

Thurrock Council – Corporate Peer Challenge 2022 action plan

Recommendation	Summary of key points	Actions
<p>Recommendation #1.</p> <p>Prioritise the Thurrock Ambition.</p> <p>Agree what type of council you want to be and use this to drive transformation and culture change.</p> <p>Prioritise what you want to deliver within the budget available and agree on the disinvestments.</p>	<p>The council needs to develop a clear strategic growth plan which sets out the narrative and priorities for growth in Thurrock. Bringing together all the projects under one programme, aligned with economy, culture, community and wellbeing outcomes. The programme needs a timeline with appropriate milestones, governance, stakeholder engagement, resourcing, outcomes and communications strategy.</p> <p>The council needs to stop, review what type of council it wants to be, and prioritise accordingly.</p> <p>The council also needs to urgently discuss and agree a programme of disinvestments to support this priority setting.</p>	<p>The existing vision and priorities – People, Place and Prosperity – still stand with delivery reflected in the council's 3 main strategies (Backing Thurrock, Local Plan and Health and Wellbeing Strategy).</p> <p>An overarching growth narrative will be set out in the Statement of Intent 2030 supported by economic growth modelling.</p> <p>Develop an overarching Strategic Transformation Programme (STP) to also include significant growth projects and alignment to overarching priorities.</p> <p>Delivered through the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) – prioritisation and disinvestment is part of the budget setting process for 2023/24.</p>
<p>Recommendation #2.</p> <p>Financial stability/resilience and sustainability</p> <p>Corporately own and understand the financial information, align the MTFS with the ambition and priorities and effectively deliver the savings.</p>	<p>Delivering the savings and bridging the gaps in 2023/24 and 2024/25 will require a level of management, control and focus never experienced before. Peers identified this as the number one priority for the directors' board.</p> <p>All councillors need to understand the scale of challenge and be equipped with further financial information and analysis to inform oversight and future decision-making.</p>	<p>Members will continue to be engaged in terms of decision-making.</p>

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<p>Recommendation #3.</p> <p>Agree and deliver a cross council transformation programme</p> <p>Corporately own and understand the whole transformation programme, ensuring a strong governance framework to drive through the improvements.</p>	<p>To date, transformation has been mainly financially driven and led individually by services or through corporate projects. There is now a need to bring together the disparate corporate and service transformation plans into one strategic transformation programme, co-designed with staff and aligned with organisational priorities.</p> <p>As part of the revised transformation programme there is a need to broaden understanding of the benefits of a digital-first approach in terms of efficiencies from deep integration between key business systems, particularly in terms of data management and improve business intelligence. This needs to be positioned in terms of how these changes could improve outcomes for residents as well as creating efficiencies.</p>	<p>Reshape the existing transformation work into a new, overarching Strategic Transformation Programme (STP) to also include significant growth projects, alignment to overarching priorities, with appropriate governance arrangements in place including an effective engagement strategy.</p> <p>This will form part of the STP including appropriate new governance structures and link to culture change.</p>
<p>Recommendation #4.</p> <p>Strengthen corporate leadership, organisational culture and member/officer relationships.</p> <p>Make time for facilitated conversations, be clear on roles and responsibilities and describe and then</p>	<p>Councillors want to receive more information – for example, briefings such as those provided during the pandemic. They want to come together more with officers, informally to discuss projects and casework.</p> <p>Officers would like to see more medium to long-term strategic planning and annual prioritisation.</p>	<p>A new regular member briefing to be launched to replace the COVID-19 briefing and cover other strategic updates and information.</p> <p>Support from the LGA has been offered to support ongoing member development.</p> <p>Joint informal sessions of Directors' Board and Cabinet will continue.</p> <p>The Engagement Strategy and its implementation will also support this and organisational culture change.</p>

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<p>demonstrate the culture you want to achieve.</p>	<p>A governance review to consider roles and relationships between each committee/meeting, their responsibilities, and so on.</p>	<p>A governance review of the constitution is underway through a cross-party Constitution Working Group. An initial report is due to be considered by General Services Committee at its meeting on 14 June 2022 and then full Council on 29 June 2022.</p>
<p>Recommendation #5.</p> <p>Harness the partnerships offer – from local to regional and national.</p> <p>Define the partner you want to be in different scenarios and accept or secure help from others.</p>	<p>Do more work on defining the type of strategic partner the council wants to be for growth – for example, direct deliverer, enabler, commissioner, client or hybrid.</p>	<p>An overarching growth narrative will be set out in the Statement of Intent 2030.</p> <p>As part of the STP, services continue to consider the key provision questions and options around delivery, this will form part of the service review and cross-cutting work of the council.</p>
<p>Recommendation #6.</p> <p>Shape and promote the collective narrative.</p> <p>Drive proactive communications which celebrate your success and actively manage the Council's reputation.</p>	<p>The council should [...] develop a communication and engagement plan to engage communities in the ambition for Thurrock. Communities want to know how regeneration, new businesses and the Freeport benefit them. Communicate the opportunities, jobs, skills and the social return on investment.</p>	<p>The Statement of Intent 2030 will establish the overall narrative with activity over the summer to engage partners and communities in how it will be achieved. This will be supported by a comprehensive communications plan for growth and placemaking with specific activity also planned across Thames Freeport partners from September 2022.</p> <p>Further Local Plan engagement will also take place in 2022.</p> <p>Further embed the Collaborative Communities Framework</p>

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	<p>Partners spoke of working together to build a bridge from successful operational delivery to shared medium/long term planning. Using the new Collaborative Communities Framework, make time to redefine these connections and build up the trust and productive relationships required.</p> <p>Consider strengthening corporate capacity around communications – internal and external – to further celebrate success throughout the organisation.</p>	<p>External support has been secured to strengthen the approach to policy analysis and stakeholder engagement more broadly and align to existing communications capacity and more strategic, proactive and positive communication activity linked closely to the council's overall ambition and priorities.</p>