

**28 November 2018**

**ITEM: 11**

**Council**

## **Report of the Cabinet Member for Communities**

**Report of:** Councillor Deborah Huelin, Cabinet Member for Communities

**This report is Public**

### **Introduction by Cabinet Member**

I am delighted to present to Council my report which details many of the areas of work and achievements within my Portfolio since I took on this role in May 2018. I am passionate about the range of services included within my Portfolio, and I am committed to seeing the different community services align, giving a strong, complimentary offer to residents in Thurrock.

The core services covered by the Portfolio are delivered across four directorates and include:

Sports and Leisure (Environment and Highways Directorate)  
Registrars (Place Directorate)  
Culture and Arts (Place Directorate)  
Heritage Services (Place Directorate)  
Community Development and Equalities (Adults, Housing and Health Directorate)  
Libraries (Adults, Housing and Health Directorate)  
Performance (Strategy, Communications and Customer Service Directorate).

This report provides an overview of the achievements across each of these service areas over the last 12 months, as well as aspirations for the future.

### **SPORTS AND LEISURE**

#### **▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW**

Sport and leisure facilities have always been important to the residents of Thurrock and are not only vital in making Thurrock a great place to live and work but also have many economic, health and social benefits. The well documented benefits of physical activity to improve health and well-being are just one example.

I have spent time visiting the local Leisure Centres both formally as the Portfolio Holder responsible for this area but also as member of the public using the facilities.

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

The Council has a partnership with Impulse Leisure, a Charitable Trust that manages the Council's three Leisure Centres at Blackshots, Corringham and Belhus. These centres attract an average of around 700,000 visits per year across all age groups and are popular with both male and female users. During the course of the year the council has invested well over £1m in refurbishing Belhus Swimming Pool. This work included a new roof, heating, ventilation and a pool water filtration system. In addition to this, Impulse Leisure funded the refurbishment of the swimming pool changing rooms which complement their earlier refurbishment of the health and fitness facilities and a more welcoming entrance. They also deliver a wide range of community programmes such as falls prevention support for elderly residents within their homes.

During the summer, the Sports and Leisure Team, working with Public Health colleagues, established an Active Thurrock Network. This brings together key council departments, local organisations and the voluntary sector to link into the County Sports Partnership (Active Essex) and their funding opportunities. The Network has attracted £28,000 of external funding to be spent on local programmes that increase physical activity within Thurrock. It is expected that this network will grow and develop a joint action plan to attract greater funding in the future.

This area of work was managed by one member of staff previously, this year a strategic lead has been recruited for recreation and leisure to ensure we are appropriately resourced to support the growth of the service needs and increase capacity of the team to have a greater impact across the borough.

The Sports and Leisure Team have been working throughout the year with Sport England and various National Governing Bodies of sport including hockey, tennis, football, cricket and rugby to focus on local issues and plans for future development, ensuring proportionate contributions are made from developers implementing housing schemes. Additionally the team have been offering advice and support to other sports such as Thurrock Gymnastics Club who are looking to secure a permanent venue and attract the necessary funding for the specialist equipment required.

From this direct engagement, additional investment in facility improvements have been made to bowling greens in Corringham and Blackshots, Thurrock Gymnastics Club has been supported to finalise a permanent venue and attract the necessary funding for the specialist equipment they require, and community groups delivering sports in parks have been supported to develop their models so they can have a wider long term impact in the local communities.

To ensure the sports clubs get the help they require to grow and thrive, the team has met 42 football clubs, most of the cricket and bowls clubs, pentecque clubs as well as the Thurrock Sunday league, Grays Athletic FC and Thurrock Sports Council. They aim to directly support them with their issues, help signpost to external funding opportunities, and link them more closely with the National Governing Bodies where required. The clubs will all be invited to attend the Active Thurrock user group meetings. This open platform will enable clubs to raise their issues and work with the council to develop projects and activities locally.

## ► FUTURE

We aim to work with clubs to improve and enhance the sports facilities across the borough by working with the National Governing Bodies and Sport England. Levering external investment, we hope to increase the quality of our outdoor sports provision and also increase the capacity to meet our existing and growing demands. We are working with clubs to improve the quality of their facilities such as improved bowls greens, improved football and cricket pitches, ensuring clubs such as Belhus Cricket Club are able to meet the facility and growth requirements of promotion to the Sheppard Neame Essex League Premier Division in 2019.

We are aiming to develop several floodlit third generation artificial grass pitches. These will enable better use of the spaces and attract young people to use the facilities, which will help to reduce anti-social behaviour. They enable users to play on good facilities for longer periods with significantly reduced maintenance issues and the improved lighting and footfall using the facilities will deter people from loitering around the leisure centres and outdoor facilities.

We are currently in the process of recruiting three additional Parks & Green Spaces Engagement Officers recruited for 2019. The officers will work on the front line directly delivering activities across the borough, helping residents use the outdoor gyms, developing simple activities that the community can continue on their own and engage people to become volunteers who will help support the activities and champion our parks. This will help inspire Thurrock residents to become active and utilise the opportunities across the borough.

We want to increase our connection with the local sports clubs, empowering them to take pride in their sports and leisure facilities across the borough and assist us in reducing the number of inactive people in Thurrock.

### Sport and Leisure Budget 2018/19

Sub Service	Cost Centre	Revised Budget	Forecast	Variance	Notes
Sport & Leisure	Sport & Leisure codes	862,233	862,233	0	

## REGISTRARS

### ► SERVICE OVERVIEW

Thurrock Registration Service team provides valuable, statutory and discretionary registration services to a fast-growing community from its base at the Thameside Complex, Grays.

The main functions of the Register Office cover the following statutory duties:

- To register all births, deaths, marriages, still-births and civil partnerships which occur in the Thurrock district
- To take notices of marriage and civil partnership for residents of Thurrock
- To conduct marriage and civil partnership ceremonies at the Register Office and licensed venues throughout Thurrock – licensed venues include:

Orsett Hall Hotel, Orsett  
 The Plough House, Bulphan  
 Langdon Hills Golf and Country Club, Langdon Hills  
 Thurrock Hotel, Aveley  
 High House, Purfleet  
 Old Regent Ballroom, Stanford le Hope  
 Stifford Hall, North Stifford  
 Thameside Complex, Grays

- Issuing certificates of birth, marriage, death and civil partnership from archived registers in the custody of the Superintendent Registrar from 1837 to date
- Providing the discretionary Nationality Checking Service, authorised by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner, in partnership with the Home Office UK Visas and Immigration.
- Carrying out statutory group and discretionary private Citizenship Ceremonies. Group Citizenship Ceremonies are held in Hawthorn Suite, Thameside Complex approximately every 4/6 weeks. The ceremonies are attended by the Mayor and it is an occasion where a welcome and honour of citizenship is awarded to our new Citizens.

Private ceremonies are made available every day for the best customer experience and greatly appreciated by residents who wish for an earlier ceremony.

- Performing discretionary celebratory ceremonies namely Naming, Renewal of vows, Commitment
- To collect and maintain records of religious marriages from returns supplied by the clergy and authorised persons
- To approve venues for marriage and civil partnership

The current reputation of Registrars staff within Thurrock is exceptional as staff go above and beyond to make the service as successful as possible. We need to build on this commitment, extend our services and facilities and build on our reputation.

#### ► **REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS**

Over the last year revised background work for ordering copy certificates online has now

been finalised and customers can order by the preferred option – online, by phone, calling in to the office, or downloading an application form and sending it in. Take-up of the online ordering option is increasing daily which is great news.

We are committed to promoting and increasing the choice of Licensed Approved Premises, Coalhouse Fort option being a preferred addition to current venues. We have visited Coalhouse Fort to advise on the legal requirements to become a Licensed Approved venue for marriage and civil partnerships. Coalhouse Fort is a beautiful, historic Fort situated on the River Thames with views across to Kent. To add it to our list of Approved venues is a vital goal in order for Thurrock to compete with so many of our couples marrying in ‘Langtons House’ in our neighbouring Local Authority district of Havering.

Thurrock offer Private Citizenship Ceremonies seven days per week. As we are a small team and working in one location we are able to offer a Private Ceremony in the Hawthorn Suite or Register Office between appointments, at the start or end of the working day. Private ceremonies are a discretionary service and the fees raised for this are invested into the service creating a healthy budget forecast. Importantly customers are thrilled to have the opportunity to avoid waiting for a Group Ceremony. Citizens who do choose a private ceremony enjoy an exclusive, dedicated ceremony any day morning or afternoon. They are invited to attend either alone or with their choice of friends and family. Sixty two private ceremonies and fifteen group ceremonies were held last financial year.

All Statutory and Discretionary Ceremonies are offered by Thurrock seven days per week. Thurrock Registrars are not only willing to work covering each day but also perform late or early ceremonies if requested and reasonable to do so, offering a truly unique, customised ceremony at times to suit the couple.

In the last financial year one hundred and sixty two marriage ceremonies were held in the Register office and two hundred and eighty four at our Approved Premises. We have received 100% Good or Excellent Customer Satisfaction feedback consistently over the years and our reputation is extremely high. This keeps morale high in the team too.

#### ► **FUTURE**

Options for the future location of the Registrars service in Grays are being explored. In the meantime we will continue to promote the existing facilities and encourage prospective approved premises.

A future plan is to pursue agreement for registering Essex births – by law; a child has to be registered in the district where the birth occurred. The majority of Thurrock resident’s babies are born in Basildon Hospital so although a declaration of the particulars can be sent from Thurrock to Essex Registration Service the birth is not registered by Thurrock. Our aim is to discuss with the Registration Manager for Essex to consider us partnering with Essex to enable Thurrock to also register for Essex. This would give a better choice to residents and stream line the service. This partnering will only be pursued should a statutory fee being considered for taking declarations not be forthcoming.

Sub Service	Cost Centre	Revised Budget	Forecast	Variance	Notes
Registrars	Registrars	(71,784)	(59,640)	20,503	This slight overspend is being offset by underspends elsewhere in the service

## ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE

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

### ▶ HERITAGE SERVICE OVERVIEW

Thurrock has a rich history and the Heritage Service help tell the story of the borough through the museum gallery in the Thameside Complex and a programme of exhibitions, talks and educational workshops. The service are also guardians of the Museum Collection which spans more than 250,000 years and is used to illustrate and bring to life Thurrock's past. The service is supported by a group of dedicated volunteers who help conserve and manage the collection, conduct research and organise exhibitions and events.

### ▶ REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Over the past year the service has particularly focussed on re-organising its collection to help improve access and share information about the rich heritage of the borough more easily. The service was successful in securing funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund to digitise and catalogue the collection as part of the review process. This project is designed to ensure the Museum complies with current standards and has given us the opportunity to work with local schools and the community to create a travelling exhibition, allowing us to seek further funding. As part of this project we have also been reviewing and updating the Museum's policies and re-organising the storage areas to improve access and store items more efficiently.

Work has also started to improve the Gallery Space within the Thameside Complex with the aim of making it more inviting to the public by renewing some of the older displays and brightening up others.

The Museum has recently started a Facebook and Twitter account [@thurrockmuseum](#) and regularly posts interesting facts about Thurrock's history and items within our collection. We have also improved public access to museum artefacts by taking part in public events at Orsett Show, the Windrush Event, Tilbury on Thames Trust Open Day and Fun Palace.

As Chair of the First World War Commemorative Committee, I have been impressed by the range of community led and council supported ways in which The Great War has been appropriately marked in Thurrock. The Committee includes six members from across the council along with members of the heritage and services organisations. I have been privileged to chair this group since May 2018 which has held a number of events from 2014 onwards to remember the sacrifices made by so many.

As part of its work the Committee commissioned a memory project to capture local people's stories of life in Thurrock, including stories of those who contributed to the war effort with a connection to Thurrock. Twenty seven memories were collected by volunteers with the support of ngage. They are available on the Stronger Together website. They have been published in a book for local schools and libraries and the heritage service has supported the recording of some stories onto a Candle Stick telephone which is currently travelling around the borough in Libraries and public events so that people can listen to those memories.

As part of the WW1 Centenary, the heritage service and community development team has worked with the local community to fix the Beacons at Coalhouse Fort and Purfleet so they could be lit on the 11<sup>th</sup> November as part of the National Beacon Lighting event. On this day there were also performances and participation from local schools and uniformed groups as part of these ceremonies. Thurrock staff teams have worked hard, contributing over and above to support Thurrock's commemoration of WW1 any my thanks go to all involved. The Museum Volunteers have been particularly supportive of efforts to commemorate WW1. The volunteers have researched and curated a number of exhibitions looking at different aspects of the war and the impact it had on the people and place of Thurrock. The latest exhibition which focused on the Armistice opened in the gallery space at the Thameside Complex on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

Heritage organisations working in Thurrock have also been able to come together over the year as the Museum has set up a new Local Heritage Group. This takes place quarterly and has been extremely successful in attracting members and identifying opportunities to work together.

#### ► **FUTURE**

The Museum will continue the work on the collection and hope to expand on the current programme of school visits at Coalhouse Fort and the Thameside Complex. The team are hoping to apply for 'Working Towards Accreditation' from Arts Council for Thurrock Museum which will open up access to funding opportunities and to expertise that will help the service to develop its offer. The service are keen to work even more closely with the Libraries and Community Hubs to display items from the collection and to share the story of different parts of the borough with residents.

#### ► **ARTS SERVICE OVERVIEW**

The Thameside Theatre is a well-loved part of Thurrock's cultural landscape and is always rated highly in the Council's customer survey. Each year the theatre hosts a mix of touring shows and local groups including a number of shows arranged by local dance schools. A highlight each year is

the pantomime which attracts many families over the festive season. The theatre also manage a small arts development budget which is used to support events and activities or as match funding for bids through the year.

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

During 2017 the Thameside was subject to a business planning exercise with the intention of reducing subsidy and working towards a break even financial position. The business plan included a number of recommendations which the theatre team are working towards and which include optimising online booking, including through smart phones. As a result in recent months over 60% of tickets have been purchased online. The system also enables and supports integration to social media marketing and as a result most of the theatres marketing is now by social media or targeted email campaigns. The automatic reporting system has reduced the amount of administration needed to run the box office functions allowing the team to explore other ways in which to further improve sales and maximise income such as merchandise offers and pre-ordering of interval drinks and food. The Thameside must embrace these ideas to compete with commercially run venues.

While there has been a focus on income generation, the theatre also supports Thurrock's diverse community and has continued to host Liam's Club - the disco for customers of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions, relaxed performances of pantomime for people on the autistic spectrum, the monthly Beautiful Minds Cinema Club for people with dementia and their carers, the Nepalese film programme and Black History Month celebrations among other things. The Theatre has also supported the Museum by hosting exhibitions in the gallery space.

The Thameside Young Producers have also had a successful year. This voluntary group of about 20 teenagers have presented the annual Young Choreographers competition and the Starmaker talent show. They also organised the 'Orsett Show's Got Talent' event as part of the annual Orsett Show.

### ▶ **FUTURE**

Old favourites such as the Pantomime will continue - It is expected that about 15000 people will see this year's show Aladdin, making it Thurrock's biggest annual event continuing a pantomime that has been running for over 45 years.

Planning is well underway for the 2019 season with many professional acts booked and a new brochure will be issued in the next few weeks. The Theatre continues to work towards delivery of the business plan including exploring the potential of new ways to generate income for the theatre and the community activities that take place there each year. Examples include increasing the use of the Thameside 2 and the foyer area for activities and performances, and exploring ways to use the theatre on days when it is empty including roll out of the Wicked Wednesday's film offer piloted in the summer.

As regeneration plans for Grays develop, and options for the Thameside come forward, I am keen to see a cultural centre for the future, helping to align the potential for residents to enjoy the arts, culture and heritage with a modernised offer with a Central Library. Outreach across the borough will be essential and I look

forward to a wider offer through modernised buildings that can support more arts, heritage and cultural activities in the future.

#### Arts, Culture and Heritage Budget 2018/19

Sub Service	Cost Centre	Revised Budget	Forecast	Variance	Notes
Arts, Culture and Heritage	Theatre codes	0	0	0	Theatre income is used to offset direct costs.
	Museum codes	103,099	103,099	0	
	Arts Development	13,500	13,500	0	
		<b>116,599</b>	<b>116,599</b>	<b>0</b>	

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Community Development Team works with residents so they are able to take forward the aspirations they have for their neighbourhoods and communities. In doing so people are supported to liaise with relevant departments across the council to better enable community led activities including fun days, community clean ups and engagement events. The range of services supported spans a number of areas, one of which is liaison with the voluntary, community and faith sector so that there is a strong environment for organisations to thrive. The team works with all local Community Forums and oversees voluntary sector funding through a grants programme administered by Thurrock Community and Voluntary Services. In addition, the Community Environmental Development Fund is managed, which has recently completed its third round of grants. The team helps to build best practice across the council in relation to consultation and engagement, including management of the corporate consultation portal. The service leads the Council's role on the Stronger Together Partnership which looks to build on the strengths and assets within communities, and helps to empower residents so they have the skills, confidence and knowledge to improve the issues they feel passionate about locally. The team plays a key role in promoting volunteering in Thurrock, working with Ngage to develop a range of placements across the borough, and supporting the council's own volunteer programme across all services.

### ▶ REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Thurrock Council has delivered grants programmes for many years. Our primary and core funded initiative is the Voluntary Sector Development Fund (VSDF) for which the operational management and administration of the budget was taken on by Thurrock CVS in April 2014, and reconfirmed by Cabinet in December 2017. The VSDF provides infrastructure and smaller grant funds for organisations across the borough that contributes to the delivery of the Council's priorities. The Community Environmental Development Fund has also entered its third year targeting those

projects that will improve the appearance of the borough, increase community safety and renew, improve or create land, buildings or equipment for the benefit of communities. Outcomes from the programme to date extend from the construction and enhancement of community buildings through to increased access to parks and green spaces in Thurrock. The most recent round supported a number of projects including Thurrock Rugby Club in its pursuit for a new roof for their club, the rebuild of Corringham 1<sup>st</sup> Scout Hall and match funding towards new dwellings to support homes for adults with mental health needs. As we continue to invest in communities, grants will remain a core component of the Council's funding mix and are increasingly used to achieve targeted outcomes. Officers are about to complete a refresh of the Council's Social Values Framework and supporting strategy that sets out all of those priority outcomes that we wish to achieve through our procurement, commissioning and grant funded activities for the next four years. The refreshed framework and strategy will be published on the Council's website in 2019.

In June this year, the team worked with the Port of Tilbury and Tilbury Riverside Project to deliver a significant event to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Windrush at Tilbury Docks. The arrival of the Empire Windrush to Tilbury Docks is not only an important part of our local heritage, but it marked the birth of multi-cultural Britain and it is important that we celebrate the contribution of the Windrush generation to our country. A fantastic day was held at the Cruise Terminal which attracted over 3000 visitors as well as a river boat carrying NHS staff.

Supporting volunteering is a key priority for the service. As well as working with communities to encourage volunteering, the service oversees the Council volunteer programme. The council has volunteers across a variety of services, the majority of which are in the library or children's services. On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 we started the reporting year with 148 active volunteers. In order to meet our KPI targets a thorough review of the recruitment process for volunteers has been undertaken with the Community Development & Equalities Team and Recruitment teams to streamline the process. Working with the volunteer managers and those volunteers part way through the process we have been able to take on a large number of new volunteers in quarter 2 taking our cumulative total to 225 (the target is 220). This is a fantastic achievement, helped partly by the summer activities such as summer read (through the library service) and empowering parents (through the children's centres). As we continue to monitor and streamline the process it is anticipated that the programme will go from strength to strength with opportunities for larger recruitment drives and the creation of more volunteer opportunities across a number of services.

Recognising volunteer impact is key to retaining volunteer support and encouraging further activity. In February 2018 The Civic Awards recognised 9 champions, charities and local heroes working in creative ways to support and engage residents across a wide range of areas including music, the environment, social care and befriending. The Queens Award for Voluntary Service is the highest award that can be given to recognise effective volunteering. This year, the service worked with the Essex Panel for the Queens Award for Voluntary Service Services to recognise the contribution of volunteers to not one – but three Thurrock organisations. Thurrock Mind; Stanford, Corringham and Tilbury First Responders and One Community

Development Trust all received the Queens Award. This is an amazing achievement and Thurrock performed extremely well to receive all three awards made across Essex in 2018. I very much hope this encourages more of our local organisations to celebrate the difference they make for local people's lives through their passion, dedication and determination. We need to mobilise the incredible skills, expertise and talent within our communities to develop a rich and strong voluntary sector to support and engage Thurrock residents.

Thurrock's Community Hub programme is a partnership across communities, the voluntary sector and Thurrock Council led by the community development team. A network of six hubs exists across Thurrock. Each help to connect people with neighbours or the help people need day to day, they provide an opportunity to network and meet locally and they each enable people to access digital services free of charge, some via the Library service. Each hub supports local priorities from helping people into work, to combating loneliness and isolation. Community Hubs help to articulate a vision for its area's future and this year a great deal of progress has been made by the Aveley Hub in pursuing the first purpose built hub in Thurrock. A business plan was supported by Cabinet in December 2017 and works started on the new build earlier this month. The Aveley Community Forum has shown determination in its pursuit of a local resource and ultimately it has been through working in partnership that this exciting project is taking shape and moving forward.

Through the work of hubs, grant applications made, and the responses to engagement events, we know that Thurrock residents have great aspirations for the future of their areas. Where we can play a useful role in progressing projects with communities, we will continue to do so.

► **FUTURE**

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

A key role of community hubs is to galvanise communities around the issues they feel passionate about; supporting opportunities to improve local conditions including health and wellbeing, community safety and helping people into work. As the library service and hubs programme align, we will build on this opportunity for residents to influence local decisions and shape the future of their borough through hubs. The team will support the delivery of Your Place Your Voice engagement activities and help residents with a passion for active citizenship to develop the skills and confidence to take an active role in their neighbourhood.

Community Development Budget 2018/19

Sub Service	Cost Centre	Revised Budget	Forecast	Variance	Notes
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Community Development Projects	Community Development Projects	353,524	338,584	(14,940)	Underspend due to part-year vacant post
	Voluntary Grants	332,600	332,600	0	
		<b>686,124</b>	<b>671,184</b>	<b>(14,940)</b>	

## LIBRARY SERVICE

### ▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW

Thurrock's Library Service includes 9 authority run libraries and one self-serve library within Purfleet Community Hub. Opening hours range from 15 hours in four libraries, 27 in two libraries, 38 in two libraries and 48 at the central Grays library. The principal purpose of the library is to provide equality of access to accurate and up to date information achieved through provision of printed material and increasingly, access to information on line. The service champions reading in all its forms enabling all residents to make the most of the proven benefits of reading, economically better educational prospects leading to better paid jobs as well as supporting health and well-being.

### ▶ REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

Thurrock's Library Service has continued to support the development of the hubs programme, working closely with steering groups and volunteers to create a single vision and purpose. In South Ockendon and Tilbury, the hub and library are now jointly managed by one Supervisor enabling closer cooperation. Plans for the new Community Hub and Library at Aveley passed an important milestone with a 'ground breaking ceremony' at Aveley Recreation ground last month. The new build is underway and will be fully open by January 2020. Also the refurbishment of East Tilbury library after the fire in 2017, has started on the original site. Due to open in Spring 2019, the refurbished facility will include meetings rooms, the Bata Reminiscence Centre and will develop as a community hub enabling a greater range of community events to run from the premises.

Supporting the Digital agenda is a key priority for the service. Beginner computer courses have continued including sessions on using tablets and digital safety. Along with hub volunteers, library staff assists residents to access online forms, complete job applications and survive in a digital world. A partnership with the University of East London has enabled an increase in coding and robotic sessions for children and young people.

The service has continued to provide volunteering opportunities for all ages, from the 13 to 18 year olds supporting the Summer Reading Challenge to adults delivering our Homelink service and Digital Champions helping people get online. 74 library volunteers gave over 2,000 hours of support in 2017-2018. This is in addition to hub volunteers.

Use of our online services has grown with more residents aware that they can access 24/7 free learning courses, practice driving tests etc. and borrow e-books and e-audio via their phones and tablets. Support for reading continues especially encouraging children and young people to read for pleasure and benefit from the opportunities being able to read well can bring.

All primary schools are invited to visit their local library. In partnership with Health, Children’s Centres and Early Years settings, the Bookstart and Time to Read programmes ensures families with young children are encouraged to share stories and rhymes. While libraries have adapted to meet changing demands, residents still show an appetite to borrow books as is demonstrated in the recent library consultation which ran throughout the summer. 79% stated that a wide range of good quality books was still very important to them and over 337,000 volumes were issued in 2017-2018.

Provision of information and signposting to support agencies remains a core offer. Library staff receive on-going training and work with the hubs to ensure information is easily accessible. It is with thanks to our hard working and dedicated staff that the library service remains a much loved service and a place where residents feel comfortable and safe, knowing they will receive a friendly, warm welcome and the access to information they need. Council and other services increasingly see libraries as places where they can meet with residents informally. Consultation throughout the summer has highlighted the value our communities have for the library service and the role it provides in helping people access information and the services they need. I look forward to seeing this develop in the years to come.

► **FUTURE**

The library service will continue to develop alongside the Community Hub programme. The consultation held summer 2018 has provided a wealth of information to help influence the development of Thurrock’s first library strategy. This sets out our commitment to keep all library branches open whilst modernising and aligning the service alongside community hubs. A key aim of this will be to develop an investment plan for the long term future, considering all development opportunities to enhance future provision. Thurrock’s first ever Library Strategy will come to Cabinet in December 2018. 2019 will see the reopening of East Tilbury library, and the completion of building the Aveley Community Hub. Where possible we will co-locate the library service alongside wider provision from modern buildings. I am confident that the new Library Strategy will enable the service to move forward with clearly defined priorities, able to adapt and change to meet the needs of Thurrock’s residents in the future.

Library Service Budget 2018/19

<b>Sub Service</b>	<b>Cost Centre</b>	<b>Revised Budget</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Notes</b>
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Libraries	Library cost centres	1,046,502	1,093,868	47,366	Historical overspend to be addressed through library strategy
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## **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE**

### **▶ SERVICE OVERVIEW**

This part of my portfolio is primarily concerned with ensuring the council is delivering against its objectives through the corporate performance framework.

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

The performance of the priority activities of the council is monitored through the Corporate KPI (Key Performance Indicator) framework. This provides a mixture of strategic and operational indicators and is the outcome of a full and thorough review of KPIs and other performance tools in line with recommendations made by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny in 2015/16.

The purpose of the review was to make the performance framework as clear and simple to understand as possible, whilst balancing the need to ensure the council is monitoring those things which are of most importance, both operationally and strategically.

For 2018/19, the set of indicators was reviewed by portfolio holders and officers in line with the new vision and priorities agreed by Council on 31 January 2018. They will continue to be reported to both Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and, then on to Cabinet, on a quarterly basis, throughout 2018/19.

The increased analysis of internal processes at service level by Directors, which was started in 2016/17 has been positive throughout 2017/18 and as such will continue. This includes a monthly review of service indicators by Directors and each portfolio holder.

This is the third year that corporate performance indicators have been reported simply as having “Achieved” or “Failed” to meet their target. This has proved to be much clearer than the previous system, as seen by the positive improvement. At the end of 2017/18, 66% of key performance indicators achieved their target and nearly 60% also improved since the previous year. As at the end of quarter 2 this was 70% of indicators on target – full details were reported to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny in November, and will come to Cabinet in December. As we continue to improve, this is very positive, and the highest percentage on target in recent years.

I have continued this year with the proactive practice of putting any indicators that have failed to meet their target “into focus” which means further explanation is given in the committee and cabinet reports to explain the performance and confirm what action is being taken to improve the situation. Closer scrutiny is also given to indicators where there is a downward direction of travel, but are still on target, to mitigate against continued reduction in performance.

▶ **FUTURE**

The governance for the corporate performance framework is embedded and as such this approach will be continued throughout 2018/19.

This governance is multi-layered – individual teams, lead officers, Directors, portfolio holders and member scrutiny through the Corporate O&S and Cabinet work programme. Teamwork will ensure focus is achieved and improvements made.