

Extraordinary, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

14th February 2024

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CTS0004- Review Charging Policy for Assistive Technology

Name of service	Potential Increases in Adult Social Care Charges
Lead officer name	Ceri Armstrong
Lead officer job title	Head of Transformation and Commissioning
Lead officer email address	carmstrong@thurrock.gov.uk

Subject of this assessment

What specific policy, strategy, function or service is the subject of this assessment?
Adult Social Care Fees and Charges Policy
Borough-wide or location-specific?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Borough-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Location-specific – please state locations below.
Why is this policy, strategy, function or service development or review needed?
To look at options to enable the continued provision of essential Adult Social Care services to eligible individuals within Thurrock.
This CEIA is updated from 2021 when Cabinet agreed a change to the Adult Social Care charging policy (with many services being charged at full cost recovery subject to a means test to identify affordability).
This update is required given the Fees and Charges report going to HOSC and Cabinet November 2023 relating to 2024/25 Fees and Charges.

1. Engagement, consultation and supporting information

- 1.1. What steps you have taken, or do you plan to take, to engage or consult (where applicable) the whole community or specific groups affected by this development or review? **This is a vital step.**

Steps you have taken, or plan to take, to engage or consult
Consultation was carried out on the initial decision to move to a 'full cost recovery position', via the councils' website and a letter to all ADS services users, the outcome of this consultation is available on request. Response rate 14.42 %,
Reassurance was and will be given that will not impact the level of service that users receive as the underlying duty to meet eligible needs under the Care Act 2014.

- 1.2. What data or intelligence sources have you used to inform your assessment of the impact? How have these helped you understand who will be affected by the development or review?

Sources of data or intelligence, and how they have been used

Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate – to provide narrative in regard to negative impacts being minimised.

Care Act 2014 – in both the ‘summary of impacts’ and ‘mitigation’ sections. The narrative explains the legal duty placed on the authority in regard to completing a financial assessment and that charges are made based on ability to pay.

Controcc – our data recording system has been used to provide numbers/percentages of individuals for some of the protected characteristics.

Office of National Statistic – 2021 census information. To add to the narrative in ‘summary of impacts’ sections.

[Social Care Access for adult BAME and LGBT+ populations: a rapid realist review - NIHR Funding and Awards](#) – to provide additional narrative in the ‘summary of impacts’ sections for Race and Sexual Orientation.

2. Community and workforce impact

- 2.1. What impacts will this development or review have on communities, workforce and the health and wellbeing of local residents?

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
<p>Local communities in general</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and contributes to sustaining the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock.</p> <p>Individual impact can only be fully understood on completion of a financial assessment.</p> <p>Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>A greater proportion of people requiring social care support will come from deprived areas of the borough than less deprived areas of the borough. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>Individuals may refuse care where they have been assessed as requiring to pay partially or in full for their care.</p> <p>Individuals may request to have their care reduced where they have to contribute towards the costs.</p> <p>Health & well-being of individuals may be impacted on where assessed provision of care</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p> <p>Refer to the Carers Support service – free to access.</p>

			<p>is refused in part or full. This could lead to informal carer breakdown, hospital admissions, increased crisis, increased usage of Thurrock Urgent Community Response Team</p> <p>Increased reliance on informal carers, where informal carers increase their caring to supplement paid for care which they may view as unaffordable.</p>	<p>Encourage Carers to request a Carers assessment for additional support.</p> <p>Development of a Carers Strategy/Action plan.</p> <p>Any services/support provided to unpaid carers is not charged.</p>
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Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>The majority of users of Adult Social Care (ASC) services are age 65+ and therefore increasing charges would have a greater impact on those aged 65+.</p> <p>However, out of those age 65+ just under 20% will be affected. Therefore, whilst this does not disproportionately affect this protected characteristic (as most users of ASC users in Thurrock do not make any contribution to their care) it is however worth noting.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>36% of ASC service users are recorded as those with physical, learning or mental disability. This is the second largest client category.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each</p>

				<p>service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide details of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No specific impacts on grounds of gender reassignment have been identified, this data is not routinely collected from service users.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows</p>

				<p>afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide details of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
<p>Marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for</p>

					care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No specific impacts on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity have been identified.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any charges levied are unlikely to impact on grounds of race, it is recognised that some nationalities may have	Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their

			<p>difficulty in understanding any communication received in relation to increased charges due to limited English language skills. Communication needs are noted by staff and information can be made available in other languages, font sizes or easy read upon request.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>Whilst this assessment is focused on charges for services. It is worth noting that research carried out in 2019 suggested that some of the people most likely to miss out on social care services are black, Asian or from another ethnic group (BAME) - Social Care Access for adult BAME and LGBT+ populations: a rapid realist review - NIHR Funding and Awards.</p> <p>There is no specific evidence of this in Thurrock, however it would be reasonable to assume that these experiences of BAME communities reflect national findings.</p>	<p>financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> No specific impact on grounds of religion or belief has been identified.	Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can

				<p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
<p>Sex</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>Women form the largest part of the ageing population and therefore is</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG</p>

				<p>likely to impact on women more than men, however charges will only be levied following an individual financial assessment .</p> <p>In addition 59% of unpaid carers are female – and provide more hours of unpaid care than men</p>	<p>rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p> <p>Carers are entitled to request a carers assessment.</p> <p>Respite to take a break from Caring role/sitting service/day services.</p> <p>Use of the Carers service – free to access.</p> <p>Any services/support provided to unpaid carers is not charged.</p>
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No specific grounds on sexual orientation have been identified.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person’s ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person’s ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock’s Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG)</p>

				<p>against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>Whilst this assessment is focused on charges for services. It is worth noting that research carried out in 2019 suggested that some of the people most likely to miss out on social care services are from lesbian, gay or bisexual communities - Social Care Access for adult BAME and LGBT+ populations: a rapid realist review - NIHR Funding and Awards.</p> <p>It would therefore be reasonable to assume that these experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual communities in Thurrock replicate national findings.</p>	<p>is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
Location-specific impact if any	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A
Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No specific impacts on the grounds workforce have been identified.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) –</p>

					<p>individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
<p>Health and wellbeing of residents</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>It is likely that the increase in charges may have a negative impact on individuals health and well-being.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and contributes to sustaining the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock.</p> <p>Individual impact can only be fully understood on completion of a financial assessment.</p> <p>Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p> <p>Health & well-being of individuals may be impacted on where assessed provision of care is refused in part or full. This could lead to informal carer breakdown, hospital admissions, increased crisis, increased usage of Thurrock Urgent</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%,this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision,</p>

				<p>Community Response Team.</p>	<p>Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
<p>Socio-economic outcomes</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>No specific impact on grounds of Socio-economic outcomes has been identified.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>

<p>Veterans and serving members of the armed forces</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>No specific impact on grounds of Socio-economic outcomes has been identified.</p> <p>Individuals may have to pay more towards the cost of their Adult Social Care service. This will be based on the person's ability to pay and help sustain the provision of all care services for the vulnerable adults within Thurrock. Charges are only levied against those who can afford it following individual financial assessment.</p>	<p>Via means testing to assess the person's ability to pay. Individuals can request a review of their financial assessment at any time.</p> <p>Benefit maximisation is offered to ensure each individual has access to any benefits they are entitled to.</p> <p>Thurrock's Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) is set at the Department of Health & Social Care MIG rate plus 25%, this allows people to keep more of their income.</p> <p>Disability related expenditure (DRE) – individuals are asked to provide detail of any DRE which will be deducted from any income to assess their ability to pay.</p> <p>The LA has the ability to exempt an individual for care costs on a case by case basis on complex matters such as, waiting for a Continuing Healthcare decision, Ordinary Residency decision.</p>
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3. Monitoring and review

3.1. How will you review community and equality impact once the policy, strategy, function or service has been implemented? These actions should be developed using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 and included in your service area's business plans.

Action	By when	By who
<p>Service users can request a review of their financial circumstances, this is also carried out at review which occurs on an annual basis</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Financial Assessment Officers</p>

Continue to monitor the application of increases to fees and charges in relation to protected characteristics	On-going, as and when changes are made to our policy	Head of Transformation and Commissioning
Review any additional feedback from engagement and update this CEIA accordingly	January 2024	Head of Transformation and Commissioning

4. Next steps

- 4.1. The information gathered must be used to inform reports presented to Cabinet or overview and scrutiny committees. This will give members a necessary understanding of the impact their decisions will have on different groups and the whole community.

Summarise the implications and customer impact below. This summary should be added to the committee reports template in the Diversity and Equality Implications section for review and sign-off at the consultation stage of the report preparation cycle.

Summary of implications and customer impact

Sex: women form the largest part of the ageing population, and therefore this has the potential to impact more on women.

Race: some nationalities may have difficulties understanding the policy due to limited English Language skills.

Sexual Orientation: whilst not in relation to increases in charges, research suggests that accessing services is limited for this particular protected characteristic, no

Disability: more people with disabilities are in receipt of care and support services than those without disabilities. The policy has the potential to impact more on disabled people than non-disabled people.

Age: more older people are in receipt of care and support services than younger people. The policy has the potential to impact more on older people than younger people.

Deprivation: those in receipt of adult care and support services are likely to be amongst the most deprived.

Health and Well-Being: there is potential that increases to fees and charges, where applicable, may negatively impact some individuals.

5. Sign off

- 5.1. This Community Equality Impact Assessment must be authorised by the relevant project sponsor, head of service, or assistant director. Officers authorising this assessment are responsible for:

- the accuracy of the information
- making sure actions are undertaken

Name	Role	Date
Ceri Armstrong	Head of Transformation and Commissioning	5 th October 2023
Jayne Middleton-Albooye	Interim Head of Legal Services	9 th November 2023

CTS0077- Rent Reviews

Name of service	Property & FM
Lead officer name	John Cooper
Lead officer job title	Interim AD Property & FM
Lead officer email address	John.cooper@thurrock.gov.uk

Subject of this assessment

What specific policy, strategy, function or service is the subject of this assessment?
The subject of this assessment is part of the Financial Recovery Board Workstream and the purpose of the undertaking lease renewals and rent reviews, is to bring at least 10% additional income on the current budgeted income of £3.528M which has already been achieved for the current financial year.
Borough-wide or location-specific?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Borough-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Location-specific – please state locations below. Click or tap here to enter text.
Why is this policy, strategy, function or service development or review needed?
To assess whether there is a negative impact upon the Council's property tenants following a review of the provision of their Leases with regards to rent reviews and lease renewals. In most cases rents will increase

Consultation and supporting information

5.2. What steps you have taken, or do you plan to take, to consult the whole community or specific groups affected by this development or review? **This is a vital step.**

Steps you have taken, or plan to take, to consult
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The rental increases only affect those individuals and organisations that have chosen to enter commercial property transactions with the Council. The Council is not the only owner and provider of commercial property and other organisations will initiate reviews where their Leases allow.

The Leases are typically reviewed on a regular basis; are agreed by negotiation accepted by choice and are normal contractual arrangements.

The rental increases only affect individuals or organisations that choose or have chosen to enter into a commercial transaction with the Council. Consultation with Community and workforce described in part 2 below is not deemed necessary and is not something that it is believed to be conducted by other Councils

5.3. What data or intelligence sources have you used to inform your assessment of the impact? How have these helped you understand who will be affected by the development or review?

Sources of data or intelligence, and how they have been used

We have reviewed our approach and working practice is consistent with other authorities.

Community and workforce impact

5.4. What impacts will this development or review have on communities, workforce and the health and wellbeing of local residents?

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Location-specific impact if any	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Health and wellbeing of residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Socio-economic outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Veterans and serving members of the armed forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Monitoring and review

5.5. How will you review community and equality impact once the policy, strategy, function or service has been implemented? These actions should be developed using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 and included in your service area's business plans.

Action	By when	By who
Consider the necessity and Benchmark annually against similar authorities	October annually	Head of Property Services

Next steps

5.6. The information gathered must be used to inform reports presented to Cabinet or overview and scrutiny committees. This will give members a necessary understanding of the impact their decisions will have on different groups and the whole community.

Summarise the implications and customer impact below. This summary should be added to the committee reports template in the Equality and Diversity Implications section for review and sign-off at the consultation stage of the report preparation cycle.

Summary of implications and customer impact

Customers should be properly advised when entering property transactions

Where individuals or organisations enter commercial leases or other commercial property transactions it is expected that there will be reviews and changes provided for in Lease agreements.

Negative Community impact is not thought to be applicable at this time but will be reviewed annually to ensure any changes are appropriately and fully considered.

Sign off

5.7. This community equality impact assessment must be authorised by the relevant project sponsor, strategic lead, or assistant director. Officers authorising this assessment are responsible for:

- the accuracy of the information
- making sure actions are undertaken

Name	Role	Date
John Cooper	Interim AD Property & FM	10/11/2023
Jayne Middleton-Albooye	Interim Head of Legal Services	10/11/2023

CTS0209- Parks and Open Spaces**

Name of service	Clean and Green
Lead officer name	Vincent Taylor
Lead officer job title	Head of Clean and Green Services
Lead officer email address	vtaylor@thurrock.gov.uk

Subject of this assessment

What specific policy, strategy, function or service is the subject of this assessment?
<p>Change in the Grass Cutting schedule on public open spaces (inc Parks), and on Highways verges. This is a reduction of cutting from every 3 weeks to every 5-6 weeks.</p> <p>The Council will also be delivering additional income through offering events spaces and hiring out concessions within these park/open space sites.</p>
Borough-wide or location-specific?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Borough-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Location-specific – please state locations below.
Click or tap here to enter text.
Why is this policy, strategy, function or service development or review needed?
<p>The proposal is to reduce the frequency of grass cutting to achieve savings under the Section 114 Notice, and also to increase income through a more commercial approach within our parks.</p>

Consultation and supporting information

5.8. What steps you have taken, or do you plan to take, to engage or consult the whole community or specific groups affected by this development or review? **This is a vital step.**

Steps you have taken, or plan to take, to engage or consult
--

Budget Engagement Survey 2023 held between 29 November-7 January 2024 where feedback invited on proposal to reduce grass cutting and increase income streams. Series of public engagement events also held in libraries in December. Engagement promoted to voluntary and community sector, across a wide range of social media and council communications channels (e.g. staff and resident newsletters).

In a 2017 YouGov poll for Friends of the Earth and Buglife (See link below), Over 80 per cent (81%) of the public back calls for councils to help Britain's under-threat bees by cutting areas of grass less often in parks and roadside verges to allow wildflowers to grow. It also found that 92% support local authorities in planting more wildflowers and other bee friendly plants in their local parks and community spaces

<https://friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/huge-public-backing-councils-reduce-grasscutting-help-save-our-bees>

A clear communication strategy will be developed to keep residents engaged and informed about the approach and reasons behind pursuing wilding certain areas (Wilding is about charting a path forward in our relationship with nature. Wilding is, fundamentally, a 'hands-off' approach to ecological restoration) as a part of the approach for parks and open spaces.

Maintenance frequencies for formal sports pitches would be proposed to remain the same. This would allow residents to continue using these facilities for formal sports activities without reducing the health benefits associated with them.

There may be opportunities for communities to take on increasing ownership in the management of open space sites, which aligns with the council's desire to be an enabling council. Examples of good practice which could be built on include: the relationship already developed at Grays Beach and Friends of Corringham Town Park. Further relationships could be developed with other [friends of groups](#) that are already established for parks across Thurrock. Cultivating relationships with these groups , through regular contact, newsletters and consulting on service delivery will help to maintain a sustainable parks and open space service. We will be communicating with these groups on this change and listening to them and their feedback on its impact, both positive and negative. The key to successful "Friends of" groups is sustained engagement, education, and creating a sense of shared responsibility for a cleaner, healthier and well maintained park / open space environment

5.9. What data or intelligence sources have you used to inform your assessment of the impact? How have these helped you understand who will be affected by the development or review?

Sources of data or intelligence, and how they have been used

Budget engagement survey 2023, had 91 responses to the proposals to reduce grass cutting and income generation within our parks. Several respondents addressed more than one area in their responses, which are categorised by type in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Category	Number of Responses
Positive	4
Negative	38
Positive/Negative	6
Neutral	31
Not related to Parks & Open Spaces	10
Response not specific enough to categorise	2
Total	91

The comments were taken into consideration when completing this CEIA, below is a hyperlink to the FAQs

<https://consult.thurrock.gov.uk/parks-and-open-spaces/widgets/83982/faqs#question21996>

The primary themes emerging from the responses are summarised below:

Grass cutting - Disagreement with the length increasing between cuts as there will be an increased risk of vermin, therefore making it unsafe for residents, particularly children. There is a concern around the amount of dog excretion as it will be harder to find and pick up, causing smelly parks and open spaces. There will also be less opportunities for events where open spaces will not be fit for purpose

Events - Disagreement as Thurrock are lowering the number of opportunities to organise events due to the lack of suitable areas available. Decrease in parks & open spaces maintenance will mean that areas will be left to overgrow, making the borough look untidy.

Health & Well-being - Disagreement as not having suitable parks and open spaces for residents who do not have homes with gardens do not have public places to go to that look presentable. This can have a negative impact on resident's health and well-being as they are reluctant to go out in these areas.

Parks & Open Spaces - Disagreement with the proposal as there was already poor maintenance of parks and open spaces prior to this consultation. The current level of maintenance that should be provided is not being done and residents disagree with the further cuts that are being proposed.

There was a positive comment made that the suggested reduction in grass cutting was a good suggestion, as long as consideration was given to hay fever sufferers. The use of parks for commercial activity was also considered good idea as long as there was not an inconvenience to residents.

Public authorities who operate in England must consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England, this duty has shaped the savings and income proposal,

[Complying with the biodiversity duty - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Age - Borough wide 2021 census data (see data below) shows that Thurrock has a fairly significant elderly population with 13.6% over the age of 65. There is a possibility that the reduced changes in the grass cutting regime may affect older people and those with mobility impairments and/or impaired vision. Long grass can hide litter and obstructions which could contribute to slip/trip hazards and make movement off the main paths more hazardous for those that are old and infirm. Perception of increase in crime if there is an appearance of unmanaged and unmaintained facilities.

Age category	% population
Aged 4 years and under	7%
Aged 5 to 9 years	7.2%
Aged 10 to 15 years	8.4%
Aged 16 to 19 years	4.6%
Aged 20 to 24 years	5.4%
Aged 25 to 34 years	14.7%
Aged 35 to 49 years	21.6%
Aged 50 to 64 years	17.6%
Aged 65 to 74 years	7.7%
Aged 75 to 84 years	4.3%
Aged 85+ years	1.6%

Disability -

Borough wide 2021 census data (see data below) shows that 14.45% of Thurrock's population is Disabled as defined under the Equality Act, with their Day-to-day activities either limited a little or a lot.

There is a possibility that the reduced frequency in the grass cutting regime may affect people in wheelchairs and/or people with other mobility impairments and/or those with visual impairments. Long grass can hide litter and obstructions which could contribute to slip/trip hazards and make movement off the main paths more hazardous for those in wheelchairs and/or people with other mobility impairments and/or those with visual impairments.

Census category	% population
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot	6.05%
Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little	8.40%
Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long-term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited	5.47%
Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long-term physical or mental health conditions	80.07%

Community and workforce impact

5.10. What impacts will this development or review have on communities, workforce and the health and wellbeing of local residents?

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	People will still be able to use Thurrock's Parks and Open spaces, we will still maintain areas that are high use This was one of the major concerns that was expressed in the Budget survey.	We will still maintain areas that are high use in the same way that they are now
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Team currently maintains the Play areas and the Complexes on a 3 week cutting schedule, and this will remain the case after the proposed change is implemented	No change to essential works for the old and young. Path borders and accessible fence lines will be cut and/or pruned at current standards to ensure safe passage from vegetation and possibly hidden litter and natural surveillance in terms of reducing fear of crime.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a possibility that the reduced frequency in the grass cutting regime may affect people with impaired mobility, in wheelchairs or visually impaired.	We will still maintain areas that are used for disabled access in the same way that they are now Path borders and accessible fence lines will be cut and/or pruned at current standards to ensure safe passage from vegetation and possibly hidden litter and natural surveillance in terms of reducing fear of crime.
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is a possibility that the reduced frequency in the grass cutting regime may affect people with prams / pushchairs	Path borders and accessible fence lines will be cut and/or pruned at current standards to ensure safe passage from vegetation and possibly hidden litter
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Location-specific impact if any	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A
Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The reduction in staffing numbers will be able to be achieved without the risk of redundancy, as we will use / vacant posts or a reduction in Agency staff for this.	A restructure will be required to distribute staff across the sites maintained by the teams. Staff reduction will be met by existing vacancies or discontinuation of Agency staff. There will be no redundancies affecting permanently employed staff. We do not currently have a data on the diversity profile of the team.
Health and wellbeing of residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposals should not impact on the useability of our parks and open spaces in a way that affects the health and wellbeing of our residents	Maintaining key major parks at disparate geographic locations will mitigate some perception and fitness implications. Existing sports facilities in parks will be maintained to existing standards

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Socio-economic outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parks can be considered an integral part of the social support network. Green spaces have been shown to have a positive effect on mental wellbeing and parks are a regular venue for sports, casual fitness activity and walking, which can have a significant positive effect on fitness.	Maintaining key major parks at disparate geographic locations will mitigate some perception and fitness implications. Existing sports facilities in parks will be maintained to existing standards
Veterans and serving members of the armed forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unlikely to have an adverse disproportionate effect	N/A

Monitoring and review

5.11. How will you review community and equality impact once the policy, strategy, function or service has been implemented? These actions should be developed using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 and included in your service area's business plans.

Action	By when	By who
We will actively go out and pursue the views of the "friends of" groups	Ad hoc, however it is expected that there will be regular contact between the Managers within the Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing teams with the friends of groups.	Clean and Green Team / Operations managers
In house monitoring through the creation of random inspections via the LAMS system Land Audit Management System (LAMS) - apse.	Routine monitoring of our Parks and open spaces with results analysed monthly	Grounds Maintenance and Cleansing Team Mangers

Checking of the data on Customer and Cllr enquiries and Complaints.	This is a live system and is monitored daily, this data will be looked at on a weekly / Monthly basis to look at trends and identify areas of concern	Click or tap here to enter text.
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Next steps

5.12. The information gathered must be used to inform reports presented to Cabinet or overview and scrutiny committees. This will give members a necessary understanding of the impact their decisions will have on different groups and the whole community.

Summarise the implications and customer impact below. This summary should be added to the committee reports template in the Diversity and Equality Implications section for review and sign-off at the consultation stage of the report preparation cycle.

Summary of implications and customer impact

there will not be a detriment to any specific group and any negative impact will be where there is a perceived degradation in the maintenance of the grassed areas. It must also be noted that there will also conversely be lots of residents that support the change and the positive impact it has on Biodiversity and Habitats

Measures will be put in place (as shown in section 2.1 to mitigate any negative outcomes for the groups that were identified as being potentially impacted

Sign off

5.13. This Community Equality Impact Assessment must be authorised by the relevant project sponsor, strategic lead, or assistant director. Officers authorising this assessment are responsible for:

- the accuracy of the information
- making sure actions are undertaken

Name	Role	Date
Paul Southall	Interim Assistant Director Street Scene and Leisure	16/01/2024
Jayne Middleton-Albooye	Interim Head of Legal Services	26/01/2024

CTS0201- Contact Management**

Name of service	Contact Management Operating Model
CEIA Lead Officer	Vince Waddams
CEIA Lead Officer job title	Project Manager
CEIA Lead Officer email address	Vincent.waddams@thurrock.gov.uk

Subject of this assessment

What specific policy, strategy, function or service is the subject of this assessment?
This CEIA will look at the management of contacts from residents and those doing business in the borough who currently use phone, email, portal and digital channels, and it will assess the impact of dealing with those contacts via Voice Automation, Customer Relationship Management system (CRM), and Web Forms.
Borough-wide or location-specific?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Borough-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Location-specific – please state locations below. Click or tap here to enter text.
Why is this policy, strategy, function or service development or review needed?
The Council’s current Contact Management model is dispersed, with activity spread across the Council and each Directorate retaining ownership of how they manage incoming demand from residents, businesses, partners, professionals, and Members. There are multiple front doors and direct channels to service areas, which has resulted in a Contact Management model which is inefficient, costly and provides an inconsistent experience.
Although the Council has made efforts to channel shift away from telephone and towards digital, through webforms and emails, this has increased the effort spent on dealing with transactional resident queries in the service areas.
By automating, digitising, and streamlining processes, the Council can realise significant savings and accelerate its journey to being ‘digital by default’ and offering resident-centred services.
Initial scoping has identified users in the following service areas as being immediate beneficiaries of further digitisation/automation of contact management:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Contact Centre • Public Realm • Adults Housing & Health (housing services)

Engagement, consultation and supporting information

5.14. What steps you have taken, or do you plan to take, to engage or consult (where applicable) the whole community or specific groups affected by this development or review? **This is a vital step.**

Steps you have taken, or plan to take, to engage or consult

Following Central Government intervention and appointment of Essex County Council to support Thurrock Council with its financial challenges, a series of savings proposals have been put forward including the proposal to introduce a new Contact Management Operating Model for financial year 24/25. This has been debated at public Overview & Scrutiny meeting on 28th November 2023.

Proposals, including this CEIA, will be published prior to a full Council meeting in March 2024.

Once approved, the Full Business Case will be implemented, and a systems provider procured. Further engagement with staff and representative groups will take place at that time. Public surveys on the services provided by the Contact Centre took place in 2020 and again in January 2023. The 2023 survey asked users about the current Interactive Response System (IVR) and the responses showed that following improvements prompted by the 2020 survey there was an overall 14% improvement in the way customers were able to navigate their way through the automated system.

If an option was available, customers were asked why they did not choose the relevant option to speak to a trained advisor

Reason customer gave as to why they did not choose an option appropriate to their enquiry	Results	
	2020	2023
Distracted and/or just did not hear the option	31%	21%
Didn't know what to choose	28%	20%
Say they did press the right option	9%	7%
Missed what they wanted	6%	4%
Just wanted to talk to someone	4%	31%
Options not clear didn't hear what they wanted	22%	17%

The results of these surveys will be used during the design of the technical solution especially the learning around 'options' offered by the automated system.

Additionally, as part of the Council's commitment to monitor data and to respond to user's needs, an automatic survey is offered at the end of every call where users are encouraged to feedback on the way the call was handled and whether their issue was resolved to their satisfaction.

These surveys will be maintained and closely monitored under the new Operating Model so that the system can be continuously improved and better guidance can be given during the call and as part of a Frequently Asked Questions section on the Council's website.

5.15. What data or intelligence sources have you used to inform your assessment of the impact? How have these helped you understand who will be affected by the development or review?

Sources of data or intelligence, and how they have been used

Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) was engaged by the Council in the latter part of 2023 to carry out analysis that could be used to produce an Outline Business Case. PWC analysed 334 ways in which the public contact the council including 296 routes which go direct to service areas. It was found that multiple keying-in of data and incomplete details taken over email/ad hoc phone contacts led to further multiple contacts being required providing an inefficient process and a poor service for residents. Implementation of automatic processes and the ability for customers to self-serve will eliminate many of the failed contacts experienced by users.

Findings from the UK digital Poverty Alliance ([UK Digital Poverty Evidence Review 2022 Introduction - Digital Poverty Alliance](#)) have been considered to understand how digital poverty can still exist in a world seemingly full of smart mobile phones, computers and tablets, because of a lack of cheap and reliable connectivity. This is further supported by the Lloyds Bank 2023 Consumer Digital Index [231122-lloyds-consumer-digital-index-2023-report.pdf \(lloydsbank.com\)](#)

Data from the 2021 Census shows that the median age in Thurrock is slightly younger than the national average (age 36 and 40 respectively) which poses no particular challenges for the implementation of the operating model. There has been an increase of 16.5% of those aged between 50 and 64 years of age but this is not an age bracket of concern for digital literacy. Unemployment fell from 5% to 3.2% which should ease pressure on factors which traditionally lead to digital poverty.

Community and workforce impact

5.16. What impacts will this development or review have on communities, workforce and the health and wellbeing of local residents?

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Voice automation is a technology that can understand, process and respond to human language - whether spoken or typed and is tried and tested across councils, and the wider public and private sector. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software allows processes to be streamlined and better management of relationships with residents throughout their entire interaction with the Council. The creation of portals, webforms and new automated workflows will bring council interaction into line with modern practices enabling residents to digitally self-serve and helping to ensure that things are done 'right first time' so that users are not asked to repeat basic details multiple times	Implementation of technologies will be rolled out in phases allowing lessons learned from early phases to be incorporated into subsequent phases thus engendering a continuous learning experience Additionally, the Council has a network of Libraries and Community Hubs where digital inclusion is supported through a series of initiatives to help people to get online, this includes free access to PCs and Wi-Fi.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Census 2021 predicts an increase of 16,000 people in the 65 years old or older age group living in Thurrock in the next ten years.</p> <p>Older users experiencing digital exclusion may experience difficulties interacting with new technology.</p>	<p>Existing options such as face-to-face services and support at community hubs already in place for older members of the community will continue and wherever possible will be enhanced by the intelligent system which can repeat questions slowly and clearly. Also the releasing of resources from transactional contacts, which will be handled by the automated system, will allow greater direct support for vulnerable users</p>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The 2021 Census shows that one in fourteen residents have a disability that limits their day to day activity a lot - equivalent to 7.2% of the population; one in ten has a disability that limit their day to day activity a little.</p> <p>Users with sensory disabilities may face difficulties accessing and interacting with new technology</p>	<p>Existing options in place for individuals with sensory disabilities (such as hearing loops, sign language video calls) will remain in place and wherever possible will be enhanced by the releasing of resources from transactional contacts, which will be handled by the automated system, thereby allowing greater direct support for vulnerable users</p>

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, gender reassignment is defined as 'proposing to undergo, undergoing or having undergone a process to reassign your sex'. Census 2021 highlighted that 390 (or 0.3%) had a gender identity different from sex registered at birth but did not specify gender reassignment.</p> <p>There is no specific disproportionate impact based on gender reassignment identified from this project.</p>	There is no specific disproportionate impact based on gender reassignment identified from this project.
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The 2021 Census data showed a rise in the share of lone-parent households from 11.2% in 2011 to 13.5% in 2021. Thurrock is now among the highest 15% in England for lone parents. However, there is no specific disproportionate impact according to marriage and civil partnership status identified from this project.</p>	There is no specific disproportionate impact according to marriage and civil partnership status identified from this project.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is no specific disproportionate impact based on pregnancy and maternity identified from this project.	There is no specific disproportionate impact based on pregnancy and maternity identified from this project.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Thurrock's ethnic makeup has changed in the last ten years. <i>Other ethnic minorities</i> groups represented 14% in 2011 and increased to 34% in 2021</p> <p>78 languages are spoken in Thurrock with English, Romanian, Polish, Lithuanian being the most common ones.</p> <p>In 4,227 households no people have English as a main language.</p> <p>A further 1,657 have no English as a first language as speaking adults in the household, but at least one person aged 3 to 15 years, has English as a main language</p> <p>Where English is not the users first language, they may experience difficulties interacting with new technology.</p>	Existing options in place for those who do not have English as their first language (such as Premium Linguistic Services, The Language Shop, DA Languages) will remain in place and wherever possible the service will be enhanced by the releasing of resources from transactional contacts, which will be handled by the automated system, thereby allowing greater direct support for those facing language barriers.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Approximately half of Thurrock residents identify as Christian in the 2021 Census. A third of the residents consider themselves to have no religion. Islam is the third largest religious group in Thurrock (one in twenty residents). There is no specific disproportionate impact based on religion or belief identified from this project.</p>	<p>There is no specific disproportionate impact based on religion or belief identified from this project.</p>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Females form 51% of Thurrock's local population (of the 65+ age group, 13,000 are female and 10,800 are male).</p> <p>There is no specific disproportionate impact for individuals based on sex identified from this project</p>	<p>There is no specific disproportionate impact for individuals based on sex identified from this project.</p>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Nine in ten adult residents in Thurrock identify as Straight or Heterosexual; and one in fifty identify as Gay/Lesbian or Bisexual (2%)</p> <p>There is no specific disproportionate impact based on sexual orientation identified from this project</p>	<p>There is no specific disproportionate impact based on sexual orientation identified from this project</p>

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Location-specific impact if any	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There is no specific disproportionate impact that is location specific identified from this project.	There is no specific disproportionate impact that is location specific identified from this project. The Council has a network of Libraries and Community Hubs where digital inclusion is supported through a series of initiatives to help people to get online, this includes free access to PCs and Wi-Fi,

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The implementation of automated technology will change the way staff are involved in contact management and may require re-training, service restructures and potential job losses as technology takes over.	<p>The roll out of all new technology will be preceded by training for all those that will be using the technology and will be maintained as part of a regular training programme.</p> <p>Restructures will follow HR policy and guidance and will also include training/re-skilling where needed.</p> <p>The diversity of staff affected will be considered in consultation with HR and workforce diversity data to mitigate disproportionate negative impact for any group through the restructure process.</p> <p>Job losses will follow the council's procedure and will include full staff/union engagement .</p>

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Health and wellbeing of residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The 2021 Census data showed that overall, most residents rate their health as good or very good (four in five), but one in twenty have a bad or a very bad health</p> <p>No specific disproportionate impact on health and wellbeing has been identified from this project.</p>	No specific disproportionate impact on health and wellbeing has been identified from this project.
Socio-economic outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No specific disproportionate impact on socio-economic outcomes has been identified from this project.	No specific disproportionate impact on socio-economic outcomes has been identified from this project.
Veterans and serving members of the armed forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No specific disproportionate on veterans and serving members of the armed forces impact has been identified from this project.	No specific disproportionate impact on veterans and serving members of the armed forces has been identified from this project.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Unpaid carers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Approximately one in twelve residents provides an unpaid form of care (14,608 residents).</p> <p>An unpaid carer may look after, give help or support to anyone who has long-term physical or mental ill-health conditions, illness or problems related to old age (paid employment excluded), and the help can be within or outside of the carer's household.</p> <p>Unpaid carers may contact the Council on behalf of the person they are caring for, but no specific disproportionate impact has been identified for unpaid carers from this project.</p>	No specific disproportionate impact for unpaid carers has been identified from this project.

Monitoring and review

5.17. How will you review community and equality impact once the policy, strategy, function or service has been implemented? These actions should be developed using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 and included in your service area's business plans.

Action	By when	By who
Review comments/feedback given at Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet	February 2024	Project Team
Review comments/feedback given at Full Council	March 2024	Project Team

Review CEIA with procured supplier of systems and agree actions they will fulfil to ensure that we continue to maintain our Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty responsibilities.	April 2024	Project Team
Ongoing review of lessons learned from each early phase to carry forward to each subsequent phase	July 2024 onwards	Project Team
Automatic surveys to be offered to users at the end of every call and reviewed by the Assistant Director	Already in place – if necessary, survey questions can be adapted to suit	Contact Centre
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Next steps

5.18. The information gathered must be used to inform reports presented to Cabinet or overview and scrutiny committees. This will give members a necessary understanding of the impact their decisions will have on different groups and the whole community.

Summarise the implications and customer impact below. This summary should be added to the committee reports template in the Diversity and Equality Implications section for review and sign-off at the consultation stage of the report preparation cycle.

Summary of implications and customer impact

The Council currently has around 334 routes which the public use to make contact including 296 routes which go direct to service areas having received no triage from the Contact Centre. Direct and ad-hoc contacts often have incomplete details and require the re-keying of data multiple times giving rise to an inefficient process and a poor service for residents. Implementation of automatic processes and the ability for customers to self-serve will eliminate many of the failed contacts experienced by users and will support the Council to ‘get it right first time’.

Voice automation is a technology that can understand, process and respond to human language - whether spoken or typed and is tried and tested across councils, and the wider public and private sector. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software allows processes to be streamlined and better management of relationships with residents throughout their entire interaction with the Council. The creation of portals, webforms and new automated workflows will bring council interaction into line with modern practices enabling residents to digitally self-serve.

As existing specialist services (language translation, video sign call etc) will remain in use, and call handling assistants will be in place behind every contact should they be needed, this project minimises any disadvantages for vulnerable groups whilst providing the council with an opportunity to greatly enhance contact management so that information only needs to be provided once, contacts can be dealt with correctly first time, and efficiencies can be brought to the service leading to fewer call failures. Regular monitoring and review is already embedded in the service showing a high caller satisfaction rate of 98%. This will form the benchmark for future services which will continue to be monitored in the same way.

Behind the automated system, traditional call handlers will be in place ready to take over and handle the more complex calls. Facilities in libraries and Hubs will continue to provide support in the community.

The Council’s equalities obligations will form part of the specification sent out to potential providers during procurement of the Voice Automation and CRM systems and will form part of the evaluation process.

Sign off

5.19. This Community Equality Impact Assessment must be authorised by the relevant project sponsor, strategic lead, or assistant director. This should not be the CEIA Lead Officer. Officers authorising this assessment are responsible for:

- the accuracy of the information
- making sure actions are undertaken

Name	Role	Date
Pete Pawson	Interim Change Director	Click or tap here to enter text.
Tracie Heiser	Assistant Director Customer Services	Click or tap here to enter text.

CTS0217- Home to School Transport - Review policy and routes to secure improved value for money and CTS0226- Home to School Transport - Policy update and post 16 charging policy

Name of service	Children’s Services
CEIA Lead Officer	Michele Lucas
CEIA Lead Officer job title	Assistant Director – Education and Skills
CEIA Lead Officer email address	mlucas@thurrock.gov.uk

Subject of this assessment

What specific policy, strategy, function or service is the subject of this assessment?
Home to School Transport Policy Update – Post 16 SEND Transport Statement and Review of taxi/minibus spend
Borough-wide or location-specific?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Borough-wide <input type="checkbox"/> Location-specific – please state locations below.
Why is this policy, strategy, function or service development or review needed?

SEND home to school transport is a statutory duty on the Local Authority, we have further duties where we place a primary child two miles from the school and secondary pupil three miles from the school. The LA does not have a statutory duty to transport post 16 SEND students however it must ensure that young people can access an educational offer. The SEND home to school transport has seen a significant increase due to the increase in demand for Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs). The current policy needs a complete review, in line with the changes to the home to school transport policy nationally and the proposed changes to the current offer for post 16 SEND students.

We have recently undertaken a benchmarking exercise across the eastern region to gain a better understanding of which authorities have introduced changes which may include a charging system to post 16 students.

The current Home to School transport budget was realigned as part the 2023/24 estimates. This baselined and reflected the year on year overspend due to the continual increase in demand and our statutory duty to provide transport. We have, over the past two years, introduced a range of options for parents which has led to some reductions in the overspends reported. An example is offering fuel reimbursement or bus/train tickets rather than contracted vehicles. In addition to this travel assistance already offered, we will also be considering an option to include a travel assistance budget provided to the parent where this is more cost effective.

Alongside the policy, there will be a supporting review of taxi/mini-bus spend to secure better value for money and greater consistency of spend per pupil (home to school transport).

Engagement, consultation and supporting information.

5.20. What steps you have taken, or do you plan to take, to engage or consult (where applicable) the whole community or specific groups affected by this development or review? **This is a vital step.**

Steps you have taken, or plan to take, to engage or consult

An engagement exercise is required when any changes are made to a home to school transport policy. We will undertake an engagement exercise and ensure that factors in the policy changes. We have already started consultation with our parent carer forum and are working closely with them on the proposed changes.

A public consultation in relation to the proposed policy the SEND Post 16 SEN changes commenced on 29th November 2023 and closed on 19th January 2024.

A budget engagement exercise commenced on 29 November 2023 to 7 January 2024 during which specific comments and questions were received and FAQ pages set up for Home to School Travel Assistance. [FAQs | Home to School Travel Consultation 2023 | Have my say | Thurrock Council](#)

The transport contract will be re-procured for the new academic year, September 2024. The service is looking to achieve savings from the taxi/minibuses following re-procurement along with optimising routes to achieve savings going forward.

The service is also working with an academy trust to pilot the trust using their own mini buses to deliver transport for their own Resource Base Pupils, which has reduced spend on SEND transport.

The information summarised in the table in section 1.2 has informed the review and update of this Community Equality Impact Assessment. A dedicated FAQs page for home to school transport has also been set up and is published on council's website. This includes questions raised through the consultation. See: [FAQs | Home to School Travel Consultation 2023 | Have my say | Thurrock Council](#)

5.21. What data or intelligence sources have you used to inform your assessment of the impact? How have these helped you understand who will be affected by the development or review?

Sources of data or intelligence, and how they have been used

Benchmarking has been undertaken with other Local Authorities around the policy and post 16 statements that they have and the options that have been included around the post 16 transport offer.

In addition, the primary themes emerging from budget engagement survey responses are summarised below:

Area	Summary of Responses
Taxis & minibuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain the current service. • Provide suitable transport on unsafe routes. children transported by taxi; walking/cycling could be considered. Provide suitable transport links around the borough. • Stopping school transport for SEND children can harm children who do not like crowded buses or attending school. Home to school transport is important for the safety and wellbeing of those who need it.
Post-16 contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider Means testing or minimal contribution. • Lack of information on level of fee • Those who are eligible should receive home to school transport at no cost to the family. • Users of the service should pay for the service • Impact of pupil attendance at Post-16 provision where families have to pay for transport.
Both proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents feel they should continue to get free transport. Affordability. • Agree with proposals • Walking to school has health benefits • Concern this proposal affects families of some of the most vulnerable in the Borough. • Parents feel they only have two options where they choose a school outside the local area. A subsidy should be given for specialised transport. • Consider cases on an individual basis. Consider SEND and transport costs to get to school. • Eligibility for all transport - all parents should pay or no payment at all • Most parents are able to get their child to school. Some have two cars, but transport provided is free.

Community and workforce impact

5.22. What impacts will this development or review have on communities, workforce and the health and wellbeing of local residents?

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Any change to a home to school transport policy is likely to be viewed negatively particularly as we engage around options that may include a contribution from parents around post 16 SEND transport.	Our commitment to work at an early stage with our parent carer forum and the consultation exercise we will undertake will enable the voice of the community to be heard.
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There is likely to be a disproportionate direct impact on 16–18-year-old SEND learners.	We are working at key transitions points in schools yr. 9 and yr11 to discuss and consider how we can support independent travel training to support young people with SEND into adulthood.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The likely changes to post 16 learners will have a disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of disability.	We are working at key transitions points in schools yr. 9 and yr11 to discuss and consider how we can support independent travel training to support young people with SEND into adulthood.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of gender reassignment.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of gender reassignment.
Marriage and civil partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of marriage and civil partnership.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of marriage and civil partnership.
Pregnancy and maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of pregnancy and maternity.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of pregnancy and maternity.
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of race.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of race.
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of religion or belief.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of religion or belief.
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of sex.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of sex.
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of sexual orientation.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated on the basis of sexual orientation.
Location-specific impact if any	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This proposal has the potential to cause parents of post 16 learners' frustration and concern.	We will work closely with the parent/carer forum to ensure we are communicating well any changes to the offer around SEND post 16 students.

Communities and groups	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Summary of positive and negative impacts	How will positives be maximised, and negatives minimised or eliminated?
Workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated for the council's workforce.	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated for the council's workforce.
Health and wellbeing of residents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The potential changes to the policy are likely to lead to concern for residents with post 16 SEND students.	Clear communication plans will be put in place to ensure parents can comment on as part of the consultation around the proposed policy changes.
Socio-economic outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This proposal will potentially impact transport operators as we look at a range of options as to how to support post 16 SEND learners to access education.	Regular meetings are held with transport operators, and we will ensure any proposed changes that subsequently implemented will communicated at the earliest opportunity.
Veterans and serving members of the armed forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No disproportionate direct impact anticipated for veterans and serving members of the armed forces.	N/A

Monitoring and review

5.23. How will you review community and equality impact once the policy, strategy, function or service has been implemented? These actions should be developed using the information gathered in sections 1 and 2 and included in your service area's business plans.

Action	By when	By whom

Annual review of Post 16 contribution towards transport so that inflation and revised public transport costs are taken into account, this also falls in line with the statutory duty to publish our Post 16 transport statement	January 2025	Sarah Williams
Annual review of policies to ensure any new statutory guidance is being adhered to and any policy changes are consulted upon	January 2025	Sarah Williams
Review and refresh CEIA on a bi-annual basis or more regularly if required incorporating feedback from service users	July 2024	Sarah Williams
Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.

Next steps

5.24. The information gathered must be used to inform reports presented to Cabinet or overview and scrutiny committees. This will give members a necessary understanding of the impact their decisions will have on different groups and the whole community.

Summarise the implications and customer impact below. This summary should be added to the committee reports template in the Diversity and Equality Implications section for review and sign-off at the consultation stage of the report preparation cycle.

Summary of implications and customer impact

An initial consideration of impacts for communities and protected groups is set out in section 2 of this CEIA. Specific feedback arising from the budget engagement exercise and a specific consultation has informed an update to the original Community Equality Impact Assessment published in November 2023 and related to the Home to School Transport Policy – Post 16 SEND Transport Statement along with outcomes from a review of taxi/minibus spend.

A further report will be provided to Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet in March 2024.

Sign off.

5.25. This Community Equality Impact Assessment must be authorised by the relevant project sponsor, strategic lead, or assistant director. This should not be the CEIA Lead Officer. Officers authorising this assessment are responsible for:

Extraordinary, Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 14th February 2024

- the accuracy of the information
- making sure actions are undertaken.

Name	Role	Date
Sheila Murphy	Director Executive Director of Children's Services	24/01/2024
Jayne Middleton-Albooye	AD for Legal Services (Reviewed and approved)	25/01/2024