

<b>31 January 2024</b>		<b>ITEM: 11</b>
<b>Full Council</b>		
<b>Debate on a Petition containing over 1500 verified signatures – Public Inquiry into Financial Collapse of Thurrock Council</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Not Applicable	
<b>Report of:</b> Asmat Hussain, Interim Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Not Applicable		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Asmat Hussain, Interim Director of Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer		
<b>This report is public</b>		

## Executive Summary

At Cabinet on 8 November 2023 a petition was submitted by Mr O'Rourke, a resident, relating to a public Inquiry into the financial collapse of Thurrock Council.

The petition exceeded the threshold of 1500 verified signatures and in accordance with Chapter 1, Part 2, Article 3 of the Constitution is qualified to be debated by Full Council.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That Full Council consider the petition and make any recommendations it feels appropriate as a response to the petition.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

#### History and Details of Petition

2.1 A petition was submitted on 8 November 2023 to Cabinet by Mr O'Rourke, a resident of Thurrock.

2.2 The following statement that accompanies the petition details the actions the petitioners wish the Council to take:

**We the residents of Thurrock demand that Thurrock Council and the Secretary of State take all the necessary action to hold a full public inquiry into the financial collapse at Thurrock Council.**

**We further request that should the inquiry find any person/s (Officer or Elected Member) guilty of negligence, the evidence gathered will be handed over to the police for criminal action, to be taken against them on behalf of the residents of Thurrock.**

- 2.3 The petition has been verified. 1697 signatures were inspected to reach the required 1500 threshold. A detailed breakdown is provided below:

Number of Signatures checked	<b>1697</b>
Number of Valid Signatures	<b>1501</b>
Number of Invalid Signatures	<b>196</b>

- 2.4 Where a petition in respect of any matter has a number of signatories equal to or greater than the 1500 verified signatures threshold set out in paragraph 7.1 of the Council's Petition Scheme it may be debated by the Council.
- 2.5 Due to reaching the required number of valid signatures, the Mayor has agreed that the petition may be debated at Full Council.

#### Procedure for Dealing with the Petition at the Meeting

- 2.6 Under the Council's petition scheme, the petition organiser will be given a period of up to five minutes to speak to the subject matter of the petition at the meeting.
- 2.7 In accordance with the rules of Full Council debate (Paragraph 7.3, Chapter 1, Part 2 – Article 3) the petition will then be discussed by Councillors for a maximum of 15 minutes.
- 2.8 In accordance with paragraph 7.4, Chapter 1, Part 2 (Article 3) of the Constitution:

“the Council will decide how to respond to the petition at this meeting. They may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee”.

## Previous Petition

- 2.9 A similarly worded petition was submitted by Cllr Byrne at Full Council on 27 September 2023. The response to this petition, in accordance with procedures, is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' information.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

- 3.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Council of the receipt of the petition which has attracted signatures from people who live, work or study in the Borough.

### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 Allowing Members to debate the petition at a full council meeting complies with the requirements of the Council's adopted petition scheme.

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

- 5.1 The petition will be considered at Full Council.

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

- 6.1 The placing of the petition on the agenda for debate upholds the procedures set out in the constitution and reinforces the democratic process whereby residents are able to engage with decision-making in an informed and constructive way.

### **7. Implications**

#### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Karen Ind**  
**Interim Management Accountant**  
**(4/12/2023)**

The financial implications will depend on the nature of the decisions made by Council, and therefore at this time cannot be quantified. Once a decision, or decisions, are made then the financial impact will be assessed.

#### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye**  
**Interim Head of Legal Services (30/11/23)**

There are no particular legal implications arising from this report. The Council's petition scheme is set out in the Constitution. This petition has been accepted for debate at Full Council in accordance with paragraph 7.1 of Part 1, Chapter 2, Article 3 of the Constitution.

Paragraph 7.4 of the same section of the Constitution sets out that the Council will decide how to respond to the petition at the meeting. The Council may decide to take the action the petition requests, not to take the action requested for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter, for example by a relevant committee.

### 7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Team Manager – Community Development & Equalities (22/11/23)**

There are no diversity or equality implications.

### 7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, or 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):

None.

### 9. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1 - Council response to Councillor Byrne's petition – 27 September 2023.

### **Report Author:**

Matthew Boulter  
Head of Democratic, Scrutiny and Member Services  
Legal Services