

## Cabinet

### **Briefing Note: Thurrock Council Enforcement Policy – Place Overview and Scrutiny Comments and Recommendations**

**Purpose of the briefing note:** To inform Cabinet of the discussions and recommendations agreed by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Thurrock Council Enforcement Policy.

- 1.1 This report was considered by the Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2024. The following comments and questions were raised:
  - 1.1.1 Members questioned fly-tipping levels around the borough and asked what could be done to prevent this.
    - a. Residents were urged to report any incidents to the team, and any incidents would be triaged and dealt with as quickly as possible.
  - 1.1.2 Members questioned if the policy had been developed in consultation with all enforcement service areas of the Council.
    - a. An enforcement board within the Council had been set up for all senior practitioners across the Council with enforcement functions, who met monthly, and shared working practices. The report had been shared with the enforcement board so all service areas who participated had an opportunity to comment and add to the Policy.
  - 1.1.3 Members questioned the Council's relationship with the police regarding enforcement.
    - a. Officers could not comment on any specific incidents, but the Council had a very good working relationship with the police.
  - 1.1.4 Members questioned if there were appropriate levels of staffing across all enforcement service areas.
    - a. Each service area managed their own staffing levels and therefore this was dependent on each enforcement team. Officers invited Members to contact them with any ideas that the Committee may have to improve the service.
  - 1.1.5 Members questioned if, in future, they could have data in reports regarding accounts, budgets, and structure charts to obtain a better overall feel of the enforcement services provided by the Council to ensure they could effectively scrutinise policies.

- a. Enforcement was currently broken down into different service areas so budgeting was not something any one person would have control over. Each service area produced their own annual reports, but this was not something that was collated together under 'enforcement function'. Officers would look at this further with the possibility of adding this to a future agenda for consideration by the enforcement board.
- 1.1.6 Members questioned the sustainability of using outside contractors to remove fly-tipping and abandoned cars.
- a. The Council had a contract with a contractor to remove abandoned vehicles and the Council received a monetary value for each vehicle that was removed. The contractor then dealt with the owner, storage and possible destruction of the vehicle. This was the most cost-effective way of dealing with such issues. With regard to other areas of enforcement such as waste, the Council had a duty to remove such waste and the Council did issue fines when they were able to successfully investigate, and those fines were reinvested into the service area.
- 1.1.7 Members questioned how effective the new policy would be.
- a. The policy was not directed at any one service area and all service areas would create their own enforcement policies under the principles of the policy being presented to the committee. The purpose of the policy was to provide consistency across the council, for example, to avoid one service area enforcing against someone for something considered minor and then another service area taking an extreme level and only enforcing against something that was considered major.
- 1.1.8 Members questioned if other Local Authorities used such policies.
- a. Officers had undertaken research and best practice suggested that Local Authorities did have overarching enforcement policies that were used to guide other more specific policies consistently.
- 1.1.9 Members questioned how many civil enforcement officers the Council employed and how they were deployed.
- a. There were 20 Civil Enforcement Officers within the borough and they were deployed at hotspots, based on legislation, intelligence, and data.
- 1.1.10 Members noted with in the Policy there were a list of the most common enforcement actions the Council took and questioned if all of these were reported through the Council's website using the 'Report It' tool and how residents were able to report should they have any enforcement concerns.
- a. Any concerns whether it be trading standard, food safety or any other area they had concerns about should be reported through the online portal or Members could email the department directly.
- 1.1.11 Members questioned if the Policy would cover vehicles that were advertised as for sale and were left on the roadside.

- a. Vehicles that were taxed and insured were entitled to remain on the roadside and was not something the Council had the authority or the legislative ability to remove from the road.
- 1.1.12 Members questioned whether this policy would change the policies that were already in force within the Council, for example Council Tax enforcement.
- a. Officers could not confirm this policy would change existing Council Tax policies, but it formed part of the agenda for the enforcement board that Council Tax are a member of. Therefore, all practitioners of the enforcement board would have reviewed their policies against the policy being brought before the committee.
- 1.2 Place Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the recommendations:
- 1. Members discussed and challenged the proposed Enforcement Policy and made observations and recommendations that can be presented to Cabinet before seeking approval and adoption.
  - 2. No additional recommendations were made by the Committee.

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