

Appendix 2: Feedback from Budget Review Panel meetings

The below information relates to the Budget Review Panel meetings which have been held as at the report deadline date:

Environment Budget Review Panel – 11 August 2015
Actions
Area based working – discussion around the opportunity to bring together area teams working in street cleaning, grounds maintenance and highways. To be discussed further in BRP meeting to be held on 15 September regarding Highways
Salt barn – new salt barn to be built with significant capacity and cost saving to the council. Explore opportunities for others e.g. Lakeside and the ports to store salt or commission the council to provide a gritting service for them as a potential income generation opportunity.
Waste collection - provide a menu of options for waste and recycling collections e.g. weekly and/or fortnightly collections with different elements such as a caddy to separate glass, separating food waste, options for brown bin collections etc. This review was set out in the report to Cleaner, Greener and Safer O&S last month and will be reported back to the committee. It was noted that cross-boundary working had been considered in the past and was not a suitable option going forward. Educating residents on how to recycle properly was considered critical and could include messages such as if you recycle properly then you may be able to keep weekly collections.
Precept authorities/community companies – explore opportunities for community groups to use precepts or access other funding to buy services e.g. grass cutting from the council/other provider, building on existing community involvement in service delivery.
Litter – revisit the opportunity to work with take away outlets such as McDonalds locally as part of their corporate social responsibility to provide a clean-up and enforcement service in the area around their restaurants.
Other key areas of discussion
Need to consider the impact on the corporate image of fly tipping, grounds maintenance and state of parks and open spaces etc. Already exploring examples of communities doing more themselves, ongoing support for community clear up days and behaviour changing communication campaigns.
If we recycle more and correctly then can reduce costs – price per tonne reviewed every three months.
Lack of clarity among residents where council tenants receive an enhanced service and are paying for it through their rent. Acknowledgement that this may be impacted by government proposed changes to rent levels and HRA reduction going forward.
Fleet replacement due in 2017 but options to increase usage in the short-term with work to each vehicle – capital cost implications.
Statutory responsibility to have one household waste recycling centre as we are a disposal authority – currently open 7 days per week but could reduce to peak days e.g. Thursday to Monday.

Central Services Budget Review Panel – 13 August 2015
inc. Corporate Finance, Legal, HROD & Transformation, Commercial Services, Strategy & Communications
Actions
Serco transition – Ensure all Members are given confidence in the delivery of services from 1 December 2015 and are made aware of any issues. Updating Members is covered in the communication plan. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will have oversight of the transition through their performance remit.
Statutory and discretionary services – Provide a list of statutory and discretionary services including the minimum/most reasonable level of service to meet legal requirements. This will be collated from the information provided to each session.
Other key areas of discussion
Acknowledged the significant challenge of addressing the culture change for Serco staff returning to the Council and to provide support.
In relation to sickness absence the work to support improvements in the health and wellbeing of staff was noted and potential to use the Bradford Index in sickness recording.
Ongoing exploration of alternative delivery models included traded services and opportunities to sell to schools e.g. HR and payroll (post Serco transition), and other partnering arrangements e.g. PV panels on Council housing to generate income. Consideration of whether constitutional and/or policy changes would be required to facilitate changing requirements.

Adults Social Care & Health Budget Review Panel – 18 August 2015
Actions
Housing – Explore options for using Gloriana and S106 to provide HAPPI and other specialist housing schemes.
Public Health Grant – Explore opportunities to flex the grant more and deliver prevention programmes as part of the ongoing “invest to save” programme across the council.
Other key areas of discussion
The 0-5 programme is believed to have the most impact in addressing health inequalities but acknowledged that the same areas in Thurrock were facing these issues as several years ago despite positive direction of travel overall.
Thurrock is the 10 th worst in England for obesity levels – awareness and therefore access to initiatives such as Sport for Life and Active Tilbury could be improved with a more targeted and systematic approach but dependent largely on GPs.
Changes from 5-19 to 0-19 commissioning from October 2015 will hopefully improve pathways and outcomes – adds £3.5m of Public Health Grant for existing NHS delivered services.
Demand pressures re autism due to increased awareness and understanding nationally as well as two high performing local schools but uncontrolled market and complexity of needs require a long-term view including building local provision, offering broader choices and solutions, and close working with families. Good joint working with Children’s services re transition.
Work underway to grow own social workers and occupational therapists - service has very few agency temps. Not seen as a career choice for school leavers especially in domiciliary care and nursing homes.
HAPPI schemes helping to give aspiration and choice for older people in terms of their housing and grant funded which then also frees up family properties. Impact of close working with Housing recognised.
Building Positive Futures Phase 2 – do not yet know whether the increasing demand combined with implementing the initiatives will result in savings overall. Market management is the biggest challenge – supporting providers to develop creative solutions and services e.g. building on the experience of Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions.
Prevention and early intervention are key with investment in the longer-term rather than fire-fighting – impact of savings has been managed well but will now be increasingly felt.

Appendix 2

Integration of social care and health needs to scale up and speed up in next 12 months – barriers to integration include NHS structure and culture, cost shunting concerns, and moving from concept to reality despite positive relationships. If we can't do it in Thurrock...

Children's Services Budget Review Panel – 20 August 2015

including Education & Libraries

Actions

Libraries – Provide statistics on the number of libraries per head of population and compared to other councils.

Other key areas of discussion

Rising young population with 29% increase in school places needed in the last 5 years.

Council has a duty to provide sufficient school places but academies do not have to expand. Good working relationships between the Council and academies. Core Education Support Grant has reduced due to number of academies but we retain a significant number of statutory duties. Council has a mature relationship with academies and work together well e.g. we have provided support in a crisis even though not obliged to do so. Council responsible for all admissions with schools setting their own policies.

Proposed in year cut from Youth Justice Board. Our Youth Offending Service works hard to keep 16 and 17 year olds out of custody. Cost of custody sits with the Council. Low re-offending rates.

Integrated commissioning reduces duplication and provides clear pathways of support for parents. Economies of scale from regional commissioning. Outcome framework for placements – minimum level for placements we would use is 'good' in OFSTED ratings.

National shortage of qualified social workers and some reliance on agency staff. Locally taking on newly qualified social workers and providing a career pathway to retain them after their first year of supervision.

Quality assurance framework with independent checks and audit.

Ability to quantify savings from troubled families and early intervention initiatives is challenging, although national cost calculators have proven the case. Cost avoidance rather than savings in some cases. May need to invest in back office analysis e.g. NEETS tracking officer has impacted on success of significantly reduced team and only council with no "unknowns".

Plan to invest in early intervention and look longer-term including ongoing discussions with partners on impact of our and their changes/savings.

Alternative delivery models being explored including Community Interest Company (CIC) and mutual.

Victims of abuse are now more likely to come forward and there has been an increase in requests to look at historic case files, in line with national trends.

It can be difficult to place older children and sibling groups in suitable foster care. Costs range from £450 per week for specialist in-house foster care to £700 per week for standard foster care through an independent agency. Strategy is to increase in-house provision to be competitive in the market. Communications strategy is key. Residential care can cost £2k per week and secure accommodation £4k+ but there is a national shortage. Responsibility for Looked After Children is up to age 25.

Demand led service with significant incremental costs due to rises in child population and increased need.

Housing Budget Review Panel – 7 September 2015

Actions

Anti-Social Behaviour – explore whether it would be cost effective for the GF to buy services to support public protection/anti-social behaviour activity from the HRA with consideration of the constraints on the use of the HRA and ensuring clarity of the messages to the public including the role of the police

Housing for children in care post 18 - clarify the number of children in care post-18 housed by the Council (Southwark judgement)

Appendix 2

Other key areas of discussion

Landlord function – all repairs and servicing provision is outsourced in a mature and cost effective market. Customer 'slip' process has helped to manage demand (12,000 slips per year). Successful rent collection service (£48m income to the Council).

Some increase in evictions linked to introduction of tenancy agreements for first time tenants where eviction can occur at the end of a year-long process. Recognition that ability to pay Direct Debit on only two dates in the month is restrictive.

Service has focused on implementing new ways of working which has resulted in savings and more efficient service as well as greater presence in the community.

Private sector housing is a key issue – 150 complaints and growing demand. Issue re recruitment and retention of qualified officers and availability of general fund. 300+ Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) – best practice is to inspect all, but statutorily only need to license with 5+ occupants and 3+ storeys. This area usually involves most vulnerable residents and can impact on other services

260% increase in homelessness over three years. Ability to prevent through intervention by team is growing and has had very positive results maintaining children at home with families and residents in private tenancies. Close working with Children's Services to support 16/17 year olds to stay at home. There are some people/families housed in Thurrock by other councils but this is low and 90% of those placing authorities inform us correctly.

Energy efficiency programme targeting the most inefficient properties with 400 getting insulation through partnership with Eon and Green Deal. Exploring use of PVs to benefit residents and reduce their bills and generate income for the Council. Report to Councillors in a few months with options.

Communities Budget Review Panel – 7 September 2015 including Community Development & Equalities, Leisure, Public Protection & Arts & Culture	
Actions	
Community engagement	– review the engagement strategy including where existing mechanisms are working e.g. hubs and where less tangible ideas such as community councils have not been developed
Flytipping	– explore opportunities to target regular flytipping sites through use of technology but with consideration of capacity to implement this
Environmental Enforcement Action	– discussion on budget implications where works are rechargeable to see whether more action can be taken
Other key areas of discussion	
Public protection	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively low cost and high impact service • Successes re prosecutions e.g. flytipping, dog fouling etc. but lack of capacity to have more impact • Communicating prosecutions to act as a deterrent – communication is key as reputational risks • Opportunities to recoup costs where we know the offender even over long-period of time and potential to seize vehicles and use Proceeds Of Crime Act (POCA) powers • Shared service with LBBD providing management with £100k income per year to Thurrock – opportunities to explore wider partnering opportunities • Civil protection priority for the team with joint exercises with the emergency services re COMAH sites 	
Parking enforcement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased requests for Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) mostly in areas impacted by commuter parking • Working with partners to address HGV parking issues and development of lorry parks • Trialling school gate enforcement in Tilbury • Exploring income opportunities on Council owned land and with partners 	
Arts and heritage	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative industries is a key sector – strategy to Cabinet in October • Challenge for the theatre to attract big shows due to number and size of seats – operating at 60% capacity • Heritage offer linked into schools' curriculum • Opportunity to attract external funding but need commitment to be in same location for 25 years 	
Community development & Equalities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service leads on relationship with voluntary sector including through Joint Strategic Forum, as well as development of hubs and co-ordination of community right to bid/challenge processes • Opportunity to refresh the relationship with sector in light of reduction in grant funding and their need to adapt and increasingly demonstrate value to the Council delivered through the grants 	
Leisure	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impulse Leisure – no grant from 2015/16. Working with them to agree asset transfer terms including maintenance responsibilities. • Condition surveys of village/community halls to take place with a view to transferring some to the community • Needs assessment to be carried out to inform future strategy 	