

Thurrock - An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future

Extraordinary Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **1 November 2023**

Chamber, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex, RM17 6SL.

Membership:

Councillors Martin Kerin (Chair), Jack Duffin (Vice-Chair), Robert Gledhill, Valerie Morris-Cook, Georgette Polley and Lynn Worrall

Substitutes:

Councillors Paul Arnold, Aaron Green, John Kent, Sara Muldowney and James Thandi

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.	
3 Declaration of Interests	
4 Call-in to Cabinet Decision 110667 - Asset Disposals Programme - Recommended next tranche of properties for disposal	5 - 14
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **24 October 2023**

Information for members of the public and councillors

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest *at a meeting*?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;
- Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and
- leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

An ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.

1. **People** – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay
 - High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time
 - Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing
 - Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together

2. **Place** – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future
 - Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places
 - Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in
 - Fewer public buildings with better services

3. **Prosperity** – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
 - Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
 - Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
 - Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

1 November 2023	ITEM: 4
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Call-in to Cabinet Decision 110667 - Asset Disposals Programme – Recommended next tranche of properties for disposal	
Wards and communities affected: West Thurrock and South Stifford	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Rob Large, Assistant Director, Property	
Accountable Director: Mark Bradbury, Director of Place	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report outlines the call-in made to the above Cabinet decision, highlighting the reasons why the call-in was made and the alternative proposal being put forward.

This report offers advice to the committee on how to manage the call-in through the committee process and should be used as a summary document to help understand the overview of this particular call-in.

1. Recommendation(s)

That Committee can either:

- 1.1 If it is concerned about the original decision in light of the call-in, refer the recommendation (Decision 110667 - Asset Disposals Programme – Recommended next tranche of properties for disposal) to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.**
- 1.2 If it considers the decision is contrary to the Budget or Policy Framework, refer the matter to the Council.**
- 1.3 Reject the call-in stating the reasons why.**

2. Introduction and Background

Call-in

- 2.1 Following the reissuing of the asset disposal list to all Members on 28 September 2023, Councillor Green submitted a call-in to the Monitoring Officer on 2 October 2023. This was duly validated and progressed.
- 2.2 The reason for making the call in was the land in question sits on the green belt and once again the residents of Purfleet on Thames are bearing the brunt of over development. It states that the land is being put forward to be sold for potential residential dwellings. Purfleet on Thames has a significant regeneration programme that although is currently going through evaluation it will provide 3,000 homes, a new school, and an integrated medical centre, but over 20 years so the infrastructure is not adequate enough for more housing. The land is currently used as recreational land and green space. Purfleet on Thames has one very small parade of shops on the Garrison Estate. The lack of shops is already an issue for Purfleet without the added issue of additional residents. There are also the health effects losing more trees in the area. Potentially more green space will be lost, if and when the Mardyke development goes to planning. That is frequented by walkers.
- 2.3 In accordance with Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10.4 of the Constitution, this has been cited as a failure of the decision maker to take the decision in accordance with the following decision-making principles:
- a) Due regard for individuals and communities served by Thurrock Council.
 - c) Due consultation in line with the council's consultation strategy.
 - e) A presumption in favour of openness.
- 2.4 The call-in was agreed as a valid call-in in accordance with the rules set out within Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Councils Constitution.
- 2.5 The alternative proposal stated on the call-in form is:
- For the Cabinet to look at other options in the borough preferably brown field sites where it will not affect the local residents and a full public consultation takes place.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 When considering the call-in, the Committee is recommended to adhere to the following schedule:
- The person who made the call-in to briefly introduce the reasons for the call-in and their alternative proposal(s).
 - The portfolio holder and officers to respond to the call-in and advise the Committee of any points that may be relevant.

- If applicable, the Committee should receive comments from third parties that may be directly involved in the original cabinet decision.
- The person who made the call-in to summarise.
- The Committee should then weigh up evidence and ask any relevant questions to those in attendance.
- The Committee should decide to do one of the following:
 - a) if it is concerned about the original decision in light of the call-in, refer it to the decision maker (Cabinet) for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns; or
 - b) reject the call-in stating the reasons why.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Committee are requested to manage the call-in in accordance with the provisions set out in Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Constitution.

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

5.1 Not applicable.

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

6.1 The call-in has a positive impact on corporate policies as it allows for the proper exercise of the democratic function, namely for Members to call-in a Cabinet decision based on valid arguments.

6.2 The role of Overview and Scrutiny in this function will allow for issues to be discussed in a public arena with cross party involvement and will give the opportunity for interested parties to join the debate and make representations

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director - Finance

There are no specific financial implications attached to the Call-in process. The financial implications attached to the original report – ‘Asset Disposals Programme – Recommended next tranche of properties for disposal’ are set out in that report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye**
Interim Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal implications directly arising from the recommendations beyond the procedural matters cited in this report. The Council Constitution provides for Call-In of Cabinet decisions in Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10. The options available to Overview and Scrutiny Committee having considered the call-in are set out in the report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer | Adults, Housing & Health

There are no direct equality implications arising from this call in. Any alternative proposals would need to be reviewed and any equality implications arising from them would be stated as part of the proposals.

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: Call-In form Councillor Green

Report Author:

Jenny Shade
Interim Principal Democratic Services Officer

Thurrock Council

Request to call-in an executive decision

Decision title	Disposable of Assets land at tank hill Road Purfleet Rm19 1GL
Date of decision	13/09/23
Who took the decision – for example, Cabinet	Cabinet
Reason for making the call-in – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	<p>The land in question sits on the green belt and once again the residents of Purfleet on Thames are bearing the brunt of over development.</p> <p>It states that the land is being put forward to be sold for potential residential dwellings. Purfleet on Thames has a significant regeneration programme that although is currently going through evaluation it will provide 3,000 homes, a new school and a integrated medical centre, but over 20 years so the infrastructure is not adequate enough for more housing. The land is currently used as recreational land and green space.</p> <p>Purfleet on Thames has one very small parade of shops on the Garrison Estate. The lack of shops is already a issue for Purfleet without the added issue of additional residents.</p> <p>There is also the health affects losing more trees in the area. Potentially more green space will be lost, if and when the Mardyke development goes to planning. That is frequent by walkers.</p>
Date of call-in request	01/10/23

You can only make a request to call-in a decision if there is evidence that the decision taken was not in accordance with the principles of decision-making, as set out in the Constitution.

Which of the following principles do you believe the decision did not take into account?

- Due regard for the individuals and communities served by Thurrock Council
- Proportionality – this means the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome
- Due consultation in line with the council's consultation strategy
- Respect for human rights
- A presumption in favour of openness
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes – the link between strategy and implementation

Consistency with the council's budget and policy framework

Additional Information to support the call-in – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	
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Alternative proposal

Alternative proposal – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	For the Cabinet to look at other options in the borough preferably brown field sites where it will not affect the local residents and a full public consultation takes place
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Persons making this call-in

I am / we are:

- An individual elected member for a ward particularly affected by the decision
- The chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 2 members of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 3 non-executive members of the Council
- Any 10 members of the public, working or studying within the Thurrock Council area
- A voluntary group with interest in the Thurrock Council area
- A local business situated in the Thurrock Council area – not allowable where the decision relates to procurement of goods and services

Contact information

Name	Cllr Aaron Green
Email address	agreeen@thurrock.gov.uk
Daytime phone number	07742764112
Postal address	

When the relevant overview and scrutiny committee considers your call-in, would you like to make a statement or representation at the meeting?

- Yes
- No

Supporters of the call-in

Details of each person indicated as 'persons making this call-in' on page 2 must be entered below.

Number	Name in block capitals, and signature	Address, in block capitals
1.	Councillor Aaron Green Agreen	
2.		
3.		<input type="text"/>
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Please return this form to either:

- direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk
- Democratic Services, Thurrock Council, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, RM17 6SL

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We will use your information to provide the service requested. We may share your personal data between our services and with partner organisations, such as government bodies and the police. We will do so when it is of benefit to you, or required by law, or to prevent or detect fraud. To find out more, go to thurrock.gov.uk/privacy. Get free internet access at libraries and community hubs.

For Monitoring Officer use only

Monitoring Officer's decision on the call-in request:

- Allowed in full
- Allowed in part
- Not allowed

Monitoring Officer's reasons for decision	
Monitoring Officer's comments on the alternative proposal	
Signature	
Date	

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1 November 2023	ITEM: 5
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Call-in to Urgent Cabinet Decision 110676 - Resources to Support the Council's Budget	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Director of Legal and Governance	
Accountable Assistant Director: N/a	
Accountable Director: Steven Mair, Chief Finance Officer/ Section 151 Officer	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report outlines the call-ins made to the above Cabinet decision, highlighting the reasons why the call-ins were made and the alternative proposals being put forward.

This report offers advice to the committee on how to manage the call-in through the committee process and should be used as a summary document to help understand the overview of this particular call-in.

1. Recommendation(s)

That Committee can either:

- 1.1 If it is concerned about the original decision in light of the call-ins, refer the recommendation (Urgent Cabinet Decision: Resources to Support the Council's Budget Process) to Cabinet for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns.**
- 1.2 If it considers the decision is contrary to the Budget or Policy Framework, refer the matter to the Council.**
- 1.3 Reject the call-in stating the reasons why.**

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 On 17 October 2023 Councillors Kent and Speight separately called in an urgent Cabinet Decision: Resources to Support the Council's Budget Process, which had been tabled at Cabinet meeting on 11 October 2023. Councillor Kent (alongside Councillors Worrall and Watson) called the decision in in their capacity as three non-executive Members. Councillor Speight made the call-in as an individual elected member for a ward particularly affected by the decision.

Councillor Kent Call-in

2.2 The reason for making the call in (in accordance with Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10.4 of the Constitution) has been cited as a failure of the decision maker to take the decision in accordance with the following decision-making principles:

- Proportionality – this means the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome
- Consistency with the council's budget and policy framework

2.3 The call-in was agreed as a valid call-in in accordance with the rules set out within Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Councils Constitution

2.4 The alternative proposal stated on the call in form is:

- Work to identify budget savings should continue to be carried out by council officers and members.

Councillor Speight Call-in

2.5 The reason for making the call in (in accordance with Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10.4 of the Constitution) has been cited as a failure of the decision maker to take the decision in accordance with the following decision-making principles:

- Due regard for the individuals and communities served by Thurrock Council.
- Due Consultation in line with the council's consultation strategy.
- A presumption in favour of openness
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes – the link between strategy and implementation
- Consistency with the council's budget and policy framework

2.6 The call-in was agreed as a valid call-in in accordance with the rules set out within Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Councils Constitution

2.7 No alternative proposal was provided.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 When considering the call-in, the Committee is recommended to adhere to the following schedule:

- The person who made the call-in to briefly introduce the reasons for the call-in and their alternative proposal(s).
- The portfolio holder and officers to respond to the call-in and advise the Committee of any points that may be relevant.
- If applicable, the Committee should receive comments from third parties that may be directly involved in the original cabinet decision.
- The person who made the call-in to summarise.
- The Committee should then weigh up evidence and ask any relevant questions to those in attendance.
- The Committee should decide to do one of the following:
 - a) if it is concerned about the original decision in light of the call-in, refer it to the decision maker (Cabinet) for reconsideration, setting out in writing the nature of its concerns; or
 - b) reject the call-in stating the reasons why.
 - c)

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The Committee are requested to manage the call-in in accordance with the provisions set out in Chapter 4, Part 3 of the Constitution.

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

5.1 Not applicable.

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

6.1 The call-in has a positive impact on corporate policies as it allows for the proper exercise of the democratic function, namely for Members to call-in a Cabinet decision based on valid arguments.

6.2 The role of Overview and Scrutiny in this function will allow for issues to be discussed in a public arena with cross party involvement and will give the opportunity for interested parties to join the debate and make representations

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Karen Ind**
Management Accountant, Corporate Finance Team

The financial implications of the decision are set out in the original report which is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

If this decision is not agreed then it risks delaying the development and implementation of £5.25m recurrent revenue budget savings for 24/25, which make up 29% of the savings targeted for next year. Should this work not progress then the £5.25m savings would be at serious risk of not being developed and thus the Council would be unlikely to identify the full £18.2m of savings for next year. The impact would be to set back the financial recovery of the Council and the longer term aim of financial sustainability and could potential hinder long-term assistance from DLUHC.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye**
Interim Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no specific legal implications directly arising from the recommendations beyond the procedural matters cited at the start of this report. The Council Constitution provides for Call-In of Cabinet decisions in Chapter 4, Part 3, Rule 10.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer | Adults, Housing & Health

There are no direct equality implications arising from this call in. Any alternative proposals would need to be reviewed and a Community Equality Impact Assessment completed to identify any equality implications. Any implications identified through this process would be stated as part of the proposals.

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: Urgent Report from Cabinet - 11 October 2023
- Appendix 2: Excerpt from the minutes of the Cabinet meeting 11 October 2023
- Appendix 3: Call-In form Councillor J Kent
- Appendix 4: Call-in form Councillor Speight

Report Author:

Jenny Shade

Interim Principal Democratic Services Officer

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11 October 2023		ITEM: Urgent Item 110676
Cabinet		
RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET PROCESS		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Yes	
Report of: Steven Mair, Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer		
Accountable Assistant Director: N/a		
Accountable Director: Steven Mair, Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Council has to achieve £18.2m of revenue savings for 2024/25 by February 2024. This is a major challenge and one the Council will need immediate support to achieve.

This report proposes the appointment of advisors that will facilitate the delivery of the budget and provide change portfolio support and assistance.

Recommendation

- 1. It is recommended that the Council enter into a contract for services with PWC through to February 2024 for the value specified in the financial implications to support the Council's change and budget processes.**

Commissioners Comments

Commissioners have been engaged in the consideration of securing resources to support the budget process. Commissioners are supportive of the recommendation as laid out, to appoint advisors, bringing both the necessary capacity and capabilities to support Thurrock in delivering a savings proposal for Member approval. Given the scale of savings at £18.2m, and the need to operationalise ahead of the start of 2024/25, a hybrid option using a mix of external and in house capacity is the best option to move ahead. It is essential that skills transfer occurs to in house staff, and that plans are made in anticipation of the end of this contract in February 2024, ensuring continuity.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The financial position of the Council is extremely challenging in terms of the scale of the financial impact, the time it will take the Council to recover from this and the range of issues to be dealt with. The position will undoubtedly regularly change and resolving all the known matters will take at least 5 years.
- 2.2 The last financial analysis identified long term debt of £680m and an annual budget deficit of £15m in 2028/29 after the assumed successful conclusion of a great deal of work that is being undertaken and is planned to continue and develop further to improve the Council's financial position. This position remains under review.
- 2.3 A key element of this work is identifying ongoing revenue savings of £18.2m in both 2024/25 and 2025/26 and then £13.65m in each of the following three years and ensuring that it is fully implemented and managed.
- 2.4 £18.2m for each of two years is clearly a major challenge for the Council but once achieved will have a very significant impact on the Council's future financial sustainability.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Council has 4 major streams of financial expenditure reduction which are underway (these are only one part of the financial improvement programme)
- sell £1.035bn of **investments** to the fullest extent possible and pay down debt and in doing so ensure the governance, project management, budgetary control etc of this programme of work is properly undertaken.

This work is being led by the Council significantly supported by advisors and has recently been reported to Cabinet.
 - generate at least £150m of **capital receipts** and pay down debt. This is under review and will be updated in subsequent reports.

This work is likewise being led by the Council and supported by external advisors and reports to Cabinet for approval for disposals.
 - reduce reliance on borrowing to fund GF **capital programme** to avoid increasing debt and improve its capital strategy.

This work is being undertaken by the Council and will be reported during October/November
 - save **£18.2m from the revenue budget** for next 2 years and a further £13.65m 7.5%, for each of the following 3 years. This may change over time.

The Council does not have a track record of identifying and implementing revenue savings of this magnitude and as can be seen above is undertaking a wide range of major financial activity at the same time.

Work has commenced much earlier for 2024/25 than for 2023/24, with a more robust process, quality assurance and planned supporting documentation. Nevertheless achieving £18.2m of savings will be extremely demanding.

3.2 Options were considered to ensure in order to secure the delivery of this revenue budget target along with all the other work required. The pros and cons of each option are shown below.

Option	Pros	Cons
1. In House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most economical • Local knowledge will be fully available • Experience gained by staff will very beneficial for future development • Existing relationships with services can be called on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In house resources already heavily stretched on many workstreams • Risk thus of non delivery because staff pulled across too many workstreams • Lack of knowledge of what works in other Councils and may be useful in Thurrock • Staff will not be able to dedicate themselves to this workstream alone
2. External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated additional experienced resources will be available to undertake the work • Learning from elsewhere will be readily accessible and useable • Single focus teams will be able to ensure full time work on this initiative • Will bring in addition to revenue savings support for the delivery of a PMO to ensure delivery of the programme and monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most expensive option • Need to start from scratch because of lack of local knowledge
3. Hybrid ie mix of in house and external	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost will be reduced in comparison to the fully external option • Local knowledge will be fully available • Experience gained by staff will very beneficial for future development • Existing relationships with services can be called on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More costly than in house option

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated additional experienced resources will be available to undertake the work • Learning from elsewhere will be readily accessible and useable • Single focus external teams working with in house resources will be able to ensure a large degree of full time work on this initiative 	
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3.3 Given the imperative to achieve the revenue savings of £18.2m the hybrid option is considered most likely to achieve that.

3.4 Further to the above it was then considered whether to go to market or to utilise a framework and direct award. In considering this previous work is a very relevant consideration. This is outlined below.

3.5 The Council has previously procured from the framework PWC to undertake 8 weeks of work that covered:

Define an execution plan to realise revenue savings, which articulates a credible strategy on how you will reach a sustainable financial position over the next six years, while addressing the immediate requirement to identify and release savings this financial year

Ensuring the Council understands what **capacity, and capability** is required to drive the change over the next years.

Develop a future operating model for Thurrock Council, which will move the Council away from direct service. delivery to community leadership. By articulating a coherent vision for the locality and re-designing the organisation to better understand local need, utilise spend to build local markets, commission and collaborate to drive local change, TBC will ensure that its people and communities can thrive despite significantly reduced Council expenditure budgets.

3.6 In addition PWC also undertook work on:

Help the Council build a functioning transformation team, with a common purpose and clarity on what behaviours are associated with success. Team members bring different strengths, ways of working and diversity of thought. Harnessing this and directing it to working productively, effectively and with the right culture from the outset it critical to achieving the Councils goals.

Ensure the **PMO infrastructure is geared up to facilitate decision making**. The Council will need to drive change at a rapid pace, making continuous decisions in an uncertain environment. This will mean that the Council’s governance structure will have to remain agile but provide sufficient challenge and rigour to avoid risk escalation. PWC experience from shaping and delivering similar programmes with other organisations in crisis will help Thurrock find a balance that works for your organisation.

Provide targeted support to augment and develop Thurrock internal capacity, in particular to develop the next version of the IRP. The Council recognises that this programme represents a step up from previous change programmes. Thurrock therefore need access to a different skills set across to deliver the programme successfully. PWC support is flexible and scalable at short notice, so that the Council has access to the capacity and capabilities needed while also building internal capabilities to reduce reliance on external consultants in the longer term.

3.7 The pros and cons of each option are shown below.

Option	Pros	Cons
1 Market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most competitive • Opens the proposals up to alternative exploration/ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge acquired and input from PWC would be partially/wholly lost with a new adviser • The work is planned to complete in full by February 2024 and in part by November 2023. A competitive process and delivery of the scale of change would be unlikely to meet these timeframes • In house staff would need to establish from scratch working relationships and spend time raising the awareness and understanding of a new- supplier
2. Direct Award	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of current workstreams • No learning period required for the current provider • No learning period required for the in house staff • Acceleration of current plans more easily undertaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No benefit from competition – either financial or proposals

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Council has to achieve £18.2m of revenue savings for 2024/25 by February 2024. This is a major challenge and one the Council will need immediate support to achieve.

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

- 5.1 The report is attached to an ED2 for a very urgent decision for the reasons set out.

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

- 6.1 The revenue budget savings are needed as part of the financial strategy to secure the Council's financial sustainability and arise from the IRP and the Council's financial position.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jo Freeman/Karen Ind**

The table below sets out the indicative fee for each option. There is also the ability to charge up to a cap of 6% of the fee for expenses incurred.

	Option 1 £K	Option 2 £K	Option 3 £k	Option 4 £K	Option 5 £K
Fee	280	640	480	773	490
Expenses Cap 6%	17	38	29	46	29
Total	297	678	509	819	519

The recommended option (option 4) is a one-off revenue cost of £773K plus up to 6% expenses (£46K) in 2023/24 which will be funded from the Transformation Fund of £12m. This is an invest to save proposal which is intended to deliver £5.25m of recurrent savings from 2024/25 onwards and start to build up 2025/26 also.

The savings identified need to be recurrent savings that can be built into the base budget. They must reduce spend or increase income for the General Fund. Savings that are predominantly for ring-fenced budgets such as the Housing Revenue Account or grants will not be considered part of the deliverables of this project.

The fee is to be paid in stages as the work is completed and will be fully paid by the end of the project in February 2024. There is no retention payment being held to be released once savings have been delivered in 2024/25.

Therefore, there is a risk that this work will be done and fully paid for before implementing the savings programme and the savings cannot be fully realised. This will be minimised by clearly identifying project owners, with business cases supporting the proposals and a structured approach to managing delivery and tracking of the savings options in all aspects

The project needs to start immediately if the full-year benefit of savings is to be realised in 2024/25 as time will be needed for implementation.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Jayne Middleton-Albooye / Kevin Molloy**

The option of selecting a contractor via direct award from a framework would be compliant with national legislation if the Council is able to demonstrate that the chosen bid was the most economically advantageous available. This contract was selected via Cross Council Assurance Service Framework (CCAS) put in place by Barnet Council. Lot 2 Advisory will be utilised for the purposes of engaging PWC. PWC are the only provider in this Lot. The PwC proposal offers a 10% discount from published framework rates and would therefore represent the most economically advantageous solution.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

There are no specific diversity and equality implications arising from this proposal.

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

None relevant

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 relevant

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Steven Mair

Chief Finance Officer/S151 Officer

Excerpt from the minutes of the Cabinet meeting 11 October 2023

174. Items of Urgent Business

Councillor Jefferies invited Councillors J Kent, N Speight and P Arnold who were sitting in the public gallery to come forward and join the meeting if they wanted to ask questions or comment.

Councillor Jefferies confirmed he had agreed to one urgent item of business which is an urgent report titled Resource to Support the Council's Budget Progress.

Councillor Snell introduced the report and explained that it concerned taking on PWC (Price Waterhouse Cooper). Councillor Snell stated that the Council is facing a wide range of financial challenges which it is currently addressing by divesting investments, capital asset sales, reducing the capital programmes and making revenue budget savings. Councillor Snell stated that it is a huge task, and it is therefore sensible to procure some short-term support in the area of revenue budget savings. Various options have been looked at internally and externally, but the decision has been made to procure PWC for 22 weeks to find 5.2 million pounds of savings recurring each year. The cost of procuring PWC is £800,000 and this will come from the Transformation Fund. Councillor Jefferies clarified that it is spending £800,000 to save 5.2 million pounds every year and they will also be looking at how to save 18.2 million for next year. Councillor Jefferies added that the Finance department is stretched and there is a restructure taking place, PWC have expertise that can be passed on to existing members of staff. Councillor Speight stated that in recent meetings members and the public have been told that the Council is making progress and is on track to make the savings required and now they are being told the Council will be paying £800,000 to an independent organisation and they might not be able to achieve the savings. Councillor Speight queried if members and the public can believe what they are being told. Councillor Snell clarified that it is an ongoing project, and the Council is well on its way to finding the 18.2 million pounds of savings for the year 2024/25. However, the finance team is poorly resourced and has been working absolute miracles. External advice has been provided on the investments and assets sales as we don't have that expertise within the Council. We are learning from the experts and ensuring our savings plan for future years is robust now. Councillor Snell stated that it is an £800,000 one off spend and the money is coming from the transformation fund of 12 million pounds. This is exactly what the fund is there for. The Council needs to recover, and it needs the best possible help to do that.

RESOLVED:

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Council enter into a contract for services with PWC through to February 2024 for the value specified in the financial implications to support the Council's change and budget process.

Reason for the decision: As outlined in the report This decision is subject to call-in.

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Thurrock Council

Request to call-in an executive decision

Decision title	Resources to support the council's budget process.
Date of decision	11 th October 2023
Who took the decision – for example, Cabinet	Cabinet
Reason for making the call-in – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	<p>The sum of £800,000 - to be paid to PWC for help with identifying £5.2 million of savings is disproportionate.</p> <p>This sum is around 15% of the savings target and, in effect, means identifying £6 million to stand still.</p> <p>It is not clear why these extra resources are required as the Finance portfolio holder has been clear that the savings needed for next year's budget are "nearly there" and "£7 million for the year after."</p> <p>Given this, the proposed spend of £800,000 does not meet the council's duty to provide Best Value.</p>
Date of call-in request	17 th of October 2023

You can only make a request to call-in a decision if there is evidence that the decision taken was not in accordance with the principles of decision-making, as set out in the Constitution.

Which of the following principles do you believe the decision did not take into account?

- Due regard for the individuals and communities served by Thurrock Council
- Proportionality – this means the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome
- Due consultation in line with the council's consultation strategy
- Respect for human rights
- A presumption in favour of openness
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes – the link between strategy and implementation
- Consistency with the council's budget and policy framework

Additional Information to support the call-in –
continue on a separate sheet, if necessary

Alternative proposal

Alternative proposal – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	Work to identify budget savings should continue to be carried out by council officers and members.
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Persons making this call-in

I am / we are:

- An individual elected member for a ward particularly affected by the decision
- The chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 2 members of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 3 non-executive members of the Council
- Any 10 members of the public, working or studying within the Thurrock Council area
- A voluntary group with interest in the Thurrock Council area
- A local business situated in the Thurrock Council area – not allowable where the decision relates to procurement of goods and services

Contact information

Name	John Kent
Email address	jkent@thurrock.gov.uk
Daytime phone number	07749 986777
Postal address	199 Hathaway Road Grays

When the relevant overview and scrutiny committee considers your call-in, would you like to make a statement or representation at the meeting?

- Yes
- No

Supporters of the call-in

Details of each person indicated as 'persons making this call-in' on page 2 must be entered below.

Number	Name in block capitals, and signature	Address, in block capitals
1.	Cllr Lynn Worrall	C/O Labour Members Room, Thurrock Council.
2.	Cllr Lee Watson	C/O Labour Members Room, Thurrock Council.
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		

Please return this form to either:

- direct.democracy@thurrock.gov.uk
- Democratic Services, Thurrock Council, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, RM17 6SL

How we will use your information

We will use your information to provide the service requested. We may share your personal data between our services and with partner organisations, such as government bodies and the police. We will do so when it is of benefit to you, or required by law, or to prevent or detect fraud. To find out more, go to thurrock.gov.uk/privacy. Get free internet access at libraries and community hubs.

For Monitoring Officer use only

Monitoring Officer's decision on the call-in request:

- Allowed in full
- Allowed in part
- Not allowed

Monitoring Officer's reasons for decision	
Monitoring Officer's comments on the alternative proposal	
Signature	
Date	

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Thurrock Council

Request to call-in an executive decision

Decision title	1.1 It is recommended that the Council enter into a contract for services with PWC through to February 2024 for the value specified in the financial implications to support the Council's change and budget process.
Date of decision	11/10/2023
Who took the decision – for example, Cabinet	Cabinet
Reason for making the call-in – continue on a separate sheet, if necessary	<p>It was taken without reference to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was held just days before, at which the portfolio holder advised councillors almost all the required savings for 2023-24 had been identified and the council was 'well on the way' to identifying the £18m savings required for 2024-5.</p> <p>So why the need for the matter to be suddenly brought up as urgent business?</p> <p>Either way, councillors are not being given the opportunity to discuss in detail vitally important matters and they are being given information in a disingenuous way.</p> <p>In his report Cllr Snell spoke of ongoing work with PWC, so they are clearly already engaged with the council which is confusing. As far as I can see there have been no payments to them to date in the list of payments to suppliers.</p> <p>That is only posted to the end of August so payment may have been made in September.</p> <p>So did cabinet vote through something that had already been agreed?</p> <p>That is one question, there are many more and I believe they need to be asked at O&S.</p> <p>This smacks of the sort of decision-making that we were promised was long gone.</p> <p>Having called this in, it is my understanding that no progress should happen towards drawing up a contract with PWC.</p> <p>I sincerely hope that has not already happened.</p>
Date of call-in request	17/10/2023

You can only make a request to call-in a decision if there is evidence that the decision taken was not in accordance with the principles of decision-making, as set out in the Constitution.

Which of the following principles do you believe the decision did not take into account?

- Due regard for the individuals and communities served by Thurrock Council
- Proportionality – this means the action must be proportionate to the desired outcome
- Due consultation in line with the council’s consultation strategy
- Respect for human rights
- A presumption in favour of openness
- Clarity of aims and desired outcomes – the link between strategy and implementation
- Consistency with the council’s budget and policy framework

Additional Information to support the call-in –
continue on a separate sheet, if necessary

This is a decision that reflects the lack of integrity in the decision-making process

Alternative proposal

Alternative proposal –
continue on a separate sheet, if
necessary

Persons making this call-in

I am / we are:

- An individual elected member for a ward particularly affected by the decision
- The chair of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 2 members of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee
- Any 3 non-executive members of the Council
- Any 10 members of the public, working or studying within the Thurrock Council area
- A voluntary group with interest in the Thurrock Council area
- A local business situated in the Thurrock Council area –
not allowable where the decision relates to procurement of goods and services

Contact information

Name	Neil Speight
Email address	neil.speight
Daytime phone number	07885313435
Postal address	50 London Road, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex

When the relevant overview and scrutiny committee considers your call-in, would you like to make a statement or representation at the meeting?

- Yes
- No

Supporters of the call-in

Details of each person indicated as 'persons making this call-in' on page 2 must be entered below.

Number	Name in block capitals, and signature	Address, in block capitals
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For Monitoring Officer use only

Monitoring Officer's decision on the call-in request:

- Allowed in full
- Allowed in part
- Not allowed

Monitoring Officer's reasons for decision	
Monitoring Officer's comments on the alternative proposal	
Signature	
Date	

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