

7 February 2023		ITEM: 5
General Services Committee		
Representations to Government Directions issued in January 2023		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Ian Wake, Acting Chief Executive		
Accountable Assistant Director: N/A		
Accountable Director: N/A		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The following report provides the background and details supporting a decision to endorse Thurrock Council's representations to government on the proposed expansion of Directions.

As part of the representation period ending on 7 February, interest parties are able to comment on the Directions the Secretary of State is 'minded-to' implement following the receipt of the Commissioners' first report and the interim findings of the Best Value Inspection.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That General Services Committee comment on the letter of representations at Appendix 2 for submission to the Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 On 2 September 2022, the then Secretary of State announced a package of Intervention for Thurrock Council, including appointing Essex County Council as Commissioners.

2.2 At the same time, Essex County Council were appointed as Best Value Inspectors, to ascertain as to whether Thurrock Council was failing to comply with its Best Value Duty.

2.3 The Department of Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) required Essex County Council to provide a first report of the Commissioner within

three months and the Best Value Inspection report was required within four months.

- 2.4 The Best Value Inspection team wrote to DLUHC ahead of their deadline to request more time to conduct the inspection and to provide an update letter on their findings. This request was approved, and the Best Value Inspection report will now be submitted in full to the Department by 17 February 2023.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 On 24 January, the Department wrote to Thurrock Council outlining that the Secretary of State was 'minded-to' expand the Directions in response to the Best Value Inspection update letter and the Commissioners' First Report.
- 3.2 The letter containing the proposed Directions has been provided with this report at appendix 1, and can also be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intervention-at-thurrock-council> along with the all other documents DLUHC has published relating to the Intervention.
- 3.3 As stated in the letter, the Secretary of State intends to publish new Directions following a period of representations. All interested parties are able to submit representations, which will be considered ahead of the Secretary of State making their final decision. The deadline for representations is 7 February.
- 3.4 The response on behalf of Thurrock Council can be found at appendix 2 and the submission of a Thurrock Council representation does not preclude any individual or group associated with the organisation from submitting separate representations to DLUHC should they wish.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The recommendation provides for Members to endorse the representations made from Thurrock Council to officials within the Department.

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

- 5.1 Those consulted in advance of formulating the letter are set out in Appendix 2.

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

- 6.1 Endorsing the representations within this report will have no direct impact on policies, priorities, performance or the community.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Acting Director of Finance and s151 Officer

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. The Council continues to respond to the directions issued by the Secretary of State and progress is monitored against the delivery of the Improvement Recovery plan. The delivery of this plan has significant wider financial implications which are subject to ongoing monitoring and reporting in a range of forums.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **John Jones**
Interim Director of Legal and Governance and Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no direct diversity or equality implications as a result of this report.

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

None.

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

- Published correspondence and reports relating to the Intervention and Best Value Inspection can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/intervention-at-thurrock-council>

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Letter to the acting Chief Executive setting out a proposed expansion to the intervention package
- Appendix 2 – Representations from Thurrock Council

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