving care, and ensure that none of these users faced homelessness.

## New Council HRA Home Building Programme

At the start of this municipal year, the Cabinet approved 500 new council homes to be built in Thurrock. Although this programme had been approved, they requested that we use our knowledge to review the programme and give advice.

We felt that this was an ambitious project that would do much good for our residents. We were concerned about the level of resident consultation though, and amended the recommendation to ensure that resident’s views could be heard throughout the process.

**We’ve helped residents this year by making sure that homes are built in the right places across the borough, and decisions consider local resident’s views.**



Cllr Lynn Worrall,  
Chair of Housing  
Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee



## Planning, Transport, and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### A13 Projects

Throughout the year, our Committee has been analysing the A13, to reduce congestion and pollution across the borough.

Our first task was to analyse the detailed funding bid and options assessment for the proposed A13 East Facing Slip Road. We invited a representative from consultants Mott MacDonald, and discussed the proposed options for the scheme.

At our final meeting of the year, we considered the slip-road again and learnt of new issues surrounding the project, such as deliverability. We felt concerned about the project and therefore asked for details on the



project overspend. We also asked for increased democratic oversight of the project and requested a meeting with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

We also received regular updates regarding the A13 Widening Project, and felt concerned regarding the timescales. We heard regularly from senior officers, and look forward to the completion of the project.

### Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Project

Throughout the year we have been receiving updates on the Stanford-le-Hope



Interchange project, which would improve the train station. We learnt of the work which had been undertaken, such as demolition of the existing station building.

As the project was on pause, we felt that we should undertake ‘lessons learnt from the project’ sessions, and

wanted to see future updates to maintain democratic oversight.

### Grays Town Centre Update

Another major project in our borough this year has been the re-introduction of two way traffic in Orsett Road.

We felt an update was required at the Committee, because we’d heard some concerns from residents and local businesses about the lack of communication. We received assurances that officers were working hard to liaise with residents and had undertaken the required level of pre-consultation. We also questioned the targeted end date, and are now pleased to see that these works have been completed.

**Our committee has worked hard this year to help residents by ensuring that major borough infrastructure projects work for you, by holding external stakeholders and officers to account.**



**Cllr Martin Kerin,  
Chair of Planning,  
Transport &  
Regeneration  
Overview and  
Scrutiny Committee**

## Task and Finish/ Working Group

Overview and Scrutiny Committees also have the power to form Task and Finish Groups or Working Groups.

These groups can then focus on a particular issue and report back to their parent committee. This frees up time for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to focus on different issues, whilst still ensuring that the most important issues for you can be scrutinised in detail.

At Thurrock there are currently two Task and Finish or Working Groups:

- Lower Thames Crossing Task Force
- Local Development Plan Task Force

In addition to these, a Task Finish Group for Orsett Hospital was established, but finished its work at the end of the municipal year.

A new Working Group was also formed regarding Waste Management across Thurrock, and we look forward to

hearing of the progress they make throughout the coming year.

In 2018/19, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee also felt it was time to organise a review of the scrutiny function at Thurrock. This work has been ongoing throughout 2019/20, and we look forward to its implementation in the coming year.

Although a review is not an independent Task and Finish Group, it is a detailed piece of work, which can last up to a few years, that focuses on particular issue, and is therefore included in this section.





## Lower Thames Crossing Task Force

### Health Impact Assessment

The year began with a presentation from Highways England regarding the Health Impact Assessment, which is a document that Highways England will submit at a later stage of the programme. We discussed what would be included in the document, as well as the potential health impacts caused by the proposed scheme, such as increased levels of COPD across the borough and increased air pollution.

Although it falls to Highways England to write the Health Impact Assessment, and this will not be done until a later date, it was good to be on the front foot and prepared for the examination



hold the scheme to account.

phase when the Council will have the chance to formally

### Modelling and Traffic Update

We also requested an update on traffic modelling which had been undertaken to determine the potential levels of traffic for the proposed crossing, and the affect this would have on the local road network.

We listened to a presentation from consultants PBA who outlined that Thurrock Council had been allowed access to the cordoned traffic model,



and age of the data, as this dated from 2016 and lots of changes had taken place since then. We asked Highways England to update their traffic modelling data, which they had completed by March 2020.

### Consultation

This year the Committee also heard from Highways England regarding the proposed scheme changes that had come from statutory consultation, such

so we could run our own technical models. We questioned the accuracy

as the removal of the Rest and Service Area in East Tilbury.

Although we were pleased that this was removed, we questioned Highways England about other aspects and

highlighted that the Council remain opposed. Highways England then held a supplementary consultation, and it was our job to analyse the Council's response to this consultation, before it was formally agreed by the General Services Committee. We discussed the affect the proposed scheme would have on a nearby traveller's site, as well as other concerns regarding communication during the supplementary consultation phase.

**This year our Task Force has held Highways England to account, and opposed/ the scheme. We have also been trying to mitigate the effects the scheme might have on residents, if it is approved by Highways England.**



**Cllr Gerard Rice,  
Chair of LTC Task  
Force**

## Local Development Plan Task Force

### Town Planning for Health and Wellbeing

At our last meeting of the 2018/19 municipal year, we requested a detailed presentation from David Lock Associates (DLA), to discuss how town-planning can affect health and well-being in a community.

We were pleased to welcome DLA for our first meeting of the year, and discussed the NHS' Healthy New Towns Initiative, as well as how health and wellbeing could be incorporated in our proposed Local Plan. We also looked at some green spaces across Thurrock, to discuss how these could be better utilised and make our residents more active.

Later on in the year, we heard another presentation, but this time from Knight Kavanagh Page Consultants regarding the Thurrock Active



Place Strategy, and we discussed in more detail how to invest in our open spaces across Thurrock, to make them dual or multi-use and ensure our residents can benefit from them.

The Committee wishes to thank all those external stakeholders that attended our meetings, and provided Members with necessary and interesting information.

### Thurrock Lakeside Basin

One of our ongoing responsibilities



since the formation of the Task Force has been the

Lakeside Basin and proposed development for this area. We received another update this year regarding the proposed diversification of the Lakeside area, and raised concerns regarding increased congestion in the area, as well as potential problems with housing developments. We asked for another update next year, and we look forward to hearing that.

## Aveley Design Charrette Process

We also welcomed a representative from Joseph Hardy Consultants to January's Task Force meeting, who presented an update on the Design Charrette Process, which allowed residents to get involved in potential developments in their area.

We were pleased to hear that the pilot scheme that had been run in Aveley had been successful, with local residents engaging in the process, and was being rolled out across the borough, starting in Corringham and Stanford-le-Hope. Although the Committee felt this was a good step, we raised some concern regarding the level of consultation feedback.

**The Local Development Plan Task Force has helped you this year by ensuring the Local Plan process includes input from a wide-range of experts and consultants, and ultimately works for you.**



Cllr Joycelyn Redsell, Chair of LDP Task Force

## Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group

### Aims

The Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group was set up in 2018/19 with the aim of scrutinising the current proposed closure process of Orsett Hospital, which includes the proposed transfer of services; the timings and operational position of the integrated medical centres; and to have a clear focus on the future of Orsett Hospital and to address alternative proposals.

### Evidence gathering

The Group held three meetings attended by NHS England, Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), NELFT, and council officers. Each meeting addressed a range of serious concerns about the building of the new medical centres and the closure of Orsett Hospital.

### People's Panel

The Chair of the People's Panel, which was set up in 2018 on the recommendation of HealthWatch to

provide an independent view on the closure of Orsett Hospital.

We listened to their concerns regarding the lack of information being distributed to residents' regarding the new IMCs, as well as the proposed breakdown of services from Orsett Hospital to the new IMCs. The Chair shared similar concerns to the task and finish group and agreed that many of the shared concerns were now being effectively managed, but would be closely monitored by them too.

We wish to thank the People's Panel for their attendance at our meeting, and for their continued hard work.

### Site Visits

In order for the Task and Finish Group to better understand the proposals, we undertook a site visit to the proposed IMC site in Corringham, and Grays Hospital, in January 2020.

Following this, we were shown the current layout of services at Orsett Hospital in February 2020. We looked at the current layout of the hospital, the services provided currently and met

NHS staff to discuss the transfer of services to other sites in Thurrock in detail.

**At the end of this municipal year, we felt that the aims of the group had been achieved. The meetings and site visits had assured the group over many of the concerns raised over the course of the new site builds and closure of the hospital. The group agreed that there was need for regular scrutiny on these enormous changes to health delivery in the borough, and this scrutiny would continue at the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We therefore, requested that the Task and Finish Group end, and report back to Health and Wellbeing O&S.**



Cllr Victoria Holloway, Chair of Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group

## Scrutiny Review

In 2018/19 the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee felt like it was the right time to organise a review to look into current overview and scrutiny practices at Thurrock, and how they could be improved.

## Scrutiny Symposium

In September 2019, we invited all members of overview and scrutiny, as well as the Centre for Public Scrutiny to attend a symposium.



We discussed the positive aspects of scrutiny at Thurrock, what could

be improved, and the next steps. It was great to hear the opinions of other scrutiny members, as well as the thoughts of the leading national scrutiny consultants. We decided that we should get the Executive involved the process early, as it was important to hear their views. Therefore, a workshop was arranged between the Leader and Portfolio Holders, as well

as Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Unfortunately, this meeting had to be postponed due to the outbreak of COVID-19, but we look forward to this workshop in the coming year.

## Statutory Scrutiny Guidance



In May 2019, the government produced statutory guidance relating to scrutiny in local authorities. It contained many examples of best practice scrutiny, and the government's guidelines on how to ensure the function is run effectively. The Committee considered this guidance during one of our meetings, and were pleased to see that the guidance contained a recommendation for an Executive-Scrutiny Protocol, to ensure that both functions communicated effectively. This is something that we have been keen on implementing in Thurrock since the beginning of the review, and therefore felt that our review was in-line with government guidance.

## Background Research

Throughout the year, the Committee also commissioned our Democratic Services team to undertake background research and attend conferences, to find out how other authorities organised scrutiny. We wanted to see how many committees other authorities had, as well as the type of reports they considered.

We received a verbal update in March 2020 on some of their findings, and look forward to seeing this in the final review documents.

**This year we have helped our residents by ensuring that the scrutiny function at Thurrock produces good results, and is in line with best practice. We look forward to seeing the outcomes in this coming year, ready for implementation.**



Cllr Oliver Gerrish, Chair of the Scrutiny Review

## How can you get involved?

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

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

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

**Address:** Democratic Services,  
Civic Offices,  
New Road,  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6SL

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

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

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

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<b>8 July 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 13</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance</b>	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance	
<b>This report is Public</b>	

## **Introduction by Cabinet Member**

COVID-19 has had, previously, unimaginable impacts on the United Kingdom, and thus, residents of our borough.

The virus has tragically had an impact on the lives and families of some residents of our borough – our thoughts are with the families grieving. As we have now started the, structured plan to ensure the safe return to livelihoods and education of millions – we owe so much to key-workers for their efforts, sacrifice and care during this crisis; beyond measure.

HM Government has helped Thurrock unequivocally during this crisis – for example, with £9.21m to help pay for council services fighting the COVID-19 battle; £20m+ provided for small businesses, to whom we want to preserve and see reopen sustainably. This is on top of paying 60% of the nation's salary, when some markets ground to a halt. The government's support for hard-working people, and those who need key services, is not in doubt.

Even with unprecedented support from HM Government, the local economic impacts remain significant - councils are not receiving usual income from fees for public buildings, like theatres, registrars, and the like. Tax income from individuals and businesses, is understandably, also down.

But we have two significant reasons why we are somewhat better placed than other councils as we confront that challenge.

Firstly, Thurrock Council has increased its general fund reserve by 40% since 2016/17, set up a Financial Resilience Reserve with a further £6m and now has a £1.5m Social Care Reserve to meet pressures within those services. We have long made the point that whilst the sun was shining, that we needed to plan for a rainy day. That rain, along with a storm, is now directly above us. Whilst it is preferable not to access these reserves they do provide additional security against financial pressures and allow the market to slowly build up to pre-COVID-19 levels and ensure reforms are possible in the first place.

Secondly, the council's investment approach - our investments have held their own and Thurrock Council continues to realise the income we expected. Investment activity was an approach started out in 2014, and the enhanced investment activity garnered cross party Full Council support in 2017 - it enabled us to go above and beyond to increase our economic resilience in the first place by increasing financial reserves, as well as deliver additional services, like extra police officers across our borough. Despite one of the largest economic downturns for centuries, and the largest crisis our nation has experienced since WW2, our investments continue to pay out fully as expected – our focus on investing in the

energy sector, rather than purchasing high-streets etc. has been a defining factor of this strategy.

Even with that backdrop, things will not be able to stay as they are. The impact on council tax and business rate collections, along with ongoing expenditure and income pressures, will now put the Council into deficit in 2021/22, and we need to take action to bring the budget back into balance.

For context, in a pre-COVID world back just four months ago in February 2020, the Council considered a report on 26 February 2020 that set out budget surpluses of £5.8m and £4.1m for 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively.

The ability to do everything we do now, is no longer in our gift – and residents already predict as such, and there are impacts that will now manifest in the 2021/22 budget – currently anticipated to be circa £15m. The surplus in the current year will help the Council address the financial pressures in 2020/21.

Further commentary will be provided on the night in regard to the activity required to reform Thurrock into a post-COVID council. Whilst the political make-up of this authority has changed, and there is now a majority council for the first time since 2012, the challenge ahead to do what we need to, as a collective group of people who represent their communities, will come with difficult reviews of services – we need to maintain strategic outcomes, and work together to deliver a programme of reforms. Despite the political composition change, there will be a concerted effort to engage in all areas of the political spectrum, and sector-leaders in the appropriate fields.

There will be residents who naturally worry about what all this means - equally - there are those who work for the authority who will equally be asking their own questions. That is understandable - and I would urge and ask that we take a considered and constructive approach to dialogue we will have in the future about what all this means.

This report will be structured accordingly:

1. Summary of pre-COVID-19 performance of the department & economic resilience position – including reserves and investment activity;
2. COVID-19: the action we have taken, and helped HM Government deliver during the crisis; and
3. Emerging out of the COVID-19 crisis: re-building our economic resilience.



## **Part 1: Summary of pre-COVID 19 performance of the department & economic resilience position – including reserves and investment activity**

### **CORPORATE FINANCE**

#### **► SERVICE OVERVIEW**

Corporate Finance lead on the promotion and delivery of good financial management to ensure that the council's financial position is managed appropriately and public money is safeguarded.

#### **► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12M / PERFORMANCE:**

The long-term financial plan of Thurrock Council is to continue its objective of becoming self-sufficient from national government grant funding. This is not a new objective – and Thurrock, like other councils, has been innovative to support the economic recovery objectives that the government has had to undertake since the turn of the last decade. Through service reviews, an innovative investments strategy which, in conjunction with the commercial focus, Thurrock is a council delivering high quality services to residents.

Before COVID-19, the approach enabled the Council to publish a three-year, balanced, Medium Term Financial Strategy - with projected surpluses totalling £5.5m over the current three year period. This is in addition to the surpluses of the previous two years of over £10m in total. The council has taken a year-on-year assessment of the authority's financial health and the wider economic situation, in regards to taxation – and adopted all elements of the Adult Social Care precept, and averaged under-inflation general tax rises over the period of the last four years.

The 2019/20 outturn position continues to be finalised, reflecting on how COVID-19 emerging at the end of the municipal year, changed so much, so quickly. However, through this report, we can confirm that core services were delivered within budget, the projected surplus was delivered and the investment strategy enabled the Council to further develop financial resilience reserves.

Building on my comments at Cabinet in June 2020, where I outlined that the surplus allocations announced in January 2020 would not be able to stay exactly as we had planned for, owing to COVID-19, I can now confirm that the surplus has now been ringfenced to the following local priorities including additional policing, and to continue the effort around the Lower Thames Crossing work.

Through its economic planning and activity, the council has been able to strengthen its reserves position in recent years with an increase in the General Fund balance from £8m to £11m (an increase of nearly 40%, and considerably over the “5% of annual revenue spending” informal assumption). Also, the council has a Financial Resilience Reserve that stands at a further £6m and now a £1.5m Social Care Reserve to meet yet unknown pressures within those services. Whilst it is preferable not to access these reserves, they do provide additional security against financial pressures and may well have to be used in part, and then rebuilt, to current levels.

In addition, the Housing Revenue Account balance has been maintained at £2.175m.

It would be usual for me to reflect and report here on the investment approach.

Members will, on the same night as this report is to be heard, have reviewed a report on this subject, as an agenda item of its own. This report will therefore focus on all other aspects of the department, and report back on top-level departmental outcomes, as emerging from the operation of the approach approved by members.

The investment activity last year has earned Thurrock Council circa £35m extra income, after costs, last year. All of this income goes towards enhancing current services for residents and creating new services altogether. The borrowing position, as at 31 March 2020, reflects the following:

- To fund Thurrock's Capital Programme, easily the most aspirational in the whole of the Eastern Region, with wider economic benefit for not just Thurrock, but the whole region. This includes historic hard-debt with no repayment mechanism - £431m; and
- Capital Investments (predominantly, a mix of renewable energy sources), which are fully repayable in the short to medium term, for activity to enhance and fund new services by the council (it should be stressed that there is a diverse portfolio, and this is not just solar-linked) - £985m.

By delivering through this approach, the council has been able to take a more methodical and pragmatic approach to reforming services in a way that services are improved but net costs reduced. The opposite of a short and damaging approach of annual cuts. It has always been the council's intention to reduce investments over time as the impact of these reviews take hold. It has also enabled the uplift in financial resilience which I articulated earlier in this report.

In terms of external scrutiny of the council's investment strategy, in the last year, a new external formal audit process resulted in an unmodified opinion of the council's approach. The audits recognised the council's accounts and financial health with positive value for money opinions.

## **REVENUES & BENEFITS/COLLECTIONS**

### **► PERFORMANCE DATA**

Owing to the timing of COVID-19, we are still able to say that the 2019/20 outturn figures were delivered with a balanced budget, and the submission of annual accounts has been extended for six-months.

Reflecting on the pre-COVID 19 period, Thurrock continues to be a council which achieves some of the best rates of collection across the UK – for both Council Tax and Business Rates.

Our approach to Fair Debt Collections has continued to enhance our approach, and reduce the need for court or enforcement state proceedings – the outcomes of the Fair Debt Summit were always designed to support those who wanted to pay, but couldn't, and to help

educate young adults emerging into the world outside an academic setting about the signs of getting into debt, and the long-term consequences.

Sadly, we have a cluster of routine offenders who continue to choose not to pay, even though they can. This is particularly saddening, given that the tax income funds services for our residents most in need.

Complaints received regarding the debt collection process continue to remain low and in total last year there were 58 complaints received in relation to the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry debt, 16 of which were upheld.

## ► FAIR DEBT SUMMIT OUTCOMES

Following the Autumn 2018 Fair Debt Summit, we have continued to progress our action plan which we co-developed at the summit with schools, the VCS sector, industry experts.

For the benefit of recap, the Fair Debt Summit event brought together key partners across various sectors, voluntary sectors and groups with a view to doing something different. It sought to identify ways to help people help themselves, avoid debts of any type, and also ensure that our collections process is fair to those who want to pay but find themselves unable to, and not lenient on those that can pay but simply choose not to.

The aims of the Fair Debt Summit were simple:

- 1) Identify help where we can (while recognising that everyone ultimately needs to pay their dues)
- 2) Be tougher where we may need to be with those who play the system
- 3) Help provide some education for a younger generation who have yet to experience an economic downturn like the last recession of 2008-9.

As a result of the summit, a wide ranging action plan was produced. The plan included a number of initiatives, some of which were of a quick fix nature along with some that required a longer term approach. I am pleased to be able to provide an overview and progress update on the key themes as follows:

### Investment in new technology

- Historically amounts owing to the council were held across 4 different systems, this created difficulties in both establishing a total amount owed and enabling staff to discuss holistic resolution. In addition information held by other council departments that may suggest potential vulnerability relevant to an individual's ability to deal with their finances, was not easily be visible to the debt teams. To remedy this situation a joint project commenced between the council and Xantura to provide a '**Single View of Debtor**'.

Phase 1 of this project went live on 11 March, this initial delivery provides officers with both a holistic view of council debts owed by an individual and ensures that any relevant information held by the council in relation to someone's ability to deal with their financial affairs is visible to the debt teams. This in itself is a ground breaking

achievement and I am delighted to confirm that this has been recognised and has been shortlisted for the Solutions Partner Award at the Public Finance Awards 2020.

Having created the 'Single View', phase 2 of the project is now underway which is looking to further enhance efficiencies and care by looking for opportunities to combine collection activities for different debts owed – e.g. as stated previously whilst we need to ensure we adhere to respective legislative processes for each debt type, it would be beneficial for residents in debt, that if we are telephoning or visiting a resident, that the officer is in a position discuss all debts owing, rather than undertaking totally separate communications on each debt type and causing the mental health challenge of having to speak to four different people, when they could speak to just one, and help build a plan to help them recover from the situation they are in. This will also enable champion challenger collection strategies to be run, and the learnings from these placed into enhanced collection processes.

We are also looking to further encourage early contact and resolution by widening our outbound contact channels from traditional letter, to include SMS, Email, self-serve web access, web chats etc. – this will enable residents in debt to “reach” out, without a formal setting, but with the same impact and outcome, and was tested initially in late 2019.

### Education of our younger generation

The Education & Skills Team working in conjunction with Thurrock Adult Community College, have extended the promotion and now run Money Management courses at Inspire Youth Hub, The Princes Trust, Gateway Academy and Mind.

It remains a solid aspiration to work with partners across further young-adult education settings to extend the roll out even further.

Whilst a number of further courses had to be cancelled as a result of lockdown these will recommence once restrictions are lifted. The team are also investigating the possibility of adapting these courses to enable remote learning.

### **COVID 19**

Clearly, more than ever the immediate challenge as a result of the pandemic is how we collect income to maintain service provision, whilst ensuring that residents and businesses who are experiencing financial difficulties; have access to the help and support available in assisting them to meet their obligations. To this end we have commenced a soft re launch of recovery activity, with communications reaching out for residents and businesses who are having difficulty in respect of amounts they owe the council. I have asked for there to be consideration of two audiences – those in difficulty now, and those who may not return to their workplace after furlough owing to redundancy (the latter is more of an anticipative audience).

At Cabinet I highlighted our commitment to working with any resident who reaches out to try and establish a way of help in regards to council tax payment. Residents should be aware that council tax – unlike water bills etc. – carry legal sanctions which can include committal in the long-term – and so we want to do what we can to ensure that we help people avoid collection action wherever possible. To do that, I again, implore residents to reach out and ask for help. We will do what we can to help.

## ► HOUSING BENEFITS AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

The rollout of Universal Credit which commenced in Thurrock in March 2015 for single people, progressed to full service in October 2017. Under full service new working age applicants including those that have had a break in their claim, are now required to claim support for housing costs through Universal Credit rather than Housing Benefits. Within Thurrock there are currently circa. 3,100 claimants who now receive support with housing costs under the Universal Credit system and 8,000 who continue to receive support through Housing Benefit.

Migration of existing claimants has temporarily placed on hold to allow a small scale pilot to take place. The Governments latest estimate suggests that full migration to Universal Credit will not complete until 2023.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind Members that whilst Universal Credit is administered by the DWP, even once fully rolled out, the council will still play a key role in signposting people for Universal Credit. The Council will also maintain responsibility for the administration of Housing Benefit for people of pensionable age, those in temporary homeless accommodation, all claimants for Local Council Tax support and Discretionary Housing Payments for those in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who require additional short term assistance to meet their Housing Costs.

For the Local Council Tax Support Scheme the impact of COVID has resulted in a net increase of approx. 400 LCTS claimants since the start of the crisis. The caseload as at June 2020 is 10,200 The situation is being monitored closely as the lockdown eases, and later on, I will update members on a summit-activity which will be held to refresh the scheme and ensure that COVID-pressures are captured, and that allocations are proportionate to need in the new world.

## ► PERFORMANCE DATA

Despite some additional administration workload in relation to Universal Credit and COVID the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support remains good with new claims being currently being processed in an average of 3 weeks and changes of circumstance in less than a week.

Complaints regarding the service remain low with only 21 received in 2019/20 out of a total of 10,000 claimants. 9 complaints out of all the 10,000 claimants were upheld. This is a pleasing result.

## ► HOUSING BENEFITS - FUTURE

The service will continue to monitor developments and adjust service provision where possible to mitigate the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit and the wider benefit reform agenda.

## ► COUNCIL TAX - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

Within Thurrock we currently send a Council Tax bill to around 70,000 properties for a net value of £83m. This income stream is critical to fund the services the Council provide and therefore it is vital that to support effective collection and customer service we maintain

timeliness, and accuracy of billing, processing and assessment of applications and query resolution.

Operational costs of the department have not been impacted, despite a growth of new properties being developed and then occupied. Timeliness of processing and accuracy levels also remains strong with most queries or applications resolved within the week they are received.

#### ► **PERFORMANCE DATA**

For 2019/2020, despite ceasing collection activities as a result of COVID Thurrock maintained excellent collection rates for Council Tax to achieve an in year collection rate of 98.22%. Whilst we await publication of national results, it is envisaged these results will again place Thurrock among the top performing councils.

Complaints regarding council tax and business rates billing have continued to reduce with 38 being received last year compared to 41 in the preceding year. Of the 38 received in 2019/20 eight were upheld. Again this is a low ratio, considering the 70,000 properties billed.

#### ► **COUNCIL TAX – FUTURE**

The service continues to focus on promoting all means of available support in reducing amounts due through promotion and application of discounts and reliefs and ensuring flexible payment plans are available, especially in light of the economic impact of COVID-19.

#### ► **NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M**

For business rates in 2019/20 we billed circa 4,300 businesses for a total net value of £127m, under current funding arrangements Thurrock keeps approx. £36m of this income.

#### ► **PERFORMANCE DATA**

Regarding collection, whilst due to an increase in the number of compulsory write offs due to CVA's/Insolvencies, the overall collection rate reduced to 98.22%, for the element within the recovery teams control excellent performance was maintained achieving a collection rate 99.54%.

#### ► **NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) - FUTURE**

For business rates we bill in excess of 4,350 properties for a net value of £81m, the value billed has significantly reduced from the previous year due to the extended reliefs introduced by the Government, however this loss in income will not impact the council as the Government will reimburse the council through a section 31 grant. This is good news for our businesses, and us, as an authority.

#### ► **SUNDRY DEBTORS - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M**

In addition business as usual activities the team continue to investigate enhancements to improve the efficiency of the service and service experience such as streamlined payment processes and Direct Debit functionality.

## ► PERFORMANCE DATA

Income received through Sundry debt totalled £55.6m in 2019/20, and despite the cessation of collection activities as a result of COVID running up to year end, underlying performance maintained in line with previous years.

## ► SUNDRY DEBTORS – FUTURE

As with the other debt types the immediate focus will be on how we can assist Sundry customers with the impact of the pandemic whilst maintaining income to the Council

## COMMERCIAL SERVICES

### ► SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Commercial Services team leads on the promotion and delivery of best practice in business development and procurement practices across the Council, continuing to build on the cultural shift within Thurrock Council to create a commercially astute Council that delivers innovative and entrepreneurial outcomes.

The service continues to be the key enabler for ensuring the delivery of existing income generating commitments, identifying income streams that are in line with agreed commercial principles, stretching every pound we spend to continue to deliver great value for money while at the same time delivering best possible outcomes for residents

### ► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

#### ► External Income Monitoring

The Commercial Board that was chaired by the Director of Commercial Services for half of the last council year, monitored the performance of external income across all Council areas. This level of scrutiny and discipline has generated significant returns for the Council, which in turn, leads to funding security for the services of which residents use and depend. In the financial year 2019/20, gross external income from fees & charges exceeded budget expectations by 3.4%. The Commercial Board has Council wide representation from each Service Area all committed to delivering on Thurrock's Commercial Principles. The external income target for 2020/21 was set pre-Covid and is now under review in light of the impacts noted in this report.

The department continue to deliver a positive return on investment through enhancing and widening existing income streams and the development of new opportunities to support the longer term financial stability of the Council. Return on Investment is currently circa 1.25:1.

#### ► Gross External Income from fees & charges:

Directorate	Budget 19/20	Actual 19/20	Variance
Adults; Housing and Health	(369,190)	(283,667)	85,523
Children's Services	(1,088,040)	(1,007,857)	80,183
Corporate Strategy & Communications	(270,024)	(240,629)	29,395
Environment and Highways	(2,646,718)	(2,669,350)	(22,632)

Directorate	Budget 19/20	Actual 19/20	Variance
Finance; Governance and Property	(233,895)	(132,312)	101,583
Housing General Fund	(414,500)	(611,240)	(196,740)
Place	(2,706,806)	(3,048,511)	(341,705)
<b>Total</b>	<b>(7,729,173)</b>	<b>(7,993,566)</b>	<b>(264,393)</b>

## RISK & INSURANCE

### ► SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Risk and Insurance team aim to maintain appropriate risk management, insurance and risk financing arrangements for the council.

### ► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The insurance arrangements operated in line with the renewed contract for 2019/20. The Strategic Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register continues to be refreshed annually and has been regularly reviewed and reported to Standards & Audit Committee, Directors Board and Performance Board in line with the Risk and Opportunity Management Framework.

### ► PERFORMANCE

The council continues to use the ALARM/CIPFA Risk Management framework to test the council's performance against good practice. For the 2019 review the Council attained level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best). This along with the 2018 Internal Audit reviews of the service which resulted in a green report for Insurance and level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best) for Risk Management provide assurance to the council that the Insurance and Risk Management functions are effective and performing well.



## **Part 2: COVID-19 – responding to the crisis**

### **► OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT**

As outlined in my opening commentary, HM Government have helped Thurrock unequivocally during this crisis

This section of my report seeks to articulate the key reactions of the Finance directorate during the COVID-19 crisis.

It also adds further detail on the pressures to come.

The government has granted Thurrock Council two grants, to the total sum of £9.21m, to help it discharge its usual duties as a council, and the emerging COVID-19 pandemic pressures (based on timescales between the dates between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020). Thurrock currently believes the current actual pressure is £9.7m, so nearly all of the extra spending required to increase resilience in our vulnerable care settings, along with other COVID-19 related action, has been accounted for by HMG.

The longer-term concern is the impact for the remainder of the financial year both in terms of additional costs and ongoing reductions in income. Understandably, that is a fluid position, and it is hard to determine a final financial position given the many unknowns – however, the position remains under assessment. The Council continues to engage in an ongoing dialogue with MHCLG and regular returns are submitted to ensure the full range of financial impacts are clear at a national level Our regular interactions with MHCLG, along with other councils, has seen new policy introduced – such as a Discretionary Support Scheme for businesses not eligible under the initial grant schemes which we introduced as a result of the pandemic.

It should be noted that additional impacts on Council Tax and Business Rates income do not impact on 2020/21 but will need to be mitigated from 2021/22 onwards through the Collection Fund.

### **► HEALTH-SECTOR & HOMELESSNESS – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT**

In the wider national context, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided specific funding to address COVID-19 financial impacts totalling £3.2bn. Further measures have been taken to support the Council and the wider business community as set out below:

- £1.3bn has been provided directly to CCG's to support local authorities enhance the hospital discharge process.
- £0.600bn for local authorities to ensure care homes can continue to halt the spread of COVID-19 by helping them cover the costs of implementing infection control measures to reduce transmission. Thurrock Council has been allocated £1.007m to distribute to care homes to implement infection control measures that reduce the spread of COVID19.
- DHSC have announced a fund of £0.300bn for test and trace services. The funding is intended to help each local authority develop tailored outbreak control plans, working with local NHS and other stakeholders. The Council will receive circa £1m.

- Funding to tackle rough sleeping of £3.2m. The Council has provided significant additional capacity to provide 33 rough sleepers with accommodation during the pandemic and the expectation is this will continue into the future. The projected costs over the initial 4 months is currently £0.272m but remains under review.
- The Council the also worked with Essex partners to ensure there is sufficient mortuary capacity available across the Essex, Thurrock and Southend areas – this has been held at a specific level as the position is assessed and can be scaled up or down as required. The current facilities are expected to cost up to £0.218m

## ► LOCAL JOBS ECONOMY STIMULUS – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

I have already referenced the loss of income to services which are paid for by our residents (i.e. theatres, registrars etc.), and that there has been some loss of tax collected income since the pandemic crisis began. Whilst most of the tax-raised pressures emerge in the following year, as part of the Collection Fund arrangement, HM Government have supported local government in a number of ways above the support funding it has paid out, of which Thurrock received circa £9.2m:

- An upfront payment of the Business Rates Grant to support cash flow;
- The deferral of £2.6bn in business rates payments to central government until July to support cash flow; and
- £850m of existing social care grants to be paid up front in a move to support cash flow.

Thurrock is industry rich – and we are proud of that. It is a borough which boasts service-led markets and manual-markets, however, social distancing requirements across the nation led to economic impacts in different markets. Whilst some markets have held a strong and growing position during the crisis, owing to the services that they provide, there have been others which needed help. The consequence of not helping these businesses, is additional unemployment, higher social service and benefit costs, and a reduction of service offer affecting other businesses. The government's intervention is to be applauded. Whilst HM Government issued the funding, it was for Thurrock Council to passport a share of the following:

- A Hardship fund of £500m for those receiving Council Tax Support, of which an increase of claimants was inevitable; this led to a maximum of a one-off £150 discount being allocated to each recipient of LCTS.
- £1.8bn of Business Rates Relief;
- £12.3bn of Grant Support to Rural and Small Businesses as well as the Leisure, Hospitality and Leisure sectors to local authorities in England; and
- A further £617m to provide support to those businesses with ongoing premises costs but are not on the rating list. This is a discretionary scheme that must be set by individual councils.

In the Thurrock context, this has meant the following:

- Business Rates payments for all businesses were deferred for the month of April; so to provide HM Government the time to establish the ICT software to make wholesale

changes to business rate accounts for the industries who are beneficiaries of the governments policies.

- 2,401 businesses will pay no business rates in 2020/21 due to the Small Business and Rural Rate Reliefs;
- Business rate relief has now been extended to all businesses within the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sector with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000;
- A grant scheme covering all businesses that are in receipt of one of the reliefs above. As at the 18 June 2020, 1,683 grants have been paid out of an estimated number of 2,018 with a total of £21.1m from an estimated total of £23.770m;
- The government announced a further discretionary scheme for small businesses with a total of £1.237m to allocate. Thurrock's local policy, based on government guidance and developed with others in commercial settings, was launched on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020. This is designed to support businesses who did not meet the original criteria of the grant scheme, but are able to demonstrate COVID-19 impacts on their business viability etc. Thurrock had made representations into government level about those businesses who fell outside the initial awarding criteria;
- This has included additional subsidies to local bus providers to ensure services remained open to residents at a reduced level during the lockdown process – this is projected to cost £0.23m over the 4 month period; and
- The Council has been allocated £0.156m of funding to support a range of practical safety measures to reopen high streets safely including new signs, street markings and temporary barriers.
- The Department of Transport has allocated the Council a total of £1.438m to be provided in two tranches for the emergency active travel fund to support increased infrastructure for cycling and walking. The first tranche received is £0.288m.

The support for private markets and employees has been clear. It is evident HM Government seeks to make sure that the private sector is as close to what it was pre-COVID-19, when the crisis is over – however, it has also been very diligent in providing resilience and support for our public sector markets.

#### ► **ADULT SOCIAL CARE – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT**

There has been significant activity to ensure the local social care capacity was sufficient to address the expected increases in demand due to COVID-19

The focus has been on:

- stabilising the care market;
- ensuring emergency care facilities had sufficient capacity for people leaving hospital;
- providing more financial resilience in the care sector;
- taking actions to reduce hospital admissions; and
- ensuring there is sufficient Personal Protective equipment available to staff.

This has been reflected in:

- 10% across the board resilience up-lift for 4 months to stabilise local provision and address income shortfalls and increased staffing costs;
- Establishing local Step-Down provision - for example rapidly re-opening Oak House Residential Care home to take COVID positive patients discharged from hospital;
- Block booking, for a period, vacant beds within Thurrock to secure local provision; and
- Work is also ongoing to enable swab testing to be available to care home staff to enable effective management of any virus outbreaks.

The financial resilience costs are projected to total £1.27m. A further £0.41m is required to ensure there has been sufficient additional capacity available locally and circa £0.13m to reflect the projected increase in homecare demand. Finally the additional PPE requirements are currently projected to be £0.24m and additional staff costs to cover increased demand and sickness related to COVID-19.

Looking ahead the care sector will be facing significant challenges – and there are new opportunities for innovation emerging.

This is a national issue as care homes in particular face reduced occupancy, increased costs and ongoing requirement around infection control. Action may be required to avoid significant business failure as the sector recovers from the pandemic and adapts to a changed market.

The government tasked Local Authorities to meet needs in the period before food deliveries could be achieved. The total projected cost of the operation to date is £0.25m to provide food to those without family support etc.

#### ► CHILDRENS SERVICES – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

The key impact is the availability of placements for children looked after and is a critical function of the local authority. Whilst placements are generally available it is predicted that demand may increase due to provider staff absence, in addition the availability of local placements is crucial especially if we have reduced staffing levels as this will decrease time spent travelling.

This has been applied to both LAC placements and Head Start Housing as shown below:

Directorate	Detail	Total for 4 month period
Children's Services	Block Purchasing of Placements	156,233
	Head Start Housing	177,328
Children's Services Total		333,561

Wider impacts include supporting care leavers and children looked after laptops have been purchased to support access to online learning; prior to the government scheme.

In addition Schools were asked to remain open over the Easter holiday period to support key workers and vulnerable children. Consequently additional Home to School Transport costs have been incurred, where the Council has a statutory duty to provide transport.

Going forward there is concern of an increase in demand for children's services once the sector returns to business as usual. This could have an associated financial impact, and we are modelling various options

### ► OTHER SIGNIFICANT EXPENDITURE – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

The Council has wider additional costs arising from the response to COVID-19:

- The Council has reconfigured the Household Waste and Recycling Centre to address social distancing requirements and enable the facility to reopen. This has required detailed traffic management planning to support this and the associated costs are under assessment.

The response to the pandemic will also directly impact on the delivery of savings plans for 2020/21 and this is estimated to total £0.233m over the period.

### Ongoing Expenditure

Members should also be aware that savings on non-COVID budgets are minimal. Government instructed local authorities that where contracts were in place – the highest value example being Home to School Transport – that payments should still be made despite the services not being provided either all or at a much lower level than originally budgeted.

### Income

Officers are currently estimating a shortfall in fees and charges of £2.3m, of which key areas include:

- Environmental Services;
- Parking (Car Parks etc.)
- Planning;
- Children's Services (Catering, Thurrock Adult Community College, Grangewaters and Music Services); and
- Thameside Theatre.

Not being able to progress the Thurrock Regeneration Ltd projects also has an impact on the investment returns that would have started in this financial year. Members will also be aware that there were also pressures in the last financial year and these roll forward into this financial year. The financial impact is estimated at £2.4m.

Investments entered into in previous years continue to be robust and pay interest/dividends as expected.

## ► FUTURE

There are a range of possible outcomes that can be modelled.

Considering a reasonably moderate level of losses -5% Council Tax reduction, 20% increase of take-up in the LCTS, and 10% fees and charges losses - there will now be a funding gap in 2021/22, anticipated to be circa £15m.

The next part of this report, addresses the plan to emerge into a post-COVID-19 world.

### **Part 3. - Emerging out of the COVID-19 crisis: re-building our economic resilience.**

Reacting to the front-line COVID-19 pandemic, with the speedy injection of re-profiled spending, has rightly preserved our National Health Service's ability to cope with the thousands of cases emerging in its system, and quite literally, saving more lives than the NHS otherwise could. Equally, there is mimicry in any public health and care market - of which Thurrock Council has full responsibility for under its unitary status. In our pursuit of maintaining services, working practices and protective equipment have changed and require funding, so to provide vital tools to keep our employees safe, and effective in role.

The government's Job Retention Scheme is unparalleled, and has saved people from losing their homes; along with the many grants being made available for businesses in similar predicaments.

The understandable, and sadly unmissable international economic slowdown, leads to a reduction of income and resources across the public and private sector, as a result of many markets stopping quickly, and needing to build back to a pre-COVID level,. A loss of household economic security, whether it is cutting back on spending, or an inability to spend owing to redundancy from work.

Reductions/loss of income in households does present concerns on tax-raising authorities being able to receipt full amounts of forecasted tax-raised income to facilitate the previously-considered normal day-to-day services.

It was self-evident from the offset that spending pressures would come (additional spending and reduced income), and that they would likely be unprecedented and challenge our existing spending on services - we must plan for tomorrow: to reform services to ensure they are right for a post-COVID-19 world, and to ensure the additional services are maintained.

And as such, the previous assumptions we all had need a full refresh as we execute plans to recover back to our full, pre-COVID-19, economic health, and the plans for continuing our long-term self-sufficiency objective, including the phased-approach to reduce investments over time as the impact of these reviews take hold.

As I mentioned earlier, I hope that conversation around this is sensitive to the people involved, and constructive in its approach to recover.

There will be a concerted effort to engage in all areas of the political spectrum - to canvass views constructively and to provide a forum to put forward any ideas about proposed service reforms.

#### **► FUTURE: USE OF RESERVES**

The potential use of reserves outlined earlier in this report has already been noted. Any use of general reserves is predicated on the principle that any General Fund Balance used will be re-built up to a minimum of £11m over the life-time of the MTFs.

It should also be noted that the council has built up further financial resilience, in the form of a Financial Resilience Reserve (£6m).

## ► FUTURE: SOCIAL CARE – ADDITIONAL SECTOR RESILIENCE

These key services where dependence on the system is essential for users, and new investments in people services such as making it more financially attractive to work in social services in Thurrock, secure market need, and evolve the way the care market operates to provide an even higher-quality service.

Furthermore, we have created a further social services reserve, of £1.5m, which will only ever be used for extraordinary service pressures, not day-to-day spending.

## ► FUTURE: CHANGES TO PREVIOUS SURPLUS ALLOCATIONS

We gave a list of surplus spending commitments at January 2020 Cabinet, however, COVID-19 has meant we have had to review the “what”, “when” and “if”.

The Cabinet have informed officers that some of the surplus previously allocated in January 2020 can be re-profiled and used for COVID-19 related pressures. This is predicated on the principle that any surplus used will be re-built up and the commitments made in January 2020 being delivered/honoured by January 2022, wherever possible.

The surplus profiled to COVID-19 demand, should preserve the Lower Thames Crossing effort and the policing commitments which we believe remain a resident priority during a crisis, or not – and as such, we have ring-fenced the surplus allocation initially awarded

Other schemes such as the investment in Mental Health and Youth Offending we plan to still realise, albeit, we expect those roll-outs to be delayed, whilst we take stock of the post COVID-19 world, and check and adjust the approach.

## ► FUTURE: COUNCIL SPENDING REVIEW MK. II

We need to adjust to work in a post-COVID world. Service Reviews are but one mechanism to help deliver £15m worth of efficiencies.

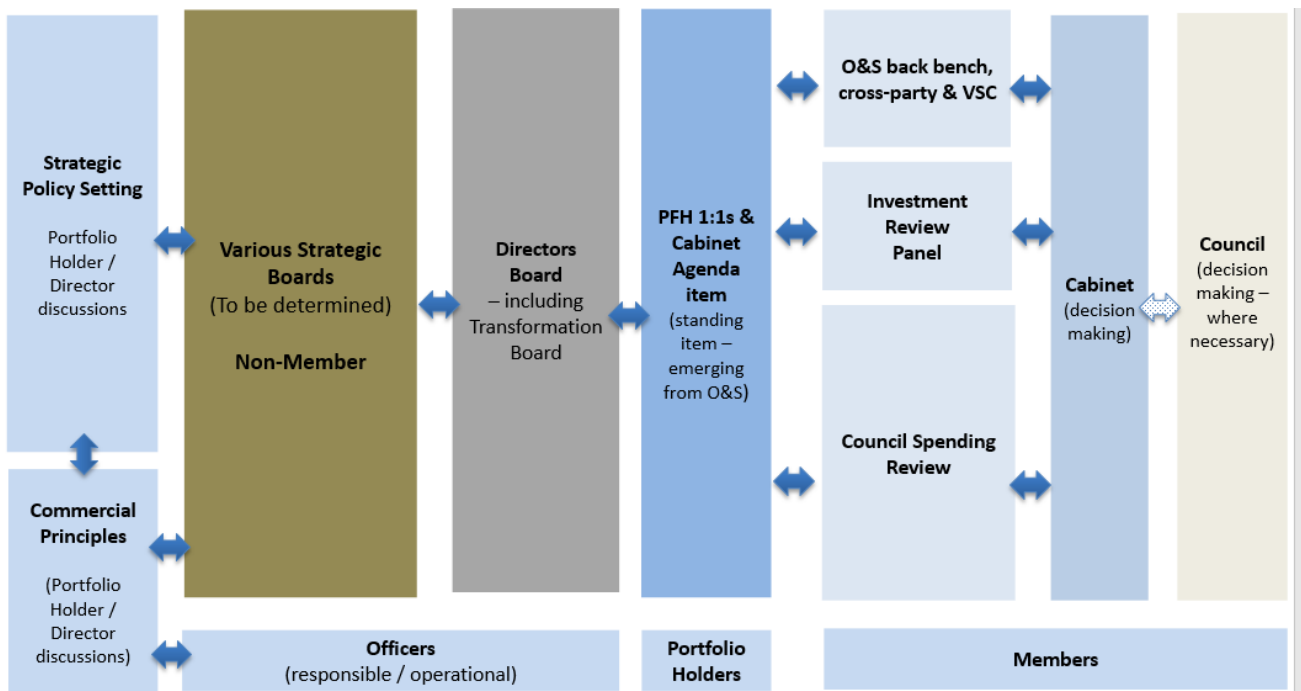
In 2019/20, council resolved to continually improve the Council Spending Review process – to increase member engagement, and in regard to service reform, members of the voluntary sector, all as part of the council’s long-term economic plan.

Following the COVID-19 economic pressures, and despite the change to political proportionality, this will be more relevant than ever and is a choice that the administration are making to ensure that outcomes are developed alongside partners

Over the coming months, more details will emerge, building on commitments from earlier this year on further increasing democratic oversight across the council.

A model of this process, is as follows:





Priority of the service reviews should be reviews prioritising post-lockdown realities and attend to services impacted most by COVID-19 first, and the Fewer Buildings, Better Services ethic remains – as it has proven to have worked as strongly as it has before.

Market drivers will also be considered more than the original service reviews – competition in the salary market (i.e. Domiciliary Care).

Officers continue to engage with external agencies to support the further enhancement of council capability and Member involvement.

► **FUTURE: CHANGES TO THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The council will perform a full-review of the capital program.

What is clear and evident, is that there needs to be a greater amount of delivery oversight of projects that Thurrock Council is responsible for to its elected members. The aspirations of the capital plan were good, but we should now reform and make the capital plan more affordable for a post-COVID world, and the delivery more accountable to elected members. There will, of course, be consideration in regards to the schemes current progress when making decisions.

Equally, re-use of council-owned estate to build homes and earn income, remains a sound aspiration to enable key-worker and affordable housing etc. Cabinet have asked for a paper to be brought forward in the second half of 2020 on the best models of building hundreds of high quality homes quicker, for residents who want to live in our borough. There are no new or further initiatives going to be put through TRL whilst Cabinet makes a decision on the best models as proposed by officers who have committed to providing that piece of work as I have outlined just now.

► **FUTURE: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ASSETS IN THE LONG-TERM**

Along with supporting a COVID-impacted social care market, supporting our community assets which provide social value is key - the CEDF scheme needs a reconfiguration so to preserve community assets/groups who need capital support, and the VSDF fund has been

revised to reflect pressures on such community assets from a revenue perspective, which threaten their long-term sustainability. The fund is designed to help retain sustainable assets across the borough – what it isn't, is a way of surviving for a small period without a plan thereafter.

► **FUTURE: DEBT COLLECTION (incl. FAIR DEBT REVIEW)**

There will be a Fair Debt Summit Refresh – to account for a post-COVID world approach to collections, whilst also using this opportunity to continuously improve based on what the authority learns from upheld complaints each year. We will do that by working with industry experts and leaders. This is building on the support that has been offered to residents struggling during the COVID-19 crisis.

► **FUTURE: LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME**

A LCTS Summit will be held to ensure members, industry leaders and the VCS have input into the scheme review, so to ensure the scheme is allocated proportionally against COVID-19 emerging challenges, whilst retaining key characteristics around war veterans, war widows etc.

► **FUTURE: FEES & CHARGES**

Usual tax-raised/fees income will be adverse in receipts, causing income implications. There will be a Fees and Charges/Rents Sense-Check for a post-COVID world approach to commercial models and realities (potentially tapered fees etc. / forecasted).

► **FUTURE: COUNCIL TAX**

As members would likely know, there is always an in-built assumption in any MTFS of a year-on-year increase up. This has most recently been set at 1.99% per annum.

For the purposes of forecasting, MTFS modelling over the next five years to include a council tax increase up to the maximum capped increase (capped, as in non-local referendum requiring increase – i.e. 1.99%).

The Cabinet view is that tax rises alone should not replace the effort around the upcoming CSR Mk. II – the objective around service reform.

► **FUTURE: FUNDING REFORM**

Owing to COVID-19, the funding reform associated with NNDR has been delayed, yet again.

## FINANCE DIRECTORATE BUDGET CONTROL

### ► FINANCE FINANCIAL INFORMATION – 2019/20

Service Area	Full Year Budget £	Full Year Forecast £	Variance £
Finance	4,456,367	4,690,656	234,289
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,427,613</b>	<b>4,427,613</b>	<b>234,289*</b>

### ► TREASURY – 2019/20

	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Variance £000
Interest & Fees Payable on External Debt	15,856	15,580	(276)
Interest Receivable on Investments	(45,316)	(45,739)	(423)
<b>Net Interest</b>	<b>(29,460)</b>	<b>(30,159)</b>	<b>(699)</b>
MRP	7,756	7,756	(0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>21,704</b>	<b>22,403</b>	<b>(699)</b>

### ► COMMERCIAL FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Service Area	Full Year Budget £	Full Year Forecast £	Variance £
Commercial Services	757,324	766,515	(9,191)
<b>Total</b>	<b>757,324</b>	<b>766,515</b>	<b>(9,191)</b>

\*Variance from the budget was primarily due to final corporate fraud income position undergoing final agreement discussions and final position is expected to improve further.

The Commercial Services department continues to support the delivery of the wider income streams of the Council

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<b>8 July 2020</b>	<b>ITEM: 14</b>
<b>Council</b>	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Social Care</b>	
Report of: Councillor James Halden, Cabinet Member for Children and Adult Social Care	
This report is Public	

## **Executive Summary**

While I am honoured to present my annual report to the chamber on the state of the adult social care and child social care departments, I give this report fully aware that I do so as we start to recover from a public health pandemic and enter an economic downturn following the covid-19 crisis. Serving this borough and every member in this chamber, I pledge that this department is doing everything to be battle ready for the post covid world. With this in mind, this is a different style of report – instead of just a litany of services, I have tried to present the position from crisis to beyond. If further detail is requested, myself and officers are always happy to attend any scrutiny meeting.

In the first section of this report you will read about some of the work we undertook to keep people safe during the covid crisis in terms of those in care and the wider society on the edge of care. In addition, you will see the focus we took on making sure people kept on accessing social care services, and how we led the way with partners to ensure the system could cope with increased referrals post lockdown. I briefly touch on the wider service and covid impacts.

In the second section you will read about how we started to form the new policies to be rolled out to take Thurrock boldly beyond the crisis. For example, we are making sure we take our ofsted rating for children from “good” to “outstanding” by improving transition services. We will target keeping the elderly socially mobile by improving the use of technology in social care. Finally, I outline the work we have done with partners across the wider health and care system to ensure we can work together to evolve services based on learnings from covid, while protecting our autonomy as a unitary council.

In the third section, I will discuss our ever-important duty to protect the vulnerable. To this end, I will detail the work we are undertaking to ensure our Learning Practice reviews (serious case reviews, in old money) are carried out in a swift and independent way. Also, how we are working to improve the system to support the unaccompanied asylum seeking children population. Finally, the vital work to protect the vulnerable care leavers and such in a covid-cased economic downturn from issues where they could be preyed upon or see reduced opportunities.

Finally, in the fourth section we will outline the financial situation we find ourselves in, and how we maintain the secure system we have built, during a looming economic downturn caused by covid-19. This will include how we improve access to Youth Offending Services and properly house it, and the emerging work to improve and secure the recruitment market for adult and child social care in this post covid world.

I am grateful to the wonderful care workers, from foster care to domiciliary care, who have toiled in the worse circumstances of late. Following this covid crisis, we hope to quickly restart our recognition events with carers quickly.

I also want to thank the brilliant team of officers who have kept the system going with cool resolve, while still looking to building a better future for social care, and to my wider cabinet colleagues. I single out my remarkable Corporate Directors, Roger Harris and Shelia Murphy, the incredible Public Health Director Ian Wake, and a team of talented Assistant Directors – Les Billingham, Joe Tynan, and Michele Lucas. In addition, outstanding partners such as Mark Tebbs in the CCG, and Tania Sitch, Partnership Director for Health and Social Care. It maybe me presenting this report, but these people have been in the engine room, doing the most incredible work to save and improve lives in this borough.

## **Section 1 – Keeping social care safe during the crisis**

### Focusing on edge of care.

- 1.1 Lockdown presented many logistical challenges to us all. However, we ensured that there was constant contact with all partners to not just protect those within care, but to also maintain constant vigilance for those on the edge of care. While we had to focus on priority “category A” (the most at risk) people, we were determined not to lose a focus on others at risk.

In addition to daily operational meetings and meetings with the senior social care teams, there were over 50 direct portfolio holder meetings to push this edge of care agenda and support partners. This included, but was not limited to:

- Local Area Coordinators
- Thurrock First Adult Social Care Referrals
- MASH (children services multiple agency safeguarding hub)
- Thurrock Looked after Children
- Thurrock Foster Carers
- Basildon Hospital
- Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust (EPUT) – our local mental health provider
- North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) – our local community health provider

- Thurrock CCG
- Thurrock Schools forum
- Thurrock virtual school for looked after children
- Child Safeguarding Partnership
- Adult Safeguarding Board
- Essex Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner
- CVS
- Essex County Council
- Southend Borough Council
- Thurrock Community Safety Partnership
- Inspire Careers Service
- Essex Resilience Forum
- Mid and South Essex ICS
- Thurrock Life Style Solutions

#### Testing in care homes

- 1.2 Only as of early May, responsibility for testing of symptomatic and asymptomatic care staff was devolved to Directors of Public Health, albeit with access to tests still being provided through a dedicated centrally determined national care staff portal.

The majority of testing and “track & trace” will be covered by the Cabinet Member for Health, who has public health responsibilities. Below we have accounted for our actions in care homes etc. However, this is very fast moving and it is possible the position will be updated many times following the publication of this report.

- 1.3 To support care homes, we put in place a COVID-19 Care Home Hub Protocol which sets out testing arrangements for both asymptomatic and symptomatic staff and residents and includes both weekly screening and proactive initial and repeat testing of all staff and residents in outbreak situations.

This is now implemented and is working well. The PH team are managing the process and clinical health protection actions to manage outbreaks locally in care homes as this has also been devolved to us by PHE.

- 1.4 In terms of testing locations, under our local protocol, asymptomatic care staff and both symptomatic and asymptomatic residents in care homes are tested at the care home. This is done through a combination of Commisceo attending the care home to undertake initial swabbing in outbreak situations,

and a courier service to and from the care home of test kits for repeat swabbing of staff and residents in outbreak situations, and proactive screening of staff and residents.

1.5 We would not wish symptomatic staff to attend a care home to receive a test as this risks spreading further infection and causing additional outbreaks. Symptomatic staff can currently access tests through a variety of locations and we manage this through the Thurrock Council Testing Hub for local NHS provision, or directly through the national website. These include:

- Postal test kits delivered to the staff member's home
- Drive through locations at Stanstead Airport, and as of next week a mobile testing centre in the car park at Blackshots Leisure Centre provided by the MoD three times a week.
- MSE Hospital drive through provision (nearest location Basildon Hospital).

1.6 At present all of these locations are running significantly below full capacity, which we would expect as an R value below 1 will result in falling numbers of new infections in the community on the transmission life cycle of the virus (currently around five days). In London as of last week, new confirmed daily infections were being reported as only 24 per day.

PH estimates that even accounting for some infections not being picked up, the absolute number of new daily infections in London will be no higher than 300. As we know from the modelling work that the PH team has led, that our local epidemic curve is only a few weeks behind London's, we would expect similar low absolute transmission numbers in Thurrock very soon as long as R remains below 1.

1.6.1 We are due to set up an "Outbreak Control Oversight Board" which will be formed within the Health and Wellbeing Board and will be cross party.

#### Access to social care, care beds and PPE

1.7 Given that PPE is likely to be a new way of life for sometime now, we are making sure that our COVID-19 Care Home Hub Protocol keeps us in close contact with Thurrock Council controlled and private homes to maintain adequate supplies. Adequate supplies were maintained through lockdown.

1.8 We did have to prioritise our efforts and so some services were stopped e.g. our three day centres were closed, or scaled back e.g. most reviews were undertaken via phone. But at all times we ensured that we maintained contact with people to check they were kept safe. I will be working with officers to agree when it is safe to fully re-start these services again. We will be very cautious indeed.

1.9 In addition to the above work, we massively increased the amount of step down and step up beds (to help people either return to their home from hospital, or move to a more suitable location if they possibly had covid).



Approximately 35 dedicated COVID beds were created through the opening of a recently closed residential care home - Oak House, a dedicated unit at Piggs Corner and the creation of the isolation unit at Collins House.

- 1.10 In terms of a possible “second peak” and to ensure we were ready for any event and that we did not become complacent, we also resolved to keep the extra beds in place even when our surplus capacity was clearly more than sufficient. The work with our access to care points (MASH and Thurrock First) and the local testing protocol remains under constant review in case we need to “ramp up”. Finally, the work to ease restrictions on care home visiting and restarting certain work which involves visitation will be the very last thing we would wish to restart.
- 1.11 Our work with our acute hospital saw us, with one or two exceptions, keep within all hospital discharge timeframes – ie within 3 hours.
- 1.12 During the crisis, it became a key focus to ensure that people kept on accessing social care and associated services like mental health, domestic abuse and so on. We assisted CVS in establishing a “one stop shop” triage service for covid. In addition, we worked closely with the MASH and Thurrock First to make sure that we were able to support those seeking child and adult services, and were battle ready to take on any spike in cases as lockdown was eased. The corporate communications team was heavily used to ensure in excess of 1,000,000 emails were sent out to communicate key contact details for services.
- 1.13 Throughout the lockdown, we worked closely with partners to ensure the vulnerable were protected and services able to reach out during lockdown, and braced for a spike of stored-up issues following lockdown. The work done on the Police and Crime Commissioners “Violence and Vulnerability Group” will be detailed in section 3.

### **Core functions during the crisis**

Allow me to give you a few general facts and figures regarding day to day activity of the departments;

Adoption:

- 1.14 Adoption recruitment continues to grow and is on target. At the end of 2019-20, 15 children were adopted compared to 13 in 2018-19 representing an increase of 15.4%. This reflects the significantly increased activity of our new adoption service, which is driving adoption for those children that require it.  
In April 2020:

- 8 enquires were received from prospective adopters which has led to 7 households progressing to training
- We currently have 6 households approved for adoption
- 2 households linked to children
- 16 Households in the assessment process

- All children adopted have received a life story book and this is now being extended to children who are subject to SGO's and across Children Looked After.

The number of days for a child from "entering care" to "being placed with adopters" has reduced on a three year average to 383 days which is below the national average of 486 days. The number of days from "Court Authority" to "place to matching with adopters" has reduced from an average of 184 days which is below the national average of 201 days. This improved performance has been achieved by robust tracking processes.

Thurrock joined the Adopt East Alliance in 2018. The Alliance is made up of 8 Local Authorities across the Eastern Region and two voluntary agencies, Barnardo's and Adoption Plus working in partnership with Adoption UK. The planned Go Live for Adopt East is in Autumn 2020 to coincide with Adoption Week. This is a busy and exciting time for Thurrock and Adopt East. Much has been achieved in terms of shared practice, particularly in placing children with the region's adopters, and the development of an enhanced and extended offer of services for families where children are adopted or living with Special Guardians, utilising money made available during Covid-19.

## Fostering

- 1.15 At the end of March 2020 we had assessed 20 fostering household with positive outcomes. We are currently assessing 10 Fostering Households and have reviewed and introduced new rates for our foster carers.

During Fostering Fortnight our campaign, which was driven by social media, was effective in creating enquiries and lots of hits on the council website where our new rates are now displayed. We have also had a reach of over 23,000 through Spotify and Facebook and an increase in applications from prospective households. We are continuing to deliver preparation training for Foster Carers and Adopters virtually and remotely via Microsoft Teams and the feedback from those attending has been excellent. This is being offered both in and outside core work hours to increase attendance and provide flexible.

Our Fostering and Adoption Panel has moved to virtual meetings in line with Covid-19 guidelines and we have received excellent feedback and continue to meet our regulatory guidance. Foster Carers have continued to support children in their usual helpful and flexible manner to meet children's needs. It is impressive that our Fostering and Adoption Teams have stepped up to the challenge, working really hard to approve adopters and fostering carers, place vulnerable children and to support families. There has been some creative practice and a commitment to continue as much as possible with business as usual.

## 1.16 Troubled Families and YOS

	Thurrock	South East	Essex	Family	England
Quarterly (latest data)	34.8%	37.0%	39.1%	31.7%	38.1%
Aggregated yearly	28.9%	37.2%	34.2%	35.5%	39.2%

The latest data from the Youth Justice Board is tracked quarterly, with a significant time lag. As Thurrock is a small YOS and consequently has a small quarterly cohort the quarterly data can fluctuate. The more meaningful figure is the yearly aggregated data which indicates that performance is better than all comparators.

## 1.17 Re-offending – Local data

Thurrock YOS reports on local data and this is the performance that is recorded on the corporate score card. This data is dynamic and is a good predictor of future MOJ published data. It identifies and tracks a cohort of children for a period of 12 months. There is a 3 month drag on this data to allow for the criminal justice process. As of the end of the financial year 19/20 (which equates to quarter 3) the re-offending figure stands at 11%.

## 1.18 Troubled Families Programme

At the end of March 2020, Thurrock achieved their target of 1220 Payment by Results claims. This achievement meant that we are one of the highest performers in the Eastern Region. The target for 20/21 is set by the MHCLG to achieve 281 claims by the end of the financial year. 80 claims will be made by the end of June, so we are well placed to achieve the target by the end of the year, if not earlier.

Number of children being supported under a CIN, CP and CLA

There are 166 children subject to a Child Protection Plan

There are 612 children subject to a Child in Need Plan

There are 295 Looked After Children.

Dom Care

## 1.19 The domiciliary care market has been under significant pressure for a number of years. A rapid growth in demand and growing competition for staff, most notably from the retail sector, have been the main causes of this pressure.

A number of factors have added to these pressures to make the market extremely fragile. For example the introduction of the National Minimum wage has squeezed the profit margins of providers. This has led to contracts being

handed back and providers withdrawing from the market altogether or shifting their business model to focus on private placements.

Thurrock has felt the consequences of the market's increasing fragility. Three years ago, two of the three major contracts we held with external providers were terminated by the organisations in question. This meant that the Council, as provider of last resort, took the work in-house and became a provider of domiciliary care, having completely outsourced these service some time before.

- 1.20 Local demand has been increasing significantly. From April 2019 until March 2020 there were approximately 8,528 hours of homecare per week delivered in Thurrock. This total represents an increase of some 2,000 per week over the recent past.

Competition for jobs locally is also problematic given the large retail centre at Lakeside and the recent increase in job opportunities, such as the opening of the Amazon warehouse in Tilbury. Whilst economic growth is extremely positive, Thurrock typically enjoys low unemployment and a high percentage of low skilled positions. The juxtaposition of this position contributes to high turnover in the care sector.

We have however been successful in stabilising the local market since 2015, mostly via the following two factors:

- We have increased the unit cost paid to external providers through a yearly uplift, this has made us more competitive with other local authorities across the region, and this has also helped with recruitment and retention.
- Our contract management team has established strong partnership relationships with all local providers, enabling us to take a joint, solution focused approach to issues.

- 1.21 Alongside this we have introduced a radical new approach to delivering support to people in their own homes through the introduction of two Wellbeing teams in Tilbury and Chadwell, as part of our transformation programme across health and social care. These teams are small, delivering locality based services across a much smaller patch than is typically found in traditional domiciliary care teams. The pilot has not yet finished, however early signs are promising. Should the Wellbeing model be successful it could transform the way support at home is provided.

Because the domiciliary care market in Thurrock has been developed using the approaches outlined above, we have been able collectively, to successfully meet the challenge posed by the recent Covid 19 pandemic. The pandemic has inevitably caused an increase in deaths locally, and every death is regrettable and a tragedy for anyone close to the person. However, given the enormity of the challenge, it is clear that through indicators such as hospital discharge data and responsiveness of services to meet demand, the

local domiciliary care market has coped extremely well. This is a credit to the local providers whom we contract with, our own in-house teams and to all of the staff within Adult Social Care who provide support and management oversight to the system.

## **Section 2 – Making social care even better after the crisis**

### Care transformation in Mid and South Essex

2.1 As we know, Thurrock is a part of the NHS STP (Sustainability and Transformation Partnership), now referred to as the Integrated Care System (ICS) for Mid and South Essex. This is my responsibility as the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board. This is a key vehicle for change across our care system. We welcome system wide cooperation, however have always been weary regarding a loss of autonomy locally, certainly in areas where Thurrock is already leading the way.

2.2 COVID has led to a set of conversations regarding how care could evolve based on our learnings and innovations forced during the crisis. Below is an outline of the position which we have taken with the ICS as we have started this “re-set” work.

Our great focus is to protect what is called “place”. By “place” we mean Thurrock as an autonomous unitary, able to focus on the people that live here.

A - For health and social care post covid, we must stick to the current STP footprint for planning matters and for “recovery”, and not double up on this work by trying to run these matters through the Essex Resilience Forum or on a pan Essex setting. A constant re-tinkering of structures is not helpful (even though we fully engage in joint committees to learn together). It seems our position is supported.

B - We need to get the governance for the partnership sorted once and for all – it’s been an on running issue to protect “place” services and the HW Board / local government voice which is absorbing head-space from other areas. Signing off the MOU from the meetings between our Independent Chair and partners should be done now by the 5 CCG chairs, 3 HWB Chairs, our STP Accountable Officer and Independent Chairman, and the Executive Lead for the Acute Hospital Trust. It is vital that we all own and sign the plan so we can all share the duty to maintain it. Of course, the MOU must articulate the balance between place and system to avoid mission creep.

We are making very firm progress here and a final MOU sign off is imminent. We have won the key argument that the MOU contains clear references to protecting our autonomy in that “place is the primary planning area” for service changes.

C - While we should restart other health work like cancer pathways and to tackle the backlog, we cannot start to reshape care services in the post covid world as we have yet to quantify our learnings i.e. community care. This should be deferred to July when all partners can submit detailed thoughts and

data where we can review quantifiable actions. This is vital to make sure we get the community / mental health response correct. Thurrock is happy to host a summit and this is being arranged.

D - The “place” matters must have a SRO (senior responsible officer) from the three social care councils i.e. the leadership cannot just be from the NHS. The three councils must be represented at this level, in parity with the CCG leads – so 8 SRO’s, not just 5. We have secured what we need here.

E - From here, we can consider joint staff between council’s and CCG’s (the local MD post certainly), however we must resist an urge to push more to the “system level” at a time where we need to push more towards the “place”. We should set the principal that we look at areas where pooled resources make sense, but starting now at the place level only. If we do anything else, the risk is that the social care demand on local government could well buckle us. This is broadly supported, but remains a key area of risk.

F - We need reassurance that this work will not impact on the announced plans for Orsett Hospital, IMC’s, or new care home / residential care plans for Thurrock. I am pleased to say that we have received this.

### Thurrock’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy

2.3 As referenced at 2.8, we will seek to host a summit to review the ways in which we can reset our ICS based on learnings from this crisis. Within Thurrock, we will also use the July Health and Wellbeing Board to start to refresh the Health and Wellbeing Strategy in the Post covid world.

2.4 We will start with a deep drive evaluation of the mental health system and refresh of our Mental Health Transformation Programme in July, as well as the headline principals of what we have learnt from covid.

As it did last time, this will include each department of the council and all partners – in many ways, this will be one of the most significant pieces of work we undertake for the immediate future.

### Taking children services to “outstanding”

2.5 Turning to future work streams for children services, we are focusing on the work to take us from “good to outstanding”. Key to this is improving our transition work from childhood to adulthood. This work, due to come to scrutiny this year, is focused on the following;

A - Getting the balance right between those in social care and the general core offer. We need to clarify the general approach, with specific content regarding those in care i.e. a core offer, and top ups. The focus must be quality outcomes in terms of life chances, and not just a referral process within the care system.

B - We need to address the Children Services Ofsted inspection commentary that we need to do better to ease the transition for young people, and get all services working together. In our minds, this should work like the Head Start Housing policy – it’s a jointly owned policy between education and housing

where the home is simply an asset, but the wider point is the pastoral care from skills, housing and social care to ensure the care leaver has a robust CV, long term housing plan and so on.

C - We must consider the “vulnerability factor”. The Annual Public Health Report does a lot to bridge the world of the YOS and wider services. How can we ensure that from drug and alcohol issues, to crime and mental health problems, that we are protecting young people as they grow and leave adolescence?

### Timeliness in SEND and Child Social Care

- 2.6 Working with colleagues in the education department, we will take the pledges to Health and Wellbeing Board this year to improve the quality and timelessness of plans to support children with special education needs and disabilities.
- 2.7 In line with the above, we will convene partners like the Fostering Panel, Adoption Panel, Child In Care Council and such, to consider the timelessness of our internal functions to support children and families and what “stretch” targets should be in place.

For example, we boast some excellent figures during this crisis such as 90.5% of Looked After Children visits being completed within timescale. However, there are some figures, such as only 58% of Pathway Plans completed in April were completed in timescale which need to be improved. We need to ask the questions regarding A) What is the delay, B) What can we do to get back on target, C) What should our stretch target be in the post covid world?

With both of the above examples, the question we must always ask must always be with regard to how we our positively affecting life chances for young people, and not just processing through the system. I look forward to pushing this agenda forward as I chair our development board.

### Digitalisation of the adult offer

- 2.8 Turning to future work streams for adult services, we are focusing on the work to keep our older population socially mobile. Key to this is improving use of technology in care. This work, also due to come to scrutiny this year, is focused on the following:
- While we are proud we made systems like careline free, assistive technology needs to move beyond just keeping people well. We need to focus on keeping people “active and healthy”.
  - We need to work with older people to understand the skills and accessibility that people need and want, and what infrastructure and wider support do we need to get there.
  - To kick off this work, and in-line with the success we had with the mental health summit in 2018, we would like to convene a roundtable in

September, with everyone from those in the care market like TLS, to those in the tec sector like Amazon.

### **Section 3 – Always focusing on better support for the vulnerable**

#### Protecting the economically vulnerable

- 3.1 As we enter, as much of the world does, an economic downturn due to covid-19, it is vital we put the vulnerable and those in care front and center. Their lives are not just about social care; they are an important and active part of the economy.

However, we must also recognise that a possible loss of apprenticeships and employment will hit certain groups hard and possibly make them more open to being preyed upon. We have two key work streams on this issue;

A - We are working with the Police and Crime Commissioners “Violence and Vulnerability Group” to look at issues where economic hardship could leave certain groups, such as the learning disabled, more vulnerable to those who would seek to exploit them. Issues include nominal gang activity such as “cuckooing”.

With our partners on our Adult Safeguarding Board, we are reviewing our current policies in this regard to ensure they are fit to deal with the level of economic downturn we are expecting. We will feed this work into our wider SET (Southend, Essex, and Thurrock) partnership.

B – We are working with SET colleagues on the issue of employment for care leavers and the vulnerable. The profile of many of our “vulnerable cohort” fall into areas where a loss of apprenticeships could disproportionately hit them. Work is being done between Children Services and our Inspire Careers Hub, consulting with colleagues in Adult Services and groups such as Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions, to outline a core offer to those who fall into these groups.

Both of these themes will also be addressed as we seek wider engagement with different communities as we host a faith summit in October.

As of June 25<sup>th</sup>, we have now formed an economic vulnerability taskforce in Thurrock between the child safeguarding board, adult safeguarding board, supported by TLS and Inspire, to make sure care leavers and vulnerable young adults are supported in a recession and protected from those who would seek to exploit them.

#### Serious case reviews now called Learning Practice Reviews

- 3.2 As members will know, our Children Services and Adult Services teams have been rated “good” by Ofsted and CQC on a range of issues on a frequent basis. However, I know all members will share our view that we cannot just sit back and relax. We need to constantly be challenging ourselves to improve and make a system which is more inclusive, efficient, and safe.
- 3.2.1 Number of children subject to a CP plan has risen in the last 3 months and at the end of April was 179, which is 41 per 10,000 children, this nevertheless is



lower than SN (50 per 10,000 for 18-19). We have completed an analysis and put measures in place to ensure that the right cases are coming to ICPC and reviewed the following children.

- 3.3 The most serious thing that can happen is a death of a vulnerable person. It's devastating for loved ones, for support workers, and for partners. This starts a formal and statutory process to investigate any relevant agency in an independent manner by the appropriate Safety Partnership in a Learning Practice Review (LPR). Currently, Thurrock has no such investigation in Adult Services, and the Children Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been sighted on the two active LPR's.
- 3.4 Our partnerships are robust, however, I have the following commentary. I feel we need to review why one SCR has taken 18 months plus and not the 6 months which is the recommended timeframe. We should review if the partnerships are well enough supported and have the correct level of independent challenge.

To this end, we have prepared terms of reference for a peer review into our safeguarding partnership arrangements. Ideally, we would like us to make our LPR's more timely and ensure the partnership is in line with the very best practice. In addition, we need to consider how we can make sure we have the capacity to investigate not just the issues that make it to the LPR stage, but some of the "near misses" to see how we can learn and constantly improve.

This is a vital area of corporate parenting and corporate responsibility from all elected member's to our whole society. Therefore, I would like to invite the Opposition Chairman of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees to meet with me to review outcomes of this work and make any suggestions.

Having served in the Shadow Cabinet as Lead Member for Education and Health, and having served as Chairman of these committees, I know how important the role of the official opposition is in such matters. I would very much welcome opposition challenge, thoughts, and input; children's safeguarding is everybody's business.

We have recruited a massively experienced former director to independently lead our review.

### UASC

- 3.5 Finally, we want to work to better consider how we support Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. As it currently stands, Thurrock has seen multiple incursions in recent years of human trafficking events. We have a duty to take all those who we cannot evidence are over 18 into our care when they present within the Borough.

While only a small proportion abscond from care, it is vital we keep working with partners like the boarder force and police to act faster as Thurrock becomes a busier port borough. Making sure we can support these children

within the system is the best way to protect their lives and do our part to help deter those who would seek to traffic people for more unsavory purposes.

## **Section 4 – Going into the crisis with a strong financial system, and maintaining it during difficult times**

### The downturn backdrop

- 4.1 The Bank of England has warned that the UK economy is heading towards its sharpest recession on record. The coronavirus impact would see the economy shrink 14% this year, based on the lockdown being relaxed in June. Fortunately, we do not enter this with a national deficit as high for normal day-to-day spending as we did in the 2008 crisis.

This, also coupled with a loss of council revenue from areas such as fees and charges means that we will face difficult financial times ahead. The need for financial resilience, to keep key services sustainable, has never been more vital.

### The Thurrock position

- 4.2 We enter this economic downturn in a robust position. This is vital to how we approach social care going forwards. Social care, certainly placements for looked after children and adults are some of the most reactive and demand led services that local government oversees, and therefore it is vital that we put financial resilience at the center of all we do.
- 4.3 Thanks to Thurrock Council unanimously passing it's current investment strategy, which continues to pay out despite covid, we were able to massively increase reserves and certain discretionary spending. Prior to covid, this investment income helped pay for a number of new services in mental health and so on. Our officers have publically confirmed that these investments continue to provide significant income to the authority, in spite of the covid-19 economic backdrop, there is no indication of a downturn in pay out at this time with all demonstrating continued strong performance.
- 4.4 However, we will likely see a sharp fall in revenue due to a loss of fees, charges and some tax revenue, like many other councils. Therefore will need to build a smarter and leaner council as we cut our cloth accordingly. However, we are in a position where much of our revenue is secure, where reserves are higher than ever, and where we have a backdrop of a balanced budget. This means that, even as the rest of the council must become leaner and smarter, social care is not in the same threatened position that some councils find themselves in.

We now must begin a review of closing the spending power gap between us and Essex County Council to ensure our section of the market remains stable.

On resilience, people need to know that social care can be relied upon during this health crisis and during an economic downturn. It can. Our reserves, "the rainy day fund" is up to £11m (40% higher than four years ago), with a £6m

resilience fund on top. In addition to this, I can announce we have now put in place an additional £1.5m in a reserve for social care for truly exceptional circumstances.

Going forward, we must rebuild any reserves spent, and in fact increase them to match any emerging pressures. This is not reserves for the sake of it, it's about making sure the money will always be there for people, certainly the vulnerable.

4.5 Cabinet wrote to the section 151 officer during the first phase of lockdown to outline the financial framework we will operate under. The areas that relate to social care include;

- Supporting the public health grant from the general fund, if needed, to maintain their excellent work.
- Restoring the people services commitments from surplus spending in the life of this MTFS if they need to be diverted to tackle emerging pressures.
- Reviewing care sector resilience to increase reserves above the current level to ensure social care remains stable. This is vital considering how the care market could struggle following people making new care decisions out of the fear of covid i.e. care homes.
- Committing that we will keep investing to support the care market in this period of flux i.e. considering what else we can do for support and pay structures for foster care and domiciliary care.
- Making the capital plan more affordable and accountable to members, while protecting the spend to save projects like headstart housing for care leavers.

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## QUESTION TIME

**Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.**

There is 1 question to the Leader and 6 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

**1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill**

The unemployment rate for 18 - 24 year olds in Thurrock has been above the national average for the last two years, an issue that has been exacerbated by the impact of Covid 19. What plans does the administration have to get Thurrock's youngsters into work?

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

**1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Johnson**

Will the Portfolio Holder withdraw the Elm Road Open Space from his list of possible housing development sites?

**2. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Johnson**

Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing advise what steps he has taken to ensure that there is a clear and consistent approach to consulting with residents and the wider communities who may be impacted by the housing development sites?

**3. From Councillor Holloway to Councillor Mayes**

What is the Portfolio Holder for Health doing to attract health and care professionals to work and live in Thurrock?

**4. From Councillor Kerin to Councillor Coxshall**

What infrastructure has the Portfolio Holder put in place in the last six months to encourage Thurrock residents to walk and cycle around the borough?

**5. From Councillor Shinnick to Councillor Johnson**

Following your recent decision to remove the green spaces from the housing development sites in South Ockendon can you now treat the residents of Enborne Green equally and remove this well used green space from your list.

**6. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Mayes**

Following my question to the Portfolio Holder around a year ago he undertook to review the Clean Air Strategy. What changes have been made as a result to improve air quality for residents in Grays Riverside?

## Update on Motions agreed by the Council

Date	From	Motion	Status	Director
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> <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 the 2020/21 budget cycle and investment strategy will take into account the actions the Council will take to address this emergency;</li> <li>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.</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 from experts within the field and what actions are required to be taken.</p> <p>Terms of Reference have been drafted and a draft work programme put together. That work programme is currently being reviewed. In addition, supporting arrangements to assist in the delivery of that work have been recently agreed. The delivery of the programme will commence shortly.</p>	Andy Millard

## Update on Motions agreed by the Council

Date	From	Motion	Status	Director
29 January 2020	Cllr 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.	A report has been prepared to consider the previous costs and arrangements. The matter will be discussed with members in due course.	Roger Harris
26 February 2020	Cllr Redsell	Council calls on Cabinet to consider a new wood and bluebells to be planted on a piece of land at the edge of Woodside.	The 106 agreement on the land requires for it to be kept open and mowed with limited planting around the edges. Officers have attempted dialogue with the developer to consider the motion and the changes outlined. A public consultation with local residents will also be conducted.	Julie Rogers
26 February 2020	Cllr Rigby	The high use of fireworks in the borough is causing distress and injury to pets and wildlife with an impact on air quality. Members therefore call on the Council to request the Government; via a letter to George Eustice, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, with copies sent to our two local Members of Parliament, Jackie Doyle - Price and	A letter has been sent to George Eustice MP from the Director of Place. There is not a requirement for users to notify the council prior to using fireworks on most occasions therefore the Council are not able to provide notification of events.	Andy Millard



## Update on Motions agreed by the Council

		<p>Stephen Metcalfe; review current legislation to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce the time period fireworks can be purchased.</li><li>• Reduce the decibel level of fireworks for private use.</li><li>• Restrict use of fireworks to official dates such as Bonfire night, Diwali, New Year's Eve and Chinese New Year. All other times, for example weddings, requiring a licence.</li></ul> <p>We also request the Council provide improved notification of big scheduled events.</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 Kerin**

This Chamber calls on Thurrock Council to celebrate and thank our National Health Service by marking the 5th July, every year, with the raising of the National Health Service flag outside the Civic Offices.

#### **Monitoring Officer Comments:**

The Motion relates to a matter which affects the Authority or the Authority's area and for which the Authority has a relevant function. The proposal action is one the Council could adopt within its powers and functions.

#### **Section 151 Officer Comments:**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

#### **Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?**

Yes

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