

2013 - 16

Create a great place for learning and opportunity



Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity



Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities



Improve health and wellbeing

Protect and promote our clean and green environment

Thurrock Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial strategy

"Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish"

Foreword

This plan sets out what the council will do to deliver the community strategy agreed with partners last year. It reflects issues and concerns raised by residents, community groups and businesses.

“Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish”

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities
- Improve health and well-being
- Protect and promote our clean and green environment

Thurrock is the place to be and the next few years will see the rhetoric about regeneration and growth turning into reality on the ground. All along the 18 miles of riverside new opportunities will emerge that will improve the lives of local people for generations to come:

Thurrock Council, working with its partners locally and in government, is central to making that a reality and connecting local people to these opportunities.

Its relationship with local communities is changing, creating the environment for local people to take more control of their own affairs, and becoming more self-reliant and stronger. The opening of the South Ockendon Centre in March is the first real example of this approach.

Education and school improvement is the top priority and Thurrock wants its young people to be aware of the jobs and opportunities being created on the doorstep and to be equipped to grasp those opportunities.

With a diverse and growing population, the health and wellbeing of every resident is just as important, tackling inequalities across different parts of the borough and supporting people through the impact of welfare reforms.

As a council Thurrock is working with less money. Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 - taking into account inflation and growth - the reduction is £56 million.

Over the last few years the council has corrected the budget, stabilised reserves

and created the foundations for operating differently.

It has tough decisions still to make and for the first time in 2013 created a two-year budget to deliver the required savings.

Central to achieving this is a radical overhaul of the way it does business – whether that’s through shared services, online transactions or better procurement – to drive down costs, drive up efficiency, while improving and protecting front line services as far as possible.

While this plan sits alongside the budget now available there also needs to be a debate with you about what the council’s role should be in 2015 and beyond.



Councillor John Kent
Leader of the Council



Graham Farrant
Chief Executive

This Corporate Plan outlines the Council’s role in delivering the 5 priorities for Thurrock over the next three years.

This plan should be read along side two other documents:
Appendix 1 - 2013-14 Delivery Plan;
Medium Term Financial Strategy;





Introduction

Despite the challenges 2012/13 has seen many successes. Some of the highlights are:

- Refreshed Community Strategy;
- Over £10m to support business growth and productivity
- 'decade of delivery' launched with permissions granted and development beginning across five growth hubs
- Primary and secondary school standards rising;

- Thurrock Joint Compact adopted with commitment to joint working with community, voluntary and faith sector;
- Building Positive Futures and housing transformation programme – eg Oxwich Close Scheme;
- Olympic Torch Relay celebrations;
- Piloting new ways of engaging our communities and embedding localism;
- Consistently high performance in Planning and Development services;

- J30/31 lobbying and investment proposals;
- Early integration of Public Health and launch of Health and Wellbeing Strategy consultation;
- 'Good' rating from OFSTED for the Council's Safeguarding and looked after Children Services
- Secured £5 million to promote and develop sustainable transformation options

Our Principles and Values - the future role of the Council

While ambitions remain high for the next three years, local government is facing a period of significant change, driven by budget cuts and rising demand for services. The Council will need to develop new ways of working to underpin its work programmes.

- Empower independence enabling job growth and helping people help themselves
- Create strong and connected communities that support each other and enable self reliance
- Transform services to be more efficient

- New ways of working will include:
- Thurrock On-line – a new and improved web, able to handle automated transactions; a fundamental redesign of processes, automating systems end to end
- Community hubs – enabling connected and resilient communities – starting with South Ockendon
- Commissioning/procurement – improving the connections between the council and suppliers

- Invest to save projects to bring further improvements in the medium term
- Empowering and enabling the community through the Joint Compact
- Focusing on cross-department delivery for neighbourhood renewal and growth hubs
- These principles will be embedded in the approach to deliver the five community strategy priorities and their long-term goals.



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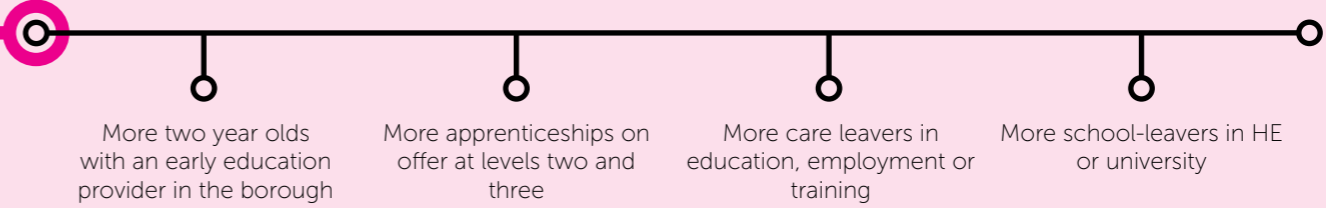
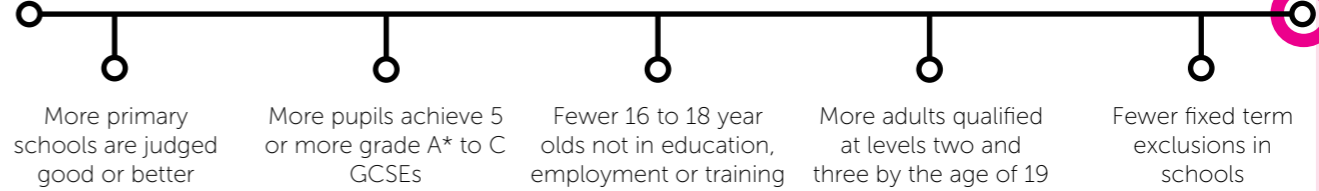
Thurrock's children must have the best possible start in life to equip them with the necessary skills to compete on a world stage, so the council will work in all educational settings to ensure every place of learning is rated as good or better and that Thurrock becomes a great place for lifelong learning.

In the next three years we will:

- Target resources to ensure all children make expected progress during early years, primary school and secondary school years
- Develop increased capacity to provide early education to two year olds
- Implement plans to increase the percentage of good or better outcomes in Ofsted inspections of primary schools
- Fully implement a new Special Education Needs and Disability Strategy
- Develop the role of the local authority as a commissioner – especially around preventable services
- Develop a Raising the Participation Age Plan for 16-19 year olds to ensure high-quality opportunities for learning, skills development and training
- Produce a borough-wide 14-19 Curriculum Map to identify the choices available to students
- Develop and increase quality opportunities for academic courses and

- learning and skills development and training
- Offer every family a programme of screening tests, immunisation, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parents and health choices
- Promote and enable children, parents and families to make positive lifestyle choices
- Implement the Troubled Families Initiative
- Implement the strategy to support, challenge and change parenting
- Co-produce community hubs designed to build community resilience
- Enhance support and focus resources to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN and learning difficulties
- Develop a targeted and integrated delivery of services to reduce health inequalities
- Prevent re-offending through range of initiatives
- Develop and implement a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services strategy with health partners

Measures of success



Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity



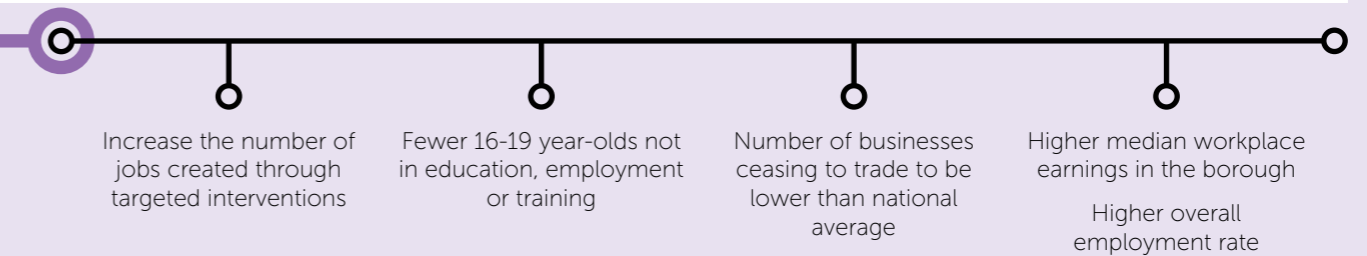
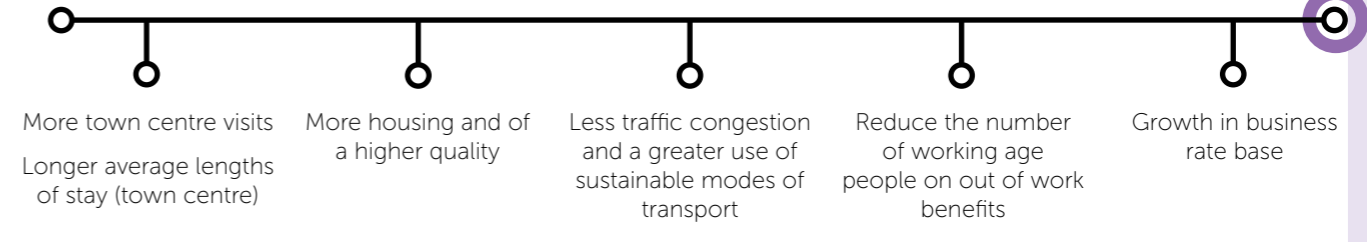
The council will look to provide the infrastructure needed to promote and sustain growth and prosperity. A recent study said Thurrock has an "infrastructure deficit" of £742m and this must be reduced through local actions and lobbying others. Local businesses will be supported to find and develop the skilled workforce needed and increase their competitiveness.

In the next three years we will:

- Develop a regeneration vision and delivery plan for each of the growth hubs - Grays, London Gateway, Lakeside Basin, Purfleet, and Tilbury.
- Progress the Local Development Framework (LDF) to give confidence to investors and shape sustainable growth
- Deliver planned major capital projects in the hubs to act as a catalyst for regeneration and jobs
- Develop Neighbourhood Action Plans to help local communities understand local pressures and shape local priorities
- Provide support activities to promote business start-ups and business growth including strengthening networks, creating web-based procurement and meet-the-buyer support.
- Develop skills and establish direct routes for local people to access local employment opportunities

- Prepare a business case for a further European Regional Development Fund programme to support start-up businesses and small enterprises.
- Use the successful (TIGER) partnership application with North Kent to support innovation and growth with existing firms.
- Work to improve the vitality of town centres through the High Street Innovation Fund
- Deliver 200 high quality, sustainable and affordable homes per year
- Maximise the use of council and private-rented homes
- Maximise funding opportunities
- Lobby for key infrastructure improvements including free flowing tolls at the Dartford Crossing and the upgrading of Junction 30/31 of the M25
- Deliver actions set out in the Transport Strategy/Local Transport Plan

Measures of success



Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safer communities



We will build on the pride and community spirit created by the Olympic and Paralympic Games and Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 2012.

The strength of Thurrock's communities will be harnessed to create a greater sense of pride, promoting equality and tackling discrimination to develop a sense of belonging. People will be able to influence decisions that affect their lives and will be encouraged to make healthy choices as well as being able to enjoy heritage, arts and culture.

In the next three years we will:

- Bring community assets and resources together into community hubs – starting with the South Ockendon Centre
- Bring people together through a cultural strategy which celebrates and protects existing assets and develops new cultural industries in partnership with others
- Support residents to influence the decisions that affect their lives and shape the places where they live
- Increase volunteering – in the council and across communities
- Support vulnerable people to be better connected within neighbourhoods and recognise the strength and assets within communities

- Work in partnership with other public agencies and Thurrock's voluntary, community and faith sector to co-produce and commission services
- Embed Thurrock's Compact to enhance our partnership with communities
- Transform Housing to be responsive, tailored to needs, with a focus on repairing homes and improving neighbourhoods
- Reduce re-offending and youth offending
- Deliver the Alcohol Strategy: Prevention, Enforcement, and Treatment.
- Promote personal responsibility and civic pride and remove barriers that prevent communities taking positive action to improve their quality of life
- Tackle sexual violence through delivering the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy
- Meet statutory equality duties and promote human rights in partnership with communities
- Work with voluntary and community partners to promote respect and cohesion
- Work with businesses, communities choose to promote Thurrock to people outside the borough and within

Measures of success

Less litter, detritus, graffiti, fly posting and fly tipping

More volunteers actively involved in services

Better awareness of honour based abuse and on line exclusion

Reduced crime rates and incidences of anti-social behaviour





We will work in partnership to improve health and well-being, reducing the life expectancy gap between people living in different areas by developing resourceful and resilient communities with homes and neighbourhoods that support independence

The Health and Well-Being Board has identified a number of shared aims:

- Every child has the best possible start in life;
- People stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years;
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being; and
- Empower communities to take responsibility for their own health and well-being.

In the next three years we will:

Improve the quality of health and social care:

- Sustainable and high quality health and social care in all areas;

- Increased numbers of people able to manage their own care and remain independent for longer; and
- Reduced demand for public funded and commissioned services.

Strengthen the mental health and emotional well-being of people in Thurrock

- More people have good mental health;
- Increased numbers of people with mental health problems recover;
- More people with mental health problems have good physical health – with people with physical health problems having good mental health;
- Increased numbers of people with mental health problems achieving the best possible quality of life; and
- A better connected and strengthened community

which encourages good emotional health and well-being.

Improve our response to the frail elderly and people with dementia

- Increased dementia diagnosis rates;
- More people with dementia feeling supported and secure in their own communities;
- More people living longer, healthy, independent lives;
- Fewer people in old age reporting depression and loneliness; and
- Fewer people prematurely moving in to residential care or remaining in acute medical

settings with avoidable or treatable conditions.

Improve the physical health and well-being of people in Thurrock

- Fewer people starting to smoke;
- Reduction in the prevalence of smoking – particularly in wards/areas with the greatest prevalence and pregnant women smoking at the time of delivery;
- A partnership approach to enabling people in Thurrock to achieve a health weight

Measures of success

More people able to manage their own care and remain independent for longer

More people with mental health problems achieving the best possible quality of life

More people with dementia feeling supported and secure.
More people living longer, healthy, independent lives

A better connected and strengthened communities





Protect and promote our clean and green environment



Making the most of 18 miles of riverfront will mean increasing access to riverside heritage, parks, paths and marshes and connect people to the environment from their doorstep to the countryside and protect natural landscapes ensuring the network of sites remains connected to support a wide range of wildlife.

We will continue to improve the cleanliness of our streets, parks and open spaces to a high standard and ensure Thurrock is a pleasant place to live, work and do business.

In the next three years we will:

- Use resources to deliver efficient environmental services, optimising the workforce, resources and productivity for waste services, street cleaning, horticulture and grounds maintenance
- Develop partnership working opportunities, business services and external funding bids for key projects
- Develop Greengrid improvement zones and deliver a suite of flagship riverscape projects to reconnect people to the riverside and natural habitats including: Coalhouse Fort, the Tilbury Heritage Trail; the Mardyke Valley; and the Aveley Forest project
- Embed environmental quality and sustainability within planning, regeneration and other services to maximise green opportunities, green enterprise and green excellence
- Deliver a programme of emissions reduction and resource efficiency to ensure the council leads by example in minimising its environmental impact
- Deliver a package of measures via the Local Sustainable Transport fund, guided by the council's Transport Strategy, promoting and encouraging sustainable modes of transport
- Ensure the Green Belt and other environmentally sensitive areas are protected and positively managed
- Deliver a landscape scale approach to the urban and natural environment
- Reduce the environmental impact of the economy through low carbon and green economy initiatives
- Take a responsible approach to monitoring the environment and make improvements to climate change emissions, environmental enforcement and habitat protection

Measures of success

Less litter, detritus, graffiti, fly posting and fly tipping in the borough

Lower carbon emissions from industry, housing and transport

Less congestion and pollution via move to sustainable travel patterns

More access to riverside and more use of green spaces



Governance

The Council will manage and monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan through a series of decision making boards.

Governance Boards

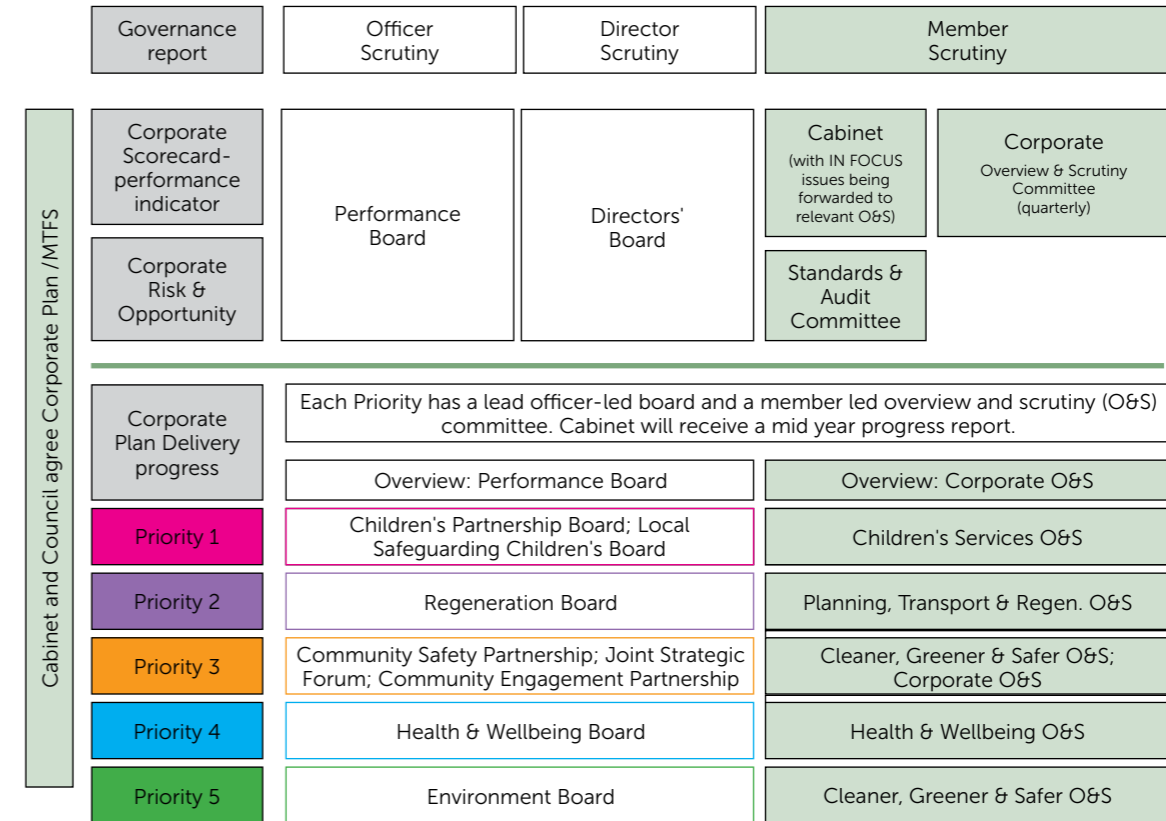
Each Corporate Plan activity has an associated governance Board which has lead responsibility for monitoring progress. Each Board will set its own terms of reference for fulfilling this responsibility but, as a minimum, progress reports relating to key projects, actions and performance indicators will be considered on a quarterly basis.

Performance Management Framework - Corporate Scorecard, Risks and Opportunities

The performance of the Council in meeting its objectives is monitored by the Performance Board through the corporate scorecard and the Corporate/Strategic Risk and Opportunity Register.

This Board is responsible for the monitoring and challenging of performance against the suite of key performance indicators each month.

The priority risks and opportunities facing the Council are reviewed quarterly by Performance Board to ensure that the key actions identified to manage the issues are being addressed within appropriate timescales.



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Financial Strategy to deliver this plan

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shows, at a high level, how the council intends to address the financial challenges it faces in delivering the priorities.

The MTFS presents the financial position showing how the council intends to align its financial resources to national and local priorities while balancing spending with funding.

The national financial context

There are a number of additional demands on local authorities passed down from central government that are set out in detail within the appendix.

Government grant remains the factor that influences the level of funding available for local authorities. The government set out its determination to reduce its expenditure in this area in 2010 with an unprecedented in-year reduction in grant

and financial support was further reduced through the Comprehensive Spending Review 2010 that further reduced resources for 2011/12 to 2012/13.

The Chancellor's Autumn Statement in December 2012 set out the need for further reductions above those planned - demonstrated by announcements for 2013/14 to 2014/15 with a clear indication of further reductions in the following two years.

Two key changes that impact from 1 April 2013:

- The localisation of business rates will provide an opportunity to those areas that promote and support economic growth (like Thurrock). While the opportunity is welcomed, it also means that the risk of bad debts and business failure is also transferred, in part, to the council; and

- The Department of Health has announced financial allocations for the transfer of public health responsibilities to the council from April 2013. The council will need to ensure these resources are adequate to fund the existing provision of health improvement services and adequately reflect the level of need in the borough.

The national context presents the council with a challenging financial climate which will require the council to deliver further efficiencies and to radically re-think its relationship with communities and the way services are provided and managed.

The local financial context

Government Grant

Council's finances are influenced significantly by the national economy and government policy on the share of public spending for local government and how that is then distributed to individual councils.

Thurrock Council had its resources reduced in-year by £4m in 2010 and then a further ??? over the CSR10 period.

The recent announcement covering the financial years 2013/14 and 2014/15 reflect a further cash decrease in grant of £11.9m bringing the total grant reduction for general services to ??? over the five years.

Taking into consideration unavoidable growth and inflation, this has required the council to identify savings of ??? over that same period.

Council tax

Thurrock:

- Had the sixth lowest Council tax of all unitary authorities in 2011/12
- Has a Council tax that is over 10 per cent lower than the unitary authority average. (If the council's Band D Council tax was at the average for unitary authorities, it would collect an extra £6.7 million each year to fund local services).

Thurrock Council took advantage of the Council tax freeze grants from the government for the

financial years 2011/12 and 2012/13. The grant equates to a 2½ per cent council tax increase - £1.4m a year - although it is only for the short term. The government has removed one of the £1.4m grants from 2013/14 and the MTFS assumes the other is removed from 2015/16. This adds further pressure to the council's finances.

The government has announced a further freeze grant for 2013/14 that equates to just one per cent despite setting a referendum limit of two per cent.

The pressures are now so great on the authority that the MTFS assumes that the grant will not be accepted and that council tax is increased by just under 2%



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Cost pressures

Some of the cost pressures facing the council over the coming years are the same as most others and should be seen in the context that Thurrock:

- Has broadly average funding per head from government compared to other unitary authorities; and
- Is spending just below the average per head of population for comparable unitary councils due to the borough's relatively low Council tax charge mentioned above.

The main cost pressures include:

- The need to find ongoing savings;
- Delivering the planned savings and efficiencies from transformation;
- Demographic-related pressures, especially in the areas of children's and adults' social care; and

- Price increases in energy and other costs.

The corporate, service and resource planning framework

The Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) is used throughout the year to project the budget deficit and collate growth and savings that impact on that deficit.

Directors' Board drives the process with a series of meetings to challenge assumptions, costs and performance. This includes:

- Meetings where progress is monitored and savings proposals sense-checked;
- Star Chamber meetings where a core team of the Leader, Chief Executive, Director of Finance and Corporate Governance and a backbench member challenges all portfolio holders with their respective officers;

- Cabinet meetings where proposals are monitored; and
- Overview and Scrutiny Committees where growth and savings proposals are considered in more detail.

The MTFF 2013/14 to 2016/17

A clear objective was set to divide this planning period into two – to move away from setting a one-year balanced budget to balancing both 2013/14 and 2014/15 in time for the budget council meeting.

This would form a solid financial foundation for the second part - to identify the future shape and delivery mechanisms of the council.

The two-year balanced budget has been achieved and officers, through the Transformation Board and now working on the shape of the council in the post 2015 period.

The need for the post 2015 review is strengthened by the fact that the MTFF still shows budget deficits of ??? and ??? for 2015/16 and 2016/17 despite having identified and delivered ??? over the five-year period to the end of 2014/15.

Other Opportunities

The changes to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financing model has resulted in increase revenue funds of around £6million a year for housing tenants and the service.

There are two major benefits:

- A clear commitment to developing and facilitating new affordable housing stock for sale and rent; and
- A capital programme that will transform existing stock for our tenants.

Business Rates Retention will allow the council to benefit from increases to the business rates paid in Thurrock through economic growth. Current guidance only allows for 29 per cent of this growth to be retained locally and the expected benefit has been built into the MTFF.

The cessation of the Thames Gateway Development Corporation returned regeneration powers to Thurrock Council. Although it will maximise the use of any third-party funding, resourcing regeneration through the disposal of assets, prudential borrowing and business rates retention will be a challenge.

Capital Programme

The council has suffered in previous years through the lack of an Asset Management Strategy and a disposal programme. This has limited capital programmes to third-

party funding, such as education and transport grants, HRA programmes through the Major Repairs Allowance and prudential borrowing.

The Asset Management Strategy is now becoming embedded throughout the authority and an Asset Disposal Working Group, formed from both officers and members, meets throughout the year.

Together with additional funding from business rates retention, this will identify resources that can be used to support the transformation and regeneration programmes going forward.



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