

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

## Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm on 7 September 2021**

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

There is very limited space for press and public to physically attend this meeting due to social distancing requirements. We advise anyone wishing to physically attend to book a seat in advance via [direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk) to ensure a place.

Arrangements have been made for the press and public to watch the meeting live via the Council's online webcast channel: [www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast)

### Membership:

Councillors Susan Little (Chair), Colin Churchman (Vice-Chair), Adam Carter, James Halden, John Kent and Bukky Okunade

### Substitutes:

Councillors Abbie Akinbohun, Gary Collins, Sara Muldowney and Graham Snell

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### Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 8 June 2021.	
<b>3 Items of Urgent Business</b>	
To receive additional items that the Chair 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. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.

<b>4</b>	<b>Declaration of Interests</b>	
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**Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:**

Please contact Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to [Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk)

Agenda published on: **27 August 2021**

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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.

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# 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.**

## 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

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 8 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

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- Present:** Councillors Colin Churchman (Vice-Chair), Abbie Akinbohun (substitute, arrived 7.05pm), Adam Carter, John Kent, Bukky Okunade and Graham Snell (substitute)
- Apologies:** Councillors Susan Little (Chair), and James Halden
- In attendance:** Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance  
Karen Wheeler, Director Strategy, Engagement and Growth  
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer
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Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being recorded, and live-streamed onto the Council's website.

### 1. Minutes

The minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 9 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

### 2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

### 3. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

### 4. End of Year (Month 12) Corporate Performance Report 2020/21

The Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth introduced the report and stated that it covered the Council's corporate performance from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021. She stated that 63% of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had met target, which was 10% lower than in 2019/20 when 74% of KPIs had reached target. She highlighted that this was largely not due to service performance, but due to the impact of COVID-19 and subsequent restrictions. She explained that in Quarter 2 when COVID-19 restrictions had eased, 75% of KPIs had reached their targets, and she hoped to see this again in the figures for Quarter 1 of this municipal year. She described how each KPI that had not hit target had commentary and a 'route to green' attached, which explained the reason for the missed target and any action being taken to ensure it hit future targets. She summarised and highlighted point 3.4 of the report which outlined the KPIs that had achieved target.

The Vice-Chair questioned page 26 of the agenda and the KPI regarding the

occupancy percentage of council-owned business centres. He queried what marketing and incentives the Council were undertaking. The Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth replied that although the Council were not providing any direct incentives for council-owned business centres, but they were working hard to ensure the units were marketed and occupancy take up increased.

*Councillor Akinbohun arrived 7.05pm.*

Councillor Okunade questioned the KPI relating to the turnaround time of re-lets. She queried whether this KPI had been affected by the pandemic, and if the Council had a plan in place to ensure the time to re-let properties was reduced. The Director of Strategy, Growth and Engagement responded that the report highlighted the direction of travel for the KPI, and explained that in Quarter 1 the choice-based lettings programme had been suspended due to COVID-19, so the time to re-let had increased to sixty days. She explained that the re-let time had now decreased to thirty days, and was continuing to travel in the right direction, but had not hit the end of year target. She added that the team were seeing improvement in Quarter 1 this year, which would be shown to the Committee at the meeting in September.

Councillor Kent stated that this had been a tough year for the Council due to COVID-19, and felt that the KPIs reflected this. He thanked officers across the Council for their hard work throughout the pandemic, and felt that they had continued to deliver services during a difficult year. He highlighted page 21 of the agenda, and asked if the Committee could see the raw data for the KPI regarding the completion of treatment in the Young People's Drug and Alcohol service. He also questioned the KPI regarding the Council's support of cultural, social, and health and wellbeing events outlined on page 22, and asked if these had taken place virtually during the pandemic. He also asked if the Committee could see more detail on the type of events that took place, and what future events were planned. Councillor Kent then drew the Committee's attention to page 27 of the agenda and the KPI relating to payment of Fixed Penalty Notices. He felt that the repayment figure was still low, and asked what extra steps had been put in place to ensure this figure met target in the future. He then queried page 28 of the agenda, and asked if the figure of 195 homes permitted through the Planning Committee was correct. He also wished to see the percentage difference between sites suppressed due to the pandemic and site availability. Councillor Kent then moved on and highlighted the KPI on page 30 of the agenda relating to the number of houses at risk of homelessness. He stated that only 211 cases had been accepted, which was a rate of 11.5%, and questioned whether this was due to officers turning people away or ensuring they were not losing their homes. He added that it would also be useful to see a full report relating to the asset disposal strategy. The Director of Engagement, Strategy and Growth thanked Councillor Kent for his feedback, and stated that she would respond to his questions in writing after the meeting.

Councillor Snell agreed with Councillor Kent that lots of KPIs had missed their targets due to COVID-19 restrictions, but also agreed that parts of the report



needed more clarity, such as site availability of housing. He highlighted page 29 of the agenda, and the KPI relating to the number of initial health assessments for children completed, and felt that 57% completed within 28 days of a child becoming Looked After was low. He felt that this was a hidden impact of the pandemic, and although the team had done a good job in the circumstances, they would need to work hard to catch-up on those initial health assessments that had been missed. The Director of Engagement, Strategy and Growth replied that the team were currently finalising this year's KPIs, which would be brought before the Committee in September. She added that any feedback made by the Committee would be taken back to the team, and KPIs would continue to be monitored and reviewed.

The Vice-Chair summarised and stated that the Council would continue to work hard during these unusual times, and felt that KPIs would continue to improve now COVID restrictions were easing.

**RESOLVED: That the Committee:**

**1. Noted and commented on the performance of the key corporate performance indicators, in particular those areas which are off target, and the impact of COVID-19.**

**2. Identified any areas which required additional consideration in 2021/22.**

**5. Work Programme**

Councillor Hebb thanked the Committee for allowing him to attend the meeting, and stated that he was attending due to the scrutiny review, which had been developed by Councillor Gerrish as Chair during the previous municipal year, and had been a welcome piece of work. He explained that he had a suite of ideas to put to the Committee to build the Work Programme, which included:

1. The Fair Debt Summit – a piece of work on the impact of COVID-19 and residents who wanted to pay debts, but simply could not. This could include a deep-dive or a Task and Finish Group into the collections process, the new relationship between Thurrock's revenue department and the Citizens Advice Bureau, and the compassionate side of collections.

2. Education within the Fair Debt Summit – a piece of work on how to help young people anticipate the signs of household debt. He stated that before COVID-19 a small piece of work had been completed which looked at this issue, but had been stopped due to the pandemic. He hoped the Committee would look into how to rollout the education package to schools, sixth forms, and academy trusts. He felt that the generation who were being raised during COVID-19 would need additional help regarding this issue.

3. Wide-reaching consultation regarding the Local Council Tax Scheme to ensure it was fit for purpose, it met the borough's needs, and provided good value for money for the people that funded it.

4. Members oversight of investments, which had been suggested by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee last year. He stated that a Shadow Investment Board had been running since July 2020, but felt that the Committee should have a role in how the Board would be constituted and formed. He explained that although the Council were now no longer pursuing investments, Members still needed to ensure the strategy was fit for purpose, and transparent for residents to understand.

Councillor Okunade thanked Councillor Hebb for his proposals. She questioned the potential timeframes for completing this work. Councillor Hebb replied that the timescales could be determined by the Committee based on outstanding Work Programme commitments. Councillor Kent agreed with the proposals, but felt that the timescales would be quite tight due to the timings of future Committee meetings. He questioned if activities could take place in between formal Committee meetings. The Senior Democratic Services Officer replied that she would speak with senior officers, as well as the Chair and Vice-Chair, to formulate a draft Work Programme and timeline. Councillor Okunade highlighted that some work streams would need to be prioritised over others, due to potential time constraints.

**The meeting finished at 7.28 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)**

<b>7 September 2021</b>	<b>ITEM: 5</b>
<b>Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Communications Strategy 2021-24</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non applicable
<b>Report of:</b> Mary Patricia Flynn, Strategic Lead Communications	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> N/A	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth	
<b>This report is public</b>	

## Executive Summary

The Communications Strategy 2021-24 sets out the approach the council will take over the next three years to ensure that communications activity aligns with and supports the vision and priorities of the council.

This strategy follows on from the previous Communications Strategy 2017-20, and builds on the work that has taken place over the past three years to introduce a more modern, direct and digitally focused approach to the way that we engage with our residents.

Thurrock is:

- a borough with a hugely ambitious regeneration agenda with billions of pounds of planned investment in new jobs, infrastructure and homes
- one of the largest growth areas in the UK
- the lead authority for the new Thames Freeport
- leading the implementation of over £40million from the government's Town Fund
- key to the delivery of projects such as South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park and the Technical University through the ASELA partnership
- involved in the Thames Estuary Growth Board and SELEP
- developing a Statement of Intent for 2030 which sets out the expected outcomes and deliverables for the council over the coming years

A consistent and strategic approach to communications which ensures that the good work of the council is shared with residents and that they are kept informed on how to access essential services is critical, even more so following a sustained period of change and uncertainty through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategy has been developed to ensure that recent learning and successes are built upon, and that all communications activity reflects best practice, taking on board expert advice and recommendations as well as input from senior management and members.

The approach to communications will be built around:

- brand recognition – further developing and embedding the Thurrock Council narrative to support growth and regeneration
- a strategic approach – clearly planned activity which is aligned to the corporate objectives of People, Place and Prosperity
- direct digital communications – sharing engaging information and content with residents through their preferred channels

Working with partners and colleagues across the council and the wider community this approach which will result in a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand as well as national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay and to invest.

It will also increase trust in the council and its decision making processes and ensure that staff are fully engaged in the council's work and transformation agenda and can act as advocates for both the local authority and the borough.

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

### **1.1 To comment on the proposed Communication Strategy 2021-24 as the principle policy document for communication with residents, businesses, stakeholders and staff**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

2.1 This report sets out the Communications Strategy 2021-24, which outlines the approach the council will take over the next three years to effectively communicate and engage with residents, staff, partners, local businesses and other key stakeholders.

2.2 This communications strategy follows on from the previous Communications Strategy 2017-20, and builds on the work that has taken place over the past three years to introduce a more modern and digitally focused approach to the way that the council engages with residents and to embed new ways of working.

2.3 The development of the new strategy was delayed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that this had on the work of the communications team.

2.4 During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the work of the team focused heavily on ensuring that frequently changing critical public

health messaging was communicated clearly and directly to Thurrock residents and businesses.

- 2.5 The Local Government Association (LGA) was invited to carry out a virtual peer review in October 2020, referred to as a 'communications health check' in preparation for developing the communications strategy.
- 2.6 This was similar to the 'communications health check' undertaken in May 2017 which informed the 2017-20 strategy.
- 2.7 The LGA's report, as previously reported to this committee, highlighted that the council had good crisis communications, strong stakeholder relations especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and a flexible team who were proactive, committed and responsive. It also reflected that internal communications had improved since 2017 and communications were now more campaign-led overall.
- 2.8 To further inform the strategy the LGA also facilitated a workshop session with members and officers.
- 2.9 One of the LGA recommendations was to commission a survey into how residents find out their news and information about the council. Independent market research was commissioned which consisted of a telephone survey with 200 residents. This ensured a response from a representative cross section of those in the borough who may not currently actively engage with the council on a regular basis. This was supplemented with an online survey which was promoted through the council's online channels.
- 2.10 While led by the Communications Team, communications is a shared responsibility across the entire council to ensure that a clear and compelling story which articulates the council's aims and purpose is being told collectively.

### **Communications Update**

Through the implementation of the previous Communications Strategy, there has been much more focus on digital communications, the use of consistent messaging, campaigns and profile raising.

### **Digital Communications**

- 2.11 The council's reach on social media has grown substantially since the previous strategy, with the council's Facebook page going from 2,000 followers to almost 13,000 (we have 12,891 followers, 11,920 likes).
- 2.12 An Instagram account has been launched which has almost 1,800 followers, Twitter has grown to 13,400 and LinkedIn has increased to over 5,000.

- 2.13 Engagement rates of posts have increased across all channels, and there has been an improved focus on the use of eye-catching imagery and video content.
- 2.14 During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of the Thurrock News e-newsletter and the council's social media channels were the primary tools for getting very rapidly changing information directly to residents.
- 2.15 There was very high engagement with these channels, with up to 65,000 residents either opening the e-newsletter or being reached by Facebook posts at times of key changes to guidance, such as the introduction of the government's Tier system.
- 2.16 Since the introduction of e-newsletters in 2016 they have continued to grow their audiences. There are specific e-newsletters for topics such as Careers, Weather Warnings and the A13 Road Widening Project, all of which have consistently high open rates.

### **Media**

- 2.17 The media landscape has changed substantially in Thurrock since 2017. Where there were once three printed publications, there is now one, and this is no longer delivered to homes. This is in common with the national picture, where local news has moved primarily to news websites and other online offerings.
- 2.18 Regional and national coverage of Thurrock related stories has increased, and member participation in interviews, particularly radio interviews, has risen substantially.

### **Campaigns**

- 2.19 There has been a much more campaign driven approach to communications, with large-scale behaviour change campaigns on the issues of fly-tipping, recycling and anti-social behaviour, as well as awareness campaigns on fostering, careers support and Transforming Thurrock which highlights regeneration and positive change in the borough. In addition to this, a long-term campaign called 'Discover Thurrock' highlighted the excellent amenities on offer in the borough including the many parks and open spaces.
- 2.20 All campaign activity is fully evaluated to measure impact and effectiveness.

### **Internal Communications**

- 2.21 The approach to internal communications has been enhanced over the past three years through introducing a new Intranet and new email newsletters. These e-newsletters receive excellent engagement from staff, with over 65 per cent of staff with access to email opening each one – well above benchmarking against other public sector organisations. Digital

communications to staff are also supplemented by printed materials and in-person/virtual briefings to ensure that office based and front-line staff are kept fully informed of key information.

### **Design and Brand**

- 2.22 The council's graphic design has moved to a 'digital first' approach, where content is developed with an online audience in mind as the first stage. This includes increased use of animation and gifs. There will always be a need for some printed materials, particularly for residents who do not or cannot access the internet, and this forms part of the overall campaign approach to channel use. The council's brand played an integral part in the response to COVID-19, where a recognisable identity ensured residents knew what information was coming directly from Thurrock Council.

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

- 3.1 The issues set out above and the analysis of the resident research have informed the development of the approach set out in the Communication Strategy 2021-24 at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Through independent market research, it has been established that the majority of residents get their information from the council's website (65 per cent) and through e-newsletters (38 per cent).
- 3.3 This insight into resident preferences has guided the approach taken in the strategy to ensure that the council is communicating with residents through their preferred channels.
- 3.4 The research also outlined the content which is of most interest to residents, which means that a strategic and planned approach can be taken to ensure high engagement with key messages.
- 3.5 Working with partners and colleagues across the council the key outcomes that communications will be working to achieve are:
- embedding a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand which positions the council as a leader in local government
  - achieving local and national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and encourages inward investment both regionally and nationally
  - ensuring the council is viewed by residents' as delivering excellent services and positive change and transformation for the benefit of all who live and work in Thurrock
  - building increased trust in the council and its decision making processes through clear and consistent dialogue with our target audiences

- demonstrating improved wellbeing of residents and empowered communities which have been positively influenced in improve behaviours and life choices through collaborative working with the council
- having informed, motivated and empowered staff who act as advocates of Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

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

- 4.1 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to comment on the approach to communication and engagement set out in the strategy.

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

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Communication Team, Strategy Engagement and Growth Directorate Management Team, Directors Board, Cabinet and the Leader. In addition, a communications update report was provided to Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 which outlined the feedback and recommendations of the LGA health check. The recommendations from that report and feedback from the committee meeting have been used to inform the development of the strategy. These included:

- commission a ‘who reads what?’ survey to establish how Thurrock residents consume news and prefer to consider commissioning an externally facilitated workshop involving members and officers to help develop the new strategy
- ensure the refreshed communications strategy includes measurable objectives and an annual campaign plan
- consider more productive ways of engaging the local media (e.g. briefings) rather than relying on press releases
- focus more on the council’s own communications channels which are read by more people (e.g. e-newsletters)

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

- 6.1 Communication of the priorities, policies and performance is key to the overall success and reputation of the council as well as the wellbeing of residents.

#### **7. Implications**

##### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**  
**Senior Management Accountant**



There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. The Communications Strategy and corporate communication activity will be delivered within existing budgets.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**  
**Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer**

There are no legal implications as a result of this report. The council follows the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity. The Code provides guidance on the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no direct diversity and equality implications as a result of this report, however, the council must ensure that a range of channels are used to communicate with residents so as not to exclude any particular group. Research to inform this strategy was carried out with a demographically representative sample of the Thurrock population.

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

A strong communications strategy in relation to crime, disorder and ASB will encourage reporting by residents and improve their perceptions of crime and response thus supporting Thurrock Council in fulfilling its Duty towards S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

There are no other specific implications, however, the council regularly develops communications approaches and materials in partnership with other public sector organisations including health partners and Essex Police, the voluntary sector and businesses as appropriate.

## 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):

- LGA Communications health check: Thurrock Council
- Communication Strategy 2017-20

**9. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 - Communications Strategy 2021-24

**Report Author:**

Mary Patricia Flynn  
Strategic Lead Communications  
Communications

# COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2021-24

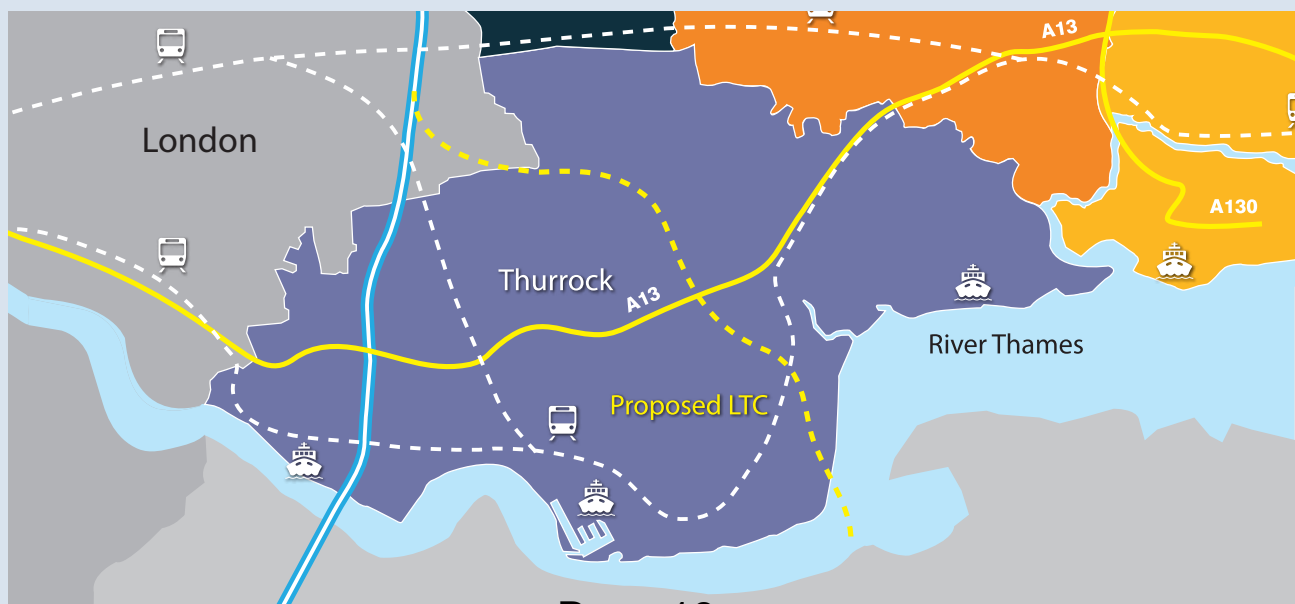
# INTRODUCTION

Thurrock is a borough on the rise. Our motto of 'By Thames to all the peoples of the world' captures the essence of Thurrock and its unique location at the heart of the Thames Estuary and the rich opportunities on our doorstep.

## Thurrock is:

- a borough with a hugely ambitious regeneration agenda with billions of pounds of planned investment in new jobs, infrastructure and homes
- one of the largest growth areas in the UK
- the lead authority for the new Thames Freeport
- leading the implementation of over £40million from the government's Town Fund
- key to the delivery of projects such as South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park and the Technical University through the ASELA partnership
- involved in the Thames Estuary Growth Board and SELEP
- developing a Statement of Intent for 2030 which sets out the expected outcomes and deliverables for the council over the coming years

Communications will be essential to help unlock the unrivalled opportunity presented by our position at the heart of economic growth in the region. We need to ensure that we are telling Thurrock's story locally, nationally and internationally and through doing so that we gain recognition for the borough as being an excellent place for residents, businesses and investors to work and play, live and stay; and to invest.



# PEOPLE, PLACE AND PROSPERITY

## People

A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

## Place

A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future

## Prosperity

A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

Under the corporate priority banner of People, Place, Prosperity, the council is creating a place where people want to live and are proud of, where businesses want to stay and thrive, and where investors and talent want to be located.

### **Effective communication and engagement will:**

- tell a compelling story which articulates the council's aims and purpose and uses our unique position at the heart of the Thames Estuary to ground this
- use clear messaging to ensure that council priorities are easily understood by local residents, our staff, our partners, local businesses
- reinforce Thurrock's pivotal role and position as the heart of the South Essex region with key external stakeholders including regional bodies and government
- ensure Thurrock is first in the minds of opinion formers and decision makers in order to support us to achieve our vision for the borough

# WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Working with partners and colleagues across the council the key outcomes that communications will be working to achieve are:

- embedding a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand which positions the council as a leader in local government
- achieving local and national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and encourages inward investment both regionally and nationally
- ensuring the council is viewed by residents as delivering excellent services and positive change and transformation for the benefit of all who live and work in Thurrock
- building increased trust in the council and its decision making processes through clear and consistent dialogue with our target audiences
- demonstrating improved wellbeing of residents and empowered communities which have been positively influenced in improved behaviours and life choices through collaborative working with the council
- having informed, motivated and empowered staff who act as advocates of Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

**Communications activity will be built around:**

- brand recognition – further developing and embedding the Thurrock Council narrative to support growth and regeneration
- a strategic approach – clearly planned activity which is aligned to the corporate objectives of People, Place and Prosperity
- direct digital communications – sharing engaging information and content with residents through their preferred channels

# BRAND RECOGNITION

We will be working to develop the Thurrock brand as both a local authority and a place in order to support the council's economic growth and regeneration agenda and ensure Thurrock gets the national recognition it so richly warrants.

The council is at the heart of developing a better future for all those who live and work not only in Thurrock but the wider South Essex region and Thames Estuary.

Through the development of a new place brand and the implementation of a long-term new Economic Growth campaign, we will ensure that the borough is seen as an attractive option for potential further investment.

## **This will mean:**

- using the council's narrative alongside a vivid and identifiable place brand to develop a strong external affairs approach
- supporting the council to articulate the deliverables and outcomes of the Statement of Intent for 2030
- having the right conversations at the right time with key partners and stakeholders, and working together on consistent and cohesive messaging
- clearly explaining the benefits that investment in our borough will bring to residents and local businesses through a large-scale campaign
- this campaign will run for three years and use audience segmentation to deliver targeted messaging to different stakeholders
- it will use all communications channels at our disposal and will be a key focus of the work of the communications team

# STRATEGIC APPROACH

Communications is a strategic function of the council, and we have a collective responsibility to plan, prioritise and consider the potential impact of all communications activity, as well as ensure that all our output is focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for the council, residents, business and our partners.

By prioritising key campaign activity, we can align resources to ensure we are meeting our objectives. Annual priorities and the annual campaign plan must be agreed by Cabinet and Directors Board and clear planning is crucial to ensure that all output from the communications team is in step with these priorities. Anything which does not directly support key corporate objectives will receive communications support in the form of appropriate social media or media relations only.

## Campaigns

### Campaigns developed by the communications team will:

- be outcome focused
- have specific and measurable objectives
- work to directly assist the council in meeting its strategic aims
- link directly to the council priorities of People, Place and Prosperity
- focus on issues that we know are important to residents
- aim to create greater understanding between the council and the borough's residents
- support positive behaviour change

### This will mean:

- have a planned schedule of activity which clearly sets out the priorities of People, Place and Prosperity and how we are achieving them
- build trust and confidence in the council through increased and improved direct digital communication with residents
- strengthen relationships with residents, stakeholders and staff through improved opportunities for collaboration and engagement including through the Collaborative Communities Framework
- ensure residents are fully informed on how we are investing in infrastructure, housing and job creation, and kept up to date on the latest news on our roads, schools, leisure, culture and community facilities
- influence key external stakeholders' view of Thurrock as a council to do business with and as a place to invest





The communications landscape continues to change at pace.

- traditional media audiences have been in decline for a number of years, and this has been highlighted in our survey results
- since our previous communications strategy was implemented in 2017, Thurrock has gone from having three local print publications, including one which was delivered to households, to only having one print publication which is now 'pick up' only
- digital channels continue to increase in popularity with the majority of UK adults now using at least one social media network
- more traditional face-to-face and direct methods of communication with residents are still valuable especially for harder to reach communities

## Digital Channels

A key element of implementing effective communication is ensuring that we are communicating with residents through the channels they are already using, and that all information provided on our council website information is clear, easy to understand and up to date.

Based on our research findings we can ensure that the content we are providing is in line with what that age group have said they are most interested in. This will help build trust with our audience and have the knock-on effect of enhancing the council's reputation through clear and consistent direct messaging. It will also help us to increase our audience and broaden our reach.

# DIRECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS



## Social Media

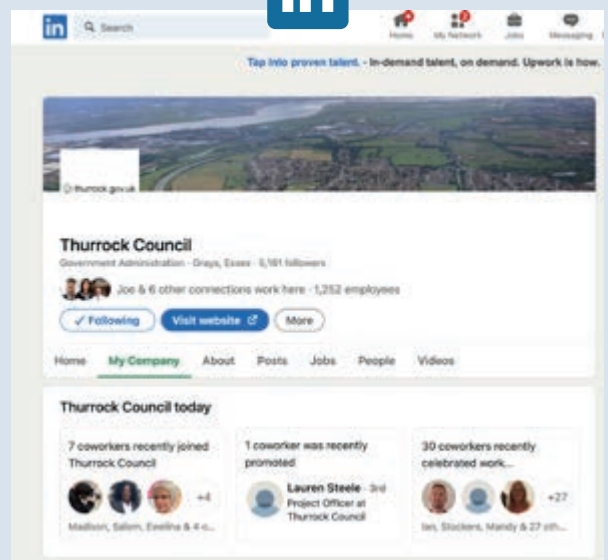
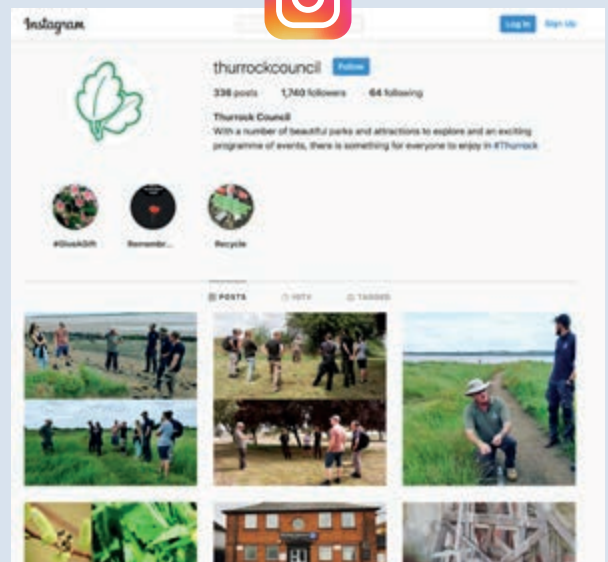
Our resident research has shown that:

- the council's Facebook page is used as a source of information by one in six residents in the borough
- this demonstrates that it is an excellent way of sharing good news directly with residents and helping to promote important services and initiatives
- during the COVID-19 pandemic some of our posts were being seen by over 65,000 people on a regular basis
- the age profile of those who use Facebook in Thurrock is primarily those aged 35 and above

We therefore want to build on this channel as a trusted source of information for local residents.

Twitter has fallen in popularity nationally, and as such is not as effective a method of directly communicating with residents.

- only 2% of survey respondents said that they use it to find news or information about the council
- this is in line with the national picture, where it comes below Facebook and Instagram in user numbers and popularity
- Twitter is still a useful channel for key updates and breaking news
- this is how we will be using it as part of our overall approach to social media



# DIRECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Our LinkedIn continues to grow at pace.

- we have seen increased engagement during the past year
- its use ensures a visible presence for Thurrock with key stakeholders and partners
- this is a valuable channel for connecting with decision makers and professional influencers

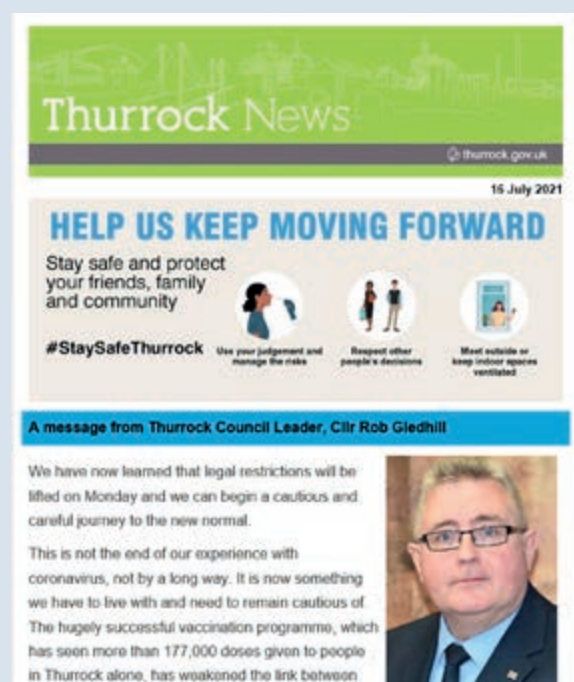
The approach to social media will include:

- focusing our resource on the channels which have proven to have the most impact on our residents
- an increased emphasis on video content and the use of real life case studies, not only about the council but key community and business partners as well
- working with our residents to tell our story to build trust with our audience
- increased use of Instagram and its targeted ads function to engage residents aged between 16 to 34
- continually investigating new and emerging channels, such as TikTok
- introducing more specific and topic-led Facebook groups so that we can increase our two-way engagement with residents in a more meaningful way, and enhance links between individuals in our communities
- engaging with local community Facebook group admins to build relationships and ensure that important information and messages can be shared

## Email newsletters

Email newsletters have proven to be exceptionally effective, especially for communicating crucial public health information about COVID-19 directly to residents over the past year and a half.

- 35% of residents say that this is the way they find out information about the council
- we will continue to grow and expand our newsletter offer including broadening our range of specific topic lead bulletins
- direct communication to resident and business inboxes will be used both to keep people informed and up to date on weekly updates and as a valuable channel for campaign materials
- we will investigate additional issue specific newsletters to supplement our existing offer



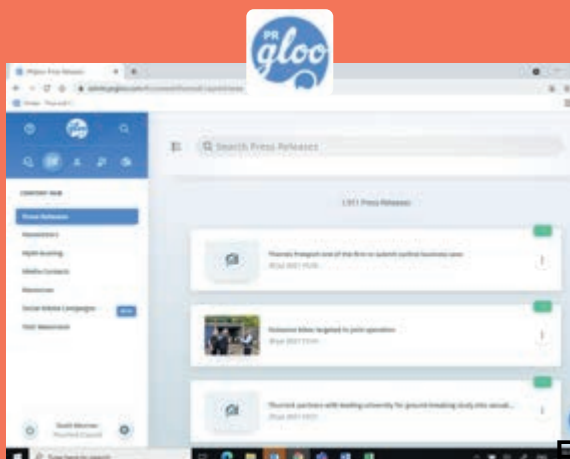
# DIRECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

## Media relations

As part of raising the profile of both the council and the borough, we will be taking a broader approach to media relations which will help to tell Thurrock's story on a wider stage.

The approach means that:

- more emphasis will be given to developing relationships with trade and specialist press as well as increasing links with regional and national media outlets
- resources will be managed in a way which enables the communications team to focus on producing high quality proactive and direct communications
- day-to-day proactive and reactive media relations will focus on key decisions and local issues which link to council priorities
- responsive work which does not work towards achieving strategic outcomes and goals will be dealt with on a case by case basis
- press briefings will be introduced, as well as more interactive discourse around key issues
- we will increase the use of video releases and photography

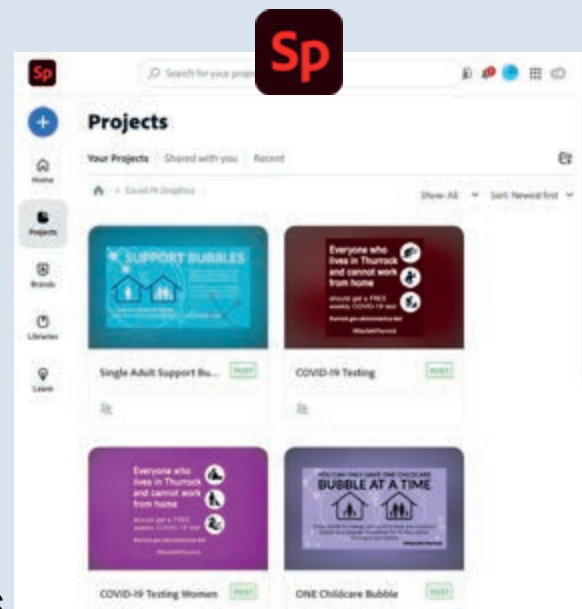


## Design and Print

Our graphic design has moved to a 'digital first' approach, where content is developed with our online audience in mind as the first stage.

The approach means that we will:

- increase our use of animation and gifs across all digital channels
- only produce printed materials for specific projects and for groups of our population who do not or cannot access the internet
- provide additional options for getting important, locally targeted messages to residents in areas of high footfall through introducing more council owned outdoor advertising channels
- ensure that the council brand is applied in a consistent way across all materials and that the use of partner branding is applied in a consistent way
- ensure materials being displayed by or distributed on behalf of the council are of a high quality



## Internal communications

Our council staff are our biggest asset as an organisation and as such it's crucial that we ensure that we have clear, open and honest communication with them. They are also an important audience for wider council messaging as over 70% of Thurrock Council staff also live in the borough.

We have enhanced our internal communications approach over the past three years, introducing a new intranet and new email newsletters. Over 65% of staff with access to email open each one – well above benchmarking against other public sector organisations.

As we enter a more challenging period in the post COVID-19 world, including the move to more remote and 'smarter' working, keeping our staff engaged and informed will be more important than ever.

Our approach will focus on:

- communicating key information in a very clear and easy to understand way which keeps staff involved in the decision making process
- building on the success of our email newsletters which receive excellent engagement from staff
- continuing to supplement digital communications with printed materials and in-person briefings to ensure that office based staff are kept fully informed of key information
- increasing the use of text messages to reach staff who either do not have access to email or are away from their devices
- investigating new channels to communicate with staff such as internal social networks and new functionality of Microsoft 365

Engaged and informed staff can be some of our best advocates for the work of the council. Feedback on internal communications is obtained through the annual Staff Survey which all staff are encouraged to complete. A full staff survey explores a large range of issues and topics relating to all aspects of working for the council which is followed by a 'Pulse Staff Survey' the following year, further exploring the six top themes and topics highlighted in the previous years' survey results.



# Team Thurrock

Staff Notices Training and Development Health and Wellbeing Staff Benefits Corporate Boards

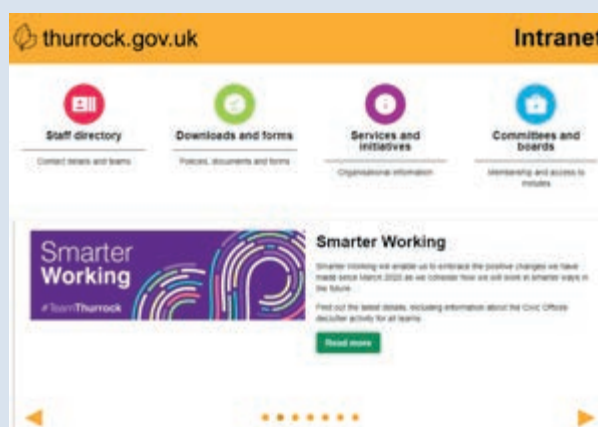
### COVID-19 restrictions

We ask that #TeamThurrock continue to act cautiously to protect you and your colleagues. We ask that face coverings be worn in public facing buildings, such as libraries. As we continue to do our best to protect #TeamThurrock, the council will continue to follow the specific guidelines it has set out so far within existing risk assessments and there will be no immediate changes.

The majority of #TeamThurrock will continue to work from home until at least October 2021. Where staff travel together in vehicles, the requirements for wearing a face covering will continue to be based on current risk assessments. Existing guidance for care staff remains in place including the use of PPE.

The [COVID-19 working arrangements policy](#) and updated [Civic Offices risk assessments](#) documents are available to support staff and managers with working conditions to ensure everyone's safety. #TeamThurrock should still be [taking regular COVID-19 tests](#) to help

Print page



thurrock.gov.uk Intranet

Staff directory Downloads and forms Services and initiatives Committees and boards

### Smarter Working

Smarter working will enable us to embrace the positive changes we have made since March 2020, as we continue to work in smarter ways in the future.

Find out the latest details, including information about the Civic Offices flexible priority for all teams.

Print page

# WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Evaluation of our communications activity is critical to ensuring that we understand what works well and what doesn't in achieving our objectives. From this evidence base we can make sound judgements on what approach to take at any given time, and adapt our content and channel use accordingly.

- a monthly monitoring and evaluation report will be produced to give a snapshot of campaign activity and the outcomes achieved, audiences reached and key issues that needed to be managed
- through thoroughly evaluating all of our work and the impact it has had against measurable objectives, it will ensure that we are able to allocate our resources efficiently and in a way that ensures we are working cohesively to achieve the council's overall priority objectives
- the monthly evaluation report will be shared with Directors Board and Cabinet and published on our intranet where it will be available for all council staff and members to view

**The evaluation will link directly back to the key outcomes communications will be working to achieve, and by 2024 will ensure that:**

- the Thurrock brand is fully embedded and Thurrock is recognised as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and to invest
- residents believe that the council has and continues to deliver excellent services and positive change and transformation
- trust in the council and its decision making processes is substantially higher
- residents' wellbeing is significantly improved through working together to influence positive life choices and outcomes
- council staff consider themselves to be well informed and are motivated to be strong advocates for Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

## WHAT HAS INFORMED THIS STRATEGY?

This communications strategy has been developed to ensure we build on recent successes and reflect best practice, taking on board expert advice and recommendations as well as input from senior management and members.

As good practice, we invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a peer led 'communications health check' in October 2020 which made recommendations to support the development of the communications strategy 2021-24. One of their recommendations was to commission a survey into how residents are finding their news and information about the council.

To do this we commissioned a market research agency to conduct an independent telephone survey with 200 residents. This ensured that we got a representative cross section of those in our borough who may not currently actively engage with the council on a regular basis. This was supplemented with an online survey which was promoted through the council's online channels. An externally facilitated workshop involving members and officers was also held to help develop the new strategy.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

### **Where do residents get their news and information about the council?**

A survey was administered by telephone by an independent market research company from 21 June to 5 July. Demographic quotas were set for gender and age in line with population statistics to ensure a representative sample of residents were interviewed.

#### **The findings from this research shows that:**

- Thurrock residents have a preference for online sources of information with the council's website being by far the most popular
- more than half of residents surveyed by telephone saying that [thurrock.gov.uk](http://thurrock.gov.uk) is the main way they learn about the council
- next most popular were our council email newsletters, with 35% of residents saying this was their primary source of information, and 97% of those saying that its contents were useful to them

- in total just under half of those surveyed (46%) said that they receive the Thurrock Council email newsletter; the vast majority also said they always read it
- 92% of those who read the email newsletter believe it keeps them informed, with 47% saying that it keeps them very well informed

The next most popular ways to find news and information about the council were word of mouth (18%) and Thurrock Council's Facebook page (14%). Overall, a third of residents who access the internet follow Thurrock Council's social media channels, with the most common being Facebook. The print edition of the Thurrock Gazette was referenced as a source of information for 8% of respondents, with primarily over 55s referencing this publication. Online news outlets were referenced by 3% of respondents.

An additional online survey carried out through the council's consultation portal was promoted through our own digital channels and local online media outlets.

- this sample is not as representative as the telephone survey as the demographic profile of respondents is much older and has a higher proportion of retirees
- it provides useful insight into how the audience who already engage with digital channels, both council owned and community based, receive their information
- almost 60% of respondents said that they receive information from the council from our weekly email newsletter, with 81% finding it useful
- a higher proportion of residents who responded to the survey said that they get news about the council from local and regional media
- this is in common with the national picture (source: Ofcom news consumption 2020 report) with an average of 9% accessing information from these channels

## **What type of content are residents most interested in?**

- community news and events and service updates, e.g. changes to household waste collections, on the council's social media channels
- around a third would like to see updates on key projects or work by the council and information about upcoming roadworks
- a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 35-54 are interested in seeing service updates, information updates on council work as well as road and traffic updates
- this content is of less interest to residents aged 16-34
- the vast majority of residents are most interested in receiving information about waste and recycling, community issues, leisure and culture, environment and safety and adult care and health across all of our communications channels
- there is less interest overall in news about travel and transport and planning and growth
- over 55s displayed more interest in these topics than the younger age group



- a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 would be interested in receiving information about housing, education and learning, children and families, jobs and careers and business and licensing
- a lower proportion of residents aged 55 and over would be interested in receiving this information

Respondents to the online survey indicated a wider interest across council topics, with the vast majority of respondents saying they would be interested in receiving information about waste and recycling, environment and safety, travel and transport, community and living, planning and growth and leisure and culture.

Over two thirds of this group indicated their interest in receiving information about council and democracy; far higher than observed amongst the random representative sample. Over half are interested in receiving information on housing and money, tax & benefits.

### Priority 1 campaigns

These campaigns will be directly linked to high level corporate priorities that are of strategic importance to the council. These campaigns will have clear, measurable objectives linked directly to priorities and require significant research, planning and communications resource. The campaigns will be implemented across a wide range of channels over an extended period of time.

#### Economic recovery

This campaign will build on the success of the Transforming Thurrock campaign to harness the excitement and potential of the ambitious growth agenda. A key element will be focusing on real life case studies from individuals and businesses across the borough to highlight the work the council is doing to support everyone who lives and works in the borough to reacclimatise to the new post-pandemic world. This will be a cross-cutting campaign covering many different council services from jobs and skills and strategic planning to Children's Services, and compliment work with partners through the Towns Fund Boards, Thames Freeport and ASELA.

#### Neighbourhood pride

The proposal for this campaign is to work across the Environment and Housing services to encourage positive behaviour change relating to how residents treat their local areas. It will aim to encompass elements of tackling untidy front gardens, low level 'bad neighbourly' anti-social behaviour (ASB) such as noise disruption and encourage more residents to feel empowered that they can improve their local area with help from the council, rather than having the expectation that the council is responsible for every aspect of civic life. It will also promote neighbourliness and build on the community spirit seen throughout the pandemic.

#### Smarter working

This will be our main internal communications campaign and will support council staff to embrace the new technology we have available, the different places we can work from and how we view our work to deliver it in the best ways possible – work is what we do, not where we do it. This is linked to the council's approach to providing better services from fewer buildings and ensuring that staff have the tools that they need to work in a modern and flexible way.

### Priority 2 campaigns

These campaigns will be shorter in duration with a more defined audience and specific, time bound deliverables. They will require research, planning and sustained communications input and support over an agreed time period and will be implemented across targeted channels.

#### Fostering

A refreshed fostering campaign will encourage potential foster parents to foster directly through the council rather than use agencies. The campaign emphasises both the financial advantages, such as the Council Tax discount, and the additional excellent support available from our dedicated team. The campaign uses design materials which have been newly created this year and tested on a panel of existing foster parents.



#### Recycling

Building on the previous campaign which ran from 2018 to 2021, a new recycling campaign is being developed which looks to use a mixture of factual information and emotional appeals to influence positive behaviour change and encourage residents to recycle more and create less general waste. It will work to prepare residents for expected forthcoming changes in waste collection by emphasising that the majority of household waste should go in the blue recycling bin which will be collected weekly.

#### Report it online

This campaign will encourage residents to report issues including crime, ASB, repairs, environmental issues including missed bins and other service requests through the appropriate direct online channels. It will explain that this is more convenient for them, rather than taking indirect routes such as posting on social media, and means that reports can be acted upon straight away by the relevant officers, partners or contractors.

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<b>7 September 2021</b>	<b>ITEM: 6</b>
<b>Corporate Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</b>	
<b>Fair Debt Summit – Supporting Vulnerable Residents</b>	
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> N/A
<b>Report of:</b> Michele Lucas, Assistant Director Education & Skills	
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Michele Lucas Assistant Director Education & Skills	
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children’s Services	
<b>This report is</b> Public	

## Executive Summary

This report provides an update of the work that was identified as emerging from Fair Debt Summit that was held in September 2018. The summit was a joint initiative between Children’s Services and Finance to consider how we tackle some of the challenges that occur when people do not have the appropriate skills to develop strong financial management as they enter life after full time education

The summit was divided into two sections; one looking at young people’s understanding around managing finances. The second part of the summit recognised the need for a holistic look at debt within the wider communities. Debt remains one of the most difficult issues that vulnerable local residents face and we took the opportunity to explore how we could jointly develop some key principles around how we support residents to overcome and foresee the burden of debt.

This report will focus on the first section of the summit which was related to supporting schools and colleges with money management programmes to support a greater understanding of financial literacy among young people in Thurrock. An action plan was developed and one of the key priorities was to *‘Have in Place an Effective Debt Education Programme’*.

### 1. Recommendations:

**The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee to:**

- 1.1 Review the approach, and provide any relevant feedback, with a view of supporting a joint working approach between Finance and Education to provide holistic opportunities to address debt management/avoidance in schools.**

- 1.2 Recommend to Cabinet the continuing support for financial literacy to remain a key focus of the curriculum offer across schools and colleges.**
- 1.3 Recommend the debt management activities continue to be delivered across directorates, as well as making use of external agencies/services to support this programme of activity.**

## **2 Introduction and Background.**

- 2.1 In September 2018 Thurrock Council hosted its first Debt Summit. The event brought together members from each political party, schools and colleges and people from local organisations across both the public and voluntary sectors. The summit explored the reasons people get into debt, the consequences, and how the support we and our partners provide can be improved for people who 'want to pay, but can't'.
- 2.2 The Fair Debt Summit built on the internal and independent external reviews of the council's debt service to provide a framework of good practice, an assessment of the current service, and a rich source of ideas and suggestions on how processes can continue to improve.
- 2.3 One of the key development opportunities related to how we can ensure a more integrated approach to supporting local people and clearly education has an important role to play in ensuring that we have a more holistic approach to addressing what is a very complex picture.
- 2.4 We also recognise the importance of ensuring that local residents can access a range of different services within the council and are building on the work that has been undertaken by both the local area co-ordinators and other members of the community to provide assistance to young people and the wider community.

## **3 What has been achieved?**

- 3.1 A money management programme was developed by Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC) to support both young people and the wider communities across Thurrock. This programme was presented to the 11-19 Strategy Group for comment and feedback. We then went on to pilot this with two schools. The feedback was positive and an evaluation of the programme was produced - see Appendix.
- 3.2 Building on the support for our care leavers which has placed a council tax exemption for all care leavers up to the age of 21 and where special circumstances exist this can be extended to 25, these form part of a number of vulnerable groups. We have also imbedded financial literacy into our successful On Track Programme which is working with unemployed young people aged 16-24.

## **Current position**

- 3.3 With the global pandemic and the national lockdown we had to put further development work on hold. As we begin to come out of the pandemic we can once again consider how we continue with this work going forward. The Inspire Skills Team have a number of both local and national programmes that we are engaging with. An example of this, the Careers Enterprise Company, is providing funding for the Inspire Team to work with schools around the careers curriculum and we are planning to discuss how we can further imbed financial literacy into this work.
- 3.4 We are looking at a Thurrock's Next Top Boss programme to identify a way in which the Local Authority could set a challenge for schools as to how we can develop a more sustainable way of delivering financial literacy given the current budget challenges of both the LA, schools and colleges.

## **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

As we continue on the recovery phase after the covid pandemic as a Local Authority, we are committed to ensuring that we can support both young people and the wider community with a range of ways in which we can further imbed and support financial literacy going forward.

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

Fair Debt Summit September 2018 – attendees included partners from the local education sector, and whose feedback has been adopted as part of the approach presented to members.

## **6. Impact on Corporate Policies, Priorities, Performance and Community Impact**

- 6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:
- create a great place for learning and opportunity.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Finance**

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

This forms part of the work that was outlined in the debt summit to support young people with the tools around financial management. The COVID pandemic is likely to put more pressure on all communities, and how we support young people in this over the coming academic year will be important.

## 7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**  
**Interim Deputy Head of Legal (Social Care and Education)**

There are no legal implications within this report.

## 7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer, Adults, Housing & Health**

Supporting our local residents is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council, we ensure that we can utilise our powers to positively support local residents around managing debt and enabling them to access educational opportunities to keep them financially healthy.

## 7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

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

None.

## 9. Appendices to the Report

Appendix 1 – Evaluation of the Programme

### Report Author:

Michele Lucas

Assistant Director Education & Skills



*A quarter of our younger generation are in debt all the time and almost half have to borrow money to make their cash last to the end of the month.*

## **Executive Statement**

One of the unique motivations for The Fair Debt Summit was to help provide some education for a younger generation who have yet to experience an economic downturn like the last recession of 2008-9. An action from the Thurrock Fair Debt Summit Outcome Report is to provide effective support and education for our younger generation by working closely with schools to develop and roll out the pilot training.

Two pilot workshops were delivered:

**Harris Academy**  
**18 year 10 GCSE and Business Studies students**  
**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2019**  
**4 hours**

**The Grays Convent**  
**10 year 9 girls**  
**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019**  
**3 hours**

The 28 young people who took part were asked to give detailed constructive feedback on the content of the workshop. This involved rating and commenting on each activity to measure its effectiveness for future use.



## Outcomes

100% of the young people stated that they would be keeping a budget from now on. They all felt more confident at keeping track of their income and spending.



## Feedback

### Students:

#### When they were asked what they had learnt, they commented:

- *'Ask for help when needed, be smart about what you spend, make sure you have the money'.*
- *'About planning ahead and keeping a budget. Saving is really important'.*
- *'That it is important to keep a budget and it should not be embarrassing when financial problems occur and such issues should be resolved quickly'.*
- *'I learnt about how to save money and put it towards protecting myself from debt in the future. Also I learnt how to balance essential and non-essential items'.*

#### When they were asked how we could improve the workshop, comments included:

- *'It could be a bit longer. Teach how to budget effectively/value of money. Explain why the money you are taxed affects your monthly income'.*
- *'More about tax. More maths and practicing to make budget spreadsheets'.*
- *'Some more games to explain things. Some more information about debit/credit cards'.*
- *'You can't it was absolutely amazing. I would like to know about mortgages and fraud and student loans'.*

## **School staff**

### **Harris Academy:**

- Students really seemed to enjoy the breadth of the activities, as a lot was covered during the sessions.
- Session focused on the real life aspects and information and guidance was practical and understandable for the students involved.
- Having 2 people involved in delivery I felt really helped – particularly with students who did not perhaps understand the information fully.
- Activities were varied and kept students engaged
- Consider an element of competition – this would keep students engaged across the whole session.

### **Grays Convent:**

The girls enjoyed the sessions. I found some topics really needed further exploration especially the new technologies and banking and the contactless society we are fast approaching. I felt the game of bingo idea was good but it was mainly a definition tool which should only be a starter. Sign posting agencies to help with debt, but again the girls did not relate to debt due to them having no experience. Perhaps some more scenario examples for problem solving and how the girls could free the person from debt i.e. a simple one stop shop to get advice and by working through the scenario they could learn a number of techniques.

### **Delivery tutors**

- The students seemed to be engaged and wanted to know more about managing their money. So I think there is a demand for this type of work with young people.
- All learners were able to learn something new, whether that was new terminology or doing a budget.
- Having an additional facilitator really helped with delivery.
- The sessions were quite long and the content was quite tightly packed in. 3 hours was too short and 4 hours is a bit too long.
- They seem to love competitions and stories so look at incorporating more of this into the programme.
- I would look to shorten the sessions but deliver them over a number of weeks (2-3). This way we could even set tasks to be done between sessions (like keeping a track of what they have spent over the last week). We could even then look at doing a week per learning outcome.
- If we had a better understanding of the school's IT system even look at putting in some videos or online aspects of the course.
- I would just add that the students liked getting up and moving around. Someone suggested setting the classroom up like a 'street' with a bank, pay day lender etc. so they have to enquire at each and then decide which one was best. Especially if one had 'small print' that might catch them out. We could incorporate money or something like skittles and they get to eat what's left.

The feedback from everyone involved has been incorporated into a revised programme which can be tailored to the needs of the audience. The college has experience with working priority groups including adults and young people that have vulnerabilities including financial, learning difficulty, physical disability, economic inactivity or mental health amongst others and has a track record of helping people to achieve their individual goals resulting in improved outcomes.

## Executive Summary

Prevention is always the best solution. It is recognised that with better education many instances of problem debt are preventable. By focusing on education and working closely with schools and other organisations to develop and roll out the pilot training we can ensure our younger generation have access to the information and knowledge they need to guide their decisions as they begin to climb Life's Ladder. This programme is transferable to adults and young people with learning difficulties/disabilities



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<b>7 September 2021</b>		<b>ITEM: 7</b>
<b>Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22 and Corporate Performance Framework</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Non-key	
<b>Report of:</b> Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> n/a		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth		
<b>This report is public</b>		

## Executive Summary

This is the first corporate performance monitoring report for 2021/22 covering April to June 2021.

This report provides a progress update in relation to the performance of those KPIs, including a focus on some specific highlights and challenges. It details statistical evidence the council will use to monitor the progress and performance against the council's priorities.

This report shows that 77% of indicators are currently achieving target and half are better than the previous year.

During the first three months of the financial year, the country was preparing to open up slowly in line with the government's roadmap, but there were still a number of restrictions in place. Some indicators have been directly or indirectly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the enforced changes to council services in line with government guidance during this period. The report highlights how COVID-19 has disrupted or changed performance and/or priorities and demand levels across a number of services during the year.

The report also provides an update to the council's overall performance framework of which the KPIs are a key part. Council agreed the vision and priorities in January 2018 which better reflects the ambition for the council and Thurrock the place. Some additional narrative has been added to set out the main areas of focus and activity in the coming year that will help to deliver against the overall vision and priorities.

## **1. Recommendation(s)**

- 1.1 To note and comment upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are off target and the impact of Covid-19.**
- 1.2 To identify any areas which require additional consideration.**
- 1.3 To comment on the areas of focus for 2021/22 that will support delivery of the overall vision and priorities.**

## **2. Introduction and Background**

- 2.1. The performance of the priority activities of the council is monitored through the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework. This provides a mixture of strategic and operational indicators. The indicators have been chosen to be as clear and simple to understand as possible, whilst balancing the need to ensure the council is monitoring those things which are of most importance, both operationally and strategically.
- 2.2. This reflects the demand for council services increasing and being ever more complex, not least due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and the need for a holistic approach to monitoring data and intelligence. Analysis of performance and internal processes at service level by Directors continued monthly throughout 2020/21 and will continue throughout 2021/22.
- 2.3. These indicators will continue to be reported to both Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on a quarterly basis, throughout 2021/22.
- 2.4. In line with the recommendation from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019, throughout 2020/21, where performance is below target, commentary will be included to show the intended improvement plan. This is included in Section 3.5 as the "Route to Green".
- 2.5. This report also provides an update to the council's overall performance framework which the KPIs are a key part of alongside the overarching vision and priorities, corporate projects and service plans making up the 'golden thread'. Council agreed the vision and priorities in January 2018 which better reflects the ambition for the council and Thurrock the place. Some additional narrative has been added to set out the main areas of focus and activity in the coming year that will help to deliver against the overall vision and priorities. The committee are asked to comment on the priority projects set out in Appendix 1. No changes have been made to the vision and priorities themselves.

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

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

#### 3.1 Summary of Corporate KPI Performance

Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance against target		Direction of Travel compared to 2020/21	
Achieved	77.4% (24)	↑ BETTER	50% (14)
Failed	22.6% (7)	→ STATIC	17.9% (5)
		↓ WORSE	32.4% (9)

#### 3.2 Impact of Covid-19

3.2.1 The Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) overall outturn is 77% which is higher than the results throughout last year, including the equivalent three month period where the outturn was 65.6%. However, given the significant impact and disruption this time last year at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison. This report covers April to June 2021 where the country was still in various phases of lockdown and it is as yet, too early in the year to predict performance levels. This will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year.

3.2.2 In most cases the targets for 2021/22 have been set based on “normal” circumstances to more clearly analyse the impact of the disruption caused by the pandemic. This is likely to mean that more indicators will not “perform” as well as they did before COVID, and/or the rate of improvement will not be as great. Where an indicator has failed to reach its target during the year, the commentary provided will identify clearly whether this is related to COVID-19 impacts.

3.2.3 It is difficult to predict accurately how long and to what extent service delivery in some areas will continue to be impacted. Some will continue to be affected during the first half of 2021/22. This is being further affected by the need to mitigate against the wider capacity and financial pressures which COVID has brought about, including the need to hold vacant posts and the ongoing recruitment restrictions as well as transformational changes to the way services are delivered. This is likely to have an increasingly significant impact on service delivery going forward through 2021/22. This will continue to be kept under close monitoring.

### 3.3 On target performance

77% of available corporate KPIs achieved their targets. (Brackets show actuals where appropriate).

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% of potholes repaired within policy and agreed timeframe	Cllr Maney	98%	98% (494)	100% (433)	100% (545)	99% (1,472)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	98%	98%
% of Major planning applications processed in 13 weeks	Cllr Maney	97%	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (1)	100% (9)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	90%	90%
% Rent collected	Cllr Spillman	98.3%	71.4%	86.4%	89.5%	89.5%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	89.5%	98.0%
Tenant satisfaction with Transforming Homes	Cllr Spillman	86.5%	100% (24)	85.7% (12)	83.3% (20)	90.3% (56)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	85%	85%
% of refuse bins emptied on correct day	Cllr Jefferies	97.31%	n/a	n/a	99.87% (691,611)	99.87% (691,611)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	98.5%	98.5%
Of the children who reached their 28th day in care within the reporting period, % that had an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) within 20 working days	Cllr Johnson	57% (amended KPI)				85.2% (23)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	80%	80%
% occupancy of council-owned business centres	Cllr Coxshall	71%				75%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	71%	80%
Proportion of older people (65+) still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/ rehabilitation	Cllr Huelin	86.40%				91.9% (68)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	86.3%	86.3%
Number of events/activities (provided from hubs/ libraries) that support engagement in a range of cultural, social & learning opportunities to support well-being and strengthen community connections	Cllr Huelin	437				99	ACHIEVED	BETTER	90	360
Successful completion of treatment in Young People's Drug & Alcohol service (YTD)	Cllr Mayes	90%				100%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	70%	70%
Value (£) of council owned property disposals	Cllr Coxshall	£460k				£537k	ACHIEVED	BETTER	£500k	£3m



Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% of Minor planning applications processed in 8 weeks	Cllr Maney	100%	100% (15)	100% (16)	100% (12)	100% (43)	ACHIEVED	STATIC	90%	90%
Overall spend to budget on HRA (£K variance)	Cllr Spillman	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	£0	£0
Number of applicants with family commitments in Bed & Breakfast for six weeks or more (ie homeless with dependent child(ren)/are pregnant)	Cllr Spillman	0	0	0	0	0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	0	0
% of young people who reoffend after a previously recorded offence	Cllr Johnson	17.0%				17% (Q4)	ACHIEVED	STATIC	20%	20%
Overall spend to budget on General Fund (% variance against forecast)	Cllr Hebb	0				0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	0	0
% of repairs completed within target	Cllr Spillman	98.3%	97.3%	97.5%	96.8%	97.3%	ACHIEVED	WORSE	95%	95%
Permanent admissions of older people (aged 65 and over) to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population (population figure 24,098 published June 2021)	Cllr Huelin	618.3 per 100,000	62.2 (15)	107.9 (26)	178.4 (43)	178.4 (43)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	186.7 (45)	738.7 (178)
Proportion of people using social care who receive direct payments	Cllr Huelin	34.4%	34.8% (481)	33.3% (470)	33.1% (480)	33.1% (480)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	33%	33%
No of placements available within council for volunteers	Cllr Huelin	224				150	ACHIEVED	WORSE	150	190
% of volunteer placements filled within council	Cllr Huelin	96%				90% (135)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	90%	96%
% of GP practices who have received 1 visit to discuss COVID recovery in relation to QOF	Cllr Mayes	new KPI				25% (7)	ACHIEVED	n/a	25%	100%
% of GP practices who have received a second visit to review outcomes of first and discuss the cancer quality improvement work	Cllr Mayes	new KPI				0% (0)	ACHIEVED	n/a	0%	100%
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days) (rolling 12 months)	Cllr Johnson	new KPI				378 (provis-ional)	ACHIEVED	n/a	426	426

### 3.4 Off target indicators

At the end of quarter 1, 7 of the available indicators failed to meet their target.

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Average time to turnaround/re-let voids (in days)	Cllr Spillman	47.5 days	30.6	30.7	38.1	32.6	FAILED	BETTER	28	28
<p>During Q1 of 2021/22, 105 standard voids have been re-let in an average re-let time of 32.6 calendar days - 4.6 days above the target of 28 days. Analysis of voids data shows that just three voids, which had very specific issues took longer to resolve and therefore re-let, affected performance significantly. Without these three voids performance in April would have been on target at 27 days, performance in June would have been on target at 26.6 days and the overall average for Q1 would have been only slightly over target at 28.8 days.</p>										
<b>Route to GREEN</b>										
<p>In order to improve performance on void re-let time, performance dashboards have been developed and made available for operational voids meetings to provide operational teams with granular performance information on each stage in the voids process. This enables staff to easily identify process bottlenecks which may be adversely affecting void performance. These dashboards are interactive and drillable allowing staff to view performance overall, as well as on an individual property basis. In addition, void re-let time performance data and business intelligence is monitored monthly by the service managers, with break-downs of void performance for each stage including both general needs and sheltered housing voids.</p> <p>The service are also reviewing the end to end voids process to identify areas where current practice causes blockages or where deviation from the documented policy may be more effective, in order to produce an accurate map of the process which reflects the current needs of the business and ways of working.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Number of health hazards removed as a direct result of private sector housing team intervention	Cllr Spillman	746	99	40	73	212	FAILED	BETTER	252	1,000
<p>Generally, landlords have requested more time to remove hazards and carry out remedial works due to financial difficulties caused by the pandemic in completing works. This is assessed on a case by case basis and the latest government advice for local authorities to enforce standards in rented properties. MHCLG continue to recommend a pragmatic approach to support landlords and tenants. Routine “part 1” property inspections were not carried out during the periods of national lockdowns. Essential inspections were only carried out where there was an imminent risk to a tenant’s health due to a serious hazard. Following government advice, routine inspections recommenced in May 2021, subject to tenants not self-isolating or refusing to allow access.</p>										
<b>Route to GREEN</b>										
<p>Property inspections are monitored and tracked to ensure private landlords fulfil their legal repair obligations and tenants are kept safe. Formal action and works in default are taken to enforce housing standards on the most serious ‘category 1 hazards’ to a tenants health. Private Housing has adopted the following measures designed to help the service return to normal operation as soon as possible and minimise delays to tenants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environmental Health Officers carrying out current inspections</li> <li>• Licensing Officers carrying out the backlog of single dwelling Part 1 Property Inspection</li> <li>• Using phone/video technology to monitor revisit inspections to ensure landlords fulfil their legal repair obligations</li> </ul>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% General tenant satisfaction with neighbourhoods/services provided by Housing	Cllr Spillman	75.5%	70.1%	72.6%	75.8%	72.8% (361)	FAILED	WORSE	75%	75%
<p>During Q1 of 2021/22 496 tenants have completed a telephone satisfaction survey and have given a rating for satisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing. Of these 496 tenants, 361 tenants gave a "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" rating which makes up the satisfaction rate of 72.8%. Of the remaining 135 tenants, 62 (12.5%) gave a neutral rating of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" and 73 (14.7%) tenants gave a rating of "fairly dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied".</p> <p>13 of the 73 dissatisfied ratings were accompanied by qualitative feedback relating to refuse collection, street sweeping, Council Tax and Housing Benefit - particularly in April and May. Whilst these are not services delivered by Housing, this has had a 2.6% impact on the satisfaction rate and accounts for 17.8% of the dissatisfied ratings during the period.</p>										
<b>Route to GREEN</b>										
<p>Tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing in June was 75.8% and on target, appearing to recover from lower satisfaction levels in April and May. Tenant satisfaction data is routinely analysed by the Intelligence and Performance team and insight is regularly shared at both an operational and a strategic level which identifies common themes for dissatisfaction from the qualitative feedback tenants provide during the survey. This insight enables the Housing service to understand dissatisfaction and take action to address specific themes to improve satisfaction with Housing overall. This work will continue throughout this year.</p> <p>In addition, interactive, drillable tenant satisfaction performance dashboards are also available across all tenant satisfaction surveys for staff to review monthly satisfaction performance, understand the direction of travel and drill down into the qualitative feedback for each individual measure. Data analytics are also used to establish whether there is a strong statistical relationship, or correlation, between satisfaction with individual measures and overall satisfaction which enables the Housing service to identify the most effective measures to focus on in order to improve satisfaction overall through key driver mapping.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Payment rate of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)	Cllr Jefferies	49%	48.38%	45.32%	42.62%	45.49%	FAILED	WORSE	70%	70%
<p>The payment rate of FPNs has been below target for some months. This is due to factors that are outside of the control of the service, including the financial and emotional impact of COVID on residents who are fined. The service has received a high level of representations and appeals over the last 12 months with requests for extended payment periods. The service continues to adopt a supportive approach agreeing payment plans on a case by case basis.</p>										
<b>Route to GREEN</b>										
<p>There has been an increase in cases going to prosecution for the non-payment of FPNs when payment arrangements have not been agreed. FPN payments are actively monitored, with reminders sent to those you have received fines in line with requirements. The delay in payments for the reason specified will continue to affect this indicator for the foreseeable future.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Number of new Micro Enterprises started since 1 April 2021	Cllr Huelin	20				4	FAILED	↓	5	20
<p>This indicator is only 1 under target. COVID restrictions, such as social distancing and self-isolation rules, have slowed the process of new micro-enterprises starting. The restrictions have made it difficult to meet with individuals wanting to start a micro-enterprise to provide them with support and also some individuals have been unwilling to meet/start services due to the restrictions. In addition, in the first quarter there has been a reduction in the overall number of micro-enterprises operating in the scheme - reducing from 130 to 126, mainly due to retirement and changes in personal circumstances of the operators. The services that are no longer operating are mainly in the personal care and support at home categories.</p>										
<b>Route to GREEN</b>										
<p>Since lockdown restrictions have been relaxed, there has already been a sharp increase in applications to the scheme, totalling 37 so far. (The average in 2020/21 was 10 per quarter). Applications have come from a diverse range of applicants including those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have been made redundant and are taking up the opportunity of self-employment</li> <li>• wish to have a better work/life balance by working locally</li> <li>• have volunteered to provide support during lockdown and wish to continue operating their own service</li> </ul> <p>The service will continue to work with the new applicants wishing to set up a micro-enterprise and it is hoped that this will translate into an increased number of services being developed as restrictions lift to get the indicator back on track.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
No of new apprenticeships started (inc. staff undertaking apprenticeship) (exc. LA maintained schools)	Cllr Duffin	56	2	4	4	10	FAILED	BETTER	15	62

Whilst currently under target, this number is a 25% increase on previous highest for Q1 of 8 apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are also coming through the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) process and are being promoted internally.

#### Route to **GREEN**

An apprenticeship recruitment event in July has generated interest from over 30 candidates for an event webinar on 29 July and interviews taking place in August. There are currently 9 apprenticeships on offer through the recruitment event. It is hoped that successful candidates will be able to start in September in order to benefit from financial incentives available.

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Total gross external income (fees & charges) (based on sales forecast)	Cllr Hebb	£6.4m				£6.6m	FAILED	BETTER	£8m	£8m

The position reflects the current projection of fees and charges in the context of the ongoing pandemic. It is expected a proportion of the expected reduction will be met from Central Government funding and there will be some cost reductions associated with specific income losses that further mitigate the overall position. This continues to be closely monitored as part of the wider budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) monitoring with regular reports to Cabinet.

### 3.5 Other key indicators

3.5.1 Throughout the year the council also monitors some other indicators as part of the corporate scorecard which, whilst not performance related, are important to keep under review

Demand Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Qtr 1	Direction of Travel since 2020/21
Number of households at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance	Cllr Spillman	1,826	139	133	168	440	HIGHER
No of homeless cases accepted	Cllr Spillman	211	16	11	8	35	LOWER

At Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June 2021, members requested more detail on preventative services that take place, with the assumption that that is why homeless case acceptance seems low compared to approaches.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 places a duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness, or relieve homelessness where this is not possible. The number of approaches include all who have approached the council for housing assistance. A number of these cases were prevented and homelessness has been relieved.

In respect of preventative services, there are a number of actions that are taken to prevent homelessness.

We primarily use the private rented sector to source accommodation for applicants which is secured through regular contact with landlords and estate agents. Our Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Financial Inclusion Officers then work with the tenant to ensure that the relevant benefits are applied for to enable them to sustain their tenancy. In addition to this, we also utilise the services of our Community and Employment Support Officer to support applicants into training and employment.

The service also prevents homelessness by negotiating and working with landlords and excluders\* to keep the applicants in the property they are approaching us from or negotiating a planned move into suitable accommodation.

The acceptances are low in comparison to approaches because the service deal with a greater number of the cases before we reach the “main duty” stage, which is the stage at which we make a formal homelessness decision as is traditionally known. This is the stage at which acceptances are recorded.

\*An excluder is someone the applicant currently lives with, e.g. a parent, friend or resident landlord who has asked the applicant to leave their property.

### 3.6 KPIs for which data is not currently available due to COVID-19 impact

Number of delayed transfers of care (DToC) - days from hospital (attrib. to NHS, ASC & Joint)	The collection and publication of official DToC figures continue to be suspended by NHS England for at least Q1 due to COVID-19 and new Hospital Discharge Policy.
% of primary schools judged "good" or better	No inspections have taken place since the start of COVID-19 pandemic
% of secondary schools judged "good" or better	
Forecast Council Tax collected	COVID-19 impact is ongoing and is still being assessed. This is being regularly reported to members alongside separate financial reporting.
Forecast National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected	

### 3.7 Additional indicators reported outside of quarterly pattern being monitored as part of the 2021/22 Corporate Performance Framework

Street Cleanliness - a) Litter	Survey undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy, three times per year – next result due in September
Street Cleanliness - c) Graffiti	
% of places accessed for 3&4 year olds funded nursery place	Termly – next result due in September
% of places accessed for two year olds for early years education	Termly – next result due in September

It should also be noted that for April and May 2021, industrial action impacted the Waste Collection service significantly. Whilst some household waste collections were undertaken and completed during the period of disruption, the uncertainty around resource levels and schedules meant that it was not possible for the service to report on the percentage of collections completed as planned. It was felt it was more important to ensure that as many collections as possible were made and other mitigations put in place for residents. Since June 2021, the service has returned to a normal collection cycle with close monitoring of performance. Performance will be reported for quarter two 2021/22.

### 3.8 Additional annual indicators being monitored as part of the 2021/22 Corporate Performance Framework

These indicators will be reported in the End of Year (Month 12) Corporate Performance Report.

Annual indicator	2020/21 Outturn	2021/22 Target
Average gross full-time weekly wage in Thurrock	New KPI	£631.70
Total number of employee jobs in Thurrock (data from ONS/NOMIS)	66,000	66,000
Value of business rate base	£283m	£277.5m
Total number of homes permitted through Planning	195	950
% English and maths combined KS4 GCSE grade 5+	<i>new KPI</i>	National average
% GCSE Attainment 8 score DfE	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Reading	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Writing	<i>new KPI</i>	



KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Maths	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS4 Attainment – Progress 8 score	<i>n/a</i>	
Achievement of Level 2 qualification at 19 years old	<i>n/a</i>	
Achievement of Level 3 qualification at 19 years old	<i>n/a</i>	
Children Looked After KS2 – % Achieving the National Standard in Reading, Writing & Maths	<i>n/a</i>	
Children Looked After KS4 – Progress 8 score	<i>n/a</i>	

### **3.9 Feedback from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2021**

At the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2021 where the year-end 2020/21 report was considered, there were a number of questions and comments which required further consideration.

#### **3.9.1 Provision of “actual” numbers on indicators showing percentages**

Where this is available and will add useful context, the numerator related to the performance indicator will be shown in brackets underneath the relevant outturn (as at 3.4). In some cases, particularly where data is from a third party and/or actual numbers are so small that there may be data protection issues, this may not be reported.

#### **3.9.2 Type of events and activities which took place to support and strengthen community engagement through community hubs and libraries**

All such events from April 2020 to March 2021 were delivered online where there was demand/need. The 437 community engagement sessions included online job club, Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel training, under-fives story and rhyme sessions, and book promotions.

For 2021/22 a combination of online and face to face activities are planned, subject to national and local restrictions. These include rhyme times, including baby rhyme time (online with possible physical sessions later in year), class visits for literacy (online), Summer Reading Challenge (a range of related activities including online and physical), Essex Book Festival activities, social events such as friendship groups/knit and natter sessions, computer training (online and physical), job clubs and employment support, author visits/book promotions, and a variety of events linked to national promotions such as National Library Week, Get Online.

#### **3.9.3 Number of homes permitted through Planning in 2020/21**

The committee asked to what extent this indicator was impacted by COVID-19 and/or by site availability. In short, it is not possible to work out the split between COVID and site availability.

#### **3.9.4 The hidden impact of COVID-19**

The committee recognised that COVID-19 had and continues to have a profound impact on council services and the wider borough, but asked about the hidden impact of COVID-19.

Whilst restrictions have lessened, the country has only been out of lockdown since 19 July and it is by no means the end of the pandemic. The country is not “back to normal” indeed some practices will not return to pre-COVID days.

In performance terms, targeting of some measures for this year is difficult, because service delivery has changed so much. As such this will continue to be reviewed and monitored through the year.

Some enforced changes - such as smarter working practices which enable more people to work from home and services to be delivered remotely - have moved us forward much quicker than would otherwise have been the case. The incredible response and new relationships which have developed with and within communities are also a hugely positive aspect.

But undoubtedly the pandemic has been devastating in many ways and has provided significant challenges for the future.

The short, medium and long term impacts of COVID are still be assessed. Some of these are more obvious than others, and some of the hidden impacts may take longer to identify, but there is a lot of work going on within the council and with partners to ensure everything is done that is possible to recover from this awful situation.

This is also reflected in the council’s Backing Thurrock Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet in March 2021 and in the development of the new Health and Well Being Strategy which is currently being refreshed and is being led by the Health and Well Being Board alongside partners.

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

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

4.2 This report highlights what the council will focus on during 2021/22 and confirms the governance and monitoring mechanisms which were in place to ensure that priorities are delivered.

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

5.1 Performance against the corporate priorities was monitored through Performance Board, a cross-council officer group of performance experts representing each service. Performance Board will continue to consider the

corporate KPIs on a monthly basis, highlighting areas of particular focus to Directors Board.

- 5.2 Each quarter a report will continue to be presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and finally reported to Cabinet.

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

- 6.1 The vision and priorities cascade into every bit of the council and further to our partners, through key strategies, service plans, team plans and individual objectives.

- 6.2 This report will help decision makers and other interested parties, form a view of the success of the council's actions in working towards achieving the vision and priority ambitions.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Joanne Freeman**  
**Finance Manager**

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

Where there are issues of underperformance, any recovery planning commissioned by the council may entail future financial implications, and will need to be considered as appropriate.

The council is still assessing the full financial impact of Covid-19 and this is being regularly reported to members.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**  
**Deputy Head of Law and Deputy Monitoring Officer**

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

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

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

The Corporate Performance Framework for 2021/22 contains measures that help determine the level of progress with meeting wider diversity and equality ambitions, including youth employment and attainment, independent living, vulnerable adults, volunteering etc. Individual commentary is given throughout the year within the regular monitoring reports regarding progress and actions.

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

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

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

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Vision and Priorities – Priority Activities 2021/22

**Report Author:**

Sarah Welton

Strategy Manager

# Thurrock Council

## Corporate Strategic Ambitions 2021/22

**Borough Motto: “By Thames to all peoples of the world”**

**Council Vision: An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future**

Corporate Priorities		
People A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay	Place A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future	Prosperity A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time	Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places	Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing	Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in	Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together	Fewer public buildings with better services	Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Corporate Priority Projects 2021/22	
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deliver Backing Thurrock, our Economic Growth Strategy, to strengthen and grow the economy for the benefit of residents and businesses</li> <li>Deliver major regeneration and infrastructure projects contributing to growth including the government funded Towns Fund proposals</li> <li>Progress the Local Plan to support place-making and guide future sustainable development</li> <li>Work with private sector partners to deliver the Thames Freeport to unlock new jobs and skills opportunities through investment and enable levelling up</li> <li>Work collectively through ASELA to deliver strategic projects that secure greater prosperity and opportunities for residents and businesses</li> </ul>
Corporate Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transform the council and service delivery through new operating models and ways of working</li> <li>Redefine to create a leaner asset base to reduce costs and support long term financial sustainability</li> </ul>
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Embed the collaborative communities framework – work with partners to redefine the council’s role to achieve better outcomes for residents, especially the most vulnerable, through collaboration and co-design</li> <li>Refresh and deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy with health and other partners to tackle inequalities and the wider determinants of health</li> </ul>

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## Work Programme

**Committee:** Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Year:** 2021/22

**Dates of Meetings:** 8 June 2021, 7 September 2021, 16 November 2021, 18 January 2022, 8 March 2022

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
<b>8 June 2021</b>		
End of Year Corporate Performance Summary 2020/21	Sarah Welton/ Karen Wheeler	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
<b>7 September 2021</b>		
Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22 and Corporate Performance Framework	Sarah Welton/Karen Wheeler	Officer
Communications Strategy 2021-24	Karen Wheeler	Officer
Fair Debt Summit – Supporting Vulnerable Residents	Michele Lucas	Member
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
<b>16 November 2021</b>		
Scrutiny Review Update	Lucy Tricker/Matthew Boulter	Member
Mid-Year/Quarter 2 (June-September 2021) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22	Sarah Welton/Karen Wheeler	Officer
Fair Debt– Compassionate Collections	Andy Brittain/Sean Clark	Members

## Work Programme

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Requested by Officer/Member</b>
Asset Update	Sean Clark	Officer
Budget Update	Sean Clark	Officers
Local Council Tax Scheme Consultation	Sean Clark	Members
Communications Strategy Update – Verbal Report	Karen Wheeler	Member
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
<b>18 January 2022</b>		
Investment Strategy – Member Oversight	Sean Clark	Member
Draft General Fund Budget & Medium Term Financial Strategy Update	Jonathan Wilson/Sean Clark	Officer
Capital Strategy 2022/23	Jonathan Wilson/Sean Clark	Officer
Draft Capital Programme 2022/23	Jonathan Wilson/ Sean Clark	Officer
Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	Standard Item
<b>8 March 2022</b>		
Fair Debt Summit – Education and Compassionate Collections Summary	Sean Clark	Member



## Work Programme

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
Quarter 3 (April-December 2021) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22	Sarah Welton/Karen Wheeler	Officer
Work Programme	Work Programme	Work Programme

**Clerk:** Lucy Tricker

**Updated:** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2021

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