

24 July 2024		ITEM: 12
Council		
Corporate Plan 2024-29		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: n/a	
Report of: Cllr John Kent, Leader of the Council		
Accountable Assistant Director: Patrick McDermott, Assistant Director, Strategy, Policy, Performance and Partnerships		
Accountable Director: Alex Powell, Assistant Chief Executive		
This report is public		
Version: Final		

Executive Summary

As part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan Thurrock Council needs a Corporate Plan to give clarity about how the organisation will move forward. The Corporate Plan sets out the purpose of the council and how services will need to adapt. It focusses on:

- corporate priorities
- the changes needed
- guiding the work of the council's leadership, teams and officers
- rebuilding external and internal confidence in the council

As a new team, the Leader and Cabinet fully support the urgent need for a new Corporate Plan, and agree this important strategic document will give members, staff, partners and residents more clarity.

Through this Corporate Plan the new administration is determined that the council will be different and better. It will put Thurrock and its communities first and take responsibility for its decisions. It will say what it means and mean what it says. It will be honest, open, fair and respectful.

A short, high-level summary of the Corporate Plan was brought to Cabinet in June 2024 as a precursor to presenting this final version to Cabinet and Council in July. Please note that publishing of the Council meeting agenda and papers pre-dates the Cabinet meeting, therefore this report and its recommendation is dependent on the administration having agreed to the Corporate Plan at the Cabinet meeting on 17 July 2024 and recommended it to Council for approval.

The Corporate Plan is not intended to cover everything the council does but sets out our aspirations for change that will be delivered alongside our day-to-day activities. The document presented today is the full plan for the next five years, which will be reviewed each year to ensure the council is progressing on its improvement journey monitored via a clear and open performance management and assurance framework which will be shared with members in the Autumn.

Commissioner Comment:

Commissioners have been consulted on the content of this report and agree with the recommendations made.

1. Recommendation(s)

Council to agree the Corporate Plan

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The lack of a Corporate Plan, strategic narrative, clarity of priorities and associated comprehensive performance management, assurance and reporting framework is well recognised. The need for clear strategic direction was highlighted in the Best Value Inspection report, commissioners' reports and through internal reflection amongst staff and members.
- 2.2 Since the start of intervention the council has been looking inwardly and challenging how it works both internally and also externally with our service users, partners and stakeholders. The Corporate Plan builds upon and enforces the progress already made through the Improvement and Recovery Plan and enhanced Improvement and Recovery Plan and further articulates the new operating model.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan articulates, in one place, the messages shared over the last year with staff, members, Commissioners and government as part of the improvement and recovery of the council, and its journey out of intervention. It draws upon feedback from engagement sessions with staff and members across the council, particularly in relation to culture, behaviours and values. It also takes account of comments and recommendations in the Best Value Inspection Report and subsequent reports of Commissioners and the Secretary of State. And it reflects the commitments and determination of the new Leader and administration to be honest, open, fair and respectful.
- 3.2 The Corporate Plan is not intended to cover everything the council does but sets out our aspirations for change that will be delivered alongside our day-to-day activities.
- 3.3 The Corporate Plan has three priorities:
- An Enabling Council – building strong and impactful partnership to maximise the benefits for residents and our borough
 - People – ensuring Thurrock is a place where everyone has the opportunity to reach their full potential and access the support they need
 - Place – achieving a strong and well-connected place that enables our borough and its diverse communities and businesses to thrive and grow
- 3.4 The Corporate Plan articulates how each of those priorities will be delivered and what this will mean for local people, businesses and communities. A full performance management and assurance framework including key milestones and metrics is being developed with services and Cabinet members to enable clear and open reporting against how the council is performing and progressing against these priorities. This will be shared with members in the Autumn.

3.5 The first output of the new performance management and assurance framework has been the introduction of an interim scorecard during 2023/24, for which the End of Year Corporate Scorecard Outturn 2023/24 report is also being presented to Cabinet tonight. Future corporate performance reports will be a mixture of milestones, metrics and commentary reporting specifically against the commitments as set out in the Corporate Plan.

3.6 **New Values and Behaviours Framework**

3.6.1 The Best Value Inspection Report, alongside an internal deep dive reflection period across the whole organisation, identified a number of issues around the leadership and culture of the organisation which was inhibiting decision-making. As part of the Improvement and Recovery Plan, the council wanted to understand both how colleagues felt about the organisation culture and also what changes staff wanted to take place to rectify the issues. Importantly, what needed to change to regain the trust of people inside and outside the organisation.

3.6.2 A range of engagement events have taken place during 2023/24 including staff roadshows, managers conferences and Culture Focus Groups which ran between May and October 2023. The feedback and outputs from these events culminated in a new set of draft behaviours and values statements being created. These were then tested back with the organisation through directorate management teams, staff networks and other staff channels to check whether they resonated with staff.

3.6.3 The final co-designed behavioural drivers included in the Corporate Plan are:

- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Responsiveness
- Integrity
- Impactful
- Adaptability

3.6.4 The Corporate Plan goes into more detail as to the accompanying value statements and ways of working associated with practising those new behaviours.

4. **Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 The development and delivery of a Corporate Plan and associated performance management and assurance framework are required outcomes of the Enhanced IRP as agreed by Council, with endorsement from Commissioners and the government.

4.2 The Local Government Act 1999 requires that council services are “responsive to the needs of citizens, of high quality and cost-effective, and fair and accessible to all who need them”. Councils are also under a general best value duty to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”.

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

5.1 There has been consistent and ongoing engagement with Commissioners, members and staff over the last 12-18 months about the future for the council and how it needs to change in order to improve and recover. This has been led by the Chief Executive with support from Senior Leadership Team (SLT), with regular engagement with Improvement and Recovery Board (IRB) which had cross-party political membership.

5.2 The new values and behaviours contained within the Corporate Plan have been co-designed with staff through a series of engagement workshops and surveys throughout 2023/24.

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

6.1 The Corporate Plan is the foremost document which articulates the council's strategic priorities including how it will work with communities in the future. The plan includes a number of different projects and activities, some of which will require a different relationship with communities and residents, for which Community and Equality Impact Assessments (CEIA) will be completed as appropriate as those projects progress.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Rosie Hurst**
Interim Finance Manager
10 June 2024

One of the key principles of the Corporate Plan is getting the council to a place of financial stability and sustainability. Many of the projects/actions will have financial implications and these will need to be reviewed and considered as individual projects develop and progress.

As the principles are developed, these will inform the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget setting objectives.

Following the council's process, any funding for individual projects will need to go through the finance governance procedures.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Helen Nicol**
Assistant Director Legal and Governance
14 June 2024

7.2.1 Whilst there is no specific statutory duty to produce a corporate plan, it is crucial to the council in establishing its priorities. The CIPFA / Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 guidance underlines that councils should set out their purpose and intended outcomes. The council can then measure itself against the outcomes to ensure that its resources are being managed in accordance with its priorities for its residents.

7.2.2 Additionally, the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 oblige the council to produce an Annual Governance Statement for each accounting year evidencing how the council has performed: the Corporate Plan is therefore an important part of the overall governance framework of the council.

- 7.2.3 Councils are also under a general best value duty (Local Government Act 1999 s.3 (1)) to “make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness”. The Corporate plan and meeting of objectives outlined therein will assist in demonstrating continuous improvement.
- 7.2.4 The Corporate Plan is a requirement of the Improvement and Recovery Plan as agreed with Commissioners as part of the Directions issued by the Secretary of State. Some of the individual projects/actions will have legal implications and these will need to be reviewed and considered as individual projects develop and progress.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**
Head of Community Development
12 June 2024

The Corporate Plan emphasises our commitment to diversity and equality objectives and services will need to consider the impact of decisions about new ways of working through Community and Equality Impact Assessments (CEIAs) as projects develop and progress.

7.4 **Risks**

Not having an agreed Corporate Plan risks staff, members and partners not having a clear understanding of the direction for the council, and risks loss of confidence from Commissioners and government in the council’s ability to progress.

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

The Corporate Plan articulates a number of projects and activities which will have differing implications on a number of different areas, including those highlighted in the heading of this section. These implications will need to be reviewed and considered as individual projects develop and progress.

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):

- [Improvement and Recovery Plan](#)
- [Documents on www.gov.uk regarding intervention at Thurrock Council including reports](#)
- [\(Enhanced\) Improvement and Recovery Plan](#)
- [Abridged Corporate Plan - high level summary](#)

9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1: Corporate Plan 2024-2029

Report Author: Sarah Welton, Strategy Manager

