

21 July 2021

ITEM: 11

Council

Report of the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities

Report of: Councillor Deborah Huelin, Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities

This report is: Public

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is the first report of the Portfolio Holder for Adults and Communities.
- 1.2. It has been a year of unprecedented challenges created by the COVID-19 Pandemic. The services within this Portfolio have responded and adapted, to the Pandemic, ensuring they have continued to deliver our priorities and support Thurrock's residents, including the most vulnerable, throughout the Pandemic.
- 1.3. This report describes the key areas of the Portfolio which comprise:
 - Adults Social Care
 - Community Development and Equalities
 - Libraries
 - Arts, Culture and Heritage

2. Impact of Covid-19

- 2.1. COVID-19 has dominated the work of the services within the portfolio over the last year. Maintaining a fully functioning adult social care operation throughout the pandemic has provided one of the greatest challenges of recent times. The Council and partners have been able to adapt and make sure Thurrock people have been kept safe, while being able to access continued mental and physical health support services.
- 2.2. Thurrock was a leading authority in taking proactive action to develop and implement a dedicated protocol with health partners on how to manage COVID outbreaks in care home settings. The protocol was developed and agreed in mid May 2020, and included enhanced arrangements to care homes, many of which were not available from central government until much later in the epidemic. These included:
 - An enhanced testing protocol for care home staff from May 2020 including weekly asymptomatic PCR testing of all care home workers

four months before government offered similar arrangements nationally, and strengthened local arrangements to protect against the risk of false negative PCR test results.

- A requirement for all patients discharged from hospital back to care homes to have been tested and received a negative COVID-19 test result
- Proactive engagement of care homes to put control measures in place as soon as we were informed of a COVID-19 exposure amongst a resident or staff member including closure of the home to visitors and non-essential personnel.
- Advice on prevention of outbreaks including enhanced IPC training and audits to deliver the highest standard of infection prevention and control.
- A GP Locally Enhanced Service with a named GP and dedicated primary care support to every care home resident
- Enhanced clinical in-reach to care homes from the North East London Foundation NHS Trust including a community gerontologist; a Consultant physician specialising in medicine for the elderly. (Research demonstrates that regular review by a community gerontologist significantly reduces risk of a hospital admission).
- 24/7 access to specialist Public Health advice
- Enhanced arrangements for managing and controlling outbreaks in care homes when they did occur including whole home testing and local contact tracing
- Establishing a multi-agency Health and Social Care Hub to oversee implementation of the protocol and management of outbreaks when they did occur

2.3. The council formed and led a multi-agency Care Home Hub that met at least twice a week to oversee implementation of our Care Home COVID-19 protocol and manage COVID-19 exposures and outbreaks when they did occur.

2.4. At the start of the pandemic the shortage of PPE was a source of national concern. The Council took swift and proactive action, assuming responsibility for providing supplies of PPE to other services, community groups and informal carers ensuring those most in need could access PPE that they required.

2.5. At the end of the first wave, the council had one of the lowest rates of death amongst care home residents in the country.

2.6. Regrettably, following the emergency of the new B.1.1.1.7 (Kent) variant that was significantly more transmissible than the original wild (alpha) variant, Collins House experienced a significant outbreak of Covid in mid-December. Over 70% of staff were also affected which presented some serious staffing challenges. These were mitigated by staff from other services volunteering to provide the much needed support until the outbreak was brought under control and staff who were self-isolating were able to return to work.

- 2.7. In March 2020 the Council took a pre-emptive step and set up a nine-bedded residential home to accommodate COVID-19 positive residents. This facility provided support to people discharged from hospital who could not return to their homes or a care home because they needed to self-isolate.
- 2.8. At the start of the second wave the Government directed all local Authorities to establish such a facility. Thurrock was able to support Essex partners as well as the residents of Thurrock and the facility accommodated more than 110 people during the two waves.
- 2.9. Since the start of the pandemic the council has worked closely with external care homes, domiciliary home care and supported accommodation providers to make sure they felt supported throughout and have remained up to date on outbreak management protocols and relevant government guidance.
- 2.10. The council have been in regular telephone and virtual contact with providers in relation to adequate PPE stocks, offering advice and guidance to staff on self-isolating protocols and identifying vacancies and capacity within the care homes as part of supporting timely hospital discharges. Home care providers have been encouraged to work in set geographical areas in order to utilise hours efficiently therefore minimising service users waiting for a home care service to start.
- 2.11. Regular virtual meetings have continued with providers to maintain relationships and to continue to in partnership for the benefit of service users. A number of compliments and thanks from providers have been received during this period.

The Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action

- 2.12. Thurrock Coronavirus Community Action (TCCA) established by the Council in partnership with the voluntary sector and led by CVS provided ongoing to support communities through the Coronavirus pandemic:
 - The TCCA supported communities by helping with access to food, prescriptions and avenues of support and the TCCA continues to support people self-isolating.
 - Over 5200 residents have been supported with 600 food boxes provided by the council due to shielding or emergency situations with staff teams and community volunteers making this happen during very challenging times.

3. Health and Social Care Transformation – Better Care Together Thurrock

- 3.1. The drive to deliver a *place-based* approach and new models for providing integrated, bespoke and person centred health and care continues at pace. Our approach recognises and leverages the unique strengths of our residents and the assets within our communities, seeking to design new preventative approaches in partnership with residents to promote and maintain their wellbeing and independence. Our approach seeks to '*do with*' rather than '*do*

to'. These is a key principles that underpins our plans to transform health and social care – known as *Better Care Together Thurrock (BCTT)*. Our ambition is for everyone to live in the place they call home, with the people and things that they love, doing things that matter to them.

- 3.2. This model aims to ensure that when people do require our support, they receive a response that focuses on what they tell us is important to them in improving their health and wellbeing and does not just look to 'fix' what we define as their immediate needs. Achieving this requires us to work across organisational boundaries and see the world through the eyes of our residents and their neighbourhood and community, rather than through health and care services. It is a principles and values based approach that requires us to transform whole systems rather than simply commission or provide distinct programmes or services.
- 3.3. The value of the Voluntary and Community Sector and the part they play is recognised and acknowledged in Thurrock with the Council continuing to work in close partnership working with the sector as an equal partner. This partnership is key to being able to identify and maximise the strengths that exist in our communities and it is also key to understanding what individuals and communities actually want and need from services.
- 3.4. The strength-based approach being adopted continues to help transform health and social care, ensuring that we create a responsive and flexible system that wraps itself around people and communities.
- 3.5. Along with the significant challenges it has brought, the Pandemic has also opened up opportunities and new approaches that we are keen to both embed and learn from as part of our transformation journey. This includes the increased use of virtual means to build relationships with partners – for example our community-based social work teams have regular 'virtual' meetings with representatives of health and care organisations in their area. This has enabled cross-organisational solutions to be achieved for people who would ordinarily have to be referred in to different parts of the system. We will also seek to retain the use of virtual opportunities as a means of engaging with people requiring support. This will not become a default, but an option – for example occupational therapists and social workers have been able to conduct assessments for some people this way. This will provide greater choice and flexibility – but will only be used if appropriate. Other opportunities that we are keen to retain are the use of volunteers for befriending and welfare checks. Our CLS 1 team has recruited volunteers for this purpose with great success and evidence of preventing crisis for certain individuals throughout the Pandemic. The greater our flexibility, the greater chance we have at delivering a system that works around people, and not around the organisation.

4. Front line social work teams

- 4.1. Social work teams are our professional leads in adult social care. They support and protect some of the most complex and vulnerable adults in Thurrock. Thurrock has one of the lowest turnover rates of social workers in England allowing long term care relationships between our staff and residents to be maintained. This is achieved through recruiting through social work apprenticeships and then offering staff career progression opportunities and the opportunity to work in a strengths-based, holistic way embedded within our communities.
- 4.2. There is now Thurrock-wide coverage for our place-based social work teams (known as Community-Led Support Teams). Each of the teams is aligned to one of four NHS Primary Care Network geographical footprints, supporting the provision of integrated health and care services.
- 4.3. The teams are easily accessible – offering regular drop-in sessions known as ‘Talking Shops’ at key locations within the community. During the Covid period, the Teams have offered ‘virtual’ talking shops but are now exploring re-establishing face-to-face sessions. We will also continue with a virtual offer of support if people prefer this way of making contact.
- 4.4. Despite approaching social care, people still continue to want to connect and do the things that have made their lives enjoyable. For example, we have often been able to link people with some gardening help so that they can continue to enjoy their garden or help to ensure they can get to clubs and organisations that reflect their interests.

5. Wellbeing Teams

- 5.1. Wellbeing Teams represent our new radically improved model of delivering strengths-based, holistic, flexible and integrated care based to residents in their own homes, based on long term care relationships. Following a successful pilot and evaluation, we have confirmed the permanent establishment of two Wellbeing Teams – one located within Tilbury and one within Chadwell. Wellbeing Teams represent our approach to addressing the ongoing fragility of the domiciliary care market and the desire to shift away from the existing ‘time and task’ model where resident needs are assessed once and then exactly the same number of minutes of care are provided each day, often by different individuals.
- 5.2. The Teams, based on the Buurtzorg model of self-management successfully developed in the Netherlands, operate at sub locality level and deliver care requirements to people who would ordinarily have received a service from a domiciliary care provider, but use the hours allocated to the individual flexibly and also look to build long term relationships with the person receiving support based on shared interests and passions.

- 5.3. The teams also look to reduce the reliance on a service but using resources creatively – seeing what can be provided from the community itself, family and friends, and also the application of technology and connecting individuals they care for with assets in the community that improve their wider wellbeing, for example a trip out to a garden centre or community group.
- 5.4. An evaluation of the approach has shown that it is already making a significant positive impact on the lives of individuals and in doing so, protecting and releasing capacity within the health and care system. An evaluation by the council's public health team using an entire year's worth of data concluded that residents receiving support from Wellbeing Teams needed seven times fewer GP appointments and had three times fewer hospital admissions compared to similar cohorts of residents receiving standard domiciliary care.
- 5.5. There are plans for Wellbeing Teams which will see the approach extended to incorporate elements of health care. For example, the Teams may be able to be trained to administer certain tasks normally carried out by a health professional. This will enable individuals to have greater continuity of care and reduce the number of visits by different professionals to one individual receiving support from both health and care sectors. This approach has been successful in other areas of the country and allows us to embrace a much more 'blended' definition of support in the home.

6. Care Home Development

- 6.1. In January 2019 Cabinet gave approval for a new residential care facility to be built on the Whiteacre / Dilkes Wood site in South Ockendon.
- 6.2. The new facility will provide social care and nursing care in a specialised setting. It will include 45 self-contained dwellings for single people and couples as well as the provision of 30 en-suite bedrooms for intermediate care. The facility will also include shared lounges, a restaurant, laundry room, and treatment rooms as well as accessible dementia friendly gardens.
- 6.3. Good progress was made in 2019, and the early part of 2020, with the design reaching RIBA Stage 2 (Concept design). Plans for consultation on the design with a range of stakeholders was put on hold in March 2020 due to the pandemic, although further design details was developed using remote working. In September 2020 it was decided to pause further work in order to a) review the requirements for the scheme in the light of the pandemic, and b) to focus on the proposed re-provision of the South Ockendon Health Centre.
- 6.4. In October 2020 an application was made by the NHS with the support of the council to One Public Estate for funding for a feasibility study. A grant of £133,000 for this work was announced in March 2021. The study is expected to commence in the next few weeks.

- 6.5. A report presenting the findings of the review of the requirements for the new care home, the prospects for a new integrated medical facility incorporating a community hub, and proposals for restarting the development is being finalised.

7. Mental Health Service Transformation

- 7.1. The challenges faced within our support offer to residents with poor mental health were well-documented in a report presented to Cabinet in March 2019. The findings of this report have underpinned an ambitious programme of adult mental health system transformation in partnership with Thurrock CCG, EPUT and our third sector partners which is seeing a greater number of our residents receiving support to improve their mental health and emotional wellbeing in the right place, and at the right time.
- 7.2. Appointment to a new Strategic Lead position and Commissioning Manager with a focus on mental health, to work with colleagues across the council and system partners has enabled a greater level of focus on this agenda, which has included several specific work programmes which will improve access to mental health services irrespective of level of need.
- 7.3. Appointment to a new Strategic Lead position and Commissioning Manager with a focus on mental health, to work with colleagues across the council and system partners has enabled a greater level of focus on this agenda, which has contributed to the development and ongoing implementation of the Mental Health Transformation Plan. There are five workstreams within the Plan which are:
- Urgent and Emergency Care
 - Integrated Primary and Community Care
 - Inequalities
 - Accommodation and Support
 - Workless-ness and Health JSNA
- 7.4. The MH Commissioning Manager sits within the ASC Commissioning and Procurement Team. The role is instrumental in developing provision under the Care Act that specifically meets the needs of people with mental illness to improve their health and wellbeing. Additionally, the role works with other agencies to ensure that service development in this area, across health and social care services is seamless, holistic and provides value for money. This process includes identifying need, capacity and demand, Monitoring/evaluating services and procuring new provision.

- 7.5. Our new Integrated Primary and Community Care (IPCC) model brings together a range of health, social care and voluntary sector resources to offer care and solutions in the community with specialist mental health social workers, working alongside Community Psychiatric Nurses and a range of assets in each Primary Care Network area. For Adult Social Care this model allows us to build on the success of Community Led Support (CLS) and Local Area Coordinators whilst maintaining established multi-disciplinary working practices to manage risk safely and to ensure that each individual is supported by the most appropriate professionals to find solutions to meet their desired outcomes and health needs.
- 7.6. The new model will improve capacity within Consultant led care, as the IPCC has created a viable alternative to manage individuals who require support but do not require that support/treatment to be consultant led, freeing up Consultant time to manage the most complex patients. During this transformation programme the benefits of a flexible and responsive social work offer in the mental health system are becoming evident. The approach is preventing escalation of need, improving independence and creating a smooth transition to more specialist services without unnecessary hand-offs and duplicate assessments.
- 7.7. During 2020, the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health took the decision to dissolve the section 75 agreement with Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust, allowing our specialist mental health social workers move from Grays Hall and work in a more integrated and strengths based way within the community.
- 7.8. Whilst the changes will take a little time to embed, we aim to align our social work Mental Health arrangements within the four PCN localities, in which we already provide a generic strengths based social work response. The benefits of the new approach will be:
- Improved access; more people, with a greater range of mental health needs and their carers, will receive support from the Adult Mental Health Social Work Team
 - Easier access to the team by all residents, with direct referrals accepted from within the community.
 - A broader range of approaches employed to help residents find solutions to address their needs thereby increasing their choice and independence.
 - Improved grip on demand, capacity and emerging issues and trends, which can then be resolved in a timelier manner.
 - Social work practice that is steeped in strengths based approach and closely aligned with the direction of travel for social work in Thurrock.
 - Ability to flex to meet changes in need and demand and offer a truly bespoke service to each individual resident.

8. Delayed Transfers of Care (DToC)

- 8.1. The targets within the Better Care Fund agreement continue to provide a significant focus to Delayed Transfers of Care (DToCs). DToCs are where someone is medically fit to leave hospital but there is no-where for them to move to and are a national issue monitored by NHS England.
- 8.2. In 2019-20, Thurrock was the best performing Council in the region, and performed well above the England average.
- 8.3. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, DToC recording has been suspended for 20-21. When recording will be reinstated is currently not clear. Despite official recording being suspended, locally we know that Thurrock continues to keep delayed discharges at a minimum as we are monitoring discharges through our hospital social work team and contract team. Any delays for Thurrock residents are often as a result of people waiting for discharged not agreeing to the choices of care and support that are available. Throughout the pandemic we have worked hard and succeeded in ensuring discharges are not delayed utilising our designated setting to ensure those who were Covid positive were discharged and supported in a timely way.
- 8.4. Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals Foundation Trust continues to be extremely complimentary about the work of the council – in particular the excellent work carried out by the Social Care Hospital Team, who work tirelessly to ensure people are discharged quickly when they are fit to do so.

9. Safeguarding (LPS)

- 9.1. Safeguarding adults who may be at risk of abuse or harm has long been an absolute priority for adult social care. The statutory Board led by Thurrock Council, the Clinical Commissioning Group and Essex Police is now well established and the Safeguarding Team provide skilled and person-centred interventions.
- 9.2. In 2020-21 a total of 1070 safeguarding alerts were received, a slight increase of 7% on alerts received in the previous year. The increase is in line with national data during the Covid period, and we are expecting this may increase further as restrictions ease. This will be closely monitored by the safeguarding teams and also our statutory Safeguarding Adults Board. The Council and partners continue to work closely with individuals, local communities and other agencies to ensure that those at risk have the support they need to live lives free from harm or abuse.
- 9.3. The Safeguarding Team is also responsible for managing the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Service. The team will be implementing the new Liberty Protection Safeguards scheme, which is due to replace the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Service in April 2022. The two schemes will run alongside each other for the first year post implementation. A process is currently in

place to develop the necessary systems and processes and ensure effective implementation of the new scheme.

- 9.4. Thurrock Council have always been proactive in ensuring that the necessary procedural safeguards are in place for those at risk of being deprived of their liberty; and remain confident that this strong Human Rights based practice will continue under Liberty Protection Safeguards.

10. Preparing for Adulthood Strategy

- 10.1. Effective preparation for adulthood for disabled young people has a very positive effect on prevention, helps young people and families manage change and promotes independence.
- 10.2. The Thurrock Preparing for Adulthood Strategy is a three year plan that is relevant for all agencies and staff who work with disabled young people between the ages of 14-25 years in Thurrock. Throughout its three-year life cycle, all accountable parties will update the action plan to include progress every year.
- 10.3. The Strategy is guided by the principles of the Children and Families Act 2014 and associated SEN Code of Practice 2015, Care Act 2014 and the guidelines recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence 2016, which provides national guidance and advice to improve health and social care. It is also supported by an action plan to ensure positive outcomes for our disabled young people, their families and carers.
- 10.4. The Strategy is now live and accessible via the Thurrock website at <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/young-people-with-special-needs-preparing-for-adulthood/transition-strategy>

11. Care Provider Market Development and Management

- 11.1. Thurrock's response to the Pandemic highlights the importance of the social care market, which remains fragile but manageable in Thurrock. A great deal of work has been done to stabilise the market and increase capacity. However, we are now grappling with a significant increase in both the numbers of people requiring care and the complexity of their need and the wider impact of COVID.
- 11.2. Older People entering residential care have more complex needs than they were a decade ago. For example, 80% of service users have both a physical and cognitive impairment compared with only 47% ten years ago.

11.3. A multi-faceted approach is adopted in Thurrock to address the increase in demand and complexity and support the provider market in addition to action previously described in this report includes:

- The contracts for home care continue to be well embedded and our in-house service, Thurrock Care at Home, is also now well established. Our approach to providing support to people in their homes through Wellbeing Teams is proving very successful.
- It is acknowledged that the location of specialist schools in-borough for young people with disabilities would result in additional demand for services when they transitioned to adulthood. This is why a purpose built supported housing scheme for people with autism in response to that identified need is currently in the process of opening.
- A greater variety of provision and type of providers (including successfully growing the number of micro providers) to meet the needs of an increasing number of young adults with complex learning disabilities who will be coming into adult social care every year is continually encouraged.

11.4. It has been an exceptionally challenging year, with significant pressure on the whole system resulting from the pandemic but we have continued wherever possible to move forward with our transformation agenda to develop and grow the market particularly with the implementation of the new model of Wellbeing Teams.

12. Carers

12.1. In Thurrock it is estimated that some 20,000 people are unpaid/informal carers. However, of these under 5% are actually known to public services and formally recognised and receiving carer support. The 2011 census shows that 26% of those identifying as caring in Thurrock provide more than 50 hours per week. This is higher than region and national averages.

12.2. To address this, over the next year the Council's work with carers is being revitalised to ensure that everything is in place to identify carers and give them the right information and support to improve their lives. As part of this, carers are involved in the refresh of our assessment process; We are developing training for social care staff on identifying and supporting carers; HR and Social Care are working together to identify and support Carers within our own workplace and we are working with carers to develop and publish an action plan so that future support meets their changing needs.

- 12.3. This last year has proven to be challenging for carers. The pandemic has meant more people than ever become a carer for the first time and for existing carers it often meant they took on more caring responsibilities as often the needs of the person being cared for increased. Many carers were unable to take a break from their caring role as day care and respite services had to pause. As a result of this, there has been a negative impact on the physical and mental wellbeing of carers. As part of our Covid recovery, the Council has increased the capacity in Thurrock Carers Service to help boost the identification of new carers and provide much needed support.
- 12.4. During Carers Awareness Week the service was able to hold its first meeting of our young adult carer peer support group (outdoor and socially distanced 'Pizza in the Park') for those transitioning to an adult carer role and an afternoon tea at Thurrock's Yacht Club to appreciate and thank Carers for all they have done during the last year.
- 12.5. Thurrock Carers Service has adapted and managed to respond throughout this difficult period by moving many of its services to a digital platform. They have supported and encouraged carers to utilise technology during this pandemic resulting in a larger number of Carers engaging digitally than ever before. It has been very successful and has helped reduce social isolation by moving peer support groups and social activities online – including a virtual garden party in the summer, a Christmas party, regular quizzes, mindfulness sessions and first aid training. The Council is looking to build on this and improve technology enabled care solutions to carers and has further enhance our digital offer/solutions.
- 12.6. Two new web based platforms have been introduced. The first provides practical information around health and wellbeing for both the cared for individual and their carer, with an online peer to peer support network. The second provides information for employers and carers who are in, or thinking about returning to work by giving advice on carers' rights, legalisation and employment.
- 12.7. It is also important to support carers who have no experience or who are fearful of new technology. In partnership with the Thurrock Carers Service the Council is trialling a videoconferencing device called Alcove to provide virtual support and social events. This specially adapted tablet makes video calling as straightforward, simple and as safe as possible.

13. Micro Enterprises

- 13.1. Micro Enterprises are small services delivering local services to local people, providing personal and flexible support to give people more choice and control over the support they receive.

- 13.2. Thurrock's award winning Micro Enterprise scheme, now in its sixth year has recently been featured as a case study in the Association for Public Service Excellence news. Micro enterprises are key to how we are changing the adult social care provider market and providing more choice so that people can still achieve what matters to them regardless of their health and care situation.
- 13.3. More than 140 services are now available for local residents. There is a very diverse range on offer from personal care to lunch clubs, gardeners and handymen to leisure and fitness activities. All are community focussed and provide a wide choice of services. Many services are run by volunteers and not dependent on an individual's ability to pay providing wider inclusivity for Thurrock residents.
- 13.4. There is ongoing interest in the scheme especially as Thurrock moves out of lockdown and people are reassessing their lives. The scheme has already provided opportunities for people who have been made redundant and there are plans to work alongside the DWP and as other local business re-start initiatives to offer the scheme as a potential for employment. Many other local authorities have sought Thurrock's expertise and are also now implementing similar schemes to the Micro-Enterprises that have been created in Thurrock.
- 13.5. Thurrock's Micro-Enterprises are part of a tangible and successful, innovative and collaborative approach to health and care transformation that delivers on all aspects, whether they be a vehicle for people realising a passion or a way of obtaining care and support that is personalised to the individual.
- 13.6. The Micro Enterprise scheme supports local residents to set up services that help others in their local communities. The focus is on developing care and support businesses that enable people to have a wide choice of services that people can utilise to enrich their lives by supporting their independence and promoting wellbeing. There are a wide range of services on offer; everything from personal care to support at home, lunch clubs to leisure activities and the list is growing. There are currently around 130 services available and there is ongoing interest from local residents in setting up services to help others.
- 13.7. The scheme offers a real opportunity for local residents to realise an ambition to utilise previous work/life experiences, an interest or a hobby and turn this into a service that not only benefits the community but also offers employment opportunities. A regularly updated list of available services is hosted on the Stronger Together website at www.strongertogetherthurrock.org.uk

14. Community Development and Equalities

- 14.1. The Community Development Team supports people to come together to take positive action on what is important to them. Support is provided to all services and staff networks around equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring our decisions and processes are both informed by our duties as a public body under the Equality Act 2010 and also representative of local issues. Building strong, resilient communities that enable integration and cohesion in a growing borough underpins the wide and varied work of the service.
- 14.2. Increasingly, so much of the council's ability to achieve the best outcomes for residents relies on an independent and thriving voluntary, community and faith sector. Supporting this sector to be as strong as it can be underpins much of our community development focus. Thurrock Community Service plays an essential role in developing the breadth and strength of Thurrock's voluntary sector.
- 14.3. The Stronger Together Partnership is developing as a key resource to help develop community resilience, connecting communities and issues to support improvements where possible. In January 2021, Cabinet approved our *Collaborative Communities Framework* which sought to encapsulate our Strengths and Assets Based Approach. Co-produced via our *Stronger Together* partnership over three years, the framework sets out how we will work and enable our communities to co-design and influence decisions, address their own challenges and realise their own ambitions. It recognises the importance of the council reducing red-tape that hinders community-led action, devolving power and enabling different ways of working so that communities are better enabled to achieve locally determined outcomes. Developing the action plan for the Collaborative Communities Framework is a key priority for the coming months including a review of community engagement to ensure we capture and use the views expressed through different programmes in a single view of engagement.
- 14.4. Thurrock Council continues to support its own volunteer programme with over 200 active volunteers. While volunteering activity slowed during the period of restrictions, the number of volunteers have remained high throughout with many of our volunteers going on to support the TCCA effort or getting involved with other roles including the Library Homelink service. The team provide training and support to services on involving and supporting volunteers leading with the creation of new roles in Adult Social Care, Library Service, Street Cleaning, Recreation and Leisure Services.

- 14.5. The Community Environmental Development Fund (CEDF), now in its sixth year of delivery, is a capital fund designed to support projects that: renew, improve, transform or create a community asset; sustain local organisations and initiatives; show a direct benefit to local communities. The fund supported 52 projects in its first five years, providing services for the benefit of local communities. The CEDF for 2021/22 was relaunched in May 2021 and will close in August 2021. The team have already engaged with approximately 35 interested groups through a series of on-line workshops.
- 14.6. In addition, a review of the council's Social Value Framework will conclude with the aim of adjusting local requirements to ensure that council contracts maximise social, economic and environmental benefits for Thurrock.

15. Community Led Local Development (CLLD)

- 15.1. The Tilbury Community Led Local Development (CLLD) programme covers Tilbury St Chads and Tilbury Riverside & Thurrock Park wards. The focus of the programme is to support local businesses as well as new start-ups and investment in projects that help unemployed or economically inactive residents to become economically active again. A Local Action Group (LAG) comprised of voluntary and community sector, resident, Member and business representatives agreed the priorities for the area and make key funding decisions.
- 15.2. The delivery element of the programme will run until December 2022. To maximise the opportunities for local businesses and residents a request to extend this to March 2023 has just been submitted to the funders – MHCLG and DWP – for their consideration.
- 15.3. The CLLD Programme offers grants of £1,000-£4,000 to small and medium-sized businesses to improve their business frontage or to support new businesses with start-up costs. Businesses need to match the grant pound for pound. Despite the impact of the pandemic, by the beginning of June, 12 had been approved, 2 more applications are being considered and 7 further businesses have had their eligibility confirmed and been invited to submit a full application. The aim is to support at least 68 businesses by the time the project concludes.
- 15.4. The investment to support unemployed or economically inactive residents has to be matched pound for pound, meaning that they only attract interest from providers with project activity already funded in the area. To date eight projects have been approved with total project costs of over £2.4m, offering a range of help to prepare for, find and secure work or move into learning. Providers include voluntary and community sector providers, Port of Tilbury, South Essex College and Council teams. These services have been badly affected by the lockdown but all of them are now mobilising to expand their delivery. Around 100 residents have been registered and we expect that to grow rapidly over coming months.

- 15.5. The first priority looking forward is to secure confirmation from the funders – MHCLG and DWP - that delivery can continue to March 2023. We are also looking to increase the financial support available to businesses to improve shopfronts in Tilbury.
- 15.6. As COVID-19 restrictions ease project leads will be able to work more closely with residents to help them develop their skills and find work. Over the next 12 months our focus is on delivery. We plan to offer grants to 40 businesses in Tilbury and help our projects engage around 800 residents in the skills and employment programme.

16. Libraries

- 16.1. Thurrock Libraries develop activities and service provision opportunities under the framework of both local strategic priorities and national DCMS-certified Universal Officers incorporating Information and Digital, Health, Reading, Culture, and Children's Promise as defined by Libraries Connected.
- 16.2. Thurrock Library Services continue to underwrite public access to books (for education and leisure purposes), authoritative information and PC facilities, including internet and printing. Pre-COVID-19 loans of physical items were at nearly 15000, and annual footfall across the borough for in-library services was at nearly 700,000.
- 16.3. Physical stock is supplemented by a popular and expanding digital library, consisting of thousands of e-books, e-audiobooks and magazines with nearly 14000 loans during the first 2020 lockdown period, with a 109% increase in new joiners. Print and digital collections are due to be expanded from July 2021 with the entry of Thurrock into the London-based Libraries Consortium, adding additional items to stock for Thurrock residents.
- 16.4. Grays Library maintains a comprehensive Local Studies archive, containing items of unique historical interest, while East Tilbury hosts the Bata Heritage Collection. The libraries serve the widest demographics, with growing support given to Further Education and Higher Education students studying locally and on distance learning courses and provision of health and well-being information resources under the national Reading Well scheme.
- 16.5. Thurrock has joined the Libraries Consortium, a business partnership of over 18 London and Essex library authorities that provides value for money, shared resources and joint contract-negotiating. To unify with the Consortium, Thurrock has installed a new Library Management System, migrating all catalogue, stock, customer and processing data – a large undertaking in which Thurrock's input and expertise benefitted best practice across the entire Consortium.

- 16.6. Over the last year Library staff adapted to a number of changes to the way they work. They were incredibly flexible and most staff were redeployed to different roles whilst the Libraries were closed, handling calls for TCCA, and providing and collecting Covid Tests from Libraries that were set up at Distribution Centres. They telephoned vulnerable library users to complete welfare checks and also delivered online sessions i.e. Baby Rhyme Time and Story Times.
- 16.7. Since lockdown, Thurrock Libraries staff have facilitating befriending and social outreach services online, such as Reading Friends, a Reading Agency scheme designed to bring people together under their love of books and reading. There have been at least two sessions a week, with approx. 6 to 12 participants per session.
- 16.8. Having benefitted from a small restructure, library and hub staff are now in a position to optimize both the service's potential and their own skills – maximising outreach and activities, local and national initiatives and schemes, and provide a robust and comprehensive response to the needs of the local community. Libraries and hubs should be as accessible and used as much as possible, while also taking skill sets and resources out into the community. We are reviewing our longer term strategy for libraries and the potential to direct more service contact through libraries to ensure better outcomes for residents.

17. Arts, Culture and Heritage

- 17.1. Arts, Culture and Heritage have an important part to play in supporting economic growth and regeneration across Thurrock. Our vision for cultural regeneration in Thurrock is one where culture brings people together, strengthens communities, and contributes to the creation of a more vibrant place through developments including health, social care, education, physical environment and economic development where culture and creativity improves the well-being of individuals and tackles inequalities.
- 17.2. The pandemic continues to have a significant impact on the arts and heritage scene and this report thanks again the many volunteers and groups who have found new ways to continue their work in a difficult year.
- 17.3. Thurrock Council manages the Thameside Theatre, Thurrock Museum and supports development of the arts across the borough. The Cultural Services team continues to take a safety first approach to the pandemic and work within the Covid guidelines - risk assessments have been prepared and measures taken to protect our community. Attention has focussed on those activities that can be delivered virtually or outdoors with some pilot activity also taking place including the full council meetings.

- 17.4. The Museum has refocussed operation to online while the lockdown has been in place. Since the online learning programme was launched, many digital learning resources have been produced, downloaded more than 3,348 times and achieved a five star rating from teachers. In addition 132 children have had online learning sessions with museum staff and 26 adults have participated in virtual tours and talks.
- 17.5. Despite long periods away from the Museum itself, Thurrock Museum 'volunteering-from-home' has been embraced with enthusiasm. The volunteers have helped with the creation of education resources, sent resource packs to care homes, submitted research that updates our webpages and even completed two temporary exhibitions displayed outside using the Thameside Theatre poster boards, reinvented as "The Museum Outdoors" – one for Remembrance Day and one for Christmas.
- 17.6. The Thameside Theatre has traditionally hosted a mixture of professional shows alongside amateur and community activities. Unfortunately its position on the third floor of the Thameside Complex means it is particularly difficult to open in a COVID safe manner and the theatre has remained closed to the public since the first lockdown in March 2020. Shows have been cancelled or postponed and where possible staff have been redeployed or furloughed.
- 17.7. Last October the Theatre won funding from the Cultural Recovery Fund to put Covid compliant measures in place and to prepare for eventual reopening. The funds were supplement with a second successful bid in March.
- 17.8. The money has been used to help pay the costs of those staff who have not been furloughed to offset the loss of income, to pay for COVID safety measures such as screens, to develop a new business and marketing plan to help the theatre develop and diversify its cultural services offer, and to invest in different ways to share cultural activity with audiences such as equipment to enable filming and live streaming.
- 17.9. The Council is particularly supportive of community led arts and cultural activity in Thurrock and the council has again supported development of a bid for Creative People and Places funding from Arts Council England. Creative People and Places is about more people choosing, creating and taking part in brilliant creative activities. If successful the bid, led by the Tilbury on Thames Trust, will draw in more than £1 million investment for cultural and creative activity in Thurrock. Groups and individuals across the borough have come together to help shape a shared vision for community led cultural activity in the borough which is reflected in the bid.

- 17.10. Furthermore, we have a world-class centre for creative production at High House Production Park which the council has taken over day to day management responsibilities for the site on behalf of the charity. The costs of our work are being met by the charity so there is no additional cost to Thurrock residents. The site has raised our profile as a centre for the creative industries – a growing sector in the UK economy. It will be important to use the same collaborative approach we have adopted for our community driven cultural activity to help the sector to grow and create jobs, inward investment and wealth in Thurrock. The potential for the sector has been recognised in the Backing Thurrock roadmap for recovery, resilience and a return to growth agreed by Cabinet in March 2021 and work is underway to develop a sector specific action plan.
- 17.11. Work on some projects to be included in the action plan is already underway. The council, working on behalf of High House Production Park has been able to secure funding from the Creative Estuary programme to help refresh the business plan for High House and to conduct a feasibility study on options for further development of workspace on site. Creative Estuary is also supporting a pilot programme in Purfleet aimed at embedding cultural facilities and activities into the major regeneration scheme. The council is also actively involved in the creative industries work being carried out by the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) across south Essex which included a recent survey of individuals and groups working in the sector to better understand what would help them thrive.
- 17.12. The council is working with the Royal Opera House to deliver the Trailblazer programme – enabling young people in Thurrock to benefit from high quality cultural activities. The Trailblazer programme is refreshing the menu of cultural opportunities available to schools and all activity will be delivered in line with Government guidelines and Covid restrictions.

Going forward

- 17.13. Officers will continue to work with volunteers and the community to bring back arts, cultural and heritage services as restrictions ease further and we are all able to return to 'normal life'.
- 17.14. Over the course of the next few months we will working with our partners plan and reposition cultural services and in particular our approach to cultural regeneration to better support the Council's place ambitions. This will include reviewing current cultural services provision and assessing their overall social and economic contribution to regeneration in Thurrock.
- 17.15. Working with partners we will develop and bring forward a report on a new shared vision and priorities to support cultural regeneration in Thurrock that is social, economic and physical over the long-term including exploring ways to maximise the power of culture and creativity to support the well-being of individuals and communities as part of an overall programme for economic growth that impacts positively on social change, tackles inequalities and promotes place shaping through creativity.

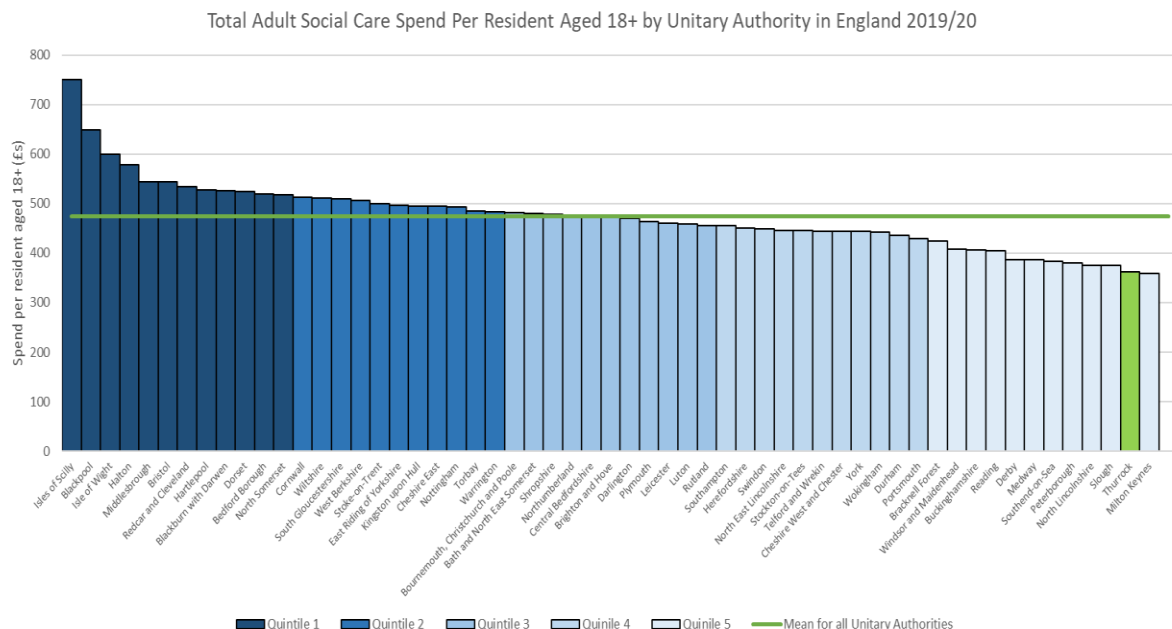
17.16. We will continue to deliver and enhance cultural services working with production companies, local groups, and borough wide facilities to promote arts and culture in venues across Thurrock and work with communities to support the development of new cultural productions and events, including the use of the theatre’s new streaming equipment and green screen to reach new audiences and support groups to maximise the benefit and impact of their work.

17.17. We will work with our partners to deliver community driven arts and heritage activity across the borough in ways that help improve the quality of life for our residents, reimagine our high streets and open spaces, support a new dimension to our economy, one that creates new jobs and opportunities for people to develop new skills as well as contributes to our key messages, conveying Thurrock’s success and opportunities and helping build external relationships for future prosperity.

18. Finance

Adult Social Care

18.1. The total net budget for Adult Social Care in 2020/21 was £ £43.431m. Thurrock has the second lowest spend per head of population on Adult Social Care of any unitary authority in the country. This reflects our success at transforming our services and wider health and care system to focus on prevention that keeps our residents independent for longer and delays and reduces demand on statutory care services. (Figure 1).



18.2. For 2020-21, adult social care received an additional £0.737m in Social Care Support grant, and £1.336m through the Adult Social Care Council Tax precept. This funding was predominantly used, in the base budget, to support

the increase in demand and costs within adult social care residential, homecare and supported living placements.

- 18.3. Additional funding was allocated, in the forms of infection control, rapid testing and workforce capacity grants throughout the year to support care providers. Furthermore, a central Covid funding allocation was received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to provide additional resources to deal with the escalated costs of delivery Adult Social Care services throughout the financial year.
- 18.4. Funding levels included within the base budget for 2021-22 include the additional 3% adult social care precept of circa £2.5m which has been used to finance growth requirement centred on increases in the rates paid to care providers for Residential, Nursing and homecare. This has been used to support the on-going market fragility and address some of the economic pressures faced within the sector. The funding has also been used to meet the rising costs associated with increased complexities within Learning disabilities and mental health clients.

Community Development

- 18.5. In 2020/21 £336,000 was allocated against supporting the delivery of community projects and over £400,000 was awarded locally in the form of voluntary grants. £800,000 has been allocated to this area for spend in 2021/22.

Libraries

- 18.6. £1.2m was spent on the library service in 2020/21. Loss of income whilst the libraries remained closed during the national restrictions was offset by reduced expenditure elsewhere within the service. The service have an allocation of £1.3m in 2021/22.

Arts, Heritage and Culture

- 18.7. The Theatre budget is based on a cost recovery basis and lost income during 2021/22 was offset by the income compensation scheme, reductions in corresponding expenditure and the furlough scheme.

19. Conclusions

- 19.1. This report highlights the comprehensive and high quality work undertaken across the diverse portfolio of services that are responsibility of the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Adults and Communities. It documents continued performance despite the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and sets out an ambitious agenda of further transformation moving forward.