

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

Council

To the Members of Thurrock Council

The next meeting of the Council will be held at **7.00 pm** on **24 July 2019**

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


Membership of the Council:

Terry Piccolo (Mayor)
Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor)

Qaisar Abbas
Abbie Akinbohun
John Allen
Alex Anderson
Chris Baker
Gary Byrne
Daniel Chukwu
Colin Churchman
Gary Collins
Mark Coxshall
Jack Duffin
Tony Fish
Mike Fletcher
Oliver Gerrish
Robert Gledhill
Garry Hague

James Halden
Shane Hebb
Victoria Holloway
Deborah Huelin
Andrew Jefferies
Barry Johnson
Tom Kelly
Cathy Kent
John Kent
Martin Kerin
Angela Lawrence
Steve Liddiard
Susan Little
Sue MacPherson
Ben Maney
Fraser Massey

Allen Mayes
Sara Muldowney
Bukky Okunade
Jane Potheary
David Potter
Shane Ralph
Joycelyn Redsell
Gerard Rice
Elizabeth Rigby
Sue Sammons
Jennifer Smith
Luke Spillman
David Van Day
Aaron Watkins
Lynn Worrall



Lyn Carpenter
Chief Executive

Agenda published on: 16 July 2019

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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4 Declaration of Interests	
To receive any declaration of interests from Members.	
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The Council are asked to agree any changes to the appointments made to committees and outside bodies, statutory and other panels, as requested by Group Leaders.	

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In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

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Name of Committee	Date
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Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	7 March 2019
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	5 February 2019
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee	12 February 2019
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Future Dates of Council:

18 September 2019, 23 October 2019, 27 November 2019, 29 January 2020,
26 February 2020 (Budget), 25 March 2020 (Provisional)

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Information for members of the public and councillors

Access to Information and Meetings

Members of the public can attend all meetings of the council and its committees and have the right to see the agenda, which will be published no later than 5 working days before the meeting, and minutes once they are published.

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If you have any queries regarding this, please contact Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

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The use of flash photography or additional lighting may be allowed provided it has been discussed prior to the meeting and agreement reached to ensure that it will not disrupt proceedings.

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- You should connect to TBC-CIVIC
- Enter the password **Thurrock** to connect to/join the Wi-Fi network.
- A Terms & Conditions page should appear and you have to accept these before you can begin using Wi-Fi. Some devices require you to access your browser to bring up the Terms & Conditions page, which you must accept.

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Members of the Council should ensure that their device is sufficiently charged, although a limited number of charging points will be available in Members Services.

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non-pecuniary

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



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

PROCEDURE FOR MOTIONS

No speech may exceed 3 minutes without the consent of the Mayor [Rule 19.8], except for the proposer of any motion who shall have 5 minutes to move that motion (except on a motion to amend where the 3 minute time shall apply) [Rule 19.8(a)]			
All Motions will follow Section A and then either Section B or C			
A.	A1 Motion is moved A2 Mover speaks A3 Seconded A4 Secunder speaks or reserves right to speak	[Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.8(a) (5 minutes)] [Rule 19.2] [Rule 19.3] (3 minutes)	
Then the procedure will move to either B or C below:			
B.		C.	
IF there is an AMENDMENT (please see Rule 19.23)		If NOT amended i.e. original motion	
B1	The mover of the amendment shall speak (3 mins).	C1	Debate.
B2	The seconder of the amendment shall speak unless he or she has reserved their speech (3 mins).	C2	If the seconder of the motion has reserved their speeches, they shall then speak.
B3	THEN debate on <u>the subject</u>.	C3	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply.
B4	If the seconder of the substantive motion and the amendment reserved their speeches, they shall then speak.	C4	Vote on motion.
B5	The mover of the amendment shall have a right of reply.		
B6	The mover of the substantive motion shall have the final right of reply.		
B7	Vote on amendment.		
B8	A vote shall be taken on the substantive motion, as amended if appropriate, without further debate.		

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

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

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

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

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 19 June 2019 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Terry Piccolo (Mayor), Sue Shinnick (Deputy Mayor), Qaisar Abbas, Abbie Akinbohun, John Allen, Alex Anderson, Chris Baker, Gary Byrne, Daniel Chukwu, Gary Collins, Mark Coxshall, Tony Fish, Mike Fletcher (*arrived 7.11pm*), Oliver Gerrish, James Halden, Shane Hebb, Victoria Holloway, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Cathy Kent, John Kent, Martin Kerin, Angela Lawrence, Steve Liddiard, Susan Little, Fraser Massey, Allen Mayes, Sara Muldowney, Bukky Okunade, Jane Potheary, David Potter, Shane Ralph, Joycelyn Redsell, Gerard Rice, Elizabeth Rigby, Sue Sammons, Jennifer Smith, Luke Spillman, David Van Day, Aaron Watkins and Lynn Worrall

Apologies: Councillors Colin Churchman, Jack Duffin, Robert Gledhill, Garry Hague, Tom Kelly, Sue MacPherson and Ben Maney

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Sean Clark, Director of Finance & IT
Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Julie Rogers, Director of Environment and Highways
Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Communications and Customer Service
David Lawson, Assistant Director of Law & Governance
Kerry Thomas, Chief Executive Business Manager
Tim Hallam, Deputy Head of Legal
Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

13. Minutes

The minutes of the Meeting of Annual Council held on the 22 May 2019 were approved as a correct record.

14. Items of Urgent Business

No items of urgent business were received.

15. Declaration of Interests

Councillor C Kent made a non-pecuniary interest in regard to Item 11 Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Health and Item 12 Questions from Members as she worked at Treetops Special School.

16. Announcements on behalf of the Mayor and the Deputy Leader of the Council

The Mayor congratulated Olivia Busby a young lady who Thurrock Sports Council and Recreation Charity had sponsored who had become the European Champion and achieved two world records in the USA for power lifting. The Mayor stated that Olivia would be invited into the Mayor's Parlour to receive a gift on behalf of the Council.

The Mayor announced that by the end of June he would have attended 22 events with the month of July looking even busier.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Hebb, updated Members by stating that on Saturday, Thurrock residents and communities across the United Kingdom would be celebrating Windrush Day to honour the men, women and children who stepped off the Empire Windrush at the Port of Tilbury on 22 June 1948, as well as the legacy of the 'Windrush Generation' and their descendants. Councillor Hebb detailed that Caribbean migrants on board the Empire Windrush, comprising of painters, musicians, farmers and carpenters, spent 30 days at sea in order to come to the UK and seize the opportunity to influence sport, culture, health care, industry and our communities. Some had served alongside the Allies during the Second World War, with many then providing much-needed labour to assist in the rebuilding efforts of post-war Britain. Thurrock was the point where they disembarked and took their first steps on British soil as they set off on their new lives. Thurrock were proud of the role they played in this important story and would mark the anniversary of this important event. With Government funding of £50,000 being allocated annually to a Windrush Day grant scheme, of which Thurrock had benefited from this year. Educational workshops had been held over the past few months and Windrush Day celebrations would conclude with the Tilbury Carnival on Saturday 20 July. This would be hosted by local groups including the Tilbury-on-the-Thames Trust, Kinetika, Port of Tilbury, Tilbury Riverside Project and One Community Development Trust alongside Thurrock Council.

Councillor Fletcher entered the council chamber at 7.11pm.

Councillor Hebb reminded Members that next week's Armed Forces Day would be commemorated with a series of events around the borough. On Monday 24 June a flag would be raised at the Civic Offices with a special event taking place at Coalhouse Fort on Sunday 23 June and the Thurrock Museum would be holding a special exhibition looking at Thurrock's place in the peacetime events which immediately followed World War One. As part of this year Thurrock remembered the events of 75 years ago when thousands of brave young men stormed the beaches at Normandy in one of the largest

amphibious assaults in history and going on to liberate France and much of Europe and begin the events which brought an end to the Second World War.

Councillor Hebb stated Councillors and Officers would be attending the Municipal Journal Local Government Achievement Awards next week where the Council would be shortlisted in four categories, including the most prestigious of all the awards, the Local Authority of the Year. Councillor Hebb stated that Thurrock Council had deservedly earned a place amongst the best of the best local authorities thanks to the hard work and innovative approach taken by all elected Members and Officers. Thurrock Council had also been shortlisted for Care and Health Integration, Innovation in Finance and Senior Leadership Team. Making all these shortlists was testament to the Council's well-earned reputation for cross-party engagement and working closely with partners in the community, business and third sectors, as well as taking an innovative approach to tackling the challenges facing local government. Councillor Hebb stated that for Thurrock to make the shortlist was an honour and the winner would be announced next week.

Councillor Hebb provided an update on the Clean Air Scheme where work was currently taking place on an exciting new competition with two Thurrock schools where pupils were being asked to design a poster encouraging parents to turn off their engines when waiting to collect their children from school. Judging of the competition will take place next month and looked forward to seeing the winning design. Councillor Hebb stated that the Council were committed to doing all that they can to improve air quality in Thurrock and encouraged everyone to consider how they can reduce their own vehicle emissions.

Councillor Hebb provided a Clean it, Cut it, Fill it update and stated that since April 2019:

- 649 potholes had been filled, every single one within agreed timeframes
- 328 fly-tips had been cleared
- 469 tonnes of waste collected by street cleaning and grounds maintenance teams combined
- Over 99% of household waste bins had been collected on the correct day

17. Questions from Members of the Public

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be viewed under the relevant meeting date at <http://democracy.thurrock.go.uk/thurrock> and are attached at Appendix A at these minutes.

18. Petitions from Members of the Public and Councillors

The Mayor informed Members that in accordance with the Council's petition scheme, two requisite of notice had been given to present a petition at the meeting.

Mr Norrington presented a petition with regard to improving sport facilities as part of the Thurrock Sports Council.

Councillor J Kent presented a petition calling for a pedestrian crossing around the junction of the Broadway, Gipsy Lane and East Thurrock Road, in Grays.

At 7.28pm, Councillor Gerrish called a Point of Order, by questioning whether the Thurrock Sports Council petition met the threshold for a report to be brought back to Council. Matthew Boulter, Democratic Services Manager, stated that the petition would need to be verified by his team and once it had been confirmed that there were 1500 valid signatures a report would be brought to Council for debate.

19. Petitions Update Report

Members received a report on the status of those petitions handed in at Council Meetings and Council Offices.

20. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies, Statutory and Other Panels

The Mayor enquired whether Group Leaders wished for any changes to be made to the appointments previously made by Committees and Outside Bodies, statutory and other panels.

The Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Hebb, informed the chamber that he had no changes to make.

Councillor Pothecary, Leader of the Labour Group, informed the chamber that she had no changes to make.

Councillor Spillman, Leader of the Thurrock Independence Group, informed the chamber that he would like to make the following changes:

For Councillor Byrne's seat on the Lower Thames Crossing Task Group to be gifted to the Independent Group. To which Councillor Massey accepted.

For Councillor Ralph to be removed from the Health & Wellbeing Board and replaced with Councillor Spillman.

Roger Harris left the council chamber at 7.30pm.

21. To Approve the Appointment of the interim Director of Children's Services

The Mayor informed Members that an update copy of the report had been emailed to Members and a copy had been tabled.

At 7.32pm, Councillor Pothecary called Point of Order, in relation to Chapter 2, Part 2, Paragraph 16(m) to request a short adjournment to seek further

clarification of the updated report with the Chief Executive and Officers. The Mayor agreed to adjourn the meeting for 10 minutes. The meeting reconvened at 7.51pm.

Councillor Hebb introduced the report to seek the agreement of Council to approve the Appointment of the interim Director of Children's Services and stated that Roger Harris had demonstrated absolute capability and care and spoke on behalf of all 49 Members that they held Roger Harris with the highest regard and with the highest esteem. Councillor Hebb stated that the Council found themselves in a unique situation where 49 Members had been given less than a 48 hours deadline to appoint a Director of Children's Services which the Council knew would be vacated some three months ago. The recommendation would see a significant remodelling of services. Councillor Hebb stated the democratic oversight had been nil but in reality there was a need to have a Director of Children's Services in place by midnight on Sunday. Councillor Hebb explained that elected members did not have the authority or control over appointments and general structures which would be in the remit of the Head of Pay Service in line with the constitution. Those 49 Members had been asked to approve this appointment but not had the time to challenge, provide opinion or examine the contents of the report. That it was the duty of all those 49 Members as Corporate Parents that they were satisfied that the place holder, structure underneath and around were in place to help to deliver what was required and have a duty of care for that person undertaking the role. Councillor Hebb was sure that the above had been considered. The updated report had come about following interactions between Councillor Hebb, the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Potheary, Councillor Spillman, Councillor Okunade and Councillor Little where concerns had been raised. Councillor Hebb stated that an interim Director of Children's Service could be appointed by Head of Paid Service but more importantly the matter should be called into General Services Committee as soon as possible for a full examination of the structure. Councillor Hebb concluded that Members this evening had to look at the report where cross party comments had been made to ensure safeguard measures were in place and to examine the proposal so that it can go ahead.

Councillor Potheary stated it was Member's duty to ask difficult questions. Councillor Potheary had reservations to have Children's and Adult Services, Health and Housing under one director and questioned the protection, care and safeguarding of children and adults under this proposal. Councillor Potheary urged Members to think long and hard to ensure that their decision was the best thing for vulnerable adults and children in care and for those Members that had any concerns on whether this was the right decision should vote against the recommendation.

Councillor Spillman stated he held Roger Harris with the highest regard but asked why the three groups had not had sufficient time to scrutinise the report. With the proposed combination of all the directorates scrutiny was vital to ensure that the layers underneath this major change were in place and to ensure the safeguards were there. Councillor Spillman stated his concern there was no democratic accountability and going forward to ensure that this

did not happen again on any upcoming appointments with better communication between groups.

Councillor Okunade wished Rory Patterson well in his retirement. Councillor Okunade reluctantly agreed to support the recommendation as this was where the Council was at this time and that going forward better processes should be put in place. Councillor Okunade had confidence the interim director appointment would comply with the Children's Act but would be overstretched as one directorate.

Councillor Halden stated that as Portfolio Holder for Education and Health he had not been consulted for his opinions on the report and had expected a General Services Committee to meet. Councillor Halden stated that decisions in the future need to be across party and to strike the right balance where conversations between Members and Officers had to be held to re-align the internal process so that this situation did not happen again.

Councillor Fletcher stated he had nothing against Roger Harris but it was essential the right support and structure were in place to do the job. Councillor Fletcher questioned the lack of consultation and what had been undertaken between the period of receiving Rory Patterson's resignation to now. Members had a free vote for no right answer to which Councillor Fletcher concluded the decision had been taken out of Members hands.

Councillor Little stated her support to the recommendation as there was a legal obligation by the Council and all 49 Corporate Parents to have a Director of Children's Services in place by Sunday and comments made would not reflect badly on Roger Harris. Councillor Little stated she had worked with Children in Care for a long time but agreed the process should be looked at differently and a report be presented to the General Services Committee as soon as possible.

Councillor J Kent stated he had known Roger Harris since 2008 and he had fantastic qualities and hoped the report would not damage his reputation. Councillor J Kent stated that lots of questions had arisen as to why Members and even Portfolio Holders were not consulted or asked on the processes of the report. Members were informed that Rory Patterson's resignation was received in March 2019 and the consultation with key staff was undertaken in May 2019 with discussions taking place with Leaders only two days ago. Councillor J Kent stated this was not acceptable and it had treated Members with contempt. Councillor J Kent stated that the Head of Paid Staff should have been responsible for the appointment of officers and the interview process and stated he was disappointed that Members had been consulted earlier. Councillor J Kent agreed with Councillor Halden that a good authority ran when there was a good partnership between senior Members and senior Officers and stated this partnership was not working in Thurrock at this time and some hard work had to be undertaken to get this back on track. Councillor J Kent stated that he did not believe that appointing a person to the Director of Children's Services role, even for only 6 months, was good enough

for this authority or good enough for the children of Thurrock and would not be supporting the recommendation.

At 8.18pm, Councillor Halden called Point of Order, to confirm that he had known initially about the report but knew that Officer were capable to do their role and a report should have gone to the General Services Committee as reports had always done so in the past.

Councillor Gerrish stated he had struggled to come to any conclusion on the report and had no confidence, however talented that person may be, that there should be one single director of Children, Adults, Housing and Health even for a period of 6 months as it was too much for one person. Councillor Gerrish stated the updated report had the same outcome just a change to the job title. That the process had not given Members options or alternatives. Councillor Gerrish urged Members to think long and hard before making any conclusions.

Councillor Coxshall stated this was the first time in his third term as a Member that he was unsure which way to vote. Councillor Coxshall noted the good points made by Councillors Kent and Gerrish and stated that the process was in place to undertake interviews for internal roles.

Councillor Abbas opposed to the recommendation so that a clear message could be sent that Members would not be put on at the eleventh hour.

Councillor Hebb stated this was a low point for the Council. The points made by Councillors were clear and professional and called the report to the vote.

The Mayor called a vote on the recommendation to which Members voted:

For: 15, Against: 26, Abstained: 0

Whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion not carried.

RESOLVED:

Members did not approve in accordance with the Council's Constitution the appointment of Roger Harris as interim Director of Children's Services for six months pending the presentation of a report to General Services Committee to consider options for the future of this role.

Roger Harris entered the council chamber at 8.27pm.

22. Report of the Cabinet Member for Education and Health

Councillor Halden was proud to be presenting his fourth Portfolio Holder for Education and Health and thanked all staff, teachers, governors, parents, general practitioners, nurses and everybody who had helped to make Thurrock such a success story and thanked Roger Harris, Ian Wake and

Michelle Lucas. Councillor Halden briefly highlighted the following services included within that portfolio:

- In Education nearly two thirds of children got their first choice of school place this year
- £4 million had been spent on new school buildings and sport facilities
- In Health, Thurrock was up to 25 “Good” General Practitioners
- £80 million on new estate plan – now known as the “Thurrock Model”
- £1 million put into adolescent mental health services
- Engage in sports and other recreational activities that would support the ambitious agenda in reducing obesity levels across communities
- Not as much as progress made on the Integrated Medical Centres due to a political referral to the Secretary of State
- A new school building continued to be a challenge
- Plans for a massively expanded Thurrock Hospital once the referral to the Secretary of State had been resolved
- Concerns raised on the SEND service
- Expand and relocate the Youth Offending services
- To improve the mental wellbeing and resilience in our young people
- Expanding the current skills and host a skills summit with partners later this year
- Plan to build more homes and schools to include sports facilities

Councillor Holloway noted the passion of the Portfolio Holder’s report but stated that the report was not good and understood that not everything could be included but information should be available to Members such as information on the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership and the acute reconfiguration of hospitals and its impact. There was nothing in the report on Primary Care Networks which was an important piece of work to happen in the borough. The report also contained little information on the Health and Wellbeing Board. Councillor Holloway was pleased to see the work being undertaken as part of the Mental Health Transformation and questioned the proposed reduction in the control total for the Mid and South Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership to assist the Peterborough and Cambridgeshire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership which would result in a reduction of £480K to the Thurrock’s Clinical Commissioning Group’s budget for 2019/20 and explained how this would impact on and delay projects, especially those around mental health services, that had already been agreed for the local authority. And asked what the Portfolio Holder was undertaking to stop Thurrock’s money from being taken and what work was being undertaken with Jackie Doyle-Price and Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Mental Health to stop Thurrock residents suffering at the benefit of Peterborough and Cambridge.

Councillor Halden stated that the referral to the Secretary of State by Councillor Holloway to transfer services out of Orsett Hospital had been made 6 months following the report being presented at the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee which had wasted six months. That Primary Care had been mentioned extensively in the report and provided

members with examples. Councillor Halden referred to the Peterborough and Cambridge Sustainability and Transformation Partnership by confirming that adolescent money for mental health had already been committed and had been ring-fenced. In regard to the adult reconfiguration the phasing would change slightly with the rollout slightly delayed by a few months and the community mental health work would continue regardless.

Councillor Okunade stated that the Council had a statutory duty to ensure that every child had a school place and asked for the number of children who were educated at home where no school could be found for them. Councillor Halden stated that every school child had been offered a school place in the borough. That the figures for those children home educated had increased due to parents elected to do this and figures may be reduced once the new Tree Tops School had been built.

Councillor Potheary focused on KPI for good schools and requested assurances that KPIs for schools in Thurrock would be good or outstanding going forward. Councillor Halden stated that Ofsted judgement had become more vigorous and the challenges were to work harder and to look at the successes and to roll those out across the borough.

Councillor Spillman stated his disappointment on the decision to remove some of the mental health services and stated that early intervention for those suffering from mental health issues was vital and could be dealt with more easily. Councillor Halden clarified that services to mental health services in Thurrock were not being defunded. That the Clinical Commissioning Group in Thurrock was in the black with a resilient budget and that it should be the NHS being held to account.

At 8.45pm, the Mayor called time on this item. Councillors Worrall and Kerin said they would contact Councillor Halden outside of the meeting relating to the questions they wished to ask.

23. Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that one question to the Leader had been received and 12 questions to Cabinet Members. Those not heard would either receive a written response or have the option to withdraw and resubmit.

A copy of the transcript of questions and answers can be found at Appendix A to these minutes.

At 9.16pm the Mayor called time on this item.

Councillor Fletcher requested a written response.

Councillor Akinbohun requested a written response.

Councillor Muldowney requested a written response.

24. Reports from Members representing the Council on Outside Bodies

The Mayor informed the Chamber that no reports had been received.

25. Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of Committee as set out in the Agenda were received.

26. Update on motions resolved at Council during the previous year

Members received an information report updating the progress in respect of Motions received at Council.

Councillor J Kent referred to Motion received on 31 October 2018

Thurrock Council notes that since decriminalisation of parking in 2005 residents of Lodge Lane have been able to park on their crossovers – as they had been able to for decades before. The decision to enforce against residents parking in this way has caused significant anger and concern against those affected. Council calls on Cabinet to revisit this decision and find a way of allowing residents to park in the way they have for many, many years without any problem.

Councillor J Kent referred Members to the updated response and questioned why ward Members had not been involved, informed or consulted as part of the process and were now being asked questions by residents of Lodge Lane with regards to a letter they had received to which ward Members know nothing about. Councillor J Kent stated that Members had once again been overlooked and questioned when Members would start being involved in matters, particularly matters in their own wards.

27. Motion submitted by Councillor Potheary

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Potheary and seconded by Councillor J Kent, to which he reserved his right to speak later in the debate. The Motion read as follows:

Thurrock Council notes opposition to the proposed plans to redevelop the Civic Offices. Thurrock Council calls on Cabinet to abandon this costly and unnecessary project.

Councillor Potheary introduced the Motion by stating there had been serious opposition against the redevelopment plans to Civic Offices which had been evident this evening with a gathering of residents outside Civic Offices demonstrating against the project. That the investment of £10 million should be spent more on community projects with residents against footing the bill for the proposed new chamber and the grand entrance. The project would be to the detriment of local businesses and would isolate the local church. Councillor Potheary urged all Members to support the motion by caring more about residents rather than having a fancy new office.

Councillor Gerrish stated that as Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee he had grave concerns with the project due to the lack of detail in the business case and what the benefits of this project would be for residents of Thurrock. Residents were told that the new proposed redevelopment of Civic Offices would be good for the regeneration of Grays but Councillor Gerrish stated residents did not want a new chamber or a new entrance they needed to see more improved local infrastructure. That a letter from the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be sent to the Leader requesting that a true business case be put forward and for a report to go back to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Kerin stated his support for the motion as the project would be spending money needlessly which would affect his ward directly. Councillor Kerin told Members if they wanted to see how money could be spent better in the borough they could speak to himself, Councillor Potheary or residents as they had a “shopping list” of projects that could be addressed instead.

Councillor Coxshall stated that the project would not cost £10 million as the sale of part of the Civic Offices would reduce this spend. Councillor Coxshall reminded Members that two years ago Members had agreed to fewer buildings, better services and stated that was what this project had planned to do. The project had plans to regenerate and make the most of Grays, with new homes being built and enhancing the entrance of the Civic Office so that it was near the station and formed part of the Grays Regeneration Project.

At 9.30pm the Mayor called the close of the meeting. The Mayor stated that the vote would now be undertaken for Motion 1 and the remaining motion would be heard and advised Councillor Huelin that she had three minutes to speak before the motion would be put to the vote.

The Mayor called a vote on Motion 1.

Councillor Potheary requested a requisition vote. The results of which were:

For: Councillors Abbas, Akinbohun, Allen, Baker, Byrne, Chukwu, Fish, Fletcher, Gerrish, Holloway, J Kent, C Kent, Kerin, Liddiard, Massey, Mayes, Muldowney, Okunade, Potheary, Potter, Ralph, Rice, Shinnick, Smith, Spillman and Worrall **(26)**

Against: Councillors Anderson, Collins, Coxshall, Halden, Hebb, Huelin, Jefferies, Johnson, Lawrence, Little, Piccolo, Redsell, Rigby, Sammons, Van Day and Watkins **(16)**

Abstained: **(0)**

Whereupon the Mayor declared the Motion carried.

28. Motion submitted by Councillor Huelin

The Motion, as printed in the Agenda was proposed by Councillor Huelin. The Motion read as follows:

That Thurrock Council establishes a working group for the next 5 years to ensure events of the Second World War are appropriately commemorated in Thurrock.

Councillor Huelin introduced the Motion by stating the working group would be established as an honour to all war veterans who had sacrificed so much for their country in the Second World War.

The Mayor called a vote on the Motion.

Members voted unanimously in favour of this Motion to which the Mayor announced the Motion carried.

The meeting finished at 9.36 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**

Appendix A to the Council Minutes – 19 June 2019

Item 6 – Questions from Members of the Public.

3 questions were submitted from members of the public.

1. Mr Perrin:

Last year I asked a question regarding the protection of grass verges from being used as parking for cars etc. Since then the situation in Broxburn Drive has not changed at all, if anything it has got worse. Can you tell me why no action has been taken to protect the grass verges in Broxburn Drive?

Mayor:

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson:

Thank you Mister Mayor. Thank you Mr Perrin for your question. Any action taken by the council is reliant on the public and local residents reporting their concerns and as far as I am aware I am not aware of any further comments in the last 12 months about Broxburn Drive but obviously may be whilst I was not here. However I do believe that following the concerns that you have raised the Housing Officers have contacted you to arrange an appointment to discuss this matter further and once that has happened they will report it back to me and we can then obviously discuss it from there. Is that the case, have they made any contact with you?

Mr Perrin:

I believe they are meeting with me tomorrow.

Mayor:

Mr Perrin do you wish to pose a supplementary question at this time.

Mr Perrin:

Thank you Mister Mayor. Councillor do you accept that these verges cannot be both grass verges and car parks they can only be successfully used as one or the other. If the council decides to allow them to be used as a car park they should then be made fit for that purpose. If they are to continue as grass verges would you agree they should be adequately protected.

Mayor:

Councillor Johnson

Councillor Johnson:

Thank you. I agree 100% Mr Perrin that they must be one thing or the other. I am sure we might be able to mix and match at some point along there but they do need to be decided what they are. I think the decision will probably go through the Environment portfolio when and if that is that is to be the case to change them but yes I agree with you that they should be one thing or the other. We will protect them if it is only going to be grass verges.

Mayor:

As Mr Suttling was unable to attend this evening to present this question Mr Caulder would be presented the question instead?

2. Mr Caulder:

Mulberry Harbours played a crucial role in the preparations for the D-Day landings during World War Two. In 1994, a plaque was unveiled to commemorate Thurrock's role in helping build Mulberry Harbours, and the gardens next to this building, were name Mulberry Square to mark this. Could the Portfolio Holder explain why building a new council office is more important than protecting and honouring Thurrock's heritage and open spaces?

Mayor:

Councillor Coxshall please respond.

Councillor Coxshall:

Thank you very much for your question. This gives me the opportunity and I am sure we will come to this item also later as this is on the agenda in the meeting. But under the current proposals you are correct that the proposals for Mulberry Square would be redeveloped. The scheme allows for vision for new gardens for ceremonial and landscaping elsewhere in the close vicinity including a public seating so we haven't lost anything. There will be more benches which will be provided in this developed new square and there will be newly landscaped areas. However the Thurrock's contribution to the D-Day landing which I have had the great honour to represent the member of parliament at which was really important to the people of Thurrock and will live on whatever happens and I welcome your views and those of Mr Suttling to achieve an enhanced public image of what Thurrock did during the D-Day landings.

Mayor:

Mr Caulder do you wish to propose a supplementary question.

Mr Caulder:

Yes please. I represent many older people in this town who have great memories of the Second World War etc also I have yet to find one who agrees with this which is now referred to as a vanity project and could Councillor Coxshall please explain to me why he thinks spending £10 million on the towns people of Thurrock hard earned money on a vanity project.

Councillor Coxshall:

Well I don't call it a vanity project I call it Grays town centre regeneration. Grays town regeneration is wanted by all those people, we have been voting for this over and over again since 2014 and the civic offices relocation is absolutely pivotal to this. With millions and millions, if you stay later you will hear the debate, will be spent on Grays town centre regeneration. We have been told so many times, how many questions have been here on how the Grays town centre has not been done, we can't walk down the high street, Grays south does not work right. We need to actually deliver our bit of public body to make the civic capital proud to actually to come to Grays rather than people staying away over and over again even in the last elections, I don't go to Grays, I don't go to Grays. We now have an entrance that is not in the right place because it is now opposite a brand new building so we need to try and reconfigure the entrance, we have got a registry office and we have ceremonies week in and week out for nationalising and moving people into this country and proud and have a massive ceremony which is in a room upstairs, third right get it over and done with where we could have a proper civic ceremony for those great people who actually want to get a British passport. This is all a great advantage of this and it is not a vanity project that the £10 million is coming down ...

Mayor:

I now call time on this question as the supplementary question was not in relation to the original question.

Question 3 was withdrawn and would be resubmitted to July Council.

Item 12 – Questions from Members

The Mayor informed the Chamber that 1 question had been received to the Leader of the Council and 12 questions had been received to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee had been received.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. From Councillor Worrall to Councillor Gledhill

Following the recent changes to the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny in Local Authorities can you advise what steps you have taken to ensure that the administration delivers on the recommendations and equips scrutiny to work effectively here in Thurrock?

Mayor:

Councillor Hebb on behalf of Councillor Gledhill.

Councillor Hebb:

Thank you Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Worrall. You're probably fully aware that in May of this year, we have had some guidance from national government in terms of what good scrutiny looks like and good governance. Preliminary studies are pretty much articulating what – Councillor Worrall has said it for the benefit of the minutes. Our preliminary studies indicate that we fulfil a majority of those implications but you're not asking me about that. You're asking me what the administration is going to do to support and do something different.

We know that Corporate Overview and Scrutiny has it on its work plan, Oliver? Something that Debbie and I need to have a conversation about, in that how we need to link that discussion in. I think it's good that Corporate have taken a lead on that but equally, we need to make sure that we support collaboratively with that. I don't know if that answers your question. You know, sorry, I can speak for the next Chair but there are others around us that are ex-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny, we know that the power of an overview and scrutiny committee and all the good it can bring. So hopefully, that brings some confidence.

Mayor:

Councillor Worrall, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Worrall:

Yes please, Mister Mayor.

So in the scrutiny training, they pay particular attention for the need of the Committee to be a critical friend. You know, the role of scrutiny. There should be no ums and errs, there should be no party colours and no deep gatekeepers to head off any challenges to Cabinet decisions or policies.

I think that scrutiny committees should be made to feel that they are part of the democratic process and that they are just not tick boxes and that we see a lot of this 'to note' and to...when really, we should building work plans that mean something and that we can make a real decisions. So, what I'm asking tonight is that can we have some assurance from you that following these updated scrutiny recommendations, that Cabinet members work closely with the scrutiny Chairs and are seen to work with them and give them work programmes and items that allow the scrutiny process to be real and meaningful in this democratic process rather than something that we just bring everything, you know, that meets 3 or 4 times a year to know what you're doing. Sometimes we even get stuff where we recommend and then it's not even mentioned. It's just those recommendations are completely overlooked and that's not the way to run this council so I just like to think that going forward, we can agree that we'll work closer to manage this. Thank you.

Mayor:

Councillor Worrall, I think you've asked your question. Councillor Hebb.

Councillor Hebb:

The answer in short is yes. I think there's multiple prongs of responses to that, mind you. One, as a Cabinet member, I can absolutely see the benefit of that. I look at the Fair Debt Summit, it's something of a private passion for me. Is there any reason why Oliver and I – or Oliver's predecessor, whoever that is, couldn't have worked more collaboratively on that? No is the truthful answer. Checks and balances as we have heard tonight is usually a good bed for those. The only other thing that I would say is the Chair of overview and scrutiny is that there is an unknown licence that a Chair has in those meetings to shape the work programme. I'm going to look at Karen Wheeler, if you remember me as the Chair, I used to say that if I got reports that says 'to note', I'll rip it up and put it back in the envelope and give it back which I'm sure she'll identify to. That was me in the power of the Chair. The work programme, it was in the licence for me to put what I wanted on there. But inclusively, make sure the membership was around but conversely, is there any reason why we can't do a cross collaboration? No.

Mayor:

Councillor Worrall, do you wish to pose a second supplementary question?

Councillor Worrall:

No I'm fine thank you, I trust them. Or I'll be back.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Watkins

Grays Riversides can experience significant traffic congestion. Can the local air quality be monitored for impact on air quality from such congestion and to inform any necessary options for improvements?

Mayor:

Councillor Watkins, please respond to the question.

Councillor Watkins:

Thank you very much Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Fish for your question this evening as well.

I would also like to add a highly important question. I know we've got one very similar about a different pass coming up shortly. And it is something that I would like to add, is very much on the forefront of my mind in regarding air quality across the entirety of Thurrock. So equally, I can understand the concerns which residents of Grays Riverside and also the entirety of Thurrock have got regarding this.

Regarding Grays Riverside itself, air testing across the borough has been taken previously and there was a report that went to Cleaner, Greener back in February this year which outlined some of the work which had happened from the initial air quality work which had taken place off the back of the work done in 2017.

Currently, the Council do tests in base on possible pollutants in the air, more based on tackling transport emissions currently and then they'll do models on how that testing will look and what outcomes need to come off the back of that which is through the AQMA.

However, I'm not averse to testing, I just believe that you need to make sure that if we are going to be doing testing, that we get it right. And that the outcomes off the back of that are also going to have an impact on the area. So what I can announce this evening, is that we are going to be reopening the previous air strategy to see what more can be done and what the council can do to tackle new issues such as the dust issue in Tilbury. If any issues like that occur moving forward, things like making sure like the Lower Thames Crossing are included. The government has announced plans which could affect us through the A127 which also needs to be included in this as well.

And I would also like it to play a part in towards this new government vision, which, well I believe is going to become law now, but by 2050, the country will have no net emissions and I would like to see Thurrock play a massive part in

that moving forward. We've only got 30 years, that's not long. As I say, Mister Mayor, we are not averse to doing testing, we're going to be reopening the strategy first of all, see more of what we can do, what needs to be done, moving forward.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Fish, do you wish to ask a supplementary question?

Councillor Fish:

Yes Mister Mayor, thank you. So you're re-opening the strategy, can you give me some sort of timescale as to when you can come up with some conclusions and some constructive ideas moving forward?

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Fish. Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins:

Thank you Councillor Fish for your supplementary. At this point in time, I'm not going to give any timescales because it's not right to do so but what I will give is the guarantee, also in the spirit of what Councillor Worrall has just mentioned, in which I try to do, as the Portfolio Holder for Environment, that all policies and options will be coming forward to Cleaner, Greener, beforehand, before any decision Cabinet makes.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Watkins, Councillor Fish do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

Councillor Fish:

Yes please Mister Mayor. As part of the strategy, will you be looking at low emission zones?

Mayor:

Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins:

Thank you Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Fish for your supplementary.

Yes, we will be looking at every possible option and I don't want this to just be looking at transport stuff as well. I also think it needs to look at something very indigenous for a full clean air strategy across this borough.

2. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Halden

How is the Portfolio Holder ensuring Thurrock's service provision for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) is fit for purpose, especially in giving proactive and proper support to children, young people and their families?

Mayor:

Councillor Halden, please respond to the question.

Councillor Halden:

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Okunade for your question. Well, like I said last year when I announced that I was going to be announcing parents and teachers to come forward and talk to me, I'm quite aware of the fact that there are problems, with the way that certain parts of our SEND service function. When parents are told that they are going to get a phone call in a couple of days, that phone call happens in a couple of weeks, that's not ok. When a care plan is written, and there is no oversight as to whether or not that care plan has been correctly delivered, that is not ok. When we send out letters that are signed 'yours sincerely, Thurrock Council', without a named point of contact, that is not ok.

So, the recent Ofsted inspection has concurred with that concern. You'll know as Chair, we've already tabled at Committee, the Statement of Action Plan that we are going to take forward but as I've said in my portfolio speech, what is important for me is that we don't just become obsessed with ticking off boxes on what's put in front of us answering the concerns that Ofsted have had. We need to set out a long term vision of outstanding and that it's more than the work that we have done over the last 3 years. Establishing inclusion units in schools so we don't have to send our children to pupil referral units. We can keep their mainstream education where possible. Investing more in mental health. Investing more in sports to allow better physical activity in school and essentially ensuring that when we do things like intervene on a dedicated school grant as we did on the £2.5 million, earlier this year, we ensure that the high needs block remain strong and stable and continue to function for the most vulnerable young people. So we need to carry on what we're doing, yes answer the Ofsted concerns to make sure it's technically 'fit for purpose' as a legal definition but our ambition is much more than 'fit for purpose' and that's why we started these exercises last year.

Mayor:

Councillor Okunade, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Okunade:

Yes Mister Mayor. Councillor Halden, I understand what you have said about getting the parents to talk to you about what the issues are and then you've

rightly admitted that in your report this is an issue you have been concerned about, SEND service for some time. The question is, why haven't you increased the capacity of the team to ensure the EHC plans were completed and by the March 2018 deadline?

Mayor:

Councillor Halden, do you wish to respond?

Councillor Halden:

Yes thank you Mister Mayor. I don't know if it was in an earlier draft and perhaps it didn't make my cut when I was trying to make the report a little bit lighter but we did outline that we did increase capacity in the team and...yes it is in there. The care plans are now delivering 94% of all plans within 20 weeks which is significantly above the national average so we did increase the capacity in the team about 6 months ago and it is clearly bearing fruit. 94% of plans within a 20 week period. That 94% is pretty close to 100 and 20 weeks ..

Mayor:

Ok Councillor Halden. Councillor Okunade, do you wish to propose a second supplementary question?

Councillor Okunade:

Yes Mister Mayor. Talking about the EHC plan that you increased the capacity on which is now 90 something percent, we have to think about the quality of it. I mean, this inspection has actually highlighted that, if I read from it 'that it has not worked out and quality was not assured'. I personally have been a model for SEND child, but I'm grown up now but that's the beginning of everything. You have to have everything right in paper, it used to be a statement, you have to have everything right in paper, so you know the type of support your child is having and any delay in intervention or support is delaying a child's development. So I'd just like to ask as my supplementary question is to assure, how can you assure all members here that you are now very confident, I put very confident, yeah, about the SEND service Thurrock Council is providing? Please can you assure us that you're very confident about the SEND service you're providing, that would be nice, thank you.

Mayor:

Thank you. Councillor Halden, can you be concise in your response, we've got quite a few questions.

Councillor Halden:

Yes Mister Mayor. We've had a very long debate this evening about the importance of children's safeguarding is so if you'd actually like me to give proper answers to serious questions...

Mayor:

I do want you to give a proper answer, I just want you to be concise.

Councillor Halden:

Well you could have one or the other really. What I would say is, you've asked me to provide you with confidence, I can provide you with confidence that when we had our Ofsted inspection, they didn't tell us anything we didn't already know. From our own self-evaluation, we knew what the weaknesses were. Now, there are extreme strengths in our SEND service e.g. our pupils with plans, our meeting the expected development of education, they should do. So they are not academically suffering compared to some of their peers.

But we know, where we do a deep dive on some of the plans, some of them are not followed up with schools so we don't know if the plans are fully enacted so we're in a situation where our young people are making a progress as they should but we don't know if that's because of the plan we put in place or whether or not it's because the school has just done a great job with that child and our plan was an absolute irrelevance. So that is what we've got to focus on, making sure that plans written are not just of good quality but making sure that how they are enacted in schools is of a high quality and that we can actually evidence our intervention. Because if we can't evidence our intervention, it may be a case of we need to give out fewer plans and focus on other wraparound support. So I can give you the confidence that we are aware of that issue, we are going after that issue and as soon as we have more information, we will return to your committee.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Halden.

3. From Councillor Gerrish to Councillor Maney

Mayor:

Councillor Gerrish as Councillor Maney has sent his apologies his evening would you like to resubmit your question or receive a written response?

Councillor Gerrish:

Thank you Mister Mayor, I'll take a written response please.

4. From Councillor Allen to Councillor Watkins

Can the Portfolio Holder please confirm the guidance he gave in his response to the question regarding the dust plaguing Tilbury from a member of the public on the 28 November 2018?

Mayor:

Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins:

Thank you very much Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Allen for your question. I'd just to put down for the record as well, thanks to yourself and Councillor Mayes as well for the work you are continuing to do in Tilbury with this particular issue. I think the comments made back in November has been highly publicised over the last few months and this is in response to the question submitted by Ms Swash and then the response which I then gave back to that question.

When the council is made aware of the dust issue, council did rightly take the advice from the relevant experts, Public Health England, Environment Agency and the London Port Health Authority. The advice that was given to us by Public Health England at the time stated the dust was annoying but not believed to be a direct risk to health. We were then given advice on what the dust was believed to be and what that was believed to contain and where that dust was potentially coming from. It was us assuming from that, that the advice which we were given that testing had been carried out to form their response. Which then formed my response to Ms Swash back in November 2018.

Following this as well, I would just like to add and raise, it's been raised many times by myself, to both elected members and to Ms Swash, both in the Chamber and outside the Chamber as well, that the Steering Group was created to both work with the internal agencies of this council but also the agencies who work at the Port of Tilbury to get the relevant testing done. Which, once the Steering Group was made, we then found out that the statement from Public Health England which again I know has been mentioned in the press recently was potentially incorrect because they had not committed to any testing previously thus their response was a bit confusing hence this is why the council's position continues to be and will be to get the Environment Health Agency and the London Port Health Authority to be doing this dust testing issue. Obviously, I have written to Ms Swash since the meeting of November 2018 to further answer questions both in regards to what was mentioned at that evening and also further follow up questions from that as well. And as I've already alluded to this evening, we are reopening the air quality so that it can also look at issues like Tilbury dust issue and also any other issue that could arise in future years.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Allen, do you wish to propose a supplementary question?

Councillor Allen:

Yes please Mister Mayor. As the whole of the Chamber might not be aware, we are having quite a big test done on this dust which is soon to take place. I'd just like to know from Councillor Watkins, will he fully support the findings once they're made public?

Mayor:

Councillor Watkins.

Councillor Watkins:

Thank you Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Allen for your supplementary. It will be wrong of me just too out rightly say yes or no till that testing is fully done. And that I receive the right expert advice from people like Roger Harris, Ian Wake and other members of this council which we can also use. What I would like to say is that I fully support the work that you and Councillor Mayes are doing in regards to this independent testing. I personally believe that this is a great use and steer for us in our negotiations in working with the Environment Agency to get this formal testing done because at the end of the day, the Environment Agency might not like the results that come out of it and then, I, for one can't predict what they're going to say but I hope that whatever comes out from the independent testing which you are committing to but that they will then follow up with their own testing from this which either back up what your testing has said or say it otherwise. We'll be using that for our Steering Group as well.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Watkins. Councillor Allen, do you wish to propose a second supplementary question?

Councillor Allen:

Thank you Mister Mayor, I don't wish to grill Councillor Watkins any further in the Chamber tonight. I'm sure I'll have many more chances to do so in the coming days, weeks and months, thank you.

5. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Maney

Mayor:

Councillor Potheary as Councillor Maney has sent his apologies his evening would you like to resubmit your question or receive a written response?

Councillor Pothecary:

Request a written response.

6. From Councillor Pothecary to Councillor Johnson

Does the Portfolio Holder for Housing believe that the service charges council tenants and leaseholders pay deliver value for money?

Mayor:

Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Johnson:

Thank you Mister Mayor and thank you Councillor Pothecary for your question. All services and works delivered on behalf of the council are procured in line with the Council's Constitution to ensure value for money is achieved with leaseholders being formally consulted as part of the procurement process in line with Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act. Tenant's service charges are paid as part of their rent. Residents are charged only for the services provided and we work hard to ensure that the charges are reasonable and represent value for money. There is a clear service charge settings policy developed in consultation with tenants as set out in the Housing Act and leasehold services charges are applied as prescribed in the leases and as defined by legislation. In accordance with the terms of our leases the service charges are reviewed annually to ensure the charges reflect the costs of the services provided. So in short, the answer to your question Councillor, yes I do believe the service the council tenants and leaseholders pay do deliver value for money.

Mayor:

Councillor Pothecary, do you wish to propose a supplementary question?

Councillor Pothecary:

Yes please Mister Mayor. Thank you for your response Councillor Johnson. I'm really interested in the phrase you used which is 'service charges should only be for the services provided'. I feel you might know where I might be going with this but in my own ward, for a period of over 4 weeks, the front entry system of 9 Lockley House was completely out of action. This is an entry system that my residents are billed for on an itemised basis as a service provided for them. It wasn't provided for a month. We've also had situations at the Echoes where a lift was out of action for even longer than that where it's –

Mayor:

Councillor Pothecary, have you got a question?

Councillor Pothecary:

Yes I do, I promise I have. And, for example, on Seabrooke Rise, you'll be aware that where residents were without a TV aerial –

Mayor:

Is that a question or another statement?

Councillor Pothecary:

No, no, no I'm coming to my question, I promise. As tenants and leaseholders are billed for these as individual items and it's based on the service that is allegedly provided, will they be reimbursed when they are not in fact provided for significant periods of time?

Mayor:

Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Johnson:

Thank you Mister Mayor. Thank you Councillor for your supplementary. If a service isn't being provided and someone is being charged for it, I, like yourself would expect to get some refund. It's certainly something that I would sit down and speak to the Officers about. There may be some legal issues in there that as I'm not a legal person, I may not know about. But I will certainly sit down and speak with them and if we apply logic rather than politics, I would expect to get a refund if I'm paying for a service that I don't get.

Mayor:

Councillor Pothecary, do you wish to pose a second supplementary?

Councillor Pothecary:

Yes please Mister Mayor. Thank you Councillor Johnson, I think that's very sensible given the stated policy and would reflect the policy decisions that this administration has made around service charges. So I'll await your response from conversations with Officers eagerly.

My second supplementary question is about how we can actually get leaseholders and tenants more involved in the setting of service charges. I know that there are certain statutory consultation methods that are used but actually the feedback that I get day in, day out with people just saying these charges keep going up every year, and they're going up, going up.

We don't feel that we're getting a service that is equivalent. They feel there is a lack of transparency, they feel they that there isn't value for money and they feel that when they complain, they're kind of brushed off. Is there a way that

we can actually get leaseholders and tenants much more involved in the setting of those charges and the evaluation on whether or not they are value for money?

Mayor:

Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Johnson:

Thank you very much Councillor for your supplementary. Once again, I think I have to refrain from giving any answer because of the legalities that are in there but I have a paper here in front of me that will be coming to Council quite soon about the Thurrock resident engagement so within the last 18 months, there've been a number of events that's been put on and we've been working with the Tenants Excellence Panel for the past, I think, 15 years.

So yes, these things are being put out more to the residents and we are trying to listen to more of their input. However, as I've said, on a legal basis, whether they can be involved in the settings of those charges, that's something I have to take advice on as well. But I would like to make it clear that there's no profit made in the charges that come back to the Council. We don't make a profit out of that, they are only charged what we are charged. I hope that helps.

7. From Councillor Redsell to Councillor Halden

The residents of Woodside welcome the potential expansion of Treetops School, but not the additional traffic this will cause on local roads around Woodside. Will education work with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) so that a permanent means of access can be considered and therefore divert traffic away from residential roads?

Mayor:

Councillor Halden.

Councillor Halden:

Thank you Mister Mayor, thank you Councillor Redsell for your question. Clearly, the £20 million that we're going to spend building Treetops 2 is money that has to be spent directly on the school and not on associated infrastructure works. However, directly opposite the site, we're spending an additional £20 million to deliver the new Orsett Heath Academy. What I've asked Officers to look at in the pre-application stage, is it possible to look at the two schemes in conjunction to see if an infrastructure solution between the two schemes can be found. And we're working on that at the moment and in conversations with the ESFA, what I would say is that, quite clearly, new schools will mean new children, will mean increased traffic, that's the way of the world wherever you build a school.

We want to do as much as we can to alleviate the road situations for local residents while saying at the same time that it's an amazing thing that we are delivering a brand new special needs school in your ward which is something that I know you very much welcome.

Mayor:

Councillor Redsell, do you wish to pose a supplementary question?

Councillor Redsell:

Thank you Mister Mayor. Thank you Councillor Halden. I'd just like to ask that you help to keep the dialogue open between education and highways just for their residents and schools of Blackshots, Little Thurrock. Thank you.

Mayor:

Councillor Halden.

Councillor Halden:

I certainly will but I understand that you probably meet with them more often than I do.

8. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Maney

Mayor:

Councillor J Kent as Councillor Maney has sent his apologies his evening would you like to resubmit your question or receive a written response?

Councillor J Kent:

Request question to be resubmitted.

9. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Coxshall

As part of the planning consent for the new development on the former Treetops School site in Grays a parcel of land was to be transferred to the Land Trust and a Management Strategy agreed for the woodland area to make it available for public access via a walkway and viewing platform. This land does not appear to have been transferred and the viewing platform is now vandalised on a regular basis and residents are subjected to constant anti-social behaviour on this unprotected land. Can the Portfolio Holder explain why the land transfer has not taken place and set out the steps he intends to take to ensure it now happens quickly?

Mayor:

Councillor Coxshall

Councillor Coxshall:

Thank you very much. The Council relinquished its freehold interest in the Former Treetops School site in 2016 so the land was sold to Keepmoat. Keepmoat had planning consent on there in 2016 and is subject a section 106 agreement. You are quite right in accordance with the section 106 agreement the woodland area is due to be transferred to the Land Trust for future management. At this time the land has not been transferred to the Land Trust but does remain the responsibility of Keepmoat not this council. The officers have written to Keepmoat to remind them of their section 106 obligations and responsibility in the mean time until it is transferred.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Coxshall. Councillor Kent do you wish to pose a supplementary question.

Councillor J Kent:

Mister Mayor the mission statement for the Dell says that the Dell is somewhere the local community can enjoy quiet, recreation and wildlife conservation. It is anything but quiet. People there are putting up with drug taking, vandalism on a regular basis. The viewing platform is regularly vandalised. I am afraid I have to repeat the question. Mister Mayor what is the Portfolio Holder going to do to enforce the section 106 agreement that this authority insisted upon.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor. Councillor Coxshall can you be as brief as possible due to finish the item shortly.

Councillor Coxshall:

It is going to be very brief. The Officers have written to Keepmoat to remind them of their responsibilities.

Mayor:

Thank you Councillor Coxshall.

The Mayor called time on questions:

Question 10 - Councillor Fletcher requested a written response.

Question 11 - Councillor Akinbohun requested a written response.

Question 12 - Councillor Muldowney requested a written response.

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QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There are 2 questions from members of the public.

1. From Ms Swash to Councillor Coxshall

Could the Portfolio Holder tell me what is happening to the building in Quebec Road that was used for the Tilbury youth centre right up until January of this year?

2. From Mr Perrin to Councillor Little

Some Councils have expressed concern that they will be unable to meet their statutory obligations with regards to the provision of Social Care, that is to say, Child care, care of the elderly and adult social care. Does Thurrock Borough Council have any such concerns?

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Petitions Update Report

Petition No.	Description	Presented (date)	Presented (by)	Status
518	To ask Uber to move their geo-fencing back to London Boroughs	28 November 2018	Mr Colley	<p>Officers have sought extensive legal advice in regards to the operation of Uber in Thurrock as to whether the operation can be challenged as being unlawful and a breach of Section 46(1)(d) of the LGMPA 1976, both before and after the recent decision in the Reading appeal.</p> <p>As part of that, an advice was sought from the Council’s Legal Team, who’s view is <i>“The Council’s Legal Team has now fully considered whether Uber’s activities in Thurrock are unlawful and are a breach of Section 46(1)(d) of the LGMPA 1976. It is their opinion there is no unlawfulness in the current operation of Uber in Thurrock. Therefore, there is no basis on which to bring a prosecution against Uber. We will now write to Uber to follow up on our previous discussions with them, asking them to withdraw from Thurrock, or make an appropriate operator’s licence application with Thurrock.”</i></p> <p>These confirm the position that Uber are not acting unlawfully. As such the council has no basis on which to bring a prosecution against Uber. The council will now write to Uber to follow up on previous discussions with them asking them to voluntarily withdraw from Thurrock or to agree to make an appropriate operator’s licence application to the council.</p>
519	Air Quality and Pollution Review in Tilbury	30 January 2019	Mr Mayes	<p>Officers routinely review the areas of Air Quality which fall within the jurisdiction of the Council as set out in the “Update on Air Quality and Health” report to Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 February 2019.</p> <p>In relation to the dust issues experienced in Tilbury the Environment Agency (EA) and London Port Health Authority (LPHA) are the relevant enforcement agencies for the company presumed to be the source. Further mitigating measures have been introduced.</p>

Petitions Update Report

				The Council has established a Steering Group to work alongside the EA and the LPHA – the next meeting is 5 July 2019. The community is being kept informed via the Tilbury Community Forum.
520	Name change from Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames	30 January 2019	Mr Batchelor	The consultation process required ahead of a formal decision on the proposal to change the name of Purfleet to Purfleet-on-Thames is expected to begin in July 2019 and run for 12 weeks. The consultation will be promoted widely across the borough.
521	Thurrock Council's Kerb-It Project - Parking Improvement Scheme – Petition is the response from residents who would like the first option implemented	May 2019	Annette Geaney	Thurrock Council's Kerb-It Project - Parking Improvement Scheme – Dalroy Close, South Ockendon, the decision has been taken to delay implementation of the proposed Kerb-It scheme option as a result of the objections that have been received through the petition process. Officers will consider all options and implications, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder, ward members and affected residents, to identify a suitable option for implementation in summer 2019.
522	Closure to the entrance to the woodland area in Woodend Close, Grays RM17 5FN	June 2019	Ms Nweke	<p>The Council relinquished its freehold interest in the Former Treetops School site when it sold the land to Keepmoat. On this basis it is not possible for the Council to close the access (because it does not own the land).</p> <p>Keepmoat obtained planning consent to develop the land for housing in 2016 which was subject to planning conditions and s.106 agreement. One of the conditions required a Woodland Management Plan to be submitted and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of any units. The approved Woodland Management Plan addressed elements of public access, including the management of the walkway and viewing platform.</p> <p>In accordance with the terms of the s.106 agreement, the woodland area is due to be transferred to the Land Trust for future management. At this time, the land has not yet transferred to the Land Trust and remains the responsibility of Keepmoat. The transfer of the land is a private transaction between the</p>

Petitions Update Report

				Land Trust and Keepmoat. Whilst the Council has no role in the process it should be borne in mind that there is an approved management plan and Keepmoat are responsible for the maintenance of the viewing platform until the land is transferred. The Council has also written to Keepmoat to remind them of their responsibilities. Residents should report incidences of anti-social behaviour directly to the Police.
523	Save Culver Fields - reject any attempt to build on the Culver Fields without proper consultation	June 2019	Cllr Fletcher	<p>The Council, in considering the best use of its assets to meet strategic priorities, such as the need to build new homes, including affordable housing for Thurrock residents, will from time to time identify locations where it will consider a change of use may be in the best interest of the wider Thurrock community.</p> <p>Any planning application to develop residential accommodation on Culver field is subject to Council and statutory provisions on public consultation and this process will be followed.</p> <p>Further, in recognition of local residents concerns a fuller consultation strategy is being prepared to engage with local residents and other stakeholders which will include public exhibitions of proposals prior to submission of any planning application and commencement of the formal statutory planning process. The exhibitions will form part of a wider consultation approach including provision of written material and opportunity for residents to submit consultation feedback online.</p>
524	Thurrock Sports Council – Improve sports facilities	19 June 2019	Mr Norrington	<p>We acknowledge the petition from Thurrock residents and welcome the opportunity to continue working with the sports clubs and community groups across the borough to improve sports provision and encourage getting people active.</p> <p>A draft sports strategy is in the process of being developed and consultation will include all sports clubs.</p>

Petitions Update Report

				<p>The Active Thurrock Network already supports communities starting new activities and supports engaging inactive groups across the borough.</p> <p>The Active Parks team work borough wide delivering community engagement and sports sessions in parks and open spaces. The team are also consulting with the community to develop services in response to their needs.</p> <p>Council sports facilities are maintained to a municipality standard and we are working with clubs to establish ways in which they can get more involved, exploring opportunities where there is an interest in managing their own facilities and supporting self-management where appropriate. This will empower the clubs and community groups to develop the facilities and activities at their site in a more dynamic way with support.</p>
525	Calling for a Pedestrian Crossing around the junction of the Broadway, Gipsy Lane and East Thurrock Road, in Grays	19 June 2019	Cllr John Kent	<p>The Transport Development team have undertaken a review of the area and have concluded that the location does not meet the criteria used to determine if a zebra or signalised crossing should be implemented.</p> <p>The Transport Development team will look into whether an uncontrolled crossing, with refuge island, could be implemented. However this will be subject to finding a suitable location with adequate width and no objections.</p>

24 July 2019	ITEM: 10
Council	
Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key
Report of: Overview and Scrutiny Chairs	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Lawson, Assistant Director Legal & Monitoring Officer	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Director of Finance and IT	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report introduces the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report which in accordance with the Council's Constitution, should be presented to the Council.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That the contents of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

2.1 Each year an Annual Report is produced detailing the work of the six Overview and Scrutiny committees and their main achievements for that municipal year. The report is designed to inform residents of this work in an accessible and engaging format.

2.2 The last municipal year has seen Overview and Scrutiny tackle a wide range of topics, with Members leading on issues that have come to the fore both through their own research and through the recommendations of Council officers.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 It is hoped that the format of the Annual Report will highlight to residents how the Overview and Scrutiny committees have picked relevant community issues, and how Members undertook work to form recommendations that positively affected these issues.

3.2 The report will be published on the Council's website and key community groups and participants from last year's work will be made aware of its

publication directly.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The report outlines the positive work that has been undertaken during 2018/2019 and is being referred to Council for review in order for Members to comment on the overall Overview and Scrutiny function of Thurrock Council.

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

- 5.1 In accordance with Chapter 4, Part 1, Rule 7.1 of the Constitution, the annual report is submitted to Council for their consideration and comment.
- 5.2 Overview and Scrutiny Chairs have been consulted on the contents of the report.

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

- 6.1 This report has a community impact as the work of the Overview and Scrutiny committees for 2018/2019 allows residents to participate in decision making and tackling key issues of local concern, which is clearly documented in the annual report.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by:

Dammy Adewole
Senior Management Accountant –
Central Services

There are no direct financial implications arising out of this report. If any recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for adoption by the Council have financial implications they are identified separately in each report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by:

David Lawson
Assistant Director Legal and
Monitoring Officer

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report but it is good practice to produce an annual report reviewing Overview and Scrutiny activity.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by:

Rebecca Price

**Diversity and Communities
Manager**

The Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out with due regard to equality and inclusion legislation and specifically the Equality Act 2010.

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

None.

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Agenda, Reports and Minutes of meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Task and Finish Reviews, available from:

<http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/thurrock/>

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2018/19

Report Author:

Lucy Tricker
Democratic Services Officer
Legal and Democratic Services

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Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2018-2019

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What is Overview & Scrutiny?

In general terms, Overview and Scrutiny is the process whereby Councillors investigate, scrutinise and oversee the work of the Council. More specifically Overview and Scrutiny pays particular attention to:

- ❖ The decisions made by Cabinet, Council and officers in relation to Council policy or key decisions.
- ❖ The activities carried out by the Council and other bodies (such as the NHS).
- ❖ The performance of the Council in relation to its targets and objectives.

Work Programme

The work programme for Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny is created by a combination of:

- ❖ What Councillors feel are important topics (this is gathered from their work in their wards and activities across the whole of the Council).
- ❖ Members of the public highlighting issues for debate, either through Call-Ins or through consultation.
- ❖ Requests by Thurrock's Cabinet for Overview and Scrutiny to undertake "pre-decision scrutiny" prior to policies being taken to Cabinet for consideration.

The agendas and associated reports of each Committee can be accessed by the following link: <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/>

Committees

At Thurrock, the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out by six committees, which each have a specific remit:

- ❖ Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- ❖ Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Membership

The membership of Thurrock's Overview and Scrutiny Committees is made up of Councillors drawn from all the political parties of the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny function enables Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet (also known as the Executive) to have an active role in the decision-making process of the Council.

Thurrock has a number of non-Councillors sitting on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Children's Services Committee has two parent-governors as well as a diocesan representative from the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches respectively. There are also two co-opted members on the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and one co-opted member on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing health and housing interests across the borough.

In addition, sub-committees or panels may also be formed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to undertake specific tasks, such as a review, the membership of which is decided alongside the remit of the review.

The decision making process

In Thurrock, Overview and Scrutiny plays a key role in adding value to the Council's decision-making process. It also reviews the existing practices of the Council and makes recommendations to Cabinet to enhance and improve service provision.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet in an informal atmosphere and engage with people who can help with their work and provide evidence for their reviews. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committees and at the discretion of the Chair may even be able to take part.

Overview and Scrutiny Online

Overview and Scrutiny has a dedicated section on Thurrock Council's website and can be found at (<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny/overview-and-scrutiny-committees>).

Thurrock Council's website provides the most up-to-date information on Overview and Scrutiny in Thurrock. Participation from the public is actively encouraged and promoted online.

A number of documents are available and easily accessible, including our Overview and Scrutiny annual reports. Reports, agendas and minutes from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting are also available electronically from Thurrock's website.

Getting in Touch

The Overview and Scrutiny process at Thurrock is managed by our Democratic Services Team. The Team is located within Legal Services. Democratic Services manage the Council's decision making process and services a wide range of Council decision making bodies including the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee as well as Full Council.

If you have any queries about this report or the Overview and Scrutiny process, or if you are interested in participating, please feel free to contact us.

Email: Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Address: Democratic Services, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays
Essex RM17 6SL

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

In this municipal year, the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomed two new Parent Governor Representatives whose expertise and guidance was widely appreciated.

The year started off well with a presentation from the Youth Work Team which emphasised its continued support in young people's personal and social development skills to help boost their confidence, improve their peer relationships and improve their social skills. Projects such as Tilbury Youth Club and #USound Music Studio continued to be set up with funding from various sources.

There was much discussion and update regarding the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) which will soon be known as Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership (LSCP) due to the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that will be taking place in May 2019. Updates will continue to come to the Committee in the new municipal year as a standing item on the work programme and the Committee looked forward to this.

Good scrutiny was undertaken by Members of the Committee on several reports that went to Cabinet. These reports included Short Breaks and Support Services for Disabled Children; Children's Transport: Re-procurement of Service; Schools Funding Formula 2019/20; and Children and Young People's Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health – Schools Wellbeing Service.

Following concerns raised by Members of the Committee in regards to whistleblowing allegations, a report was provided by the Corporate Director of Children's Services which detailed an independent review of the allegations and recommendations to follow. This had given Members reassurance and alleviated their concerns. Members were satisfied with the actions taken and that the whistleblowing allegations had been unsubstantiated.

Members were pleased to hear that Thurrock's schools were performing well based on Ofsted inspections indicating that around 89% of schools were judged to be good or better, when the national average is 88%. The disadvantaged gap at the end of key stage 1 had also closed.

In preparation for the Update on Brighter Futures Children's Centres Service report in February 2019, a site visit was arranged for the Committee to visit the Tilbury Children's Centre. A tour of the centre was provided to Members with discussion and details over the positive changes that had taken place. This enabled Members to see how Children's Centres had become more embedded into the local community and its benefits to parents with the journey starting from pregnancy until children reached the age of 11 years old.

I assumed the position of Chair of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee from November 2018, but being a member of the Committee from the beginning of the municipal year, I can report on the work of the committee for the year 2018-19.

We considered a wide-range of agenda items, including Children’s Social Care Development Plan, Schools’ Performance Report, plus regular updates from the Youth Cabinet. The Committee regularly scrutinised standing agenda items such as the Social Care Performance Report, as well as updates from the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The School Wellbeing Service delivered a presentation on Emotional, Wellbeing and Mental Health for Children and Young People, and the Committee also received a presentation by the Youth Work Team on the activities they run across Thurrock for young people aged 11–19 years of age.

The self–evaluation document of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were considered, as well as the highlights of the work undertaken by the Youth Offending Services which included gang crime, knife prevention and child exploitation. We also had the opportunity to monitor the performance report of schools and commended their efforts on improvements.

The LSCB in its update informed the Committee of the “Walk Online” roadshow in March 2019 aimed to raise awareness and teach children on social media and internet safety and gang-related issues. Also noted is the composition of new multi-agency safeguarding arrangement known as Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (LSCP) which is effective from mid-2019. It is assuring that the scrutiny committee will continue to have input into safeguarding and service development / improvement.

Outside our scheduled meetings, and before considering the progress report of changes brought about by the 2017 Children Centres’ review, Members of the Committee had the opportunity to pay site visits to the Tilbury’s Brighter Futures Children’s Centre.

Further on, the Members of the Committee had the chance of scrutinising the progress report, presented by the Corporate Director of Children’s Services, of the implementation plans in response to recommendations of the independent investigation into the 2018 whistleblowing allegations.

To conclude, I feel that it has been a successful year. I would like to thank all Members of the Committee and Officers of Children’s Services and Democratic Services for their hard work and commitment.

Councillor Bukky Okunade
Chair of the Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The year began with a detailed update on the progress made at Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre. The Committee heard how the site had been improved in areas such as new signage; new CCTV; new waste disposal containers; more extensive staff training; and a new commercial vehicle access permit scheme. The Committee also heard plans to expand and upgrade the site such as split level step free access; improving Highway Access with dedicated turn lanes; connecting the site to utilities and services; and increasing the recycling and re-use facilities on site. The Committee also undertook a site visit to the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre in August 2018 and saw the developments first hand, as well as sharing ideas of their own.

A representative from Essex Police and the Portfolio Holder for Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour attended a meeting of the Committee to discuss gang related violence and how this was being tackled across the borough. The Committee heard how injunctions were being handed out, and arrests were being made based on these injunctions. A report on the Violence against Women and Girls Strategy also came before the Committee and the Committee were glad to hear that Project MAYA, which was aimed at tackling female genital mutilation, worked with Barnardo's, who were embedded in the multi-agency service hub (MASH).

The Air Quality and Health Strategy update report outlined the authority's response to measures taken to improve the air quality and reduce air pollution exposure across the borough. As part of the strategy reducing poor air quality would be covered by promoting public transport, working closely with schools to promote walking and cycling, landscaping and tree planting programmes and promoting a heavy goods vehicle management scheme.

A strategy on tree planting across the borough was also presented to the Committee, based on a motion made at Full Council. The Committee decided that Option 1 would be followed which would replace trees on a like-for-like basis, as well as Option 3 which would backdate the replacement of trees.

The Committee also discussed a new back office system for the Environment and Highways Service called Bartec Collective, which provided a digital scheduling and reporting tool, as well as a means of allocating work packages to frontline staff via a mobile app or in-cab unit.

Members agreed the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2019/20 that related to the charges within the remit of the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

This year the Cleaner Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee have scrutinised a number of items that included Grounds Maintenance, Street Cleansing, Fly Tipping, Refuse Collections, Recycling Services and a report on Air Quality and Health.

Members of the committee also looked at the future development of the Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre and how this would incorporate significant increases in recycling and re-use facilities on-site, make improvements to the highways so that access was improved, Automatic Number Plate Readers, on-site connections to mains power and sewerage and a dedicated commercial waste disposal facility would be introduced on-site. Members were invited to attend a site visit to see plans on how these redevelopments would benefit the residents of Thurrock.

The Tree Planting Strategy was presented at this committee for the first time where members agreed that with the planned development of potentially 30,000 houses over the next 20 years in Thurrock, this was an ideal opportunity to encourage developers to include in their design the planting of trees and shrubs and for their ongoing maintenance to be the responsibility of the management company.

The committee also received a report on Gang Related Violence and noted the continually changing landscape and challenges in Thurrock and how the Council was working with partnerships to combat the increase in violent crime.

Finally, members commented and agreed to the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy proposals that were currently being considered within the remit of this committee.

I would like to thank Officers, Democratic Services and all those guest speakers for all their hard work and contribution to this committee.

Councillor Lynn Worrall

Chair of the Cleaner, Greener, and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

The Committee started the year by continuing to look at the Corporate Performance Report which monitored Council progress against a variety of Key Performance Indicators, and the Committee took this opportunity to engage with Officers to ensure the Council pushed for higher targets. This report came before the Committee every quarter so the Committee could monitor targets and suggest improvements.

The Committee also considered the disposal of land to deliver the Free School Programme, and an extraordinary meeting on this was held so the Committee could study the decisions in greater detail. The Committee was attended by representatives from Thurrock Rugby Club, as well as Officers and Members and lively debate was held.

The Communications Team Strategy Update was discussed at September's meeting, and this was attended by the editors of four local newspapers. This was a chance for the Communications Team to update Members on the progress made on implementing the strategy in the last six months, including the increased use of social media, and the success of specific campaigns such as recruiting new foster carers. It also opened discussion between the Communications Team and local newspapers on the use of social media vs. print media, and each editor spoke to the report and enjoyed the debate.

A report on the Customer Services Strategy, and its progress came before the Committee, which discussed improvements made to customer services such as a new contact centre telephony platform; a Customer Contact Association industry accreditation; transformation of the face-to-face customer services area on the ground floor of the Civic Offices; and the implementation and development of online only services.

Members were also presented with a report which outlined detailed plans for the regeneration of Grays South and the Civic Offices Project. They heard how the project will help deliver the Grays masterplan, as well as studying the architect's initial designs.

In addition, the Committee also considered the proposed Long Term Investment Strategy and heard how the Council found investments, duly considered them, and maintained them through their life-span. Officers outlined the Council's long term plans for a balanced budget. The proposed Council Tax Scheme was scrutinised at January's Committee before it went on to be agreed at Cabinet and Full Council.

It has been an eventful year for the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which I have been proud to chair. We have examined a wide range of issues relating to the council's corporate functions and made a number of recommendations.

The year started with a review of the disposal of land for the purpose of building schools within Thurrock. The committee warmly welcomed the commitment to provide more school places, but raised concerns on the process followed to identify sites, and in the level of communication between the council and those groups impacted by the decision.

In September, the committee heard an update on our communications strategy where we hosted a forum for members of the local media to directly feedback on the experience of working with Thurrock Council. This led to a good debate and a strong feeling from members that we must work with local media organisations in a closer partnership and ensure that they are well used as fantastic channels of communication with our residents. The committee recommended an approach of 'proactive openness' with the local media to ensure that our relationship was on the best footing.

Later in the year, the committee considered our long term investment strategy and reaffirmed our belief in a robust investment approach and in speeding the development of Thurrock Regeneration Limited. We also took the opportunity to consider how best to deploy the council's capital investments, and questioned the proposed new Civic Offices building.

Along the way, we have also begun consideration of how we can improve the scrutiny process and ensure that the views of scrutiny are considered by Cabinet, continued to review our corporate performance and KPIs, and ensured that budget proposals were fully debated and scrutinised. At every step, the committee has worked openly, constructively and not along party political lines, and we look forward to this approach continuing next year.

Councillor Oliver Gerrish
Chair of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The main focus of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year has been the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) for Mid and South Essex. At the January 2018 meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), it was agreed to join with Essex and Southend and participate in the Joint HOSC covering the STP area. The purpose of the Joint HOSC was to respond to the consultation document on acute reconfiguration in Mid and South Essex, and to monitor and scrutinise the work of the STP. In January 2019 a referral was made by Thurrock HOSC to the Secretary of State on the closure of Orsett Hospital and the consultation process of the STP.

The Committee also established the Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group in September 2018 to discuss and study the proposed closure of Orsett Hospital. This was following the announcement in July 2018 that Orsett Hospital would close, once the four Integrated Medical Centres were up and running.

A report on a new residential care facility and a new model of primary care in South Ockendon was presented to the Committee which proposed the development of a new residential facility in South Ockendon to meet demand and set new standards in terms of facilities and services. The Committee were pleased to hear the report and after much scrutiny sent it to Cabinet for their approval.

The Integrated Medical Centre Delivery Plan was presented to Members for them to be able to comment on the progress made to the Plan before it went to Cabinet. The Committee discussed many questions relating to the report including parking; public transport links; and timescales.

The Committee also considered waiting times for cancer patients, as focus had continued on the pathway transformation, operational control and the investment in additional capacity and capability. A representative from Basildon and Thurrock Hospital Trust participated in the meeting and Members discussed the reasons for longer waiting times, but recognised that the figure was coming down.

'The Mental Health Urgent and Emergency Care Report' was presented to Members and this highlighted that demand for adult acute mental health had increased, and as a result the system was under pressure. It also discussed that over the last 18 months commissioners had focused on developing and delivering an urgent and emergency care transformation programme. There was also focus on a winter plan to improve the operational efficiency of the current service, and plans to merge two dementia wards to form an adult inpatient wards with 16 beds.

This year the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee continued to look at a large range of topics ranging from the development of a new residential care facility and a new model of primary care in South Ockendon, cancer waiting times, learning disability health checks, to the future of libraries in the borough.

The committee also looked at reports planning fundamental changes to how residents will receive care in the future. We heard regularly about the development of the Integrated Medical Centres (IMCs) and innovative plans on primary care to ensure more residents can see the right medical professional sooner, thus creating a vision that has been adopted by others across the country.

Mental health was an important feature in this year's work. Sadly mental health support is not as good as it should be in Thurrock. This is not isolated to Thurrock – accessing consistently good quality mental health support is an issue across the country – however in Thurrock we have acknowledged we need to do better. The council undertook a peer review and excellent work began on developing our plans for adult mental health service transformation. This work will be closely monitored by the committee in the coming year too.

Last but not least the committee spoke at every meeting about Orsett Hospital and the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) plans. The committee held one extraordinary meeting on this important issue, ultimately referring the plans to the Secretary of State for Health for his consideration. The committee decided the consultation process and the ultimate decision to close Orsett Hospital was not in the best interests of Thurrock residents. I know that this important issue alongside many others will continue to be discussed by this committee.

Thank you to Officers, Democratic Services and the outside organisations who sit on the committee for all their hard work and to fellow Councillors on the Committee for their dedication and constructive contributions.

Councillor Victoria Holloway
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Following the tragic fire in Grenfell Flats in 2017, the Committee continued to hear regular updates regarding fire safety in tower blocks and high-rises throughout the borough. The Committee heard how the council had brought forward the programmed inspection of every high-rise dwelling in the borough; and every block had been inspected by the in-house team, an external fire safety consultant, and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service. The Committee also heard that planned works had taken place such as installing smoke and heat detectors in every flat; compartmentation; and compliance work on front doors.

An on-going review of garages also took place throughout 2018/19. The Committee heard how officers had undertaken a comprehensive review of all council-owned garages across the borough, and would start to undertake works to either improve or remove garages that were deemed to be at end of life. The Committee were pleased to hear updates of this review, and officers described how detailed records were now kept, as well as liaising with the legal team to organise agreements and storage of items other than cars.

A report on licensing in Houses of Multiple Occupation also came before the Committee this municipal year, and was approved and referred to Cabinet. The Committee discussed how the new licensing would affect houses of multiple occupation and their occupants, as well as the wider community.

Reports on the housing allocations policy review were also presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on two separate occasions, after being presented to Cabinet and referred back for additional scrutiny. This report focussed on how the council housing waiting list was formed, and how priority was given. A lively debate ensued on both occasions this report came before Committee regarding the criteria for giving council housing, and the formation of a sheltered housing register.

It has been a pleasure to Chair the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in what has been a busy and stimulating year. A key issue this year was a focus on the safety measures installed in high rises across the borough, following the tragic fire in Grenfell Tower in June 2017. The Committee considered a number of additional fire suppressant systems and reviewed policies for compartmentalisation and evacuation in case of emergency. We welcomed initiatives from Essex County Fire and Rescue, as well as working with the Council's in-house teams to provide a high level of safety for our high rise residents.

Members have also encouraged social housing on a number of occasions and have considered a government Green Paper on social housing and a consultation on the use of "Right to Buy". In addition, Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the internal and external redecoration of council properties across the borough, to help benefit those residents in social housing.

The Committee have also scrutinised proposals to undertake a homelessness service review; implement mandatory licensing of houses of multiple occupancy; and considered the out of hours procedures for sheltered housing.

My thanks go to all the officers who worked to bring reports and support the Committee, as well as Democratic Services for the efficient organisation of all meetings. My thanks also go to my fellow Councillors on the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee who were committed to the scrutiny process.

Councillor Gerard Rice

Chair of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport, Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered many development reports that came to the Committee this year. Most of these directly related to the Local Plan and as a result, the Members agreed on the formation of the Local Development Plan Task Force to discuss and analyse the Local Plan. This would enable the Task Force to focus purely on the Local Plan and the PTR O&S Committee to look at agenda items.

The proposed sites for the Integrated Medical Centres were brought to the Committee for discussion. There had been questions raised by Members on why certain sites had been chosen such as Purfleet which was less accessible for Aveley and Ockendon residents. Officers had explained that the site had been identified as a part of the Purfleet Centre Regeneration Scheme.

On the Purfleet Centre Regeneration Scheme, this update was brought to the Committee in the form a presentation by the Purfleet Centre Regeneration LTD. Members had found the presentation interesting and supported the project as Purfleet needed the infrastructure proposed. The Chair also invited the Chairman of Purfleet-on-Thames Community Forum to speak.

Members were informed of the next stage of the Grays South Regeneration Project: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass which was in a position to begin the next phase of development. Given the danger of the barrier crossing at Grays train station, the underpass was proposed to resolve this issue. Concerns had been raised by Members regarding anti-social behaviour which was common in underpasses and Officers had reassured the Members that safety concerns had been taken into consideration and there would be CCTV and lighting installed.

Presentations were brought to the Committee by Network Rail and c2c twice this year which detailed actions that were undertaken on trespassing, safety and train delay issues. c2c stated that they were in the process of changing their systems that was over 20 years old which would help to reduce the number of delays . At the March 2019 meeting, Members had challenged the ticket machines that were to be placed in Stanford le Hope and c2c had reassured Members that station staff would be on site to help with route and ticket purchase enquiries.

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee have had a good year with many positive reports. Following the Development Plan update provided to the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the start of this municipal year, PTR agreed on the formation of the Local Development Plan Task Force which enabled a more focused look and scrutiny of Thurrock's Local Plan and gave Members a chance to become more involved with the Local Plan.

The Committee received interesting reports that highlighted the regeneration and growth that Thurrock is going through. One in particular was the Purfleet Centre Regeneration plan in which I had invited the Chairman of Purfleet-on-Thames Community forum to speak on the positives of this regeneration scheme. I have to thank the Chairman of Purfleet Community Forum and other community forums for doing more for their local communities.

I was pleased to see an update on the Grays South Regeneration Project: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass which was informative and good to know that Officers would be engaging with affected residents. It was also good to see updated on other ongoing projects such as the A13 Widening Scheme.

Councillor Martin Kerin

Chair of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Budget Overview and Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Members were keen to scrutinise the budget to ensure that the Council was on target to achieve significant budget savings and to identify if further value for money and efficiencies could be realised. Members were keen to ensure that Thurrock was getting good value for money for its residents, as well as finding new income streams and protecting services that were important for people in the borough.

Cleaner, Greener & Safer Overview and Scrutiny

Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee reviewed proposed fees and charges, particularly those relating to the use of Wi-Fi in public libraries, the charge for school's visiting Coalhouse Fort, and charges for cultural services in the Thameside Theatre.

Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

The Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and agreed to the proposed fees and charges, and engaged in detailed discussions on issues such as nursery charges and fees for the use of the Grangewater facility.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a freeze in Council Tax for the next municipal year, and enquired into alternative plans, should the Council opt to increase in Council Tax. The Committee also welcomed the aspirational approach suggested for the Capital Programme, and scrutinised capital plans such as the widening of the A13, Grays underpass, East-facing slip roads; and an improved cycle network.

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19 that related to the charges within the remit of the health and wellbeing overview and scrutiny committee.

Housing Overview and Scrutiny

To ensure the delivery of income targets for 2018/19, the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee discussed and agreed the proposed fees and charges including mobile home site licensing fees.

Planning, Transport & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport & Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee supported the Fees and Charges Pricing Strategy for 2018/19, including licensing for highways, skip licenses and scooter training in schools.

Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can establish Scrutiny Review Panels to investigate in-depth issues which have come to their attention.

Therefore a Task and Finish Group may be established by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider a specific piece of work and make recommendations to its parent committee or directly to the Cabinet. The number of Members of the Task and Finish Group and its terms of reference must be specified when it is established.

An Overview and Scrutiny Committee may establish Working Groups to consider a specific piece of work or look into a particular issue in more detail outside of the formal meeting of the Committee. Any such Working Group will comprise of members of the Committee, working informally with Officers or other Members and reporting their findings back to the Committee.

Although there were two Task and Finish Groups convened this year, which were the Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group set-up by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and the Local Development Plan Task and Finish Group set-up by the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, the Lower Thames Crossing Task and Finish Group continued their work investigating Highways England's plans to build a new Thames crossing.

Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group

The Orsett Hospital Task and Finish Group held its first meeting in November 2018 to scrutinise the proposed closure of process of Orsett Hospital and looked at the following:

- Proposed transfer of services.
- Timings and operational position of the integrated medical centres.
- The future of Orsett Hospital and alternative proposals.

Members also received a briefing note from the NTS regarding the Sustainability and Transformation Plan and this was discussed in great detail. In addition, Members undertook a site visit to Orsett Hospital which proved interesting for Members as they could see first-hand the problems and benefits of Orsett Hospital, as well as questioning NHS staff and patients.

Local Development Plan Task and Finish Group

The Local Plan Task and Finish Group held its first meeting in January 2019 to discuss and make recommendations in relation to the development and implementation of the Local Development Plan and looked at the following:

- Review the preparation, development of strategies, and policy approaches of the Local Plan and provide comment on its scope and development
- Receive reports, presentations, and updates on government policy and the South Essex Joint Strategic Plan.
- Keep under review the Council's approach to community engagement in the plan-making process.

Members received an overview of the Local Plan and of the Issues and Options 2 Consultation, in which residents had the opportunity to express their opinions on the Local Plan. The Task and Finish Group also received a presentation by David Lock Associates, and the Town and County Planning Association, which informed Members about the most effective way of building new 'Garden Cities', and how to deliver effective communities. Members also discussed transport in relation to the Local Development Plan as traffic and pollution was an issue for Thurrock residents.

Call-ins

Thurrock's Call-In process is a vital aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny function. It allows Councillors or members of the public to ask that a decision of the Cabinet not be implemented until it has been subject to scrutiny by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Call-In of a Cabinet decision can be requested by two elected Members who are not members of the Cabinet, a Chair of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a voluntary group with an interest in the Borough, a local business situated in the Borough or ten residents in the Borough. The Call-In must be in writing and include reasons for the Call-In together with an alternative course of action.

The Call-In once it has been verified as legitimate and in accordance with the provisions of the Council's constitution is then referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee receives all the evidence relating to the issue in question and following consideration makes recommendations about whether the original decision should stand or whether Cabinet should be requested to reconsider its original decision.

During 2018-2019 no Call-ins were submitted to an overview and scrutiny committee.

24 July 2019	ITEM: 11
Council	
Appointment of Interim Monitoring Officer	
Wards and communities affected: N/A	Key Decision: N/A
Report of: Councillor Rob Gledhill, Leader of the Council	
Accountable Assistant Director: N/A	
Accountable Director: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

The Council is required to appoint a Monitoring Officer (MO) under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The appointment of the Monitoring Officer is reserved to the Council and cannot be made by any other body.

This report seeks approval to appoint an Interim Monitoring Officer (IMO) whilst an external recruitment process for a permanent MO is undertaken, interviews of candidates will be held by the General Services Committee (GSC) with a recommendation to Full Council.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Tim Hallam be appointed as the Interim Monitoring Officer of Thurrock Council.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report seeks Council's formal approval to appoint Mr Tim Hallam as the Interim Monitoring Officer following an interview process and consultation with Group Leaders.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The Council is required to appoint a Monitoring Officer under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and the final appointment of this role is reserved to the Council.

3.2 Whilst there is no requirement for the MO to have a legal qualification or background, there is a recognised benefit nationally as interpretation of the

Constitution is often supported by the various Acts of Parliament it is based on and extensive case law that often informs that interpretation.

- 3.3 The MO is required to then delegate the role of Deputy Monitoring Officer/s to any number of his or her team and this can be across a number of disciplines to provide him or her with a range of support whilst also providing the Council with appropriate cover in the absence of the MO. This is a function reserved entirely for the MO.

Current Position

- 3.4 Mr David Lawson is the Council's Assistant Director of Law & Governance and holds the statutory role of Monitoring Officer. The Assistant Director of Law & Governance and Legal Services sit within the Authority's Finance, IT and Legal Services Directorate and reports to the Director of Finance, IT and Legal.
- 3.5 Mr David Lawson announced his intention to retire in April 2019 and a departure date of 31 July 2019 was agreed to see the Council through the election period and start of the new municipal year.
- 3.6 The following has then been progressed:
- Discussions have taken place with recruitment agencies to determine the market for Assistant Directors of Legal Services and Monitoring Officers and the response is that such experienced officers are currently hard to recruit;
 - Based on the above, quotes have been sought from three recruitment agencies and one has now been appointed. Recruitment is expected to take six to eight months with appointment through the General Services Committee and Full Council; and
 - Expressions of Interest to temporarily act up into the AD – Legal and MO role were sought from the Legal Services senior management team.
- 3.7 After consultation with the Group Leaders on 24 June 2019, an interview process took place and Mr Tim Hallam appointed as Acting Director of Law & Governance and subject to Full Council approval it is also proposed that Mr Hallam covers the role of Interim MO until such time as permanent recruitment is completed and confirmed.
- 3.8 Mr Tim Hallam has been acting as a Deputy MO supporting Mr David Lawson and has over twenty years' experience working as senior lawyer across both local and national government as well as experience within leading private legal practices.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To appoint an Interim Monitoring Officer whilst a permanent recruitment process continues.

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

- 5.1 There has been consultation with Group Leaders at a meeting of the Governance Group on 24 June 2019.

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

- 6.1 The appointment of a Monitoring Officer is essential to the Council in complying with Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Sean Clark**
Director of Finance, IT and Legal

There are no financial implications as a result of this recommendation as the cost of the post is within budget.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **David Lawson**
Assistant Director - Legal Services

In accordance with section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the Council must appoint an officer to be its designated Monitoring Officer.

The appointment of the Monitoring Officer must be approved by Full Council and the officer to be appointed to this position must not be the Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer) or the Head of Paid Service.

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires Councils to appoint a Monitoring Officer to ensure the lawfulness and fairness of Council decision making and the role of the Monitoring Officer at Thurrock is set out Chapter 1, Part 2, Article 12 of the Council's Constitution.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development and Equalities
Manager**

The Council is under a statutory obligation to ensure that appropriate equality consideration is given in the exercise of its services and functions.

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

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing the report** (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

N/A

Report Author:

Sean Clark

Director of Finance, IT and Legal

24 July 2019	ITEM: 12
Council	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Transformation	
This report is Public	

Introduction by Cabinet Member

The Thurrock Council economy is strong – and thus, the services to which residents use and depend on are safe until at least 2022/23.

Every council in the United Kingdom has a legal obligation to balance a budget – but there is a difference between Thurrock Council, and others:

- We have **exceeded** the legal requirement by putting forward a medium-term financial strategy which sees Thurrock Council financially balanced not just for one-year; but another four. Indeed, a child who was born in May 2016 will be in their late Early Years education before Thurrock Council is unable to fund services in the way that it does today;
- We are not only financially balanced, but we have **delivered a multi-year, multi-million pound financial surplus** – a surplus which has been spent, penny-for-penny, on our borough – whether it be purchasing a £7m new bin collection lorry fleet to complement our pledge to retain weekly bin collections; investing half a million pounds into delivery Mental Health services; 1.6m into fighting crime above our statutory duty; or funding our *Clean It – Cut It – Fill It* campaign to lift the environmental standards in this borough, and create a place where people are proud to call home;
- We have **protected our services by increasing our “rainy-day” reserve account** – an increase of 38% under the watch of this administration, ensuring that the roof is fixed whilst the sun is shining. We have also enacted a policy that **earmarked reserves will be spent on, on behalf of, and with residents in the forefront of our minds through key projects and initiatives** – Thurrock is not a council which subscribes to sitting idly on money of the tax-payers, for the tax-payers, in the council coffers;
- We remain a **low-tax council** and was one of less than 5% of council’s across the United Kingdom to freeze council tax in 2019/20. Our Council Spending Review objectives – service reviews; a commercial approach; and an investment strategy, has led to a Thurrock Council which no longer looks at what it doesn’t have; but what it does have; at what it can provide, rather than what it can’t; and
- We are a borough which has **record-level and un-paralleled infrastructure investment** happening in its borders, for those in our borders – schemes

designed to improve the life experience of our borough for residents, businesses, passers-by, and those coming to visit – £78m expanding the A13 at the Orsett Cock, £2.3m on building new homes and council properties, £17m on expanding schools, and over £20m on redeveloping Grays and Purfleet (-on-Thames!)

The plan that the Conservative administration embarked on in May 2016 is working – not just for the council's financial health; but more importantly; by extension, directly for our residents to whom we serve – through providing the services we were being told for years that could not be funded for much longer, now years into the future, all the while keeping tax low and leaving residents more money to spend on the families and in the Thurrock economy.

Whilst other councils have lamented and laboured away at a reducing Revenue Support Grant, Thurrock has rejected the ethic of hoping that “someday, something may change; that someone-somewhere, will do something for us”. We rose to the challenge, and I am proud to work with everyone in the Portfolio to whom I work with; more than my team could ever know.

2019/20 will be a year where we hold true on the path we set. Of course, no path to the future is a straight line to the end-destination:

- This year we will be seeking to revitalise the Council Spending Review process – after our three-year service review schedule, we are taking a fresh look at our services, and this time, direction has been set that we need an even greater focus on service equality as part of the CSR expected outputs; and
- This council has a well-improved scorecard – going from 50:50 (pass:fail) to nearly 70:30 – but there is still a 30% gap. This administration is adamant that we wish to close that gap; and we are layering the next phase of the CSR with a refreshed look at not just the structure of services and how they are funded; but a far-harder ambition of service quality enhancement.

Aside from the Council Finances, a personal pride of passion for me is the work we set out and embarked on with our **#LifesLadder initiative - the Fair Debt Summit** in September 2018. As someone who once had household debt myself; as someone who will never forget the emotions, fears and anxieties that household debt can bring to an individual (and later for me, to my family), I was proud of what we achieved. Comprised of teachers, care workers, those with their own life experiences, voluntary groups, council staff, councillors of all colours – we set our ambition and have dedicated approaches to different situations:

- **Those who want to pay, but can't** – we reviewed our Fair Debt Policy and are introducing new technology to help those feeling alone and isolated to reach out for help, without having to face someone physically; whilst still facing up to the issue and getting the structured help needed to get one's personal finances in better health, and ensure that their obligations to pay their council tax can be balanced on a case-by-case basis;
- **Those who can pay, but won't** – we have set out objectives of proceeding to committal for those who starve the system of the tax it needs to pay – some people can afford but chose not to pay their council tax, whilst taking

and using the same services that those honest people, on the lowest incomes, pay for; and

- **We will help future generations anticipate and avoid getting into debt** – we are pioneering education packages for secondary students and young people, which helps them structure their finances, understand the short-and-long-term implications of personal debt, and anticipating when debts are building up out of control.

There remains much left to do – I am confident that Thurrock Council will grow on its financial successes, by pushing forward on the plan we have set out; reflecting on what we need to improve on and looking at those services afresh, and most importantly, by having the willingness and belief that every resident of this borough deserves-to, and can, prosper.

CORPORATE FINANCE

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

Corporate Finance lead on the promotion and delivery of good financial management to ensure that the council's financial position is managed appropriately and public money is safeguarded.

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12M / PERFORMANCE:

Thurrock Council continues to deliver an innovative investments strategy which, in conjunction with the commercial focus and alongside the Council's annual spending review, is delivering high quality services to residents. The approach has enabled the Council to not increase Council Tax while continuing to deliver in priority areas through allocation of the surplus funds projected in the budget. Within the context of a 0% Council Tax increase in 2019/20, the 4 year Medium Term Financial Strategy remains balanced with further projected surpluses totalling £16.7m. This continues the work to becoming financially self-sufficient whilst maintaining the focus on those services that are important to our residents.

The 2018/19 financial outturn position was reported to Cabinet in June 2019. This confirmed core services were delivered within budget, the projected surplus of £2.5m was delivered and the investment strategy enabled the Council to further develop financial resilience reserves. The surplus has been allocated to local priorities including additional policing, further work to address anti-social behaviour in the borough and to deliver outcomes from the fair debt and mental health summits held during 2018/19.

Whilst the Housing Revenue Account balance has been maintained at £2.175m, the General Fund balance has been maintained at £11m, continuing the Administration's commitment to increase this balance against economic and demand led risks.

► FUTURE: COUNCIL SPENDING REVIEW

In 2016, the Administration launched a different approach to setting the Council's budget, the Council Spending Review (CSR). This was to move away from the historic approach of top-slicing service budgets but, instead, concentrates on:

reviewing bottom-up a service; a commercial approach; more or same for less; and reducing the level of growth on demand led services. This is underpinned by a comprehensive review of all services and an ambitious investment strategy.

The process was endorsed by the East of England Local Government Association's Finance Peer Review in June 2017. This continued to deliver service improvements and efficiency savings in 2018/19, which also attracted recognition through a number of awards and nominations in the last year from leading institutes such as the LGIU and the MJ.

The work carried out and planned under the CSR was presented to the Council in February of this year and contributes to a balanced medium term strategy for the next four years with surpluses planned as noted above.

► FUTURE: CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The capital programme continues to evolve under this Administration. There have been significant developments on major schemes in 2018/19. The widening of the A13 is in progress, The Purfleet Centre proposals have received outline planning permission and key projects in Grays town centre continue to develop. This is in addition to further capital investment in environment, schools and highways. There has been further investment in the transforming homes programme and the lifting of the HRA debt cap presents further opportunities to deliver new housing in the borough.

► FUTURE: FUNDING REFORM

The future of Local Government funding is still under review with consideration being given to the overall level of funding, the distribution of funding to authorities in the sector, and, the mechanisms to deliver this funding. Further clarity is expected during 2019/20 and Council Officers continue to consult, and proactively engage and contribute, with MHCLG and the LGA on the proposed reforms.

COUNTER-FRAUD & INVESTIGATION

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

The service delivers the council's annual counter-fraud strategy, working across the different directorates to improve business processes and better educate staff on the fraud risks the council faces. The service also operates a model providing specialist crime fighting services to other public bodies.

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The Standards and Audit Committee received the annual report last week that sets out the many successes and partnerships that the counter fraud service has delivered whilst also receiving international recognition.

Key successes include:

- £3.4m of detected economic crime last year, £27.9m since 2014;
- 2.04:1 ratio of detected fraud to cost;
- The safeguarding of 118 adults and children from harm;
- The use of the Proceeds of Crime Act and civil law to recover monies from fraudsters, over £4.9m has been recovered so far; and
- Launching and embedding the UK's first Cyber Resilience Service in local government, protecting Thurrock and other councils from cyber-crime.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Reports of fraud received and under investigation:

- Housing fraud 127, under investigation 52;
- Blue Badge 10, under investigation 2;
- Social Care 7, under investigation 2;
- Council Tax 52, under investigation 10;
- Cyber 10, under investigation 1;
- Other 133, under investigation 30;
- The unit have recovered 30 properties that were being fraudulently used; these have now been re-let to those in genuine need. The value of this fraud is £690,000

► FUTURE: FOCUSES, PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Since central government granted funding to expand the centre of excellence model in 2014, over 44 public bodies have accessed the specialist capabilities held in the Counter Fraud & Investigation team. This support offered includes providing expertise to tackle the most serious crime including online child abuse, organised money laundering, fraud and cyber-crime.

The team developed a Cyber Resilience Service using its expertise in the investigation of cyber-crime to help other councils in that area too. In recent times, up to 76% of councils were affected by cyber-crime. This work continues to defend against cyber-terrorism, and also ensures we share what we are good at by helping other councils to do the same.

► NATIONAL INVESTIGATION SERVICE

Thurrock's enhanced counter fraud & investigation model has been operating as an investigation service nationally, providing the capability of a national crime-fighting team but working from here in Thurrock. The service was reviewed by MHCLG and the CIPFA towards the end of 2018 to examine how Thurrock invested in its counter fraud services. Thurrock's offering was one of another 58 local authorities who detected £100m fraud in total. The independent auditors found that Thurrock's team (1 of the 58 councils who received the same funding) alone detected £26.2m of the entire £100m.

The auditors commented on Thurrock's model being set apart from any other local authority in the country where its success speaks for itself. The auditor

recommended that Thurrock continue to support other LAs across the country, many of whom have limited or no capability to tackle the most serious cases. In response to this Thurrock has taken an innovative approach of relaunching its national service as the National Investigation Service.

The new National Investigation Service has received support from the Cabinet Office on its model and the function has partnered with the police Eastern Regional Special Operations Unit for Counter Terrorism and Organised Crime, in the only collaboration of its kind in the country.

Our priority has always been to ensure that the council can provide the best possible services to our residents, visitors and businesses taking a strong stance against those who seek to abuse those services for criminal gain. Our development of our Counter Fraud & Investigation function has ensured that it is at the forefront identifying and pursuing those who do attempt to commit crime.

As Cabinet Member for this department, I remain very keen to enhance relations with other local authorities and public sector bodies, of course, where there is a benefit of doing so.

My stance on fraud has always been clear – those that seek to defraud and take money fraudulently, which has expense to those hard-working and honest taxpayers, deserve the right accountability being levied against them. It is right that the correct processes are followed, and that we maintain an “innocent until proven guilty” approach – but those who engage with financial crime should know that Thurrock is no soft target, and our award-winning Counter Fraud team will lead to you being caught and, ultimately, being held to account by the justice system. This is a team which has positive links, and an even more positive perception, in other world-wide public sector bodies, for all the success that they have achieved on behalf of honest tax-payers, and they should remain very proud of their success.

RISK & INSURANCE

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Risk and Insurance team aim to maintain appropriate risk management, insurance and risk financing arrangements for the council.

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

The Council successfully tendered the insurance contract during 2018/19 and improved the level of cover within the existing cost structure. The Strategic/Corporate Risk and Opportunity Register continues to be refreshed annually and has been regularly reviewed/reported to Standards & Audit Committee, Directors Board and Performance Board in line with the Risk and Opportunity Management Framework.

► PERFORMANCE

The council uses the ALARM/CIPFA Risk Management framework to test the council's performance against good practice. For the 2018 review the Council attained Level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best).

Internal Audit reviews of the Risk Management and Insurance functions were undertaken in 2018 and resulted in a Green report for Insurance and a level 4 out of 5 (where 5 is best) for the Risk Management Maturity report. These reviews provide assurance to the council that both the Risk Management and Insurance functions are adequate, effective and performing well.

► FUTURE

The service continues to embed risk management into decision making and ensures the wider Council has access to appropriate advice as required.

REVENUES & BENEFITS/COLLECTIONS

In autumn last year I chaired Thurrock Council's first Fair Debt Summit; part of a new #LifesLadder initiative. The event brought together key partners across various sectors, voluntary sectors and groups with a view to doing something different. It sought to identify ways to help people help themselves, avoid debts of any type, and also ensure that our collections process is fair to those who want to pay but find themselves unable to and not lenient on those that can pay but simply choose not to.

The aims of the Fair Debt Summit were simple:

- 1) Identify help where we can (while recognising that everyone ultimately needs to pay their dues)
- 2) Be tougher where we may need to be with those who play the system; and
- 3) Help provide some education for a younger generation who have yet to experience an economic downturn like the last recession of 2008/09.

As a result of the summit, a wide ranging action plan was produced. The plan included a number of initiatives, some of which were of a quick fix nature along with some that required a longer term approach. I am pleased to be able to provide an overview and progress update on the key themes as follows:

Investment in new technology

- Currently amounts owing to the council are held in 4 different systems which creates difficulties in both establishing a total amount owed and discussing a holistic resolution. In addition information held by other council departments that may suggest potential vulnerability, relevant to an individual's ability to deal with their finances, may not currently be visible to the debt teams. We have therefore instigated a project to provide a '**Single View of Debtor**'. Phase 1 of this project will provide officers with a holistic view of council debts owed by an individual and ensure that any relevant information held by the council

in relation to someone's ability to deal with their financial affairs is visible to the debt teams. The initial part of this project is at a mature stage and whilst I expect this to continue to evolve, it is expected that the initial 'view' will be available to officers in August.

- In recognition that people who owe money fall into different debtor types eg. those that pay late, those that refuse or avoid payment or those that can't pay etc. in order to increase efficiency and enable a fairer approach, phase 2 of the SVoD project will investigate the business case for further development. This will enable us to move away from a standard 'one size fits all' collection process (where everyone receives the same reminders and follow up) to an enhanced data led intelligent approach, more appropriate to an individual's circumstances.

For example if somebody pays their council tax but pays late it may be more appropriate initially to send targeted correspondence to encourage the individual onto direct debit rather than warning them of consequences of non-payment.

Having created the 'Single View', phase 2 of the project will also look to further enhance efficiencies and care by looking for opportunities to combine collection activities for different debts owed – e.g. whilst we need to ensure we adhere to respective legislative processes for each debt type, it would make sense that if we are telephoning or visiting a resident, the officer is in a position discuss all debts owing, rather than undertaking totally separate communications on each debt type. This phase of the project has already commenced with some background investigations.

- We are also looking to further encourage early contact and resolution by widening our outbound contact channels from traditional letter, to include SMS, Email etc. This project has commenced and is currently at procurement stage. The platform is expected to be ready to use for targeted initiatives by December.

Investment in Staff

- In order to create stability by attracting, developing and retaining staff with the right skillsets a new team structure has been agreed. The recruitment process has commenced and once complete will be followed with appropriate training including recognising potential vulnerability, customer care etc.
- Three members of staff have already attended the 'Suicide Prevention Training' facilitated by 'Reach Out'.

Provision of debt advice/support

- We have ensured that information is available for those who need help. Not only do all our collection letters contain information on sign posting to organisations that can provide assistance if required, as an additional feature if somebody searches 'debt advice Thurrock' on the internet, the search results will include a link to a council Webpage. This details some "do's and

do not” and provides information on organisations that can provide further support.

- In order to provide an opportunity for people to obtain the support they need, where a recognised organisation requests it and where appropriate, a hold will be placed on collection action to allow the person owing money some breathing space and the people supporting them sufficient time to consider their finances and provide appropriate advice.
- In order to encourage people to save for a rainy day and provide those who may have difficulty obtaining credit with an alternative to doorstep lenders, we are investigating re-establishing a partnership between the council and an appropriate credit union. In order to achieve this a working group of council officers and support organisations has been formed to review a selection of Credit Unions who are licensed and have the potential to operate within the Thurrock area. The group is in the process of meeting with and reviewing each of the organisations and aims to conclude its recommendations by the end of August.
- The number of Financial Inclusion Officers within the Housing Team has been increased from 2 to 3.
- A financial inclusion role similar to those in place within Housing to prevent homelessness is being introduced within the Benefits team. This role will provide general welfare benefit advice, budgeting advice and assist those identified as potentially vulnerable who have wider council debts. The role will be independent of the debt team and will have autonomy to negotiate sustainable payment arrangements with the individuals they are assisting. I expect this role to be operational by October this year.

Education of our younger generation

- The Education & Skills Team working in conjunction with Thurrock Adult Community College and building on the pilot Money Management course held at Inspire for care leavers, are moving forward with plans to offer the course within mainstream schools. Following a recent presentation 3 schools have signed up to the pilot phase, results of which will be evaluated to consider the future offering. We will continue to offer the programme to care leavers and young people who are not in education, employment or training to ensure that vulnerable young people can gain the skills to manage money and prevent moving into debt.
- In addition to people of school age, Thurrock Adult Community College will be offering a budgeting course to adults as part of their prospectus. The debt team will be promoting this opportunity to people owing money.

For those that can but won't pay

Fortunately Thurrock enjoys some excellent collection rates compared to other councils. To maintain this we continue to pursue those who won't pay through all options available to us. To enhance this we are working with a specialist

enforcement agency to focus on a small hard-core group of debtors. Any residual accounts that the agency are unable to collect will be returned to the office to be considered for further action through Charging Order, Bankruptcy or Committal.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Whilst there is still much to do, I am pleased to say that the 2018/19 outturn figures were extremely positive. Not only did Thurrock again achieve some of the best collection rates in the country, for Council Tax and Business Rates the number of people reaching court or enforcement stage continues to significantly reduce. To support the Fair Debt Agenda and evidence the direction of travel, I am also pleased to note that complaints received regarding the debt collection process significantly reduced last year by 30%.

In total last year, there were 47 complaints received in relation to the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates and Sundry debt, 5 of which were upheld.

► HOUSING BENEFITS AND COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

The rollout of Universal Credit, which commenced in Thurrock in March 2015 for single people, progressed to full service in October 2017. Under full service new working age applicants, including those that have had a break in their claim, are now required to claim support for housing costs through Universal Credit rather than Housing Benefits. Within Thurrock there are currently circa. 3,100 claimants who now receive support with housing costs under the Universal Credit system and 8,000 who continue to receive support through Housing Benefit.

Migration of existing claimants has temporarily placed on hold to allow a small scale pilot to take place. The Government's latest estimate suggests that full migration to Universal Credit will not complete until 2023.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind members that whilst Universal Credit is administered by the DWP, even once fully rolled out, the council will still play a key role in signposting people for Universal Credit. The Council will also maintain responsibility for the administration of Housing Benefit for people of pensionable age, those in temporary homeless accommodation, all claimants for Local Council Tax support and Discretionary Housing Payments for those in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, who require additional short term assistance to meet their Housing Costs.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Despite some additional administration workload the time taken to process Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support remains good with New Claims being currently being processed in an average of 3 weeks and changes of circumstance in less than a week.

Complaints regarding the service remain low with only 28 received in 18/19 of which 29% were upheld. This is a pleasing result considering the service still has a caseload of 9,000 claimants.

► HOUSING BENEFITS - FUTURE

The service will continue to monitor developments and adjust service provision where possible to mitigate the impact of the roll out of Universal Credit and the wider benefit reform agenda.

► COUNCIL TAX - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

Within Thurrock we currently send a Council Tax bill to around 70,000 properties for a net value of £81m. This income stream is critical to fund the services the Council provide and therefore it is vital that to support effective collection and customer service we maintain timeliness + accuracy of billing, processing and assessment of applications and query resolution.

Again, I am pleased to report that whilst work volumes continue to increase in line with property numbers, operational costs have not been impacted. Timeliness of processing and accuracy levels also remains strong with most queries or applications resolved within the week they are received.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

For 2018/19 Thurrock maintained excellent collection rates for Council Tax to achieve an in year collection rate of 98.91%. Whilst we await publication of national results, it is envisaged these results will again place Thurrock among the top performing councils.

Complaints regarding council tax and business rates, billing have continued to reduce with 41 being received last year compared to 55 in the preceding year. Of the 41 received in 2018/19, 9 were upheld. Again this is a low ratio, considering the 70,000 properties billed.

► COUNCIL TAX – FUTURE

The service continues to focus on encouraging residents to transact with the service through cheaper more efficient on line channels.

► NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

For business rates we bill in excess of 4,350 properties for a net value of £127m. Under current funding arrangements Thurrock keeps circa £38m of this amount.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Regarding collection, Thurrock achieved an excellent in year collection rate 99.43% which again is expected to place Thurrock amongst the top performing Councils in the country.

► NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR) - FUTURE

The service is focused on maintaining this excellent performance whilst continuing to monitor the Governments plans to introduce 75% Business Rates Retention which is currently expected from 2020/21.

► SUNDRY DEBTORS - REVIEW OF PREVIOUS 12M

In addition business as usual activities the team have been heavily involved in the migration to the new Oracle platform which went live in April this year.

► PERFORMANCE DATA

Income received through Sundry debt totalled £68.8m in 2018/19, with the net aged debt position remaining neutral compared to the previous year.

► SUNDRY DEBTORS – FUTURE

The implementation of the new Oracle platform will facilitate enhancements to be introduced to further improve efficiency such as introducing the option to pay by Direct Debit for Sundry customers.

FINANCE DIRECTORATE BUDGET CONTROL

► FINANCIAL INFORMATION – 2018/19

Service Area	Full Year Budget £	Full Year Forecast £	Variance £
Finance	4,427,613	4,427,613	0
Total	4,427,613	4,427,613	0

► TREASURY – 2018/19

	Full Year Budget £000	Full Year Forecast £000	Variance £000
Interest & Fees Payable on External Debt	15,192	15,192	0
Interest Receivable on Investments	(38,527)	(38,527)	(0)
Net Interest	(11,476)	(11,476)	(0)
MRP	6,599	6,599	0
Total	4,191	4,191	(0)

COMMERCIAL SERVICES

► SERVICE OVERVIEW

The Commercial Services team leads on the promotion and delivery of best practice in business development and procurement practices across the Council, continuing to build on the cultural shift within Thurrock Council to create a commercially astute Council that delivers innovative and entrepreneurial outcomes, which ultimately, ensures that services are financially safeguarded as they bring in the proportional

income they are expected to; as would be expected of a voluntary or private sector organisation.

The service continues to be the key enabler for ensuring the delivery of existing income generating commitments, identifying income streams that are in line with agreed commercial principles, stretching every pound we spend to continue to deliver great value for money while at the same time delivering best possible outcomes for residents

► REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS 12 MONTHS

► External Income Monitoring

The Commercial Board, chaired by the Director of Commercial Services, monitor the performance of external income across all Council areas. This level of scrutiny and discipline has generated significant returns for the Council, which in turn, leads to funding security for the services of which residents use and depend. In financial year 18/19, gross external income from fees & charges exceeded budget expectations by 5.9%. The Commercial Board is working well and has Council wide representation from each Service Area all committed to delivering on Thurrock's Commercial Principles the outcome of which has resulted in an external income target for 19/20 of £8.9m, a 7.5% growth from 18/19 budget.

► Gross External Income from fees & charges

Directorate £000's	Budget 18/19	Actual 18/19	Budget 19/20
Adults	337.5	330.3	369.2
Adults Client contributions	1,183.4	1,183.4	1,183.4
Children's	1,173.9	1,067.4	1,088.0
Environment & Highways	2,311.4	2,633.6	2,646.7
Housing (GF)	413.2	413.2	414.5
Place	2,845.2	3,081.6	3,110.7
Corporate	25.0	70	100.0
TOTAL	8,289.6	8,779.5	8,912.5

► Business Development

In 2018 the business development team undertook a detailed review of the Thameside Theatre resulting in a three year business plan for the services. In financial year 2018/19 the theatre generated an income of £706.8k and was cost neutral. This year saw the introduction of a new ticketing system and a refresh of the theatres marketing strategy, the theatre has gone from strength to strength in its business plans, a record breaking pantomime and half term shows that were a sell out. New initiatives such as Wicked Wednesdays have brought a new audience to the theatre thanks to our new cinema technology. Commercial hire has also increased thanks to the new booking literature that is now available.

► FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

	Budget 18/19	Outturn 18/19	Variance
Procurement Team	388,334	342,239	46,095
Business Development	294,659	294,659	-
TOTAL Commercial Services	682,993	636,898	46,095

*Variance from the budget was primarily due to staff savings during vacancy and sickness periods, and from income generated following the What Makes a Winning Bid programme.

The Return on Investment of the Commercial Services department is at a ratio of 2:1 thus demonstrating further strength of the administrations financial strategies.

► Council Spending Review

The Service Review Board, chaired by the Director of Commercial Services, monitor the performance of internal, cross cutting service reviews across targeted Council areas. The reviews are carried out based on seven key service design principles that underpin good service delivery practice;

Theme	Principle
People	Are staff upskilled enough to support changes in service delivery models
Technology	Are we maximising the use of available technology to support and enhance service delivery
Procurement	Are we getting best value from 3 rd party contracts
Demand	Can we reduce or control demand within service
Process	Are we working with processes that optimise the efficiency of the service making things simpler for our residents
Property	Are we delivering the service making smart use of our assets
Commercial	Are we maximising opportunities to generate income within the services

During 2018/19 a number of reviews were undertaken across a number of service areas including:

- School Transport
The School Transport Service Review led to a review of how home to school transport is provisioned. Using Ormiston Park Academy as a pilot, private hire transport were decommissioned on three of the four vehicles and children were moved onto public transport. Working together with the School and the Chief Operating Officer of Ensign Bus Company this has had very positive impact. This work will continue under the service review programme and compliments the boroughs wider plans on smarter and greener travel.
- Childrens Social Care Services
The Children's Social Care Service Review resulted in a number of transformational programmes of change. It increased the number of social

workers and reduced the use of agency social workers. It increased the number of in-house foster carers and enabled more Thurrock children to be placed with Thurrock Carers. The implementation of an 'Edge of Care' early intervention strategy aims to provide support to more children and young people to remain safely with their families. Finally, the implementation of the 'Signs of Safety' model, an internationally recognised strengths based model, enables social workers to work more collaboratively with parents ensuring that their views and the views of the children are a key part of care packages.

- ICT & Technology

The ICT service review, resulted in a review of the structure of the team with an emphasis on value and quality of process. There is now a greater understanding of the ICT contracts portfolio and an alignment of many of the contracts e.g. consolidation of providers for staff mobile phone contracts. The restructure of the team resulted in an emphasis on SMART and emerging technologies. Smaller 'lean' improvements were also made such as the increased use of e-signatures to take away unnecessary paper-processing out of a number of key processes such as 'new starters'.

The Service Review Programme for 2018/19 delivered £930k of efficiency for the Council ensuring smarter use of spend. The ambition is to match this achievement again for 19/20.

Having concluded the three-year programme, the Administration have set direction that the CSR will be re-formulated, and a new full spending review of council services will begin - a non-arbitrary target driven study of services we perform, to understand what we should and could provide, and make informed cost/data-based decisions on the future of services, with a renewed looked at service quality to improve the experiences that residents have of the services the local authority provides.

The Administration have also set out plans to make the CSR process more inclusive of all levels of member engagement when the initial timetable for the forthcoming reviews is finalised in Summer 2019.

► **Discretionary Services Fees & Charges**

£000's	Actual 16/17	Actual 17/18	Actual 18/19	Budget 19/20
Total External Income	7,715.3	8,000.7	8,779.5	8,912.5

Our income growth performance over the last three years is impressive, we are not standing still and work will continue on future year fees and charges, ensuring that all commercial principles become a reality and ensure that all discretionary services are cost neutral. In addition, the traded services model will continue to develop throughout 2019/20.

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QUESTION TIME

Questions from Members to the Leader, Cabinet Members, Chairs of Committees or Members appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee in accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 14) of the Council's Constitution.

There are 2 questions to the Leader and 5 questions to Cabinet Members, Committee Chairs and Member appointed to represent the Council on a Joint Committee.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO THE LEADER

1. From Councillor Akinbohun to Councillor Gledhill

There is open buying, selling and use of drugs at Chafford Hundred Station, especially on Friday evenings. It is a shocking experience for my residents and they cannot understand why this is allowed to continue. What can the Portfolio Holder do to reassure my residents or have the Police given up on drug crime?

2. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Gledhill

What urgent procedures and processes are you putting in place pending the presentation of a report to General Services Committee on the recruitment of a permanent Director of Children's Services (DCS) to protect the discrete roles and responsibilities of the DCS, undertake local test of assurances so that the focus on outcomes for children and young people is not diluted and ensure clear lines of accountability are maintained?

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CABINET MEMBERS, COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND MEMBERS APPOINTED TO REPRESENT THE COUNCIL ON A JOINT COMMITTEE

1. From Councillor J Kent to Councillor Maney

What is the reason for the delay to the implementation of the Zone H resident parking zone?

2. From Councillor Fish to Councillor Coxshall

Does the Portfolio Holder have confidence in Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL)?

3. From Councillor Potheary to Councillor Hebb

Can the Portfolio Holder please outline the process for deciding fees and charges for community and voluntary groups to use Council spaces?

4. From Councillor Okunade to Councillor Little

In view of the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding arrangements, how do you ensure the Council contributes effectively to safeguarding Thurrock children?

5. From Councillor Van Day to Councillor Maney

Can the Cabinet Member outline what work is being undertaken to tackle the problem of HGVs parking up on Sandy Lane and using it as a rest area?

Update on Motions agreed by the Council

Date	From	Motion	Status	Accountable Director
31/10/2018	Cllr Gledhill	We call on the elected members of Thurrock Council to support any judicial review, or other legal action, that may be possible against Highways England proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing?	Evidence will continue to be gathered to support a potential future judicial review of Highways England's proposed Lower Thames Crossing. Should the opportunity arise to challenge the process on grounds eligible for judicial review it will be taken.	Andy Millard
31/10/2018	Cllr J Kent	Thurrock Council notes that since decriminalisation of parking in 2005 residents of Lodge Lane have been able to park on their crossovers - as they had been able to for decades before. The decision to enforce against residents parking in this way has caused significant anger and concern against those affected. Council calls on Cabinet to revisit this decision and find a way of allowing residents to park in the way they have for many, many years without any problem.	<p>The Transport Development Team have commenced a review of the Traffic Regulation Order covering Lodge Lane and potential options will be considered.</p> <p>As a result of the issues that have been identified in relation to Lodge Lane, the Transport Development Team have undertaken a review of the Traffic Regulation Order covering Lodge Lane and have considered potential options. These options were considered in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, through the Delegated Decision Report (DDR) process and the decision was taken to revoke the existing restrictions and implement a Red Route scheme along Lodge Lane. This scheme has been included within the Council's Integrated Transport Block Capital Programme for 2019/20.</p> <p>Full public consultation is to be undertaken in advance of the scheme to ensure that it complements the strategic network layout and to understand the requirement and impact of the Red Route option.</p> <p>The Transport Development Team will progress a full Topographical Survey towards the end of July and then commence design and an informal consultation in September, followed by a formal consultation toward the end of November. This will allow sufficient time for the scheme to be implemented in the New Year.</p>	Andy Millard
28/11/2018	Cllr J Kent	Thurrock taxi trade is under huge pressure at the current time. Much of this pressure is being caused by	Officers have sought extensive legal advice in regards to the operation of Uber in Thurrock as to whether the operation can be challenged as being unlawful and a breach of Section 46(1)(d) of the LGMPA 1976,	Andy Millard

Update on Motions agreed by the Council

		<p>the proliferation of Uber in the borough and there needs to be a level playing field for the long standing Thurrock Licensed Taxi Trade and Uber alike. To help achieve this Members call on the Authority to work with Uber London Limited and Transport for London to achieve a redrawing of the boundaries of Uber's geo fence which, currently, includes Thurrock as part of Greater London.</p>	<p>both before and after the recent decision in the Reading appeal.</p> <p>As part of that, an advice was sought from the Council's Legal Team, who's view is <i>"The Council's Legal Team has now fully considered whether Uber's activities in Thurrock are unlawful and are a breach of Section 46(1)(d) of the LGMPA 1976. It is their opinion there is no unlawfulness in the current operation of Uber in Thurrock. Therefore, there is no basis on which to bring a prosecution against Uber. We will now write to Uber to follow up on our previous discussions with them, asking them to withdraw from Thurrock, or make an appropriate operator's licence application with Thurrock."</i></p> <p>These confirm the position that Uber are not acting unlawfully. As such the council has no basis on which to bring a prosecution against Uber. The council will now write to Uber to follow up on previous discussions with them asking them to voluntarily withdraw from Thurrock or to agree to make an appropriate operator's licence application to the council.</p> <p>A formal letter to Uber was issued via the Council's Legal Team w/c 1st July.</p>	
27/2/2019	Cllr Duffin	<p>Thurrock Council will write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling on the Government to reverse its policy of placing Authorities who do not increase Council Tax to the maximum level at a financial disadvantage by assuming such a notional increase have been made when calculating the amount of business rates they will be allowed to retain.</p>	<p>Thurrock Council has responded to the Fair Funding Review being carried out by the Treasury and MHCLG making the unfairness of this approach clear, especially considering historic decisions.</p> <p>The Fair Funding Review is part of the wider resetting of Local Government Finance being conducted by Central Government which also includes the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review and an updated system of Business Rate Retention. This overall reset of the system will consider the overall funding allocated to Local Government, the proposed allocation to individual authorities and the mechanism to access this funding.</p> <p>The Council continues to consult on all elements of the reset and will update members in due course.</p>	Sean Clark
19/6/2019	Cllr Potheary	<p>Thurrock Council notes opposition to the proposed plans to redevelop the Civic Offices. Thurrock Council</p>	<p>This motion is being considered and a full update will be provided in due course.</p>	Andy Millard

Update on Motions agreed by the Council

		calls on Cabinet to abandon this costly and unnecessary project.		
19/6/2019	Cllr Huelin	That Thurrock Council establishes a working group for the next 5 years to ensure events of the Second World War are appropriately commemorated in Thurrock.	A cross party Commemorative Committee will be established to shape and deliver a programme to support community engagement. Cllr Huelin will Chair and group leaders will be invited to nominate 2 representatives to join the Committee. A terms of reference will be agreed and membership will be reviewed annually.	

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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 1

Submitted by Councillor J Kent

Thurrock Council congratulates Grays Athletic Football Club on being named the Bostik League Football Club of the year for 2018/19.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

The motion relates to a matter which affects the Authority or the Authority's area and for which there is a relevant function.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no financial implications as a result of this motion.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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Motions Submitted to Council

In accordance with Chapter 2, Part 2 (Rule 15) of the Council's Constitution

Motion 2

Submitted by Councillor Holloway

That Council notes with extreme concern, the recent instruction from NHS England to NHS Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to set out a clear and agreed timeline by the end of September 2019 for a CCG merger to create a single CCG covering Mid and South Essex.

Council finds the complete lack of consultation by NHS England with us as a key statutory partner and with local residents, prior to issuing an instruction of this magnitude, unacceptable and disrespectful.

Council strongly opposes any move by NHS England to create a single CCG for Mid and South Essex which we believe will damage the strong partnership working and local relationships we have with our NHS partners, shift focus away from local health and care transformation at Thurrock level, and will make our local NHS less accountable to our residents.

Council calls on NHS England to retain a fully constituted CCG at Thurrock level with a Thurrock CCG Accountable Officer and Executive.

Council also resolves to write to our two local MPs to ask them to support our calls and work with us to intervene to prevent this merger.

Monitoring Officer Comments:

This 'on-notice' motion relates to a matter which affects the authority or the authority's area, and relates to a matter in respect of which the authority has a relevant function.

The motion complies with Rule 15, Chapter 2, Part 2 of the Council's Constitution, is not defamatory of any individual, offensive or otherwise infringe the proper conduct of local government, and the recommendation in the motion is not illegal.

Section 151 Officer Comments:

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this motion. However, the Council has a strong relationship with the CCG and has joint governance of the Improved Better Care Fund and this would be a concern if the CCG was not at a local level as it is currently.

Is the above motion within the remit of Council to approve?

Yes

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