

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

Council

To the Members of Thurrock Council

The next meeting of the Council will be held at **7.00 pm** on **26 January 2022**

South Essex College Auditorium, High Street, Grays, Essex, RM17 6TF

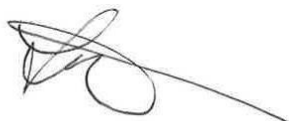
Membership of the Council:

Sue Shinnick (Mayor)
James Halden (Deputy Mayor)

Qaisar Abbas
Abbie Akinbohun
Alex Anderson
Chris Baker
Gary Byrne
Adam Carter
Daniel Chukwu
Colin Churchman
Gary Collins
Mark Coxshall
Jack Duffin
Tony Fish
Mike Fletcher
Robert Gledhill
Shane Hebb
Victoria Holloway

Deborah Huelin
Andrew Jefferies
Barry Johnson
Tom Kelly
Cathy Kent
John Kent
Martin Kerin
Steve Liddiard
Susan Little
Ben Maney
Fraser Massey
Allen Mayes
Sara Muldowney
Bukky Okunade
Augustine Ononaji
Maureen Pearce

Terry Piccolo
Georgette Polley
Jane Potheary
Shane Ralph
Kairen Raper
Joycelyn Redsell
Elizabeth Rigby
Sue Sammons
Jennifer Smith
Graham Snell
Luke Spillman
James Thandi
David Van Day
Lee Watson
Lynn Worrall



Lyn Carpenter
Chief Executive

Agenda published on: 18 January 2022

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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2 Apologies for absence	
3 Items of Urgent Business	
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4 Declaration of Interests	
<p>To receive any declaration of interests from Members.</p>	
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Name of Committee	Date
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Standard & Audit Committee	9 September 2021
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	12 October 2021
Planning Committee	28 October 2021
Planning Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 October 2021
General Services Committee	11 October 2021
General Services Committee	3 November 2021
Corporate Parenting Committee	14 September

	2021
Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education	3 November 2021
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Future Dates of Council:

23 February 2022 (Budget)

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Information for members of the public and councillors

Access to Information and Meetings

Advice Regarding Public Attendance at Meetings:

Following changes to government advice there is no longer a requirement for public attendees to book seats in advance of a committee meeting. All public attendees are expected to comply with the following points when physically attending a committee meeting:

1. If you are feeling ill or have tested positive for Covid and are isolating you should remain at home, the meeting will be webcast and you can attend in that way.
2. You are recommended to wear a face covering (where able) when attending the meeting and moving around the council offices to reduce any chance of infection. Removal of any face covering would be advisable when speaking publically at the meeting.
3. Hand sanitiser will also be available at the entrance for your use.

Whilst the Council encourages all who are eligible to have vaccination and this is important in reducing risks around COVID-19, around 1 in 3 people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. This means they could be spreading the virus without knowing it. In line with government guidance testing twice a week increases the chances of detecting COVID-19 when you are infectious but aren't displaying symptoms, helping to make sure you do not spread COVID-19. Rapid lateral flow testing is available for free to anybody. To find out more about testing please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/regular-rapid-coronavirus-tests-if-you-do-not-have-symptoms/>

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

Recording of meetings

This meeting will be live streamed and recorded with the video recording being published via the Council's online webcast channel: www.thurrock.gov.uk/webcast

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thurrock Council Wi-Fi

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

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

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

Evacuation Procedures

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

How to view this agenda on a tablet device



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

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

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

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

DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non- pecuniary

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



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

PROCEDURE FOR MOTIONS

No speech may exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Mayor [Rule 19.8], except for the proposer of any motion who shall have 5 minutes to move that motion (except on a motion to amend where the 3 minute time shall apply) [Rule 19.8(a)]			
All Motions will follow Section A and then either Section B or C			
A.	A1 Motion is moved A2 Mover speaks A3 Seconded A4 Secunder speaks or reserves right to speak		[Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.8(a) (5 minutes)] [Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.3] (3 minutes)
Then the procedure will move to either B or C below:			
B.		C.	
IF there is an AMENDMENT (please see Rule 19.23)		If NOT amended i.e. original motion	
B1	The mover of the amendment shall speak (3 mins).	C1	Debate.
B2	The seconder of the amendment shall speak unless he or she has reserved their speech (3 mins).	C2	If the seconder of the motion has reserved their speeches, they shall then speak.
B3	THEN debate on <u>the subject</u>.	C3	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply.
B4	If the seconder of the substantive motion and the amendment reserved their speeches, they shall then speak.	C4	Vote on motion.
B5	The mover of the amendment shall have a right of reply.		
B6	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply.		
B7	Vote on amendment.		
B8	A vote shall be taken on the substantive motion, as amended if appropriate, without further debate.		

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

WW2 in Memoriam

Remembering Thurrock's Fallen : Civilian Deaths due to enemy action and Roll of Honour

Today we share names on the Roll of Honour. These are people whose home address was shown as Thurrock who lost their lives during the Second World War whilst serving with the armed forces or merchant navy.

In recognition of the adversity and bravery experienced by ordinary people in Thurrock civilian deaths are also noted here in relevant months. 101 non-combatants were killed in Thurrock between 1939 and 1945 who will also be remembered.

A special thanks to Museum volunteer Pam Purkiss for compiling the Roll of Honour information. Civilians added by Valina Bowman-Burns from Thurrock Museum.

The names have been listed in date order.

December 1941

GREEN Charlie
DALY Arthur
MARRIOT George
REDKNAP Edwin F
GRAY Phillip J

January 1942

EMMERSON Leslie
WATKINS Thomas
LLOYD Francis J
TURNNIDGE William R
HART Graham D

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 November 2021 for the rescheduled 22 September 2021 Council at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Sue Shinnick (Mayor), James Halden (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Robert Gledhill, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Jane Potheary, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Jennifer Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, David Van Day, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Gary Collins, Victoria Holloway and Sue Sammons

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

47. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 30 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on the 21 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

48. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

49. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor stated the last 18 months since lockdown in March 2020 had been truly unprecedented times and had shown the generosity of individuals,

community, voluntary and faith groups and local businesses who had helped support Thurrock residents during the pandemic. The Mayor stated she had sought nominations for a special Certificate of Recognition which would be given to those in the borough who had gone above and beyond to help their community during the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been 450 nominations for a Covid-19 Community Star and a certificate as a token of appreciation for the help and support they provided would be sent out over the next couple of days.

Councillor Gledhill, Leader of the Council, made the following announcements:

Covid Update - With Christmas on the horizon, Councillor Gledhill urged everyone to remain sensible when it came to taking precautions against Covid-19. Everyone wanted to have a good Christmas celebrating with friends and family and asked residents not to undo all their hard work and risk their Christmas celebrations. That two thirds of Thurrock residents had received two vaccinations, which meant only around 30% of eligible residents had not yet been fully protected. The vaccine's safety and effectiveness had been proved on a global scale and again urged anyone who had not yet received their vaccinations to reconsider and take up the offer as soon as possible. In terms of local rates these had been increasing from an average of 69 new cases per day in October up to 107 per day in November, which was over double in the space of a month. This showed residents could not become complacent and it remained important to do what we could to avoid spreading the virus throughout our families and communities – we must continue to carefully wash our hands, respect the wishes of those who wished to cover their faces, ventilate crowded indoor gatherings and social distance where possible.

Shop Safe, Shop Local - Earlier this month the new campaign Shop Safe, Shop Local had been launched with the support of many independent businesses across the whole of the borough. Lakeside being a brilliant asset for Thurrock but we also had many high streets with a fantastic mix of shops and places to eat. These small and often family run businesses were the beating heart of our towns, and since restrictions had lifted they had done an incredible job safely welcoming shoppers back. That shopping local helped support Thurrock's economy, created jobs, boosted local communities, employment and helped towns thrive. Councillor Gledhill hoped this new campaign would inspire more people to think of their local shops and would give residents the confidence to shop safely. Councillor Gledhill thanked all of the businesses who had already backed the campaign.

Enforcement Success – Councillor Gledhill had joined the Council's Environment Enforcement Team working alongside Thurrock Essex Police and Rural Engagement Team targeting anti-social behaviour which had a significant impact on the lives of residents. The two day operation had focused on fly-tipping, including unlicensed waste carriers who transported and dumped waste illegally. More than 50 individuals were spoken to in vehicles each day and some positive comments had been received from local

residents on how pleased they were with the proactive approach. That 11 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued with fines totalling more than £3,000; seized three vehicles for no insurance; seized one vehicle which was not roadworthy; reported one individual for not having a driver's licence and one reported vehicle for no MOT. Councillor Gledhill stated the Council worked well with Essex Police and would continue to do so.

Give a Gift – Councillor Gledhill stated Give a Gift was back for the sixth year, that promised to give gifts to Thurrock children, known to our children's services teams, who may receive few, if any, presents this Christmas and urged all members to get involved.

Councillor Gledhill wished everyone a Merry Christmas and extended season greetings to all Thurrock residents.

51. Questions from Members of the Public

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

Mr Seeger withdrew his question prior to the meeting and a written response would be provided.

52. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, no requisition of notice had been given to present a petition at the meeting

53. Petitions Update Report

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

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

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

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, stated he had the following changes:

For Councillor Little to be removed from the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Thandi would then become a substantial member on this committee.

Councillor J Kent, Leader of the Labour Group, stated he had the following changes:

For Councillor Potheary to be replaced with Councillor Worrall on the Corporate Parenting Committee.

For Councillor Watson to become a substitute member on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

For Councillor J Kent to become a substitute member on all committees except the Planning Committee.

Councillor Byrne, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group stated he had no changes to make.

Councillors Massey stated he had no changes to make.

55. Report of the Cabinet Member for Transport and Highways

Councillor Maney introduced the report by stating many services across the Council, those within the highways, transport and planning departments had been impacted upon by the pandemic which had affected operations as well as income but despite this Councillor Maney was pleased to report they had risen to the challenges of the past 20 months and delivered an ambitious agenda. Some of the points made:

- Was responsible for an extensive highways network, including 545km of carriageway, 700km of footway and cycle paths, 21,000 street lights and numerous structures and items of street furniture. All of which required a rigorous year-round inspection and maintenance effort.
- 4,586 safety inspections had been carried out this year alone, resulting in a high number of repairs. Including 4963 potholes, continued to exceed KPI targets of a 98% repair rate within timeframe.
- Recently completed jet patching operations across the borough had ensured many additional carriageway repairs ahead of winter.
- From last year's capital programme the Council had resurfaced 41 roads in the borough, equating to over 90,000 square feet of road space.
- The slab replacement programme, footway repairs and reconstructions had taken place at locations across the borough.
- Announced that following on from the completion of the LED programme would over the next two years be spending £350,000 replacing and upgrading older street lighting infrastructure.
- The ITB programme had allowed for £700,000 to be allocated to safety measures, including vital engineering projects such as junction improvements on A128 and the borough's second Average Speed Camera system in Lodge Lane.
- A £2.4m spend from the Safer Roads Fund would also enable safety measures along the A126 including at the Marshfoot Road junction with A1089.

- Safer Routes to Schools programme - four new safety enhancement schemes had been delivered and would continue to work towards making travel to and from our schools a key priority.
- Supporting the local bus operators via the Covid Bus Service Support Grant and making bus travel more appealing with an extensive shelter replacement programme, which would include the installation of digitalised information screens at some locations.
- The dedicated team of CEOs provided a vital service and were a reassuring uniformed presence in our communities.
- Announced approved plans for doubling of the CEO team. This 100% increase would mean more action against those who flouted the rules and made life difficult for others.
- Following recent approval from Cabinet, be commencing on the seizure of vehicles belonging to persistent offenders, or motorists who parked in contravention of a waiting restriction and caused a danger or obstruction.
- In January 2021 the parking team received time limited Government funding in order to extend HGV enforcement activity and this had enabled the Council to pursue operations up until 2.30am.
- Since January 2021, 3322 PCNs had been issued for HGV parking violations, averaging a little over 300pm and amounting to a combined value of £175,068.
- Looking at ways to address nuisance HGV activity where parking enforcement regulations did not apply. The following enforcement actions - 98 Community Protection Warnings, 47 Community Protection Notices and 98 fixed Penalty Notices for non-compliance with a CPN had been taken against companies.

Councillor Maney extended his thanks to officers within the highways, transport and planning teams and stated how impressed he had been with the calibre of officer under his remit. That for some time officers in the highways and transports teams had been subject to unacceptable conduct by a handful of elected members. No officer of the Council should receive abusive emails, see their name posted on social media, nor be made to feel uncomfortable at work. That the decisions they took were in line with policies and budgets that members set and officers should be treated with respect and decency.

Councillor Kerin referred to the Parking Enforcement Plan and questioned whether this plan would be more joined up when looking at the whole of the borough and to put in place the enforcement needed. Councillor Maney reiterated the CEO team was doubling up which would mean more action against those who flouted the rules. The team responded to intelligence and data and encouraged residents to continue to report.

Councillor Kerin referred to Active Travel Fund of £600K and questioned why the amount received had been far short than the amount promised by Government to which Councillor Maney stated no reasons were given by Government. The submission was looked at and the allocation was given

accordingly but this was still a huge amount of money and had been gratefully received.

Councillor Kerin questioned why there had been no mention of the A13 delays and overspend in the highways element of the report and asked the portfolio holder to support a Local Government Association Peer Review into the A13. Councillor Maney stated the delivery of the A13 project would fall within Councillor Coxshall portfolio holder remit but stated there was no need for a Peer Review as when completed it would be a major benefit to the residents of this borough. That no more delays or reviews were in order just to get the project finished.

Councillor Anderson referred to approved Street Lighting Network and asked the portfolio holder that the Council would not be adopting a policy of part night lighting as seen in other authorities to which Councillor Maney assured members that Thurrock would not be following the example of other boroughs and street lighting would continue in the borough.

Councillor J Kent referred to the Safer Travel to Schools and a motion raised by Councillor Worrall at the June 2021 Council calling on Cabinet to recognise the huge problems residents of Ward Avenue and surrounding areas were experiencing being caused by parents, and others, dropping off and picking up children attending the three schools in this area. Councillor J Kent stated this situation continued and had worsened and asked Councillor Maney to reconsider, look again and re-evaluate these problems. Councillor Maney stated he would be happy to look or relook at any problem to see what could be done to resolve that but reiterated the CEO team would be doubling in size and would make operations outside schools much easier. Councillor Maney reminded members that schools were responsible for managing traffic and were reliant on schools producing school travel plans. Where schools did this, the Council would work with them and where there were solutions he would ask these to be brought forward.

Councillor Byrne stated that he stood by every email he had sent to officers and that respect amongst members and officers had to go both ways.

Councillor Massey referred to HGV nuisance parking and questioned whether the doubling of the CEO team would include the HGV evening parking team to which Councillor Maney stated very much so with the night time operations continuing when the Government funding run out.

Councillor Muldowney referred to over 80 pot holes filled in Sabina Road and Holyrood Gardens in Chadwell St Mary and the request the roads be resurfaced. That some of the pot holes had been jet patched but had understood from residents this type of repair had not lasted very long and could not be very cost effective and asked the portfolio holder to commit to a long term solution to resurface these roads and other effected roads in Chadwell. Councillor Maney stated Chadwell were getting a lot of attention in regards to roadways, pathways and cycle path repairs following the election of Councillor Carter. That Chadwell St Mary would be judged in accordance with

the same policies of any other area and most roads in the borough would be inspected on an annual basis and where intervention was required this would be actioned.

Councillor Abbas referred to the recent repairs to Stone Hill Lane and questioned why a small section had been left unrepaired to which Councillor Maney stated the repair work had to stop somewhere and where the repairs had stopped the road thereafter would have been in a serviceable condition. Councillor Maney stated if Councillor Abbas still had concerns to bring this to the attention of officers.

56. Report of the Cabinet Member for Health and Air Quality

Councillor Mayes introduced the report by thanking all NHS Staff and Health Care Professionals who had supported Thurrock residents through the Covid-19 pandemic over the last 18 months. This had been an extremely difficult time for Thurrock residents and for everybody across the country. Even though this had been difficult it was essential to do all we could to save lives and to protect the NHS. This year had seen the successful rollout of the Covid-19 vaccines which had enabled the Government to review restrictions. In Thurrock as of the 18 November, approximately 80% of Thurrock residents had received their vaccinations which had been a remarkable achievement. Councillor Mayes thanked everyone who had been involved in the vaccination programme. During this time we had continued to work successfully with health partners. Brighter Futures implementation was underway for younger people to have the wraparound support for them and their parents. Work continued on the four Integrated Medical Centres and committed to delivering the Integrated Medical Centre model and implementing all the primary care services and benefits these would bring. Recognised the pressure on general practitioners during the pandemic and how they were trying to catch up over the last 18 months although some general practitioners had been better at undertaking face to face appointments than others. Working with the Clinical Commissioning Group planned to visit practices throughout Thurrock now the restrictions had been lifted and have the opportunity to speak to those delivering the service. Mental Health Transformation, the successful trial of a new strategy which had been rolled out at Primary Care Networks within Thurrock would improve access to services. Recognised more could be done and committed to work with health partners to ensure this got better. In regards to Air Quality, actively recruiting an Air Quality Officer who would undertake air quality reviews which were greatly needed in the borough and to look at the Tilbury dust.

Councillor Potheary questioned the under-doctoring in the borough, with Thurrock being the third worst borough in the country. Asked what the key drivers were of that problem and what the best route of this would be when working with health partners. Councillor Mayes stated it had been very difficult to recruit general practitioners into Thurrock and the way to do this would be to look at better working environments and for new general practitioners they would be looking at an area which were transforming their primary care services and delivering the Integrated Medical Centres in a timely fashion.

Councillor Potheary questioned whether the closure of Orsett Hospital had been put on hold during the Covid outbreak and whether during this time any further plans or rethinking had been made to save the future of Orsett Hospital. Councillor Mayes confirmed the services currently at Orsett Hospital would be moving out and in consultation with the Clinical Commissioning Group and Health Partner this would be in 2025 with no movement in delaying those plans.

Councillor Potheary stated that air quality was one of the biggest challenges being faced in this borough and stated her frustrations there were no bold radical plans in place to deal with those issues and asked the portfolio holder to commit to some sort of action or timetable on when this situation would improve, when radical action would take place and when the borough would see the action on promises that he had made. Councillor Mayes stated that to make any improvements you had to have the data and facts but the situation had improved and as example referred to the installation of electric charging points in the borough for electric vehicles. That until the recruitment of the air quality officer this could not be moved forward.

Councillor Ralph referred to face to face appointments with general practitioners and going forward what could residents do if they were still unable to get a face to face appointment and had there been any reported improvement of this. Councillor Mayes stated the data supplied to him had indicated an increase and for those residents who felt they were not getting the service they felt they should get, would be to report this to the practice manager at their general practice or use the 111 service.

Councillor Redsell referred to air quality and stated until the air quality officer was in place we did not have the information or data we needed. Councillor Mayes shared member's frustrations as this had been a very difficult recruitment process.

Councillor J Kent referred to the issue of access to general practitioners and again asked the portfolio holder in partnership with health partners and colleagues what they urgently plan to do to improve this situation. Councillor Mayes agreed this had been difficult and in conversations with health colleagues, the Clinical Commissioning Group and general practitioners there had been a lot of pressure and trying to catch up in a situation that was not normal. That ultimately an environment had to be created that would attract new practitioners into the borough and to look at different ways of working. Councillor Mayes also stated some residents preferred the telephone/video appointments and there had to be some flexibility on primary care services to move this forward.

Councillor Byrne questioned why all S106 monies were being diverted to health and not to its intended destination. Councillor Mayes stated that he was sure health were not getting all the S106 monies.

Councillor Massey expressed his shock on the air quality spent for 2020/21 was only £28,000 and based on the scale of the problem this seemed a very small financial amount. Councillor Massey questioned whether idling enforcement fines could be ring-fenced towards air quality spend in the future and questioned how many £40 fixed notice penalties had been issued in 2020/21 to which Councillor Mayes stated this would not within his gift as portfolio holder and would need to be agreed by Cabinet.

57. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that two questions to the Leader had been received and ten questions to Cabinet Members. Those questions not heard would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

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

58. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

No reports were presented.

59. Minutes of Committees

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

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

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

61. Motion submitted by Councillor J Kent

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

Council notes the Thameside Complex was, formally, opened on 22nd of January 1972 with the first performance in the theatre taking place in October 1971. Council agrees: (1) that a celebratory event should be held, at the Thameside, in January 2022 to mark the Golden Anniversary of the complex and (2) to call on Cabinet to identify the resources necessary to refurbish the theatre and ensure the future of the complex.

Councillor J Kent presented this motion by stating the Thameside Complex comprised of a theatre, library and museum that had been completed in 1971 and on the 18 October of that year saw the first play performed. In 1972 the Thameside Complex had been officially opened by Lord Goodman, the chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain. There had been two phases of building the complex with the rear tower being built first and then the foyer, theatre and museum. It had been built that way so the library could be

relocated into the new building without any break in service. That arts, culture and heritage played a vital part in bringing people together, enrich the communities and bring new experiences and ideas and making a massive contribution to the economy both locally and nationally. That for the past 50 years Thameside had provided a wonderful little theatre which had welcomed over two million visitors. Dance schools had performed dance and drama performances. The museum gallery displays some 1500 items, plus there were two floors of artefacts that could not be displayed. The central library continued to be well used, computers that youngsters could use in a quiet area to study and playing host to a range of community and group activities. This was all well worth celebrating and wished residents could go forward with confidence for the next 50 years but with Cabinet proposing to close the Thameside Complex in order to save the £600k that it claimed it cost to run the building each year. That closing the Thameside without a new building in place was unacceptable to Councillor J Kent and to the Labour Group. That the library with its purpose built children's library deserved to be housed in a building designed for that purpose. That no firm proposal had been received on the relocation of the museum and how those 1000s of artefacts were not on display would be catalogued and secured stored. That the Thameside Theatre was a professional theatre and there was nowhere else in Thurrock could offer the same facilities and no professional events could be attracted to Thurrock, give local groups the opportunity to perform in a proper theatre or give Thurrock residents the opportunity to visit a theatre without leaving the borough. That the Thameside Theatre created the heart of Thurrock on arts, culture and heritage of the borough which would not be lost without a fight. Councillor J Kent stated now was the time to delivery and come up with the resources needed to keep the Thameside Complex open and thriving into the future.

An amendment to this motion had been received from Councillor Snell and seconded by Councillor Carter and read as follows:

Council notes the Thameside Complex was formally opened on 22nd of January 1972 with the first performance in the theatre taking place in October 1971. Council agrees: (1) that a celebratory event should be held, at the Thameside, in January 2022 to mark the Golden Anniversary of the complex and (2) to call on Cabinet to identify the resources necessary to improve and secure the future of the theatre service and all the services at the complex.

Councillor Snell presented the amended motion by stating he echoed a lot of what Councillor J Kent had said that Thameside Complex had been a terrific facility for Thurrock over the years and it would be appropriate to have some form of celebration on the services that it had provided over those years. That moving into the future it would be more about securing the services not the building. It was time to create better facilities and better scenarios where residents got to have a better use of what Thurrock could offer and this could no longer be served by being in the Thameside theatre. That it was time to concentrate on the services used the theatre, when raising or securing funds for the future lets concentrate on the people and the services that used the complex and not the run-down building.

Councillor Carter stated that modern services required modern delivery and agreed the good and bad history of the complex should be celebrated and the building was past its prime and should be looked at as such.

Councillor Muldowney stated she would be voting against the amended motion and in favour of Councillor Kent's motion. Had been puzzled by the claim made by the portfolio holder that theatre services could be improved by closing the theatre, whilst providing a theatre offer at an unspecified location. Questioned how a theatre offer without a building could be provided or improved and how could current services housed in Thameside be improved by moving them into inadequate venues. The Thameside complex was a social and arts hub and where the community could meet and use the café, library and theatre which would help with boosting the night time economy. Only at Thameside would young people be given the opportunity to perform on a real professional stage and closing the theatre would rob them of this opportunity. Councillor Muldowney urged members to vote for the original motion submitted by Councillor J Kent.

Councillor Worrall stated Thurrock had an outstanding history of celebrating achievements and milestones and the Thameside Complex had been part of that history. Councillor Worrall's stated her love for the theatre and the number of shows she had attended at Thameside and wanted this to continue, not necessarily at Thameside Complex but for another theatre to be built. Councillor Worrall wanted to continue to attend theatre shows in Thurrock and not outside the borough and urged members to support Councillor J Kent original motion.

Councillor C Kent stated the Thameside Complex was the heart of Grays for residents to visit and use all the services, where youngsters were learning how to put on a show with acting, scenery, sound and lighting to which these things could not be done in a village hall. Councillor C Kent stated the services needed to continue at Thameside and the Council had to think outside the box to ensure it remained open for the future and for the future generation of Thurrock's children.

Councillor Huelin stated a new modern viable service was required when compared to other local Theatres and Thurrock community deserved better facilities. That celebrations should be around the arts, culture and people who had been involved in the last 50 years and not the building. Those 50 years of hard work, dedication of performers, artists, volunteers of those who had spread joy and laughter. The Administration recognised there should be a theatre service and the Thurrock community deserved better so by agreeing to Councillor Snell's amendment to part two of the motion. A more improved sustainable registrar had been built and a future for the library had been secured and would continue to work to improve the arts, culture and heritage offer.

Councillor Kerin focused on the library and how this could be accessed by everyone regardless of income. That this was the heart of the library service

and provided an opportunity for the next generation to learn and grow and by reducing this service to a few shelves in another building would be cultural vandalism and should be housed in a building worthy of its status. The library, museum and theatre must be saved. It was not just about the service, buildings for theatres were also important and should be purpose built and to respect culture and save Thameside.

Councillor Spillman stated that Labour were not presenting new ideas and when he had spoken about arts with stakeholders they had all agreed the current offering in Thameside was not good enough and was not structured to deliver. What was required was a redesign of the offering in the existing building or a new building and the people to run that building would be the arts themselves and for them to provide business plans and to see an offering that could deliver funds, generate money and be self-sufficient.

Councillor Byrne stated that Councillor Snell's statement demonstrated they were from someone who had no love or interest of the arts and had no understanding.

Councillor Piccolo compared performance at Thameside Theatre and from 2005 to 2008 there had been 172 performances, between 2009 to 2019 there had only been 45 performances over that 10 year period. Last year there had been three theatrical performances. This had demonstrated that it was not being used as a theatre and would be better somewhere else where we could attract better crowds and bigger performances.

Councillor Redsell agreed there was passion amongst members to have a Thameside Theatre but members were not looking forward, always looking backwards, that something more positive was required, a new theatre was required so that shows and performers would continue to come to Thurrock.

Councillor Duffin shared his love for musicals but was having to travel outside of Thurrock to watch these top London performances as Thurrock did not offer the facilities available for them to perform. Thurrock needed to have a theatre that would attract top talent and performances. That there was the capability and drive to do this so encouraged business plans to be presented and get an organisation, not the Council, to run this.

Councillor Maney stated his support for Councillor Snell's amendment as he had hoped when Councillor J Kent had moved his motion there would a forward plan, a radical plan, business case or plans to find the money to repair a building that was not suitable. That Cabinet were open to all options but needed something to work with and this just had not been forthcoming from opposition members.

Councillor Coxshall stated a good theatre operation was required, that worked and would be open to all ideas on what that asset could be used for. Also open to where could we put something better for the community and where those great acts could perform. Councillor Coxshall wanted to see a

community business plan and Cabinet would not make a decision until everyone had been spoken to.

Councillor Little stated the Thameside Complex was a third rate building and this was not acceptable and to concentrate on the community, the library and the theatre and agreed it should be the community that led on this and to look for a first class building to accommodate the services. To celebrate on what work the arts and culture had done and not celebrate the building.

Councillor Abbas questioned what the plans were for the new theatre and Thameside was not just a building it offered educational, artist and cultural facilities which needed to be saved and protected.

Councillor Fletcher agreed the passion in the room was shared for supporting the arts to have a bigger, better facility that Thurrock could be proud of. Councillor Fletcher questioned why the amendment had not been amended to call on Cabinet to identify the resources necessary to approve and secure a new theatre and library complex.

Councillor Chukwu stated his support for Councillor J Kent's motion and stated if the Thameside Complex were to be shut we should be thinking of a new building the community could use.

Councillor Polley recognised the passion in the room this evening and the need to attract new acts and performers to Thurrock but not forgetting that Thurrock had home-grown talent that also needed to be supported. That High House Production facility trained people in theatre skills but then had nowhere in Thurrock to practice those skills. That successful community projects that Councillor Polley had seen had been led by the community and would be supporting Councillor Snell's amendment as it was the passion and services that Thurrock did not want to lose.

Councillor Gledhill stated himself and Councillor Snell had sat on the committee that had looked at the provision at Thameside and the words that Thameside was a failing building and not fit for purpose had been part of that report. Stated to Councillor Fletcher the constitution was clear the amendment could not alter the motion substantially.

Councillor Ralph referred to the great museum facility and referred to the two floors of artefacts hidden away that were of historic importance. That the amendment referred to services that the building had, and to move to somewhere that had a better museum, better library and better art facilities which was very positive.

At 8.23pm, Councillor J Kent called point of order in relation to Chapter 2, Part 2, Paragraphs 17, 18 and 19, Alteration of Motion of the Council Procedure and Rules and stated if the constitution had allowed, the amendment would have gone further to suggest a new theatre should be built. If this was what Councillor Gledhill was saying he would be happy to alter his motion in

accordance with the constitution. Councillor Gledhill stated that the amendment had been put forward in line with the constitution.

Councillor Potheary stated she had been unaware a new arts complex was being proposed, this was great news and looked forward to seeing the plans. To make sure the Thameside Complex remained open, remained functional and remained with all the services until the day a new complex was opened to which the residents of Thurrock deserved nothing less. Referred to Councillor Polley's passion on High House Production but this was not a theatre that could host those types of shows and experiences that members were referring to. For the community to run the theatre was a brilliant idea and would support but they needed a theatre to run, they needed a building. Agreed with Councillor Huelin that Thurrock should have a modern theatre but this was not what was being discussed, this was a budget saving proposal being driven by finances that would not deliver for Thurrock. There was a lack of understanding in regards to the museum artefacts and what it took to preserve, display and store them. That Thurrock deserved a good central library, a children's library and a specialist children's library and deserved more than eight shelves and two computers. The motion was to make sure that future generations were not robbed of performing on a professional stage, to study, to learn and to discover and this would be for future generations. Councillor Potheary concluded by urging all members to vote for the original motion.

Councillor Snell summed up by requesting the move to the vote.

Councillor J Kent summed up by stating he had enjoyed the debate and two issues from the debate had fallen into two categories – one the current theatre was smaller and older than we would like, it was run down and would like a new theatre. That Councillor J Kent was not alone in saying the Thameside Complex should remain open until a new theatre was in place. That Councillor Snell and Huelin referred to having a theatre service would mean not having a theatre but taking shows and plays on the road. That you could not have a theatre service without a service. For Councillor J Kent it was holding on to what you had, and although the Thameside may not be perfect prior to the Covid pandemic it was functioning fine as a theatre and again reiterated the theatre cannot close without a replacement being in place. Referred to Councillor Maney stating that £16 million was an eye-watering amount of money and agreed it was, it equated to one year's debt interest payment that the Council were paying on its accumulated debt. At Corporate Overview and Scrutiny committee last week, a report on the £16 million was presented but the numbers had not added up, this also included £2.5 million of contingency and project management. That the £16 million had been a wish list, there were things that needed to be done and some that needed to be done quickly. This was a 10 year programme with much could be done much less than what was being suggested.

Councillor J Kent requested a requisition vote and urged members to vote for the original motion. A vote was taken on the amended motion and the results were:

For: Councillors Akinbohun, Anderson, Baker, Carter, Coxshall, Duffin, Gledhill, Halden, Hebb, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, Little, Maney, Mayes, Ononaji, Pearce, Piccolo, Polley, Ralph, Redsell, Rigby, Snell, Spillman, Thandi and Van Day (27)

Against: Councillors Abbas, Byrne, Chukwu, Fish, Fletcher, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Massey, Muldowney, Okunade, Potheary, Raper, Shinnick, Smith, Watson and Worrall (18)

To which the Mayor announced the amended motion be carried.

62. Motion submitted by Councillor Redsell

Councillor Redsell deferred her Motion until the 26 January 2022 Council meeting.

63. Motion submitted by Councillor Polley

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

This Council welcomes the Conservative Governments lifting of the cap on medical school places and acknowledges the success of our young people achieving record A Level results in what had been a very difficult year.

Councillor Polley presented her motion that recognised the lifting of the cap on medical school places and acknowledged the A Level result success in such a testing year. With Thurrock finding it hard to recruit into the area there should be more places available to train home-grown talent. To have the initiative to train and recruit new general practitioners into Thurrock. Councillor Polley summed up by stating these successes should be celebrated.

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

The meeting finished at 8.39pm.

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

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Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 22 September 2021

Item 6 – Questions from Public

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions had been received.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Jefferies

Mr Perrin

Can you confirm that it is a Council rule that tenants/residents must remove refuse bins “wheelie bins” after being emptied from public areas e.g. pavements?

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin. To ensure the safety of pedestrians, wheelchair users and pushchairs we ask residents to remove bins from the pavement after collection and only represent prior to collection, it is really important that residents enable the free flow of pavements to assist in keeping our neighbourhoods safe.

All local authorities carrying out domestic waste collections are subject to the Environmental Protection Act. The removal of domestic wheeled-bins after collection falls within Section-46 of the Environmental Protection Act, which provides the Highways authority with consent for the placing of receptacles, for that purpose, on the highway.

As the ‘local’ Highways authority we are able to allow residents to use the public highway to present their bins to the kerbside, and we also have the ability to stipulate that bins must be removed from the public highway after the bins have been emptied.

Mayor

Mr Perrin would you like to pose a supplementary question.

Mr Perrin

Thank you Madam Mayor. This is not the first time that I have asked this question and been told that it is a council rule that refuse bins must be removed from public areas. There is very little evidence, if any, of the council enforcing this rule. In addition to the wheelie bins pedestrians have to contend with extra rubbish being dumped on the pavement such as discarded fridges, furniture and other sundry items too large for the bin. Pedestrians especially the elderly also have to contend with mobility scooters, battery powered scooters on cracked and uneven paving stones. In short some pavements are damn right dangerous and are a real threat to

the wellbeing and safety of all pedestrians. Councillor Jefferies will you take the appropriate action to ensure pavements are safe.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin for your supplementary question. It is one of those difficult situations Mr Perrin whereby the council do not actually have powers to prosecute people. It would be quite difficult to establish who had left their bin out whether it was deliberate or that the bin had been left out for collection so we don't actually have powers. I will have a look at this to see if there is something that we can do with our enforcement officers. What I would say to any resident if there is fly-tipping on the pavements to report it and it would be removed within 24 hours at the latest. I share your annoyance of people leaving bins out on the street longer than they should be and would urge all residents to take them back in so that the footpaths are kept clear. Any fly-tipping please report and it should be cleared within 24 hours.

2. From Mr Williams to Councillor Coxshall

Mr Williams

Councillor Coxshall, concerning the demolition of the Thameside Theatre Complex threat, we briefly note the following key facts: (i) The recently issued Property Agent's site sale particulars of the Titan Works for housing lists positive Grays facilities, London links, shopping, eateries etc and the new £10 million Council Offices over 900 yards away, yet glaringly excludes any mention of the Thameside Theatre Complex facility right beside the Titan Works indicating they appear to know it will be demolished if possible (ii) Your Highways Department has to accept that Titan Road, at current width of 25 feet kerb to kerb plus its footpath, is already a wide enough second vehicular access to serve the Titan Works pit in conjunction with its newer Hogg Lane access. Will you therefore confirm that the use of Titan Road as a second access to serve half of the approximately 700 possible homes development will not require the closure and demolition of the Thameside Complex in order to further widen Titan Road for that housing?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

You are misinformed. Thurrock Council has not received any planning applications for these sites in question. If the developer submits the highways officer would of course carry out a detailed assessment of the access to the site. What I can say is making 2 and 2 makes 6 is a bit disappointing. What the property agent say is I, myself, for Thurrock Council have no power over.

Mr Williams

I found it astonishing that there was no talk of CPO in the first shop unit of the west corner of Titan Road and must have realised the complex it would have been cheaper and quicker in that way. Given that Titan Road is the same width 26 feet which has successfully served the 300 plus houses in nearby Badgers Dene over the 30 years nevertheless has the Thameside Complex so far been the subject of any pre-apt development submissions, just the dates please and were those submissions assessments against any produced design brief covering that part of Grays town centre that either include a design brief solely for the Thameside Complex.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

Mr Williams did you not listen to the first answer before you have gave me the second question as I said no in the first answer. You are misinformed. There are no plans to link ever these sites and for Thurrock Council has seen, or myself, of any planning applications or designs that you are talking about. Please don't make things up. There is nothing. What do you want me to say? We haven't seen anything.

Item 14 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 2 questions to the Leader had been received and 10 questions to Cabinet Members.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Councillor J Kent

A recent judge-led tribunal says the public has a right to know the detail of how Thurrock Council borrowed and invested £1bn in taxpayers' money - so why is the Council spending even more public money trying to fight that decision?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. The decision to which you refer it was a partial and interim decision in dealing with only one aspect of the overall case, and at that time the Council had not been a direct party to the proceedings.

The council has supported an approach to investments over a significant number of years with unanimous support of the chamber. The requested information is of such detail that to provide it would seriously prejudice the council's ability to operate in the commercial market and this would therefore impact on the returns we can secure which benefit the council and directly support services for residents.

The council's approach was supported by the independent Information Commissioner and the tribunal recognised that the delicate balance which is needed to be considered when withholding information. On the aspect that the tribunal has looked at it has reached a decision balancing specific commercial interests against a formal public interest test. The tribunal itself recognised that there were significant other elements and issues in the case which it wanted to speak to the council's specific representations before issuing a final overall decision. The council is responding to that request and supporting the tribunal to be able to consider all the material elements in full.

This process, commenced on the request of the tribunal itself and undertaken in order to support the ongoing investment strategy that this council is pursuing, will get that information submission from us. It is worth noting that the Independent Information Commissioner continues to support the council's representation at the tribunal and agrees that the information requested is appropriately withheld. Therefore the council is right to support its approach and continue to support the tribunal in reaching its final decision. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Madam Mayor the reality is there is now a cultural of secrecy that surrounds the council that is getting worse and is frankly quite appalling. The freedom of information requests are routinely refused, enquiries from the media go unanswered. Members and members of the public refused the right to submit questions this evening. None of this is conducive to good governance and to good decision making. So will the leader agree to establish a cross party review to improve the openness and transparency of Thurrock Council.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent yes that it quite a wide ranging of answer from the original question about a freedom of information request. The council is within its rights and within the law to refuse freedom of information requests on a number of reasons that could be the length of time it would take to respond, whether it's commercially confidential or whether it identifies an individual and so on. We could be here for some time going through all of them. Equally for

members and indeed for members of the public to ask questions that is governed by the constitution, there is a constitutional working group that will be kicking off very shortly and I know the deputy mayor will be attending and it will for there whether to decide to change the ability for those questions to be asked and be put before the council.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

No thank you.

2. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Councillor J Kent

Cabinet has agreed that 500 FTE posts will be cut over the next two years to save money. Given a number of these will be vacant posts, how many people currently employed by Thurrock Council does the Leader estimate will lose their jobs as a result of this?

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. The 500 full time equivalent reduction statement is based on an estimate using the average council salary with on costs of £40,000 and assuming £20M reduction in costs against the General Fund that equates to the 500. Quoted. Actual staff reductions will depend on a sufficient number of factors. So first of all alternative funding sources found, maximising capital and other grant funding to paid for rather than it being paid for from the general fund. Decisions about service delivery models and other efficiencies and opportunities for reducing costs. Of the 500 posts that potentially could be reduced over the next two years we believe it is going to be over 200 full time equivalents which will be achieved through vacant posts which you referred to briefly in your question. Additionally we can expect further natural staff turnover to increase the number of those vacancies. This potentially results in around somewhere between 250 and 300 full time staff equivalents that could and say again could see being cut. That is of course assuming that the savings are not identified from other sources and if they are not redeployed from other jobs and if and as I have said before if the costs are found through other income streams and there will also be other employment opportunities that may arise as the borough evolves. Indeed we heard from Councillor Maney earlier about the increase of the size of the CEOs. The impact of any reductions on services will be mitigated through the transformation and reform of the Council as we create a modern organisation that can deliver the increasingly exciting agenda and improve outcomes for the

borough and its residents. Maximising our use of digital and technical solutions will be key to this and ensure we maintain crucial services that protect the most vulnerable. As we know Thurrock Council needs evolve and it will evolve unfortunately that will mean a reduction in staff.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Thank you Madam Mayor and these are incredibly sensitive issues and I know from past experience that having to lose staff and having to make them redundant is something that nobody here wants to do and in any way do I diminish the toughness of the decision. It is also unfortunate that very often you can't always make the savings or make the job cuts in the areas that you would most likely to be able to. So can the leader of the council tell us whether he has made any assessment at all of which areas of the council are most vulnerable to job losses.

Mayor

Councillor Gledhill

Councillor Gledhill

Thank you Councillor Kent for number one for your understanding of this position obviously you were in a similar position a number of years ago but also for the sensitivity towards those staff who may be losing their work and their employment with Thurrock Council. The assessments will go forward, and we've already seen Councillor Jefferies who is directly in front of me, submit a report with a number of the street cleaning operatives will be reduced but we will be doing everything we can to maximise the services provided to residents so can I point to one particularly team or another particular team no I can't nor should I. But what I can assure you is that it will be done as fairly as possible and following emails from another leader it will start from the top all the way down to the bottom. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

No thank you.

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

1. From Councillor Holloway to Councillor Maney

Councillor Holloway's question fell due to apologies being received and a written respond would be provided.

2. From Councillor Muldowney to Councillor Maney

Councillor Muldowney

Will the Council consider traffic calming measures to combat speeding and dangerous driving on Heath Road, Chadwell St Mary?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Muldowney for your question. As we have heard Councillor Muldowney has asked whether the council would consider calming measures in respect of Health Road in Chadwell St Mary and as I explained to Councillor Carter I am happy to say in an around way the answer is yes and the reason that it is yes because we always consider road safety across our entire road network where accident data or speed levels justifies intervention we will do. So Councillor Muldowney can rest assure that if and when and I hope that it doesn't come to this but if and when accident levels on Heath Road reach a point where we are required to intervene we will but at present Madam Mayor there has only been three personal injury accidents in Heath Road over the last five years, and this is police data, not the council data, which means that Health Road currently rates 71st out of 162 roads on our priority list so the residents of Health Road can actually rest assure that they live in a very safe road as statistics fair out but at the moment there are no plans for any engineering works but should that change the council would of course respond accordingly.

Mayor

Councillor Muldowney do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Muldowney

Yes thank you Madam Mayor. Madam Mayor residents are very concerned about the lower stretch of Health Road where the road bends to form a right angle at the junction into Orsett Health Crescent. There have been two recent incidents of cars leaving the road and ploughing into bungalows at this point it was a miracle that nobody died. Last week it was road safety week were we learnt that more people are killed or seriously injured on our roads in Essex because of road incidents compared

to any other type of crime. So this is a very serious issue that residents have a right to be concerned about. Can I ask the portfolio holder if he is not prepared to consider traffic calming at this point will he at least commit to gathering live traffic data to establish the scale of this issue before there is another serious accident.

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

I might need another microphone because I think I said in my answer that we interrogate police data as of routine so we know what the data tells us, there have been three personal accidents in Heath Road over the last five years, there isn't really much more I can say to that, we do measure speed, we do measure accidents as I have just said. We wouldn't have a priority list if we didn't have that information to hand already. We don't pick them out of a hat. So I can only repeat the data is there, we use it to see which roads to prioritise and at the moment in the grand scheme of things Heath Road is a very safe road and residents should take comfort from that but at the same time we will continue to monitor the situation and if road safety deteriorates or speed levels deteriorates we will then look at that. I am sure Councillor Muldowney would not want us to prioritise Heath Road over another road where accident data was a lot higher and people are subject to danger when using that road ... *(unable to hear the remainder due to static interference)*...

Mayor

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

Councillor Muldowney

No thank you.

3. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Coxshall

Councillor J Kent

Will the Portfolio Holder set out the plan, and target dates, for reopening each element of the Thameside Complex?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

The Thameside Theatre as this question has been some time for me to answer it has been superseded, but it is here, the Thameside Theatre is open access to staff and the council in line with the council's approach to public buildings. The library is open,

the registrar office has been operating for some time, the Thameside opened on the 7 September, the museum reopened on the 14 September.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Clearly things have moved on and most elements have re-opened although I understand the need for caution with regards to Covid but can I ask for when instance the theatre will be able to open with full capacity when most theatres across the country are already operating at full capacity. So when will Thameside move to that position and when does he envisage the library being fully opened and fully accessible rather than the system which is in place at the moment.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

Yes, I understand that the air conditioning wasn't able to be sufficient for air quality reasons at that time but I understand as of now, today, that has been corrected by a temporary air conditioning system in there so as of now I have been told that it can actually open at full capacity due to the air conditioning.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Madam Mayor that is really good news and really good to hear. Can I ask the portfolio holder then to undertake to ensure that the council web site is updated to release further tickets for further capacity for shows immediately and especially for the pantomime as that would be a shame if that went ahead at three quarter capacity if that is now not necessary.

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

That is obviously not my department service, it is actually the building and assets but I understand the question and thank you for raising that because if that's not been done yet, it takes time to go through the council, this happened recently so that will certainly happen.

4. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Jefferies

Councillor J Kent

For the past two years Thurrock Council has, one Saturday a month, provided a caged truck to support the Orchards Forum as they work to keep alleyways in the area as free as possible from fly tipping and other litter. Unfortunately, that support has now been withdrawn and the rubbish pulled from alleyways is left to be collected in the week. Will the Portfolio Holder reinstate the Saturday support?

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Kent for your question. I feel there needs to be some clarification here this support had never been withdrawn from the Orchards Forum. What in fact happened was the council spoke to the forum and asked them if it would be possible to collect their rubbish during the week day, this would help the service operational and this was agreed what would happen. If however if they wish for the rubbish they collected to be collected on a Saturday then as with all community groups we are happy to support and all they need to do is contact Waste.streetservices@thurrouck.gov.uk and arrangements can be made.

Mayor

Councillor Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Kent

Yes I am pleased to hear that but I have to say the forum has been in touch with the council on a number of occasions to ask for the Saturday support to be reinstated but on every turn have been turned down. But I will take that back. The issue is the 30 sessions that they have held have cleared at least 40 tonnes of rubbish. With the support of the cage truck on the day they are able to move from alleyway to alleyway and clear 5 and 6 in one go. Having to leave the accumulated rubbish on a pavement means they can realistically clear only 1 or 2 so they don't keep on top of it as they wished. But I am grateful for the initial response and I will suggest they do as you have set out and copy you into it so if there is a problem you will be able to resolve it.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor. I don't think there was a question there but yes more than happy to receive the email and sure the rubbish is collected.

Mayor

Councillor Kent do you wish to pose a secondary supplementary.

Councillor Kent

No thank you.

5. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Huelin

Councillor Worrall

Following her very public offer to meet with groups based at the Thameside building can the portfolio holder please update the chamber what meaningful meetings she has had with the groups and what were the outcomes of these meetings.

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor for your question. Working with officers I have put in place an extensive engagement programme that is currently ongoing and will continue over the next few months as we develop a new cultural strategy for Thurrock. Anyone who has written to the council about this issue has received a response either directly myself or officers on my behalf and there has been continued engagement to keep those interested up to date. Myself, Councillor Coxshall and officers have shared information with local groups and regional stakeholders on the current status of the Thameside Complex this then gained a greater understanding of the need of get those involved to better inform the decision making, outlined our plans for developing a new culture strategy, updated on the opening of the theatre and museum and discuss how we will continue to engage over the coming months. Amongst other meetings with individuals and groups we also attended the round table meeting organised by the council's local cultural practitioners from across the sector and more meetings are being planned. At the round table meeting I reaffirmed my commitment to working collaboratively with individuals and groups on the opportunities to improve arts, culture and heritage for Thurrock residents and the development of ideas and actions to inform the new cultural strategy.

Mayor

Councillor Worrall do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Worrall

Yes I do, thank you Madam Mayor. I am just not prepared that you have done all that stuff when I know that many many residents are emailing in saying they have not

received a response from you or officers which kind of upset me. I want to talk about those round table meetings, you had your first round table meeting on the 22 September with the Heritage, Library and Arts Groups and it was agreed that a series of meetings would be held to find a suitable solution on the proposal of the closure of Thameside Theatre. Unfortunately, I understand, that due to the sad death of Sir David Amess the second meeting was cancelled and is now due to take place on the 30 November, but last week at the corporate overview and scrutiny committee the head of finance informed the committee that the decision on the future of Thameside committees was due to be tabled by cabinet on the 8 December. If that timetable is followed there really is no time for these meaningful meetings to take place and the cabinet report include in the decision will be printed in the same week that the meeting is scheduled to take place. Can you assure all those groups that you have been speaking to and those groups that you met at the round table that you will delay any cabinet decision on the closure of Thameside until all of those meetings have taken place.

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Short answer to that one. Thank you for your question. Yes. It is not appropriate to do now, so yes.

Mayor

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

Councillor Worrall

Thank you for that. I am sure that will assure people here that we can plan for Thameside in the future maybe.

Councillor Huelin

Totally agree, it was wrong and has already been decided.

Councillor Worrall

Its definitely been decided. Off the table?

Councillor Huelin

Yes.

Councillor Worrall

Thank you for that. This is always going to be on going, a budget problem, we know there is going to be a budget problem and over the recent weeks I have been

following all the stuff around the different theatres and seeing across the country, so many theatres have received a substantial amount, millions of money, for refurbishments and running costs and thinking how are they getting that. It is really difficult for the council to bid for that money and get it. The ones that are getting it are the ones that are in community ownership. It's about that asset transfer, they can get much much more money than we as a council can get. So if we are going to get a new theatre that is amazing as this was what was promised that the theatre would not shut until we got one but what I don't want to do in next year, two years, three years, five years were here fighting again. I really think Thameside theatre belongs in the hands of the community and we do need to do that asset transfer. They will run to much better than us so do you agree that is a good place for our theatre to sit.

Mayor

Councillor Huelin

Councillor Huelin

Thank you councillor for your question. Yes that was one of the reasons why we were both agreeing and saying we have said we would like communities to come forward with an interest in it. So yes community can take things forward obviously it needs to be as viable as any other option there but if it is viable we are willing to talk about it. We have always said we would do that.

Councillor Worrall

Yes but it needs some support from this council and I'm sure they will make a better job of it.

Councillor Huelin

Just like you we don't want to be in this position in five years where we don't have a theatre service.

Councillor Worrall

Absolutely.

6. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Maney

Councillor Worrall received a written response.

7. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Redsell

Would the portfolio confirm that there is still no plans to relocate the Gammon field travellers' site to Long Lane, as part of Highways England Lower Thames Crossing project?

Mayor

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall

I can confirm there are no plans to relocate the site much further than as originally designed by Highways England now called National Highways. In fact I would like to thank yourself and Councillor Maney for the hard work that they had put in with National Highways then Highways England and without that I believe they would never have got this result that is substantially proven to your ward and to thank them both for the meetings they had with Highways England which are a difficult organisation to see sense.

Mayor

Councillor Redsell do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Redsell

No thank you.

8. From Councillor Polley to Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Polley received a written response.

9. From Councillor Kerin to Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Kerin

Does the Portfolio Holder support the call of the Grays Riverside councillors for Parker Road Recreational Park to be given official Green Space Designation?

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor. A very long meeting so will keep it short. Yes.

Mayor

Councillor Kerin do you wish pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Kerin

Because I liked the response, I am going to keep it short so thank you.

10. From Councillor Fletcher to Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Fletcher received a written response.

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 24 November 2021 at 8.52 pm

Present: Councillors Sue Shinnick (Mayor), James Halden (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Gary Byrne, Adam Carter, Daniel Chukwu, Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher, Robert Gledhill, Shane Hebb, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Tom Kelly, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Ben Maney, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Augustine Ononaji, Maureen Pearce, Terry Piccolo, Georgette Polley, Jane Potheary, Shane Ralph, Kairen Raper, Joycelyn Redsell, Elizabeth Rigby, Jennifer Smith, Graham Snell, Luke Spillman, James Thandi, David Van Day, Lee Watson and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Gary Collins, Victoria Holloway and Sue Sammons

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

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

47. Items of Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business.

48. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor stated she had attended the funeral of Sir David Amess this week which had been a very moving service. Councillor Gledhill thanked the Mayor for attending this on behalf of Thurrock Council.

50. Questions from Members of the Public

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

51. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

Councillor Van Day presented a petition on calling on the Council to rename the B1335 (Aveley bypass) 'Lance Corporal Nicky Mason Way'. This would be a fitting and lasting tribute to Lance Corporal Mason, a former Aveley resident, who gave his life whilst on active duty in Afghanistan on 13 September 2008.

Councillor Muldowney presented a petition calling on the Council to resurface Claudian Way, a main bus route in Chadwell St Mary.

52. Petitions Update Report

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

Councillor Redsell requested an update on her petition submitted on the 26 February 2020 - Council calls on Cabinet to consider a new wood and bluebells to be planted on a piece of land at the edge of Woodside.

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

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

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Gledhill, stated he had no changes to make.

Councillor J Kent, Leader of the Labour Group, stated he had no changes to make.

Councillor Byrne, Leader of the Thurrock Independent Group stated he had no changes to make.

Councillor Massey stated he had no changes to make.

54. Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help Appointment

Councillor Gledhill introduced the report and sought the approval from Council to appoint to the permanent Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help. Following a robust search and selection process, General Services Committee interviewed on 3 November 2021 and agreed to recommend the appointment of Janet Simon as Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help.

Councillor Massey thanked the stakeholder panel for their part they played in the recruitment exercise and stated the internal recruitment process had worked well.

Councillor Johnson stated he was pleased to welcome Janet Simon into her role.

Councillor Gledhill summed by thanking the stakeholder panel and the Looked After Children for the part they played in the recruitment exercise.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendation to which this was carried.

RESOLVED

Approved in accordance with the Council's Constitution the appointment of Janet Simon as the permanent Assistant Director Children's Social Care and Early Help.

55. Political Assistants

Councillor Gledhill presented the report detailing the employment of political assistants to support identified political groups. In October 2019 the General Services Committee received a report entitled 'Review of Constitution and Process' and as part of that report recommended that political assistants be appointed to political groups with more than six members to aid in research and support. The General Services Committee resolved to defer a decision on this to allow further discussions to take place. Local authority political assistants were local government employees who undertook research and provided administrative support for the main political groups of the council.

Councillor J Kent referred to an earlier announcement made by Councillor Gledhill on the loss of job, where 300 council staff would be losing their jobs. To bring forward a recommendation to appoint political assistants to the two largest political groups at an estimated cost of £100,000 was the wrong thing to do and at the wrong time. That this was insensitive to the extreme and would not be supporting the recommendations.

Councillor Byrne questioned how these posts could be justified and what the return or value would be and indicated his disgrace.

Councillor Massey agreed the timing was not appropriate and the discussion should be referred to a future meeting.

Councillor Worrall agreed this was not the right time with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee reporting only last week on an unbalanced budget and agreed this was not the time to be signing off redundancy consultation notices.

Councillor Johnson stated the timing was perfect as members understood senior officers had a lot of pressures of dealing with the budget and this would take the burden off them and allow them to concentrate on what they were good at doing.

Councillor Potheary stated this was not the way forward and appropriate at this time. That Cabinet had agreed a £100,000 pay cut from the front line environment team which were four full time posts plus a van to which this money could have paid for. The priority should be on front line workers keeping our streets clean and all the other services the Council offered to residents.

Councillor Hebb echoed Councillor Johnson's comments and referred to page 18, paragraph 3.3 of the agenda "the council is reforming the staff base to reflect the post pandemic situation. To help reduce the requirement for members to rely on existing officers for policy interpretation, this recommendation will provide members with a separate policy resource, outside of the current restricted officer corps, releasing them to spend more time delivering a leaner organisation". There would be a requirement for senior leaders within the organisation to be expected to lead more operationally and the policy support would not be available within the organisation.

Councillor Jefferies referred to the comments made on the £100k cuts to front line services who had made this clear at overview and scrutiny committee that these cuts were about cost savings, cost efficiencies, using machinery, a better way of working and it was not about cutting staff to the tune of £100k.

Councillor Gledhill stated this was the right time with Thurrock evolving and moving forward and with that there needed to be the right level of support in making decisions or even challenging decisions and to do these effectively.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendations to which were carried.

RESOLVED

- 1. That Full Council decide whether to employ political assistants to support the Conservative and Labour Groups (referred to in this report as the 'qualifying groups').**
- 2. That, if agreed, the Council, in consultation with group leaders effected, set out the contract terms and conditions for such posts in line with the statutory requirement for these posts.**

56. Report of the Cabinet Member for Central Services

Councillor Duffin presented his report as read in the agenda.

Councillor J Kent questioned when the Civic Office would be open to the public to which Councillor Duffin stated he did not have the exact timeline to hand. Councillor J Kent asked for the portfolio holder's assurance that members of the public can come into the Civic Office with any issues and speak with real people. Councillor Duffin stated staff were on hand to support members of the public in the Civic Office and also support residents digitally.

Councillor Duffin made reference to the potential move of the central library into the Civic Offices.

Councillor J Kent referred to the Communications Strategy presented to Cabinet in September 2021 and questioned with the October Cabinet being cancelled, the decision to agree the communications strategy had been made by the leader and questioned what changes had been made to that strategy which had satisfied the concerns of Councillor Duffin. Councillor Duffin stated that editors had been written to with only one reply being received back within the timeframe and that feedback had been very positive.

Councillor Byrne questioned the levels of secrecy that Thurrock Council continued to have with members of the press and those submitting member questions. Councillor Duffin stated the one response received back was positive and the Council worked well with partners and would continue to do so.

Councillor Potheary asked for confirmation that the Grays Library would be relocated to the Civic Office as stated by Councillor Duffin and raised her concern that it would not be appropriate for librarian staff to be used to support and man the main reception area. Councillor Duffin stated that this was an option to move the library to the Civic Office and that work was being undertaken to look at office based support and the answers to those questions would be got out as quickly as possible.

Councillor Kerin questioned whether the completion of the new Civic Office was on scheduled to be completed by early 2022 and within budget to which Councillor Duffin responded yes.

57. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that no questions to the Leader had been received and seven questions to Cabinet Members. Those questions not heard would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

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

58. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

No reports were presented.

59. Minutes of Committees

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

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

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

61. Motion submitted by Councillor Fletcher

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

That this chamber recognises the unique community value of the Grangewaters Outdoor Education Centre as a place where our young people learn the skills, values and understanding of their environment that our borough urgently needs; and as an essential training facility for local groups as diverse as schools, triathletes and the Grays yacht club and that this chamber urges Cabinet to halt any plans to sell or close the centre.

Councillor Fletcher presented his motion. Councillor Fletcher was very passionate to preserve this community asset where a lot of fabulous work had been undertaken by the centre to local schools and with schools and students from outside the borough. The centre offered a wide group of activities including the Angling Club that attracted a lot of interest and was self-sustained, the Thurrock Yacht Club used the centre as a safe place for training, and there was a Residential Centre and the lake for open water training for triathletes. The centre served as a valuable purpose to the community and did so in a sustainable manner and even during Covid the centre had come in at around net zero cost. The centre was able to this because of its reputation and being able to offer services that were unique. The centre was not just a community hub but was self-sustaining and at no cost to the council to keep the centre open. If the services were marketed more effectively those services could increase the income coming in. This improved the council's reputation and had set good examples of health and wellbeing. There was no downside to this facility, this was not a difficult decision and urged members to support this proposal, to look at ways to work with the centre, not to shut it, not to sell it but to maximise the possibilities of the community hub.

Councillor Byrne agreed with the comments made by Councillor Fletcher.

Councillor Coxshall stated there were no plans at this stage to close this facility but whether the council should be running such a facility. This would be looked at and how that facility was ran. That it was good practice to look at all facilities and how improvements could be made. Look at where we were, what facilities were being offered, would it be better ran by the community and would be open to conversations with a wide range of people across the borough on how best to run this facility.

Councillor Johnson echoed Councillor Coxshall's comments and stated the lake would not be big enough for all 400 members of the angling club, the yacht club only now used Grangewaters as it could no longer use Stubbers. Had conversations with Head Teachers who had stated that Grangewaters was not fit for purpose. This was not a statutory duty of the Council to run this

facility and agreed the Council could not run this facility properly and needed to listen to the community. Councillor Johnson had asked Officers to make a note of how many people used and attended the open day scheduled for the 4 December.

Councillor Muldowney stated as part of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee had heard from officers how much use the post 16 year old SEND children got from the facilities at Grangewaters, a provision made in response to the SEND Ofsted inspection. Councillor Muldowney questioned Councillor Johnson's comments about schools not using the facility but it was acceptable to be used by the most vulnerable. Councillor Muldowney echoed the comments made by Councillor Fletcher and having spoken with residents and how passionate they were of Grangewaters, the facilities that it offered and being a safe place to teach these sports. That outdoor education was absolutely essential for all children and this venue supplied outstanding facilities that would help us recover from Covid.

Councillor Spillman stated the point of the review was to open doors and look for greater potential for an underused asset. That opening this asset up for consideration would open it up to other activities and possibly seasonal events.

Councillor Johnson stated in response to Councillor Muldowney's comment regarding sending most vulnerable children to Grangewaters but not good enough for some schools, that most of the use by schools was with children with special educational needs and they enjoyed those facilities. The question that should be asked was should the Council be running this facility and whether it could be done better by someone else.

Councillor Worrall stated the successes of Grangewaters were not shouted out enough, agreed much more could be offered and that it should be a residential site that required a complete overhaul to make it into a real money spinner. Councillor Worrall stated that other authorities were able to offer residential courses and questioned why Thurrock could not. That the site needed investment and a refresh to secure it for the future.

Councillor Gledhill stated those outside organisations who were community based had the facility to attract extra money that the Council could not do and would be voting against the motion as the Council had to continue to see what could be provided that was better.

Councillor Fletcher summed up by stating there were shared opinions of the site and an agreement more could be done with this asset but disagreement on whether Grangewaters should be sold and whether this was the answer. That it was great news there was no intention of closing the facilities and its value was appreciated and asked all members to consider what more could be done, what marketing could be undertaken to make the most of the facilities and questioned was there not just another way forward.

The Mayor called a vote on the motion to which the majority of members voted against this motion to which the Mayor announced the motion lost.

62. Motion submitted by Councillor Worrall

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

This Council shares the concerns of residents living around the former Grays Adult Education College and Alf Lowne Scout Centre about the future of the site. Council calls on Cabinet to bring forward a comprehensive plan for the future of the whole site and halt any demolition or development, on this site until that plan has been consulted on and agreed.

Councillor Worrall presented her motion by stating the demolition or development of the site should halt until agreement had been sought from residents. This was the key part of this motion that all residents affected should be spoken to not just a handful. There were no reasons why this demolition was happening and the new gate would remove six parking spaces. This was a missed opportunity for ward members and residents to comment and that a comprehensive plan should be presented on the whole site with the demolition halted until that plan had been agreed.

Councillor Hebb stated it was incredulous for Councillor Worrall, as a former cabinet member, to ask all members to support this motion when in the past a decision to dispose of a piece of land had been made, even though a ward member had asked for this not to go ahead, and was still causing residents issues, even 10 years later.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the Council would still pay business rates on empty buildings and took the point made by Councillor Worrall on consultations and agreed that consultations should be undertaken with residents and ward members.

Councillor J Kent stated if the site was right for development the Council had to work with residents and also stated that a demolition plan, access plan and survey had not been seen and a step should be taken back to look holistically at this site and come back with a proper plan.

Councillor Worrall summed up by stating the demolition should be halted until the proper consultation process had been undertaken and to work with residents and ward members. Going ahead residents and members should be properly informed of these decisions and not have to see these on planning lists. Councillor Worrall reiterated that the demolition should be halted, reviewed until a plan had been agreed and to this, Councillor Worrall requested a requisition vote.

For: Councillors Abbas, Chukwu, Fish, Fletcher, C Kent, J Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Muldowney, Okunade, Potheary, Raper, Shinnick, Watson and Worrall (15)

Against: Councillors Akinbohun, Anderson, Carter, Coxshall, Duffin, Gledhill, Halden, Hebb, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Kelly, Little, Maney, Mayes, Ononaji, Pearce, Piccolo, Polley, Ralph, Redsell, Rigby, Snell, Spillman, Thandi and Van Day (26)

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

To which the Mayor announced the motion lost.

63. Motion submitted by Councillor Muldowney

Councillor Muldowney deferred her motion until the 26 January 2022 Council meeting.

The meeting finished at 10.37 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

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

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Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 24 November 2021

Item 6 – Questions from Public

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 1 question had been received.

1. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Jefferies

Mr Perrin

I congratulate and thank the Council for its intention to plant flowers on grass verges. However, would you please confirm that the planting of flowers will apply to all grass verges throughout the borough not to just a few select areas?

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin for your question. I am delighted to say that a new land maintenance strategy will be considered by the Cabinet in January, the strategy outlines how the boroughs public open space is effectively maintained. Where appropriate, allowing grass to grow alongside wildflowers and meadow planting will increase biodiversity and these areas will provide important habitats for insects and pollinators and provide new wildlife havens that are crucial to the development of our parks and open spaces and the wider environment.

Many factors need to be taken into consideration when introducing these areas, such as highway safety, site levels and underground services. They will initially be piloted with a view to making them a permanent part of our landscape.

There will be highways verges and other areas that are not suitable for Wildflower planting or Long Grass Regimes, the decision on where and how to plant will be taken on a site by site basis.

Mayor

Mr Perrin do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Mr Perrin

Yes please Madam Mayor. I congratulate the council as I consider any proposal to enhance the appearance of grass verges deserves credit and is a cause for celebration. However if the scheme is to be successful grass verges must be protected from the vandalism of motor vehicles being parked on them. I think you are naive if you believe the planting of flowers on unprotected grass verges is going to deter drivers from parking on them. For many years I have pleaded for the protection of grass verges throughout the borough to no avail. At my request councillors and council officers have use the state of the unprotected grass verges in the vicinity of my home in Broxburn Drive in South Ockendon, and agreed the unsightly puddles of water and mud are acceptable. To date no action has been taken to protect these grass verges and as far as I am aware no action has been taken by the council to prosecute offending drivers who flout council rules and continue to park on grass verges. I therefore think it unlikely that I will see flowers planted in the grass verges in my

area. Councillor Jefferies will you prove me wrong and take speedy and appropriate action to protect all grass verges starting in my area of Broxburn Drive. Thank you. I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a safe and prosperous new year.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Mr Perrin for your supplementary question. I am not familiar with where you actually live but I will give you an assurance that tomorrow morning I will raise it with officers. We will look at it and see what can be done to stop the nuisance of parking as I agree cars should not be parking on grass verges and if we are going to wildlife flowers and plants and vegetation there we don't want it ruined by cars and you have my assurances that we will look at it and take your comments very seriously.

Item 13 – Questions from Members

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

The Mayor informed the Chamber no questions to the Leader had been received and 7 questions to Cabinet Members.

1. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Maney

Councillor Okunade

Russell Road, Church Road, Dunlop Road, Adelaide Road, Leicester Road, Park Avenue, the Beeches and surrounding roads, as well as side roads along the Dock Road in Tilbury are worn and deteriorated and have been reported on numerous occasions. Due to a lack of attention, these roads have deteriorated even further. Is the Portfolio Holder able to ensure that these roads are inspected for structural problems and that necessary repairs are made?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Okunade for your question. Let me assure Councillor Okunade that all the roads you refer to are regularly inspected already. In the case of Dock Road it is inspected every two months and the others are inspected annually unless there was a cause to inspect them sooner following a complaint or something like that. They are already subject to regular inspections as I say. It is accepted if they are cosmetically poor they don't look very nice but in actual

fact they don't meet intervention levels. As I had said during my presentation earlier we had quite clear policies that we work with on things like this and they have not deteriorated to a level that we are required to intervene at this time. Of course if pot holes or defects appears we will respond to them, fill them and repair to them as that happens but in terms of this year's capital programme there won't be any substantial works or repairs. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Okunade

Yes thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Maney for your answer. I don't know when you visited Tilbury last but I am just asking you and I am only making a simple request, that to get your commitment to at least to perhaps go with the officers who inspect this road. The roads that I listed you only have to go and see, they are not just cosmetic they are really really bad and people like to take pride in where they live and it's not just about cosmetic it's about road safety as well. So I would really, I am begging you to maybe take time to visit Tilbury and look around these roads. Thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Madam Mayor, please please don't beg it's not necessary. Look if it pleases you I will ask officers to have a look, I am happy to go, you could join us, we could have a jamboree, we could have a walk about, I am quite happy to do that. I do have to say, we will take a look and respond to any defects but I still have to keep coming back to this point we prioritise work in accordance with policies that we, as members, set. Officers don't set them we set them. We can't then complain when repairs don't happen within the rules that we set. Officers are quite clear and I have to take their professional judgement on this as this is a professional judgement it's not for members to go around. I would love to be able to pick roads, trust me every Conservative ward would be having roads resurfaced left right and centre if I could decide which roads would get done like Blackshots Lane. But like I say there are clear criteria that we have to adhere to. These roads are cosmetically poor, they don't look very nice but they are surface-able but I am happy to arrange a visit. You say these have been reported many times and I know there are various ways that people can report these but just looking at the information we have, I have to say the level of complains from those roads in relation to carriageway defects are actually quite low, with the exception of Dock Road and other roads combined it has been single figures. So I think if the residents who live there if they are unhappy with the state of the roads not quite sure where these many of complaints are going they are not coming to us. I don't believe there has been any this municipal year, there have been no enquiries from ward councillors on those roads either but as I say more than happy to arrange some visits. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade do you wish pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor Okunade

Thank you Madam Mayor just to thank Councillor Maney for agreeing to visit and would be happy to attend whenever you can visit and I would also like to mention that it has been reported many times and it has been many many years that the inspection whether they attended or not coming back to see if they are cosmetic but thank you for agreeing to that. Thank you.

Mayor

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

Councillor Okunade

No thank you.

2. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Mayes

Councillor Okunade

As Portfolio Holder responsible for air quality, if you agree that dust pollution is a significant problem that has a negative impact on the health and well-being of Tilbury residents, how are you working with the Environment Agency to tackle dust pollution in Tilbury?

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank your Councillor Okunade for your question. In terms of what I agree with versus what I don't agree with is that I find that disappointing coming from all the conversations that we have had on that especially over the years. The reality is has been tested by the Environmental Agency by themselves over a period of time. That has been shared with the Public Health team and the Public Health team have said in their professional option, being the experts that it is not damaging to health. Whether we agree with that or not, I am not a medical expert, neither are yourself, so we have to take their word on that. But in terms of working with the Environmental Agency, it isn't just the Environmental Agency actually it is also Port of Tilbury and Port of Health and the Environmental Agency that the council continues to work with and we will share information to make sure we are all up to date and that we all know what the latest data is. Especially when we get the new air quality officer we will be able to work with them a lot better to have an actual expert in the council.

Mayor

Councillor Okunade do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Okunade

Yes thank Councillor Mayes you remembered that we had a meeting with councillors in July about this issue, because I do know it is understandable that you do not have the magic wand to just wish away this air quality issue, I do understand that. So I would just like you if you could undertake that you are identifying and working with all the Agencies, you have already mentioned some of them and doing everything that is required to tackle this problem and as you know we cannot not just accept that it does not affect health because nobody can say that, because sometimes things happen in years later that some people get affected by something where they have been exposed to. I would just like to ask the portfolio holder if he would continue to work with the rest of the Tilbury councillors on this issue and be responsive to our requests for information that would be great. Thank you very much.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Madam Mayes and thank you Councillor Okunade for your supplementary. I found that quite a useful meeting I think bearing in mind the importance of this for residents and it was such a shame it took so long to get to that position because actually it shouldn't have. This is why I am so passionate about getting this air quality officer because once we do a full quality air review we would know a lot more. Then the Public Health experts would have a lot more data to work with so therefore that's the importance of it. So obviously will continue to keep everyone in the loop. Thank you.

Mayor

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

Councillor Okunade

No thank you.

3. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Byrne

Thurrock Council ask residents to care for wild life without disturbing it, then continue to use pesticides. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why the Council continues to use pesticides?

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank Councillor Byrne for your question. The council minimises the amount of pesticides used to twice yearly weed spraying. Unfortunately pesticides are essential in controlling weeds that would, if not treated, cause damage to the highway infrastructure. Contractors and staff undertaking the application of weed control are fully trained and take every precaution to minimise the impact on wildlife. This includes control measure on washing out the applicators and the disposal of the used containers.

Glyphosate is a licenced pesticide in the UK, and regulators including the US Environment Protection Agency, European Food Safety Authorities, and European Chemicals Agency, all support the conclusion that glyphosate-based products are safe when used as directed and is not carcinogenic.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

Yes. The World Health Organisation and the German Institute Risk Assessment, European Chemical Association say it is carcinogenic that it causes serious eye damage, toxic to life, evidence of lung, heart, bowel disease and Parkinson's and birth defects. So I challenge what you have just said.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor. We can all have experts and we can all quote different experts but I am listening to officers. But what I would like to say interestingly in the Guardian newspaper, which I am not particularly fond of reading, "the biggest impact of glyphosate on bees in the destruction of wild flowers on which they depend and we are planting more wild flowers that is what we are going to do, we don't kill wild flowers when we are doing this. Evidence today suggests that direct toxicity to bees is fairly low", so the Guardian newspaper.

Mayor

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

Councillor Byrne

We could be here all day. The councils that are agreeing that it should be banned like Hackney, Glastonbury, Brighton, Hammersmith & Fulham, Isle of Wight, Chester, Cambridge, Scottish Isles, Lyme Regis, Greater London Authority, Colchester, Londonderry, Shetlands, Lambeth, Faversham, Edinburgh, Liverpool, Sunderland, Manningtree, Reading, Bath, Chichester and Folkestone and even Somerset so they are all the councils that totally disagree with you.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Byrne and have you visited any of those areas you would probably find weeds up to your armpits because they aren't actually killing them. I recently went to Brighton and I would hardly hold up Brighton Council as an expert on anything apart from the fact they have weeks growing everywhere, rubbish everywhere because they have a bin strike they can't settle so and homeless people everywhere so I really to think Councillor that you should really be carefully about what he quotes as being experts because if he visited those areas they aren't exactly very tidy.

4. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Hebb

Councillor Byrne

I am going to speed it up Councillor Hebb the actual figure that I quoted should have been £9,600 which is less that we paid for a portfolio holder to look after the arts. Last week you ask me to contact you, I asked you a lot of questions, I sent you a very long email and you said you would get back to me so my lovely arts totally out ways throwing three curve ball questions at you and will rely on you to come back. It's a lot more than just about Thameside, it's a lot more than just funding it is about arts all over Thurrock. So I would rather await your answers than ask three curve ball questions of you so thank you.

Mayor

Councillor Hebb

Councillor Hebb

Thank you Madam Mayor – Councillor Byrne does raise a point that perhaps might not be widely understood or widely known and why should it be. There is a simply answer to the difference. So Thurrock is responsible for a range of sport pitches across the borough and that value of £184K spent on staff costs, machinery maintenance and any relevant gardening material to maintain those green spaces across the borough. The slight difference between the different types of funding is there is no funding specifically for pitch maintenance from external bodies. Although we have applied for pitch approval funding that is obviously more capital orientated than day to day revenue. We have always been clear as an administration that tiding

this borough up was part of our objectives following six years of neglect and forms part of the widely recognised clean it, cut it, fill it campaign and the pitches are obviously used for formalised club groups as well as providing people with a free point of access for recreational activities for all ages. Something which I think we all agree is good for all different groups across the borough. In terms of the arts and the figures we have just spoken about, this is direct funding for the council and it does not include the self-funding productions. So the conversations we have had this evening. Subject to approval in terms of that budget it is expected to remain again next year. But unlike sport pitches there are substantive more opportunities for the arts to draw on external funding and so the emphasis moves best on how do we maintain assets, fields of grass and sports pitches but to how we unlock that funding for the arts. Just to illustrate, so Thurrock has secured £184K from the Creative Estuary Programme for projects specifically designed to design cultural spaces and facilities into the Purfleet on Thames regeneration scheme and worthy of note is that those direct funding opportunities from the council in terms of revenue funding though the voluntary sector development fund and capital orientated stuff into the community environment development fund. Whilst those organisations can obviously access those sources I thought I would just point that out but a figure which I thought might help out for anyone who may have the same sort of passion that we are talking about is that Thurrock CVS are actually a really good service at supporting local groups in applying for bids, for helping them structure a component and capable bid to go through and hopefully be measured and awarded accordingly. We all know what their web site is, I won't call that out to you all we know who Thurrock CVS are. I hope this answers but happy to chat off line but I thought just in case people were wondering about the arts and stuff I thought I might as well share it.

Mayor

Councillor Byrne do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Byrne

It's not actually a question but those sport pitches are staged for sport and actually performing arts is staged for arts performances but you are going to take away that stage but not going to take away those football pitches.

Mayor

Councillor Hebb

Councillor Hebb

Just to clarify, in regards to the funding for the arts I mentioned the community economic development funding, a few figures here which may be of interest, again stuff that anyone would be expected to know off the top of our heads. Cherry Wood scouts had been awarded over £10,000, Thurrock Play Network over £70,000, Chadwell St Mary scouts £4,000, Martial Arts over £7,000, Tilbury Band £5,500 so there is grant money out there, that is being attracted, which is being won for valuable assets and groups in our borough which bring a lot of enjoyable to all of us socially but let's carry on talking and see how we can help support those

organisations. I know Councillor Huelin and I have had conversations off line on how we can support that a bit further.

Mayor

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

Councillor Byrne

No thank you.

5. From Councillor Chukwu to Councillor Mayes

Councillor Chukwu

What additional measures have you put in place to reduce the surge of Covid cases in our schools?

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for your question. In terms of measures put in place on 12 October, the Director of Public Health and the Corporate Director of Children's Services wrote to all Thurrock schools in response to a rise in cases among 11-18 year olds. This letter outlined a number of measures in line with national guidance including testing, face coverings, and cohorting of groups.

Local guidance in the letter also suggested that where necessary in outbreak situations additional measures could additionally be implemented on an individual school basis, at the school's discretion but in agreement with the Public Health Settings Lead. Where schools can identify close contacts and/or siblings of positive cases, they should immediately ask that cohort to remain off school and obtain a PCR test 3-5 days after the contact with the positive student/case. The student should remain at home until the results of the PCR test had been received, and can return to school if it is negative.

Mayor

Councillor Chukwu would you like to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Chukwu

Yes Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Mayes. There was a sharp increase of Covid infections in our schools in Thurrock that was in October, may I ask you do you know the actual figure of how many of the children were infected.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for your supplementary. I have the rate of infection not the actual amount of students, the rate of infection on the 15 October was 1197/100K so obviously considerably high. However that had fallen down as of the 11 November to 230/100K. Obviously we want to reduce the number of infections as possible which is why we had the vaccination rollout run as well at schools run by the school vaccination service of which sadly only 31% of students, aged 12 to 15 did take up so we need to encourage as many young people and of course all residents to take up the vaccine as quickly as possible.

Mayor

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

Councillor Chukwu

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for your response Councillor Mayes. Another question I would like to ask is what the latest guidance for vaccinations in care homes are.

Mayor

Councillor Mayes

Councillor Mayes

That is not a substantive question, obviously if we are talking about care homes this should be potentially directed to my colleague for social care as well so unfortunately unable to answer.

6. From Councillor Rigby to Councillor Maney

Councillor Rigby

In respect of Stifford Clays ward, please would the Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transport explain what highway works/repairs have taken place in the past three years including but not limited to all pavement repairs/reconstructions, road repairs/resurfacing work, street column replacements and bus shelter replacements?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you Councillor Rigby for your question. I am happy to report that in no small part thanks to your diligent representation of your ward there has been a number of highway repairs and investments in Stifford Clays. There has been in the time frame that you have asked in relation to this there has been 355 reactive maintenance repairs. In addition there has been 19 street lighting repairs, 12 lamp column replacements, 7 capital funded carriageway resurfacing schemes included in Crammavill Street, Long Lane, Whitmore Avenue and St Anne Close and we are also spending money again as I said in my report this administration slab replacement policy has allowed us to get rid of some of that really old unsightly, unsafe slab footway that we have in the borough and your ward has benefitted from that. The roads included in that were Stifford Clays Road, Crammavill Street, Kingsman Drive, Leasway and Long Lane and in addition we have replaced two new bus shelters in Stifford Clays outside Headon Hall and Thurrock Hospital. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Mayor

Councillor Rigby do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor Rigby

Yes please, thank you. I am pleased to see that Stifford Clays had received its fair share of the highways and transport investment and I will continue to campaign for more going forward. One note of achievement this year was the introduction of the average speed check cameras in Long Lane. Could the portfolio holder please advise what the earlier benefits of this scheme were?

Mayor

Councillor Maney

Councillor Maney

Thank you Madam Mayor and thank you for your supplementary question. Another thing I know you have taken a great interest in is the average speed camera check system and you were instrumental in lobbying me for that so I know it is something that is close to your heart. The scheme hasn't been in sufficiently long enough to get the full picture of the benefits but what I can tell you is that in first year prior to the scheme going live there were five accidents in Lodge Lane including one serious personal accident, so far this year there has only been just two minor accidents. We also know that prior to the scheme going live the speed studies were showing that about 44% of motorists were driving in excess of 35 miles an hour, which we now Lodge Lane has a 30 miles per hour speed limit, so a considerable amount of motorists were breaching the speed limit and residents in your ward particularly the avenues adjoined to Lodge Lane were concerned about safety issues hence your heavy involvement in lobbying for this scheme. What we know from the other average speed camera system which we have in the east of the borough, there the compliance of the speed limit was 65% prior to the scheme going live so again a lot of motorists were not complying. That now stands at 96% compliance and we have

no reason to believe that we would not see a similar trend in Lodge Lane. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Mayor

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

Councillor Rigby

No thank you.

7. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Jefferies

Councillor J Kent

How many net tonnes of carbon were emitted by Thurrock Council in the calendar years 2019 and 2020?

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

In 2019/20 the total annual net emissions was 5,491 tonnes of carbon. This was down from 6,150 tonnes of carbon in 2018/19 and 8,005 in the baseline year 2013/14. The figures for the total annual net emissions for 2020/21 are not yet available. Official figures are expected to be published in January 2022.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Thank you Madam Mayor. This council declared a climate emergency when it met in October 2019 could I ask the portfolio holder when he thinks the carbon management plan and climate local plan will finish the reviews which are currently underway when we would expect to see these going through scrutiny onto cabinet.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor. Thank you Councillor Kent. Unfortunately I am not actually responsible for what you're asking, I believe this to be Councillor Mayes. However I have got a couple of points I would like to make when it comes to carbon emissions to inform all members if anything. This administration was got

enforcement officers using enforcement vehicles which are electric reducing the carbon footprint, we had an investment in a solar power farm something that you opposed which was the equivalent of Thurrock being powered two times over, all street lights have been changed to more environmentally friendly LED lights, this was proposed by a very young fresh faced Councillor Gledhill. Something that you did not put into place but gladly when he became leader, slighter older, he did implement it. The new council offices which again are being built opposite this building will also reduce our carbon footprint something you opposed. Finally, just one thing, the Thameside which has been debated a lot in this meeting today is one of the most unfriendly environmental building that we have in the borough.

Mayor

Councillor J Kent do you wish to pose a second supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent

Madam Mayor I am pleased that from the 2013/14 baseline there appears to be appears to some 30% decrease in carbon and that is something to be welcomed and Councillor Jefferies, actually the LED street lights were introduced by the previous labour administration with cross party support but credit where it's due. But can I just ask when we agreed at 2019 that the emergency climate we did agree that as budget proposals came forward there would be a carbon assessment alongside them. Could I have the assurance that this happening this year.

Mayor

Councillor Jefferies

Councillor Jefferies

Thank you Madam Mayor. Yes I can give Councillor that assurance.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Three questions received from members of the public.

1. From Ms Aldham to Councillor Coxshall

A13 Widening Project - How much per mile has the road project cost?

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Hebb

Can you tell me the full amount the Council has borrowed from outside sources, for example other Councils, over the past 5 years i.e. the “financial years 2016 to 2021”?

3. From Mr Rikowski to Councilor Mayes

I live in Parker Road, Grays. On our street and surrounding areas we often detect a strong pollution that smells like washing detergent. I believe this comes from nearby factories or industry, and has been a concern for a number of decades. These strong chemicals trigger my asthma, cause my partner to suffer migraines and there is the wider concern for public health and air quality. What can be done to stop this issue from continuing to pollute the air for local residents?

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Petitions Update Report

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Presented (by)	Responsible Director	Status
557	Call on Thurrock Council to rename the B1335 (Aveley bypass) 'Lance Corporal Nicky Mason Way'. We believe this would be a fitting and lasting tribute to Lance Corporal Mason, a former Aveley resident, who gave his life whilst on active duty in Afghanistan on 13 September 2008.	24/11/21	Council	Julie Rogers	Cabinet approved a new Naming and Numbering of Streets and Highway Assets Policy in July this year following the receipt of a number of requests to name roads and highway assets. The Policy contains guidance on how requests to name a street or asset after a deceased person are considered. Generally, the individual must have been born or lived in the locality or must have made a demonstrable contribution to the local community; or they will be an individual of significant national importance. Consent should also be sought from the deceased person's living direct relatives or descendants where possible. All applications received will be considered on a case by case basis and be subject to Cabinet approval. We are in the process of updating the Council's webpage where the application form and Policy can be viewed. It is anticipated that the Policy and application form will be available online soon. In the meantime, requests should be submitted by email to PROW@thurrock.gov.uk together with the supporting information requested.

Petitions Update Report

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Presented (by)	Responsible Director	Status
558	Call upon the Council to resurface Claudian Way, a main bus route in Chadwell St Mary.	24/11/21	Council	Julie Rogers	The petition and concerns relating to the condition of the road have been noted. Claudian Way is regularly monitored via routine safety inspections which are undertaken every 2 months. This enables any intervention level defects that occur to be acted on quickly. For the longer term plans and more holistic repairs, Claudian Way will be considered as part of our annual 2022/23 Capital Works Programme. This is currently being assessed in line with our Highway Asset Management Policy and it will be prioritised along with all other roads in a similar condition. A detailed examination of Claudian Way will be carried out and the priority ranking of roads proposed for the Capital Programme will be presented to Cabinet for approval. The lead petitioner will be updated on the outcome following Cabinet approval.

26 January 2022	ITEM: 11
Council	
Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Councillor Rob Gledhill, Leader of the Council	
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

In accordance with the relevant legislation and Constitutional requirements this report provides Council with information for noting with regards to the appointment of an interim Monitoring Officer, as an Emergency Decision (ED2), in order to ensure statutory and governance requirements are maintained.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 **To note the appointment of Mr Matthew Boulter to act as the Council's Monitoring Officer on an interim basis, taken as an Emergency Decision (ED2).**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council's permanent Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer left the Council on 3 December 2021.
- 2.2 Due to the departure of the postholder there was an urgent need to appoint an interim Monitoring Officer to ensure the Council's statutory requirements were met and governance arrangements remained in place.

3. Monitoring Officer

- 3.1 The Council is required to appoint a Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It is a statutory role and essential for the efficient delivery of Council services and governance.

- 3.2 In the absence of a permanent Monitoring Officer it was essential that an interim appointment was made as an Emergency Decision (ED2) and there was no opportunity to consider external recruitment due to the time restrictions.
- 3.3 As such, the decision to appoint Mr Matthew Boulter as interim Monitoring Officer was undertaken as an Emergency Decision (ED2). Mr Boulter is an experienced existing Deputy Monitoring Officer, who joined Thurrock in 2005.
- 3.4 The ED2 appointed Matthew Boulter as interim Monitoring Officer effective 4 December 2021.
- 3.5 Arrangements for the permanent replacement of the Assistant Director Legal and Monitoring Officer will be developed and managed in line with normal requirements through General Services Committee and any permanent appointment brought to Council for approval.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To ensure interim arrangements are maintained to meet statutory requirements whilst options for permanent recruitment are explored.
- 4.2 The interim arrangements will be in place until permanent recruitment is concluded in 2022.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The appointment of Matthew Boulter as Interim Monitoring Officer was reported to General Services Committee on 8 December 2021.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Corporate Director Resources and Place Delivery

The Monitoring Officer is part of a substantive post and is therefore included within the council's core budgets.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer & Deputy Monitoring Officer

Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires the Council to designate one of its officers as the Monitoring Officer and provide that officer with such staff, accommodation and other resources as they consider sufficient to allow them to perform their duties. By law the Monitoring Officer cannot be the Council's designated Head of Paid Service or its Chief Finance Officer.

Although the Monitoring Officer's duties are essentially legal, there is currently no requirement for the officer to be legally qualified. The position of Monitoring Officer is an essential role pivotal to the protection of probity of the Council. The Monitoring Officer has a number of specific statutory duties, which include to report to the Council on matters which appear to him/her which are, or are likely to be, illegal or amount to maladministration. The Monitoring Officer is responsible for matters relating to the conduct of councillors and officers; and also for the operation of the Council's constitution. The Monitoring Officer also carries out a number of responsibilities set out in the constitution and legislation.

It is the duty of the Council, and a requirement of the Constitution, to designate an officer as Monitoring Officer. The designation of an officer as Monitoring Officer is a Council matter. However the main body of report sets out the reasons for Chief Executive taking urgent action to fill this role as temporary measure.

Chapter 6, Part 1 of the Council's Constitution sets out those functions which have been delegated to Officers. Under this Part of the Constitution the Chief Executive is authorised to discharge all the functions of the Council within her area of responsibility (Chapter 6, Part 1, para 4.1). The Chief Executive may allocate or reallocate responsibility for functions between officers as necessary for the effective discharge of those functions or to cover the absence of particular officers (Chapter 6, Part 1, para 4.9).

Further, the Chief Executive has exercised urgency powers set out in Chapter 6, Part 1, para 7.1 (d) of the Constitution which states, that the Chief Executive shall in cases of urgency or emergency, take any decision on behalf of the Council (after consultation with the Leader).

The urgent action taken by the Chief Executive to designate an officer to act as Monitoring Officer on an interim basis is a temporary measure. The action taken falls within the remit of the Chief Executive's urgency powers referred to above, which will be superseded as soon as a permanent Monitor Officer can be appointed by Council, in accordance with the process for making a permanent appointment to this role.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The interim appointment was made in line with the Council's Constitution as an Emergency Decision (ED2). Any proposed permanent recruitment will be based on the council's recruitment process which is underpinned by the council's equal opportunity policy.

Report Author:

Jackie Hinchliffe

Director of HR, OD & Transformation

26 January 2022	ITEM: 12
Council	
Appointment of External Auditor	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director - Finance	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

Under the Local Government Audit and Accountability Act 2014 the Council is required to appoint an auditor to audit its accounts each financial year.

This report sets out the options and a preferred approach for appointing the external auditor to the Council for the five year period from 2023/24, noting that the current appointment applies up to and including the 2022/23 accounts.

The decision on the appointment of the auditor is one that is required to be taken by Full Council.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Council accepts the Public Sector Audit Appointment Limited (PSAA) invitation to ‘opt-in’ to the sector led national scheme for the appointment of external auditors for the five financial years commencing 1 April 2023.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The current auditor appointment arrangements were agreed by the Council in 2017 and cover the five years up to and including the audit of the 2022/23 accounts. To make the appointment the Council opted into the ‘appointing person’ arrangements made by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) for the Council’s local auditor appointments.

- 2.2 Under the Local Government Audit and Accountability Act 2014, the Council is required to appoint an auditor to audit its accounts for each financial year. The statutory requirement is to have an auditor appointment in place by 31 December of the year preceding the start of the contract i.e. by 31 December 2022. The time needed to run an effective procurement process means that the Council now needs to decide how it wishes to undertake the process.
- 2.3 There are three options for the appointment of the external auditor:
- the Council could undertake its own individual procurement process;
 - the Council could undertake a joint procurement process with other local authorities; and
 - the Council could opt into a sector led arrangement provided by PSAA. The decision to take this route requires Council approval and the council would need to opt in by 11th March 2022.
- 2.4 The scope of the audit will still be specified nationally by the National Audit Office in their Code of Audit Practice which all audit firms must follow. Auditors are regulated by the Financial Reporting Council (FRC). Councils therefore have very limited influence over the nature of the audit services they are procuring, the nature and quality of which are determined and overseen by third parties.
- 2.5 The advantages of the Sector-led procurement by PSAA include an expected reduction in the cost of the audit for the Council through being included in a wider sector based procurement process. The approach also eliminates the need for the Council to establish and operate its own audit panel (including an independent chair and independent members to oversee a local auditor procurement). Further, the Council will receive wider PSAA support and an agreed framework for the ongoing management of the audit contract. It is also noted that under the existing contract, and procured under the same approach, the external audit process has been delivered effectively.
- 2.6 This report concludes that the sector-wide procurement conducted by PSAA will be the most efficient way to appoint the external auditor and is likely to achieve the most competitive price.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The options available to the Council are set out below:

Option 1: Individual auditor procurement and Appointment

- 3.2 The Council may elect to appoint its own external auditor under the Act, which would require the Council to establish an independent Auditor Panel to make a stand-alone appointment. The Auditor Panel would need to be set up by the Council, and the members of the panel must be wholly, or have a majority of,

independent members. Managing the contract for its duration, would also be overseen by the Auditor Panel.

3.3 Advantages/benefits

- Setting up an Auditor Panel allows local input to the decision.

3.4 Disadvantages/risks

- Recruitment and servicing of the Auditor Panel, running the bidding exercise and negotiating the contract would be time consuming and costly to the Council.
- The Council would not be able to take advantage of reduced fees and economies of scale that may be available through joint or national procurement contracts.
- The Council would also be procuring in what is a very challenging market currently. The local procurement exercise would be seeking tenders from the same firms as the national procurement exercise.

Option 2: Joint audit procurement and appointing exercise with other Local Authorities

3.5 The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 enables the Council to join other local authorities in setting up an Auditor Panel. Again, this will need to be established of wholly or a majority of independent appointees.

3.6 Advantages/benefits

- The costs of setting up the Panel, running the bidding exercise and negotiating the contract will be shared across a number of authorities.
- Provide opportunity for negotiating some economies of scale from a combined large value contract.

3.7 Disadvantages/risks

- The choice of auditor could be complicated where individual Councils have independence issues due to, for example, consultancy or advisory work performed by the audit firms. This may limit firms who are appointable by a joint process and the Council would then need to make their own arrangements.
- Initial discussions with other Local Authorities, in particular those within the Essex boundary, have identified that the majority of Councils are recommending to opt in to the appointed person regime. As such the ability for the Council to consider joint procurement with other authorities is limited.

Option 3: Opt in to the Sector Led Arrangement operated by Public Sector Audit and Appointments Ltd (PSAA)

3.8 PSAA is the sector-led body appointed by the Secretary of State specified as the 'appointing person' for local government under the provisions of the Local Government Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015. PSAA let five-year audit services contracts in 2017 for the first appointing period, covering audits from 2018/19 to 2022/23. It is now undertaking the work needed to invite eligible bodies to opt in for the next

appointing period, from the 2023/24 audit onwards for a period of five years and to complete a procurement for audit services.

3.9 Advantages/benefits

- PSAA will manage the procurement process to ensure both quality and price criteria are satisfied.
- The costs of setting up the appointment arrangements and negotiating fees would be shared across all opt-in authorities, saving time and resources.
- The suitable independence of the auditors from the bodies they audit and managing any potential conflicts as they arise during the appointment period will be ensured.
- PSSA would undertake ongoing contract and performance management of the contracts once these have been let.
- A national exercise offering large contract values may also encourage participating firms to offer more realistic prices in what is currently a challenging market.
- Independence issues would be managed by PSAA that would have a number of contracted firms to call upon.
- PSAA has built up considerable expertise and has been working hard to address the issue from the contracts over the last couple of years i.e. commitment to further enhance arrangements related to monitoring quality of service, delays in audits and auditors staffing issues, contract management and value for money in fee setting.

3.10 Disadvantages/risks

- Individual elected members would have less opportunity for direct involvement in the appointment process other than through stakeholder representative groups.
- To remain viable and place itself well in terms of negotiating position, PSAA Ltd will need to secure opt in from a good number of Councils.

4. Conclusions and Timescales

- 4.1 The advantages of a sector led procurement by PSAA are considered to outweigh the issues as noted in the assessment above. The process provides the appointment of an independent auditor with limited administrative cost to the Council. The Council will be acting with other Councils to optimise the opportunity to influence the market that a national procurement provides.
- 4.2 PSAA is now inviting Councils to opt in for the second appointing period, for 2023/24 to 2027/28. Based on the level of opt-ins it will enter into contracts with appropriately qualified audit firms and appoint a suitable firm to be the Council's auditor.
- 4.3 Regulation 19 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 requires that a decision to opt-in must be made by a meeting of the Full Council.

- 4.4 Assuming the recommendation to opt-in to the national auditor appointment scheme is made, the Council will then respond formally to PSAA's invitation by the close of the opt-in period on 11 March 2022.
- 4.5 PSAA will commence the formal procurement process in Spring/Summer 2022. It expects to award contracts in August 2022 and will then consult with authorities on the appointment of auditors so that it can make appointments by the statutory deadline of 31 December 2022.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To ensure the Council has a process in place for the appointment of the external auditors. It is recommended that the most efficient and cost effective approach for the Council would be to 'opt in' to Sector Led arrangement for the appointment of the external auditor, provided by PSAA.

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

- 6.1 There has been consultation with the current external auditors, the PSAA and other local authorities.

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

- 7.1 The Council continues to deliver the corporate priorities that underpin the work of the Council. Strong Governance arrangements form part of these core principles and external audit provide the authority with independent assurance over the Council's governance arrangements in relation to the production of the opinion of the final accounts and value for money conclusion.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

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

There is a risk that current external audit fee levels could increase when the current contracts end. It is clear that the scope of audit has increased, requiring more audit work. There are also concerns about capacity and sustainability in the local audit market.

Opting into a national scheme provides maximum opportunity to ensure fees are as realistic as possible, while ensuring the quality of audit is maintained, by entering into a large scale collective procurement arrangement. If the national scheme is not used some additional resource may be needed to establish an auditor panel and conduct a local procurement. Until a

procurement exercise is completed it is not possible to state what, if any, additional resource may be required for audit fees from 2023/24.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

The process as set out above and the recommendation should ensure compliance with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Section 7 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires a relevant Council to appoint a local auditor to audit its accounts for a financial year not later than 31 December in the preceding year.

Section 8 governs the procedure for appointment including that the Council must consult and take account of the advice of its auditor panel on the selection and appointment of a local auditor. Section 8 provides that where a relevant Council is a local Council operating executive arrangements, the function of appointing a local auditor to audit its accounts is not the responsibility of an executive of the Council under those arrangements.

Section 12 makes provision for the failure to appoint a local auditor. The Council must immediately inform the Secretary of State, who may direct the Council to appoint the auditor named in the direction or appoint a local auditor on behalf of the Council.

Section 17 gives the Secretary of State the power to make regulations in relation to an 'appointing person' specified by the Secretary of State. This power has been exercised in the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 (SI 192) and this gives the Secretary of State the ability to enable a sector-led body to become the appointing person. In July 2016 the Secretary of State specified PSAA as the appointing person.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no specific implications from this report. Appointment of an External Auditor or recruitment to an Auditor Panel would adhere to equalities legislation.

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

There are no specific implications from the report.

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

None

10. **Appendices**

None

Report Author

Jonathan Wilson

Assistant Director of Finance

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26 January 2022	ITEM: 13
Council	
Interim Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations	
Wards and communities affected: Aveley & Uplands, Belhus, Chadwell St Mary, Grays Riverside, Grays Thurrock, Ockendon, South Chafford, Stanford East & Corringham Town	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive and Returning Officer	
Accountable Officer: Mark Bowen, Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director Resources and Place Delivery	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report requests Council to consider and approve the recommendations of the Returning Officer and Chief Executive in relation to an interim review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations in the Polling Districts listed below and for the reasons outlined in the Appendix.

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
- 1.1 That Aveley Hub be confirmed as the polling place for Aveley and Uplands, polling district B**
- 1.2 That Royal British Legion Hall be confirmed as the polling place for Belhus, polling district F**
- 1.3 That Chadwell Library be confirmed as the polling place for Chadwell St Mary, polling district J**
- 1.4 That Inspire Youth Hub be confirmed as the polling place for Grays Riverside, polling district V**
- 1.5 That United Reform Church, Bradleigh Avenue be confirmed as the polling place for Grays Thurrock, polling district Y**

- 1.6 That Belhus Village Hall be confirmed as the polling place for Ockendon, polling district AF**
- 1.7 That Bannantyne Gym be confirmed as the polling place for South Chafford, polling district AL**
- 1.8 That Springhouse Club be confirmed as a temporary polling place for Stanford East & Corringham Town, polling district AP, for the polls to be held in May 2022.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The report sets out the legal requirements. Appendix 1 outlines the options considered, alternative locations and the Returning Officer recommendation for each Ward.
- 2.2 The Electoral Administration Act 2006 introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a full review of all polling districts and stations to improve accessibility. Additional Statutory Instruments were issued in late December 2006.
- 2.3 The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. The last full review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and polling stations was undertaken and brought to Council 29 January 2020. This report is not part of a statutory review.
- 2.4 Local authorities must comply with the following legislative requirements regarding the designation of polling districts and polling places:
- each parish in England and community in Wales is to be a separate polling district, unless special circumstances apply
 - in Scotland, each electoral ward must be divided into two or more separate polling districts, unless special circumstances apply
 - the council must designate a polling place for each polling district, unless the size or other circumstances of a polling district are such that the situation of the polling stations does not materially affect the convenience of the electors
 - the polling place must be an area in the district, unless special circumstances make it desirable to designate an area wholly or partly outside the district (for example, if no accessible polling place can be identified in the district)
 - the polling place must be small enough to indicate to electors in different parts of the district how they will be able to reach the polling station
- 2.5 The Returning Officer has the right to use schools as polling stations. Given recent government guidance and because schools and education have been disrupted in 2020/21 due to Covid-19, Electoral Services would prefer not to use schools where possible alternatives may exist.

2.6 Local authorities must also comply with the following access requirements. As part of the review, they must:

- Seek to ensure that all electors in a constituency in the local authority area have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable in the circumstances.
- Seek to ensure that so far as is reasonable and practicable every polling place for which it is responsible is accessible to electors who are disabled.

2.7 The council must have regard to the accessibility to disabled persons of potential polling stations in any place which it is considering designating as a polling place or the designation of which as a polling place it is reviewing.

2.8 Staff of the Returning Officer visited each site and viewed the proposed venue.

2.9 The proposed changes were consulted on with relevant people. Group Leaders, Ward members directly affected by the proposed change, the Member of Parliament for Thurrock and for South Basildon and East Thurrock and Election Agents.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The issues, options and recommendation for each polling station is detailed in Appendix 1, along with a map. If appropriate distances from existing locations are also shown.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The reasons for recommendations are informed by the staff of the Returning Officer and the reasons outlined in Appendix 1.

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

5.1 A full consultation was undertaken in the Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts and Polling Stations which began in 2019 and concluded 31 January 2020. This interim review is required to determine and agree changes to polling places ahead of the next full statutory review.

5.2 Group Leaders, Ward Members and MPs have been apprised of the Returning Officers recommendations. The main comments related to proposed changes to polling places within Aveley & Uplands, Grays Riverside and Grays Thurrock.

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

6.1 The Council continually seeks to ensure services are accessible by all users

and the review will help to ensure that those electors who wish to vote will not be put off by inaccessible polling stations. The proposed changes have been reviewed to actively encourage participation and in some cases will limit impact on other parts of the community on polling day.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Dammy Adewole**

Senior Management Accountant, Resources & Place

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

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Mark Bowen**

Interim Deputy Monitoring Officer

The Electoral Administration Act 2006 (the 2006 Act) introduced the requirement for all Councils to undertake a periodic full review of all polling districts and stations throughout their area. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (the 2013 Act) introduced a change to the timing of compulsory reviews of UK Parliamentary polling districts and polling places. Both the 2006 Act and the 2013 Act amended the Representation of the People Act 1983.

The 2013 Act stated that the review must be started and completed in a 16 month period every five years after 1 October 2013. The previous review period was concluded 31 January 2020. This interim review is required to determine and agree changes to polling places ahead of the next full statutory review and in time for the next scheduled polls in May 2022.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**

Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer, Adults, Housing and Health

The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on Local Authorities to promote equal opportunities. These considerations should sit alongside the statutory obligations set out in the Electoral Administration Act. The Electoral Administration Act (2006) and the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 seeks to improve the engagement in the electoral

process by ensuring that polling places are accessible to all. The proposed changes will improve access to the electoral process, in line with the objective of the legislation.

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

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

None

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

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

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 – Returning Officer Recommendations.

Report Author

Elaine Sheridan

Electoral and Member Services Manager

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Appendix 1 - Returning Officer Recommendations

Aveley & Uplands

Ward Councillors		David Van Day Colin Churchman Maureen Pearce
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
B	Current polling station 2021	Aveley Public Hall, Purfleet Road
B	Proposed 2022 onwards	Aveley Hub, High Street Recreation Ground Car Park RM15 4BY

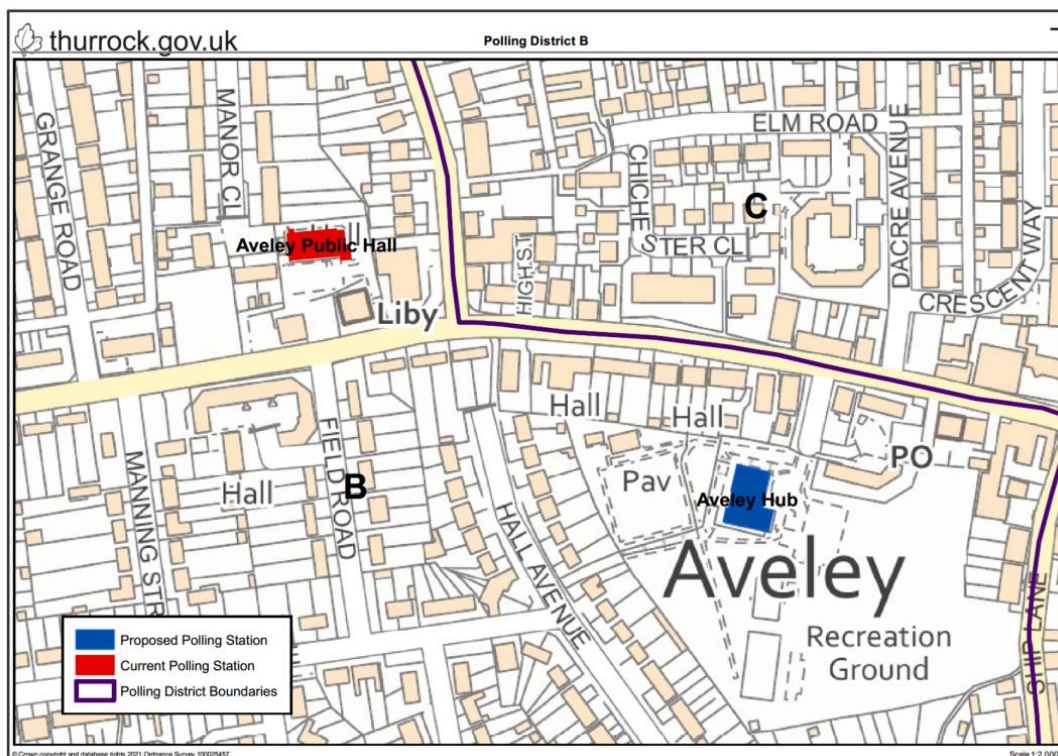
Reason for review:- Aveley Public Hall is now closed and not available for use.

Details of proposed new venue:

Aveley Hub is a new building on the Recreation Ground located on the opposite side of the road to the Hall but more central within the village and shopping area. The hub has parking immediately outside, it can be accessed either from the High Street, or via the Recreation Grounds and it is an accessible building. The hub has outside lighting for evening voting and perceived staff safety is much improved. The Hall inside is large and accessible for voters and facilities for staff working on the poll are available.

Distance between venues: [4 min walk, 1 min drive (0.2mile)]

Recommendation: The Returning Officer recommends Aveley Hub be confirmed as the polling place for Aveley and Uplands, polling district B



Belhus

Ward Councillors	Michael Fletcher Chris Baker Georgette Polley
Existing Arrangements	
Polling District	Polling Place
F	Current polling station 2021 Holy Cross Catholic Primary School, Daiglen Drive
F	Proposed 2022 onwards Royal British Legion Hall, Faymore Gardens

Reason for review:- Holy Cross Catholic School is unwilling to be used as a polling station. The school is shut on polling day.

The Returning Officer has the right to use schools as polling stations. Given recent government guidance and because schools and education have been disrupted in 2020/21 due to Covid-19, Electoral Services would prefer not to use schools where possible alternatives may exist. There are no other suitable locations within the polling district boundary.

Details of proposed new venue:

The polling place for any polling district must, except in special circumstances, be an area in that district. A polling place may be designated outside the polling district in those special circumstances.

If the school is not available and/or members wish to limit the disruption to schooling for those schools that close on polling day, it would be possible and practical to combine the polling for districts E2 and F, providing two polling stations in one Polling Place (The Hall, Royal British Legion).

The Hall is large enough to separate the two polling districts, provide a larger section for Polling District F (due to the larger electorate) and the polling areas can be accessed from different entrances.

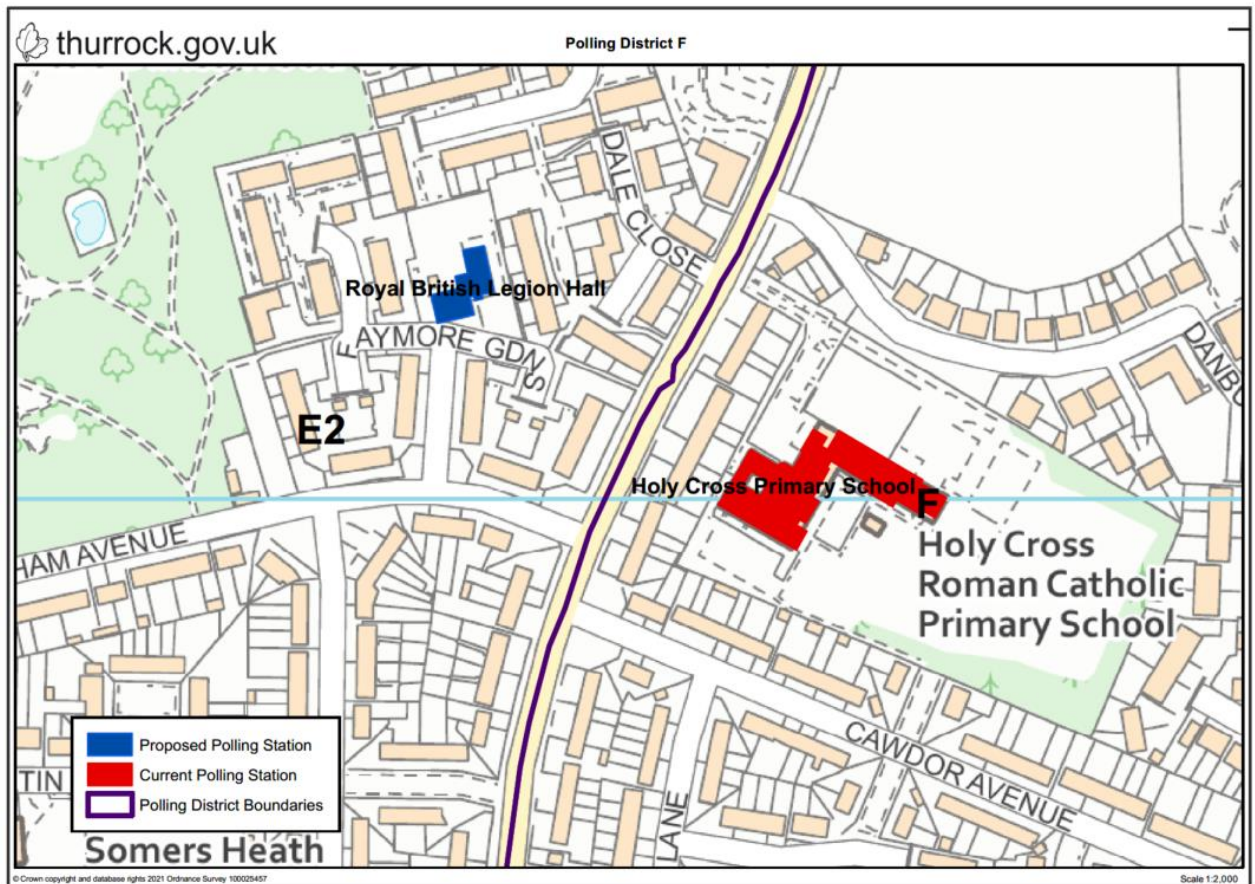
Distance between venues:

The route between each venue is accessible either by road via Fairham Avenue [**1 min drive (0.2 mile)**] or via a footpath directly opposite the entrance to the Holy Cross School (through Faymore Gardens and Dale Close. [**2 min walk (0.1 mile)**])

The extra travelling distance is not considerable, and residents / electors may consider that keeping the school open is a priority.

Recommendation: The Returning Officer recommends Royal British Legion be confirmed as the polling place for Belhus, polling district F and continues as the polling place for E2.

Map on next page



Chadwell St Mary

Ward Councillors		Sara Muldowney Daniel Chukwu Adam Carter
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
J	Current (agreed) polling station	Chadwell St Mary Working Mens Club – due to unavailability Chadwell St Mary Library was used in 2021
J	Proposed 2022 onwards	Chadwell St Mary Library, Brentwood Road

Reason for review:- The Working Mens Club is unavailable on 5 May 2022 due to an existing booking. During discussions and through a lack of response from the Club it appears that they do not wish to encourage a booking for elections in future years.

Details of proposed new venue

The library was used successfully in 2021 under Covid-19 restrictions with a dedicated area for polling. There is parking onsite and the venue is accessible.

The library is marginally outside of the polling district. The polling district boundary runs down the centre of Brentwood Road. This did not cause issues at the polls in May 2021.

Distance between venues: 0.2 mile



Grays Riverside

Ward Councillors	Martin Kerin Jane Potheary Tony Fish	
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
V	Current polling station 2021	Grays Central Library, Thameside Theatre, Orsett Road (this is outside of the Polling district)
V	Preferred option	Inspire Youth Hub, 24-28 Orsett Road, Grays RM17 5EB
V	Also considered	Q-gym, Units 14-16 The Queensgate Centre, Orsett Road, Grays RM17 5DF

Reason for review: The Returning Officer needs clarity on the polling station in this district to avoid elector confusion. For administrative reasons the decision regarding polling stations is required no later than January 2022. Suitable alternatives are available within the district boundary. It would be preferable to confirm the polling station during this interim review instead of an emergency prior to the next poll.

Details of proposed new venue:

Two venues were considered during the research. The preferred option is Inspire Youth Hub. The polling district boundary shows that Thameside Theatre is **outside** of the polling district. Inspire Youth Hub is **within** polling district V and directly opposite Thameside Theatre.

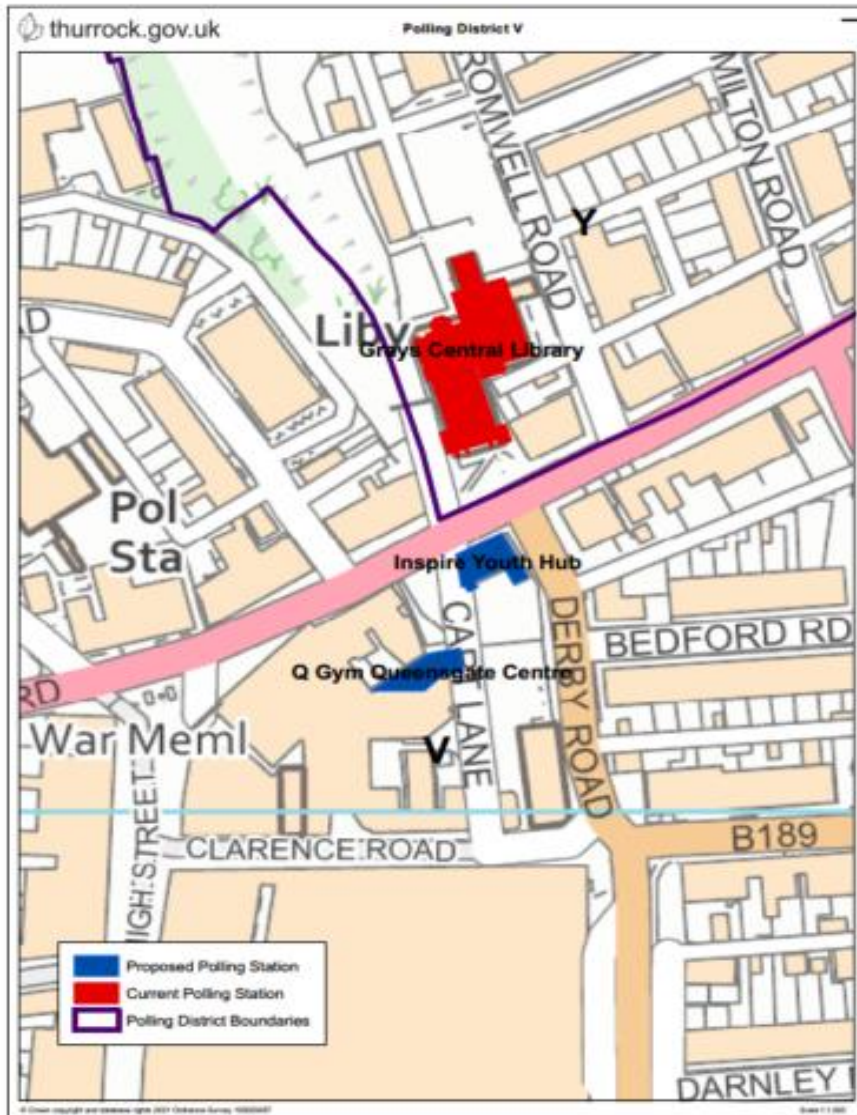
The building does have parking for staff to the rear. Separate entrances are available for other service users in the building and the building is accessible. This location is preferable to Q-Gym unit as it is a shop frontage on Orsett Road, easily visible to electors, encouraging participation and voting. It is also the nearest location to Grays Central Library should electors need signposting.

Distance between venues:

From Thameside Theatre to Inspire Youth Hub - 33 ft

Recommendation:- The Returning Officer recommends that Inspire Youth Hub is confirmed as the polling place for Polling District V.

Map on next page



Grays Thurrock

Ward Councillors	Lynn Worrall Cathy Kent John Kent
Existing Arrangements	
Polling District	Polling Place
Y	Current polling station 2021 Stanley Lazell Hall, Dell Road
Y	Preferred Option United Reformed Church, 31 Bradleigh Avenue RM17 5XD
Y	Considered but no parking Grays Baptist Tabernacle, 85 Orsett Road, RM17 5HH (subsequently advised that only the Church Hall, Hathaway Road is available for use)

Reason for review: Stanley Lazell Hall is no longer available for hire as a polling station. A new station is required for Polling District Y.

Details of proposed new venue:

Two venues were considered during the research. The preferred option is United Reformed Church, 31 Bradleigh Avenue. This venue offers a large hall for polling, adequate facilities for staff and good parking onsite for staff and electors. The Church is reached via its on driveway leading to parking spaces and should not require on street parking. The location is in the northeast area of the polling district but still accessible, within the residential area and near several schools.

Grays Tabernacle Church does not have parking for electors and the frontage is on Orsett Road. The Church have subsequently advised that we may only use the Church Hall located on Hathaway Road. The hall has no specific parking and is located in an area with double yellow lines and resident only parking spaces.

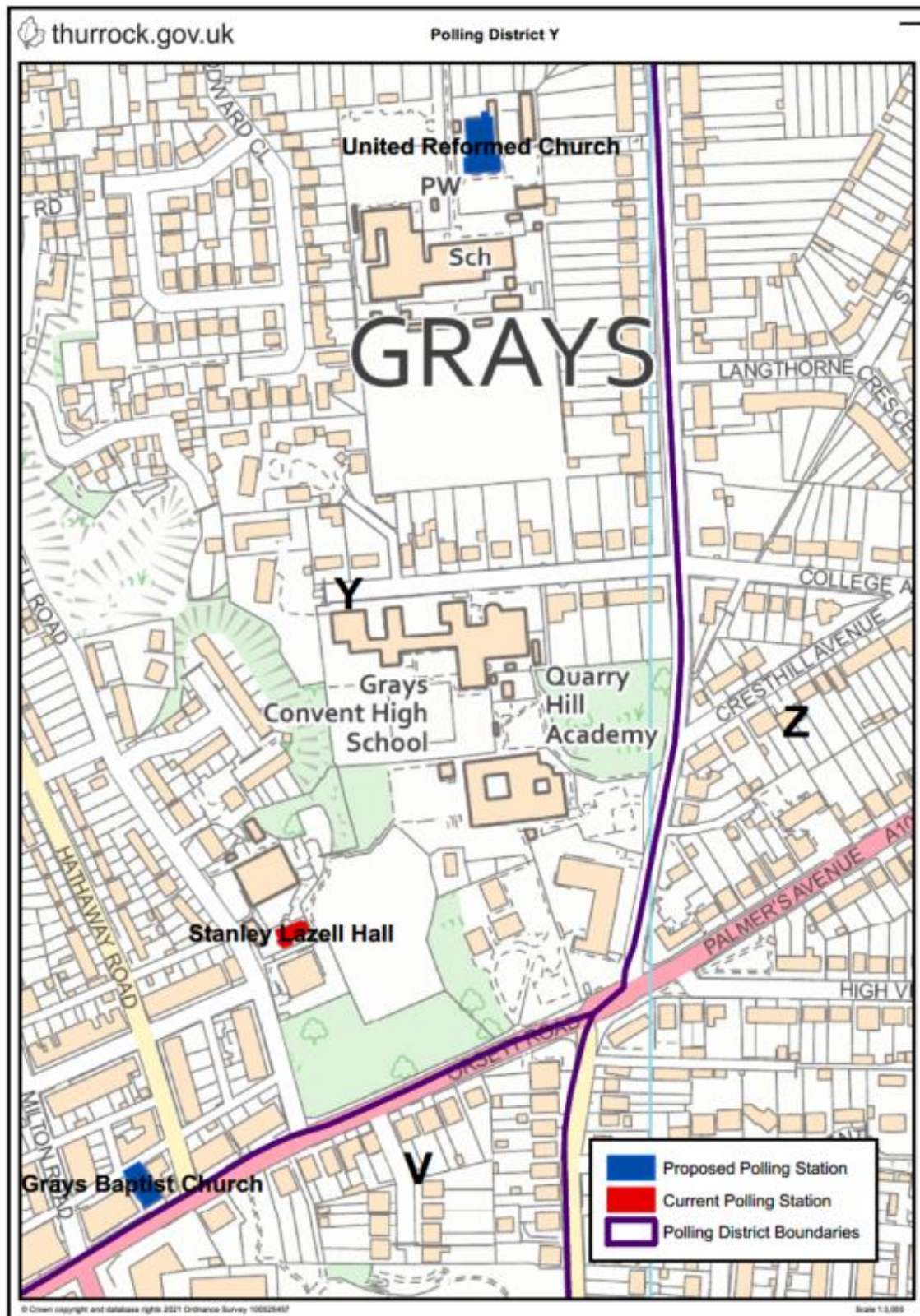
Distance between venues:

From Stanley Lazell to United Reform Church: - 2 min drive, 12 min walk 0.5 mile

From Stanley Lazell to Grays Baptist Tabernacle: - 1 min drive, 3 min walk, 0.1 mile

Recommendation:- The Returning Officer recommends that United Reformed Church, 31 Bradleigh Avenue is confirmed as the polling place for Polling District Y.

Map on Next page



Ockendon

Ward Councillors	Sue Shinnick Andrew Jefferies Luke Spillman	
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
AF	Current polling station 2021	Bonnygate Primary School, Arisdale Avenue
AE	Preferred Option 2022	Belhus Village Hall, Daiglen Drive (AE)

Reason for review:- Bonnygate Primary School is unwilling to be used as a polling station. The school is shut on polling day.

The Returning Officer has the right to use schools as polling stations. Given recent government guidance and because schools and education have been disrupted in 2020/21 due to Covid-19, Electoral Services would prefer not to use schools where possible alternatives may exist. There are no other suitable locations within the polling district boundary.

Details of proposed new venue:

The polling place for any polling district must, except in special circumstances, be an area in that district. A polling place may be designated outside the polling district in those special circumstances.

If the school is not available and/or members wish to limit the disruption to schooling for those schools that close on polling day, it would be possible and practical to combine the polling for districts AF and AE, providing two polling stations in one Polling Place, Belhus Village Hall, Daiglen Drive.

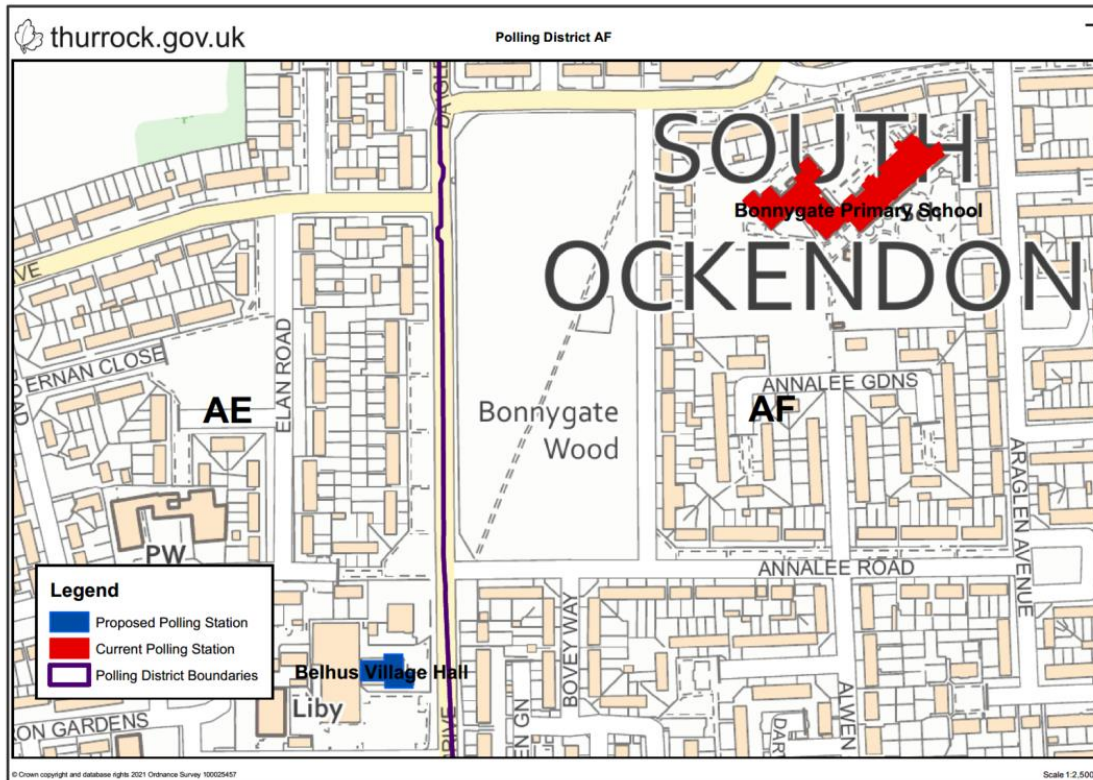
Polling in a school that has shut for the day does not encourage parents/ carers to vote as the school is not open and a journey to the school is not necessary. Belhus Village Hall is located on Daiglen Drive just past the main shops and may possibly result in an increased turnout for this district. There are two separate halls and polling for AF and AE can take place in different halls. Both polling districts are in the same Ward.

Distance between venues:

2 min, 0.5 mile (drive), 8 mins, 0.4 mile (walk)

Recommendation:- The Returning Officer recommends Belhus Village Hall is confirmed as the polling place for Polling Districts AE and AF

Map on next page



South Chafford

Ward Councillors	Abbi Akinboun Augustine Ononaji	
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
AL	Current polling station 2021	The Chafford Hundred Brewers Fayre, Howard Rd
AL	Preferred Option	Bannatyne Gym (Indoor tennis courts) or Temporary Polling Station if not available, Howard Road OR
AL	Possible option	Temporary Polling station, Sainsbury's Supermarket car park, Burghley Road

Reason for review:- There is a considerable risk each year that The Brewers Fayre will not be available for polling. The polling arrangements are confirmed with the manager, but this is not a formal arrangement and incoming managers are not made aware of our booking. There is a high turnover of management and no booking contract. For this reason Electoral Services team have sought to find a more permanent and less risky option that will not disadvantage electors.

Details of proposed new venue:

Bannatyne Gym is willing for polling to take place on their inside tennis courts. Parking is available on site and entrance to the courts would be through the main doors, via an accessible gate next to the turnstile. Electors would proceed through the hallway into the building and into the tennis court. Facilities are available for staff and the building is accessible for all members of the public. The gym is located immediately opposite the Brewers Fayre and would still be on a commuting route to and from the train station. Polling hours occur during gym opening hours minimising the risk of the venue not being open on time.

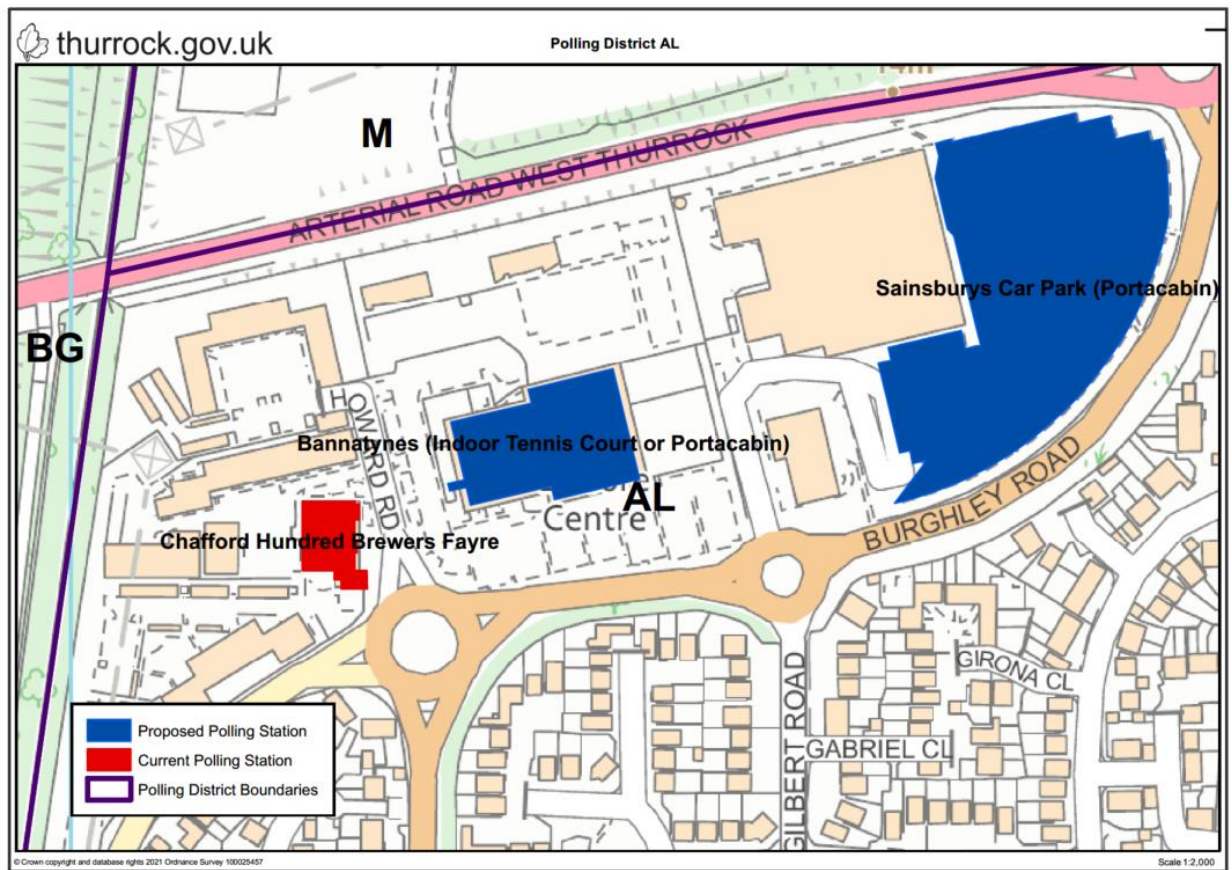
The use of a temporary polling station at Sainsburys is possible and Sainsbury management have agreed. However, it is expensive and not the preferred option when a permanent building is available.

Distance between venues:

Brewers Fayre to Bannatyne Gym - 2 min, 0.1 mile (walk and drive)

Recommendation:- The Returning Officer recommends Bannatyne Gym is confirmed as the polling place for Polling District AL.

Map on next page



Stanford East and Corringham Town

Ward Councillors	Alex Anderson Shane Ralph Jack Duffin	
Existing Arrangements		
Polling District	Polling Place	
AP	Current polling station 2021	Corringham Hall, Springhouse Road
AP	Preferred Option	Springhouse Club, Springhouse Road,
AP	Considered but not suitable	St John's Evangelist, St John's Way, Corringham

Reason for review:- Corringham Hall, Springhouse Road is not available to hire for polling in May 2022 due to an existing booking. A temporary alternative location is required for the May 2022 polls.

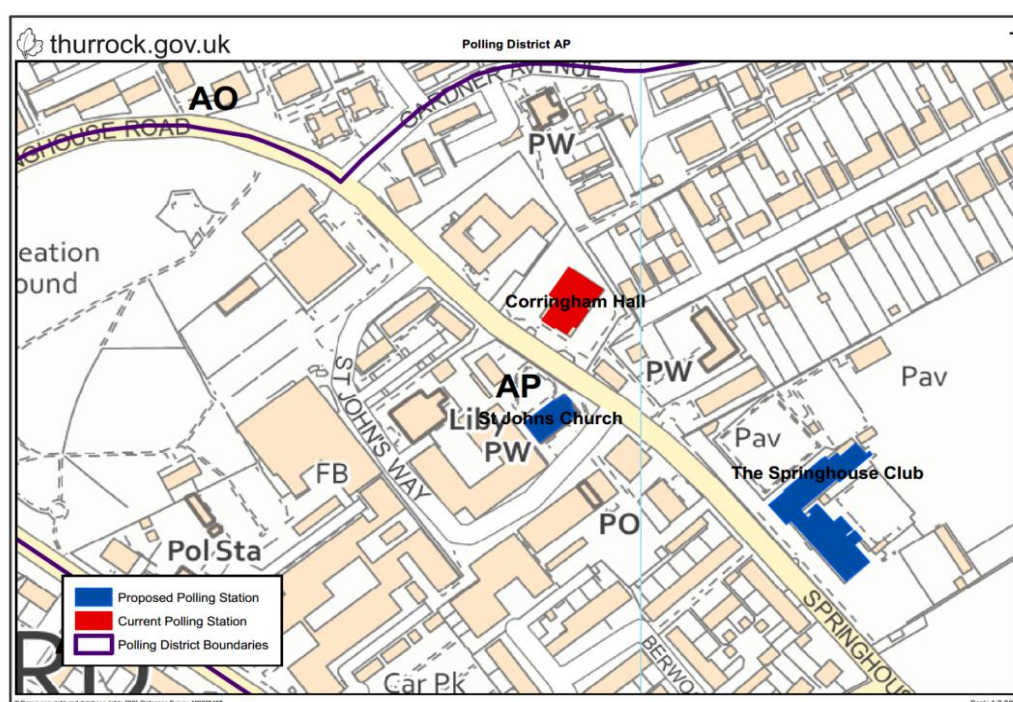
Details of proposed new venue:

The preferred option is The Springhouse Club, located on the same road as Corringham Hall. It has two halls that could be used for polling. Polling will take place in the smaller hall and this will allow direct access via a ramp from the car park into the small hall. The ramp directly into the hall does have a small lip/step. For those electors who require a more accessible ramp one is available to the right of the small hall and this would take electors through the main building. It can be clearly signposted and staff will be on hand and have confirmed they would be willing to direct electors through the building if required.

Distance between Corringham Hall and Springhouse Club:

1 min, 0.1 mile (drive), 2 min walk

Recommendation:- The Returning Officer recommends Springhouse Club is confirmed as the temporary polling place for Polling District AP. (May 2022)



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26 January 2022	ITEM: 14
Council	
Local Council Tax Scheme	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Portfolio Holder for Finance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director of Finance	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

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

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

The Council is required to consider its scheme annually and consult on any changes before they are introduced, the current LCTS scheme was implemented on the 1st April 2017 following consultation and has been agreed for each subsequent year up to the current financial year with no changes.

Members will recall the council increased the LCTS from £7.77m to £8.47m when it was reviewed after nearing the first anniversary of the pandemic, as noted in January 2021. Whilst claimants have reduced back to pre-COVID levels, the council seek to maintain that increased funding allocation (adjusted for the Council Tax increase) into 2021/22 to provide sufficient but cautious headroom, should the need be there.

This report provides details of Thurrock’s current scheme and analysis to support the recommendation that the current scheme remains unchanged for 2022/23.

1. Recommendations:

1.1 That Council agree to maintain the existing scheme for 2022/23.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The design of each LCTS scheme must be finalised by the 11th March ahead of the relevant year to which it relates. Failure to provide a scheme by this date will trigger the implementation of a default government scheme. The default scheme would require the council to revert back to the level of support that would have been provided under the national Council Tax Benefit arrangements. With regards to current caseload, reverting to the national scheme would result in an additional cost to Thurrock of circa £1m per annum.
- 2.2 Some components of the LCTS scheme have been directed by Government such as:
- All low income pensioners will be protected under the national framework as defined by DCLG;
 - Consideration for protection for vulnerable working age groups will be allowed for; and
 - Each authority's scheme will maintain work incentives wherever possible. The Government continues to stress the importance of this principle given the current economic climate and the welfare reform agenda.
- 2.3 From 2014/15, any specific funding for the LCTS scheme was rolled up into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) as provided to local authorities by the government. It is entirely for local authorities to decide how much they are prepared to spend on their LCTS scheme.
- 2.4 Local authorities take on the risk that liabilities under LCTS exceed the amount projected for at the start of the relevant financial year. This risk is shared between billing and major precepting authorities with circa 15% of the council tax collected by the council being paid over to the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service and Essex Police.

3. Analysis/ review of current scheme

3.1 Overview of existing Scheme

The existing Scheme contains the following elements:

- To ensure work pays, the first £25 per week of earned income is disregarded when calculating levels of council tax support;
- The maximum capital limit is to be set at £6,000. This means anyone who has savings over £6,000 may not receive support with their council tax;
- For working age claimants, the maximum support allowed is set at 75% of their full council tax bill;
- To assist those with families the Child benefit and child maintenance received is not included as income in the calculation of council tax support;

- The maximum period a claim can be backdated under the scheme is one calendar month. In order to qualify for this the claimant will need to provide good reason for not claiming earlier;
- There is a full disregard of military compensation payments, including War Disablement Pensions, War Widow's Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments;
- The number of dependants assessed in the calculation of claimants needs is a maximum of two; and
- The maximum period of an award when temporarily absent outside the United Kingdom is four weeks.

3.2 Roll out of Universal Credit

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

Initially Universal Credit was to be fully implemented for all new and existing Working Age claimants by 2017, however this has now been extended nationally and the Governments latest forecast suggests the project will not complete before 2024. In view of this new Housing Benefit legislation is now forming part of the Welfare Reform agenda with this benefit continuing until at least 2024.

The numbers of UC claimants claiming LCTS are being monitored. As at the October 2021 there was a total LCTS case load of 10,003; of this 4,147 claims were for people in receipt of Universal Credit.

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

3.3 Accessibility

The application process for LCTS is linked to other national benefits such as Universal Credit and Housing Benefit. This means that people who claim these benefits are directed to make a claim for LCTS where applicable. Applications for LCTS can be made online with assistance via customer services, community hubs and various other organisations for those who need help in completing a claim.

3.4 Level of Support and affordability

Whilst the maximum level of support afforded to eligible working age claimants is entirely at the Council's discretion, in order to maintain fair and effective scheme the council needs to consider both the cost of providing support and the ability of claimants to contribute towards services funded by Council Tax.

Setting the maximum level of support too low would make Council Tax unaffordable for residents on a lower income and would lead to low collection rates which would ultimately benefit no one, whereas an overly generous scheme would increase the burden on wider taxpayers.

The current Thurrock scheme operates a means tested approach, with maximum discounts for working age people set at 75%. The current level of discount provides:

- A high collection rate of council tax billed by claimants with 97.01% collected in the year it is billed; and
- Thurrock's LCTS is in line with other Essex authorities along the South Essex Corridor, as outlined in the table below:

Authority	Max. Support Level
Basildon	75%
Castle Point	70%
Southend-on-Sea	75%
Thurrock	75%

3.5 Cost and Caseload

The number of people claiming LCTS increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, however numbers have now returned to pre pandemic levels, although this of course will continue to be closely monitored.

Within Thurrock for the period July 20 to October 21 while the number of claims in payment decreased by 350 there was an additional cost of £245k as set out below. However, after adjusting for the increase in Council Tax for the current financial year, this reduction in claimants would actually be equivalent to a net reduction to the cost of the scheme of £155k.

Claimant Type	Number of Claimants		Total Awarded	
	As at Oct 2021	Var. to Jul 2020	As at Oct 2021	Var. to Jul 2020
Working age - Employed	1332	-272	£758,434.50	£2,964.50
Working age - Not Employed	5125	64	£4,186,596.70	£220,691.70
Pension Age	3547	-142	£3,717,094.30	£21,689.30
Total	10004	-350	£8,662,125.50	£245,345.50

3.6 Complaints

There have been no specific complaints recorded regarding the council's scheme in recent years.

3.7 Additional Support

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

3.8 Further considerations

In addition to the available evidence which suggests the scheme remains fit for purpose, due to the impact of the pandemic, in the interests of maintaining current levels of support and consistency there are no proposals to make changes to the scheme at this time. It is however intended that the scheme will be further considered once the situation stabilises, and future demand/ support can be more confidently assessed.

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

4.1 The Council is required to undertake a full public consultation on any proposed scheme changes.

4.2 The recommendation to maintain the current scheme for 2022/23 has been endorsed by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial

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

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

5.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Gina Clarke**
Corporate Governance Lawyer

Section 13A(2) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, requires the Council as billing authority to make a localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with Schedule 1A to the Act. Each financial year the

Council must consider whether to revise its scheme, or to replace it with another scheme.

Any revision to its scheme, or any replacement scheme, must be made no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect.

This report proposes no revisions to the LCTS currently in place for 2021/22. Therefore the Council would not be required to conduct the prescribed consultation process where it is not proposing to make any changes to the LCTS.

Although there are no proposed changes to the Scheme, Full Council is required to agree the adoption of the Scheme to continue as from 01 April 2022 for the Council Tax year 2022/23.

Under Schedule 1A of the Act the Government has the power to make regulations about the prescribed requirements for schemes. Therefore any scheme that the Council adopts must comply with these regulations.

The Council must ensure that it has due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010 when considering whether to revise the LCTS or to retain the existing scheme. Prior to making a decision to adopt the LCTS for 2022/23 Members must take into account and give particular consideration to an assessment, outlining the impact of the proposals for persons that share the characteristics protected under S4 of the Act and the proposals made to reduce or mitigate any negative impact associated with the proposal.

5.3 **Diversity and Equality**

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

The Council has a duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 to consider the equality impact of its policies and decisions, an updated equality assessment has been completed.

5.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequality, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Looked After Children

N/A

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

Working Papers held by Corporate Finance and Revenues and Benefits.

7. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author

Andy Brittain

Strategic Lead for Revenues and Benefits

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26 January 2022	ITEM: 15
Council	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance	
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance	
This report is Public	

Introduction by Cabinet Member

Local government has endured difficult times over the last 22 months, following a once-in-a-century, adult-centric, health pandemic.

The impacts on the UK local government sector finance are well documented, with many pressures to sustain pre-pandemic spending levels (BBC, 2021; LGC 2021). HM Government have worked to assist local government, and had the government not helped in the way it had, the local authority sector would have suffered; and thus, the residents which they serve. Thurrock has benefited from support from HM Government of £14.238m of unringfenced grant funding, further specific grants and funding totalling £11.920m, and funding to be passported to social care partner organisations totalling £2.789m. This includes funding to address specific pressures and funding passported to care homes to address specific issues such as infection control. The Council has received further funding of £4.853m to address ongoing COVID pressures in 2021/22 with further specific support continuing to be provided, for example, to support the management of outbreaks and provide ongoing support to care homes. This funding is welcome and necessary but there remains a significant concern in respect of the ongoing impacts in 2022/23 and beyond.

Thurrock businesses have benefitted from circa £72m of business rates relief across 2020/21 and 2021/22. In addition grant funding of £43m has supported local business through the pandemic through the national schemes and the wider discretionary funding put in place.

2020 was a difficult year for a number of councils, notably with S114 notices being issued in Slough and Croydon.

This has not been the case for Thurrock. The approach that the council took, initially in 2016, and adopted by Full Council in October 2017, enabled financial capability to withstand the economic shock through useable reserves being increased by 300% (from £8m, to £24m). This, of course, does not reflect that the policy, which all members approved, enabled (and has continued to) surplus spending on policing, social care, our environment – to name a few - to the tune of £14.976m over its lifespan. To date (inclusive of the entire COVID-19 period since March 2020) the approach enabled the council to fund an additional £114 million worth of public services above statutory services which would have otherwise been cut rapidly in 2016. For context, that is almost a whole year's annual revenue spend of a unitary authority, with highway and social care responsibility, like Thurrock – so one out of the last four years has effectively been funded by the approach the chamber agreed to (three times). It continues to perform after 22-months of COVID-19.

Since COVID-19 become such a formative part of our lives, we have seen some of Thurrock's best moments – with notable moments such as passporting business grants to

struggling businesses forced to close/adapt to social restrictions rapidly; injecting emergency support funding into the social care market which would otherwise have collapsed; providing consistent shelter for homeless residents; and helping to distribute food and supplies to those in the community who were most vulnerable, are moments we should all be proud of. The council was a partner with the voluntary sector, other public sector bodies, and elements of the private sector – this “partnership” made an undisputedly positive impact at a time which was so worrying, for so many.

Conversely, the council has had some tough moments. Policies which the entire chamber endorsed, which attracted awards, nominations, financial resilience and put Thurrock on the map for innovation, became possible; no longer. Rule changes driven by some councils investment approaches being unsuccessful, and a local reversal of support after three years meant that in February 2021, the council formally began the conclusion of the investment approach. As I said at Budget Council 2021, borrowing levels are set by members; it is in their gift to enable borrowing levels, as it is, to reduce them. We chose to provide officers the borrowing levels in 2017, 2018, and 2019 collectively. In 2021, we chose to reduce them, thus commencing the beginning of the end of the investment approach. That has impacts which members need to clear on.

Following the choice we made, we have to commence a period of fiscal re-engineering. We have to adjust the offer of the council, focusing on the delivery of core services, over other services not mandated of a council. The council has always been clear on the need to reduce the size of the council – the CSR process was part of that work which ran alongside the investment approach to reduce the base of the council, sensitively and considerately.

Now the investment approach has concluded, timescales of reform have to advance. No choice will be easy on what stays, and what cannot stay. No decision will be made without as much consideration and input as practically possible. Every decision made will be done, with a service-quality mind-set, albeit, in the constraints of spending power pressure.

At the time of this report, the council projects being balanced for 2021/22, but there are in-year pressures which will be managed, as members would expect. The council over the next two years, faced a large financial deficit, caused by the economic fallout of COVID-19, and the collapse of support for the investment approach. This means removing circa £35m from the council's base net budgeted spending power, out of circa £155m. For context, in a pre-COVID world back in February 2020, the Council confirmed projected budget surpluses of £5.8m and £4.1m for 2020/21 and 2021/22 respectively – a very different world.

I would hope that every elected member in Thurrock got into local politics to help our borough grow, and be a place; a home, a place of work, a place of play; a place they can reliably and proudly call theirs; a place that is there to help when help is needed.

That is a common cause. I thank those who will be, and already are, constructive and ready to face the challenge ahead, dutifully and with the best intentions. I thank everyone in my department, across the council, and in the borough of Thurrock, for what they have done to help other people over the last couple of years.

If we choose to - together, we are, and will emerge, stronger.

This report will be structured accordingly:

Part 1: Summary of the last financial year's performance of the department & economic resilience position – including reserves and investment activity;

Part 2: COVID-19 Specific Activity

Part 3: Reforming for the future to provide, at the least, the best core services for our residents in a post-2020 world – also accounting for Thames Freeport and Afghan Resettlement Plan

References

<https://www.lgcplus.com/uncategorized/councils-face-2-5bn-funding-shortfall-next-year-lga-warns-06-07-2021/> (LGC, 2021)

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57720900> (BBC, 2021)

Part 1: Summary of the last financial year's performance of the department & economic resilience position – including reserves and investment activity (not including COVID-specific activity)

CORPORATE FINANCE

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

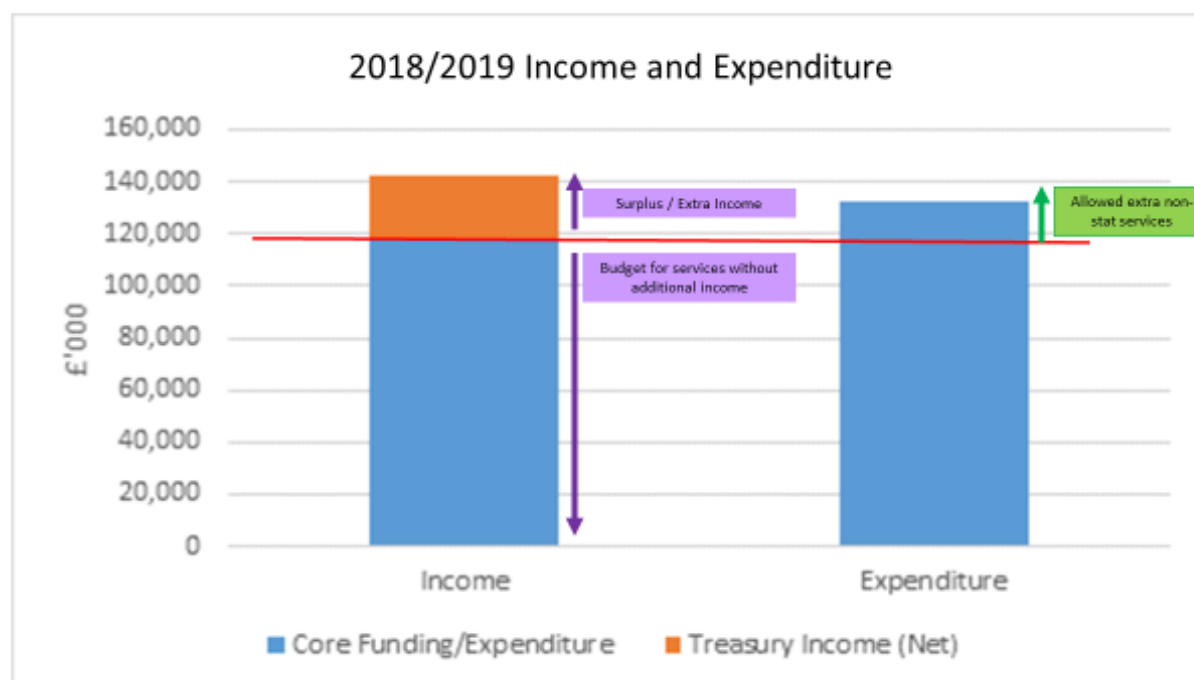
Corporate Finance lead on the promotion and delivery of good financial management to ensure that the council's financial position is managed appropriately and public money is safeguarded.

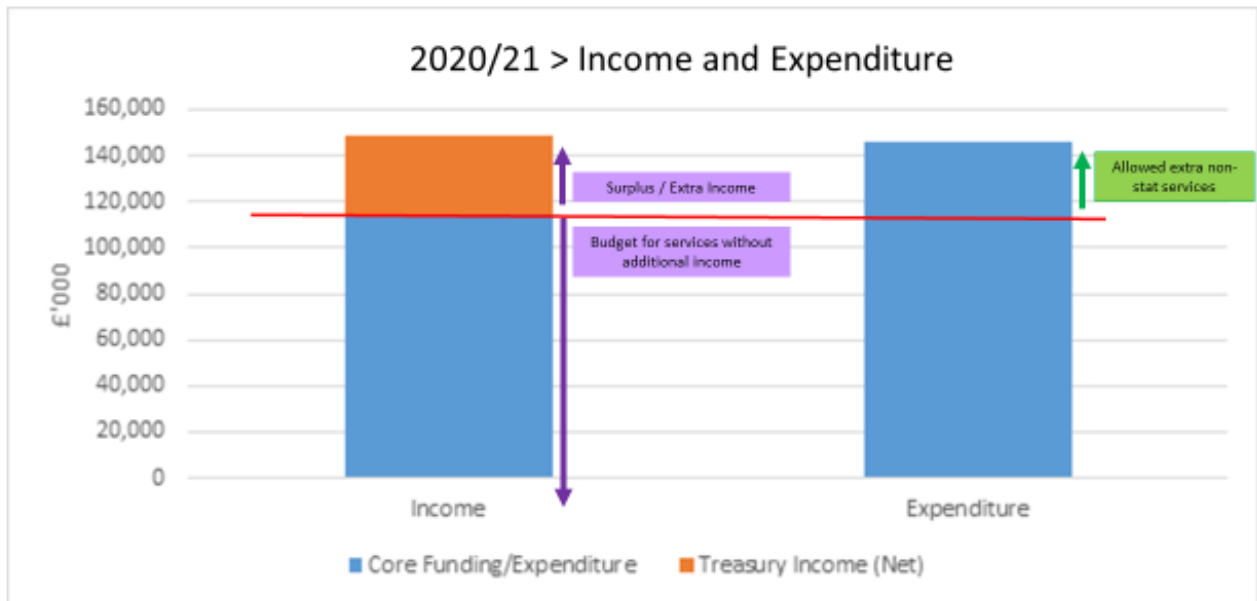
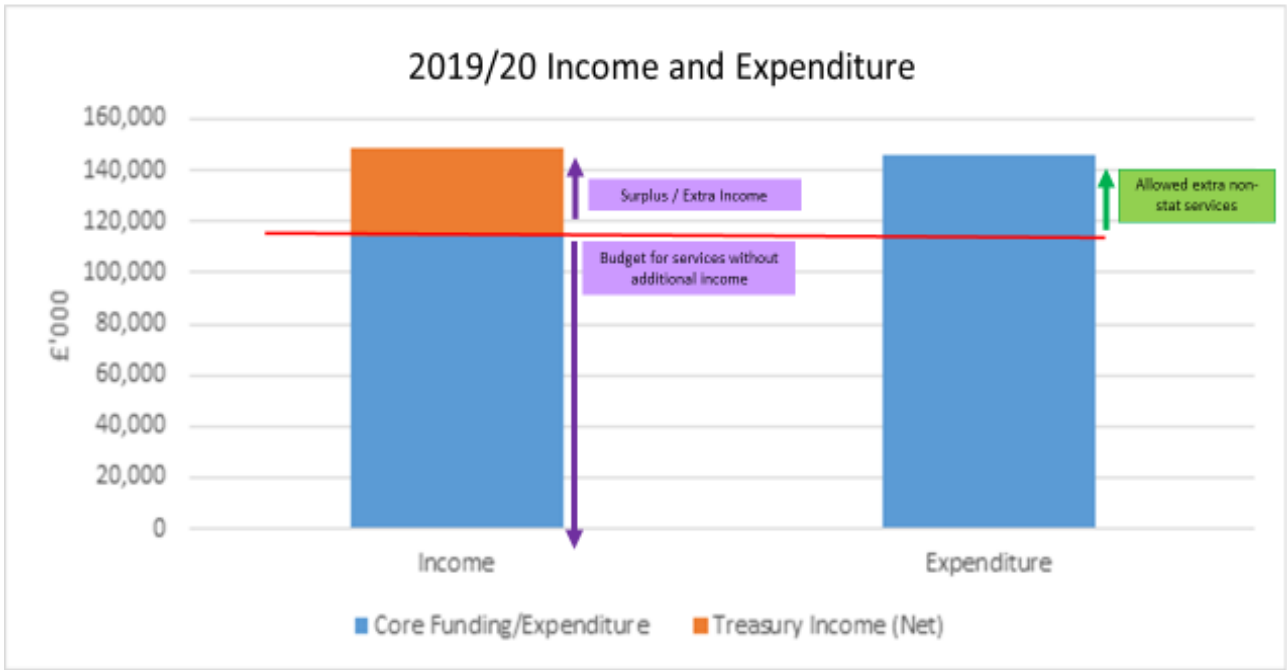
► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12M / PERFORMANCE:

Despite the evolutions of the last 22 months, the long-term financial plan of Thurrock Council is to continue its objective of becoming self-sufficient from national government grant funding, albeit now having to adjust the pace in which it does that. Thurrock, like other councils, had to innovate to support the economic recovery objectives that the government had to undertake since the turn of the last decade.

A combination of service reforms completed at a considerate pace, interest receivable from the investment approach (circa £115,000,000), and a commercial focus, helped Thurrock deliver high quality services to residents; many public priorities above the statutory minimum required of a council, such as policing, social care, and improving our green and street and parks environment.

Before COVID-19, the approach enabled the Council to publish a three-year, balanced, Medium Term Financial Strategy - with projected surpluses totalling £5.531m over the subsequent three year period. This was in addition to the surpluses already generated since the inception of the Investment Strategy of over £9m in total. Pre COVID, the council assessed, year-on-year, the authority's financial wellbeing and the wider economic situation, in regards to taxation – and adopted all elements of the Adult Social Care precept, and averaged under-inflation general tax rises over the period of the last four years.





A once-in-a-century, adult-centric health crisis changed everything at the turn of switch, whilst the long-term effects on health and the economy can never be reset back to its original position overnight. The financial pressures faced by the Council continue to be further challenged by the ongoing impacts of Covid-19, which includes significant demand increases in both children's and adults' social care; an issue growing across the entire local government sector.

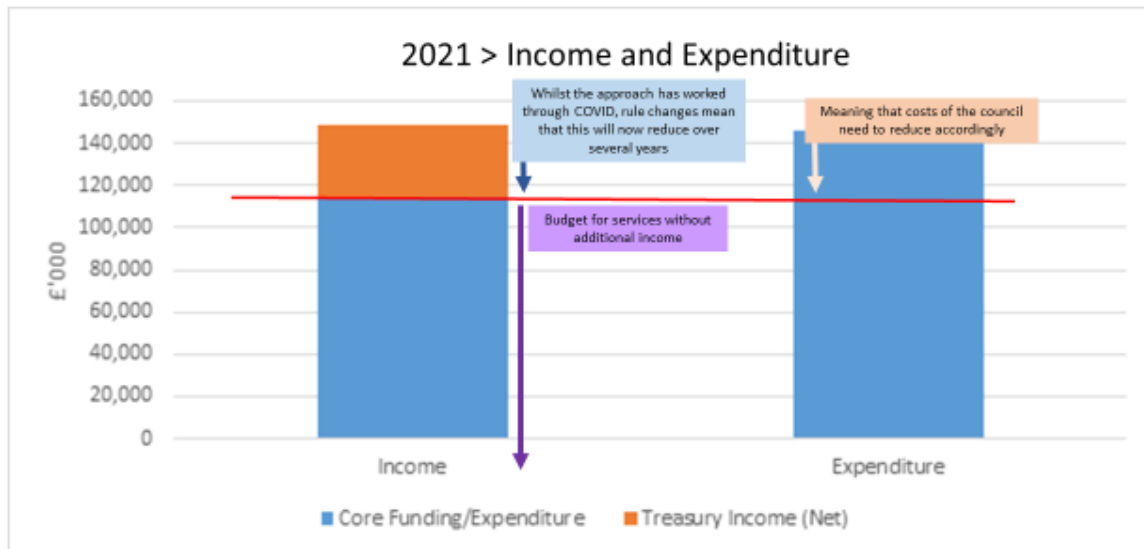
In addition and despite the approach successfully enduring the test of a 22-month international pandemic, and an approach that started initially in 2010 and then formalised in 2017, the Council continues to deprioritise the previously council-wide agreed investment approach as a result of rule changes driven at a national level on the backdrop of a number of local authorities whose investments did not perform as expected. There has, also, after three consecutive years of support from the council chamber (2017, 2018 and 2019) been a divergence of support for the approach locally.

For those who do not understand why Thurrock entered an investment approach - the Council's annual budget for 2020/21 is circa £150m – which is made up of £70m Council Tax, under £40m on Business Rates, £10m of grant funding, and circa £30m investment income. Without the £30m per annum from investment income, that a £30m gap; a gap successfully closed for four years through the approach members all signed up to.

To recap on the benefits of the approach:

- It generated £115m in income to fund services willed by the public (i.e. above the statutory minimum) – funding environment and green space improvements, extra police, as examples.
- The reserves for a 'rainy day' were very low at £8m in 2016, and the investments allowed them to rise to £24m
- Pre-COVID, the council had a three year balanced budget and a surplus of £5.531m over the three year period.

For the reasons further above, new investments that were planned and agreed as part of the medium term financial strategy have been removed from forecasts and existing investments will not be replaced. The removal of this funding support mechanism increases the funding gaps faced by the Council over the short to medium term. As such, the current investment surplus in excess of £30m per annum will be removed in a phased manner from the council's finances over the next decade adding to the annual pressures that every council faces.



Thurrock Council was able to balance its budget in the 2020/21 municipal year, and projects doing so for 2021/22, and is proposing a balanced budget for 2022/23.

Vulnerable residents were able to rely on Thurrock Council during this health crisis. And I want to levy my thanks to officials in this council, and partners who we work with in the private and voluntary sector, who helped secure the ability to serve those who needed us the most.

The government's allocation of £14.242m helped us bridge gaps from income streams from services which charge, such as registrars – as well as fund overspends critical to the local effort in providing the vulnerable the care they need, such as resilience payments into the adult care market.

Each department has also played its part, I want to pay a particular tribute to the social care and public health functions for what they faced, and overcame – along with departments who supported the common-cause, such as communities, the environment team – and all others.

The external audit process resulted in an unmodified opinion of the council's approach being issued in November 2020. The audits recognised the council's accounts and financial health with positive value for money opinions, and was the sixth such time this has occurred, and the second time from the currently appointed external auditor.

Below are a selection of points that I raised in my last report, which were identified as key 'reactions' to an emerging COVID world:

► RESERVES (incl. SOCIAL CARE RESERVE)

The table below sets out the Council's reserves by category:

31-Mar-20 £'000	Reserve Category	31-Mar-21 £'000
949	Education and Schools	1,151
-463	Adults, Community and Health	-4,250
-10,421	Other Earmarked Reserves	-9,426
-5,272	Transformation Reserve	-4,016
-6,162	Financial Resilience Reserve	-5,000
-11,000	General Fund Balance	-11,000
-5,852	HRA Related	-8,441
-38,221	TOTAL	-40,982

Notes to the reserves:

- Education and Schools – This includes individual schools' balances and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which are ring-fenced for specific use. The movement on this reserve reflects the outturn DSG position;
- Adults, Community and Health – This includes carry forward funding from the Public Health Grant and the Better Care Fund – these are also ring-fenced for specific use. This includes the social care reserve of £1.5m
- Grants carried forward – ring-fenced grant allocations for specific use in accordance with grant conditions;
- Other earmarked reserves – This captures all other earmarked reserves including ring-fenced accounts such as building control and planning;
- Transformation Reserve – This includes the surplus funding and balances set aside to enable specific transformation projects and manage the funding and delivery of these between financial periods;
- Financial Resilience Reserve – This reserve was primarily established to manage any funding implications associated with the fair funding review, transition into the new system of business rates retention and investments. The reserve also enables wider financial resilience to offset any wider impacts which may emerge
- The General Fund Balance – the balance has been maintained to protect the Council from unmitigated budget pressures; and
- HRA Related – a balance of £2.175m to protect the council from unmitigated budget pressures. The remaining balance represent the capital reserves supporting existing Council programmes.

► PREVIOUS SURPLUS ALLOCATIONS

The Cabinet informed officers that some of the surplus previously allocated in January 2020 could be re-profiled and used for COVID-19 related pressures, preserving the Lower Thames Crossing effort and the policing commitments which we believe remain a resident priority during a crisis, or not.

All other surplus allocations were absorbed in combatting the COVID-effort.

► CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The council performed a full-review of the capital programme in response to the anticipated financial impact of the pandemic and schemes totalling £28m were paused for further consideration. This included the Riverside Business Centre, Thameside Refurbishment works and a range of specific enhancements to existing Council assets including the existing Civic centre. Furthermore the Stonehouse Park scheme was not progressed following further assessment of the feasibility of this scheme. This delay and reassessment reduced the Council's MRP bill in the short term and supported additional funding for priority schemes such as the Grays Underpass and Stanford-le-Hope Station.

2020 saw the start of a review of the council's housebuilding objectives, and the models in which it believes are needed to deliver essential houses for the next generations of Thurrock people, work that continued into 2021. It is now the intention of the council to commence with a number of schemes through the Thurrock Regeneration Limited model, along with working with external partners to recognised housebuilding opportunity (in arrangements such as JV's etc.).

► PLANNING TO REFORM SERVICES – SERVICES OF THE FUTURE

We need to adjust to work in a post-COVID world, and further detail on the structure of these changes can be found in Part 3 of this report, and as heard at various reports since 2020.

► FUTURE: SUPPORTING COMMUNITY ASSETS IN THE LONG-TERM

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

Thurrock continues to provide funding for parts of the VCS sector, and will be moving to extend the governance arrangements around the issuing of funds for community projects for the forthcoming year (i.e. CEDF, VSDF), providing officers more time to perform post-COVID reflections of this funding source.

► LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

In 2020/21, the administration ruled that to perform a review the LCTS scheme in the middle of an adult-centric pandemic, would be premature, and could fail to account for post-COVID realities. As such, this work was deferred. Subsequently, the LCTS expenditure increased by £1.5m following the increase in claimants as a result of COVID-19 in 2021/22. The case load of working age LCTS claimants changed by + 9% with an overall change of +4.3% in 2020/21. It should be noted that LCTS claimant levels have now normalised at near to pre-

pandemic levels. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny agreed the 2022/23 scheme at their meeting in November 2021.

► INVESTMENT ACTIVITY

To date (inclusive of the entire COVID-19 period since March 2020) the approach enabled the council to fund an additional £115 million worth of public services which would have otherwise been cut rapidly in 2016. The interest income continues to support the delivery of the council's core services and priorities.

The position in respect of borrowing and investments as at 31 December 2021 was:

	£m
Gross Debt	1.475
Less:	
Covid- Related borrowing	(0.050)
Investments	(0.981)
Net Debt	0.444

The forecast position in respect of borrowing and investments as at 31 March 2022 is as set out below and reflects the reductions to investments alongside further investment in the capital programme in respect of General Fund and HRA schemes.

	£m
Gross Debt	1.460
Less:	
Investments	(0.944)
Net Debt	0.466

The impact of COVID restrictions highlighted the likely loss of income for those authorities who purchased, for example, shopping centres, airports or retail parks. Some councils are reporting significant income losses. The administration have always maintained that owning property investments leaves a council with long term fixed borrowing costs alongside variable income streams. This potential risk is not the case for Thurrock where the investments have been in bonds with a municipal relation ; where the drive to increase investment in renewable energy schemes is well documented at a national level and, incidentally, reflects the council's position of declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019.

I am pleased that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to my request, when I attended their meeting in July 2021, to conclude member's request of establishing a constituted investment committee arrangement by adding this onto its 2021/22 work programme. There have been two meetings of a 'shadow' group – held on 15/9/2021 and

10/12/2021. Information from independent financial advisors, Camdor Consultants, was provided at these sessions. There have also been a number of updates provided through email. Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee will hear the options for a constituted arrangement in January 2022.

As an aside, and being a council which declared a climate emergency through a motion from former councillor, Oliver Gerrish, I thought that this would interest not just the enthusiasts in the council for a greener-nation, but the wider public who are advocating and calling for public bodies to positively reduce carbon in our environment - officers did some work to quantify the positive impacts on the UK carbon footprint from the green energy assets the council has invested in.

In terms of the solar portfolio, Thurrock has had it confirmed - from external bodies - that the portfolio has generated the following positive benefits:

The portfolio produced 516,000MWh during 2020. That is enough clean electricity to power c. 178,000 homes for an entire year (based on Ofgem's 'typical UK domestic household' average annual electricity consumption). For context, that is making enough green energy to supply Thurrock twice over each year; and

It has avoided c. 222,000 tonnes of carbon emissions in 2020 (this is based off a comparison to a mix of 'traditional' fossil fuels). The amount of CO2 tonnes saved, equates to taking c. 71,000 diesel/petrol cars off the road for an entire year.

A truly outstanding contribution to the green-objectives of our government, and all of us, who believe a greener-nation and planet is possible.

As and when more interesting information about the positive impacts on reducing the nation's carbon footprint, we shall be sure to share them.

REVENUES & BENEFITS/COLLECTIONS

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Covid Financial Support

As with many other areas, COVID brought significant new challenges to the Revenues and Benefits service which required the team to adapt and balance the 'business as usual activities', to ensure the service delivery remained effective and appropriate within the pandemic, whilst reprioritising some of the planned 'development activities' to provide the team with the capacity to deliver the various vital additional support initiatives put in place both locally, and by the government to assist residents and businesses through the restrictions.

I am not the best at recognising performance; often defaulting to what we need to focus on that hasn't gone so well – but I do pay thanks to the Revenues and Benefits department, who skilfully, dutifully, and speedily got this support to vulnerable residents and enterprise in rapid speed. I saw first-hand the efforts the department went to, to do the right thing, at the speed that they did, consuming weekends to make magic happen in the first months of the

pandemic. The work the department did meant that businesses and households could survive.

We owe you many thanks for working at haste, and with accuracy, to help those you helped, a summary of which is outlined below:

- Business Rates Grants and Reliefs

Over 2,000 Thurrock businesses have been provided with one, or a combination of, the COVID financial support schemes administered by the council. The total value of support provided under these schemes since March 20 stands at £115m (£72m BR Relief, £43m Grants).

Whilst the majority of the above schemes were required to operate to fixed Government criteria, the Council was required to introduce a discretionary scheme to provide either additional support to those in receipt of the standard schemes or to provide support to a wider range of businesses not eligible for the standard schemes.

The local scheme was developed in conjunction with the Thurrock Business Board and took a phased approach to allow flexibility to ensure that; support was distributed rapidly to those most needing it, whilst allowing flexibility to adapt to the rapidly evolving situation.

Whilst the Council initially received funding of £5.035m to support local schemes through to March 22, as the situation worsened the Gov. urged swift distribution of these funds to local business and subsequently announced further conditional top up funding for councils who has successfully distributed 100% of the initial funding by 30 July 2020.

It is a mark of the success of the scheme that Thurrock introduced that the Council was one of the 1st to qualify for top up funding and as a result received an additional £1.3m to assist local business with ongoing initiatives through to March 2022.

- Hardship Payments

The Government provided 'hardship funding' to enable the council to provide an additional reduction to Working Age Claimants, in receipt of the Local Council Tax Scheme of £150. In total over 8,600 amended bills were issued to claimants with a total value of additional support provided of £1.2m.

- Self-Isolation payments

In order to assist low paid workers to be able to self-isolate when instructed to do so, the Government introduced a fixed £500 support payment for the period of isolation. The scheme operated largely to government eligibility criteria and to date 1,296 grants totalling £648k have been issued to eligible Thurrock residents. The Government has recently confirmed this scheme will be extended through to March 22.

- Free School Meals

Due to many people facing financial uncertainty and changes in circumstances at short notice due to Covid, the Awards Team experienced a vast increase in applications for Free School Meals.

This combined with the Covid Winter Food Fund implemented by Government in response to the crisis, has seen applications submitted increase over 60% from pre-covid volumes (1,824 in 19/20 to 2,989 in 20/21). The increase has continued into 2021, and is currently forecast to finish on similar volumes to 2020.

COLLECTIONS (Council Tax/Business Rates and Sundry Debt)

Clearly the significant financial burden/uncertainty placed on many residents and businesses due to restrictions and the restrictions themselves courts, social distancing meant that we had to carefully consider how to maintain income to support vital services, whilst ensuring collection action for residents and businesses was appropriate and supportive during this difficult time.

Throughout the year, the Leader and I highlighted our commitment to working with any resident who reaches out to try and establish a way of help in regards to council tax payment.

As a result, many standard recovery stages were paused and replaced by tailored 'reaching out' initiatives to ensure that those experiencing difficulties in this unprecedented period were provided with the opportunity to seek assistance including the opportunity to revise payments plans where appropriate.

This approach fits squarely within the associated principle agreed at the Fair Debt Summit in 2018 to support those who "wanted to pay, but couldn't". The outturns listed further within this report provide testament to the success of this approach, with complaints held at minimal levels, and impacts on collection significantly mitigated,

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

Residents should be aware that council tax – unlike water bills etc. – carry legal sanctions, and is considered a 'priority debt' by the CAB. Non-payment can include committal in the long-term – and so we want to do what we can to ensure that we help people avoid collection action wherever possible. To do that, we ask that residents to reach out and ask for help. We will do what we can to help.

Complaints received regarding the debt collection process continue to remain low and in total last year there were 18 complaints received in relation to the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry debt, 3 of which were upheld.

► FAIR DEBT SUMMIT

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

For the benefit of recap, the Fair Debt Summit event brought together key partners across various sectors, voluntary sectors and groups with a view to doing something different. It sought to identify ways to help people help themselves, avoid debts of any type, and also

ensure that our collections process is fair to those who want to pay but find themselves unable to, and not lenient on those that can pay but simply choose not to.

The aims of the Fair Debt Summit were simple:

- 1) Help those who 'want to pay, but can't' - identify help where we can (while recognising that everyone ultimately needs to pay their dues)
- 2) Tackle those who 'can pay, but won't' - be tougher where we may need to be with those who play the system
- 3) Help provide some education for a younger generation who have yet to experience an economic downturn like the last recession of 2008-9.

As a result of the summit, a wide ranging action plan was produced. The impacts of 2020 led to less progress on this than I would have otherwise liked – owing largely to the team being occupied with processing grants etc. However, on the backdrop of unparalleled support from HM Government to the people of Thurrock - with the Job Retention Scheme (furlough) benefits, and the aforementioned social restriction business impact grants, being of particular note – this has meant we could see how COVID-19 impacted peoples work position, and further inform our Fair Debt approach.

A further report on this initiative was received favourably by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November with the following recommendations agreed:

- 1.1 To note the initiatives delivered since the Fair Debt Summit.**
- 1.2 To review and comment on the performance.**
- 1.3 To review and comment on the draft revised Fair Debt Policy.**
- 1.4 To endorse that the Council uses all legal powers available to it to recover money owed by those who “can pay but won’t” including committal.**

Investment in new technology to help those who 'want to pay, but can't'

- As members will remember from my previous report, a 'Single View of Debt' solution had recently been implemented to enable officers to have a holistic view of amounts owed to the council by debtors and allow a view of potential vulnerability by bringing together debt information held across multiple different council systems into a single view. This was a ground breaking initiative which won an award at the Public Finance Awards.

After a pause to allow the team the capacity to deliver the vital financial support to residents and businesses, phase 2 of the project will recommence to look at how the system can be used to further encourage early contact and resolution by widening our outbound contact channels from traditional letter, to include where appropriate SMS, Email, self-serve web access, web chats etc. – this will enable residents in debt to “reach” out, without a formal setting, but with the same impact and outcome.

Education of our younger generation

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

This was ahead of COVID-19 changing everything in March 2020.

A report on this initiative was received favourably by Corporate Overview & Scrutiny in September with the following recommendations agreed:

- 1.1 Corporate O&S to support a joint working approach between finance and education to provide holistic opportunities to address debt management in schools.**
- 1.2 To recommend to Cabinet the continuing support for financial literacy to remain a key focus of the curriculum offer across schools and colleges.**
- 1.3.1 To 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**

► COUNCIL TAX - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

Within Thurrock we currently send a Council Tax bill to around 70,000 properties for a net value of £88m. This income stream is critical to fund the services the Council provide and therefore it is vital that to support effective collection and customer service we maintain timeliness, and accuracy of billing, processing and assessment of applications and query resolution.

Operational costs of the department have not been impacted, despite the significant additional burdens placed on the team as a result of the pandemic. Timeliness of processing and accuracy levels also remains strong with most queries or applications resolved within the week they are received.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

For 2020/21, as a result of the pandemic the national average in year collection rate fell to 95.7%, however within Thurrock the reduction was largely mitigated by the additional support activities put in place, achieving an in year collection rate of 98%. Again this result places Thurrock amongst the best performing councils.

Complaints regarding council tax and business rates billing have continued to reduce with 37 being received last year compared to 38 in the preceding year. Of the 37 received in 2020/21 five were upheld. Again this is a low ratio, considering the 70,000 properties billed.

► COUNCIL TAX – FUTURE

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

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

For business rates we currently bill circa 4,300 businesses for a total net value of £111m (Includes reduction for 2021/22 Covid reliefs of £19m), under current funding arrangements in total Thurrock keeps approx. £36m of this income.

This team were also responsible for the distribution of the COVID Business Grants and Reliefs highlighted earlier in my report.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Again collection rates nationally were significantly impacted by the pandemic with the national average reduced to 93%, however within Thurrock, again the reduction was largely mitigated by the additional support activities put in place, achieving an in year collection rate of 96.8%. Again this result places Thurrock amongst the best performing councils.

► NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) - FUTURE

For the current year the team will continue to focus on maximising income but ensuring those entitled to support received assistance. Clearly the Business Rates team will also have a significant role to play in administering the new reliefs associated with Thames Freeport.

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

The rollout of Universal Credit which commenced in Thurrock in March 2015 for single people, progressed to full service in October 2017. Under full service new working age applicants including those that have had a break in their claim, are now required to claim support for housing costs through Universal Credit rather than Housing Benefits. The effect of the pandemic meant that a large number of residents experienced a change in circumstances which resulted in their migration to Universal Credit.

As at May 2021 (the most recent figures available from DWP) within Thurrock there were 8,295 universal credit claimants in receipt of Housing support.

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

For the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, as a result of COVID claimant numbers increased from 9,863 in March 2020, to a peak of 10,421 in November 2020, however claimant numbers have started to fall from this to 10,024 as at the end of August. Whilst this improvement is encouraging, we remain vigilant for further impacts on the scheme as a result of support schemes ending.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Despite significant additional administrative workload in relation to Universal Credit and COVID support the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support remains extremely good with new claims being processed in an average of 10 Days and changes of

circumstance in less than a week. Recent figures from the DWP also place accuracy levels for Thurrock within the upper quartile of authorities.

Complaints regarding the service remain low with only 11 received in 2020/21 out of a total of 10,000 claimants, 4 complaints were upheld. This is another very pleasing result.

► HOUSING BENEFITS - FUTURE

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

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

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

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

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

► External Income Monitoring

The Commercial Board monitored the performance of external income across all Council areas. This level of scrutiny and discipline generates significant returns for the Council, However in the financial year 2020/21, gross external income from fees & charges reduced significantly in response to the pandemic. This was common to all local authorities where there were significant reductions in income across a range of services including the theatre, parking, private citizenships and music services to schools for example. A proportion of the lost income was recovered from Central Government (broadly 70% of the income loss net of any cost savings) totalling £1.070m. The combined position, alongside associated cost savings from not providing the relevant services, supported the balanced general fund position delivered by the Council.

The income compensation scheme remains in place in quarter 1 of 2021/22 but there is an ongoing concern over the stability of income that continues to be monitored by the commercial board and directorates as part of the financial forecasting.

The department continue to work to deliver additional income through enhancing and widening existing services and the development of new opportunities to support the longer term financial stability of the Council. This remains more challenging as the pandemic continues and alongside the wider financial challenges faced by the Council.

► Gross External Income from fees & charges

Directorate	2020/21 budget (£)	2020/21 Outturn (£)	Variance to budget (£)
Adults, Housing and Health	(423,247)	(310,556)	112,691
Children's Services	(1,399,570)	(557,909)	841,661
Housing General Fund	(572,959)	(608,631)	(35,672)
Public Realm	(4,724,119)	(4,738,381)	(14,262)
Resources & Place Delivery	(9,183)	(71,026)	(61,843)
Strategy; Engagement & Growth	(958,065)	(140,339)	817,726
	(8,087,143)	(6,426,842)	1,660,301

► COVID 19 – WHAT WE DID TO SUPPORT PEOPLE

RISK & INSURANCE

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

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

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The Risk and Insurance Team have been able to sustain the service largely unaffected during the pandemic situation through agile working practices and the insurance arrangements operated in line with the renewed contract for 2019/20. The Strategic Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register continues to be refreshed annually and has been regularly reviewed and reported to Standards & Audit Committee, Directors Board and Performance Board in line with the Risk and Opportunity Management Framework.

► PERFORMANCE

The council continues to use the ALARM/CIPFA Risk Management framework to test the council's performance against good practice. For the 2020 review the Council attained level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best). This along with the 2018 Internal Audit reviews of the service which resulted in a green report for Insurance and level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best) for Risk Management provide assurance to the council that the Insurance and Risk Management functions are effective and performing well.

Part 2: COVID-19 Specific Activity

► OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

As outlined in my opening commentary, HM Government have helped Thurrock unequivocally during this crisis. This section of my report articulates 22 months of activity the Finance directorate put in during the COVID-19 crisis.

The government has granted Thurrock Council grants, to the total sum of £14.238m, to help it discharge its usual duties as a council, and the emerging COVID-19 pandemic pressures (based on timescales between the dates between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021). This has funded a wider ranging response across the Council to address the impacts experienced in all services. There have been significant pressures addressed in adult social care, homelessness, children's social care while providing wider support for essential services such as the schools transport and wider bus services for residents.

The ongoing impacts of the pandemic continue to be assessed in 2021/22 and further funding of £4.853m has been provided to fund the longer term impacts of the pandemic.

It should be noted that 2020/21 impacts on Council Tax and Business Rates income were offset by specific funding to support residents in the payment of Council Tax and through the wider business rates relief scheme offered available to businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. This funding effectively supported these income streams and wider impacts on council tax and business rates are managed through the core system in subsequent years.

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

In the wider national context, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided specific funding to address COVID-19 financial impacts totalling £4.6bn. Further measures have been taken to support the Council and the wider business community as set out below:

- £2.3bn has been provided directly to CCG's to support local authorities enhance the hospital discharge process.
- £1.9bn for local authorities to ensure care homes can continue to halt the spread of COVID-19 by helping them cover the costs of implementing infection control measures to reduce transmission and implement rapid testing of staff and residents. In 2020/21 the Council was allocated £2.207m to distribute to care homes to implement infection control measures that reduce the spread of COVID19. There is additional funding in place for 2021/22.
- DHSC provided £0.300bn for test and trace services and subsequently £1.4bn in contain outbreak management funding (targeted at high risk areas initially and then more widely as the country moved from local to national lockdowns in early 2021. The funding is intended to help each local authority develop tailored outbreak control plans, working with local NHS and other stakeholders. The Council will receive circa £1m. This was then increased with additional contain outbreak management funding of £4.2m which supports activity to the end of 2021/22 a range of services to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic
- Funding to tackle rough sleeping of £105m. The Council received funding of £0.34m in total and since 23 March 2020, the council undertook initial homelessness assessments

for approximately 720 households who were experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. 83 individuals who were reported to be experiencing rough sleeping were housed directly through 'Everyone In'. It is noted there was significant additional costs incurred in 2020/21 and into 2021/22 as demand for services remains high. This cost is met from COVID grant funding but remains an ongoing

- The Council worked with Essex partners to ensure there was sufficient mortuary capacity available across the Essex, Thurrock and Southend areas – which cost £0.210m

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

HM Government supported local government in a number of ways above the support funding it has paid out, including:

- An upfront payment of the Business Rates Grant to support cash flow;
- The deferral of £2.6bn in business rates payments to central government from April 2020 until July 2020 to support cash flow; and
- £850m of existing social care grants to be paid up front in a move to support cash flow.

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

- A Hardship fund of £500m for those receiving Council Tax Support, of which an increase of claimants was inevitable; this led to a maximum of a one-off £150 discount being allocated to each recipient of LCTS. £1.2m received by the Council
- £1.8bn of Business Rates Relief; This equated to £52.6m of relief primarily to support business in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. An estimated further £20m of relief has been provided in 2021/22.
- £18bn of business grants targeted at business required to close including Rural and Small Businesses as well as the Leisure, Hospitality and Leisure sectors to local authorities in England. This came via several mechanisms as the pandemic evolved and;
- A further £581m to provide support to those businesses with ongoing premises costs but are not on the rating list. This is a discretionary scheme that must be set by individual councils.

In the Thurrock context, this has meant the following:

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

changes to business rate accounts for the industries who are beneficiaries of the government's policies.

- 2,401 businesses paid no business rates in 2020/21 due to the Small Business and Rural Rate Reliefs;
- Business rate relief was extended to all businesses within the Retail, Hospitality and Leisure sector with a rateable value between £15,000 and £51,000;
- Broadly the same businesses had the reliefs extended into quarter 1 of 2021/22 and receive a reduction of circa 33% for the remainder of the year. This equates to circa £20m
- A grant scheme covering all businesses that are in receipt of one of the reliefs above and a further local discretionary scheme designed to support businesses who did not meet the original criteria of the grant scheme, but are able to demonstrate COVID-19 impacts on their business viability. To date, over 2000 business have been paid out to the value of circa £43m.
- Additional subsidies have been paid to local bus providers to ensure services remained open to residents at a reduced level during the lockdown process – this is projected to cost £0.23m over the 4 month period; and
- The Council was allocated £0.156m of funding to support a range of practical safety measures to reopen high streets safely including new signs, street markings and temporary barriers.
- The Department of Transport allocated the Council a total of £0.978m for the emergency active travel fund to support increased infrastructure for cycling and walking.

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

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

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

The focus was on:

- stabilising the care market;
- ensuring emergency care facilities had sufficient capacity for people being discharged from hospital;
- providing more financial resilience in the care sector;
- taking preventative actions to reduce hospital admissions;
- meeting the additional demand costs;
- managing staffing levels during the pandemic; and

- ensuring there is sufficient Personal Protective equipment available to staff.

This has been reflected in:

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

The financial resilience funding to residential care providers and an uplift in homecare costs totalled £1.1m. Following an initial reduction in occupancy demand for services has subsequently increased and funding of £1.5m from the covid funding has been required to meet this cost within 2020/21 and 2021/22. Additional staffing costs have been significant during the pandemic and continue to be managed within grant funding. Demand levels in the sector continue to be monitored with concern over the ongoing costs alongside inflationary pressures faced by the sector and with covid support ending in 2021/22.

Care homes were supported to meet the increased costs and ongoing requirements around infection control, rapid testing and workforce planning with grant funding from the Department of Health and Social Care totalling £2.8m (administered and passported through the Council) and intervention avoided significant market failure as the sector recovers from the pandemic and adapts to a changed market.

The government tasked Local Authorities to meet needs in the period before food deliveries could be achieved. The total cost of the operation to date is £0.1m to provide food to those without family support.

► CHILDREN'S SERVICES – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

The key impact is the availability of placements for children looked after and is a critical function of the local authority. Placements have increased as the pandemic has developed and the service is experiencing significant additional demand. In addition there are further impacts through an increase in the complexity of need in some specific cases. In 2021/22, ten additional looked after children have exceeded the budgeted level and the change in placements available has created a potential cost pressure of £2.9m. Wider impacts have seen 6 additional remand cases, with a projected cost of £0.5m in 2021/22, linked to wider local social issues as lockdown measures eased. Another significant pressure of £0.475m in 2020/21 has arisen through cases initially brought through the Head Start Housing model which have evolved into more complex after care cases. This pressure continues to be monitored and will be met by the grant funding available in 2021/22.

Funding from the wider grant totalling £1.425m enabled these pressures to be met in 2020/21 and further funding has been allocated to the growing pressures in 2021/22 and this remains a high risk area in the current year. The wider significant risk is that the overall level of additional demand continues as the support funding ends. The service continues to

assess options to manage all risk areas alongside the delivery of savings to support the financial position.

Wider impacts include providing care leavers and children looked after with laptops to access education and working with schools to provide ongoing education to the children of key workers. Further additional funding of £0.458m support for home to school transport has been provided to enable safe travel in the context of social distancing requirements.

The Finance portfolio enables the Children's Services directorate, and other services, such as Housing, to realise their objectives and ambitions for a best-in-class care service for looked after children. That said, the Fair Debt Summit, specifically the education component, was designed to help equip all young persons entering the world of work, rents, mortgages and bills. The work was designed on the back of a Summit which had attending former-cared for children in attendance, who shared their experiences – and importantly, shared what they hoped the Fair Debt Summit could help improve in terms of outcomes for looked after children. There is more detail on this in this report, and full detail can be found by looking at the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny specific paper on the education-element of the Fair Debt Summit heard September 2021.

► OTHER SIGNIFICANT EXPENDITURE – OVERVIEW OF COVID-19 EFFORT

The Council has wider additional costs arising from the response to COVID-19. The Council initially reconfigured the Household Waste and Recycling Centre to address social distancing requirements and enable the facility to reopen. This required detailed traffic management planning to support this at a cost of £0.1m

The response to the pandemic directly impacted on the delivery of savings plans for 2020/21 and totalled £0.9m.

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

Income

As noted above the shortfall in fees and charges was £1.66m, of which key areas include:

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

The financial impact of not progressing with the TRL scheme at Belmont Road cost £2.4m. Owing to the fragility of the TRL model, the administration instructed a full house-building review be completed, with a combined model of delivery including TRL, JV's etc. The delay has led to a strengthened TRL model, with improved governance, and there will be larger requirement to update key stakeholders (i.e. General Services Committee) moving forward, so to ensure TRL's progress is monitored better moving forward.

Part 3: Reforming for the future to provide, or at the least; the best core services for our residents in a post-2020 world.

After a difficult year, the administration party received the highest popular vote in the 2021 local election, and this administration take the duty that residents have trusted us with seriously and dutifully. We can and will grow into a council which offers key Services of the Future.

We have a choice – we either tax above referendum limits to pay for the additional services we have had, or we reform, change and slim down the size of the council to avoid the burden being borne onto residents. The administration are clear that taxes should not be the default approach to reforming the finances of this council – and believes in cutting the size of our cloth also being essential.

The administration stands ready to lead this borough through this challenge. Residents expect politics to be put aside, and we hope to work constructively with all parties in the reforms ahead.

The following list of future initiatives, projects and focuses which the department will be focused on in 2021 and 2022 (and beyond):

► FUTURE: Transforming services for the future - providing, at the least, the best core services for our residents (including workforce changes)

Thurrock Council is a low-tax council, already paying less than over £170 on council tax than wider Essex areas. Southend Council – our nearest statistical neighbour on a like-by-like service basis - receive circa £15m more per annum than Thurrock in council tax to pay for services that people use and depend.

To keep tax rises as low as possible, we need to take tough decisions so we can avoid the vulnerable going without care, and to build back after this pandemic in a way that is sustainable for the future. This means reforms to services, and change, will be larger.

Thurrock must now look at its Vision (People, Place, Prosperity), and identify what services it can and should provide in a post-2020 world; and therefore what and what it will no longer provide now it must be leaner; and how efficient services must operate from a resourcing and a process perspective.

The council, unanimously, previously voted for a Thurrock Vision which recognised a Fewer Buildings, Better Services model. As such, reforms are being put into train which are based on such a concept.

The Digital Age is upon us – smart-phones, iPads, and laptops. Technology is all around us, we use it to pay bills, tell the time, plan our social lives, and learn. Internally, and externally, the council will look to use technology to increase connectivity and improve efficiency

Vacancies and roles considered non-critical, or aligned to either concluding capital projects, or projects not being taken forward now, will not be replaced or maintained when current projects conclude. Some staff who will find their service reformed, or capital projects no longer being taken forward, may find their role is no longer required in a leaner organisation.

Overview & Scrutiny are engaged for input into plans under consideration through the remainder of this municipal year, ahead of the 2022 Budget Meeting

► **FUTURE: Increase housebuilding and contribute to revenue income (TRL)**

2020 and 2021 saw a review of the council's housebuilding objectives, and the models in which it believes are needed to deliver essential houses for the next generations of Thurrock people.

It is the intention of the council to commence with a number of schemes through the Thurrock Regeneration Limited model, along with working with external partners to recognised housebuilding opportunity (in arrangements such as JV's etc.).

This will help us provide more housing; more social housing using old, neglected, under-utilised estate, and generate an income from those development and renting and selling proceeds.

► **FUTURE: Assets – the future of presently-uneconomic, or unsustainable assets / estate which should not be owned by a local authority**

Some assets, capital projects and services are those that fall outside of the remit of what a local authority can do in a post-COVID world.

The council is assessing assets under the Retain-Release-Reuse model versus the Services of the Future concept. Assets which sit on its asset book, which in the event of being uneconomic, at-risk of requiring significant capital investment and associated revenue costs, or estate which should not be owned by a local authority (namely public houses, retail units etc.), will be put forward for release by the council to interested groups first, and then the open market if a deal with an interested group that is mutually agreeable can be agreed. There have been some positive movements on this front – and whilst no outcome can be guaranteed, there is a commitment from the council to work positively and constructively with such groups to find win-win solutions; for everyone.

This administration is focused heavily on retaining services in localities; but potentially, in different – and in many instances – better surroundings.

► **FUTURE: Income generation (non-investment related)**

Usual tax-raised/fees income were adverse receipts, albeit, much was compensated from government grant support. There will be on-going Fees and Charges/Rents Sense-Check for a post-2020 world approach to commercial models and realities (potentially tapered fees etc. / forecasted).

► **FUTURE: Thames Freeport**

The department will work with internal colleagues and external partners, with Thames Freeport, to unlock borough infrastructure investment through retained NNDR.

► **FUTURE: Further use of reserves**

It is anticipated that £8m of the increased reserves may be used to combat the aftershock issues of 2020 and the fiscal re-engineering activity required. There are no current plans to use the general fund balance, which is presently aimed to be maintained at £11m. When the fiscal re-engineering effort is completed over the next couple of years, the administration will seek to recommence the rebuilding of the reserves position to pre-COVID levels.

► **FUTURE: Fair Debt Summit**

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’, and those who “want to pay, but can’t”.

Fair Debt Summit – those who “want to pay, but can’t”.

As noted further back in this report, this will be a key focus – specifically around embedding the Single View of Debt initiative, technology exclusions to help financially include those who may be struggling, and publishing/embedding the revised Fair Debt Policy with its various discretionary elements, and build with the contributions of the Citizens Advice Bureau, and others who attended the Fair Debt Summit.

I am pleased that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to my request, when I attended their meeting in July 2021, to add this essential work onto its work programme for 2021/22, planned for November 2021. The Committee sponsored the approaches, and we are mobilising for the delivery of these newly agreed objectives.

Fair Debt Summit – those who “can pay, but won’t”.

It is the department’s intention to target persistent, habitual council tax evaders; people who can pay, but chose not to pay into the delivery of services they use, as much as every other tax payer who do pay their council tax.

This will include utilising the committal process, in an effort to conclude habitual tax evasion from those who can pay, but chose to not pay.

Fair Debt Summit – developing financial capability in work-ready age groups.

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

A money management programme was developed by Thurrock Adult Community College (TACC), and was piloted in a number of schools ahead of COVID-19 changing everything in March 2020.

I am pleased that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to my request, when I attended their meeting in July 2021, to add this essential review onto its work programme for 2021/22, which it reviewed at its meeting in September 2021, and sponsored the work, and in some regard, helped expand the work. There will be a concerted effort from us to begin to roll out this essential and valuable education content on a wide-spread basis across the borough, now social restrictions are easing.

► **FUTURE: Investment Committee**

I am pleased that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to my request, when I attended their meeting in July 2021, to add this essential review onto its work programme for 2021/22, and to conclude the request of all members of establishing a constituted investment committee arrangement. That meeting is being held on 18th January 2022.

► **FUTURE: Local Council Tax Scheme**

In 2020/21, the administration ruled that to perform a review the LCTS scheme in the middle of an adult-centric pandemic, would be premature, and could fail to account for post-COVID realities.

I am pleased that the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to my request, when I attended their meeting in July 2021, to add this essential review onto its work programme for 2021/22. The committee agreed in November to support the approach coming to January Full Council.

► **FUTURE: Council Tax**

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

In 2021/22, the council proposed a budget which allocated all tax to the prevailing adult-social care market need. It was critical and of good conscience to inject extra funding into protecting and caring for care for later-life adults, who were more impacted by COVID-19 than any other group, who occupy a service more impacted by an adult-centric health crisis than any other. That increase enabled the service to provide stable care in an instable environment.

In 2022/23, the proposed increase of 1.99% would be ring-fenced entirely for Children's Social Care – an area with ever growing pressure across the country, as it does also in Thurrock. Members will have seen recent headlines about when Children's Social Care goes wrong – this increase is of good conscience to inject extra funding a service to avoid a situation we have seen in other councils Children's Services happening to a child of Thurrock.

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

The Cabinet view is that tax rises alone should not replace the effort around service reform and other income generation.

► **FUTURE: Funding Reform**

The funding reform associated with NNDR has yet to be finalised. This is unlikely to take place in this financial year.

Fair Funding details were received of 2021, and analysis was completed ahead of the 2022 Budget Meeting in regards to its impacts.

FINANCE DIRECTORATE BUDGET CONTROL

► FINANCE FINANCIAL INFORMATION – 2020/21

Service Area	Full Year Budget £	Full Year Forecast £	Variance £
Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services	5,497,168	4,964,931	(532,237)*
Total	5,497,168	4,964,931	(532,237)

*Variance from the budget due to a combination of holding of vacant posts, improved housing benefits position and wider cost control measures

► TREASURY – 2020/21

	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Variance £000
Interest & Fees Payable on External Debt	16,986	15,553	(1,433)
Interest Receivable on Investments	(46,192)	(46,188)	5
Net Interest	(29,206)	(30,159)	(1,428)
MRP	8,867	8,867	(0)
Total	21,704	22,403	(699)

26 January 2022	ITEM: 16
Council	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure	
Report of: Councillor Andrew Jefferies, Portfolio Holder for Environment, Sports and Leisure	
This report is Public	

Introduction

This is my first annual report as Cabinet Member for Environment, Sport and Leisure, having taken over this portfolio in May 2021.

Throughout the pandemic the services within my portfolio have managed to provide a continued and effective service, flexing their schedules and operational activity to accommodate changing guidelines, ensuring welcoming and well-presented parks and open spaces, which have been vital to our residents and visitors in terms of recreation, leisure and sport.

Something I have in common with my predecessor is a continued ambition to see more trees planted in the borough. In response to Cllr Rigby's motion, to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, I will be inviting Ward Councillors to take part in planting a tree within their ward. A list of trees recommended by the Tree Officer will be distributed and once Ward Councillors have agreed upon the species and location of the tree, our Tree Team will carry out a suitability survey on the area chosen to ensure that the tree will thrive there.

In the period April 2020 to March 2021 72 trees were felled / removed, including 20 small saplings encroaching on private gardens (which will not be replaced). 42 large trees were planted and a total of 2000 whips, 1000 whips at Oak and Ash Plantation, and at Wickham Field, with Grant funding from "Trees for Climate Change" sourced from Thames Chase Community Forest. Due to Covid-19 there was a limited availability of trees from nurseries, resulting in a reduced planting figure for large trees compared to 2019-20, however I am pleased to advise this has now improved and to date 171 trees have been planted over this winter period.

A successful bid secured funding from the Forestry Commission from the Local Authorities Treescape fund of £285k, over a four-year period enabling more trees to be planted while working alongside and engaging with our local community groups.

Volumes of refuse being presented by residents continues to be high and although there were initial delays in the flatted/community buildings recycling roll out the project is now continuing at pace. In November Cabinet approved the new Waste Strategy, linking with changes anticipated to the Environment Bill. This year we will be introducing separated food waste collections, a requirement of the Environment Bill, aimed at improving recycling and impacts on the environment. Added to this, the draft Single Use Plastics policy will be considered by CGS O&S on 20th January and Cabinet in February, all these changes stemming from the excellent work of the cross-party Waste Working Group. Work is continuing at pace in terms of procuring vehicles to accommodate the separated food waste and to ensure capacity for the increase in waste seen over the last two years. Routes are being optimised and a new communication and education strategy being prepared for residents to ensure understanding and engagement with the changes to service, with the aim of increasing recycling going forward.

Clean and Green teams have demonstrated continued efficient and effective services with Keep Britain Tidy scores remaining well within target.

The Land Maintenance Strategy, adopted by Cabinet on 8 December 2021 is in the process of being implemented and aims to:

- Ensure that all of the boroughs public open space is effectively maintained in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible.
- Inform future action plans and projects for the delivery of improvements to existing open spaces and new open spaces triggered by development.
- To facilitate the securing of funding, either internal or external, for the improvement and maintenance of Thurrock's public open space.
- Increase biodiversity and habitats.

The strategy also aims to ensure that all the boroughs public open spaces are effectively maintained in the most efficient and cost-effective way, decreasing the amount of maintenance required in some areas and allowing resources to be redirected and targeted in others, where more frequent and specialised maintenance is required, providing resilience going forward.

The Active Place summer programme attracted 1,800 participants with well-being walks; an alternative Summer Olympics; adults walking cricket; multi-sport sessions to name but a few. Additionally, the team supported the Governments Holiday Activities and Food Programme where 180 children received free meals.

Circa a million pound has been spent on parks improvements and the Active Thurrock Partnership continued to link with the County Sports Partnership and secured £60k of funding from the County wide "Find your Active Programme" to respond to the challenges of engaging people who have become less physically active due to the pandemic.

Support from Enforcement colleagues has seen some excellent results in terms of littering, flyposting, fly tipping and graffiti. Proactive work of the teams working

together has resulted in offenders receiving fines and criminal charges, reinforcing our zero-tolerance message.

We continue to engage with our communities as part of the Active Places Strategy and the overall improvements to parks and open spaces and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the community groups for their ongoing commitment, hard work and support to the improvement of the borough.

1. Sports and Leisure Development

1.1 Leisure and Recreation

1.1.1 The ongoing COVID pandemic has resulted in a renewed sense of value and appreciation of leisure, recreation and green open spaces. Many residents have been telling staff how important these facilities are for their physical health and mental well-being.

1.2 Active Parks

1.2.1 The Active Parks Team have had a busy final year working on a two-pronged approach to get residents out and active and enjoy Thurrock's parks and open spaces. The first approach organising or supporting a broad range of park activities for all ages and at various locations within the Borough. The summer programme attracted around 1,800 participants with such activities as: well-being walks; an alternative Summer Olympics; adults walking cricket; multi-sport sessions and arts and craft activities. Additionally, the Team delivered part of the Governments Holiday Activities and Food Programme where 180 children received free meals.

1.2.2 The second approach has been working with the community and local parks groups to make physical improvements to the parks which encourage greater use. Examples of these projects with a value approaching a million pounds include:

- Grays Beach Park. In partnership with the Lightship Café, a new splash pad and with funding from the Grays Towns Fund Board, a new play ship and castle feature as well as improvements to pathways and a new parkour area.
- Elm Road Open Space. In partnership with the friends of group, new play equipment and the planting of new trees.
- West Thurrock Memorial Park. In partnership the Welcome Forum, new play equipment.
- Grays Town Park. In partnership the Friends group, landscaping and the refurbishment of the shelter.
- Tilbury Daisy Field. In partnership with Active Tilbury and with funding from the Tilbury Towns Fund Board, a new running track, outdoor gym, parkour area and BMX track.

1.3 Impulse Leisure

1.3.1 Leisure Centres faced a difficult start to the year with a third lockdown period closing facilities until April 2021. However, the council continued to work with Impulse Leisure who implemented a sensible phased reopening of facilities and activities which has seen a steady rise in participation and customer confidence. The phased return has also been affected by a national shortage in leisure staff. Despite these challenges the Charitable Trust has managed to make a positive impact on the health of the Borough. In addition to the normal leisure offering, they have increased the number of post and long COVID recovery sessions to help those suffering from the lasting effects caused by COVID. The re-introduction of their Condition specific health schemes supporting those suffering from Cardiac conditions, Alzheimer's, COPD, Parkinson's, Back pain, Diabetes, Stroke and Weight management. Each 12-week programme also provides Carer respite, which meet in the Café. A brand-new Cancer programme targeting prehab and rehabilitation delivered both, face to face and by virtual sessions, launched in July as part of a ground-breaking pilot scheme. Career opportunities have been opened to Local Residents through the Retrain opportunities offered to become Lifeguards and Swimming Instructors with multiple qualification courses being run at Blackshots by the Trust. Four new Leisure Apprentices have been employed and will undertake multiple qualifications. The Civic Hall has had a welcome return with performances from Jimmy Carr, Diversity and Pzaz, as well as a range of local and cultural events. The positive affects Leisure is playing on Mental Health as well as physical wellbeing is evident through the partnership with MIND and its referrals. Re-investment back into the facilities has also recommenced with improvements to the Main Studio at Blackshots and planned improvements to the Pool changing toilets at Blackshots.

1.4 Active Thurrock

1.4.1 The Active Thurrock Partnership continued to link with the County Sports Partnership and teamed up on the County wide "Find your Active Programme". The partnership secured £60,000 of funding for Thurrock's sports clubs and organisations to respond to the challenges of engaging people who have become less physically active due to the pandemic. This included funding for well-being initiatives such as the Active Minds Project where over 100 people who used physical activity facilities and programmes at Impulse Leisure and Grangewaters Activity Centre to help improve mental health.

2. Waste and Recycling

2.1 Waste Services

2.1.1 Waste Services have worked hard to recover from both COVID over the past year and more recently the period of industrial action that adversely affected domestic-waste collections. Collections have been above the target of 98.5%

of all collections being carried out as per schedule and have continually been above 99% from July-21.

- 2.1.2 The level of tonnages being collected from the kerbside have remained higher than seasonally expected, although have remained within manageable levels for most of the year, these continued high volumes have been considered when procuring vehicles for the changes in the refuse service.

2.2 Vehicle Procurement

- 2.2.1 Work was completed on the procurement of new waste-collection vehicles that are expected to arrive between January-22 and August/September-22 in readiness for the September roll-out of the new waste collection regime. Ten of the new vehicles will be larger 8-wheeled versions of the existing single-compartment fleet, with an increased carrying capacity over current vehicles. This increased capacity will help address the increased tonnages over the last two years causing capacity issues, build in an element of resilience for the refuse-service and will ensure the service is able to accommodate a period of increasing numbers of properties being added to the collection rounds.
- 2.2.2 The new vehicles have been purchased for the collection of food-waste and dry-recyclable materials on the one vehicle. This allows the separated-collection of food-waste to be added to the service without increasing the number of vehicles being utilised around the borough. The Service will increase the number of staff on each food/recycling vehicle to allow the additional collection of food-caddies at the same time as recyclables. These vehicles although larger will incorporate the rear-steering option, as do existing vehicles, and are the first of their kind to be built in this country.



- 2.2.3 A new bespoke collection vehicle is also being purchased that will allow properties in remote areas to be collected using wheeled bins instead of bags, making the collection operation safer by removing an element of manual handling of bags, and be also used to support the food/recycling service where necessary. This vehicle will be a smaller size and the collection-body made of plastic that is sealed for food-waste collections.



2.2.4 The new fleet will be delivered with new livery to reflect and promote the new services being rolled-out in September-22. All of the large collection vehicles will be fitted with 'electric' bin- lifting equipment which help the vehicles be more fuel efficient and are quieter when working.



2.3 Route Optimisation

2.3.1 The Route-optimisation software procurement was finalised and the system from 'WebAspx', a widely known system within the waste industry was purchased. Work is now under way to ensure all the data within the software accurately reflects the current 'as-is' services, from which will provide a sound basis to begin remodelling the new collection schedules for roll-out in September-22. As part of this work, the collection-capacities of the fleet of new collection vehicles expected through the course of the year will ensure the Service is ready to introduce the new collection regime. This data-cleansing exercise will also ensure all current new-build properties built within Thurrock over the last year are included.

2.4 Disposal Contracts

2.4.1 The procurement and award of new disposal contracts is partially completed with some new contracts coming into effect during this year, including new food-waste and separated garden-waste disposal contracts in preparation of

the new collection regime in September-22. These contracts have included both waste-transfer for all Thurrock's waste collections fleet to deliver household waste for bulking in readiness for onward transport, and disposal. This also includes the transportation and disposal of waste from the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Linford.

2.5 Changes within the Service

2.5.1 The deferred roll-out of Phase I of the Flats Recycling Project has been completed and provided recycling collection to all council-owned flats within the borough. Phase II commenced in late November and is progressing well. New recycling containers, adjustments where necessary to the numbers of residual containers, new signage in bin-store locations as well as literature-guidance and individual recycling bags are being provided to all privately-owned flatted-properties over the coming months.

2.5.2 A tender and procurement exercise has been concluded for the supply and household-delivery of both small, internal-use and larger, external-use food-caddies has been awarded. Preparations are now under way to provide storage space for the caddies that will arrive in bulk and then be distributed locally from September. This distribution will include literature on the new food-waste collection scheme for residents to fully engage with the new scheme. It is anticipated that the distribution process will take around two weeks for each collection day, around ten weeks in total.

3. Household Waste and Recycling Centre (HWRC)

3.1 Although the development of the Household Waste and Recycling Centre has been delayed due to the pandemic, the site has remained mainly open during COVID and the team have adapted to ensure that the site remains COVID-safe. One of the restrictions implemented was the suspension of trailers coming into the site due to limited vehicle space. Trailer Thursday was successfully introduced at the site, which allows access for vehicles with trailers only from 8am–12pm, and through successful adjustments in the Covid-monitoring measures around the site, this was later extended to include Tuesdays.

4. Clean and Green

4.1 Clean and Green

4.1.1 This year has been a challenging one for the teams carrying out Street Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance throughout the borough, not only with the challenges presented by the ongoing COVID Pandemic but also with an unprecedented year for grass and shrub growth. The teams also supported the waste service during the period of industrial action, carrying out a variety of tasks to ensure our roads were not heavily littered and supporting the very heavily used "bring sites".

- 4.1.2 The Grounds Maintenance teams have commenced routine winter maintenance work which will be carried out until the end of March 2022, with a view to enhance the appearance of these sites. The winter maintenance will include path edging, shrub and hedge pruning. There is a programme in place to ensure that our parks, open spaces and cemeteries are looking their best. The Shrub pruning winter maintenance programme commenced at the end of November, ensuring that all shrub and hedged areas across the borough are maintained
- 4.1.3 Following on from our inspections of the play areas, we identified the requirement for additional play bark, the team have renovated the play surfacing with additional play bark or sand at the following locations: - Hathaway Road, The Daisyfield, Hardy Park, Nutberry Field, Rainbow Road, Balstonia Park and South Ockendon Rec, these works have dramatically improved the appearance of these sites, more importantly making these sites safer for the children that use them.
- 4.1.4 The team have continued the scheduled inspections and maintenance of all the War Memorials, an all-year-round activity. The team ensured that all of the memorials were looking their best for the Remembrance events within the borough.
- 4.1.5 This year the Arboriculture Team were successful in their application for funding from the Forestry Commission from the Local Authorities Treescape Fund, this award funding is to the value of £285,101.66 over the next 4 years. The Tree officer submitted an excellent submission for this funding and will be pivotal in our delivery of tree planting over this period. For the first planting season we have purchased:
- 410 Trees
 - 3420 Whips
- 4.1.6 Sites set to be planted with new trees include:
- Wharf Road Cemetery in Stanford-le-Hope,
 - Chadwell Cemetery and Orsett Heath
 - Runnymede Road Rec in Stanford-le-Hope
 - Dilkes Park and Bonnygate Woods in South Ockendon
 - Belhus Recreation Ground
 - Nutberry Playing Fields in Grays
- 4.1.7 Since Tuesday 16th November 2021, the team commenced the smaller planting with all other planting taking place over the coming months.
- 4.1.8 Trees will be planted over the course of the winter, tree planting season, dates for tree planting are flexible / provisional as the team also respond to urgent tree work and weather issues. The whips and fruit trees are expected to be delivered later in the season. They will be bare rooted, so it is essential they are planted quickly. The trees for the larger sites will be delivered as soon as

the current deliveries are planted, and storage space is available. The target date to complete the planting of these trees is by the end of April 2022.

4.1.9 The presentation standards within the Cemeteries has continued to meet the standards expected. The Burials Team have implemented the use of seasonal staff, resulting in an improved appearance of Thurrock’s burial grounds, evidenced by the low numbers of complaints and enquiries that have been received. A new Thurrock Burials and Cemeteries strategy and associated policies are being produced to seek to further improve the presentation of the cemeteries and ensure adequate burials space in future years.

4.1.10 Implementation of the new Plotbox software, replacing the old Epilogue system for the management of burial records, providing a far more modern user experience. The new system provides far more functionality including mapping of grave spaces, planning new cemetery sections and the ability for Funeral Directors to book online.

4.2 Street Cleaning

4.2.1 Street Cleanliness remains within the target of 8%, with the Keep Britain Tidy results for each tranche set out below:

<i>Nl195-style scores</i>	<i>Litter</i>	<i>Graffiti</i>
<i>Tranche 2 2021/22</i>	7.83%	3.83%
<i>Tranche 1 2021/22</i>	6.17%	3.33%
Tranche 3 2020/21	5.17%	3.67%
Tranche 2 2020/21	5%	1.33%
Tranche 1 2020/21	3.67%	6%
All Year 2020/21	4.61%	3.67%
Tranche 3 2019/20	5.83%	6.33%

4.2.2 Last year’s inspections took place during the national COVID lockdown, when there was less footfall and therefore less litter being generated.

4.2.3 The service are working with colleagues in Children’s and Adults services providing work placements for SEND young people through the governments “Kickstart” Programme. The teams currently have 3 young people working with them gaining essential work experience, and also adding resilience to the service, with succession planning considerations.

4.3 Graffiti

4.3.1 The Teams continue to carry out large scale clearances of graffiti, working closely with the Enforcement Team to address this ongoing issue. Clearances are both from service requests coming into the teams and also through proactive site visits identifying graffiti.

5. Environmental Enforcement

5.1 Environmental Enforcement

5.1.1 The Environment Enforcement Teams efforts to ensure the streets are clean and safer place to live, work, play encourages growth within the community and greater prosperity for the borough. The team has delivered the below between November 2020 to date:

5.1.2 The borough-wide interim injunction remains in place on both public and private land against unauthorised encampments. The council are taking steps at the High Court to make the injunction permanent, to enable action which can and will be taken immediately by both the Police and the Council in partnership with an agreed signed protocol.

- Increased partnership patrols between the council and police leading to an added high visibility, deterrent against crime and public reassurance.
- Increased partnership operations to tackle graffiti, ASB and enviro-crime such as littering, including nitrous oxide canisters.
- The team have 270 prosecutions utilising the single justice process, which streamlines the process for prosecution ensuring those blighting the lives of residents can be brought to justice faster.
- Daily distribution of intelligence between internal and external partners regarding offenders and hot spots, resulting in more cohesive and robust enforcement.
- Increased enforcement linked to domestic duty of care fixed penalty notices in accordance with DEFRA guidelines.
- Additional early morning patrols, as well as high visibility patrols, in known anti-social behaviour hot spots.
- Working with partners promoting an anti-engine idling campaign for improved air quality around schools.
- Applying to the Home Secretary to adopt further powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for Highways offences.
- Continued operational evidence and quickly removing criminal “tags” graffiti compiling a graffiti index and working with Police to issue fixed penalty notices.

- In partnership with the council’s contractor, removed 122 untaxed and 25 abandoned vehicles.
- Increased operational support to partners.
- Joint parking enforcement school patrols and anti-idling issuing 36 warnings to offending drivers.

5.1.3 Other highlights include:

- Leading operations with Essex Police linked to illegal waste carriers, stopping and inspecting over 70 vehicles, resulting in 21 x FPNs for noncompliance, 2 uninsured vehicle seizures, and vehicles being seized for being in un- roadworthy condition.
- Increased partnership working with Street Cleansing Team to jointly patrol hotspot areas and operatives to be further trained, by the Environmental Enforcement, to be more enforcement focused to capture and protect evidence.
- The Environment Enforcement Team, working in partnership with Thurrock Farmers, cleansing teams and police, targeted local fly tip hot spots in Operation Cape Jarvis resulting in the detection of 20 fly tipping offences, 13 littering offences and the seizure of 4 vehicles for fly tipping.
- The Twilight Team enforced to address HGVs parking on the grassed area and footpaths in Manor Way, in total Community Protection Warnings (CPW) issued x 98, Community Protection Notices (CPN) issued x 47, Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) issued, linked to breach of CPN x 98.

5.1.4 Figures for Fixed Penalty Notices issued and actions relating to Abandoned Vehicles are detailed in the tables below:

Number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued

Kingdom from 2020 to 2021	3403	Environment Enforcement 2020 to 2021	459
Kingdom from 2021 to date	4156	Environment Enforcement from 2021 to date	1007

Abandoned vehicle Removals

Removed by Contractor 2020 to 2021	29	Removed by contractor 2020 to 2021	25
Removed by owner 2020 to 2021	38	Removed by owner 2021 to date	38

5.1.5 In partnership with Essex police, following the introduction of the Town Centre Teams, joint working aims, and objectives of the teams are to:

- Combat ASB and disorder within the town centre.
- Educate officers in the processes of how to understand and enforce the PSPO.
- Conduct visible and engaging patrols, which include joint patrolling.
- Working with the council and all key partners within the town centres to run joint operations and working approaches to all problems.
- Increased community engagement and the introduction of shop safe radio system enabling better communication and increased collaborative working to make Grays a safer place.

5.1.6 The team have consistently delivered and led on partnership operations aimed at delivering long term sustainable solutions utilising education, enforcement and engineering solutions, including:

- **Operation Agnes** - Working in close partnership with Essex Police to address environmental offences such as fly tipping and unlicensed waste carriers.
- **Operation Abercrombie** - To target and reduce graffiti offences, to evidence and quickly removing tags.
- **Operation Cue** – Supporting Essex Police operation Caesar targeting garages being used to store stolen vehicles or vehicles concerned in Anti-social behaviour of quad bikes and motorcycles.
- **Operation Cape Jarvis** – working closely with Essex farmers and Rural Engagement Team to tackle fly tipping on rural land.
- **Operation Croydon** - To tackle anti-social parking of moped users in Grays Town centre.
- **Operation Canberra**- To address the anti-social parking on grass verges of HGVs.
- **Operation Collie** – To conduct community clearing of un-adopted alleyways in Grays Town Centre to reduce the opportunity of ant-social gathering and improving the neighbourhood environment.
- **Operation Lions** – Enforcing Public Space Protection Order addressing the issue of Anti-Social car racing in West Thurrock.
- **Operation Capel**- Joint patrols with the Clean and Green Team targeting early morning fly tip hot spots.
- **Operation Cobram**- Patrols with Parking Enforcement and police addressing the issue of anti-social parking and vehicle idling around our schools.

5.1.7 The officers are fully trained and CSAS (Community Safety Accreditation Scheme) accredited, enabling the team to deliver the wide range of devolved powers from Essex Police, e.g. seizing and confiscating alcohol, demand of names and addresses in respect of ASB making them even more effective in tackling ASB. The officers now have direct access to the Police National Computer to assist in their enforcement of environmental crime.

5.1.8 The Team has led and delivered a proactive approach to combat the late night offences and the introduction of the Twilight Team has had the following results:

- 735 Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to fly tipping, littering, urinating, fly Posting, Duty of Care and for breaching CPN
- 16 x Notice in relation to Duty of Care (commercial waste s34)
- 1 x male arrested for possession of a bladed article
- 1 x male arrested for racist graffiti
- 76 Community Protection Warning Notices
- 39 Community Protection Notices

6. Budget

Service	Budget 19/20 (£000s)	Outturn 19/20 (£000s)	Revised Budget 20/21 (000s)
Cleaning and Greening	5,460	5,460	5,304
Recreation and Leisure	846	846	964
Waste Services	12,830	12,830	13,354
Enforcement	(43)	(43)	0
Total	19,093	19,093	19,622

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

There were 1 question to the Leader and 10 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Gledhill

Does the Leader of the Council believe that the council, and his administration, act in accordance with the Nolan Principles of Standards in Public Life?

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

1. From Councillor Muldowney to Councillor Jefferies

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us what action he has taken to address the issues with missed assisted bin collections in Chadwell St Mary?

2. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Jefferies

Can the Portfolio Holder tell me about the aims of the No Mow Policy?

3. From Councillor Byrne to Councillor Mayes

Is the Portfolio Holder satisfied, from the Council's position as a partner to the project, in the progress of the Corringham IMC?

4. From Councillor Little to Councillor Duffin

Please can you inform Council of the true and accurate timeline regarding the events surrounding the Communications Strategy?

5. From Councillor Little to Councillor Duffin

Can the Portfolio Holder explain the reasons the Council has chosen not to engage with Nub News please?

6. From Councillor Chukwu to Councillor Coxshall

Can you give assurances the Council is working towards the provision of infrastructure, such as GP surgeries and schools, in the future housing development in Chadwell?

7. From Councillor Piccolo to Councillor Maney

Can the Portfolio Holder please update me on the progress of dealing with the ongoing issues of some operators on the Stanhope Industrial Estate? This is relating to their HGV movements that take place outside of the permitted hours for HGV movements as stated on their planning conditions. This is causing much concern and impact to the Wharf Road, Corringham Road and London Road community of Stanford-le-Hope.

8. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Duffin

The 13th of October cabinet report for Communications Strategy 2021-24 says that no feedback was received from any local media outlet within the deadline provided of 27 September, however, one response was received on 4 October. At the council meeting held on 24th of November, the portfolio holder claimed that one response had been received with the deadline. Can he explain the reason for this discrepancy?

9. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Spillman

Many council homes still suffer from cold, damp and mould. Will the Portfolio Holder restart the programme of external cladding for houses that was so successful in easing these problems?

10. From Councillor Kerin to Councillor Spillman

Can the Portfolio Holder for Housing please outline what he is doing for residents affected by mould in the six tower blocks of Grays Riverside?

This report lists all motions from the previous twelve months which still have updates forthcoming. All Motions which have been resolved or the actions from officers have been completed are removed.

Date	From	Motion	Status	Director
22 September 2021	Cllr J Kent	Council notes the Thameside Complex was formally opened on 22nd of January 1972 with the first performance in the theatre taking place in October 1971. Council agrees: (1) that a celebratory event should be held, at the Thameside, in January 2022 to mark the Golden Anniversary of the complex and (2) to call on Cabinet to identify the resources necessary to improve and secure the future of the theatre service and all the services at the complex.	<p>(1) A celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Thameside Complex is planned. Events being developed to mark the occasion are: A living history written composition and video montage of the past 50 years; a photo exhibition; children’s story telling programme; a performance (celebrating technology and young people). The events are scheduled to take place on the weekend of Saturday 22nd and Sunday 23rd January 2022. Given the ongoing COVID pandemic and case levels locally, events are being designed to be delivered digitally or with a limited number of attendees.</p> <p>(2) Discussions are underway with the community over the future of the Thameside building and related cultural services. An update was reported at Cabinet on 12 January 2022. In addition officers continue to promote arts and culture in venues across Thurrock, and work is also underway to develop a new cultural strategy for Thurrock to improve participation, support cultural regeneration and provide greater opportunities to develop and improve the arts, culture and heritage offer across the borough.</p>	Karen Wheeler
22 September 2021	Cllr Polley	This Council welcomes the Conservative Governments lifting of the cap on medical school places and acknowledges the success of our young people achieving record A Level results in what has been a very difficult year.	Many young people will benefit from the additional spaces that have been identified as a result of lifting the cap on medical school places. We continue to work closely with our health colleagues to identify a range of health related roles which recognises the opportunities that a career in health can provide. The Director of Children Services and Assistant Director have continued to work closely with schools recognising the significant challenges that they have faced –	Sheila Murphy

			all schools and colleges have been thanked for the work undertaken particularly those in exam years. No national data is available however we do recognise that nationally record 'A' level results were reported.	
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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 1

Submitted by Councillor Redsell

Irresponsible riders of motorbikes and other similar vehicles misusing public and private land are putting our resident's lives and wellbeing at risk. I call on the relevant authority to implement a borough wide PSPO to prevent the unlawful use of these vehicles where the residents have lawful access. This will help protect residents across Thurrock and also make it easier for the police and council to take action.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

The motion affects the authorities area and relates to a matter in which the authority has relevant powers. It will be a matter for Cabinet to make any order in line with the relevant legislation and guidance.

Before making an order the Council has to demonstrate that the behaviour which is being restricted has to: be having, or be likely to have, a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those in the locality; be persistent or continuing nature; and be unreasonable. This will require specific evidence and consideration of the locations where issues are occurring. It is very unlikely given the statutory guidance that a single order covering all open spaces within the borough equally will meet the necessary legal tests, however an order targeting those sites which are proportionate across the Borough may meet the tests providing that the evidence supports this.

The order has to be targeted to the specific harms, and be structured in such a way as to not interfere with lawful activities and uses. As with all the anti-social behaviour powers, the council should give due regard to issues of proportionality: is the restriction proposed proportionate to the specific harm or nuisance that is being caused? Councils should ensure that the restrictions being introduced are reasonable and will prevent or reduce the detrimental effect continuing, occurring or recurring. In addition, councils should ensure that the Order is appropriately worded so that it targets the specific behaviour or activity that is causing nuisance or harm and thereby having a detrimental impact on others' quality of life. Councils should also consider whether restrictions are required all year round or whether seasonal or time limited restrictions would meet the purpose.

Whilst the Council can make an order on any land where the public have access, on payment or otherwise, as of right or by virtue of express or implied permission. Where land is owned by a third party, the Council must consult with the land owner before making the order.

The Council has a duty to consult the police prior to making any orders. Any decision will need to be made in light of that consultation feedback, which can include

commentary on their view of information about the area and the problems being caused as well as the practicalities of enforcement.

The council must also consult whatever community representatives they think appropriate. It is strongly recommended that the council engages in an open and public consultation to give the users of the public space the opportunity to comment on whether the proposed restriction or restrictions are appropriate, proportionate or needed at all. The council should also ensure that specific groups likely to have a particular interest are consulted, or those involved in specific activities in the area, which would be impacted by the proposals. This will include any legitimate motorbike or motocross groups which use public areas.

It should be noted that any order is subject to a right of appeal by an interested person to the High Court, this can include a challenge to specific terms of any order, or the inclusion of any specific area of public space. A challenge would be successful where the order is excessive in terms of the areas covered or where the evidence does not support the basis for the order.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

It is not possible to provide a figure for the motion in the timescale. It is clear that there will be significant cost to progress a borough wide PSPO, especially considering the evidence gathering, legal input and bringing in the required resource.

Should Council agree to this motion, detailed costings will be included within the Cabinet report and, if agreed, would be a pressure on the budget as it would not be possible to meet this from existing budgets.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 2

Submitted by Councillor Muldowney

This Council notes that (1) a recent report to Government by the Social Mobility Commission reported that nearly a third of all children now live in poverty, with 500,000 children in England being plunged into poverty since 2012; and (2) the Council's Child Poverty Strategy lapsed in 2020 and needs to be refreshed. Council agrees with the Social Mobility Commission that (1) child poverty is a preventable problem and (2) agrees to undertake a rapid review of child poverty in the borough in order to inform a refresh of its Child Poverty Strategy.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

The motion relates to a matter affecting the authority's area and relates to a matter in respect of which the Council has a relevant function.

The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 removed from law the Child Poverty Act 2010 which placed certain responsibilities on local authorities and its partners to reduce child poverty. However child poverty is a cross cutting issue for services provided by the Council. Therefore the Council may rely on other powers available to mitigate child poverty through service provision.

A Cabinet decision would be required to approve an updated Child Poverty Reduction Plan. It should be noted that Council cannot impose a direct instruction for Cabinet to make such a decision.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

This was the subject of a recent report to Overview and Scrutiny. In discussion with Public Health, with other pressures from the Covid response, additional resource would be required to refresh the strategy at this time.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 3

Submitted by Councillor J Kent

This Council believes that a free press is a cornerstone of a fully functioning democracy. Therefore, this Council is appalled at the decision to, effectively, blacklist the editor of Thurrock Nub News - Neil Speight - and calls on "Legal and Democratic Services" to reverse their decision and fully engage with Mr Speight and all bona fide journalists.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

This notice of motion relates to a matter which affects the Authority. The circumstances and information relating to the subject matter of the motion relate to an individual and is subject to data protection law. Further, schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that information relating to an individual is exempt information, subject to the public interest test.

Generally, there is a public interest in providing transparency of the decisions of the Council. However it is not considered to be in the public interest to disclose information at a public Council meeting where data protection law provides safeguards against disclosure of personal information, unless there is a legal basis for disclosing such information.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no financial implications arising from this motion.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 4

Submitted by Councillor J Kent

This Council is concerned at the impact the Cost of Living Crisis is having on residents of Thurrock and notes that domestic gas and electricity bills are predicted to rise by, almost, 50% this year - from an average of £1277 to £1865.

The Council resolves to:

1. Write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ask him to help residents by scrapping VAT on gas and electricity bills for one year.
2. Write to Thurrock's Members of Parliament asking that they use their positions to support residents by working to achieve a cut in VAT on domestic energy bills.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

This is a matter which affects the authority's area. The Council has a general power of competence under the Localism Act 2011 which gives the Council scope subject to certain restrictions, to do anything an individual may do where it is aligned with the priorities of the Council and the local community.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no direct financial implications for the council resulting from this motion.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 5

Submitted by Councillor Collins

Modern Day slavery is seeing more and more people smuggled in to the UK using dangerous, and as we know too well sometimes fatal, methods as well as vulnerable UK minors and adults being groomed or duped and forced into sexual exploitation, domestic slavery, forced labour on farms, in construction, shops, bars, nail bars, car washes or manufacturing. We call on Thurrock Council to lead the charge in tackling this abhorrent practice by inviting all Thurrock based businesses to support our anti modern day slavery charter and drive down and stamp out modern day slavery.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 contains a range of measures around the prevention of modern slavery events and the support and protection of victims of modern slavery. Local Authorities have a key role to play in tackling modern slavery. The Authority is able to consider how best to prevent and raise awareness of modern slavery through engaging with local businesses.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no direct financial implications arising from this motion.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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