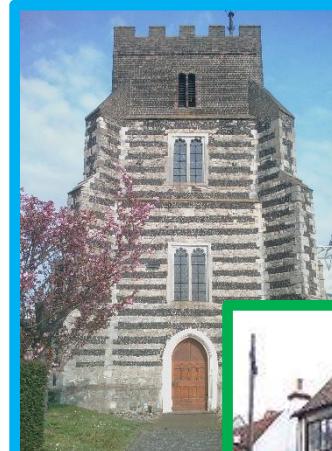


Appendix 1

Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2019-20



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What is overview and scrutiny?

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

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

Work Programme

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

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

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

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

Committees

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

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

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

Membership

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

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

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

The decision making process

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

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



How have we helped you?

Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Ofsted Inspections

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

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

We called an extraordinary committee to consider the response and the

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

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



Later on in the year we also considered the Local Authority Children's Services Ofsted Inspection,

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



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

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

Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thurrock Active Parks Programme



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

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

Thurrock Waste Strategy



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

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

PREVENT Strategy

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

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

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

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



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

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Performance

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



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

Community Engagement

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

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



Capital Strategy 2020/21

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

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

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



Cllr Oliver Gerrish,
Chair of Corporate
Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Development Options List

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

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

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



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

Homeless Hostels, Housing First & Crisis Intervention

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

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

New Council HRA Home Building Programme

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

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

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



Cllr Lynn Worrall,
Chair of Housing
Overview and
Scrutiny Committee



Planning, Transport, and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

A13 Projects

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

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

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



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

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

Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Project

Throughout the year we have been receiving updates on the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project, which would improve the train station. We learnt of the work which had been undertaken, such as demolition of the existing station building.



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

wanted to see future updates to maintain democratic oversight.

Grays Town Centre Update

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

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

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



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

Task and Finish/ Working Group

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

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

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

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

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

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

hearing of the progress they make throughout the coming year.

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

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



Lower Thames Crossing Task Force

Health Impact Assessment

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

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



phase when the Council will have the chance to formally hold the scheme to account.

Modelling and Traffic Update

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

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



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

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

Consultation

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

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

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

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

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



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

Local Development Plan Task Force

Town Planning for Health and Wellbeing

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

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

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



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

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

Thurrock Lakeside Basin

One of our ongoing responsibilities



since the formation of the Task Force has been the

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

Aveley Design Charrette Process

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

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

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



Cllr Joycelyn Redsell, Chair of LDP Task Force

Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group

Aims

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

Evidence gathering

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

People's Panel

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

provide an independent view on the closure of Orsett Hospital.

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

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

Site Visits

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

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

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

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



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

Scrutiny Review

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

Scrutiny Symposium

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



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

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

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



Statutory Scrutiny Guidance

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

Background Research

Throughout the year, the Committee also commissioned our Democratic Services team to undertake background

research and attend conferences, to find out how other authorities organised scrutiny. We wanted to see how many committees other authorities had, as well as the type of reports they considered.

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

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



Cllr Oliver Gerrish, Chair of the Scrutiny Review

How can you get involved?

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

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

Email: Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

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

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

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

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