

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

Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **7 September 2020**

Due to current government guidance on social-distancing and the COVID-19 virus, the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2020 will not be open for members of the public to physically attend. Arrangements have been made for the press and public to watch the meeting live via the Council's online webcast channel: www.youtube.com/user/thurrockcouncil

Membership:

Councillors John Allen (Chair), David Van Day (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Oliver Gerrish, Martin Kerin and David Potter

Substitutes:

Councillors Steve Liddiard, Sue Hooper, Gerard Rice and Luke Spillman

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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2. Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 July 2020.	
3. Items of Urgent Business	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B	

(4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.

4. **Declaration of Interests**
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

Please contact Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer by sending an email to Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

Agenda published on: **28 August 2020**

Information for members of the public and councillors

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

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

Helpful Reminders for Members

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

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

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



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

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

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

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

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

Pecuniary

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

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

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

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

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

Non- pecuniary

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



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

Our Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

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

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

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

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

Minutes of the Meeting of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 July 2020 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Martin Kerin (Chair), John Allen (Vice-Chair), Alex Anderson, Oliver Gerrish, David Potter and David Van Day

In attendance: Councillor Mark Coxshall, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration
Andy Millard, Director of Place
Sean Clark, Director of Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property
Anna Eastgate, Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects
David Moore, Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery
Rebecca Elsmore, Regeneration Programme Manager
Kenna-Victoria Healey, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was to be live streamed via the Councils website.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2020 was approved as a true and correct record, subject to the following amendment to minute number 19, paragraph 4:

“The Vice-Chair sought clarification on the costs of the project and what the overspend would be. Anna Eastgate explained that the cost was originally valued at £90 million and the DfT had allocated £80 million of funds towards the project.”

2. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. A13 Widening Report

The Director of Place, presented the report which was provided at the request by the Chair of the Committee in order to inform Members on the following specific matters relating to the A13 scheme:

- A breakdown of costs and how the latest out turn forecast has been calculated,
- Details of where the finance to meet any shortfall would come from,

- A timeline of when issues had arisen in the programme resulting in an anticipated completion date of autumn/winter 2021

Members heard how the A13 widening scheme would, when completed provide a continuous three lane dual carriageway linking the M25 to the A1014 Manorway junction. This continuous carriageway was to improve journey reliability, reduce queuing and congestion thereby improving the environment. It was observed how the project involved widening the A13 Stanford le Hope by-pass from 2 to 3 lanes in both directions, from the junction with the A128 (Orsett Cock roundabout) in the west to the A1014 (The Manorway) in the east and replacing four bridges.

The Director of Place explained that the consent for the project was granted by a Harbour Empowerment Order in 2008, with the Council taking on responsibility for the preliminary design in 2011. He continued by outlining the breakdown of costs within the report, which included, Construction, Statutory Undertakers, Preliminary Design, Contract Supervision, Detailed Design, Land Purchase, Technical Support and Risk Allowance. The Committee heard the original approved project budget was agreed at £78,866,586 in 2016, and these costs were based on a preliminary design.

It was highlighted the Council had recently undertaken a value for money (VfM) exercise on the project which had identified based on the current out turn forecast, the scheme still represented high VfM. This meant an additional grant was made available by DfT to SELEP of £8.9m and the SELEP Accountability Board agreed to provide this funding to the A13.

Members were advised of the potential options available to bridge the forecast funding gap were currently being explored and had not yet been confirmed, however it was likely that a combination of funding sources would be required to meet the funding gap.

The third issue raised related to the diversion of utility apparatus. It was explained Statutory Undertakers could only undertake activities to their apparatus at particular times of the year, usually when there is less demand on the system.

The Chair of Committee thanked the Director for presenting the report and explained he would ask each member individually for questions and the questions to be asked in blocks.

He then started by stating the figure within the report of £115 million, was quite significant overspend and the new completion date of the end of 2021 was also a significant delay. He continued to ask if Officers could give a cast iron guarantee that the project would be completed at the end of 2021. The Chair then move onto his second question which he queried out of the three options available to the council to bridge of £27 million funding gap, which would be the preferred option, as far as he was concerned increasing taxes for residents, was not an option.

The Director of Place commented that that he could not give a cast iron guarantee that the budget and the timeline would not slip any further. However, he added that he was confident that officers had a strong grip on the project. Nevertheless, a cast-iron guarantee could not be given due to unseen obstacles which were out of the Council's control, for example the impacts of Covid-19

The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property thanked the Chair for his question and explained within the report that there are three main options in order to bridge the forecast funding gap and all three were being explored. He continued by stating that no option had yet been confirmed, and it was likely that a combination of the funding sources would be required to meet the funding gap. The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property advised members that using council resources such as capital receipts as funding would be a last resort.

The Vice-Chair addressed the committee echoing the Chairs concerns on the overspend of £27 million on the project, he further stated that he agreed there must be other ways to close the funding gap and not to increase taxes for residents.

Councillor Anderson commented that the crux of the issue for this project appear to be in 2016, as there were two contracts with two different companies. He asked whether there was an audit trail for the decision to split contracts within project. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects explained there was an audit trail and in 2016 two Cabinet reports signed off the split contracts, these were taken in March 2016 and then December 2016.

Councillor Gerrish queried the overspend seeking a further breakdown of the £35 million overspend, which included the additional £8.9 million grant. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects highlighted £33 million of the overspend and explained the breakdown in the following ways under the terms of the contract, compensation event for structures £12 million, drainage compensation event £9 million, utility diversion works £10 million plus additional costs relating to communications and water, there was also £1.8 million in inflation costs due to additional delay in commencing contract.

Councillor Gerrish continued to question the potential funding stream used if the Council was to go ahead and use the capital program to pay the funding gap for the project. The Corporate Director of Finance, Governance and Property explained that if the need to use capital resources arose, this would need to be identified within the 2021/2022 or 2022/2023 accounts.

Councillor Potter thanked officers for the report, and commented he had confidence in officers that they will do their best to ensure residents were not put upon to close the funding gap for the project.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and comments on the report content.

5. Stanford-le-Hope Interchange Report

The Director of Place introduced the report and in doing so explained, the report was provided at the Chair's request in order to inform Members on the following specific matters relating to the Stanford Le Hope scheme and in particular:

- A review of the original scheme design, costs incurred, overspend figures and any delays
- Consideration of the revised proposal for the station and the car park

He continued to explain the scheme involved the construction of new station buildings with footbridge and lifts, passenger information system, bus turnaround facility, passenger drop-off points and cycle parking. Since the last update to the PTR Overview & Scrutiny Committee, a pause and reflect exercise had been undertaken to identify a deliverable and cost effective replacement station which could deliver the criteria set out in the approved business case.

Members heard how the original preliminary design of the scheme with a cantilevered deck and podium proved to be a complex and expensive design to deliver. The need for the bus turnaround facility meant that additional land would be required which was in ownership outside of the control of the principle parties.

It was highlighted that the original budget for the scheme was £19.09 million which included an additional £4 million approved by Cabinet in February 2019. The committee were advised there are no delays with the programme at present and the original proposed completion date was August 2021.

The Chair of Committee enquired as to the additional £4 million approved by Cabinet bring the budget for the scheme up to £19 million and saw if this was correct. The Assistant Director of Lower Thames Crossing and Transport Infrastructure Projects advised the original project would never have been deliverable on the £19 million budget. She continued by saying the scheme now had a fix tender contract and with a detailed design was in agreement of meeting the budget.

The Vice Chair of the Committee commented that in comparison to the previous report on the A13 Widening, this project appeared to be a job well done and would be brought in on budget. He continued by stating he felt it was a good idea to scrap the previous design and in turn find land to ensure the new design would be brought in on budget. He further thanked the Assistant Director for her hard work on this project.

Members agreed that the new design for the project was greatly welcomed, especially as it managed to save the creek behind the station and included additional parking.

During discussions Members heard how the outcome of this project had enabled officers to use this as a learning tool and they had reflected such lessons when looking at other projects.

RESOLVED:

That the Planning Transport Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted and comments on the information provided relating to the Stanford le Hope Interchange project.

6. Grays South Regeneration Area: Underpass and Public Realm Option Selection

The report was presented to the Committee by the Director for Place, during which they heard how the Grays South Regeneration Area comprised a number of projects designed to support the vitality of Grays Town Centre including:

- The replacement of the existing level crossing with a pedestrian underpass.
- The development of the new Civic Centre building.
- The development of new town centre residential accommodation.
- The development of new commercial accommodation.
- Improvements to Grays Beach and the Riverfront.

It was explained the focus was on the progress of the Underpass project, the report described three design options, outlined the current cost position and recommended a preferred option to be taken forward. The preferred option gave the project an opportunity to integrate the scheme into the wider Grays regeneration plans.

Members were advised the recommendation was sought from a public consultation exercise which was undertaken in February and March 2020. It was further advised that Option C: The Plaza scored highest against the spectrum of criteria and the Option Selection Report concluded Option C was the preferred design option.

The results of the public consultation exercise undertaken also mirrored the results of the option selection report. Of the responses received, 77% either agreed or strongly agreed with proposals for an underpass. Furthermore, 81% of respondents selected Option C as their preferred option.

Councillor Kerin Chair of the Committee started off by thanking officers for the report, he further commented that it was an important piece of work due to the amount of freight traffic with the links to Coryton and the riverfront. He stated it was crucial to the redevelopment of the town to make use of the riverfront.

He continued to query mitigation in place for local residents and whether officers felt that the consultation undertaken gave officers a clear engagement with residents.

The Regeneration Programme Manager explained within the town centre there were two strands of consultation, public input into the designs and the statutory planning process. She continued, to comment that unfortunately the level crossing would be closed at some points in the construction, however the team were working with Network Rail to minimise this as far as possible.

The Chair asked for a guarantee that the project would be completed on budget and sought the ways officers were to prevent antisocial behaviour in the area and to ensure that the community forums were included within any future consultations. Officers explained it was too early at this stage to give such guarantees but advised that they were following various actions to ensure that the project is delivered on time and on budget.

Councillor Allen agreed with the Chair in relation to antisocial behaviour in the area and thought whether a public protection order could be put in place or CCTV, he also asked if flood mitigation could be included such as sump pump which would reduce flood risk. The Director of Place explained that community safety was at the forefront of the design. He continued by remarking the water table of the area would be taken into consideration with further details required on the project.

Councillor Allen suggested that perhaps local schools could be involved within the project for example, with the décor inside pathway of the underpass. Officers commented this was a good idea and something they were happy to look into.

Councillor Anderson queried that the consultation only had 47 contribution, he stated he felt this was low and sought officer's opinions on this. The Regeneration Programme Manager confirmed that during the consultation it was clear local residents wanted to engage with officers however did not appear willing to complete the forms required for the consultation. The project team would work to increase the numbers of people engaging in future consultations.

Councillor Gerrish commented he felt the program was an important issue locally and was therefore important to listen to local residents and any concerns. He further commented on concerns with regards to potential costs and increased including potential overspend. The Director of Place stated officers were mindful of the budget for this project and confirmed that they were working with this in mind.

Interim Assistant Director Place Delivery advised that the figures in the report were estimated at present, he continued to advise when the report came back to the Committee at the February meeting next year (2021), officers would be able to confirm the cost figures and would be able show more of an understanding of the budget.

Councillor Potter welcomed the report observing that resident safety appeared to be at the top of the design front for the project. He went on to thank officers for the report.

RESOLVED:

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members are asked to Comment on the proposal to recommend Option C to Cabinet as the selected concept to be designed in more detail through the current Development Services Agreement contract with Network Rail.

7. Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

The Committee discussed the items listed on the work programme. It was agreed to keep the February 2021 meeting light as per the work programme. Officers suggested that the September meeting hold the following items:

- Economic Development Strategy
- Local Plan

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration suggested that the Committee might like to include the new Build, Build, Build Scheme on the work programme as it was to hold 4 major projects, for the borough.

The meeting finished at 8.55 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

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7 September 2020	ITEM: 5
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Backing Thurrock: A five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not applicable
Report of: Stephen Taylor, Strategic Lead Economic Development	
Accountable Assistant Director: Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

Backing Thurrock is a five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth. The strategy aims to support economic recovery and, alongside a new Local Plan, drive the Council’s ambition that growth should be infrastructure led, community driven and of high quality. The strategy is being developed in two parts.

This first part of the strategy recognises the underlying strengths in the Thurrock economy and the devastating economic impact that the COVID pandemic is now having in Thurrock and elsewhere. The strategy suggests a pro-active approach where the Council uses the levers it has to support a market led recovery. It proposes a number of immediate actions that are being delivered or can be implemented in the next six months to support the response.

In the medium and longer term the strategy needs to continue to support the recovery but also to take advantage of the huge opportunities arising from underlying changes in the economy. It outlines the foundations of any work to support economic growth and some of the themes that need to be explored to develop a more resilient, growing economy.

Stakeholders in Thurrock have a proud tradition of working together and the strategy proposes a framework within which businesses and other stakeholders will be invited to work with the Council to develop an Implementation Plan for the medium and longer term. The Implementation Plan will capture the work that each partner is taking to support the Thurrock economy and will be written by January 2021.

1. Recommendation

1.1 Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- **Note and comment on the report and strategy**
- **Note and comment on the proposals to co-design the related Implementation Plan with anchor institutions, key businesses, voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders and to return to Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet with a further report seeking approval of that Implementation Plan.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock's level of ambition and determination to drive growth that benefits local people remains as strong as ever, despite the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 crisis. The Council intends to build on strong foundations already established through the existing growth programme and develop a revised strategic approach that will bring further, considerable benefits to people and communities within Thurrock and the wider region.
- 2.2 The Council is determined that growth will be infrastructure led, community driven and of high quality. To deliver on that ambition the Council needs to work with residents, the business community and with stakeholders including the voluntary and community sector to put the right strategic framework in place. A new Local Plan and a revised approach to Economic Development will form the focus of that approach.
- 2.3 While the Local Plan has to be developed in line with a legal framework and will take time to complete, the development of a new strategy for economic development (the Backing Thurrock Strategy) and associated Implementation Plan can be delivered at pace, securing benefits for the local economy, residents and the business community.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Work on a revised approach to economic development began with an assessment of the local economy – its characteristics, strengths, issues and opportunities.
- 3.2 The strategy sets out some key findings from the assessment of the economy and concludes that in recent years the economy has performed relatively well. The local economy has grown, jobs and new businesses have been created and wage levels have improved. Confidence in the economic potential of Thurrock can be seen in the large private sector led investments, particularly in relation to development and expansion of the Ports.

- 3.3 The assessment identified some underlying issues to be addressed including challenges around productivity and a rise in the claimant count (albeit still at a relatively low level). The economy also faces major changes as a result of technological change and automation, the increasing importance of sustainable green growth and changing patterns of world trade. These changes present challenges and also huge opportunities reflected in the strategy.
- 3.4 The COVID pandemic has had a significant impact on the economy. It is still too early to understand the full impact however it is clear that there has been a severe contraction in the economy, that the numbers of people looking for work have increased significantly and that certain more vulnerable groups – like care leavers – are at higher risk, that some businesses – particularly those in the hardest hit sectors – are closing or struggling to survive. The pandemic has also had an impact on commuting patterns and on consumer spending habits that could last beyond the pandemic recovery itself.

Immediate actions

- 3.5 In the short term the strategy outlines immediate actions that the Council has already taken to help shore up the local economy and support resilience of key sectors. These actions have included timely distribution of funding from the Government support schemes, grant funding for resilience within the voluntary sector, engagement and sharing information with local businesses and supporting the reopening of the economy.
- 3.6 Building on the strength of partnerships in Thurrock. The strategy proposes some new initiatives that the Council can work with partners to deliver – helping local people find work (including particularly vulnerable groups such as care leavers), supporting the local economy by working with Thurrock's major partners across both the public, private sector and Thurrock residents to develop a Back Thurrock Economic Partnership that aims to procure significantly more goods and services from local businesses, recruit locally and work together to ensure that the Thurrock economy is resilient. The strategy will ensure the Council is planning for and managing new local outbreaks of COVID so they are contained and controlled quickly and efficiently to minimise impact on Thurrock businesses and residents.

The Vision and Approach

- 3.7 The strategy recognises the huge opportunities that there are in Thurrock to deliver resilient growth over the next five years. It sets out a vision based on the underlying strengths of Thurrock as a dynamic, entrepreneurial trading economy. Setting out the opportunities that arise from longer term changes to Thurrock's economic activity - including green growth, changing trade patterns and technological change. There are two further themes to the strategy that sit alongside recovery from the pandemic as the basis for the medium and longer term actions – building resilience and a return to growth.

- 3.8 The strategy recognises the proud tradition of working together to design and deliver shared approaches in Thurrock and proposes a collaborative approach to delivering market led growth. The approach focuses on working with other anchor institutions – who have invested in Thurrock, are committed for the long term and have a real interest in growing a successful and vibrant economy. Working with the other anchor institutions the Council can facilitate a discussion around the five different areas of potential collaboration set out in the strategy that we want to explore.
- 3.9 In parallel the Council will work with other stakeholders including Thurrock Business Board, business representatives, the voluntary and community sectors and public institutions to develop actions based around the foundations of economic growth set out in the report.

The Implementation Plan

- 3.10 The second part of the strategy – the Implementation Plan – will be developed through the autumn. It will include the short term actions already underway and the medium and longer term priorities identified through the co-design process.
- 3.11 The Implementation Plan will be prepared by January 2021 and delivery will begin straight away. It will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as opportunities arise.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The strategic framework to drive Thurrock’s growth ambitions needs refreshing in light of the significant changes in recent years. While the development of a new Local Plan takes time, a fresh approach to Economic Development can be delivered and implemented at pace.
- 4.2 The impact the COVID pandemic means that there is a need to deliver urgent short term actions that will help counter the impact and will help businesses recover. The strategy sets out a number of short term actions that can be delivered straight away to support economic recovery.
- 4.3 There are also opportunities for Thurrock in the medium and long term; to develop a more resilient economy able to overcome the impact of COVID; to address any underlying issues; to take advantage of the huge opportunities to come. The report sets out a framework within which the Council can collaborate with other stakeholders to develop a clear shared Implementation Plan which will form the second part of the Strategy and will be produced by January 2021.

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

- 5.1 Initial discussions have taken place with Thurrock Business Board and with other key stakeholders including potential anchor institutions. The draft strategy reflects those discussions and sets out a framework for consultation and collaboration to ensure that the final strategy and Implementation Plan are community driven.

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

- 6.1 The Backing Thurrock Strategy will support the Council's vision and priorities. Notably the priority relating to prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.
- 6.2 There will be an impact on other policies and priorities across the Council. Appropriate links will be made through the consultation on the first part of the strategy and the collaborative approach to developing the Implementation Plan.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Governance

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities

The strategy and supporting implementation plan will be informed by a Community Equality Impact Assessment that will seek to remove barriers to participation impacting individuals and communities with protected

characteristics, as well as those affected by health and/or socio-economic conditions.

This report sets out an intention to support the whole community - including those hardest to reach – to help improve skills and access to good jobs. The implementation plan will need to consider how best to work with stakeholders to ensure that actions address deprivation and help residents benefit from work.

The focus on a collaborative approach to market led growth – working with the anchor institutions and wider voluntary and community sector- is to be welcomed as a way of generating and retaining wealth within Thurrock. Through the co-design of the implementation plan all views will be considered to ensure that challenges facing individuals and communities are overcome or minimised, before moving to the medium and long term delivery phase.

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

The Backing Thurrock strategy should have positive implications for many other priorities - health and wellbeing, education and skills, community development and civic pride. The approach to the design of the Implementation Plan set out in this report will help ensure appropriate links between different priorities are made.

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):

- <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>
- www.gov.uk
- www.obr.uk
- www.bankofengland.co.uk/

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Backing Thurrock: A five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth

Report Author:

Stephen Taylor

Strategic Lead

Economic Development

Backing Thurrock

A five year strategy for economic recovery, resilience and a return to growth.

DRAFT

Introduction

Thurrock is a place of opportunity and entrepreneurship.

Our motto translates as 'By Thames to all peoples of the world' and it tells our story. At the heart of the Thames Estuary to the east of London Thurrock makes the most of its natural advantages as a dynamic trading economy, utilising its 18 miles of riverfront and proximity to the big UK markets in the capital and wider south-east.

Given our location it is unsurprising that sectors such as wholesale and retail, transportation and storage, construction and administrative and support services are particularly important to the local economy. It is these sectors, alongside education, health and social work that generate a significant number of our jobs. We continue to attract private sector investors who are looking for a place with potential to grow. We have a 'can do' attitude and an entrepreneurial spirit with more than 6,000 micro and small businesses. We have seen high numbers of people who can work in work – either as employees or setting up their own businesses.

In recent years Thurrock's economic prospects have been looking up:

- The economy has been growing: In 2013 the Thurrock economy was worth around £2.8billion. This has increased to around £4.1billion in 2019.
- The number of businesses in Thurrock has been rising: The number of enterprises has grown from around 5,000 in 2015 to nearly 6,500 in 2019
- There have been growing numbers of people who are working and more jobs created in Thurrock: Over the last five years the number of residents who are working has increased from just under 80,000 to nearly 85,000 (an increase of 4% as a proportion of working age people). The number of jobs in Thurrock has increased from 72,000 to 78,000 over the same period and the number of workless households has declined from 7,800 in 2015 to 5,900 in 2019.
- Pay has been improving. Gross weekly pay for full time workers in Thurrock has increased by nearly £100 per week over the past 5 years to £587.60 and is now higher than the East of England and Great Britain. Residents have also been earning more wherever they work. Residents working full time have increased earnings from £563 to £632 per week over the same period
- There has been huge investment in Thurrock: Thurrock is benefitting from around £20billion of investment in homes, jobs and infrastructure. This includes some high profile private sector schemes including the expansion of the Port of Tilbury, development at DP World, expansion at Lakeside and at Thames Enterprise Park.

Like many other local economies there are areas of concern. For example the claimant count has increased - from 2.1% in Jan 2015 to 3% in Jan 2020. Thurrock has some areas that are among the most deprived in the country and that should benefit from the levelling up agenda. Our local economy has also faced some productivity challenges.

Our economy was also facing major change as a result of technological change and automation, the importance of sustainable green growth and changing patterns of trade arising from leaving the EU. These significant changes present challenges but also huge opportunities.

The Thurrock economy was strong and growing. There was significant interest in Thurrock as a place of opportunity and a determination to create a business friendly environment ready for continued investment and growth.

Then the COVID-19 Pandemic hit. It is still early days to measure and understand the impact of the Pandemic and there are many different forecasts about the severity of the downturn, the impact it is having on the claimant count, the number of businesses that will struggle to survive and, most crucially, how long the impacts will last. However certain points are clear:

- There has been a significant contraction in the economy. The estimates for downturn in the April to June quarter vary but we know the UK economy shrank 5.8% in March and more than 20% in April. The Bank of England estimates a 25% drop in GDP in Quarter 2 triggering a deep recession. While most forecasts expect a bounce back as the economy reopens improvements in the latter part of 2020 are not expected to offset reduction in the first part of the year.
- The claimant count has increased significantly. In March 2020 Thurrock had a claimant count of 3.3% or approximately 3,500 people. By June the figure had increased to 7.6% or more than 7,600 people. Even more concerning is that certain groups such as young people are particularly badly hit and that the gap between performance in Thurrock versus the rest of the UK has grown (the national claimant count rate is 6.3%). This suggests that the jobs people in Thurrock do are less resilient to economic shock
- Certain sectors have been particularly badly hit. Different sectors of the economy have been impacted in different ways. Accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail, transport and storage, education and arts, entertainment and recreation have all seen a significant decline in activity. The most resilient parts of the economy are those where workers are most able to work from home;
- Many businesses and workers are dependent on Government schemes designed to keep the economy afloat. There has been unprecedented action to support businesses and the workforce through the lockdown and it is clear that a significant proportion of the economy has been badly hit
- There are a number of economic vulnerability assessments and indexes that have been produced to show the impact of COVID on particular areas. Oxford Economics have developed a coronavirus vulnerability index which assesses each local authority area against three measures:
 - economic diversity – the prevalence of particularly vulnerable sectors in the economy
 - characteristics of businesses – including size and number of self-employed people
 - connectivity – given the increasing reliance on home working

While Thurrock is about average in terms of economic diversity and characteristics of business, its connectivity is a particular concern with some parts of Thurrock having poor broadband connectivity. In addition there are relatively low rates of home working;

- Fear of a second spike in infections and local, national or international lockdowns will continue to impact on consumer behaviour and on the economy more generally. While many forecasts expect there to be a strong economic recovery in 2021 it is not expected to completely offset the downturn this year.

Such a shock to the economy requires a different approach to economic development. A proactive and collaborative approach where decisive action is taken to make best use of resources available to help shore up the economy, protect business, key sectors and jobs in the short term.

It won't be possible to save every job and every business and the economy is likely to work differently in the long term. So alongside short term action there needs to be a longer term approach that helps build on the inherent strengths in the Thurrock economy and the opportunities that technology, green growth and EU exit offer.

The Council has a vital role to play in leading work to support recovery, improve resilience and help the economy return to growth. The Council can:

- act as an analyser, understanding the underlying state of the local economy and sharing information with others;
- use its own clout as a major employer and business to help drive economic recovery and growth, diversify the economy, built resilience and economic growth
- act as an agent of change, helping to link the approach to interconnected priorities such as addressing poverty, ill health, social isolation, resilience in the voluntary and community sector among others.

This isn't something that the Council can or should do alone. As a key anchor institution with a responsibility for Thurrock as a whole the Council has a role as a leading organisation to encourage and facilitate a wider approach with stakeholders to support and grow the economy.

In recent years Thurrock has developed a proud tradition of co-designing services with stakeholders. From the 'your place your voice' consultation informing the Local Plan to the Stronger Together Thurrock partnership the value of developing shared vision and acting together is well recognised. We need to take a similar approach and harness the power of collaboration to shape and deliver this plan.

We have to recognise that there are no easy answers, that resources will be tight and that intervention may need to be long term but the fundamentals haven't changed – Thurrock is a fantastic location, has good access to markets for goods and services, boasts an entrepreneurial culture and a large number of people who are committed to working life.

There are opportunities out there and we need to be brave, work together and grab them with both hands. In short this plan is a call to work together and back Thurrock.

Recovery: Our immediate actions

In the short term in the next six months we need to focus on rescue and recovery.

The Council has been working hard throughout the pandemic to support the borough and its residents, from help for the most vulnerable in the community to making use of Council resources and Government initiatives to support businesses in Thurrock.

The immediate actions that the Council has taken include:

- Delivered financial support
 - Implementation of Government grant schemes – the Small Business Grants Scheme and the Grants for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Businesses. So far the Council has paid out £21.7m to more than 1700 eligible businesses.
 - Developed and implemented a discretionary grants scheme aimed at helping those businesses hardest hit but unable to access the other schemes on offer. The schemes has distributed £900,000 to 134 businesses so far.
 - Implemented business rate reliefs for eligible businesses and deferred payment of business rates until new bills could be sent.
 - Implemented its own initiatives including deferral of rental payments on commercial property owned by the Council for three months.
- Gathered data to understand impact and to raise issues with Government. Working closely with local businesses including Thurrock Business Board to understand the impact on the local economy and to inform discussions with Government.
- Provided easy to access advice and guidance on responding to COVID to local businesses. Sending regular updates to more than 2000 local businesses who have signed up for the business newsletter, promoted new guidance and opportunities via social media and tried to help respond to calls from businesses asking for help
- Supported the reopening of the High Street – introducing signage, reviewing queueing systems and talking to local business contacts to find out if they plan to reopen and to help them find answers to questions they may have
- Protected the public , businesses and their employees by:
 - employing staff to help maintain social distancing measures at particular pinch points
 - helping businesses understand and comply with guidance on reopening
 - taking action to encourage and enforce the rules when required

Working together to back Thurrock

This is a positive start, but there is more we can do and will do to help. We need to work with our residents, our business community and our voluntary and community sector to:

- Invest in gathering economic intelligence and insight so it can identify and respond to developing issues

- Plan for local outbreaks. The Council's public health team have developed a Local Outbreak Control Plan working with partners to ensure there are effective systems in place to identify the source of an outbreak, to track and trace people who may be affected, to shut down the problem and protect local residents and the rest of the local economy. The plan will be developed and strengthened as we understand more about the virus
- Help people find work. Connect residents to new job opportunities and to gain the skills they need to find work. Promoting and expanding initiatives like Thurrock Opportunities – www.thurrockopportunities.co.uk – to help people find local jobs, apprenticeship opportunities and training courses. There needs to be a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as young people, care leavers, SEND and those with learning disabilities
- Support our local economy. We need to work together to develop new systems that help us all to buy locally, recruit locally, supply locally and to train locally.

We will continue to explore other opportunities including funding, new Government initiatives or home grown ideas to help our economy recover from the pandemic.

This is something that everyone can help with.

We all want to see our local businesses recover and new business emerge. We all want to see our family, friends, neighbours and colleagues in good quality jobs. We all want to see the wealth created in Thurrock spent in Thurrock, levelling up to benefit us all.

We have seen the community in Thurrock pull together and support each other through the lockdown, from the volunteers who have helped their vulnerable friends and neighbours to the fantastic key workers who have kept everything running.

Now everyone needs to do their bit to help the local economy recover.

Our Vision and Approach

In the medium to longer term we need to reframe our approach to economic development and growth. In these unprecedented times we need to realise the potential of local Government to act as an agent of change and a leader of place and collaborate with others to reshape our local economy, address the challenges we face and realise the fantastic growth potential we have.

Our Vision for Growth

Thurrock's motto – 'By Thames to all peoples of the world' reflects our comparative strengths and unique selling points.

Our prime position next to London and the markets of the south east, our great transport links, our scope to export and import through our ports, our employment land availability all point to Thurrock having a fantastic opportunity to grow in a way that benefits everyone.

We need to recognise that we are part of the system that is already delivering for the UK economy and point to our strengths as a place to do business.

Thurrock's level of ambition and determination to drive growth that benefits local people is stronger than ever. However we do not want to see growth for the sake of it. We are determined that growth in Thurrock is infrastructure led, community driven and of high quality. It must deliver real benefits for our residents and for our business community who have shown a commitment to Thurrock by investing in the area.

Physical change in the borough will be guided by development of the new Local Plan, policy changes and the regeneration projects led by the council and other organisations across the borough.

This plan is about people, place and prosperity. It focuses on how the Council and its partners can help residents find good jobs with opportunities to progress, how we help our businesses adapt to new technology and to changes in demand, how we help our economy to become more productive and resilient, greener and wealthier. Most of all we need to work with our businesses to help them take advantage of the opportunities that are out there.

These are laudable aims in themselves but we also want to drive growth because of the positive impact on other priorities we all share: Improving the health and wellbeing of residents, helping to reduce poverty, tackle debt and to level up our communities, supporting investment not only in roads and rail but also in homes, schools, health and green spaces. Most importantly we want to support proud, vibrant communities.

Alongside our immediate work to recover from COVID we need to focus on:

- **Resilience:** Building an inclusive economy, helping people and businesses to plan for and adapt to changes in the economy, providing tailored support for vulnerable groups, support the levelling up agenda and take advantage of opportunities as they arise
- **Returning to growth:** Strengthening our key sectors and taking advantage of new opportunities created by long term changes in the economy such as green growth

What we do and how we do it will need to be defined with our partners. We want to collaborate with our businesses, our partners and stakeholders to develop our plans for driving resilience and growth

Most of all we want to work with the other anchor institutions in the borough to understand market needs and to facilitate growth and wealth creation that will benefit local people.

In short, we want to work together to be Back Thurrock.

Collaborating to facilitate market led growth

We want to collaborate with other public sector institutions, private businesses and key voluntary sector groups that are established in Thurrock – Thurrock's Anchor Institutions that are rooted in our Borough, unlikely to move and are committed to Thurrock. Our Thurrock Anchor Institutions have a vested interest in Thurrock and we can work collectively to facilitate growth and benefit the whole economy.

Our call to action highlights five areas that we particularly want to explore:

- **Recruitment** - good quality jobs with prospects: by working together with key anchor institutions in Thurrock can have a defining impact on the prospects for local people – recruiting from local areas, particularly more deprived communities and building progression routes in work. We also want to explore how we can best help the most vulnerable and those hardest by the pandemic.
- **Collaborative procurement:** working together we can explore developing local supply chains that will support local businesses, the voluntary and community sector, social and micro-enterprises and employment, helping local people benefit more from the local economy. Many organisations, including the Council are looking at their procurement policies to see how much they can do to support the local economy and secure wider benefits through social value frameworks. For example in Preston spend by anchor institutions retained in Preston reached £112m – a rise of £74m compared with 2012/13. Manchester increased the proportion of spend with organisations based in or with a branch in Manchester from around half in 2008/9 to around 75% in 2015/16 – an additional boost of £350m.
- **Nurturing and supporting local businesses.** We can focus on nurturing locally owned businesses including social and micro enterprises that are more likely to employ, buy and invest locally.
- **Investing in Thurrock.** Active promotion of Thurrock as an area for investment - focused on key sectors and the responsible businesses we want to attract to contribute to the local economy. .
- **Using assets to enable the economic recovery:** whilst recognising the importance of return on assets considering how land and property assets held by anchor institutions can be best used to enable economic recovery and growth.

By collaborating we can achieve more than the sum of the parts. Through our intervention we can facilitate the market and generate jobs and growth that creates wealth within Thurrock and that stays invested in the area and increases the sustainability of key sectors. There are other wider benefits as well. We can collaborate to help address skills shortages, we can build local supply chains that are greener and more resilient, we can reduce demand for public services through positive early intervention before needs become acute.

Through collaboration we want to identify needs and develop actions around the foundations of economic growth

The Foundations of Growth

We have identified five foundations for economic growth.

- **Business Advice and Support**

We want to work with the business community and business service providers to disseminate information and advice, address gaps in provision, strengthen networks between businesses and support collaboration in areas of shared interest such as developing supply chains.

Through our business advice and support we need to promote and improve productivity. The UK is less productive than comparator economies and as a result the country is poorer than it might otherwise be. Before COVID addressing the productivity gap was the key thrust of the Government's industrial policy.

We also need to make sure we help businesses understand the changes there will be as a result of leaving the EU and help gear up to take advantage of opportunities to generate export-led growth that arise.

- **Skills Training and Employment**

We want to develop opportunities for lifelong learning, addressing skills gaps and encouraging ongoing learning and development to develop an adaptable resilient business community and workforce

We also want to help local people find good jobs. We need to work together to promote local employment opportunities and to help drive local recruitment. We need to understand and overcome the barriers to employment and to work with particularly vulnerable groups such as care leavers and those with health conditions to help them realise their potential.

- **Sectors and supply chains**

As the economy moves from recovery and returns to growth key sectors that have growth potential, high value, are resilient and offer clean growth should be targeted with public intervention to facilitate market led growth and to attract inward investment. We have data on our most important and key growth sectors already but exploring potential with people already working in these sectors and understanding how we can best support them to grow is key.

Alongside a targeted approach to key sectors developing strong local supply chains to service those businesses will further encourage and support their growth.

- **A cleaner, greener economy**

Responding to climate change and reducing carbon emissions will be of continued importance to individuals, businesses and to Government. It is likely that national initiative will drive responding to climate change but locally we can focus on the opportunities this creates for green growth.

However addressing climate change is a real opportunity for the local economy – to innovate, adapt and to develop new businesses and markets.

- **Civic Pride and Community Engagement**

Civic Pride in our growth story and support from the local community will be essential to deliver on our growth ambitions and create the vibrant, dynamic society that helps everyone to realise their potential. If we want businesses and residents to feel ownership and to support the local economy we need to review and build upon our ways of engaging to bring people in to influence our work.

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Resilience and a Return to Growth

Resilience

Resilience is key to ensuring that individuals and organisations in Thurrock are in a position to take advantage of the opportunities afforded by Thurrock's location and the significant investment there is in the local economy.

It is also key to ensuring we have an inclusive economy, that people left behind have the opportunity to benefit from work – financially and through the many other benefits associated with participating in the economy such as better health and wellbeing outcomes; that helps businesses embrace new technology and improve productivity; that helps 'level up' areas of deprivation and creates new opportunities for everyone.

Some of the themes we would like to explore with our stakeholders include:

Resilience among individuals:

- Helping to address the skills shortages in the economy and prepare local people for the new jobs that will be created in the coming years
- How we can better link local people to local employment opportunities and help career progression
- How we link skills and employment opportunities with other services to overcome multiple barriers to employment – such as debt management, housing opportunities, health and wellbeing services, childcare provision
- How we can help our most vulnerable residents such as care leavers and those with health issues to realise their potential and find rewarding work

Resilient businesses:

- How we can help businesses to network and trade with each other
- How we can work together to improve productivity, embrace new technology and prepare for changes to the way we work such as automation
- How we can work together to help make sure that the wealth generated in Thurrock benefits the people and businesses of Thurrock

Resilient economy:

- What we can do to improve the infrastructure in the economy - transport links, digital connectivity
- How we can help improve links between local people, skills providers and businesses to give residents the skills that employers need
- As a trading economy we need to explore what we can do to take advantage of opportunities arising from leaving the EU or changes to Government Policy such as the creation of Freeports - to support our local economy
- Can we take advantage of opportunities created by the drive for green growth
- Can we support the levelling up agenda so everyone has the opportunity to benefit from growth?
- Can we take steps to build pride in what Thurrock has to offer – to recognise what we're good at and to focus on the sectors with most potential

Rebuilding Growth

Thurrock is a dynamic trading economy with an ambitious growth programme. The significant investment in the economy in recent years shows the confidence of private investors and public institutions in the potential of the area.

While the pandemic has resulted in a marked downturn Thurrock is well placed to weather the storm and to rebuild growth in the economy. Some of the themes we want to explore around the return to growth include:

- Building the case for investment in public infrastructure to help the economy to grow
- How we make best use of our position on the river and the opportunities afforded by the Ports to drive growth
- How we can support businesses in our key sectors and those with the most potential to grow
- What we can do to promote green growth
- How do we address the productivity gap, adapt to new technology and automation while ensuring our workers have the transferable skills to find new jobs
- How we can promote Thurrock and sell ourselves as a location for businesses that will support the local economy and create good jobs.
- How we can best exploit public and private investment in our key growth hubs to help businesses to grow

Exploring these themes and the foundations of economic growth with our anchor institutions and with stakeholders we will develop an Implementation Plan that will form part 2 of this report. The implementation plan will be prepared by January 2021 and implementation will begin immediately.

A call to action

We need your help.

There are things we can all do to help rebuild our economy and to support the recovery from the pandemic in the short term:

- We can buy from local businesses, we can try to recruit locally, and we can look for local suppliers of goods and services. All these things will help local businesses and jobs and ensure that wealth created in Thurrock stays in Thurrock.
- We can make sure we comply with social distancing rules and guidance, we can quarantine ourselves if we have COVID symptoms and we can support local track and trace services to help minimise the risk of a second wave and local lockdown
- We can start using our most vulnerable local facilities and businesses again as they reopen. We can begin to eat out, enjoy a drink, watch a film, get a haircut and see a show. Guidance needs to be followed but as the economy starts to reopen we can support it.

We also want to hear your thoughts on this plan, what you think makes sense and what you would change. If there are gaps we should address or opportunities we have missed. There will be a consultation on this report and it will be an opportunity for you to have your say and help shape our plans.

In parallel we want to work with our anchor institutions, with Thurrock Business Board and with other stakeholders including the voluntary and community sector to explore the issues and opportunities identified to build resilience and return to growth.

We will be arranging a series of roundtable discussions through the autumn and developing an implementation plan full of initiatives and actions that we want to collaborate on and implement in the medium and longer term.

We aim to have an implementation plan in place by January 2021. Delivery will begin straight away and the plan will be refreshed on a regular basis as opportunities arise.

Let's back Thurrock together.

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7 September 2020	ITEM: 6
Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Thurrock Local Plan – Next Steps	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Not applicable
Report of: Sean Nethercott, Strategic Lead Strategic Services	
Accountable Assistant Director: Leigh Nicholson, Interim Assistant Director Planning, Transport and Public Protection	
Accountable Director: Andy Millard, Director of Place	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report summarises the steps that the Council will need to take to prepare a sound Local Plan in accordance with all relevant legal and procedural requirements and consistent with national policy.

It also sets out some of the steps that the Council will take to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the local process, and to ensure that future public consultations are undertaken in a safe, open and inclusive way.

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee provide comment on the contents of this report and the approach to preparing a new Local Plan

2. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Timescales and Programme

2.1 Although the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown has led to some delay in progressing the Plan, it is not considered that the timetable will slip considerably. Work has continued on the commissioning and completion of necessary technical work with only limited delays being experienced in getting this work completed. Additional work is now being undertaken to develop a more detailed project plan with a view to the Council publishing an updated

Local Development Scheme (LDS) in October 2020. A Member engagement programme will run in tandem.

- 2.2 The Government expects all Local Authorities to have a Local Plan adopted by December 2023. Work is underway to ensure that the Council meets this deadline and it may be possible to bring forward its adoption subject to funding and the Council being able to manage and mitigate any future delays caused to the plan-making arising from the Lower Thames Crossing Development Consent Order (DCO) process and the timescales for preparing the South Essex Plan.

Impact of Covid-19 on the plan-making process

- 2.3 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will have significant and potentially long lasting economic, social and environmental impacts all of which could have profound impacts on how we live, work and travel in the future. Notwithstanding the inherent difficulties that this causes, the Council is still required to progress the production of the Local Plan in order to avoid the threat of possible Government sanction and intervention.
- 2.4 Although the effects of the Covid-19 lockdown has led to some delay in progressing the Plan, work has continued on the commissioning and completion of necessary technical work with only limited delays being experienced in getting this work completed.
- 2.5 However, as work on the plan progresses, the ongoing impact of Covid-19 is likely to have significant implications on the way that the Council undertakes its obligations in respect of community engagement and involvement in the plan-making process.

Community Engagement

- 2.6 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on plan-making has been updated setting out how local authorities can review and update their Statements of Community Involvement. This states that where “any of the policies in the Statement of Community Involvement cannot be complied with due to current guidance to help combat the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), the local planning authority is encouraged to undertake an immediate review and update the policies where necessary so that plan-making can continue.” The PPG states that any temporary amendments should promote effective community engagement “by means which are reasonably practicable”. Various online engagement methods are suggested, including virtual exhibitions, digital consultations, video conferencing, social media, whilst requirements for physical documents to be publicly available for inspection, may be satisfied through online publication.
- 2.7 To ensure accessibility for those without internet access, authorities are advised to consider engaging directly with representative groups, focusing on those in areas specifically affected by proposals, whilst allowing individuals to

nominate others to represent their views on their behalf. It also suggests that representations may be made by telephone or in writing where alternatives cannot be identified.

- 2.8 In order that the Council's approach to Community Engagement complies with Government Guidance, it is proposed to review the Local Plan Statement of Community Involvement and to identify any necessary amendments as may be required to ensure that the process of community engagement can be undertaken in a safe and effective manner over the course of the plan-making process. This work will also seek to identify alternative means of public consultation and the costs and feasibility of rolling these out as should they be required in the future. It is anticipated that this review will be completed in autumn 2020 with any subsequent amendments to the Statement of Community Involvement following shortly after. A further report on this matter will be presented to Members in due course.

Thurrock Design Charrettes

- 2.9 The Council's approach to growth is that it should be community-driven, infrastructure-led and make a key contribution to high quality place making. The need to plan for future housing and economic provision due to population growth and the impact of wider socio-economic and environmental factors means that Thurrock will change considerably over the next 20-30 years. Having an up-to-date Development Plan is a key component in ensuring that the borough grows in a sustainable way with the necessary supporting infrastructure in place.
- 2.10 Following a successful bid to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for support, the Council were chosen as one of two Local Authorities (Cornwall was the other) to pilot the potential use of Design Charrettes as a means helping local communities influence the future planning and development of their area and to ensure the delivery of better standards of design and quality of place. Funded by MHCLG, the Princes Foundation was commissioned to assist the Council in facilitating a stakeholder engagement process and masterplan visioning exercise for Aveley to explore how any new growth could potentially act as the catalyst for the regeneration of the village centre and its surrounding communities.
- 2.11 The Enquiry by Design (EbD) process has four parts: technical briefings made simple for people to understand, a site visit to further understand and remember the technical constraints and opportunities, a general workshop in mixed groups where all groups look at the same problem out of which the commonalities are recorded as a 'consolidation plan' and then technical scrutiny where the professionals are allowed to test the plan and feedback any refinements.
- 2.12 The outcome of the Charrettes process will include a vision and set of principles for each location that will guide the future development of the area and, in doing so, help inform the preparation of more formal place-making

planning policy documents, including the Local Plan and any associated Inset Plans, Master Plans or Development Frameworks. This process will also help identify the necessary infrastructure improvements required to support the delivery of the place-making strategy, and by involving key stakeholders and the community in the planning and design of their community, the charrettes approach can help to build confidence and collective enthusiasm for the vision and its delivery and implementation.

- 2.13 Following the Aveley Design Charrette Process it is further proposed to develop and roll out a similar programme of engagement across the remainder of the Borough which will focus on the following locations:
- Aveley
 - Bulphan
 - Chadwell St Mary
 - Corringham and Fobbing
 - East Tilbury and Linford
 - Horndon on the Hill
 - Orsett
 - South Ockendon
 - Stanford-le-Hope
 - Tilbury
- 2.14 Prior to the Covid-19 lockdown it was originally proposed to roll out the Design Charrette process during summer 2020. However, due to circumstances, it has not been possible to do this due to the restrictions imposed by lockdown.
- 2.15 In recognition of the fact that the impact of the current pandemic is likely to be with us for some time, the Council has been working with the Princes Foundation to develop a new programme for the roll out of the process making use of alternative means and mechanisms for engaging with the local community in developing an agreed vision and guiding principles to inform the future planning of their area.
- 2.16 The full programme for the roll out of the Design Charrette process has yet to be finalised. However, the broad timescales for undertaking this work have been agreed and are as follows:
- **September** - Hold Council and Stakeholder Briefing Workshops
 - **October to December 2020** – Undertake Stakeholder/ Landowner/ Scheme Promoter Workshops
 - **February to March 2021** – Undertake Community Engagement
 - **April to May 2021**– Complete Charrette Settlement Reports.
- 2.17 A further verbal update on the programme for rolling out the Design Charrette process will be provided to Members at the Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7th September.

Local Plan Planning Performance Agreements

- 2.18 It is a well-established principle of the plan-making process that the preparation and review of all policies must be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence. Equally important is the need for local plans to be shaped by early, proportionate, and effective engagement between plan makers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees. However, ensuring that both these considerations are addressed through the plan-making process can also significantly add to the cost and time it takes to prepare a new Local Plan. Reflecting this the Council is therefore seeking to promote the use of Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) as a means sharing the cost of preparing a local plan as well as expediting the time it takes to progress the plan through to Adoption.
- 2.19 While the use of voluntary Planning Performance Agreements is now common in respect of the determination of planning applications, the Council considers that there is also a role for them in helping to deliver a faster and more effective plan-making process. Equally, by adopting a collaborative and proactive approach to evidence development during the plan-making stage, it should also help shorten the time it takes for a planning application to be determined and granted planning permission following the adoption of the plan.
- 2.20 The participation of other parties in the PPA process should also enable early consideration of all the fundamental issues relating to whether a particular site or strategic development will be acceptable in principle as well as providing the opportunity for those involved to work together to secure the necessary funding and delivery of supporting infrastructure. The Council considers that this can be best achieved by adopting a 'Development Team' approach as the preferred way of working with stakeholders as part of an 'end-to-end' and seamless plan-making and development management process.

Joint Working

- 2.21 Wherever possible and appropriate the Council will encourage adjoining landowners and scheme promoters to work collaboratively in the assisting the Council in developing the evidence base to support the preparation of the Local Plan and the promotion of strategic sites or broad locations for growth. Adopting this approach will make the most of efficient use of existing resources and lead to cost savings and efficiencies in the procurement and commissioning of technical studies and reports.
- 2.22 To facilitate joint working a Joint Project Team will be established for the term of the Agreement. Membership of the Joint Project Team will be at the ultimate discretion of the parties. However, changes to the Joint Project Team will need to be notified and agreed in advance wherever possible. The Joint Project Team will comprise of a Site Promoters Team and a Thurrock Council Team. For larger and more complex sites or growth areas consideration

should be given the benefits of widening membership of the Joint Project Team to include representatives from the following organisations:

- The Environment Agency
- Homes England
- Highways England
- Natural England
- Historic England
- Public Utilities
- Public Health
- Transport providers and operators
- Others to be determined

- 2.23 As with the Thurrock Design Charrettes, it was originally proposed to start the entering into PPAs with scheme promoters during summer 2020 as a natural progression following on from the start of the Charrette process. However, this has had to be postponed to the autumn of 2020 to both enable the alignment of the two processes and to enable the parties to put in place the necessary infrastructure required to hold virtual Development Team Meetings. Reflecting these considerations it is now proposed to start rolling out the PPA process in September 2020 as capacity and resources allow.

White Paper Planning Reforms

- 2.24 On 6th August 2020 the Government announced its ambitions to reform the planning system. The proposed reforms are wide reaching and will have an impact on the way in which Local Plans are produced. The implications of the White Paper are being considered and a further paper will be presented to this Committee in due course.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 This report Provides Members with a regular update on the progress of the Local Plan and the next key steps in its production.

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

- 4.1 This paper provides an update on the preparation of the Local Plan and follows from a report presented to O&S in October 2019.

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

- 5.1 The Local Plan has an impact on the delivery of all of the Council's corporate objectives.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**
Senior Management Accountant

Funding to support the completion of the Local Plan is in place.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Law and Governance

The current system of plan making is contained in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town & Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 ('2012 Regulations') and supported by the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

In due course, the draft Local Plan shall be prepared and publicised in accordance with the statutory and policy frameworks. The Authority has a statutory duty pursuant to Section 13 of the PCPA 2004 to keep under review matters which may affect the development of its area.

It should be noted that the Secretary of State has intervention powers under section 21 PCPA 2004 and default powers under Section 27 of PCPA 2004 where he thinks that the Authority are failing or omitting to do anything necessary in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of a development plan document. In such cases, the Secretary of State may, under section 27, prepare or revise the document or direct that the Authority do so.

Under the Council's Constitution and in accordance with the statutory provisions contained in section 9D of the Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000, Full Council has the power to make decisions in relation to the preparation and adoption of the Development Plan.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities

The Council has a statutory duty under the Equality Act 2010 to promote equality of opportunity in the provision of services and employment opportunities. Through a process of proactive engagement, the Council will ensure that the consultation process associated with the emerging Development Plan will provide an opportunity for all sections of the community, including harder to reach groups, to become fully involved in helping to shape the future planning and development of Thurrock.

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

There are no other implications associated with the report.

7. Background papers used in preparing the report:

- None.

8. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Sean Nethercott
Strategic Lead – Strategic Services
Place

Work Programme

Committee: Planning, Transport, Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Year: 2020/2021

Dates of Meetings: 6th July 2020, 7th September 2020, 13th October 2020, 8th December 2020, 9th February 2021

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
July 2020		
Grays Regeneration - Underpass Options	David Moore	Officer
Approach to Delivering Economic Recovery and Growth (Verbal)	Andy Millard	Officer
A13 Widening Report	Anna Eastgate	Officer/ Members
Stanford-le-Hope Railway	Anna Eastgate	Officers/Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
September 2020 – Extraordinary Meeting		
Modes of Transport (trends and changes)	Leigh Nicholson	Officers
Approach to the Local Plan	Leigh Nicholson	Officers
Economic Development Strategy	Stephen Taylor	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

Work Programme

October 2020		
Purfleet Centre Regeneration	David Moore	Officers
Sustainable travel and movement in Thurrock	Matt Kiely	Officers
c2c Update	Matt Kiely (Chris Atkinson (external))	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
December 2020		
Local Plan Update	Leigh Nicholson	Officers
Conservation Area Management Plans (CAMP) consultations	Sean Nethercott	Officers
A13 East Facing Access Scheme Update (Matt K or Anna E depending on the status of the project and whether handover has happened).	Anna Eastgate / Matt Kiely	
<i>Review into PPA – SLH</i>	<i>Mat Kiely</i>	<i>Local Councillor Request</i>
EV Charging	Matt Kiely	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
February 2021		

Work Programme

Review of Projects and Schemes	Anna Eastgate	Members
Freight Strategy	Leigh Nicholson	Members
Parking Strategy	Leigh Nicholson	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

Clerk: Kenna Healey
Last updated: 25 August 2020

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