

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

Cabinet

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm on 8 September 2021**

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

There is very limited space for press and public to physically attend this meeting due to social distancing requirements. We advise anyone wishing to physically attend to book a seat in advance via direct-democracy@thurrock.gov.uk to ensure a place.

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Membership:

Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader), Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Luke Spillman

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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4 Declaration of Interests	
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Exclusion of the Public and Press

Members are asked to consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an agenda item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as specified in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 or it being confidential for the purposes of Section 100A(2) of that Act.

In each case, Members are asked to decide whether, in all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption (and discussing the matter in private) outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **31 August 2021**

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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 Cabinet held on 7 July 2021 at 7.00 pm

The deadline for call-ins is Monday 12 July 2021 at 5.00pm

Present: Councillors Robert Gledhill (Leader), Shane Hebb (Deputy Leader), Mark Coxshall, Jack Duffin, Deborah Huelin, Andrew Jefferies, Barry Johnson, Ben Maney, Allen Mayes and Luke Spillman

In attendance: Lyn Carpenter, Chief Executive
Ian Hunt, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer
Lucy Tricker, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Councillor John Kent
Councillor Sara Muldowney
Councillor Fraser Massey, Chair Lower Thames Crossing Task Force
Councillor Alex Anderson, Chair Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being livestreamed onto the Council's website.

11. Minutes

The minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 9 June 2021 were approved as a correct record.

12. Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

13. Declaration of Interests

Councillor Coxshall declared a non-pecuniary interest relating to Item 21 as his partner was a Board Member for Thames Freeport.

14. Statements by the Leader

The Leader began his statement by outlining the next steps in the roadmap out of COVID lockdown and explained that the Prime Minister announced this week that COVID rules would move towards guidance and encouragement. He explained that 60% of the population now had two vaccines, which had weakened the link between COVID cases and hospitalisations. He urged residents to take personal responsibility regarding COVID and stated that even though case numbers remained low in Thurrock, they were on the rise. He stated that in the past seven days 4799 COVID tests had been carried out

in Thurrock, which was an increase on the week before. He described how in the previous week there had been 12 cases in people aged 15-18; 60 cases in people aged 18-49; 2 cases in people aged 50-59; 1 case in people aged 60-69; and 0 cases in people aged 70+. He stated that all case numbers per age group had decreased from the previous week, other than cases in people aged 15-18. He summarised and highlighted that cases in Thurrock were currently 45.3 per 100,000 and Thurrock were 144th out of 149 unitary authorities in regards to COVID cases.

The Leader moved on and explained that, along with the Deputy Mayor, he had recently raised the flag to celebrate the NHS' 73rd birthday. He thanked all NHS staff for their hard work during the pandemic and felt it had been good to meet paramedics and ambulance crew members during the ceremony to discuss their experiences. He moved on and stated that he felt the agenda for the evenings meeting would be exciting, as it covered numerous regeneration projects, including the Towns Fund and new underpass. He explained that work was nearly complete on the new Civic Offices building and planning permission was being sought for the old State Cinema. He stated that if planning permission was granted the State Cinema would become the largest high street Wetherspoons in the UK. He explained that new homes would also be built on the old Civic Offices site, which would provide good town centre housing for people.

The Leader stated that on Friday Thurrock would be raising the flag to remember the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, during which 800 Bosnian Muslims tragically lost their lives. He stated that many survivors of the massacre were flown to the UK for medical treatment, and many relocated permanently to Thurrock. The Leader summarised with the Clean It, Cut It, Fill It update and highlighted that since April 2020 927 potholes had been filled; 31 fly-tips had been cleared; 4615 tonnes of waste had been cleared; and 763 Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued. He urged residents to report missed bin collections, or other issues, using the Council's website as this meant the issue could be sent directly to the relevant team for them to action. The Leader summarised and wished England the best of luck in the Euro 2020 semi-final against Denmark.

15. Briefings on Policy, Budget and Other Issues

Councillor Hebb highlighted that officers had recently undertaken work to quantify the carbon footprint of assets, following the Council's motion to declare a climate emergency. He stated that the Rockfire Portfolio had generated 516,000 Megawatts of electricity in 2020, which was enough to power 178,000 homes for approximately one year. He stated that this was over double the number of homes in Thurrock, which meant the energy produced could power Thurrock for two years. He added that the Portfolio had also avoided 220,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide being released into the atmosphere, which equated to removing approximately 71,000 petrol or diesel cars off the road for one year. He felt that the Portfolio had made a good environmental contribution and had had a positive impact. He stated that

although the investment approach was now being wound down, the Portfolio had earned approximately £100m for Thurrock Council and had made a positive environmental impact. He stated that the investment approach had helped increase reserves, improve services, and reduce carbon, and had managed to withstand a global pandemic.

Councillor Johnson stated that Thurrock had recently undergone an OFSTED inspection regarding vulnerable children. He explained that only verbal feedback had currently been received, but there was an overall positive message. He stated that there had been some learning points to take on board, which would provide the route to enhancing the service. He felt proud that Children's Social Care had gone from an OFSTED rating of 'needs improvement' to 'good', and commented that the team were now working hard to improve the rating to 'outstanding'. He explained that the draft outcome letter would be received on 14 July, to which Thurrock would then make comments, with the final letter being received in early August. He summarised and thanked the government for continuing to provide free school meals during the summer holidays, and highlighted that meals would also be provided to funded activity centres too.

16. Petitions submitted by Members of the Public

No petitions had been submitted by members of the public.

17. Questions from Non-Executive Members

The Leader stated that two questions had been submitted by non-Executive Members.

The first question was asked by Councillor Muldowney and read "Chadwell residents have had no opportunity to make their views known to Cabinet ahead of their decision on Item 12 tonight. Will the relevant Cabinet Member agree to consult with local residents before selling off the green fields opposite Cole Avenue?" Councillor Coxshall responded and explained that the land in question was farmland and would be offered as a sale to the farmer, to allow him to continue farming the land. He stated that there was currently no public access to the site, and Thurrock were not planning on selling the land for development, but were selling the land to increase investment. He felt that Thurrock Council should not own pubs, restaurants or farmland, and stated that the funds generated from the sale of these assets would be used to improve services, for example fixing potholes, and maintaining parks.

Councillor Muldowney thanked Councillor Coxshall for his answer and felt pleased to hear that the land would not be sold for development. She highlighted that once the land had been sold to the farmer, it would then be his decision as to what to do with the land, and continued use as farmland could not be guaranteed. She then queried what consultation had been undertaken prior to the decision to sell the land. Councillor Coxshall

responded that as the land was not an operational asset, consultation was not required. He commented that the farmer already farmed the land in question, and would continue to do so. He stated that all Members would have a chance to decide which areas in Thurrock were developed as part of the Local Plan process and the call for sites.

Councillor J Kent arrived at the meeting at 7.22pm.

The second question was then asked by Councillor J Kent and read “back in January 2017, as the Leader of the Council, you said; “central to the future of Grays is the re-provision of a new, modern and fit for purpose theatre.” You went on to say; “to be very clear - Thameside will remain open until new provision is available.” Do you stand by that promise? The Leader responded that lots had changed since 2017, particularly with the onset of COVID, which had moved the Council into a budget deficit. He stated that Thurrock were therefore considering how services were delivered in future, and explained that the Thameside building was fifty years old and not currently fit for purpose. He stated that the building included many services, not limited to the theatre, and would require lots of capital investment to keep running. He added that Thurrock had also made a commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, and Thameside did not meet this goal. He explained that Thurrock would continue to analyse its operational model over the coming months and would work with vendors to try and move operations to different buildings. He felt that a small theatre was no longer what was needed, and Thurrock would look into what could be provided across the borough. He summarised and stated that Thurrock would work with external partners to regenerate the cultural offer across Thurrock.

Councillor Kent thanked the Leader for his response and felt that Thameside was much more than a sum of its parts, as it was the cultural heart of Thurrock and included the library, museum, and theatre. He felt that it provided the cultural energy for Thurrock and urged Cabinet to look into ways of keeping it running, for example by using arts organisations or community enterprises. The Leader replied and stated that conversations were currently ongoing with a number of external partners, as well as with members of the Production Corridor, as part of a wider arts agenda across the south east. He stated that work would continue with partners to reform the service and make Thameside a centre that works for 2021 and in future.

Councillor Muldowney and Councillor Kent left the meeting – 7.26pm.

18. Matters Referred to the Cabinet for Consideration by an Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Leader stated that Councillor Anderson as Chair of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee was attending the meeting to provide feedback on Item 23. Other than those items already contained within the agenda, no items had been referred to the Cabinet for consideration by an overview and scrutiny committee.

19. Lower Thames Crossing Task Force Update Report (Decision: 110566)

Councillor Massey, as Chair of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force, introduced the report and stated that it covered meetings held between February and March 2021. He stated that in February, Highways England had attended the Task Force and given a detailed presentation on green infrastructure, biodiversity, and woodlands, and the Task Force had expressed their concerns over proposals. He explained that Highways England had also presented on Public Rights of Way, and the Task Force had queried whether these could be opened before route opening. Councillor Massey explained that they were still waiting on an answer to this question, but felt it was good to see increased engagement from Highways England. He urged Members to read the minutes from this meeting, which could be viewed at: [Agenda for Lower Thames Crossing Task Force on Monday, 15th February, 2021, 6.00 pm | Thurrock Council](#). He stated that the Task Force had also considered the government's Energy White Paper at February's meeting and looked into how changes to electric vehicle policies could impact the Lower Thames Crossing scheme. He mentioned that the Task Force had also received updates on the Hatch mitigation document, and explained that discussions were ongoing regarding this.

Councillor Massey then outlined March's Task Force meeting, during which three technical papers had been presented on the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Health Impact Assessment (HIA); and CO2 emissions. He commented that Highways England were currently revising the EIA and Thurrock were making comments, as well as comparing the new version to the first version submitted at Development Consent Order (DCO). He stated that Thurrock were also following the same process for the HIA, and felt that although progress was being made on this document, the Task Force still had concerns regarding data, methodology and results. He stated that the Task Force had also looked into CO2 emissions and how these could be mitigated, including by using Ultra Low Emissions Vehicle (ULEV) targets and willow tree planting for carbon offsetting. Councillor Massey summarised and stated that Highways England would be launching a new consultation on 14 July, which would run until 8 September. He explained that the consultation would be undertaken both virtually and in-person, if guidelines allowed, and urged all Members and residents to take part.

Councillor Coxshall thanked Councillor Massey for his presentation, and felt that the Task Force updates were helpful in allowing Cabinet to understand their work. He asked if the Task Force had felt that Highways England engagement had improved since their management structure changes had occurred. Councillor Massey agreed that engagement had improved recently, and felt reports were more detailed and more information was being provided. The Leader felt it was good to see more engagement with Highways England.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the work of the Lower Thames Crossing Task Force.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

Councillor Massey left the meeting at 7.36pm.

20. 2020/21 Financial Outturn Report (Decision: 110567)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that it provided a rear view look at the 2020/21 financial year, and stated that even though it had been difficult year due to COVID, Thurrock had managed to balance the budget. He stated this was partly due to £14m in government support, as well as the use of reserves, and £100m from investments into solar and wind farms. He stated that although it had been a difficult year for Thurrock, they had fared better than other Councils such as Slough and Croydon who had been financially mismanaged. He explained that as the Council had not invested in property, investments had continued to pay out throughout the pandemic and therefore £14.8m had been spent on protecting the vulnerable during COVID. He thanked officers, private industry, and the voluntary sector for their help during the pandemic, as well as support from central government which had helped to bridge the funding gap. He explained that during the pandemic Thurrock had not utilised its general reserves, and had continued to earn income from investments. He thanked teams across the Council, particularly public health, social care, communities, and environment and highways for their hard work during the pandemic, as well as the finance team. He stated that £92m had been spent on capital projects during this time, and the Council still planned to spend £200m on upcoming projects in future, particularly to develop concepts to reduce traffic from Lakeside in West Thurrock and Chafford Hundred. He felt that although the task ahead was large, it was important to recognise and thank officers for their hard work so far.

The Leader echoed Councillor Hebb's comments and thanked officers and the voluntary sector for their hard work throughout the pandemic. He added that although £14m had been gifted from central government, not all of this had been spent yet, and this would continue to help with the effects of the pandemic. He added that Thurrock had worked hard to deliver food parcels to those who had needed them during the height of lockdown, and felt pleased that in some cases it had taken less than four hours from a resident reporting they needed a food parcel to it being delivered to them. He felt pleased to see that Thurrock continued to fight the pandemic, and stated that grants were still incoming.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted that the General Fund next expenditure had been met within the overall budget envelope, and the General Fund Balance had been maintained at £11m.

2. Noted that the balance remaining on the Housing Revenue Account

Reserve had been maintained at £2.175m.

3. Noted that there was a total of £92.125m in capital expenditure, and some of the key projects had been set out in section 5.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

21. Asset Review and Disposals (Decision: 110568)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that work had begun on this report in 2017 when he had been tasked with looking at all Council owned assets and had developed the 3Rs policy of release, retain and reuse. He stated that the asset review was not just about buildings, but was centred on delivering good services, and being transparent with residents. He explained that Thurrock worked to speak with tenants, land owners and neighbours of those assets affected by the review, and Members would always announce interests regarding these assets to ensure maximum transparency. He stated that many of the buildings due to be disposed of were decades old and not fit for purpose, particularly when trying to deliver carbon neutral buildings. He explained that the Council would use the money made from the sale of assets to reinvest into services, and improve services for residents. He thanked the Chief Executive and the assets team for their hard work on the project.

Councillor Huelin echoed comments made by Councillor Coxshall and felt that the report not only reviewed buildings, but also began a conversation into reviewing services. She highlighted point 6.6.2 of the report and felt that although it was not economically viable to retain the building, the hot meal delivery service would continue, but from another building that was fit for purpose. She also highlighted the arts offer in Thurrock and stated that during the height of COVID, the Thameside team had worked hard to provide virtual engagement for residents, and felt that this highlighted how COVID had changed the arts offer. She explained that the arts had become more important during the pandemic, and felt that there were numerous other venues across the borough that could promote the arts, which was not limited to the Thameside. She added that proposals would be brought forward to Cabinet that would highlight the new arts strategy, and this report would open conversations with partners to build offers.

Councillor Coxshall added that he understood the importance of arts and culture for Thurrock, and this was outlined in the Council's 'work, live, play' strategy, which would be discussed throughout the agenda. He stated that there were numerous other cultural hubs across the borough, such as the Opera House in Purfleet, the heritage hubs in Tilbury, and the leisure hubs in Grays. The Leader added that under regulations introduced in 2010, community interest groups could make a bid for the Thameside building. Councillor Spillman felt that the report highlighted that all options were still on the table, and up for discussion. He felt excited to see the changes being made in Grays, and felt it was developing from a shopping space to a leisure and entertainment space. He explained that the report would start a wider

conversation into the arts offer, and development in Grays, such as the beach, would improve the area.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Declared the operational properties in 6.6 surplus to requirements, and would receive a report back, where applicable, on the future of the sites and any alternative delivery considerations.

2. Approved the immediate release and declared surplus the properties shown in Appendix 1.

3. Delegated authority of the disposal to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Leader and the completion of a delegated authority decision report.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

22. 2021/22 Capital Programme Update (Decision: 110569)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that this had been reviewed since the pandemic and £12m of capital projects had been deferred, and £19m of capital projects had been cancelled. He stated that this would reduce the MRP requirement and reduce the finance needed for the capital programme. He stated that although COVID had impacted on some capital projects, the introduction of the Freeport at the end of the year would increase investment opportunities. Councillor Hebb then highlighted that two projects had been reviewed and given priority. He stated that the first priority project would be the Grays South Underpass, which required a further £11m of investment and would ensure the Council's ambitions were realised. He stated that the second priority project was the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange project, which would begin again after some delay. He stated that a recent audit had been undertaken, and this had found that the project could be completed in phases, but would need to go through planning permission before going to tender. He explained that the plans for the station had changed to benefit residents based on local community feedback, and that the station project had been ready to go for six months. He urged the Planning Committee to not delay the station plans, when brought before their Committee.

Councillor Coxshall felt pleased to see funding was being committed to Stanford-le-Hope station ensure the project's completion. The Leader agreed and added it was also good to see the project could be completed in phases. The Leader stated that it had been five years since the first tranche of money had been allocated to the Grays South Underpass, and felt pleased that it was now close to being delivered.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the outturn position on the 2020/21 Capital Programme and the current Authorised Capital Expenditure between 2021/22 and 2022/23.

2. Noted the outcome of the review of the Capital Programme and the funding associated with projects that are not expected to progress.

3. Approved the proposed capital virements to reallocate capital funding with the programme to Grays South and the Stanford-le-Hope Interchange.

4. Approved the proposal to address further financial risk within the existing capital programme.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

23. Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget Proposals (Decision: 110570)

Councillor Hebb introduced the report and stated that the Council currently faced a choice to either increase taxation for residents in future, or reform services and reduce the size of the Council. Councillor Hebb explained that reform of services would bring about a larger change, as council tax receipts would reduce due to the impact of COVID, and the outstanding tax bill would be rolled forward into the next financial year. He added that currently a number of services would not earn due to the pandemic, and therefore numerous difficult decisions had to be made. He mentioned that in previous years £100m earned in investments would have helped to balance the budgets, but due to new rules against Council investments, Thurrock could no longer undertake this approach.

Councillor Hebb explained that the future plan would be to reform services and change delivery, for example by focussing on the core services offered by the Council. He stated that Thurrock would look into the sale of assets, and how some services could be undertaken in different surroundings. He added that some services offered by the Council were discretionary and could not be offered post-COVID, and this would mean some non-critical posts, particularly relating to capital projects, could not be maintained. He explained that staff structures would therefore be reformed and projects would not be taken forward. He explained that these proposals would be put to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comments and feedback, to promote openness and authenticity. He added that officers would also be looking to income generation, for example through house building. Councillor Hebb summarised and stated that tough decisions would need to be made, but it would produce a more sustainable council, and would reduce the deficit to approximately £3.7m.

Councillor Spillman felt that the poor narrative surrounding the investment

approach had not helped confidence in the scheme, and this had reduced the Council's income by £100m. He felt that officers had done a good job on the investment strategy, and Thurrock had not made the same mistakes as other councils who had invested in property. He thanked the Corporate Director of Resource and Place Delivery for his hard work on the budget and the investment strategy, and added that it would be good to see future income from the Freeport, which would benefit both the Council and residents. Councillor Hebb echoed Councillor Spillman's comments and added that the investment strategy had also helped Thurrock work towards their carbon neutral goal. He felt that the investment strategy had also made Thurrock more entrepreneurial, and although investments could no longer continue, Thurrock would continue to look at all income options.

The Leader stated that Thurrock would need to embrace change in the future and become smarter in regards to ways of working. He felt that lots of tough decisions would need to be made in the future, particularly surrounding reshaping services. He stated that the Freeport would help improve tax receipts in future, and would increase confidence in Thurrock.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Noted and commented on the financial forecasts included within the report.**
- 2. Noted the ongoing work of officers and will receive a further report in September.**
- 3. Recommended that the proposals set out in Appendix 1 be considered by the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and be referred back to Cabinet in September 2021.**

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

24. Housing Delivery Approach (Decision: 110571)

Councillor Spillman introduced the report and stated that it would begin a new phase of housing delivery, which would benefit Thurrock and neighbouring boroughs. He explained that housing delivery had been difficult during COVID, but Thurrock had maintained their ambitious projects. He commented that initial discussions had been positive, and numerous housing delivery methods had been discussed, such as joint ventures with partners, and through Thurrock Regenerations Ltd. He stated that the approach would include both social housing and affordable homes, and felt this was supported by the government and Secretary of State for Housing. He added that work would also be undertaken on homelessness, and he thanked the outgoing directors and previous Portfolio Holder for their hard work on this issue.

Councillor Coxshall added that a recent White Paper from the Secretary of

State had declared the housing market broken, and planning reform needed to be implemented. He explained that this had been delayed due to COVID, but would be implemented in future and would help to deliver affordable housing in Thurrock, as well as Thurrock's 'live, work, play' agenda.

The Leader added that he had recently attended the virtual Local Government Association conference, where they had had discussions regarding affordable rent and social housing. He stated that Thurrock would work hard to attract builders and property developers to Thurrock, particularly building different types of homes, such as modular homes.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported the approach to Housing Delivery as set out in the report.

Reason for decision: as outlined in the report

This decision is subject to call-in

25. Town Funds: Update and Next Steps (Decision: 110572)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that the Council were currently waiting on the green light from the government to move forward with the business case, which should be received shortly. He explained that post-Brexit the government had offered £25m in investment to the 100 most in need towns, which included Tilbury and Grays. He explained that the money would be used in Grays to fund: a new jetty, which would capitalise on tourists travelling to the area for the London Resort; a new river activity centre; a new promenade; and development of Grays beach park to include a new restaurant and outdoor entertainment area. He described how the new river activity centre would become a new home for the Thurrock Sea Cadets and would include areas for canoeing and kayaking. He explained that the money would be used in Tilbury to fund: an £8m new youth centre; a new community centre; a new jetty; and new play equipment and sports pitches in parks. He added that these projects had to be delivered by 2025 otherwise the money would need to be returned to the government.

Councillor Mayes felt it was good to see regeneration in Tilbury, including the new youth centre. He stated that he had spoken to local residents who were excited for the centre and felt it would transform young people's lives in Tilbury. Councillor Coxshall echoed these comments and thanked the regeneration team for their hard work on the Towns Fund. The Leader felt that these projects would benefit both towns, particularly with the development of beaches, and would make them destinations. He also felt it was good to see a new river activity centre, which would help young people and adults in Thurrock.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Noted the opportunity, risks, obligations and implications outlined the

report and its appendices. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to agree the final terms of the Town Deal and to subsequently enter into any agreements required to secure the grant funding, including committing the Council to becoming the Accountable Body.

2. Confirmed support for the projects proposed in the TIPs and approved in principle the commitment of the Council assets and resources set out in Appendix 4, subject to viable business cases being developed and formal consideration once this has been completed.

3. Approved the proposed governance structure for the future stages of the Town Deal.

4. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director of Legal Services, to commence procurement exercises and award tenders to secure external support to develop and deliver the projects.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

26. Approval of Naming & Numbering of Streets and Highway Assets Policy

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that it was a statutory duty of Thurrock Council to name and number streets in the borough. He explained that currently there was no policy or framework in place, and the new proposed policy would help officers to develop best practice. He stated that the only substantive change in the proposed policy would be to introduce the opportunity to name streets after people. He felt this would increase civic pride, and would give residents the opportunity to suggest people who had influenced the borough, or the wider UK.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the above named policy and processes contained therein for implementation.

27. Highways Street Lighting Central Management System (Decision: 110573)

Councillor Maney introduced the report and stated that the proposal would help the highways team manage and maintain the 21,000 street lights across Thurrock. He stated that it would also reduce the number of residents

reporting broken street lights, as all street lights would now be monitored remotely, and the system would be able to identify broken light columns. He added that this would produce a financial saving, as well as reducing the Council's carbon footprint. He clarified that this report did not introduce part night lighting across the borough. He explained that conversations were currently taking place with officers to dim lights in certain areas, but this would be minimal and experts had ascertained that the proposed dimness would not be detectable by the human eye.

Councillor Hebb thanked Councillor Maney for the report and felt that it would increase preventative maintenance of lighting columns, and would help to identify failures quicker. The Leader added that the highways team spent a lot of time maintaining street lights, and the new central management system would make their job easier and quicker, as well as reducing their carbon footprint.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Approved the commencement of the tender process and subsequent award of a contract to install a Central Management System for Highways Street lighting.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

28. Procurement of Energy for Thurrock Council (Decision: 110574)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it sought the renewal and procurement of energy contracts for the next four years.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Authorised the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery to:

a. Enter into a gas, electricity and water contracts through the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) frameworks.

b. Seek procurement approval on the open market and award under alternative frameworks if suitable options become available, subject to compliance with the relevant procurement rules, in order to secure the continued purchase of gas, electricity and water for a further period of four years until the end of September 2025.

c. Review and select the best cost options for zero carbon electricity sources, should the default cost neutral option not be available.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

29. Thurrock Better Care Fund Section 75 Agreement (Decision: 110575)

Councillor Huelin introduced the report and stated that it sought to renew the Better Care Fund, which pooled resources and focussed on the health and wellbeing of residents. She stated that the Better Care Fund reduced the rate residents needed to enter care homes and reduced the need for hospitalisations, by using a joined up approach to adult social care. She summarised and stated that the contributions to funding needed the agreement of Cabinet.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported and considered the continuation of Better Care Fund arrangements and plans in place for 2021/22, and approved the Section 75 Agreement as set out in the paper.

2. Delegated authority for the 2021/22 Section 75 Agreements and Better Care Fund plans to be agreed by the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities.

3. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities, to agree annual Section 75 Agreements and Better Care Fund plans and proposals for applicable periods as required, effective from 2021/22.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

30. Thames Freeport Outline Business Case (OBC) and Full Business Case (FBC) to government (Decision: 110576)

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and explained that the next steps would be to move to sign off the FBC in summer 2021, allowing the first Freeport in the UK to open in Thurrock by the end of the year, depending on government approval. He explained that the Freeport would bring in between £200m and £300m to the Council by 2030, and would allow for investment across the borough in areas such as new parks and leisure centres. He stated that Thurrock were also in conversation with partners to transform the petrol storage in Thurrock to hydrogen storage, which would benefit Thurrock residents for generations to come, by making Thurrock London's hydrogen storage hub. He added that this report moved the project forward and would ensure the growth of opportunities in Thurrock.

Councillor Hebb felt that the Freeport would be the biggest innovation in Thurrock, surpassing the investment seen since the introduction of Lakeside, and the London Gateway. He mentioned that it would also help to improve

neighbouring boroughs along the estuary and Members would continue to campaign for ideas, such as connecting the Freeport to the Stanford-le-Hope Industrial Park. Councillor Coxshall agreed with Councillor Hebb's comments and felt that all Members needed to sell the Freeport, as well as helping external partners, such as the ports, sell themselves. He stated that the Freeport would bring approximately 25,000 jobs into Thurrock, as well as an additional £300m in business rates. The Leader summarised and thanked the Chief Executive for her hard work on the project. He added that many other projects were also in the pipeline, such as the South East Essex Park which would run from Brentwood to Rochford and increase blue and green infrastructure in Essex.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Supported in principle the development and submission of the OBC (July 2021) and the FBC (Autumn 2021) to government.

2. Endorsed the continued engagement of officers with partners to develop the OBC and FBC, and delegated authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning, and External Relationships, as well as the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, and Monitoring Office, to sign-off and agree to the formal arrangements for the Council's role in the Freeport's governance structure and enter into appropriate arrangements.

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

31. Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass - Project Progress (Decision: 110577)

The Leader stated that there was an exempt appendix to the report, and Members should only discuss this if Cabinet agreed to enter into an exempt session. He added that Councillor Anderson had also attended the Cabinet meeting to discuss the outcome from discussions of the report from the Planning, Transport and Regeneration (PTR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee that had taken place the previous night.

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it was good to see the Chair of PTR had attended the meeting, and felt it was good to see Cabinet being challenged by the scrutiny function. He explained that the report presented good news as the project moved from phase three to phase four, in the eight phase strategy. He described how Cabinet had chosen the design last year, and this had been improved since then as the underpass had been widened, and additional opportunities for shops had been included in the designs. He stated that the Council planned to invest £37m into the scheme, £23m of which had been discussed earlier as capital project investment, and this would help to rejuvenate Grays high street and connect

Grays South with Grays North, which had been divided by the railway line almost 100 years ago.

Councillor Anderson explained that the report had been discussed at the previous night's PTR O&S Committee, and they had debated the three recommendations in great detail. He explained that recommendation 1 had been agreed, but the wording had changed from 'endorsed project next steps' to 'noted project next steps'. He stated that recommendation 2 regarding delegated authority had also been agreed, but Members wanted to see regular briefing notes brought before the Committee. He added that Members had not approved recommendation 3 as they had believed not information had been provided regarding a detailed cost plan. He commented that Members had not expressed dissatisfaction with the project progress, but had felt unable to make a decision due to the lack of information. Councillor Anderson noted that an exempt appendix had been included in the Cabinet papers, and this had not been made available to the Committee. He felt that this appendix might have been useful for the Committee to see.

Councillor Coxshall responded and stated that Cabinet would consider in future allowing access to exempt information for overview and scrutiny committees, or holding private and closed briefing sessions for scrutiny members.

The Leader stated that based on the comments made at PTR Overview and Scrutiny Committee, an addition would be made to recommendation 2 outlining that regular briefing notes would be brought before the Committee.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

- 1. Endorsed the next steps in the programme for the project.**
- 2. Delegated to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, the procurement for the next contract stages set out in the programme. Regular briefing notes on project progress would be provided to the relevant overview and scrutiny committee.**
- 3. Approved the latest iteration of the cost plan appended to this report, including paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9, and noted the efforts made to continue to drive cost efficiency.**

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

- 32. Grays South: Delivering the Pedestrian Underpass - Land Assembly (Decision: 110578)**

Councillor Coxshall introduced the report and stated that it provided delegated authority for the Council to use compulsory purchase orders (CPOs) if necessary. He clarified that Thurrock did not want to use these powers, and hoped agreement would be reached with the shop owners and land owners through conversation. The Leader added that the Council would work with businesses in the area to ensure they survived and thrived. He stated that the Council would try and avoid using CPO powers where necessary as these could prolong the process, increase stress for landowners, and cost lots of money in legal fees.

RESOLVED: That Cabinet:

1. Resolved that the Council use its compulsory purchase powers pursuant to section 226(1)(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to acquire all land and rights to deliver the scheme, and to issue appropriate notices as required to acquire land required to deliver the scheme.

2. Noted that the regeneration team is progressing negotiations to acquire the land interests required by private treaty, and delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, to approve and enter into agreements with the owners and/or occupiers of the land so as to facilitate acquisition.

3. Noted the progress on the land referencing exercise, and if required, delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Affairs, and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance, to issue requisitions for information pursuant to section 5A of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 to persons who have a potential legal interest in or who occupy the area in respect of which compulsory purchase powers are proposed to be used.

4. Authorised the regeneration team, under the direction of the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery to undertake the work needed to prepare for the making of a Compulsory Purchase Order(s) (CPO) together with the supporting documentation and proceed to make the CPOs.

5. Resolved that any land acquired by the Council by private treaty within the area shown red on the plan at Appendix1 that would be required in order to facilitate the Scheme, shall be acquired for planning purposes pursuant to section 227 Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

6. Noted that pursuant section 203 and 204 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, land acquired under sections 226 or 227 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 may then be developed and used in accordance with planning permission for the proposed scheme

notwithstanding any interference with any subsisting interests, rights or restrictions (subject to the payment of compensation calculated in accordance with sections 7 and 10 of the Compulsory Purchase Act 1965.

7. In the event that Blight Notices under section 150 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 are served upon the Council, delegated authority to the Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Affairs, and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance to acquire land or reject the Blight Notices as appropriate.

8. Delegated authority to the Corporate Director, Resources and Place Delivery in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Strategic Planning and External Relationships, and the Assistant Director for Law and Governance to grant any internal approvals necessary in order to allow the scheme to progress.

9. Approved the appropriation of the Council's current landholdings described in this report for the planning purpose to facilitate the scheme including:

- (i) Undertaking the required Advertising of the intention to appropriate land currently used as public open space and;
 - a. In the event that any objections are received, reporting the content and consideration of those objections to a future meeting of Cabinet;
 - b. In the event that no objections are received, to continue with the appropriation with no further report to Cabinet.
- (ii) Noted that it is necessary to use Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 to facilitate the development and improvement of the land as will form part of the planning permission in order for any and all private rights and restrictions that affect the land to be overridden.
- (iii) Authorised Officers to take such necessary administrative and accounting steps to give effect to the appropriation (including settling claims for compensation arising out of the extinguishment of any rights in the appropriated land pursuant to Section 203 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016).

*Reason for decision: as outlined in the report
This decision is subject to call-in*

The meeting finished at 9.25 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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8 September 2021	ITEM: 10 Decision: 110580
Cabinet	
Financial Update – Quarter 1 2021/22 and Revised Medium Term Financial Strategy	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Shane Hebb, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance	
Accountable Assistant Director: Jonathan Wilson, Assistant Director of Corporate Finance	
Accountable Director: Sean Clark, Corporate Director of Resources & Place Delivery	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This report covers the first three months of the municipal year 2021/22 and includes the forecast outturn positions in respect of the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health Grant.

General Fund Revenue Monitoring Q1 2021/22

The projected forecast for the General Fund for the 2021/22 financial year is a breakeven position.

There is a significant pressure within core services relating to Children’s Social Care and the increase in both the number and complexity of cases which has significantly raised the average cost of support packages. This is consistent with expectations in the sector as the aftershock of the pandemic manifests itself. The current projected overspend in the Children’s directorate is £1.057m after the application of wider mitigations, and the planned use of non-general fund balance reserves and grants.

There remains ongoing uncertainty on the full impact that Covid-19 will have on wider services with specific impacts expected to develop in the Adult Social Care sector and in terms of increased levels of homelessness (both nationally and in the borough). The Adults, Housing and Health directorate is currently managing these pressures through grant funding and non-general fund balance reserves. The wider concern remains over the underlying costs bases in both Children’s Service and AHH if the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 on services is not matched by ongoing funding support from 2022/23.

Housing Revenue Account

The Housing Revenue Account is projecting a breakeven position. There has been a limited impact from Covid-19 to date and the stability of rental income continues to be monitored alongside the reduction in Covid-19 support mechanisms available to tenants (and particularly the furlough scheme).

Dedicated Schools Grant

The DSG is currently forecasting an overspend of £0.720m but is subject to change when the new academic year begins and movement in school places is confirmed.

A meeting was held with the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to discuss the DSG Management plan with the ESFA acknowledging the good practice of Thurrock through its open and transparent communication with schools and actions taken to reduce the deficit and manage demand.

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Cabinet received a report on the MTFS forecasts and proposed actions at their meeting on 7 July 2021, which reported a MTFS pressure for the council of £3.693m over the next two years. This report provides an update on the current position that shows projected deficits, assuming all budget proposals are adopted, of £1.838m in 2022/23 and £0.134m in 2023/24.

1. Recommendation:

1.1 That Cabinet comment on the forecast outturn position for 2021/22 and the revised MTFS.

General Fund Quarter 1 Monitoring

2. Introduction and Background

2.1. In February 2021, Council agreed the 2021/22 budget in line with a one year balanced MTFS. The approach to the 2021/22 budget has been through a mix of measures that either provide an ongoing benefit to the council or serve as a one off solution to enable sustainable savings to be identified and implemented. Key measures are as follows:

- Council Tax Increase – permanent – a 1.99% increase - £1.65m;
- Adult Social Care precept – a 3% increase – £2.48m;
- Government grant of £4.853m – one off – government support for Covid-19;
- Use of Capital receipts for Transformation Activity –£3m one off - subject to disposals;
- Use of non-general fund balance Reserves – £3.3m - one off;
- Reduction of Allowances - £0.800m;
- Vacant Post savings (one off) - £4m equates to approximately 100 posts; and
- Income loss contingency - £1.300m.

- 2.2. Financial reporting includes the ongoing response to the Covid-19 pandemic impacts which has required a wider range of responses from the Council and continues to be a source of uncertainty. This report sets out the latest assessment of the financial impact on 2021/22 and incorporates the associated MHCLG funding announced to date.
- 2.3. The Authority will continue to utilise the Control Outbreak Management Fund and the Infection Control Fund to support care providers and local businesses to deliver their services in a Covid-19 secure manner.
- 2.4. The report sets out the latest forecast position for 2021/22 across the main revenue accounts – the General Fund, Housing Revenue Account, Dedicated Schools Grant and Public Health grant.
- 2.5. The General Fund position is set out in detail in the table below:

Directorate	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 Variance
	£000	£000	£000
Adults, Housing and Health	46,419	46,015	(404)
Children's Services	41,700	42,757	1,057
Housing General Fund	1,818	1,818	0
HR, OD and Transformation	8,906	8,556	(350)
Public Realm	35,241	35,049	(192)
Resources & Place Delivery	15,931	15,415	(515)
Strategy, Engagement & Growth	3,791	3,387	(405)
Central Financing	(79,003)	(79,533)	(530)
Treasury & Corporate Costs	(74,802)	(73,406)	1,397
Total	0	58	58

- 2.6. It should be noted that although the above table indicates the saving target is likely to be achieved, this needs to be considered in the context of the balanced outturn position – essentially this saving is supporting delivery of a balanced position and further work needs to be undertaken to develop further plans to replace this temporary measure with sustainable savings.
- 2.7. Income losses attributable to Covid-19 will be partly offset by the Income Compensation grant (this currently applies to quarter 1 only) and the Income Loss Contingency allocation held within the Corporate Costs core budget. Gross income losses are set out in the table below:

Income position	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Fees and charges	(6,843)	(5,696)	1,147
Traded - non schools	(1,286)	(1,000)	286
Traded income- schools	(4,540)	(4,167)	374
Grand Total	(12,670)	(10,863)	1,807

- 2.8. Income is forecast to be below budgeted levels based on the year to date position. This reflects the ongoing impact of Covid restrictions up until recently and a proportion of the forecast loss will be recovered through the income compensation scheme as at the end of June 2021. The risk is this impact extends through the rest of the year when the compensation mechanism will no longer be available. The position above is included in the wider forecast position and any further improvement will provide further financial resilience.
- 2.9. Income to be generated through the external contracts secured by the Counter Fraud Team for work with MHCLG have been excluded from the above position until formal signing and confirmation of associated expenditure has been ascertained, this is expected to be included in the month 4 position.

Analysis by Service Area:

Adult Social Care

Service	2021/22 Current Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Assistive Equipment & Technology	649	654	5
Commissioning & Service Delivery	1,492	1,373	(119)
Community Development	2,101	1,909	(192)
External Placements	29,999	30,506	507
Fieldwork Services	4,631	4,297	(334)
Provider Services	7,548	7,277	(270)
Total	46,419	46,015	(404)

- 2.10. The 2021/22 Adult Social Care precept provided £2.5m in additional funding which was predominantly used to support the fragile external care market through an increase in both homecare, residential and nursing rates.
- 2.11. The month 3 outturn position is currently projecting a forecast underspend of £0.404m. This is largely as a result of a delay in the recruitment of social worker posts across Fieldwork Services. Although the overall value of all vacant posts for the current financial year is estimated to be £1.068m (as per table 2), these include essential front line service posts which need to be recruited to, but for 2021/22 are being used in part to offset demand pressures in wider services, and specifically, external placements.
- 2.12. Demand for placements for people with mental health and/or learning disabilities remains high. Officers continue to review packages to ensure outcomes are met and the levels of support are necessary and appropriate. During the current financial period, an increase in demand for older people services has been identified. This is closely aligned to the growth in demand that is also being seen within the health service that has largely been caused by the impact of the lockdown. During the last 15 months, a reduction in access to, and provision of, health services has resulted in poorer management of long term conditions and delays in

diagnoses. This is now feeding through into increased health and care demand.

- 2.13. The Hospital Discharge Initiative implemented in 2020/21 has been extended for the first half of the current financial year and is providing funding for ongoing health and social care packages as a result of the changes to the hospital discharge pathway, and will continue to be claimed through the NHS. The estimated ongoing impact on Adult Social Care budgets once this ceases has been included in the forecast outturn position which, in part, will be funded through the 2021/22 Covid funding from central government.
- 2.14. Due to the closure of premises in library services and day care, there are reduced levels of spend and associated income.
- 2.15. The level of income for care provision is not projected to be significantly impacted at this stage of the financial year, but will continue to be monitored closely.
- 2.16. The overall directorate position is being supported by the use of one-off non-general fund balance reserves and work is required by officers to determine the underlying financial pressures that will remain an issue in 2022/23 and any potential impact these will have on the delivery of agreed savings targets.

Children's Services

Service	2021/22 Budget	Quarter 1 Forecast	Quarter 1 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Children and Family Services	32,217	33,846	1,629
Head Start Housing Service	848	877	29
Learning & Universal Outcomes	5,892	5,196	(696)
School Transport	2,743	2,838	95
Total	41,700	42,757	1,057

- 2.17. The overall Children's Services outturn position is a gross overspend of £2.87m before any mitigation is applied. The position relies on the use of one-off grant funding and reserves to reduce the pressure back down to £1.629m in 2021/22. There is concern that these pressures will impact the directorate's ability to contribute towards savings identified in future years and this will remain under assessment.

Children & Family Services

- 2.18. Placements within Children Services are reporting a gross overspend of £2.827m as a result of increased cases, increased complexity of need, large sibling groups and the additional need for supported accommodation. This can be reduced with the use of one-off non-general fund balance reserves and offsetting reduced expenditure elsewhere in the service to £1.318m.
- 2.19. The internal fostering service is continuing recruitment campaigns to increase numbers with competitive rates and the new council tax exemptions for new

and existing foster carers. The £0.681m saving offsets the additional costs within external fostering of £0.727m.

- 2.20. There are currently ten high cost placements with a total estimated cost of £2.883m for the year. The Directorate, as part of placement panel meetings, has an ongoing review of all high cost placements with a forecast annual cost of £0.130m and above.
- 2.21. Across the sector it is becoming more challenging to place looked after children in appropriate settings at the budgeted cost levels. This is due to supply issues with associated cost impacts and hence there is a focus on maintaining existing placements where possible. The cases subject to ongoing legal proceedings are delayed by the impact of Covid-19 on the legal system and will mean care plans will be resolved over a longer timescale and the return home for some children is delayed. The service continue to face ongoing costs pressures and uncertainty over these timescales, outcomes and hence future projections – currently the impact is estimated at £0.205m. A further review of 18 cases exceeding the 26 week deadline in place is in progress to consider the ongoing financial impact.

Head Start Housing & Aftercare

- 2.22. Head Start Housing (HSH) is projecting an almost breakeven position currently but note there is a delay to the adaptation of two properties which will now come in to use later in 2021.
- 2.23. In respect of aftercare services there are 12 cases with a range of complex needs which require specialist support to resolve. These cases have developed following shorter term support mechanisms put in place by the service in response to Covid-19 issues in 2020/21. Each case is under review to develop longer term solutions. This is expected to reduce the projected costs (currently at £0.944m) but note the issues are related to, for example, domestic violence, gang affiliation and young people recently released from prison. Covid funding will mitigate the projected cost while solutions are developed.

Home to School Transport

- 2.24. There is a projected overspend on Home to school transport of £0.294m. The forecast is based on current routes at full cost and this area remains under review.
- 2.25. The service incurs additional costs where a child is placed in temporary accommodation (in most cases outside of Thurrock) and need to be transported back to their current school. Included in the forecast are a total of 24 children costing £0.109m. Proposals to address this have been previously considered by Cabinet but were not accepted at the time and hence the cost remains a challenge.
- 2.26. In addition individual taxis with a cost of £0.171m have been incurred to provide Covid secure transportation. These temporary measures will be

withdrawn as the risks are reviewed as wider Covid-19 restrictions are removed.

2.27. For the start of the new academic year a review of all transport will be undertaken to:

- Cease additional routes put in place as a result of Covid;
- Review existing provision;
- Consider changes in routes as children transition to new schools; and
- Consider impact of Treetops Free School opening.

Public Realm

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Counter Fraud & Enforcement	(116)	(661)	(546)
Emergency Planning and Resilience	434	433	(1)
Environment and Highways	1,617	1,502	(115)
Highways, Fleet and Logistics	9,369	9,296	(74)
Planning Delivery Fund	0	0	0
Planning, Transportation and Public Protection	3,881	4,399	518
Street Scene and Leisure	20,055	20,080	25
Total	35,241	35,049	(192)

2.28. There is a projected underspend of £0.192m in Public Realm including a £0.674m underspend from holding vacant posts.

Counter Fraud & Enforcement

2.29. The Counter Fraud team are in the process of securing contracts for external work with MHCLG. Depending upon the timescales and related expenditure to be incurred in the delivery of the work, there is to potential to improve the position further in-year. A more detailed position will be presented as part of the quarter 2 budget monitoring report.

2.30. The Enforcement function are forecasting pressures on parking income largely due to the changes in working patterns following the 'work from home' guidance from Central Government. It is unclear at this time as to how well income levels will recover as restrictions are lifted, there is the potential for a longer term demand issue in this area. The impact is supported by the income compensation scheme in the first quarter of 2021/22 but will need to be considered further for 2022/23.

Highways, Fleet & Logistics

2.31. The Highways Fleet and Logistics service is forecast to underspend by £0.074m due to vacant posts being held during the year and contribution towards to the wider saving target shown in table 2.

Street, Scene & Leisure

- 2.32. There is a slight overspend position at month 3 and there remains the ongoing risk related to the waste disposal contracts, which is the directorate's largest and most volatile budget. Waste disposal costs are difficult to forecast at this time due to the impact of the recent industrial action (waste could not be sorted at the seven bring-sites which meant a lower amount of waste was recycled and a higher amount of waste was residual compared to if this had been collected normally). The month 3 invoices will give a clearer indication as to the likely cost for the next quarter and allow for a more accurate full year estimate.
- 2.33. Contained within the position is the cost of responding to the Industrial action of £0.109m; this includes the additional costs of setting up and running the 9 bring sites offset by the reduction in staffing costs.

Planning, Transportation and Public Protection

- 2.34. The projected overspend is largely a reflection of forecast planning income losses compared to the budget in light of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. This remains under review and it is noted this include central government support for expected losses in the first quarter. In addition to this there are further staffing cost pressures related to agency staff in place to cover longer term absence.

Resources & Place Delivery

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Chief Executive	409	412	3
Corporate Finance	5,494	5,465	(29)
Delivery and Strategy	249	241	(8)
Democratic Services	235	230	(5)
Electoral Services	486	403	(83)
Legal Services	2,244	2,152	(92)
Lower Thames Crossing & Transport Infrastructure Service	141	142	0
Members Services	804	793	(11)
Place Delivery	353	424	72
Property	5,516	5,153	(363)
Total	15,931	15,415	(515)

- 2.35. The Resources & Place Delivery directorate forecast variance at period 3 is £0.515m below budget.

Corporate Finance

- 2.36. There are a number of vacancies being held within the Revenues & Benefits Team whilst a wider review of staffing level versus service delivery takes place. Collection levels for council tax and NNDR remain high but needs to be monitored as the mechanisms for recovery action become available and cases are progressed. The impact on staffing levels and the subsequent levels of income that are collected are under review

Lower Thames Crossing

- 2.37. The forecast assumes the ear-marked reserves held will cover the cost of activity above the levels already allocated within the base budget. Any changes which may emerge through the LTC process requiring additional spend would be assessed separately.

Place Delivery Fund

- 2.38. A number of staffing costs are not yet linked to specific capital projects and therefore cannot be charged to the capital programme, as projects progress there is the potential to move this pressure of £0.072m from the general fund outturn. A review of capital plans will be carried out in quarter two.

Property Services

- 2.39. The cost of running a number of buildings is lower than the business as usual budget due to the restricted services being offered during the first quarter coupled with the general 'work from home' directive.
- 2.40. The service are also running with a number of vacancies within Assets and Facilities Management.

Housing General Fund

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Homelessness	1,427	1,427	0
Private Sector Housing	338	338	0
Travellers	53	54	0
Total	1,818	1,818	0

- 2.41. The Housing General Fund financial outturn is projected to be delivered within the agreed budget level. However, there is an expected increase in demand for homelessness services once the restrictions to landlord driven evictions are lifted and the associated costs will be met through the Covid-19 funding. The demand levels will become a potential risk as restrictions are lifted, funding ends and core budgets need to be considered in this context for 2022/23.

Homelessness

- 2.42. One of the major routes into homelessness is as a result of landlords imposing eviction measures. These measures operate again from July 2021. The concern is there will be an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless. In addition, as the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt, this may further increase pressure on the service and hence there is the assumed use of non-general fund balance reserves in this area.
- 2.43. A separate paper will be brought forward on how the council intends to address homelessness in the near future.

Private Sector Housing

- 2.44. The private sector housing service has an income requirement to achieve circa 50% of its overall net costs built into the base budget. One of the key income streams is from the inspections of privately let accommodation. Social distancing measures have meant a restriction in the level of work permitted, which is projected to have a directly detrimental effect on the overall budget position and is supported by the reserve.

Strategy, Engagement & Growth

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
Economic Growth & Partnerships	532	539	7
Social Care Performance	1,230	1,076	(154)
Strategy, Communications & Customer Services	2,029	1,772	(258)
Total	3,791	3,387	(405)

- 2.45. The overall Strategy, Engagement & Growth directorate have a forecast variance at period 3 of £0.405m underspend.
- 2.46. Customer Services have a forecast underspend due to the reduced levels of face to face service and the use of alternative telephony and online functions. There are a number of vacant posts being held by the teams. Any decisions regarding the reinstatement of face-to-face services may result in changes to the financial position but the option to redeploy staff will be reviewed.
- 2.47. The Registrars service were able to resume their function without restrictions from July and the level of demand will affect the final position, more detailed work will be carried out as part of the ongoing monthly monitoring.

HR, OD & Transformation

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 variance
	£000	£000	£000
HR, OD and Transformation	5,242	4,929	(313)
ICT	3,664	3,628	(36)
Total	8,906	8,556	(350)

- 2.48. The Directorate continue to manage their staffing levels and vacancies to contain additional resource pressures relating to Pay Review, Smarter Working and other corporate programmes within the base budget allocation. Additional specialist resources to increase momentum in the delivery of digital interventions and savings are being sourced through capital and transformation funding.

Central Financing, Treasury & Corporate Costs

- 2.49. The treasury and investment outturn projections remain in line with the base budget, and the implications included within the Medium Term financial strategy.
- 2.50. Contained within the corporate costs category are those savings which cannot be attributable to one service area and are therefore being held centrally (for example the vacant post saving of £4m) along with the temporary funding measures including Covid-19 funding, use of non-general fund balance reserves and capital receipts. The projected overspend reflects two things - the difference between the vacant post saving relating to each directorate and the actual directorate outturn and the delay to the implementation of the next phase of the pay review.
- 2.51. The position on vacant posts continues to be monitored and the changes to the pay review will be delivered in 2022/23 following further negotiations with the unions.

Housing Revenue Account

Service	2021/22 Budget	Month 3 forecast	Month 3 Variance
Development	235	235	0
Financing and Recharges	24,175	24,175	0
Rent and Income	(50,272)	(50,272)	0
Repairs and Maintenance	12,097	12,097	0
Supervision and Management	13,765	13,765	0
Total	0	0	0

- 2.52. The HRA has a forecast balanced budget position for the end of the financial year.

- 2.53. At present, there are no adverse variances identified within repairs and maintenance or operational activities.
- 2.54. Rent collection levels remain in line with the budgeted forecast, but there is a potential risk of bad debts and arrears as economic ramifications of the pandemic become known in due course. This will continue to be monitored closely, and provision adjusted accordingly.
- 2.55. Funding from the 2020/21 outturn position has been earmarked in a reserve to help with any associated decant costs upon the completion of the Calcutta Club properties later on in the year.

Dedicated Schools Grant

	Funding Settlement	Academy Recoupment	Funding Block transfer	Final DSG	Month 3 Forecast	Month 3 Variance
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Schools	140,936	(135,263)	(673)	5,000	5,000	0
Central Services	1,783	0	(200)	1,583	1,610	27
High Needs	28,266	(5,678)	873	23,461	24,199	738
Early Years	12,877		0	12,877	12,832	(45)
Total	183,862	(140,941)	0	42,921	42,921	720

- 2.56. The Dedicated Schools Grant is currently forecasting an overspend of £0.720m in 2021/22. This reflects additional High Needs Block funding received in 2021/22, consideration of the 2020/21 outturn position along with the latest sector information available. This information will be subject to changes at the start of the academic year once the movement in school places is confirmed.
- 2.57. The High Needs Block is the significant area of financial risk and linked to the continued increase in the number of EHCPs. A full review will be undertaken to understand the financial implications once changes for the new academic year are confirmed. In common with wider education authorities in the sector work continues with the Education and Skills Funding Agency to address the financial sustainability of the DSG.
- 2.58. A review of the local offer and commissioned places available in Thurrock continues. The need to challenge schools on the use of the Notional SEN budget and the requirement to progress to an EHCP remains. This will be subject to change once changes for the new academic year are confirmed.

Public Health

- 2.59. The Public Health Grant was increased by £0.101m in 2021/22 with the full allocation for the year now being £11.585m. The increase has been largely allocated to reducing waiting lists for sexual health and weight management services. A number of functions could not be delivered whilst the national

restrictions were in place and the team are committed to ensuring these services are once again available and working to improve the health of the local population.

- 2.60. Other schemes such as the Thurrock 0-19 Brighter Futures Healthy Families Service will continue to be funded through the grant and provide targeted support and a range of interventions for children, young people and their families across the borough.
- 2.61. The month 3 forecast is an underspend of £0.100m which will be placed into a ring-fenced reserve and allocated in 2022/23 to deal with the anticipated longer term effects of the pandemic on the local population and increased demand for local primary services.

3. Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)

- 3.1. Cabinet considered the MTFS position and a number of budget proposals at their meeting on 7 July 2021.
- 3.2. Appendix 1 of that report included a number of proposals that require Cabinet approval. Further reports will come back to Cabinet in November/December once consultation has taken place with staff, the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee and public where necessary.
- 3.3. Those savings included in Appendix 2 of that report fall under officer delegations and are being progressed accordingly.
- 3.4. The MTFS attached at Appendix 1 to this report shows projected deficits of £1.838m in 2022/23 and £0.134m in 2023/24, a total of £1.972m over two years. This is an improvement of £1.751m from the July report, mainly from council tax and business rates projections.
- 3.5. Cabinet should note that these figures assume all proposals set out in the July report are agreed and implemented, including the target of £20m from staff/service reductions. A final draft budget will be provided to Cabinet for consideration in January when the council should know the outcome of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review and its impact on Thurrock Council in particular. This will also allow a third year to be added to the MTFS for 2024/25.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1. This report sets out the current financial position of the council and shows that the 2021/22 budget is largely on target. This is for noting and comment.
- 4.2. The Council has a statutory requirement to set a balanced budget annually. Action is required in a timely fashion when considering periods of consultation, where necessary, with staff, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and residents. A number of these proposals will be implemented under officer delegations, such as restructures and commercial income opportunities, but others will need to come back to Cabinet after relevant Overview and Scrutiny consideration.

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

- 5.1. This report is based on consultation with the services, Directors' Board and portfolio holders. Previously reported proposals will receive relevant consultation.

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

- 6.1. The implementation of previous savings proposals has already reduced service delivery levels and the council's ability to meet statutory requirements, impacting on the community and staff. Budget proposals will, to a certain degree, add to that. There is a risk that some agreed savings and mitigation may result in increased demand for more costly interventions if needs escalate particularly in social care. The potential impact on the council's ability to safeguard children and adults will be kept carefully under review and mitigating actions taken where required.

7. Implications

7.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**

Assistant Director Corporate Finance

The financial implications are set out in the body of this report. Council officers have a legal responsibility to ensure that the Council can contain spend within its available resources. Regular budget monitoring reports continue to come to Cabinet and be considered by the Directors' Board and management teams in order to maintain effective controls on expenditure during this period of enhanced risk. Measures in place are continually reinforced across the Council in order to reduce ancillary spend and to ensure that everyone is aware of the importance and value of every pound of the taxpayers money that is spent by the Council.

7.2. Legal

Implications verified by: **Ian Hunt**

**Assistant Director Law & Governance
and Monitoring Officer**

There are no specific direct legal implications set out in the report. There are statutory requirements of the Council's Section 151 Officer in relation to setting a balanced budget. The Local Government Finance Act 1988 (Section 114) prescribes that the responsible financial officer "must make a report if he considers that a decision has been made or is about to be made involving expenditure which is unlawful or which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be

unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency to the authority". This includes an unbalanced budget.

Within the report there are a number of proposed savings identified, and there will be a process for consultation with Scrutiny and where relevant the public in line with the Councils duties to consult.

7.3. **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Natalie Smith**

**Community Development & Equalities
Manager**

The Equality Act 2010 places a public duty on authorities to consider the impact of proposals on people with protected characteristics so that positive or negative impacts can be understood and enhanced or mitigated as appropriate. Services will be required to consider the impact on any proposals to reduce service levels through a community equality impact assessment which should seek to involve those directly affected.

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

Proposals set out in this report will have an impact on all services across the council through either a direct impact on front line service delivery or through general capacity to support both statutory and discretionary services.

8. **Appendices to the report**

Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Strategy

Report Author

Sean Clark

Corporate Director of Resources and Place Delivery

Medium Term Financial Strategy

Narrative	2022/23	2023/24
	£000's	£000's
Council Tax Position	(1,931)	(2,034)
Business Rates Position	(1,665)	(2,165)
Government Resources Position	375	784
Net Additional (Reduction) in resources	(3,221)	(3,414)
Inflation and other increases	4,515	4,665
Treasury	6,754	2,948
Corporate Growth	3,314	3,314
Commercial Income	(1,089)	0
Internal Position	13,494	10,927
Core Budget Deficit before intervention	10,273	7,513
Savings Departmental	(13,400)	(1,915)
General Staffing	(438)	(9,063)
Cross Cutting	(1,750)	(400)
Wider Funding	0	0
Internal Core Budget Savings	(15,588)	(11,377)
Core Budget Deficit Position	(5,315)	(3,866)
Other funding (not affecting baseline)		
Utilisation of Capital Receipts	3,000	0
Use of non-general fund balance reserves 2021/22	3,300	0
Capital receipts 2022/23	(2,000)	2,000
Use of non-general fund balance reserves 2022/23	(2,000)	2,000
Covid Grant	4,853	0
	7,153	4,000
Overall Budget Working Total	1,838	134

8 September 2021	ITEM: 11 Decision: 110581
Cabinet	
Communications Strategy 2021-24	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Jack Duffin, Portfolio Holder for Central Services	
Accountable Assistant Director: N/A	
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Growth and Engagement	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

The Communications Strategy 2021-24 sets out the approach the council will take over the next three years to ensure that communications activity aligns with and supports the vision and priorities of the council.

This strategy follows on from the previous Communications Strategy 2017-20, and builds on the work that has taken place over the past three years to introduce a more modern, direct and digitally focused approach to the way that we engage with our residents.

Thurrock is:

- a borough with a hugely ambitious regeneration agenda with billions of pounds of planned investment in new jobs, infrastructure and homes
- one of the largest growth areas in the UK
- the lead authority for the new Thames Freeport
- leading the implementation of over £40million from the government's Town Fund
- key to the delivery of projects such as South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park and the Technical University through the ASELA partnership
- involved in the Thames Estuary Growth Board and SELEP
- developing a Statement of Intent for 2030 which sets out the expected outcomes and deliverables for the council over the coming years

A consistent and strategic approach to communications which ensures that the good work of the council is shared with residents and that they are kept informed on how

to access essential services is critical, even more so following a sustained period of change and uncertainty through the COVID-19 pandemic.

The strategy has been developed to ensure that recent learning and successes are built upon, and that all communications activity reflects best practice, taking on board expert advice and recommendations as well as input from senior management and members.

The approach to communications will be built around:

- brand recognition – further developing and embedding the Thurrock Council narrative to support growth and regeneration
- a strategic approach – clearly planned activity which is aligned to the corporate objectives of People, Place and Prosperity
- direct digital communications – sharing engaging information and content with residents through their preferred channels

Working with partners and colleagues across the council and the wider community this approach which will result in a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand as well as national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay and to invest.

It will also increase trust in the council and its decision making processes and ensure that staff are fully engaged in the council's work and transformation agenda and can act as advocates for both the local authority and the borough.

1. Recommendation(s):

1.1 To agree the Communication Strategy 2021-24 as the principle policy document for communication with residents, businesses, stakeholders and staff.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report sets out the Communications Strategy 2021-24, which outlines the approach the council will take over the next three years to effectively communicate and engage with residents, staff, partners, local businesses and other key stakeholders.

2.2 This communications strategy follows on from the previous Communications Strategy 2017-20, and builds on the work that has taken place over the past three years to introduce a more modern and digitally focused approach to the way that the council engages with residents and to embed new ways of working.

2.3 The development of the new strategy was delayed from 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact that this had on the work of the communications team.

- 2.4 During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic response, the work of the team focused heavily on ensuring that frequently changing critical public health messaging was communicated clearly and directly to Thurrock residents and businesses.
- 2.5 The Local Government Association (LGA) was invited to carry out a virtual peer review in October 2020, referred to as a 'communications health check' in preparation for developing the communications strategy.
- 2.6 This was similar to the 'communications health check' undertaken in May 2017 which informed the 2017-21 strategy.
- 2.7 The LGA's report highlighted that the council had good crisis communications, strong stakeholder relations especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and a flexible team who were proactive, committed and responsive. It also reflected that internal communications had improved since 2017 and communications were now more campaign-led overall.
- 2.8 To further inform the strategy the LGA also facilitated a workshop session with members and officers.
- 2.9 One of the LGA recommendations was to commission a survey into how residents find out their news and information about the council. Independent market research was commissioned which consisted of a telephone survey with 200 residents. This ensured a response from a representative cross section of those in the borough who may not currently actively engage with the council on a regular basis. This was supplemented with an online survey which was promoted through the council's online channels.
- 2.10 While led by the Communications Team, communications is a shared responsibility across the entire council to ensure that a clear and compelling story which articulates the council's aims and purpose is being told collectively.

Communications Update

Through the implementation of the previous Communications Strategy, there has been much more focus on digital communications, the use of consistent messaging, campaigns and work to raise the profile of the council and the borough.

Digital Communications

- 2.11 The council's reach on social media has grown substantially since the previous strategy, with the council's Facebook page going from 2,000 followers to almost 13,000 (we have 12,891 followers, 11,920 likes).
- 2.12 An Instagram account has been launched which has almost 1,800 followers, Twitter has grown to 13,400 and LinkedIn has increased to over 5,000.

- 2.13 Engagement rates of posts have increased across all channels, and there has been an improved focus on the use of eye-catching imagery and video content.
- 2.14 During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of the Thurrock News e-newsletter and the council's social media channels were the primary tools for getting very rapidly changing information directly to residents.
- 2.15 There was very high engagement with these channels, with up to 65,000 residents either opening the e-newsletter or being reached by Facebook posts at times of key changes to guidance, such as the introduction of the government's Tier system.
- 2.16 Since the introduction of e-newsletters in 2016 they have continued to grow their audiences. There are specific e-newsletters for topics such as Careers, Weather Warnings and the A13 Road Widening Project, all of which have consistently high open rates.

Media

- 2.17 The media landscape has changed substantially in Thurrock since 2017. Where there were once three printed publications, there is now one, and this is no longer delivered to homes. This is in common with the national picture, where local news has moved primarily to news websites and other online offerings.
- 2.18 Regional and national coverage of Thurrock related stories has increased, and member participation in interviews, particularly radio interviews, has risen substantially.

Campaigns

- 2.19 There has been a much more campaign driven approach to communications, with large-scale behaviour change campaigns on the issues of fly-tipping, recycling and anti-social behaviour, as well as awareness campaigns on fostering, careers support and Transforming Thurrock which highlights regeneration and positive change in the borough. In addition to this, a long-term campaign called 'Discover Thurrock' highlighted the excellent amenities on offer in the borough including the many parks and open spaces.
- 2.20 All campaign activity is fully evaluated to measure impact and effectiveness.

Internal Communications

- 2.21 The approach to internal communications has been enhanced over the past three years through introducing a new Intranet and new email newsletters. These e-newsletters receive excellent engagement from staff, with over 65 per cent of staff with access to email opening each one – well above benchmarking against other public sector organisations. Digital

communications to staff are also supplemented by printed materials and in-person/virtual briefings to ensure that office based and front-line staff are kept fully informed of key information.

Design and Brand

- 2.22 The council's graphic design has moved to a 'digital first' approach, where content is developed with an online audience in mind as the first stage. This includes increased use of animation and gifs. There will always be a need for some printed materials, particularly for residents who do not or cannot access the internet, and this forms part of the overall campaign approach to channel use. The council's brand played an integral part in the response to COVID-19, where a recognisable identity ensured residents knew what information was coming directly from Thurrock Council.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The issues set out above and the analysis of the resident research have informed the development of the approach set out in the Communication Strategy 2021-24 at Appendix 1.
- 3.2 Through independent market research, it has been established that the majority of residents get their information from the council's website (65 per cent) and through e-newsletters (38 per cent).
- 3.3 This insight into resident preferences has guided the approach taken in the strategy to ensure that the council is communicating with residents through their preferred channels.
- 3.4 The research also outlined the content which is of most interest to residents, which means that a strategic and planned approach can be taken to ensure high engagement with key messages.
- 3.5 Working with partners and colleagues across the council the key outcomes that communications will be working to achieve are:
- embedding a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand which positions the council as a leader in local government
 - achieving local and national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and encourages inward investment both regionally and nationally
 - ensuring the council is viewed by residents' as delivering excellent services and positive change and transformation for the benefit of all who live and work in Thurrock
 - building increased trust in the council and its decision making processes through clear and consistent dialogue with our target audiences

- demonstrating improved wellbeing of residents and empowered communities which have been positively influenced in improve behaviours and life choices through collaborative working with the council
- having informed, motivated and empowered staff who act as advocates of Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 Cabinet are asked to agree the approach to communications as set out in the strategy. The strategy will shape the work of the communications team and all communications activity carried out on behalf of the council.

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

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Communications Team, Strategy Engagement and Growth Directorate Management Team, Directors Board, Cabinet and the Leader. In addition, a communications update report was provided to Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2021 which outlined the feedback and recommendations of the LGA health check. The recommendations from that report and feedback from the committee meeting have been used to inform the development of the strategy. These included:

- commission a ‘who reads what?’ survey to establish how Thurrock residents consume news and prefer to
- consider commissioning an externally facilitated workshop involving members and officers to help develop the new strategy
- ensure the refreshed communications strategy includes measurable objectives and an annual campaign plan
- consider more productive ways of engaging the local media (e.g. briefings) rather than relying on press releases
- focus more on the council’s own communications channels which are read by more people (e.g. e-newsletters)

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

- 6.1 Communication of the priorities, policies and performance is key to the overall success and reputation of the council as well as the wellbeing of residents.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. The Communications Strategy and corporate communication activity will be delivered within existing budgets.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

There are no legal implications as a result of this report. The council follows the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity. The Code provides guidance on the content, style, distribution and cost of local authority publicity.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

There are no direct diversity and equality implications as a result of this report, however, the council must ensure that a range of channels are used to communicate with residents so as not to exclude any particular group. Research to inform this strategy was carried out with a demographically representative sample of the Thurrock population.

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

A strong communications strategy in relation to crime, disorder and ASB will encourage reporting by residents and improve their perceptions of crime and response thus supporting Thurrock Council in fulfilling its Duty towards S17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

There are no other specific implications, however, the council regularly develops communications approaches and materials in partnership with other public sector organisations including health partners and Essex Police, the voluntary sector and businesses as appropriate.

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):

- LGA Communications health check: Thurrock Council
- Communication Strategy 2017-20

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - Communications Strategy 2021-24

Report Author:

Mary Patricia Flynn
Strategic Lead Communications
Communications

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2021-24

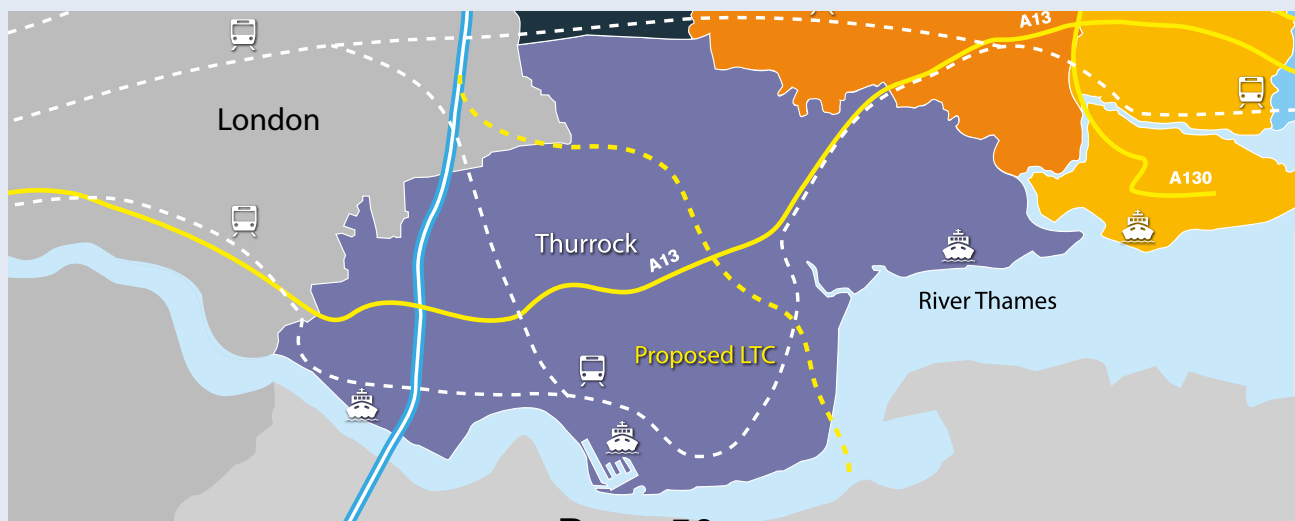
INTRODUCTION

Thurrock is a borough on the rise. Our motto of ‘By Thames to all the peoples of the world’ captures the essence of Thurrock and its unique location at the heart of the Thames Estuary and the rich opportunities on our doorstep.

Thurrock is:

- a borough with a hugely ambitious regeneration agenda with billions of pounds of planned investment in new jobs, infrastructure and homes
- one of the largest growth areas in the UK
- the lead authority for the new Thames Freeport
- leading the implementation of over £40million from the government’s Town Fund
- key to the delivery of projects such as South Essex Estuary (SEE) Park and the Technical University through the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASELA) partnership
- involved in the Thames Estuary Growth Board and South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)
- developing a Statement of Intent for 2030 which sets out the expected outcomes and deliverables for the council over the coming years

Communications will be essential to help unlock the unrivalled opportunity presented by our position at the heart of economic growth in the region. We need to ensure that we are telling Thurrock’s story locally, nationally and internationally and through doing so that we gain recognition for the borough as being an excellent place for residents, businesses and investors to work and play, live and stay; and to invest.



PEOPLE, PLACE AND PROSPERITY

People

A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

Place

A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future

Prosperity

A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations

Under the corporate priority banner of People, Place, Prosperity, the council is creating a place where people want to live and are proud of, where businesses want to stay and thrive, and where investors and talent want to be located.

Effective communication and engagement will:

- tell a compelling story which articulates the council's aims and purpose and uses our unique position at the heart of the Thames Estuary to ground this
- use clear messaging to ensure that council priorities are easily understood by local residents, our staff, our partners, local businesses
- reinforce Thurrock's pivotal role and position as the heart of the South Essex region with key external stakeholders including regional bodies and government
- ensure Thurrock is first in the minds of opinion formers and decision makers in order to support us to achieve our vision for the borough

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Working with partners and colleagues across the council the key outcomes that communications will be working to achieve are:

- embedding a strong and recognisable Thurrock brand which positions the council as a leader in local government
- achieving local and national recognition of Thurrock as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and encourages inward investment both regionally and nationally
- ensuring the council is viewed by residents as delivering excellent services and positive change and transformation for the benefit of all who live and work in Thurrock
- building increased trust in the council and its decision making processes through clear and consistent dialogue with our target audiences
- demonstrating improved wellbeing of residents and empowered communities which have been positively influenced in improved behaviours and life choices through collaborative working with the council
- having informed, motivated and empowered staff who act as advocates of Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

Communications activity will be built around:

- brand recognition – further developing and embedding the Thurrock Council narrative to support growth and regeneration
- a strategic approach – clearly planned activity which is aligned to the corporate objectives of People, Place and Prosperity
- direct digital communications – sharing engaging information and content with residents through their preferred channels

BRAND RECOGNITION

We will be working to develop the Thurrock brand as both a local authority and a place in order to support the council's economic growth and regeneration agenda and ensure Thurrock gets the national recognition it so richly warrants.

The council is at the heart of developing a better future for all those who live and work not only in Thurrock but the wider South Essex region and Thames Estuary.

Through the development of a new place brand and the implementation of a long-term new Economic Growth campaign, we will ensure that the borough is seen as an attractive option for potential further investment.

This will mean:

- using the council's narrative alongside a vivid and identifiable place brand to develop a strong external affairs approach
- supporting the council to articulate the deliverables and outcomes of the Statement of Intent for 2030
- having the right conversations at the right time with key partners and stakeholders, and working together on consistent and cohesive messaging
- clearly explaining the benefits that investment in our borough will bring to residents and local businesses through a large-scale campaign
- the campaign will run for three years and use audience segmentation to deliver targeted messaging to different stakeholders
- we will use all communications channels at our disposal and this campaign will be a key focus of the work of the communications team

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Communications is a strategic function of the council, and we have a collective responsibility to plan, prioritise and consider the potential impact of all communications activity, as well as ensure that all our output is focused on achieving the best possible outcomes for the council, residents, business and our partners.

By prioritising key campaign activity, we can align resources to ensure we are meeting our objectives. Annual priorities and the annual campaign plan must be agreed by Cabinet and Directors Board and clear planning is crucial to ensure that all output from the communications team is in step with these priorities. Anything which does not directly support key corporate objectives will receive communications support in the form of appropriate social media or media relations only.

Campaigns

Campaigns developed by the communications team will:

- be outcome focused
- have specific and measurable objectives
- work to directly assist the council in meeting its strategic aims
- link directly to the council priorities of People, Place and Prosperity
- focus on issues that we know are important to residents
- aim to create greater understanding between the council and the borough's residents
- support positive behaviour change

This will ensure that we:

- have a planned schedule of activity which clearly sets out the priorities of People, Place and Prosperity and how we are achieving them
- build trust and confidence in the council through increased and improved direct digital communication with residents
- strengthen relationships with residents, stakeholders and staff through improved opportunities for collaboration and engagement including through the Collaborative Communities Framework
- ensure residents are fully informed on how we are investing in infrastructure, housing and job creation, and kept up to date on the latest news on our roads, schools, leisure, culture and community facilities
- influence key external stakeholders' view of Thurrock as a council to do business with and as a place to invest



The communications landscape continues to change at pace.

- traditional media audiences have been in decline for a number of years, and this has been highlighted in our survey results
- since our previous communications strategy was implemented in 2017, Thurrock has gone from having three local print publications, including one which was delivered to households, to only having one print publication which is now 'pick up' only
- digital channels continue to increase in popularity with the majority of UK adults now using at least one social media network
- more traditional face-to-face and direct methods of communication with residents are still valuable especially for harder to reach communities

Digital Channels

A key element of implementing effective communication is ensuring that we are communicating with residents through the channels they are already using, and that all information provided on our council website information is clear, easy to understand and up to date.

Based on our research findings we can ensure that the content we are providing is in line with what that age group have said they are most interested in. This will help build trust with our audience and have the knock-on effect of enhancing the council's reputation through clear and consistent direct messaging. It will also help us to increase our audience and broaden our reach.

DIRECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS



Social Media

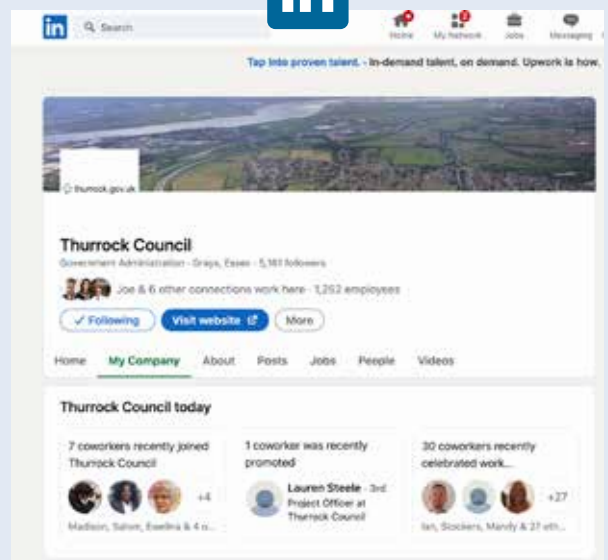
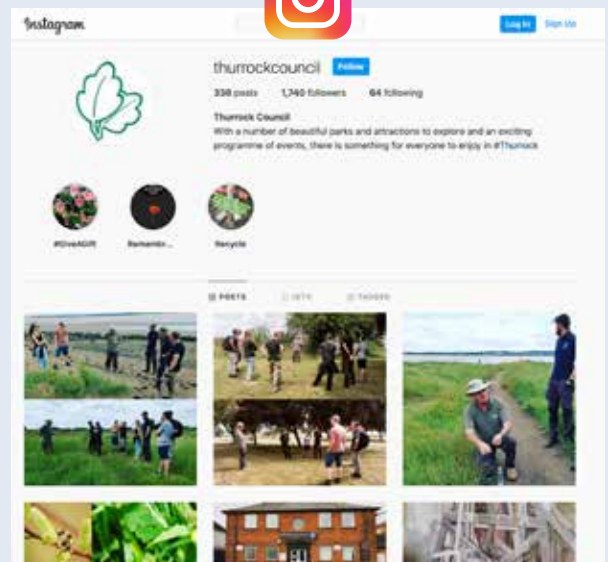
Our resident research has shown that:

- the council's Facebook page is used as a source of information by one in six residents in the borough
- this demonstrates that it is an excellent way of sharing good news directly with residents and helping to promote important services and initiatives
- during the COVID-19 pandemic some of our posts were being seen by over 65,000 people on a regular basis
- the age profile of those who use Facebook in Thurrock is primarily those aged 35 and above

We therefore want to build on this channel as a trusted source of information for local residents.

Twitter has fallen in popularity nationally, and as such is not as effective a method of directly communicating with residents.

- only 2% of survey respondents said that they use it to find news or information about the council
- this is in line with the national picture, where it comes below Facebook and Instagram in user numbers and popularity
- Twitter is still a useful channel for key updates and breaking news
- this is how we will be using it as part of our overall approach to social media



DIRECT DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Our LinkedIn continues to grow at pace.

- we have seen increased engagement during the past year
- its use ensures a visible presence for Thurrock with key stakeholders and partners
- this is a valuable channel for connecting with decision makers and professional influencers

The approach to social media will include:

- focusing our resource on the channels which have proven to have the most impact on our residents
- an increased emphasis on video content and the use of real life case studies, not only about the council but key community and business partners as well
- working with our residents to tell our story to build trust with our audience
- increased use of Instagram and its targeted ads function to engage residents aged between 16 to 34
- continually investigating new and emerging channels, such as TikTok
- introducing more specific and topic-led Facebook groups so that we can increase our two-way engagement with residents in a more meaningful way, and enhance links between individuals in our communities
- engaging with local community Facebook group admins to build relationships and ensure that important information and messages can be shared

Email newsletters

Email newsletters have proven to be exceptionally effective, especially for communicating crucial public health information about COVID-19 directly to residents over the past year and a half.

- 35% of residents say that this is the way they find out information about the council
- we will continue to grow and expand our newsletter offer including broadening our range of specific topic lead bulletins
- direct communication to resident and business inboxes will be used both to keep people informed and up to date on weekly updates and as a valuable channel for campaign materials
- we will investigate additional issue specific newsletters to supplement our existing offer



Media relations

As part of raising the profile of both the council and the borough, we will be taking a broader approach to media relations which will help to tell Thurrock's story on a wider stage.

The approach means that:

- more emphasis will be given to developing relationships with trade and specialist press as well as increasing links with regional and national media outlets
- resources will be managed in a way which enables the communications team to focus on producing high quality proactive and direct communications
- day-to-day proactive and reactive media relations will focus on key decisions and local issues which link to council priorities
- responsive work which does not work towards achieving strategic outcomes and goals will be dealt with on a case by case basis
- press briefings will be introduced, as well as more interactive discourse around key issues
- we will increase the use of video releases and photography

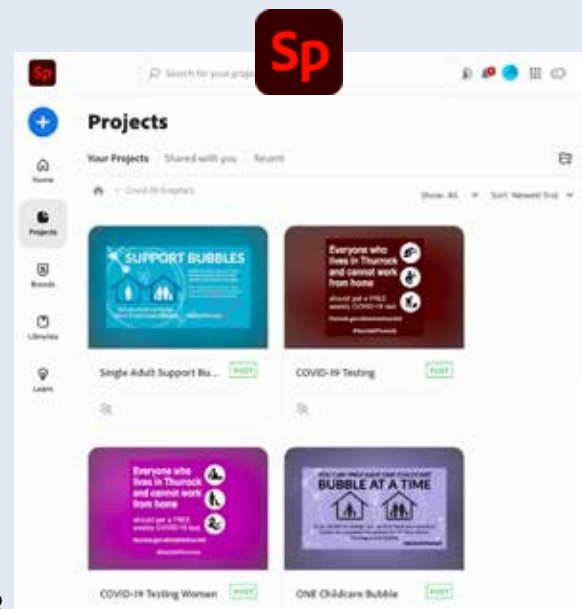


Design and Print

Our graphic design has moved to a 'digital first' approach, where content is developed with our online audience in mind as the first stage.

The approach means that we will:

- increase our use of animation and gifs across all digital channels
- only produce printed materials for specific projects and for groups of our population who do not or cannot access the internet
- provide additional options for getting important, locally targeted messages to residents in areas of high footfall through introducing more council owned outdoor advertising channels
- ensure that the council brand is applied in a consistent way across all materials and that the use of partner branding is applied in a consistent way
- ensure materials being displayed by or distributed on behalf of the council are of a high quality



Internal communications

Our council staff are our biggest asset as an organisation and as such it's crucial that we ensure that we have clear, open and honest communication with them. They are also an important audience for wider council messaging as over 70% of Thurrock Council staff also live in the borough.

We have enhanced our internal communications approach over the past three years, introducing a new intranet and new email newsletters. Over 65% of staff with access to email open each one – well above benchmarking against other public sector organisations.

As we enter a more challenging period in the post COVID-19 world, including the move to more remote and 'smarter' working, keeping our staff engaged and informed will be more important than ever.

Our approach will focus on:

- communicating key information in a very clear and easy to understand way which keeps staff involved in the decision making process
- building on the success of our email newsletters which receive excellent engagement from staff
- continuing to supplement digital communications with printed materials and in-person briefings to ensure that office based staff are kept fully informed of key information
- increasing the use of text messages to reach staff who either do not have access to email or are away from their devices
- investigating new channels to communicate with staff such as internal social networks and new functionality of Microsoft 365

Engaged and informed staff can be some of our best advocates for the work of the council. Feedback on internal communications is obtained through the annual Staff Survey which all staff are encouraged to complete. A full staff survey explores a large range of issues and topics relating to all aspects of working for the council which is followed by a 'Pulse Staff Survey' the following year, further exploring the six top themes and topics highlighted in the previous years' survey results.

#TeamThurrock

Staff Notices Training and Development Health and Wellbeing Staff Benefits Corporate Boards

COVID-19 restrictions

We ask that #TeamThurrock continue to act cautiously to protect you and your colleagues. We ask that face coverings be worn in public facing buildings, such as libraries. As we continue to do our best to protect #TeamThurrock, the council will continue to follow the specific guidelines it has set out so far within existing risk assessments and there will be no immediate changes.

The majority of #TeamThurrock will continue to work from home until at least October 2021. Where staff travel together in vehicles, the requirements for wearing a face covering will continue to be based on current risk assessments. Existing guidance for care staff remains in place including the use of PPE.

The [COVID-19 working arrangements policy](#) and updated [Civic Offices risk assessments](#) documents are available to support staff and managers with working conditions to ensure everyone's safety. #TeamThurrock should still be [taking regular COVID-19 tests](#) to help

Read more

thurrock.gov.uk Intranet

Staff directory Downloads and forms Services and initiatives Committees and boards

Smarter Working

Smarter Working will enable us to embrace the positive changes we have made since March 2020 as we consider how we will work in whatever ways fit the future.

Find out the latest news, including information about the Civic Offices (COCU) activity for all teams.

Read more

WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Evaluation of our communications activity is critical to ensuring that we understand what works well and what doesn't in achieving our objectives. From this evidence base we can make sound judgements on what approach to take at any given time, and adapt our content and channel use accordingly.

- a monthly monitoring and evaluation report will be produced to give a snapshot of campaign activity and the outcomes achieved, audiences reached and key issues that needed to be managed
- through thoroughly evaluating all of our work and the impact it has had against measurable objectives, it will ensure that we are able to allocate our resources efficiently and in a way that ensures we are working cohesively to achieve the council's overall priority objectives
- the monthly evaluation report will be shared with Directors Board and Cabinet and published on our intranet where it will be available for all council staff and members to view

The evaluation will link directly back to the key outcomes communications will be working to achieve, and by 2024 will ensure that:

- the Thurrock brand is fully embedded and Thurrock is recognised as an excellent place to work and play, live and stay; and to invest
- residents believe that the council has and continues to deliver excellent services and positive change and transformation
- trust in the council and its decision making processes is substantially higher
- residents' wellbeing is significantly improved through working together to influence positive life choices and outcomes
- council staff consider themselves to be well informed and are motivated to be strong advocates for Thurrock Council and Thurrock the place

WHAT HAS INFORMED THIS STRATEGY?

This communications strategy has been developed to ensure we build on recent successes and reflect best practice, taking on board expert advice and recommendations as well as input from senior management and members.

As good practice, we invited the Local Government Association (LGA) to carry out a peer led 'communications health check' in October 2020 which made recommendations to support the development of the communications strategy 2021-24. One of their recommendations was to commission a survey into how residents are finding their news and information about the council.

To do this we commissioned a market research agency to conduct an independent telephone survey with 200 residents. This ensured that we got a representative cross section of those in our borough who may not currently actively engage with the council on a regular basis. This was supplemented with an online survey which was promoted through the council's online channels. An externally facilitated workshop involving members and officers was also held to help develop the new strategy.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Where do residents get their news and information about the council?

A survey was administered by telephone by an independent market research company from 21 June to 5 July. Demographic quotas were set for gender and age in line with population statistics to ensure a representative sample of residents were interviewed.

The findings from this research shows that:

- Thurrock residents have a preference for online sources of information with the council's website being by far the most popular
- more than half of residents surveyed by telephone saying that thurrock.gov.uk is the main way they learn about the council
- next most popular were our council email newsletters, with 35% of residents saying this was their primary source of information, and 97% of those saying that its contents were useful to them

- in total just under half of those surveyed (46%) said that they receive the Thurrock Council email newsletter; the vast majority also said they always read it
- 92% of those who read the email newsletter believe it keeps them informed, with 47% saying that it keeps them very well informed

The next most popular ways to find news and information about the council were word of mouth (18%) and Thurrock Council's Facebook page (14%). Overall, a third of residents who access the internet follow Thurrock Council's social media channels, with the most common being Facebook. The print edition of the Thurrock Gazette was referenced as a source of information for 8% of respondents, with primarily over 55s referencing this publication. Online news outlets were referenced by 3% of respondents.

An additional online survey carried out through the council's consultation portal was promoted through our own digital channels and local online media outlets.

- this sample is not as representative as the telephone survey as the demographic profile of respondents is much older and has a higher proportion of retirees
- it provides useful insight into how the audience who already engage with digital channels, both council owned and community based, receive their information
- almost 60% of respondents said that they receive information from the council from our weekly email newsletter, with 81% finding it useful
- a higher proportion of residents who responded to the survey said that they get news about the council from local and regional media
- this is in common with the national picture (source: Ofcom news consumption 2020 report) with an average of 9% accessing information from these channels

What type of content are residents most interested in?

- community news and events and service updates, e.g. changes to household waste collections, on the council's social media channels
- around a third would like to see updates on key projects or work by the council and information about upcoming roadworks
- a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 35-54 are interested in seeing service updates, information updates on council work as well as road and traffic updates
- this content is of less interest to residents aged 16-34
- the vast majority of residents are most interested in receiving information about waste and recycling, community issues, leisure and culture, environment and safety and adult care and health across all of our communications channels
- there is less interest overall in news about travel and transport and planning and growth
- over 55s displayed more interest in these topics than the younger age group

- a significantly higher proportion of residents aged 16-34 would be interested in receiving information about housing, education and learning, children and families, jobs and careers and business and licensing
- a lower proportion of residents aged 55 and over would be interested in receiving this information

Respondents to the online survey indicated a wider interest across council topics, with the vast majority of respondents saying they would be interested in receiving information about waste and recycling, environment and safety, travel and transport, community and living, planning and growth and leisure and culture.

Over two thirds of this group indicated their interest in receiving information about council and democracy; far higher than observed amongst the random representative sample. Over half are interested in receiving information on housing and money, tax & benefits.

Priority 1 campaigns

These campaigns will be directly linked to high level corporate priorities that are of strategic importance to the council. These campaigns will have clear, measurable objectives linked directly to priorities and require significant research, planning and communications resource. The campaigns will be implemented across a wide range of channels over an extended period of time.

Economic recovery

This campaign will build on the success of the Transforming Thurrock campaign to harness the excitement and potential of the ambitious growth agenda. A key element will be focusing on real life case studies from individuals and businesses across the borough to highlight the work the council is doing to support everyone who lives and works in the borough to reacclimatise to the new post-pandemic world. This will be a cross-cutting campaign covering many different council services from jobs and skills and strategic planning to Children's Services, and compliment work with partners through the Towns Fund Boards, Thames Freeport and ASELA.

Neighbourhood pride

The proposal for this campaign is to work across the Environment and Housing services to encourage positive behaviour change relating to how residents treat their local areas. It will aim to encompass elements of tackling untidy front gardens, low level 'bad neighbourly' anti-social behaviour (ASB) such as noise disruption and encourage more residents to feel empowered that they can improve their local area with help from the council, rather than having the expectation that the council is responsible for every aspect of civic life. It will also promote neighbourliness and build on the community spirit seen throughout the pandemic.

Smarter working

This will be our main internal communications campaign and will support council staff to embrace the new technology we have available, the different places we can work from and how we view our work to deliver it in the best ways possible – work is what we do, not where we do it. This is linked to the council's approach to providing better services from fewer buildings and ensuring that staff have the tools that they need to work in a modern and flexible way.

Priority 2 campaigns

These campaigns will be shorter in duration with a more defined audience and specific, time bound deliverables. They will require research, planning and sustained communications input and support over an agreed time period and will be implemented across targeted channels.

Fostering

A refreshed fostering campaign will encourage potential foster parents to foster directly through the council rather than use agencies. The campaign emphasises both the financial advantages, such as the Council Tax discount, and the additional excellent support available from our dedicated team. The campaign uses design materials which have been newly created this year and tested on a panel of existing foster parents.



Recycling

Building on the previous campaign which ran from 2018 to 2021, a new recycling campaign is being developed which looks to use a mixture of factual information and emotional appeals to influence positive behaviour change and encourage residents to recycle more and create less general waste. It will work to prepare residents for expected forthcoming changes in waste collection by emphasising that the majority of household waste should go in the blue recycling bin which will be collected weekly.

Report it online

This campaign will encourage residents to report issues including crime, ASB, repairs, environmental issues including missed bins and other service requests through the appropriate direct online channels. It will explain that this is more convenient for them, rather than taking indirect routes such as posting on social media, and means that reports can be acted upon straight away by the relevant officers, partners or contractors.

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8 September 2021	ITEM: 12 Decision: 110582
Cabinet	
Parking Enforcement Vehicle Removal	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Councillor Ben Maney - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport	
Accountable Assistant Director: David Kleinberg - Assistant Director for Counter Fraud, Investigation and Enforcement	
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers - Director of Public Realm	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals for the council to commence the use of vehicle removal in the council's parking enforcement approach in specific incidents.

The Council is a specified enforcement authority with responsibilities and duties in managing the traffic network with the aim of maintaining traffic flow, improving road safety and meeting the needs of people with disabilities.

The Council have delegated authority for enforcement against vehicles that are parked in contravention of parking regulations through its in-house Parking Enforcement Team. The service has seen traditional enforcement actions against high-risk incidents and persistent evaders being ineffective.

All parking enforcement conducted by the council is delivered in compliance with the statutory provisions of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (as amended) and in accordance with the Operational Guidance to Local Authorities.

This report seeks approval for the Parking Team to remove vehicles parked in contravention with priority removals to those classed as persistent evaders or if a vehicle is parked in a manner that is obstructive or dangerous to other road users, in line with legislative powers and best practice.

1. Recommendation(s)

Cabinet are requested to:

- 1.1 Approve Thurrock Council's Parking Team to execute enforcement action against vehicles parked in contravention with priority vehicle**

removal of persistent evaders as suggested by the Department for Transport within its statutory guidance.

- 1.2 Adopt the policy to remove vehicles which are parked in contravention of restrictions where a PCN may be issued if the vehicle is also parked in a manner that is obstructive or dangerous to other road users.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council has an established enforcement team which has the regulatory powers to carry out the civil enforcement of parking contraventions by issuing Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and approving the removal of vehicles to which a PCN has been issued.
- 2.2 Motorists who receive a PCN for contravening parking restrictions have opportunity to either pay or appeal the charge. The party liable to make payment is the owner of the vehicle and in accordance with relevant regulations enquiries are made with the DVLA to obtain details of the registered keeper (who is legally presumed to be the owner). The keeper would be sent three statutory documents at different stages of the PCN, each of which explains the options available, including how to pay and what will happen if the document is ignored. As a final resort a warrant is obtained for unpaid PCNs and referred to enforcement agents for collection. This can result in the keeper being traced but in many occasions warrants are returned by enforcement agents at this stage as the keeper cannot be found.
- 2.3 The council incurs costs for pursuing unpaid PCNs including an £8 court registration fee for each case that is registered as a debt at the Traffic Enforcement Centre (before a warrant may be issued). Thurrock councils cost to the Traffic Enforcement Centre was £13,420 for the last financial year 20/21.
- 2.4 For some vehicles the DVLA fail to return any current keeper information, for Example if the previous keeper says they sold the vehicle but they do not know full details of the buyer and the new owner then fails to inform DVLA of their details. Parking Services are unable to take further action in such cases currently.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Department for Transport statutory guidance defines a 'persistent evader' as having three or more unpaid PCNs per vehicle, which have not had appeals made against them within the timescales allowed by the regulations, or which following the rejection of an appeal have then remained unpaid.
- 3.2 This guidance recommends that local authorities adopt strong enforcement policy against persistent evaders, with the removal of the vehicle as a beneficial option as the keeper of the vehicle then has to provide evidence of where they live at the time of collection.

- 3.3 It is proposed that Thurrock Council adopts the policy to remove the vehicles of persistent evaders to prevent abuse of parking restrictions by drivers who may ignore the restrictions. The vehicles of persistent evaders who have committed a parking contravention in a designated parking place cannot be removed until at least 15 minutes have elapsed following the issue of a PCN.
- 3.4 In circumstances where a parking contravention has occurred outside of a designated parking place, the removal of the vehicle can take place immediately after the issue of a PCN. It is therefore also proposed that Thurrock Council adopts the policy to remove vehicles which are causing the most serious impact on traffic flow or road safety.
- 3.5 The suggested priority for the removal of vehicles is as follows:
- a) Vehicles parked in contravention of a restrictive parking regulation (such as on a yellow line, zig zag lines for a school keep clear marking / a road crossing, or bus stop clearway) in a manner that is causing obstruction to traffic flow or danger to other road users (including pedestrians, or in a restricted cycleway)
 - b) Non permitted vehicles parked in a disabled bay
 - c) Persistent evaders parked where parking is restricted
 - d) Persistent evaders parked in a parking place in contravention of a restriction
- 3.6 In accordance with statutory guidance vehicles displaying a valid Blue Badge or diplomatic vehicles with a registration plate that is personalised or marked with a 'D' would be relocated rather than removed. Diplomatic vehicles with an X plate may be removed if they are a persistent evader.
- 3.7 The intention is to use the successful contractor for Thurrock Councils Vehicle Removal contract following a tender process. The contract would enable this removal activity to be carried out following directives of trained Civil Enforcement staff working for Thurrock Council's Parking Team.
- 3.8 The removal of vehicles which are persistent evaders should contribute to keeping the borough safer. As indicated above such vehicle owners often do not have their vehicle correctly registered at the DVLA. The reasons for the recommendations section, shown later in the report, explains the potential risks associated with such vehicles.
- 3.9 Persistent evaders do not pay PCNs to the local authority and also, depending on locations where the vehicle is left, parking charges (i.e. 'pay and display' charges). Money paid to the council in parking charges and PCN's is used to deliver the parking service and local transport priorities. Indirectly local economies may be impacted due to other visitors not being able to find parking and not stopping to visit local businesses or facilities.
- 3.10 Spaces being taken up by vehicles which have not paid to park lead to

higher utilisation of spaces, increasing the risk of other drivers having to drive round looking for a space. This also results in a negative impact on air quality.

- 3.11 The removal of vehicles which do not belong to persistent evaders but which are parked at locations where traffic flow is blocked will help keep the borough moving reducing congestion for other road users, including public transport.
- 3.12 The police do have powers to enforce against vehicles which are parked obstructively. There will be some circumstances only the police could still take enforcement action. For example where there are not parking restrictions in situ that enable Parking Civil Enforcement Officers (CEOs) to issue a PCN. The Secretary of State's Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities on the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions state local authorities should consult the police on the guidelines for CEOs to remove vehicles. Parking Services will consult with Essex police on the proposals if approved.
- 3.13 The police would be informed as part of standard practice about any individual vehicle removed to the pound following the issue of a PCN and the authorised removal.

3.14 Alternative Options Considered

- 3.14.1 To continue to issue PCNs to persistent evaders rather than to also approve removal of their vehicles. However, this will result in such drivers continuing to use loopholes in the DVLA vehicle registration system to avoid payment of charges and the resulting negative impact on other road users. Not removing persistent evaders creates an unfair position between motorists who do correctly register their vehicles and pay relevant parking fees (and PCNs if they do incur these) and those motorists who evade enforcement.
- 3.14.2 To continue to only issue PCNs to vehicles parked in contravention of higher level PCN contraventions at locations where they are obstructing or endangering other road users. However, another PCN cannot then be issued for 24 hours and the vehicle would then remain in a position where it is causing issues for other road users.

3.15 Equality of Opportunity Implications

- 3.15.1 Overall there are no significant equalities impacts, positive or negative, from this proposal. There is a beneficial impact on the general public by introducing this policy.
- 3.15.2 Removing vehicles which are parked on restrictions where they are causing obstruction, creating significant traffic congestion, or a danger to other road users, benefits a cross section of people. For example, young people around schools, cyclists on cycle routes, commuters, public transport users, pedestrians on footways (including those pushing buggies, with visual

impairments, or with restricted mobility).

3.15.3 The potential removal of vehicles which repeatedly park in contravention of restrictions in parking bays (including disabled bays) would improve the opportunities for Blue Badge holders to park. Reducing demand on bays from drivers trying to avoid payment of PCNs can also help improve traffic congestion and air quality as people are less likely to need to circulate to find an available space.

3.15.4 However vehicles that are being used by blue badge holders, but are persistent evaders or parked in a manner that is obstructive or dangerous to other road users, may be relocated but not removed (in accordance with Secretary of State guidance).

3.15.5 Parking Penalty Charge Notice income from the collection of tickets issued to persistent evaders (who may otherwise have avoided payment) may help contribute to any highway and environmental improvements to benefit local communities.

3.15.6 Reducing demand on bays from drivers trying to avoid payment of a Penalty Charge Notices can also help improve traffic congestion and air quality as people are less likely to need to circulate to find an available space.

3.16 Financial and Commercial Implications

3.16.1 Enforcement will be carried out by existing Civil Enforcement Officers working for Thurrock Councils Parking Team and removal of vehicles carried out by the successful contractor following a tender process for the Vehicle Removal Contract.

3.16.2 The charges for PCNs, vehicle removal, storage are set nationally – currently by the Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (Guidelines on Levels of Charges) (England) Order 2007.

3.16.3 The current levels are £70 for a higher rate PCN (reduced to £35 if paid within 14 days), £105 for the vehicle removal, £12 per day for vehicle storage or each day / part day during which the vehicle is impounded (from midnight after the first full day the vehicle is stored). There may also be a £50 charge for vehicle disposal. The Council would need to pay the contractor for removal, storage and disposal costs from the Parking Services budget, but would recoup these costs if the vehicle is collected by the motorist, except for the VAT which TBC is liable for. In this circumstance, TBC would also receive the PCN income. If a motorist does not collect their vehicle and the likely trade value of the vehicle exceeds £1500, TBC will receive any income from the sale of these vehicles at auction.

3.16.4 We would anticipate most drivers whose vehicles are removed from locations where they are parked obstructively or dangerously will pay to collect their vehicle.

3.16.5 Out of the persistent evaders there is a risk some will not pay to retrieve their vehicle, but this may be somewhat offset by other costs associated with the vehicle continuing to offend.

3.16.6 If there is no current registered keeper on the DVLA records, the vehicle may be disposed of seven days after the date of removal (excluding weekends and bank holidays). If information is provided by the DVLA, a notice would be issued by recorded delivery to the keeper to advise the vehicle will be disposed of after seven days (excluding weekends and bank holidays) following the owner/keeper being served with the Notice of Disposal. Service of this notice is taken to be two working days after it was posted. This minimises storage costs incurred by TBC.

3.16.7 In other persistent evader cases where the motorist does pay to collect the vehicle, the requirement to provide proof to collect the vehicle opens the opportunity to collect other unpaid PCNs which the local authority would have otherwise been unlikely to recover.

3.17 Legal Implications

3.17.1 Section 73 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 ('the 2004 Act') states that there are offences which may be regarded as parking contraventions such that they are subject to civil enforcement. The list of parking contraventions is contained in Part 1 of Schedule 7 to the 2004 Act and includes (but is not limited to) circumstances where a vehicle is parked in contravention of a restriction on parking implemented by a Traffic Regulation Order or where there is a failure to comply with certain traffic signs under section 36 of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

3.17.2 The Civil Enforcement of Parking Contraventions (England) General Regulations 2007 state that PCNs may be issued by civil enforcement officers where a parking contravention is observed. The Removal and Disposal of Vehicles Regulations 1986 ('the 1986 Regulations') further state at regulation 5C that where a PCN has been issued and the parking contravention arises from a failure to:

- a) pay a parking charge with respect to the vehicle;
- b) to properly display a ticket or parking device; or
- c) to remove the vehicle from the parking place by the end of the period for which the appropriate charge was paid

3.17.3 Then the vehicle may then be removed to either another position on the road it was found, another road entirely or to a place which is not a road (e.g. a depot) by a civil enforcement officer or a person acting under their direction. This cannot occur until 15 minutes have elapsed since the issuing of the PCN where there are 3 or more penalty charges outstanding, 30 minutes in the alternative.

- 3.17.4 Where a PCN has been issued and the parking contravention arises out of any other circumstance (i.e. is not due to any of the matters referred to as a), b) or c) above) then the vehicle may immediately be removed.
- 3.17.5 Section 87 of the 2004 Act states that a local authority must have regard to any statutory guidance when exercising its functions in connection with the civil enforcement of parking contraventions. The aforementioned guidance recommends the proposals contained within this report.
- 3.17.6 There are other alternative powers under the Highways Act 1980 which may be used by the Council to achieve the removal of a vehicle which is causing a danger (including danger by obstruction) however unless the danger is immediate then its removal must be delayed by the giving of notice and the obtaining of a removal and disposal order from a magistrates' court.
- 3.17.7 The use of removal powers under the 1986 Regulations present an appropriate and proportionate response where a parking contravention has also occurred; said powers are exercised pursuant to and in accordance with the duty under section 122 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (to secure the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of traffic) as well as enabling the Council to fulfil its network management duty under section 16 of the 2004 Act, which also states that the Council must manage its road network with a view to securing the expeditious movement of traffic.

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1 The removal of vehicles which are persistently parked in contravention of restrictions act as a deterrent to motorists. The British Parking Association (BPA) estimated persistent evaders cost local authorities more than £500 million a year ⁱⁱ. The BPA report also found that many such vehicles did not have MOTs, were not taxed or insured and in some cases were of interest to the police for other reasons.
- 4.2 Drivers seeking to collect a vehicle from the pound are required to provide proof showing they are the keeper of the vehicle and of their current address. Although under current legislation we cannot make the keeper pay other outstanding PCNs at the time of collection, this information can be used to pursue other unpaid PCNs relating to the same vehicle. The motorist would then still have options to pay or appeal the cases. There are hundreds of vehicles on Thurrock's streets which are classed as persistent evaders.
- 4.3 Warrants on unpaid PCNs expire after 12 months. In cases where the keeper cannot be traced due to keeper information not being up to date these are written off. In these instances as well as the debt being written off, Parking Services incur costs such as obtaining outdated DVLA information, printing and posting statutory documents and registering the debt. There are also limitations of vehicles that can be seized when a warrant is pursued. For instance a vehicle that is under a finance agreement still with the company it is being purchased from, or is needed for the owner's trade (subject to its value).

- 4.4 Removal of persistent evaders should reduce the occurrence of vehicles being left where parking is not permitted, such as on yellow lines, at locations where vehicles may cause obstruction, negatively impact on traffic flow and / or being a hazard to other road users.
- 4.5 Parking pressure is high in many areas. In other instances the removal of persistent evaders should free up bays which other drivers could legitimately park in, for example resident permit holders, or people who would buy a ticket from an on-street machine. Such vehicles also prevent other visitors to the Borough from utilising spaces to visit local businesses and facilities.
- 4.6 The removal of vehicles that are parked causing a problem for other traffic passing, or in a hazardous manner for other road users, would improve traffic flow and road safety.
- 4.7 An awareness of the risk that vehicles belonging to persistent evaders' and / or parked in contravention of serious priority restrictions may be removed will act as a deterrent to such parking practices.

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

- 5.1 This report was presented at Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 14 July 2021, with the Committee recommending that Cabinet approve the adoption of the policy to remove vehicles which are parked in contravention.

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

- 6.1 N/A

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

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

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Tim Hallam**
Deputy Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer

Given the nature of this report there are no legal implications directly arising from it.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**

Team Manager, Community Development and Equalities

Overall there are no negative equalities impacts from this proposed policy which will be applied fairly and consistently regardless of protected characteristic with reasonable adjustments proposed for Blue Badge holders. There is a beneficial impact on the general public and protected groups through the application of this proposed policy. Positive equalities impacts may be achieved not least in relation to those that use pushchairs and prams as well as users of mobility aids including scooters and wheelchairs and individuals with visual impairments given the nature of some illegal parking behaviours and the disruption to footpaths and walkways this may cause. A full Community Equality Impact Assessment will be completed in relation to the policy prior to implementation

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

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:

Phil Carver

Strategic Lead, Enforcement

Public Realm

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8 September 2021	ITEM: 13
Cabinet	
Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) Corporate Performance Report 2021/22 and Corporate Performance Framework	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key
Report of: Councillor Jack Duffin, Cabinet Member for Central Services	
Accountable Assistant Director: n/a	
Accountable Director: Karen Wheeler, Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth	
This report is public	

Executive Summary

This is the first corporate performance monitoring report for 2021/22 covering April to June 2021.

This report provides a progress update in relation to the performance of those KPIs, including a focus on some specific highlights and challenges. It details statistical evidence the council will use to monitor the progress and performance against the council's priorities.

This report shows that 77% of indicators are currently achieving target and half are better than the previous year.

During the first three months of the financial year, the country was preparing to open up slowly in line with the government's roadmap, but there were still a number of restrictions in place. Some indicators have been directly or indirectly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic and the enforced changes to council services in line with government guidance during this period. The report highlights how COVID-19 has disrupted or changed performance and/or priorities and demand levels across a number of services during the year.

The report also provides an update to the council's overall performance framework of which the KPIs are a key part. Council agreed the vision and priorities in January 2018 which better reflects the ambition for the council and Thurrock the place. Some additional narrative has been added to set out the main areas of focus and activity in the coming year that will help to deliver against the overall vision and priorities.

This report was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2021.

- 1. Recommendation(s):**
- 1.1 To note and comment upon the performance of the key corporate performance indicators in particular those areas which are off target and the impact of Covid-19.**
- 1.2 To identify any areas which require additional consideration.**
- 1.3 To comment on the areas of focus for 2021/22 that will support delivery of the overall vision and priorities.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1. The performance of the priority activities of the council is monitored through the Corporate Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework. This provides a mixture of strategic and operational indicators. The indicators have been chosen to be as clear and simple to understand as possible, whilst balancing the need to ensure the council is monitoring those things which are of most importance, both operationally and strategically.
- 2.2. This reflects the demand for council services increasing and being ever more complex, not least due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, and the need for a holistic approach to monitoring data and intelligence. Analysis of performance and internal processes at service level by Directors continued monthly throughout 2020/21 and will continue throughout 2021/22.
- 2.3. These indicators will continue to be reported to both Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on a quarterly basis, throughout 2021/22.
- 2.4. In line with the recommendation from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2019, throughout 2020/21, where performance is below target, commentary will be included to show the intended improvement plan. This is included in Section 3.5 as the "Route to Green".
- 2.5. This report also provides an update to the council's overall performance framework which the KPIs are a key part of alongside the overarching vision and priorities, corporate projects and service plans making up the 'golden thread'. Council agreed the vision and priorities in January 2018 which better reflects the ambition for the council and Thurrock the place. Some additional narrative has been added to set out the main areas of focus and activity in the coming year that will help to deliver against the overall vision and priorities. The committee are asked to comment on the priority projects set out in Appendix 1. No changes have been made to the vision and priorities themselves.

3.1 Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

This report is a monitoring and update report, therefore there is no options analysis.

3.2 Summary of Corporate KPI Performance

Quarter 1 2021/22 Performance against target		Direction of Travel compared to 2020/21	
Achieved	77.4% (24)	↑ BETTER	50% (14)
Failed	22.6% (7)	→ STATIC	17.9% (5)
		↓ WORSE	32.4% (9)

3.3 Impact of Covid-19

3.3.1 The Quarter 1 (April to June 2021) overall outturn is 77% which is higher than the results throughout last year, including the equivalent three month period where the outturn was 65.6%. However, given the significant impact and disruption this time last year at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is difficult to make a meaningful comparison. This report covers April to June 2021 where the country was still in various phases of lockdown and it is as yet, too early in the year to predict performance levels. This will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year.

3.3.2 In most cases the targets for 2021/22 have been set based on “normal” circumstances to more clearly analyse the impact of the disruption caused by the pandemic. This is likely to mean that more indicators will not “perform” as well as they did before COVID, and/or the rate of improvement will not be as great. Where an indicator has failed to reach its target during the year, the commentary provided will identify clearly whether this is related to COVID-19 impacts.

3.3.3 It is difficult to predict accurately how long and to what extent service delivery in some areas will continue to be impacted. Some will continue to be affected during the first half of 2021/22. This is being further affected by the need to mitigate against the wider capacity and financial pressures which COVID has brought about, including the need to hold vacant posts and the ongoing recruitment restrictions as well as transformational changes to the way services are delivered. This is likely to have an increasingly significant impact on service delivery going forward through 2021/22. This will continue to be kept under close monitoring.

3.4 On target performance

77% of available corporate KPIs achieved their targets. (Brackets show actuals where appropriate).

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% of potholes repaired within policy and agreed timeframe	Cllr Maney	98%	98% (494)	100% (433)	100% (545)	99% (1,472)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	98%	98%
% of Major planning applications processed in 13 weeks	Cllr Maney	97%	100% (4)	100% (4)	100% (1)	100% (9)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	90%	90%
% Rent collected	Cllr Spillman	98.3%	71.4%	86.4%	89.5%	89.5%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	89.5%	98.0%
Tenant satisfaction with Transforming Homes	Cllr Spillman	86.5%	100% (24)	85.7% (12)	83.3% (20)	90.3% (56)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	85%	85%
% of refuse bins emptied on correct day	Cllr Jefferies	97.31%	n/a	n/a	99.87% (691,611)	99.87% (691,611)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	98.5%	98.5%
Of the children who reached their 28th day in care within the reporting period, % that had an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) within 20 working days	Cllr Johnson	57% (amended KPI)				85.2% (23)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	80%	80%
% occupancy of council-owned business centres	Cllr Coxshall	71%				75%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	71%	80%
Proportion of older people (65+) still at home 91 days after discharge from hospital into reablement/ rehabilitation	Cllr Huelin	86.40%				91.9% (68)	ACHIEVED	BETTER	86.3%	86.3%
Number of events/activities (provided from hubs/ libraries) that support engagement in a range of cultural, social & learning opportunities to support well-being and strengthen community connections	Cllr Huelin	437				99	ACHIEVED	BETTER	90	360
Successful completion of treatment in Young People's Drug & Alcohol service (YTD)	Cllr Mayes	90%				100%	ACHIEVED	BETTER	70%	70%
Value (£) of council owned property disposals	Cllr Coxshall	£460k				£537k	ACHIEVED	BETTER	£500k	£3m

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% of Minor planning applications processed in 8 weeks	Cllr Maney	100%	100% (15)	100% (16)	100% (12)	100% (43)	ACHIEVED	STATIC	90%	90%
Overall spend to budget on HRA (£K variance)	Cllr Spillman	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	£0	£0
Number of applicants with family commitments in Bed & Breakfast for six weeks or more (ie homeless with dependent child(ren)/are pregnant)	Cllr Spillman	0	0	0	0	0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	0	0
% of young people who reoffend after a previously recorded offence	Cllr Johnson	17.0%				17% (Q4)	ACHIEVED	STATIC	20%	20%
Overall spend to budget on General Fund (% variance against forecast)	Cllr Hebb	0				0	ACHIEVED	STATIC	0	0
% of repairs completed within target	Cllr Spillman	98.3%	97.3%	97.5%	96.8%	97.3%	ACHIEVED	WORSE	95%	95%
Permanent admissions of older people (aged 65 and over) to residential and nursing care homes, per 100,000 population (population figure 24,098 published June 2021)	Cllr Huelin	618.3 per 100,000	62.2 (15)	107.9 (26)	178.4 (43)	178.4 (43)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	186.7 (45)	738.7 (178)
Proportion of people using social care who receive direct payments	Cllr Huelin	34.4%	34.8% (481)	33.3% (470)	33.1% (480)	33.1% (480)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	33%	33%
No of placements available within council for volunteers	Cllr Huelin	224				150	ACHIEVED	WORSE	150	190
% of volunteer placements filled within council	Cllr Huelin	96%				90% (135)	ACHIEVED	WORSE	90%	96%
% of GP practices who have received 1 visit to discuss COVID recovery in relation to QOF	Cllr Mayes	new KPI				25% (7)	ACHIEVED	n/a	25%	100%
% of GP practices who have received a second visit to review outcomes of first and discuss the cancer quality improvement work	Cllr Mayes	new KPI				0% (0)	ACHIEVED	n/a	0%	100%
Average time between a child entering care and moving in with its adoptive family adjusted for foster carer adoptions, for children who have been adopted (days) (rolling 12 months)	Cllr Johnson	new KPI				378 (provis-ional)	ACHIEVED	n/a	426	426

3.5 Off target indicators

At the end of quarter 1, 7 of the available indicators failed to meet their target.

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Average time to turnaround/re-let voids (in days)	Cllr Spillman	47.5 days	30.6	30.7	38.1	32.6	FAILED	BETTER	28	28
<p>During Q1 of 2021/22, 105 standard voids have been re-let in an average re-let time of 32.6 calendar days - 4.6 days above the target of 28 days. Analysis of voids data shows that just three voids, which had very specific issues took longer to resolve and therefore re-let, affected performance significantly. Without these three voids performance in April would have been on target at 27 days, performance in June would have been on target at 26.6 days and the overall average for Q1 would have been only slightly over target at 28.8 days.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>In order to improve performance on void re-let time, performance dashboards have been developed and made available for operational voids meetings to provide operational teams with granular performance information on each stage in the voids process. This enables staff to easily identify process bottlenecks which may be adversely affecting void performance. These dashboards are interactive and drillable allowing staff to view performance overall, as well as on an individual property basis. In addition, void re-let time performance data and business intelligence is monitored monthly by the service managers, with break-downs of void performance for each stage including both general needs and sheltered housing voids.</p> <p>The service are also reviewing the end to end voids process to identify areas where current practice causes blockages or where deviation from the documented policy may be more effective, in order to produce an accurate map of the process which reflects the current needs of the business and ways of working.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Number of health hazards removed as a direct result of private sector housing team intervention	Cllr Spillman	746	99	40	73	212	FAILED	BETTER	252	1,000
<p>Generally, landlords have requested more time to remove hazards and carry out remedial works due to financial difficulties caused by the pandemic in completing works. This is assessed on a case by case basis and the latest government advice for local authorities to enforce standards in rented properties. MHCLG continue to recommend a pragmatic approach to support landlords and tenants. Routine “part 1” property inspections were not carried out during the periods of national lockdowns. Essential inspections were only carried out where there was an imminent risk to a tenant’s health due to a serious hazard. Following government advice, routine inspections recommenced in May 2021, subject to tenants not self-isolating or refusing to allow access.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>Property inspections are monitored and tracked to ensure private landlords fulfil their legal repair obligations and tenants are kept safe. Formal action and works in default are taken to enforce housing standards on the most serious ‘category 1 hazards’ to a tenants health. Private Housing has adopted the following measures designed to help the service return to normal operation as soon as possible and minimise delays to tenants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Health Officers carrying out current inspections • Licensing Officers carrying out the backlog of single dwelling Part 1 Property Inspection • Using phone/video technology to monitor revisit inspections to ensure landlords fulfil their legal repair obligations 										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
% General tenant satisfaction with neighbourhoods/services provided by Housing	Cllr Spillman	75.5%	70.1%	72.6%	75.8%	72.8% (361)	FAILED	WORSE	75%	75%
<p>During Q1 of 2021/22 496 tenants have completed a telephone satisfaction survey and have given a rating for satisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing. Of these 496 tenants, 361 tenants gave a "very satisfied" or "fairly satisfied" rating which makes up the satisfaction rate of 72.8%. Of the remaining 135 tenants, 62 (12.5%) gave a neutral rating of "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" and 73 (14.7%) tenants gave a rating of "fairly dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied".</p> <p>13 of the 73 dissatisfied ratings were accompanied by qualitative feedback relating to refuse collection, street sweeping, Council Tax and Housing Benefit - particularly in April and May. Whilst these are not services delivered by Housing, this has had a 2.6% impact on the satisfaction rate and accounts for 17.8% of the dissatisfied ratings during the period.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>Tenant satisfaction with the overall service provided by Housing in June was 75.8% and on target, appearing to recover from lower satisfaction levels in April and May. Tenant satisfaction data is routinely analysed by the Intelligence and Performance team and insight is regularly shared at both an operational and a strategic level which identifies common themes for dissatisfaction from the qualitative feedback tenants provide during the survey. This insight enables the Housing service to understand dissatisfaction and take action to address specific themes to improve satisfaction with Housing overall. This work will continue throughout this year.</p> <p>In addition, interactive, drillable tenant satisfaction performance dashboards are also available across all tenant satisfaction surveys for staff to review monthly satisfaction performance, understand the direction of travel and drill down into the qualitative feedback for each individual measure. Data analytics are also used to establish whether there is a strong statistical relationship, or correlation, between satisfaction with individual measures and overall satisfaction which enables the Housing service to identify the most effective measures to focus on in order to improve satisfaction overall through key driver mapping.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Payment rate of Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)	Cllr Jefferies	49%	48.38%	45.32%	42.62%	45.49%	FAILED	WORSE	70%	70%
<p>The payment rate of FPNs has been below target for some months. This is due to factors that are outside of the control of the service, including the financial and emotional impact of COVID on residents who are fined. The service has received a high level of representations and appeals over the last 12 months with requests for extended payment periods. The service continues to adopt a supportive approach agreeing payment plans on a case by case basis.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>There has been an increase in cases going to prosecution for the non-payment of FPNs when payment arrangements have not been agreed. FPN payments are actively monitored, with reminders sent to those you have received fines in line with requirements. The delay in payments for the reason specified will continue to affect this indicator for the foreseeable future.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Number of new Micro Enterprises started since 1 April 2021	Cllr Huelin	20				4	FAILED	↓	5	20
<p>This indicator is only 1 under target. COVID restrictions, such as social distancing and self-isolation rules, have slowed the process of new micro-enterprises starting. The restrictions have made it difficult to meet with individuals wanting to start a micro-enterprise to provide them with support and also some individuals have been unwilling to meet/start services due to the restrictions. In addition, in the first quarter there has been a reduction in the overall number of micro-enterprises operating in the scheme - reducing from 130 to 126, mainly due to retirement and changes in personal circumstances of the operators. The services that are no longer operating are mainly in the personal care and support at home categories.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>Since lockdown restrictions have been relaxed, there has already been a sharp increase in applications to the scheme, totalling 37 so far. (The average in 2020/21 was 10 per quarter). Applications have come from a diverse range of applicants including those who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have been made redundant and are taking up the opportunity of self-employment • wish to have a better work/life balance by working locally • have volunteered to provide support during lockdown and wish to continue operating their own service <p>The service will continue to work with the new applicants wishing to set up a micro-enterprise and it is hoped that this will translate into an increased number of services being developed as restrictions lift to get the indicator back on track.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
No of new apprenticeships started (inc. staff undertaking apprenticeship) (exc. LA maintained schools)	Cllr Duffin	56	2	4	4	10	FAILED	BETTER	15	62
<p>Whilst currently under target, this number is a 25% increase on previous highest for Q1 of 8 apprenticeships. Apprenticeships are also coming through the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) process and are being promoted internally.</p>										
Route to GREEN										
<p>An apprenticeship recruitment event in July has generated interest from over 30 candidates for an event webinar on 29 July and interviews taking place in August. There are currently 9 apprenticeships on offer through the recruitment event. It is hoped that successful candidates will be able to start in September in order to benefit from financial incentives available.</p>										

Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Quarter 1	Quarter 1 Target Status	Direction of Travel since 2020/21	Quarter 1 Target	2021/22 Target
Total gross external income (fees & charges) (based on sales forecast)	Cllr Hebb	£6.4m				£6.6m	FAILED	BETTER	£8m	£8m
<p>The position reflects the current projection of fees and charges in the context of the ongoing pandemic. It is expected a proportion of the expected reduction will be met from Central Government funding and there will be some cost reductions associated with specific income losses that further mitigate the overall position. This continues to be closely monitored as part of the wider budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) monitoring with regular reports to Cabinet.</p>										

3.6 Other key indicators

3.6.1 Throughout the year the council also monitors some other indicators as part of the corporate scorecard which, whilst not performance related, are important to keep under review.

Demand Indicator Definition	Portfolio Holder	2020/21 Outturn	In month April	In month May	In month June	Qtr 1	Direction of Travel since 2020/21
Number of households at risk of homelessness approaching the Council for assistance	Cllr Spillman	1,826	139	133	168	440	HIGHER
No of homeless cases accepted	Cllr Spillman	211	16	11	8	35	LOWER

At Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in June 2021, members requested more detail on preventative services that take place, with the assumption that that is why homeless case acceptance seems low compared to approaches.

The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 places a duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness, or relieve homelessness where this is not possible. The number of approaches include all who have approached the council for housing assistance. A number of these cases were prevented and homelessness has been relieved.

In respect of preventative services, there are a number of actions that are taken to prevent homelessness.

We primarily use the private rented sector to source accommodation for applicants which is secured through regular contact with landlords and estate agents. Our Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Financial Inclusion Officers then work with the tenant to ensure that the relevant benefits are applied for to enable them to sustain their tenancy. In addition to this, we also utilise the services of our Community and Employment Support Officer to support applicants into training and employment.

The service also prevents homelessness by negotiating and working with landlords and excluders* to keep the applicants in the property they are approaching us from or negotiating a planned move into suitable accommodation.

The acceptances are low in comparison to approaches because the service deal with a greater number of the cases before we reach the “main duty” stage, which is the stage at which we make a formal homelessness decision as is traditionally known. This is the stage at which acceptances are recorded.

*An excluder is someone the applicant currently lives with, e.g. a parent, friend or resident landlord who has asked the applicant to leave their property.

3.6.2 KPIs for which data is not currently available due to COVID-19 impact

Number of delayed transfers of care (DToC) - days from hospital (attrib. to NHS, ASC & Joint)	The collection and publication of official DToC figures continue to be suspended by NHS England for at least Q1 due to COVID-19 and new Hospital Discharge Policy.
% of primary schools judged "good" or better	No inspections have taken place since the start of COVID-19 pandemic
% of secondary schools judged "good" or better	
Forecast Council Tax collected	COVID-19 impact is ongoing and is still being assessed. This is being regularly reported to members alongside separate financial reporting.
Forecast National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) collected	

3.6.3 Additional indicators reported outside of quarterly pattern being monitored as part of the 2021/22 Corporate Performance Framework

Street Cleanliness - a) Litter	Survey undertaken by Keep Britain Tidy, three times per year – next result due in September
Street Cleanliness - c) Graffiti	
% of places accessed for 3&4 year olds funded nursery place	Termly – next result due in September
% of places accessed for two year olds for early years education	Termly – next result due in September

It should also be noted that for April and May 2021, industrial action impacted the Waste Collection service significantly. Whilst some household waste collections were undertaken and completed during the period of disruption, the uncertainty around resource levels and schedules meant that it was not possible for the service to report on the percentage of collections completed as planned. It was felt it was more important to ensure that as many collections as possible were made and other mitigations put in place for residents. Since June 2021, the service has returned to a normal collection cycle with close monitoring of performance. Performance will be reported for quarter two 2021/22.

3.6.4 Additional annual indicators being monitored as part of the 2021/22 Corporate Performance Framework

These indicators will be reported in the End of Year (Month 12) Corporate Performance Report.

Annual indicator	2020/21 Outturn	2021/22 Target
Average gross full-time weekly wage in Thurrock	New KPI	£631.70
Total number of employee jobs in Thurrock (data from ONS/NOMIS)	66,000	66,000
Value of business rate base	£283m	£277.5m
Total number of homes permitted through Planning	195	950
% English and maths combined KS4 GCSE grade 5+	<i>new KPI</i>	National average
% GCSE Attainment 8 score DfE	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Reading	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Writing	<i>new KPI</i>	

KS2 Attainment - % Achieving Expected or Better Progress in Maths	<i>new KPI</i>	
KS4 Attainment – Progress 8 score	<i>n/a</i>	
Achievement of Level 2 qualification at 19 years old	<i>n/a</i>	
Achievement of Level 3 qualification at 19 years old	<i>n/a</i>	
Children Looked After KS2 – % Achieving the National Standard in Reading, Writing & Maths	<i>n/a</i>	
Children Looked After KS4 – Progress 8 score	<i>n/a</i>	

3.7 Feedback from Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2021

At the meeting of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8 June 2021 where the year-end 2020/21 report was considered, there were a number of questions and comments which required further consideration.

3.7.1 Provision of “actual” numbers on indicators showing percentages

Where this is available and will add useful context, the numerator related to the performance indicator will be shown in brackets underneath the relevant outturn (as at 3.4). In some cases, particularly where data is from a third party and/or actual numbers are so small that there may be data protection issues, this may not be reported.

3.7.2 Type of events and activities which took place to support and strengthen community engagement through community hubs and libraries

All such events from April 2020 to March 2021 were delivered online where there was demand/need. The 437 community engagement sessions included online job club, Microsoft PowerPoint and Excel training, under-fives story and rhyme sessions, and book promotions.

For 2021/22 a combination of online and face to face activities are planned, subject to national and local restrictions. These include rhyme times, including baby rhyme time (online with possible physical sessions later in year), class visits for literacy (online), Summer Reading Challenge (a range of related activities including online and physical), Essex Book Festival activities, social events such as friendship groups/knit and natter sessions, computer training (online and physical), job clubs and employment support, author visits/book promotions, and a variety of events linked to national promotions such as National Library Week, Get Online.

3.7.3 Number of homes permitted through Planning in 2020/21

The committee asked to what extent this indicator was impacted by COVID-19 and/or by site availability. In short, it is not possible to work out the split between COVID and site availability.

3.7.4 The hidden impact of COVID-19

The committee recognised that COVID-19 had and continues to have a profound impact on council services and the wider borough, but asked about the hidden impact of COVID-19.

Whilst restrictions have lessened, the country has only been out of lockdown since 19 July and it is by no means the end of the pandemic. The country is not “back to normal” indeed some practices will not return to pre-COVID days.

In performance terms, targeting of some measures for this year is difficult, because service delivery has changed so much. As such this will continue to be reviewed and monitored through the year.

Some enforced changes - such as smarter working practices which enable more people to work from home and services to be delivered remotely - have moved us forward much quicker than would otherwise have been the case. The incredible response and new relationships which have developed with and within communities are also a hugely positive aspect.

But undoubtedly the pandemic has been devastating in many ways and has provided significant challenges for the future.

The short, medium and long term impacts of COVID are still be assessed. Some of these are more obvious than others, and some of the hidden impacts may take longer to identify, but there is a lot of work going on within the council and with partners to ensure everything is done that is possible to recover from this awful situation.

This is also reflected in the council’s Backing Thurrock Strategy, which was agreed by Cabinet in March 2021 and in the development of the new Health and Well Being Strategy which is currently being refreshed and is being led by the Health and Well Being Board alongside partners.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The corporate priorities and associated performance framework are fundamental to articulating what the council is aiming to achieve. It is best practice to report on the performance of the council. It shows effective levels of governance and transparency and showcases strong performance as well as an acknowledgement of where we need to improve.

4.2 This report highlights what the council will focus on during 2021/22 and confirms the governance and monitoring mechanisms which were in place to ensure that priorities are delivered.

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

5.1 Performance against the corporate priorities was monitored through Performance Board, a cross-council officer group of performance experts representing each service. Performance Board will continue to consider the

corporate KPIs on a monthly basis, highlighting areas of particular focus to Directors Board.

- 5.2 Each quarter a report will continue to be presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and finally reported to Cabinet.
- 5.3 This report was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 7 September 2021, feedback from which will be raised at this meeting.

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

- 6.1 The vision and priorities cascade into every bit of the council and further to our partners, through key strategies, service plans, team plans and individual objectives.
- 6.2 This report will help decision makers and other interested parties, form a view of the success of the council's actions in working towards achieving the vision and priority ambitions.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Joanne Freeman**
Finance Manager

The report provides an update on performance against corporate priorities. There are financial KPIs within the corporate scorecard, the performance of which are included in the report.

Where there are issues of underperformance, any recovery planning commissioned by the council may entail future financial implications, and will need to be considered as appropriate.

The council is still assessing the full financial impact of Covid-19 and this is being regularly reported to members.

7.2 Legal

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

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. However, where there are issues of underperformance, any recovery planning commissioned by the council or associated individual priority projects may have legal implications, and as such will need to be addressed separately as decisions relating to those specific activities are considered.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer

The Corporate Performance Framework for 2021/22 contains measures that help determine the level of progress with meeting wider diversity and equality ambitions, including youth employment and attainment, independent living, vulnerable adults, volunteering etc. Individual commentary is given throughout the year within the regular monitoring reports regarding progress and actions.

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

The Corporate Performance Framework includes areas which affect a wide variety of issues, including those noted above in the body of the report. Where applicable these are covered in the appendix.

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

- Appendix 1: Vision and Priorities – Priority Activities 2021/22

Report Author:

Sarah Welton

Strategy Manager

Thurrock Council

Corporate Strategic Ambitions 2021/22

Borough Motto: “By Thames to all peoples of the world”

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

Corporate Priorities		
People A borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay	Place A heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future	Prosperity A borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations
High quality, consistent and accessible public services which are right first time	Roads, houses and public spaces that connect people and places	Attractive opportunities for businesses and investors to enhance the local economy
Build on our partnerships with statutory, community, voluntary and faith groups to work together to improve health and wellbeing	Clean environments that everyone has reason to take pride in	Vocational and academic education, skills and job opportunities for all
Communities are empowered to make choices and be safer and stronger together	Fewer public buildings with better services	Commercial, entrepreneurial and connected public services

Corporate Priority Projects 2021/22	
Economic Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Backing Thurrock, our Economic Growth Strategy, to strengthen and grow the economy for the benefit of residents and businesses Deliver major regeneration and infrastructure projects contributing to growth including the government funded Towns Fund proposals Progress the Local Plan to support place-making and guide future sustainable development Work with private sector partners to deliver the Thames Freeport to unlock new jobs and skills opportunities through investment and enable levelling up Work collectively through ASELA to deliver strategic projects that secure greater prosperity and opportunities for residents and businesses
Corporate Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transform the council and service delivery through new operating models and ways of working Redefine to create a leaner asset base to reduce costs and support long term financial sustainability
Community Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embed the collaborative communities framework – work with partners to redefine the council’s role to achieve better outcomes for residents, especially the most vulnerable, through collaboration and co-design Refresh and deliver the Health and Wellbeing Strategy with health and other partners to tackle inequalities and the wider determinants of health

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8 September 2021	ITEM: 14 Decision: 110583
Cabinet	
SEND Education and Residential Placements	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Cllr Barry Johnson Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director Children’s Services	
This report is: Public – with the exception of the Stage 1 ‘Approval to Proceed to Tender’ procurement report (Appendix 2) which should be exempt since it contains commercially sensitive information regarding the tender.	
Date of notice given of exempt or confidential report: 10 August 2021 (for relevant part of report)	

Executive Summary

This report outlines the Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Strategy and makes recommendations for the delivery of additional capacity to meet needs including the procurement of out of borough placements if we are unable to meet the complexity of needs locally.

Ensuring we have the right educational placement for children and young people who have special educational needs with residential provision if needed, is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood, independent living.

We have recently undertaken a comprehensive needs analysis, this has outlined that we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities. We expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism.

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, much of this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion.
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs in part some of this increase can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic – we will continue to closely monitor this over the coming year as we enter the recovery phase across all educational settings.

Our analysis has shown that we will need to increase specialist provision in Thurrock to meet identified needs within mainstream and existing provisions. We also need to improve access to specialist out of borough provision where needed to ensure we can meet the high level of complex needs within our SEND children/young people.

In order to meet needs, we would propose the following to improve SEN place capacity:

- Increase places for 4-18 year olds in Thurrock including free schools and developments to expand support to pupils with complex needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Condition.
- Increase number of specialist places for 11-16 year olds to support pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs.
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training and provide a range of programmes to further enhanced the current offer that has been developed over the past year – with particular reference to the work that Grangewaters our outdoor education centre has provided.

This will be done through the development of in-borough provision and the procurement of external educational and residential placements with the aim of meeting specialist needs as close to Thurrock as possible and improving value for money.

1. Recommendation(s):

- 1.1 That Cabinet agree to commence the procurement of SEND education and residential contract(s).**
- 1.2 That Cabinet agree the option to block purchase places through the contract(s) where this represents best value for the Council to meet demand.**
- 1.3 That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Childrens Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder to award contracts following completion of the procurement process.**

- 1.4 That, in line with Rule 13 of the Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet agree that the Corporate Director can seek to invoke the waiver provisions of the Contract Procedure Rules due to the nature of the services being purchased.**
- 1.5 That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children’s Services and the Portfolio Holder where:**
- The placement cannot be made on the contract to be awarded under this procurement exercise;**
 - The purchase is required in order that the Council may meet its statutory obligations and;**
- 1.6 That, as requested by Childrens Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet reviews their decision to declare Grangewaters as a surplus to SEND provision and to look at further use of Grangewaters to meeting the objectives for SEND provision.**
- 1.7 That Cabinet note the completion of the SEND Sufficiency Assessment and agree the publication of the document.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report supports the delivery of one of the recommendations in the 2021 – 2024 SEND Sufficiency Statement and seeks approval for the procurement of external education and residential placements with the aim of meeting specialise needs as close to Thurrock as possible. The full document is included in the appendices.**

We have embarked on this Sufficiency Statement of our educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in order to:

- Assess the needs of our children and young people.
- Evaluate how well our current provision meets children & young people’s needs, and to identify any gaps.

Support us in planning on how we will continue to develop our provision over a five year period with work commencing in 2021, so that we can achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.

- 2.2 The development of the 2021-24 SEND sufficiency needs assessment is a part of the ongoing work across the local partnership to ensure that we are able to meet the current and future demand for placements through an integrated commissioned offer. There is close partnership working in place to meet the demand for placements. This will continue as we develop provision with the aim to:**

- Put children/young people at the heart of the decision making to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs.
- Ensure that children and young people have their needs met within their local community wherever possible.
- Make the best use of resources.

2.3 Whilst the focus of this report is on the procurement of SEND education and residential placement provision, it is part of the overall SEND Improvement Plan that has been presented to the SEND Improvement Board who have approved a phased approach to developing our provision. This approach is based on the strategic commissioning cycle and will ensure that we continually evaluate what we need and what difference our plans, changes and increased capacity is making. This procurement of specialist provision is a part of this plan.

2.4 Co-production with children, young people and families is an essential part of the development of commissioned services. This remains ongoing as services are developed and uses information collected as part of wider continued engagement and consultation.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Thurrock has a higher rate of children and young people aged 0-25 years in its population, 34.08%, than the national rate of 31.11% and the statistical neighbour rate of 32%. From our needs analysis, we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities.

As a result we expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism.
- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion.
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

3.2 7 of 10 children with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are educated in local schools. This is a really positive figure and outlines the work that Thurrock have undertaken to ensure we have a strong inclusion ethos that, coupled with our strong partnership work with schools, has enabled us to develop a good local education offer.

3.3 There are four main types of provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities:

- Mainstream provision.
- A resource provision attached to a mainstream school / setting.
- Special provision.
- Independent or non-maintained provision.

3.4 Where possible we aim to source provision within or close to the borough. Currently 74% of placements are within 20 miles of the borough. However, where a child or young person's needs cannot be met in the local area out of borough placements are used. These are generally due to specialist needs and are usually residential placements due to the distance from home.

3.5 204 (11.3%) children and young people access provision out of the borough (as of April 2021 from Synergy). This can make it more difficult for these children and young people to feel and be part of their local communities, and to build a peer group of friends that will help to sustain them into adulthood. The procurement of education and residential placements will aim to encourage more providers in and closer to Thurrock although it is recognised that for some children and young people the complexity of their needs means that there are only a limited number of placements, which may be based at a distance, available nationally. In these cases there is often the need to spot purchase provision.

3.6 Currently all education and residential provision is spot purchased and the recommendation is made for the procurement of external education and residential placements with the aim of reducing this.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

4.1 The provision of high quality education and residential placements for children and young people with SEND is an integral part of the statutory duties on the local authority. Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Thurrock. This work will continue to be driven by the SEND Improvement Board.

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

5.1 This report is presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in advance of the decision by Cabinet, due to the value regarding the procurement of educational and residential placements.

5.2 Consultation will be ongoing and aims to build on existing mechanisms rather than duplicate requests to children, young people and their parents/ carers.

5.3 From the engagement of children, young people, parents and carers through the EHCP Telephone Survey and Pupil Voice Programme, they have told us they want:

- Services to be centred around what's best for the child or young person.
- All children and young people to get the support they need.
- To be listened to.
- To be included in decision making, and empowered to make choices best suited to the child's needs and ambitions.
- To have tailored support that meets their individual needs.
- For professionals to be clear with them about what is going to, or could happen, and what support is available.
- For services to be joined up.
- For services to be open and transparent about their basis for decision making and arrangements for funding and support.

Further engagement will be carried out and co-produced with the SEND Inclusion Support Officer as part of their ongoing programme.

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

6.1 This strategy reflects the requirements placed on local authorities and their partners by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. It also contributes to the vision and priorities for Thurrock as follows:

- People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.
- Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

The level of spend on education and residential placements along with the increasing demand makes it a priority for the local authority to deliver the value for money services that have a positive impact on outcomes for children and young people. The regularisation of spend through the implementation of

a procurement exercise for out of borough placements and the delivery of increased in borough capacity will support this.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks**
Deputy Head of Law

The procurement proposals set out in this report falls within scope of the Council's duties and statutory obligations and any tender process must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. It is noted that the local authority has a duty to ensure there is sufficient provision to meet needs through the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. This work identified those needs and sets out the commissioning priorities to ensure they are met.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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

The engagement and consultation with children, young people and parents/carers ensures that their voice is heard in the development of this work. A Community, Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed to ensure that there is no negative impact from this work and that the opportunities for positive impact are enhanced.

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

None

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

- SEND Sufficiency Statement included in the appendices

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 - SEND Sufficiency Statement
- Appendix 2 – Stage 1 Approval to Proceed to Tender: SEND Education and Residential Placements (EXEMPT)

Report Author:

Sue Green

Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning

Joint Commissioning Unit

Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs April 2021 - 2024

This version date:	19/05/2021
Version number:	Final
Review Frequency:	Every 3 Years
Author:	Tia Clark, Placement Commissioning Officer, Children's and Adult's Commissioning

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1. Executive Summary

Thurrock is committed to providing the best quality education and support for all our children and young people to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. Having the right educational placement, with residential provision for children and young people who have special educational needs if needed, is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood, independent living and if needed, residential provision.

We have embarked on this Sufficiency Statement of our educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in order to:

- Assess the needs of our children and young people
- Evaluate how well our current provision meets children & young people's needs, and identify any gaps
- Support us to plan how we will continue to develop our provision over a five year period with work commencing in 2021, so that we can achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people

Through developing our provision, we want to:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs
- Ensure that children and young people have their needs met within their local community wherever possible
- Make the best use of our resources

From our needs analysis, we expect to see an increase in the number of children and young people we support over the next five years. In part reflecting population growth, which is increasing at a faster rate than in other local authorities. We expect that:

- We will see a further increase in the need for support for Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SCLN) particularly for pupils with Autism
- We will see a further increase in the need for support for children and young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD), however, this need will be met within existing mainstream places and Treetops expansion
- We will see a further increase in need for support with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs

7 of 10 children with Education Health and care Plans (EHCPs) are educated in local schools. We expect to maintain this pattern so that children can access education close to home in their community. We need to increase specialist provision in Thurrock to meet identified needs within mainstream and existing provisions.

In order to meet needs, we would propose the following recommendations to improve SEN place capacity:

- Increase places for 4-18 year olds in Thurrock including through free school s and developments to expand support to pupils with complex needs in relation to Autistic Spectrum Condition

- Increase number of specialist places for 11-16 year olds to support pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training

We will be taking a phased approach to developing our provision which follows the strategic commissioning cycle of understand, plan, do, and review. This will ensure that we continually evaluate what we need and what difference our plans, changes and increased capacity is making.

Children, young people, parents, carers, schools, colleges and other settings are the people that are best placed to know what is needed and what works well and will be involved at all stages of the process. This Statement has been co-produced with these key stakeholders through continued engagements and consultation, which provides a clear picture of our needs which will form the basis of our ongoing conversations with these key stakeholders to develop our services for the future.

Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Thurrock. This work will continue to be driven by the **SEND Improvement Board**.

We will revisit and refresh this needs analysis in 2024 to ensure we have an accurate and up to date understanding of our pupils' needs and that we continue to evaluate our provision against what our pupils need. Should there be any significant legislative or population changes, this will be undertaken sooner. A further project has begun to scope the post 16 training provision offers for young people up to the age of 25 in order to streamline the current offer.

2. Introduction

Thurrock Council is committed to providing the best quality education and support for all our children and young people. As the Strategic Commissioner of school places, Thurrock Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient places in our schools to meet the demands of residents in our area.

Having the right educational placement is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood.

This SEND Sufficiency Statement considers children and young people aged 0 – 25. The data included within this statement has been collated from our Children Services database (Synergy) in March 2021, unless stated otherwise.

Achieving better outcomes for children is dependent upon having the right services available, but also ensuring services fit seamlessly together, have an inclusive culture, and the right structures that support them. We have taken a whole system approach to improving support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across Thurrock. This work is being driven by the SEND Improvement Board. How we will continue to develop our services as a partnership as set out in our Children and Young People's SEND Strategy.

3. Vision and Priorities for Thurrock

This strategy reflects the requirements placed on local authorities and their partners by the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEN Code of Practice 2015. It also contributes to the vision and priorities for Thurrock as follows:

Our vision

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

Our priorities

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

This means:

- 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

Place – a heritage-rich borough which is ambitious for its future.

This means:

- 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

Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

This means:

- 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

4. What are Special Educational Needs?

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities affect a child or young persons' ability to learn, making it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age. They can affect their:

- Behaviour or ability to socialise, for example, they struggle to make friends
- Reading and writing, for example, because they have dyslexia
- Ability to understand things

- Concentration levels, for example, because they have ADHD
- Physical ability

A child or young person has a Special Educational Need if they need special educational provision to be made for him or her.

5. Outcomes We are Seeking to Achieve

We want all our children and young people to be happy, healthy, safe, and to be able to live a life that is full of opportunities to learn and develop. We want all our children and young people to achieve their full potential, and go into adulthood equipped with the skills they need to enjoy their adult lives.

Our commissioning principles aim to improve outcomes and maximise resources and it is underpinned by the SEND Key Strategic Principles that were coproduced with partners, including parents / carers:

- Ensure that children and families are at the heart of an effective SEN system
- Ensure every child and young person is making good progress and attends a good place to learn
- Ensure children and families are well supported
- Ensure an effective and responsive approach to assessing and meeting children and families' needs
- Ensure the early identification of and early support for children with SEND
- Ensure young people are well prepared for adulthood
- Develop strong partnerships to support integrated commissioning to meet identified needs

6. What's Important to Children, Young People, Parents and Carers

From the engagement of children, young people, parents and carers through the EHCP Telephone Survey and Pupil Voice Programme, they have told us they want:

- Services to be centred around what's best for the child or young person
- All children and young people to get the support they need
- To be listened to
- To be included in decision making, and empowered to make choices best suited to the child's needs and ambitions
- To have tailored support that meets their individual needs
- For professionals to be clear with them about what is going to, or could happen, and what support is available
- For services to be joined up
- For services to be open and transparent about their basis for decision making and arrangements for funding and support

Further engagement will be carried out and co-produced with the SEND Inclusion Support Officer as part of their ongoing programme.

7. What We Want to Achieve

We want to ensure that all our children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes.

We want all our children and young people to be able to access a mainstream setting if this is the best option for them. We want to have a fully inclusive approach within our schools, colleges and early year's settings, and for every mainstream setting to make their best endeavours to meet children and young people's Special Educational Needs.

We believe that every Thurrock child and young person should have their needs met, as far as possible, within their local community. The advantages of this for children and young people, and their families are:

- They are connected with their community and where they live
- They can build friendships with people who live close to them
- They can enjoy outside of school as well as within it
- They spend less time travelling and therefore have more time to do the things they enjoy
- There is more choice for families
- Not to focus on the medical model of disability but also look at the social model of disability

It is also really important to us that we make the very best use of our resources so that we can provide the best quality service possible to all children and young people that need support. This means ensuring that we use our resources innovatively, match our services to the needs within our population, and we do not duplicate services. This also means reducing costs on any additional expenditure that does not contribute to children and young people's attainment or wellbeing, such as travel costs for long distance travel.

We want to:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people
- Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs
- Ensure that children and young people can have their needs met within their local community wherever possible
- Make the best use of our resources

8. Key Components to the Best Quality Support

Ensuring there are the right type and number of places to meet children and young people's needs is important in supporting us to achieve improved outcomes for children and young people. However, this is only one of a number of key components which will enable us to provide the best possible support.

We recognise this, and we are taking a whole system approach, led by the work of the SEND Improvement Board, to ensure that we have these other key components in

place, which are that:

- All services have a child-centred / person centred approach; children, young people and their parents/carers are at the centre of decision making so our support is tailored to their individual needs
- We have strong assessments so we accurately understand the individual needs of children and young people
- We have strong outcome focused plans which support us to meet those needs and achieve good outcomes
- We have a range of services available locally across the continuum of need with sufficient numbers of places that matches the needs of our population so we can offer a graduated response.
- Services are integrated and joined up, offering a seamless service to families that addresses the need of the whole person
- We have an inclusive culture, and meet needs wherever possible within our mainstream provision – families have a range of choices available to them.

In order to expand an inclusive offer, we need to ensure:

- Schools work in partnership utilise funding streams to make changes to meet children and young people's SEND
- We have effective and sustainable support services that are available to support young people and schools – for example, Speech and Language Therapy, Educational Psychology and Occupational Therapy and access to mental health services.

9. Our Approach

As a partnership, Thurrock is developing a graduated response to meeting the continuum of special educational needs. This recognises that needs are on a continuum and may go up and down over time.

A graduated response means that we expect reasonable adjustments to be made to ensure that the majority of children and young people with special educational needs are able to access and have their needs met within mainstream provision, so they enjoy the same opportunities as their peers wherever possible and are fully included within their communities.

Within the proposed SEND framework, at the Universal Level, needs are met through Quality First Teaching and Learning. Quality First Teaching is provided to all children and young people, and continues to be provided to children and young people with SEND who are also receiving additional support within the graduated response. This means all teachers are teachers of children and young people with special educational needs. Support at First Concerns may also include up to five hours of additional support. At SEN Support, as well as Quality First Teaching and Learning, between five and ten hours of additional support is given to meet children and young people's special educational needs.

Some children and young people's needs will be more complex in some contexts, and a graduated response includes more specialist support to meet these needs. Where children and young people may require specialist support, we conduct a multi-agency

assessment (Education, Health and Care needs assessment) to determine what additional support they need. If following assessment it is found that a child or young person will require special educational provision that is additional to or different from that made generally for other children or young people of the same age, an EHCP will be written.

In Thurrock, we have provided schools with sufficient funding to provide up to 10 hours (and in exceptional circumstances 15 hours) additional support and we will usually therefore only issue an EHCP where a child requires provision in excess of this. The EHCP sets out what support they need within these three areas. Education, Health and Care Plans replaced Statements of SEN and Learning Difficulty Assessments with the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014.

In Thurrock, the majority of children and young people's special educational needs are met within First Concerns and SEN Support in mainstream provision, with a small proportion requiring specialist level services. In order to have a successful graduated response, we need services to continue to have an inclusive approach and we need a range of services available across the continuum of need.

This Statement focuses on children and young people with specialist needs as they need additional or specialist provision.

10. Analysing Need

Please note, the data used in this analysis was available at the time from Schools Census and Thurrock's data management system, Synergy, (December 2020 to April 2021). This data is continuously fluctuating, and as such, the trends may slight change through the months and years.

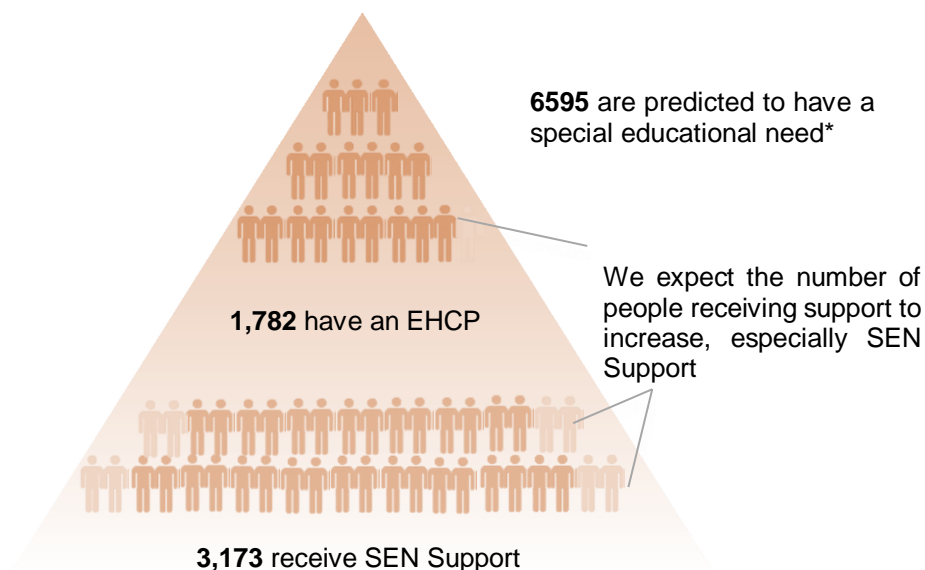
10.1 Need in Thurrock

There are approximately 59,424 children and young people up to the age of 25 in Thurrock, which is 34.08 % of our population. This is higher than the national rate of 31.11% and our Statistical Neighbours at 32%.

There is a comprehensive **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)** for children and young people with SEND. Our JSNA, which reviews the health and social care needs of our population, estimates that we should expect around **6595** children and young people aged between 5 and 18 in Thurrock to have a special educational need by 2024. This equates to 10% of all children and young people. This number is based on the prevalence of different needs within the national population and within research literature.

Currently **3,173** children and young people receive SEN Support in Thurrock Schools, and **1782** children and young people aged 0-25 in Thurrock have specialist needs and have an EHCP. Based on the predicated increase of 10% per annum, the diagram below illustrates the predicated need 2021 – 2024.

11. Predicted Need in Thurrock



*This prediction is based on the prevalence rates for each need. As some children and young people will have more than one need, the actual number of children and young people is likely to be lower than stated.

12. Prevalence of Needs

Communication and Interaction

- Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
- Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

Currently we have 47.53% (856) pupils of the SEND population whose identified needs is Communication and Interaction.

Cognition and Learning

Learning difficulties cover a wide range of needs, including:

- Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)
- Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD)
- Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)
- Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)

22.04% (397 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need in relation to Cognition and Learning.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties (SEMH)

Children and young people may experience a wide range of social and emotional difficulties which manifest themselves in many ways. This may reflect underlying mental health difficulties.

18.99% (342 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need is Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties.

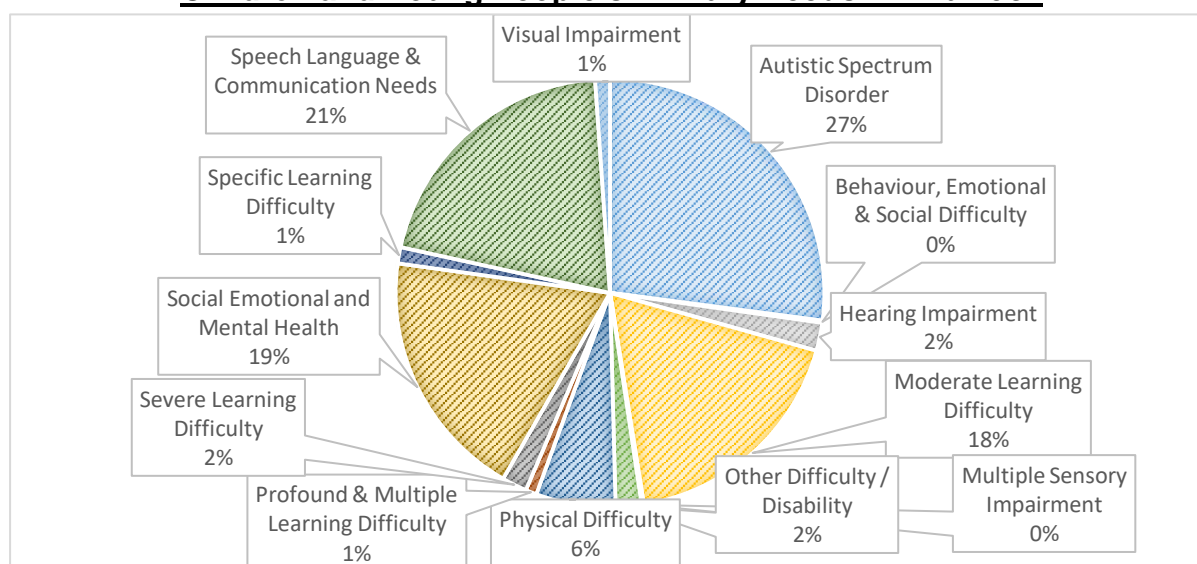
Sensory and/or Physical Needs

This includes children and young people with:

- Visual Impairment (VI)
- Hearing Impairment (HI)
- Multi-sensory impairment (MSI) (a combination of vision and hearing difficulties)
- Physical Disability (PD)

9.16% (165 pupils) of Thurrock's SEND population whose identified need is Sensory and/or Physical Needs.

Children and Young People's Primary Needs in Thurrock



13. Special Educational Needs – Thurrock Schools

There are **29,824** children on roll in Thurrock schools (School Census 2020 as collected from all maintained nursery, primary, secondary, middle academies, free and special schools). The numbers of pupils on schools' roll increased by additional 3,510 on the 2015 figures. The rate of increase in Thurrock (13.3%), is much faster than the national (5.4%), and East of England (6.1%) averages over the last five years.

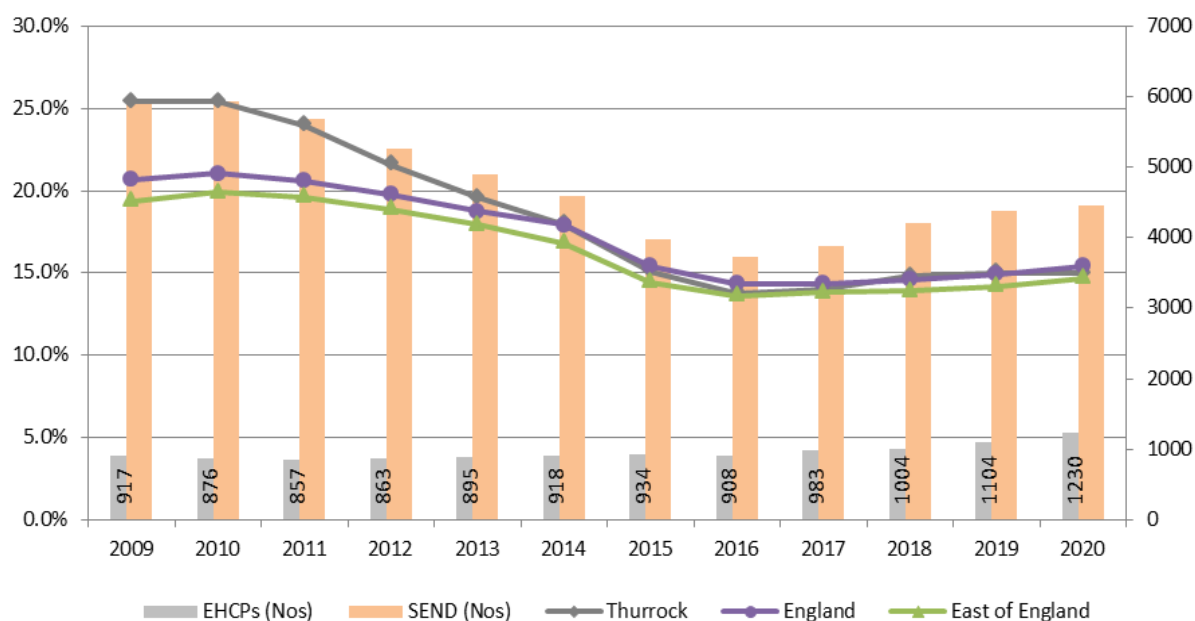
There are currently **4,467** (14.98%) school pupils in maintained schools with SEND. Of these children with SEND; **3,173** (10.64%) are eligible for SEN support and **1230** (4.34%) have Education, Health and Care Plan (*latest available School Census return 2021*).

The proportion of pupils on roll with SEND is in line with averages for East England (14.7%) and England (15.4%). However, the proportion of pupils that qualify for SEN Support is above that of benchmark groups; East of England (11.5%) and England (12.1%). The proportion of children on SEN support ranges from 8.6% to 13.1% for

East of England local areas.

Notable is the higher proportion of pupils with EHCPs in Thurrock schools compared with benchmark groups, East of England (3.18%) and England (3.3%) and Statistical Neighbours (3.41%). The proportion of pupils with EHCPs range from 2.44% to 4.12% across the East of England and Thurrock has the highest number of EHCPs amongst our statistical neighbours (*School Census, January 2020*).

Prevalence of SEND (EHCP and SEN Support) in Thurrock Schools compared to the trends



Although the numbers of pupils with SEND have come down steadily in the last decade, this trend is currently being reversed. Increases of SEND pupils are in line with the rate of overall increases of school roll, hence maintaining the proportionate share and this is in line with that of benchmark groups.

14. Identifying Needs

Based on our prediction that 6595 children and young people in our borough will have a special educational need, and the number of children and young people we know receive SEN Support or have an EHCP, we have predicted that approximately 62% of children and young people with a special educational need are known to the service. Not all pupils included in the estimated population numbers will necessarily have SEN and rates will vary across different need categories. For example, higher functioning pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition and pupils with physical disabilities may not need additional educational support.

The JSNA shows that a higher proportion of our children and young people with special educational needs receive support through Education, Health and Care Plans (3.5%) rather than through SEN Support (10.4%). This implies that we are better at identifying children and young people with more specialist needs and that the majority of the potential unidentified or currently unrecorded children and young people would need SEN Support. Having lower amounts of SEN Support compared to national levels may

also be due to our strong Quality First Teaching and Learning offer, as if pupils' needs are fully met through Quality First Teaching and Learning, they will not require additional SEN Support despite having a special educational need.

15. Specialist Needs

The following sections consider the needs of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan.

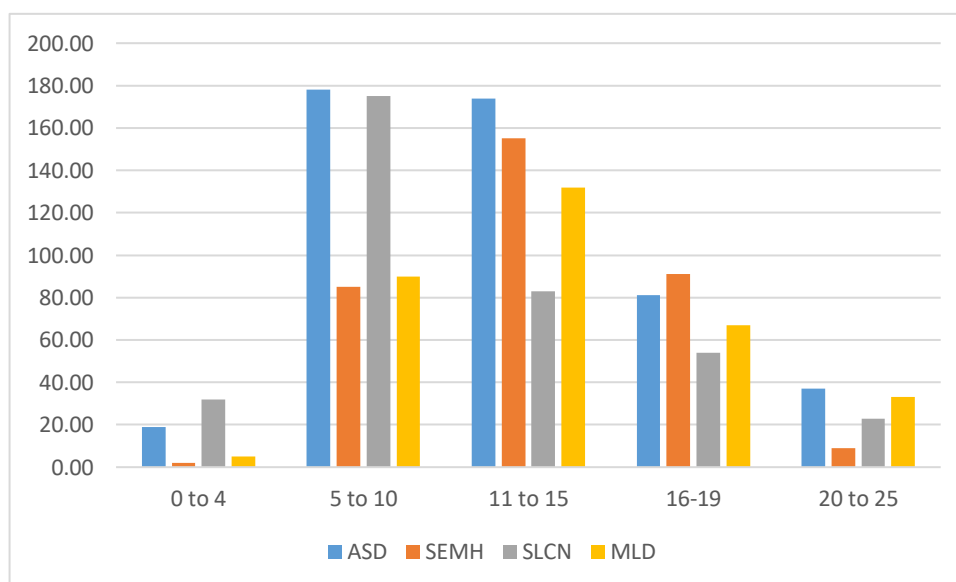
The primary needs of children and young people are shown in the chart below. This shows that in Thurrock, the majority of children and young people within the SEND cohort have specialist needs around communication and interaction (47.53%), and cognition and learning (22.06%). 18.9% primarily had Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs and 11.51% primarily had Physical or Sensory needs. Needs due to Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) accounted for 27.07% of primary needs (*latest available School Census return 2021*).

16. Predominant Primary Needs by Age Group

Prevalence of primary need is marginally different by age group with children of primary school age (aged 10 and under) having Speech, Language and Communication Needs and Autistic Spectrum Disorders being the top two needs.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs are the top most for secondary school aged children (aged 11 to 19) and young adults aged 20 and above. Young adults aged 20 and above also have Autism and Moderate Learning needs as the top two needs (*data from latest PPP 2021*).

Top 4 primary Need by Age Group



17. How well do We Meet Needs?

17.1 Our Provision

There are four main types of educational provision for children and young people with special education needs:

- Mainstream provision
- A resource provision attached to a mainstream school/ setting
- Special provision
- Independent or non-maintained provision.

This section of the Statement considers children and young people aged 0-25 therefore provision includes schools, early years' settings, colleges, and training.

17.2 Mainstream Provision

Wherever possible, children and young people should be supported to have their needs met within their local mainstream provision. Thurrock has a strong partnership ethos with schools and as such a strong inclusive approach has been developed. As outlined in statute all educational settings are expected to have an inclusive approach, and are required by law to make reasonable adaptations or adjustments to the premises and provision to ensure pupil's needs are met.

In Thurrock, we have 39 mainstream primary schools and 13 mainstream secondary schools (*Spring Census 2021*).

17.3 Special Provision

A Special School or provision is a setting supporting students who have special educational needs due to severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, physical disabilities, or social emotional and mental health problems.

Special schools/provisions are specifically designed, staffed and resourced to provide appropriate special education for children and young people with additional needs whose needs cannot be met in mainstream provision.

Thurrock has managed to offer specialist provision to great number of their SEND population who require this type of school place. However, it is important to note that the majority of these provisions are oversubscribed and have waiting lists. We are currently developing an expansion to Treetops School, which is an important step to expand our range of provision, and will therefore increase the capacity of the special schools in our borough. The schools, their specialisms and capacity are given in table below.

The Specialisms and Capacity

Establishment	Age Range	Specialism	Capacity
Resource Provision			
Corringham Primary	4 - 11 years	Speech & Language Impairment	20
Dilkes Primary	4 - 11 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	10
Harris Academy Chafford Hundred	11 - 16 years	Speech, Language & Communication Needs	20
Harris Primary Chafford Hundred Academy (ICAN Nursery)	3 - 4 years	Speech or Language Impairment	16 (8am & 8pm)
Lansdowne Primary (LD & SLCN)	4 - 11 years	Social Communication, Moderate Learning Difficulty	8
Ormiston Park Secondary School	11 - 16 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	30
Quarry Hill Primary	4 - 11 years	Social, Emotional and Mental Health	10
St Clere's Secondary School	11 - 18 years	Hearing Impairment/ Vision Impairment	17
Stanford Le Hope Primary	4 - 11 years	Vision Impairment	5
Stanford Le Hope Primary (Designated nursery)	2 - 4 years	Social Communication needs, developmental delay	6 (3 am & 3pm)
Warren Primary	2.5 - 11 years	Hearing Impairment	18
Special Schools			
Beacon Hill Academy	3 - 19 years	SLD, PMLD	75
Treetops	3 - 19 years	ASD,MLD, Associated Learning difficulties	309

Note: the Treetops project will be adding an additional 140 places by the summer which will mainly accommodate those with MLD as primary need – this has not yet been added to the table above as the places are not yet all available.

17.4 Resource Provision

Resource provision is a specialist education provision within a mainstream setting. Resource provisions have one or more dedicated classrooms for pupils with SEN, and provide specialist individual learning packages for pupils, taking into account their whole life needs. A key advantage of resource provision is that pupils attend mainstream classes as well and therefore have the opportunity to spend time with their mainstream peers. This approach better enables pupils to experience a full and typical life in their community, whilst also meeting their specialist needs.

We have 8 primary resource provisions offering 93 places and 4 secondary resource provisions offering 67 places as at March 2021.

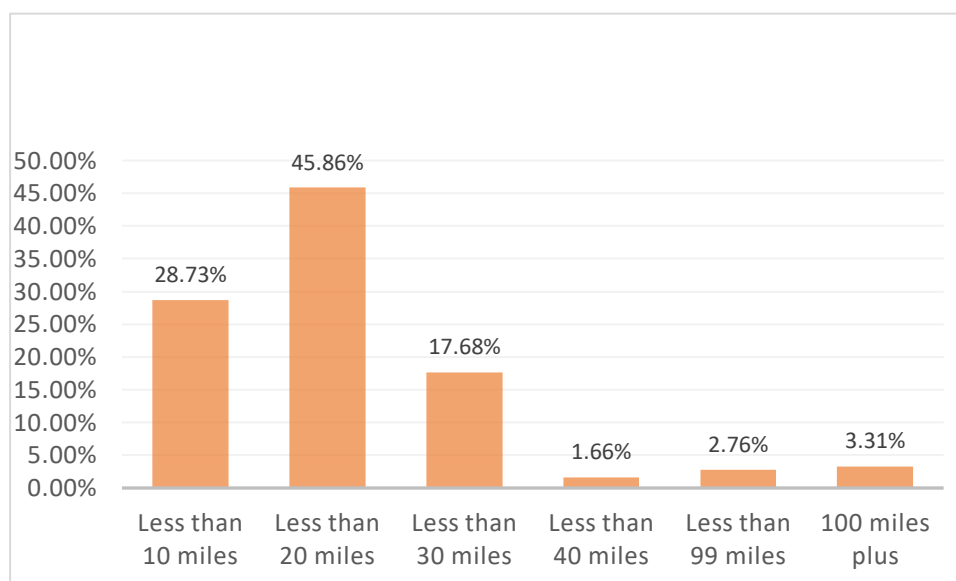
17.5 Out of Borough Placements

Where children and young people's needs cannot be met in the local area, children and young people can access another local authority's provision. This is known as an out of borough placement. Wherever possible, we want to ensure that children and young people's needs can be met locally.

Out of borough placements tend to be used where there are specialist or complex needs that cannot be met locally. This higher level of need and the fact that this type of placement often has to be purchased from independent providers means that placements tend to be more expensive, there are often increased travel costs in addition to the placement costs. In the chart on the following page, it shows over 74% of out of borough placement are within 20 miles of the borough. Placements further than this distance are usually education and residential combined (data source - Synergy as of April 2021).

In some cases, out of borough places are more than twice as expensive as in borough places due to the factors outlined above. To ensure that placements both meet need and provide value for money, there is a robust process of only placing children out of Borough when necessary.

Distance travelled for out of borough places

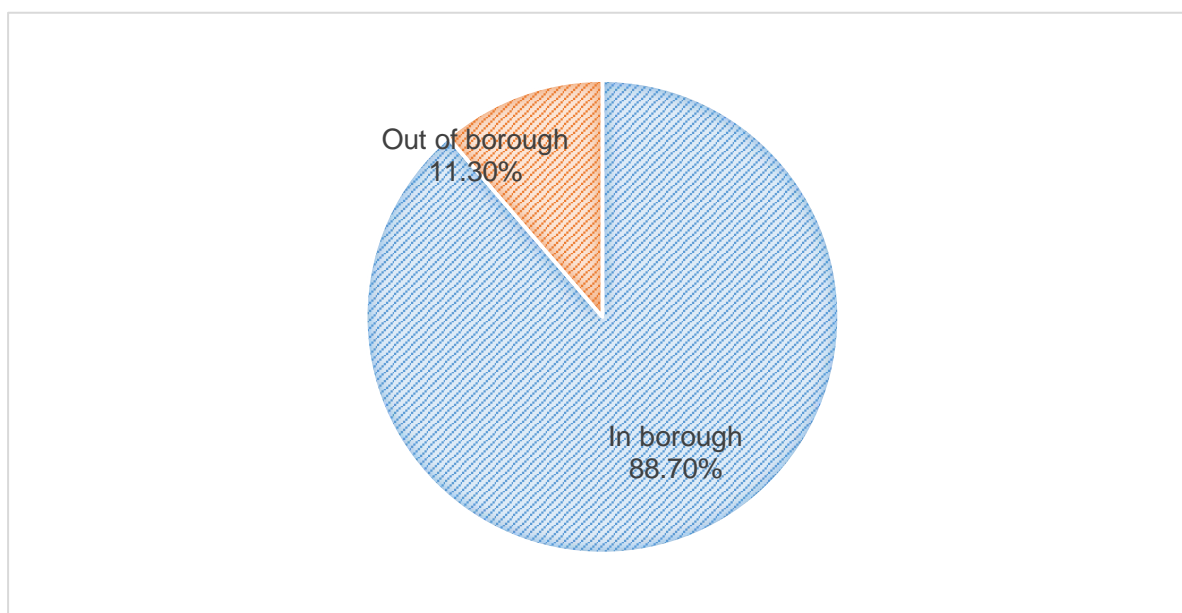


17.5.1 Analysis of Out of Borough Placements

204 (11.3%) children and young people access provision out of the borough (as of April 2021 from Synergy). This can make it more difficult for these children and young people to feel and be part of their local communities, and to build a peer group of friends that will help to sustain them into adulthood.

It should be noted however, that often the complexity of needs means that there are a limited number of providers able to meet these needs and provision is only available from a few providers who may be based at a distance.

Placement location



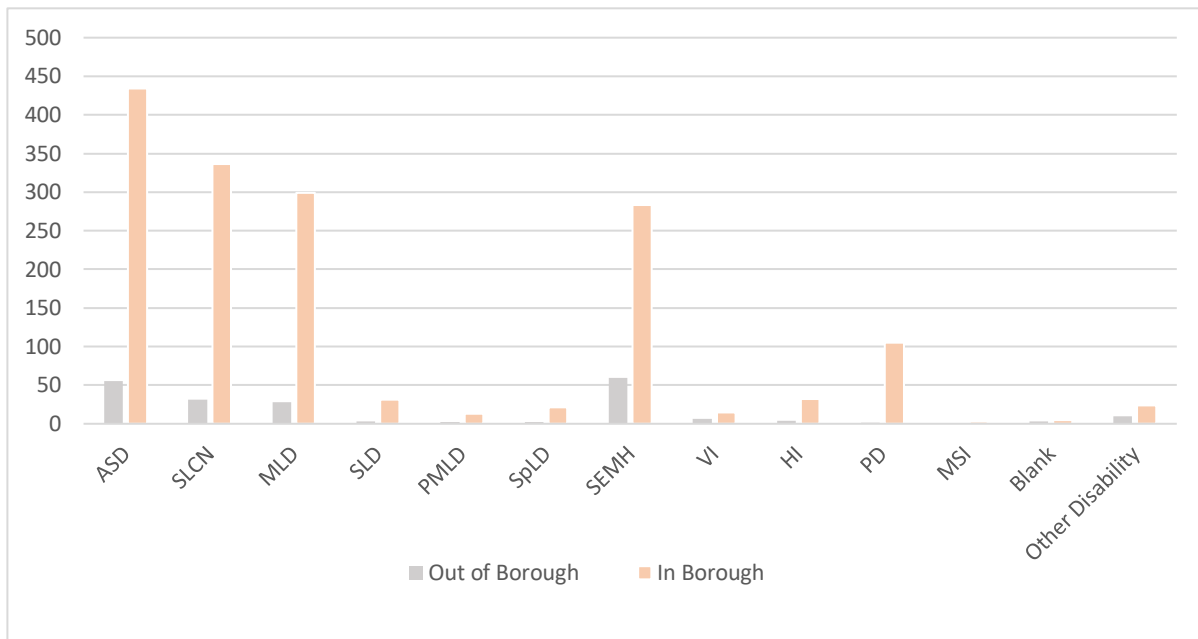
NB please 11.30% of out of borough placement equates to 204 pupils.

When considered by primary need, the following pupils with an EHCP who are placed out of the borough are broken down as follows:

- 26.96% of pupils with ASD (55 out of 204 pupils)
- 15.20% of pupils with SLCN (31 out of 204 pupils)
- 13.73% of pupils with MLD (28 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.47% of pupils with SLD (3 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.98% of pupils with PMLD (2 out of 204 pupils)
- 28.92% of pupils with SEMH (59 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.98% of pupils with SpLD (2 out of 204 pupils)
- 2.94% of pupils with VI (6 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.96% of pupils with HI (4 out of 204 pupils)
- 0% of pupils with MSI (0 out of 204 pupils)
- 0.94% pupils with PD (1 out of 204 pupils)
- 4.90%% of pupils with Other Disability (10 out of 204 pupils)
- 1.47% of pupils who have not yet been given a primary need (3 out of 204 pupils)

It is important to note that some pupils will have more than one need and the above data may not show where there are complex multiple needs.

Pupils attending Thurrock Provision and Out of Borough Placement



The graph shows that Thurrock’s greatest challenge/gaps when trying to place children and young people are those with whose need are primarily ASD, SEMH, SLCN and MLD. It is worth noting the gap for MLD will start to reduce once the Treetops project is completed.

17.5.2 Age analysis of those educated out of the borough

One in two children and young people with EHCP maintained by Thurrock and educated out of the area are of school age (aged 5 to 15). Six in ten of those with Social, Emotional and Mental needs are of school age. This suggests that there may not be enough local capacity to provide for this group of children. However, considering that this is one of the fastest growing group; there is a need for increased capacity for nurturing, emotional and well-being support. There is also general concern nationally about the long term impact of Covid-19 of the well-being of children, young people and their families further emphasising the need for this type of provision including capacity of the local Children Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

18. Priority Needs by Age Groups

Following section data has been pulled from the Education, Health Care Plans in Thurrock Deep Dive Data Analysis 2021 (NB some of the children and young people may have been fostered).

18.1 Under 5

There are only 3 children in this category and two have ASD. It is very likely that their complex needs could not be met locally and had to be commissioned externally.

18.2 Ages 5 to 10

Children aged 5 to 10 account for 20% of the population with EHCP educated out of

the borough. The number and need of this age group gives an indication of future provision for SEND needs. It also means that provision of early intervention for some less complex needs may facilitate inclusion and education of more children in mainstream settings whilst reducing the need for placements in specialist settings.

1 in 4 children have Autistic Spectrum Disorder, followed by Speech, Language and Communication Needs (19%) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (16%). Half of the children in this age group are educated within maintained settings and a quarter (10) are in special schools.

18.3 Ages 11 to 15

80 children aged 11 to 15 are educated out of the area. The majority have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (35%), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (24%) followed by those with Moderate Learning Needs (19%). As with the younger age group, this cohort is an indication of future needs and provision demands, (local Synergy data, December 2020). A third of 11 to 15 year olds are placed in special independent schools and 7 in 10 of have SEMH.

18.4 Ages 16 to 19

Young adults aged 16 to 19 are the second largest group of those educated out of the borough. 7 in 10 are in Post-16 further education colleges, of which 26% have Special Emotional and Mental Health needs. Only 7 young adults are placed in special independent settings.

The majority (29%) of this age group also have Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs followed by those with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (23%) and Speech Language and Communication needs (22%).

18.5 Ages 20 to 25

16 young people have EHCPs and 7 in 10 are placed in Post-16 further education colleges. Half of them have Communication and Interactive needs.

19. How We Are Meeting Needs

19.1 Mainstream Provision

The majority of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan attend a mainstream provision (77%). This is positive and in line with Thurrock and national policy that pupils should be supported to remain within mainstream education wherever possible.

Although the overall percentage of children and young people with an EHCP or SEN Support attend mainstream provision (excluding those in resource provision), the number of pupils is varied across schools.

The percentage of pupils supported in relation to the whole pupil population of the school within primary schools ranges from 0.5% to 6%, with a number of primary schools supporting pupils with SEN at this level (Synergy data, February 2021).

All secondary schools are supporting pupils at this level, and this ranges from 0.9% to 5.7% of the school's total pupil population.

A small percentage of parents elected to educate their children and young people at home. The table below details where children and young people are educated.

Provision Accessed for Pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Provision	Pupils	Percentage
Mainstream school	943	52.83%
Special School	438	24.54%
Resource Provision	82	4.59%
Home Educated	13	0.73%
Other	309	17.31%
Total	1785	100.00%

Please note the 'Other' category includes CME, NEET, Direct Payment, Training and Home Tuition.

19.2 Average Cost and Sufficiency

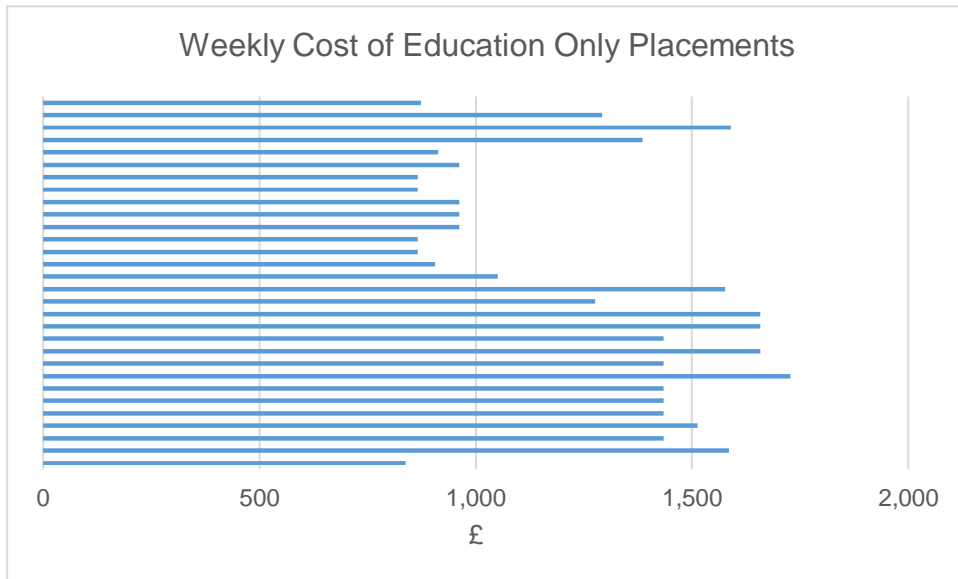
Providing access to the right placements for children has always been the key driver in accessing provision through the mainstream and independent sector. Expenditure is demand driven and the specialist nature of the support that is needed can often mean that there are only a limited number of providers available and these can be a significant distance from the child's home meaning that residential accommodation is also needed.

The cost of placements shown on the following page, shows it is difficult to achieve a baseline figure due to the range of needs the school and residential provider will be catering for. The average cost for education only provision is £1,235 per week and the average cost of education with residential provision is £2,908 per week.

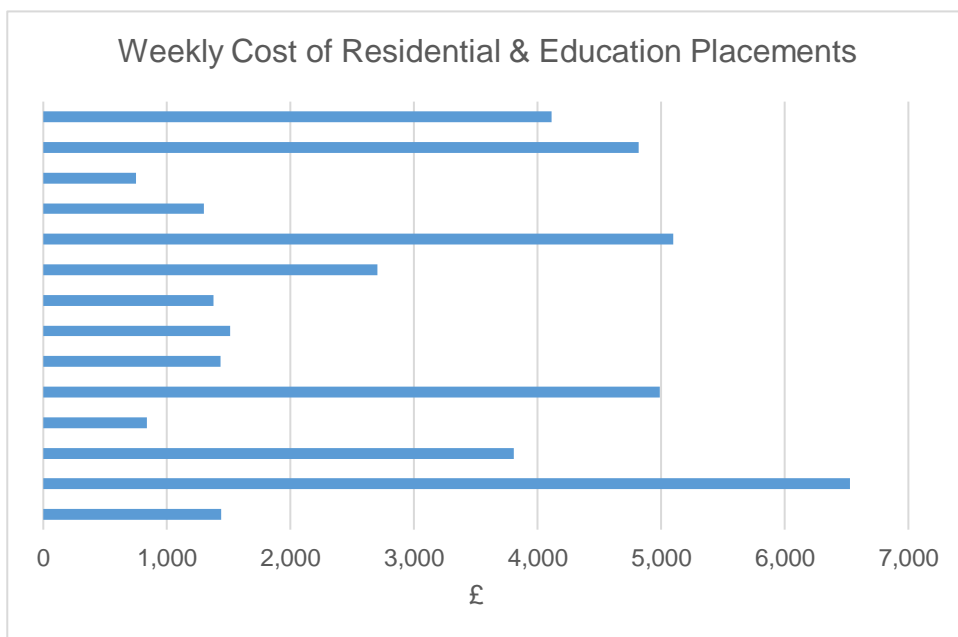
In 2019, research undertaken on behalf of the London Councils Group reported an average weekly rate for external residential provision of £3,316. Research undertaken identified that the report 'Price Trends and Costs of Children's Homes – February 2020' indicates that the average weekly cost for an education inclusive residential placement is £3,970 which is higher than the average rate we currently pay.

This data should be viewed with caution due to the specific needs to be met but they do give an indication on cost comparison, the breakdown and range is shown below. It remains a priority for us to achieve value for money and the Commissioning Team work on placement costs will be ongoing.

Education Only (31/01/21)



Education and Residential Placements (31/01/21)



19.3 Commissioning Options

Whilst there are currently sufficient providers to meet the demand we have, there are significant challenges within the market. These include the distance from home, the availability of specialist provision, should needs change or escalate, or if there are new cases and challenges around cost. Providers are predominately in the private / independent sector and currently all are spot purchased with locally managed quality assurance systems. Further research into the best ways to engage the market will be undertaken as a part of this project, including national research projects focusing on costs and the best methods to procure this service with the aim of providing a high quality, consistent and good value offer.

A number of local authorities have moved to a framework or Dynamic Purchasing System and research is needed to understand if either system has the benefit of reducing spot purchasing. Block purchasing is generally not seen as an option for this type of placements due to the highly specialised nature making the risk of unfilled places high.

19.4 Resource Provision

For some children and young people, their needs are best met within specialist provision. There are a high proportion of children and young people accessing specialist provision in Thurrock; 24.76% (446 pupils) attend Special Schools. However, there are fewer children and young people travelling outside of our borough to attend a special school than those who attend within Thurrock (92 pupils). This demonstrates that there is a need for more specialist provision within Thurrock alongside our mainstream offer. The expansion of Treetops, with an additional 140 places, will assist with providing in borough provision but more is required.

19.5 Types of School

77% of the SEND pupils attend a maintained school or academy (note this includes both mainstream provision, resource provision and special provision).

2.7% (49) of the SEND pupils due to complex needs attend an independent special school or non- maintained school, which are more expensive placements. All of these children and young people attend specialist provision, and 97.9% of these pupils are attending outside of Thurrock. Although the percentage for this is relatively small, the costs of these placements are significant.

20. What are the Gaps?

When looking at current provisions in Thurrock and needs of SEND population, we are able to identify gaps in our services or strained areas of needs. We are doing this in order to ensure the provision of schools with specialist support and resources to meet the needs of the growing population of SEMH, ASD and SLCN.

From looking at the needs analysis, available data from Synergy, School Census and the Education, Health Care Plans in Thurrock Deep Dive Data Analysis 2021, there appears a future potential demand of over 200 places for school age children with EHCPs in Thurrock. This is approximately based on the number of plans (for pupils aged 5-18) maintained by the LA (1,520) and provision for EHCP in local schools (1,230).

Trend analysis shows the need for additional 100 places on annual bases across a broad range of needs in Thurrock. As at December 2020, 215 children and young people were in out of borough placements and of which 31% are in Post-16 educational settings.

Increases in the number of needs are not consistent across all types of primary needs. For example, the number of pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs

increased by 20% in 2020, indicating 29 more children require specialist SEMH support in one year. An additional 18% (40 children) now have Speech, Language and Communication which may include pupils with Autism as their primary need and 8% (24 children) have Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

A number of children with EHCPs are educated in mainstream settings in Thurrock are above the national norms and a small proportion (5%), are eligible for additional funding to facilitate adjustment and enhance their learning.

Placements out of the borough are usually known to be expensive considering additional expenses due to transportation and other specialist therapies. The number of children Electively Home Educated increased to 11 after years of no applicable return and there is the need to understand the sudden uptake of home tuition.

Although some children's educational needs are met with provisions out of borough, attending out of borough placements can often have significant implications for pupils involving longer travelling times and distance or being placed away from family and local support networks which can lead to detachment from local communities and difficulties with independent living post formal education. While it is accepted that not all needs may be met in borough, it is imperative to plan for future demands and the range of primary needs.

21. Commissioning Priorities

- To continue to ensure the co-production of the consultation and engagement service ensuring that the views of parents and children and young people are a key part of the development and delivery of commissioned services
- Ensure a range of mental health and well-being services including Schools Well-being Service (SWS), Mental Health (MH) support in school, Emotional Well-being and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) targeting primary school age pupils with preventative measures and a clear pathway of support in order to reduce the strain on the service presented by children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
- Further develop the inclusive approaches and offer available in mainstream schools in order to continue to meet SEND pupils needs in those environments – allowing children to stay with family, and develop strong bonds within the local community
- Identify the specialist services for pupils identified with SEMH and ensure that these needs are appropriately met
- Expansion in Post 16 provision to support the access to education, employment and training
- Assess the spot purchasing pattern for high cost placements and explore the most effective procurement options
- Carry out a detailed financial analysis to support the development of adequate

number of good quality placement at an efficient cost in order to achieve best value for money

- Further develop the quality assurance processes including through the cross regional arrangements to implement an integrated system particularly for joint placements.

22. Glossary

ADD	Attention deficit disorder
ADHD	Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ALD	Associated learning difficulties
ASC	Autistic spectrum condition
ASD	Autism spectrum disorder
BESD	Behaviour emotional social difficulty
CAMHS	Child and adolescent mental health services
EHC(P)	Education, health and care (plan)
EWMHS	Emotional wellbeing & mental health service
HI	Hearing impairment
JSNA	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
LD(D)	Learning difficulties (and disabilities)
MH	Mental health
MLD	Moderate learning difficulty
MSI	Multi-sensory impairment
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PD	Physical disability
PMLD	Profound and multiple learning difficulties
SLCN	Speech, communication and language needs
SEMH	Social, emotional and mental health
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and/or disabilities
SLCN	Speech language and communication needs
SLD	Severe learning difficulty
SpLD	Specific learning difficulty
SWS	School wellbeing service
VI	Visual impairment

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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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8 September 2021	ITEM: 15 Decision: 110584
Cabinet	
Supported Accommodation for 18-24 Year Olds	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key
Report of: Barry Johnson – Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Social Care	
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas - Assistant Director Education and Skills	
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy Corporate Director of Children’s Services	
This report is: Public – with the exception of the Stage 1 ‘Approval to Proceed to Tender’ procurement report (Appendix 1) which should be exempt since it contains commercially sensitive information regarding the tender.	
Date of notice given of exempt or confidential report: 10 August 2021 (for relevant part)	

Executive Summary

This report sets out proposals to commission further supported accommodation to support our vulnerable young people aged 18-24. This will include accommodation for our care leavers as we provide a range of opportunities to support the transition into adulthood. To support this work we have established a working group within the Local Authority which covers, children’s services, housing and adults services recognising that we have a number of vulnerable young people and adults across the three directorates who require additional support. Our analysis has identified that we have seen an increase the number of care leavers in part due to historical numbers of Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and an increase in the numbers of children who are looked after in the 10-15 year age bracket.

This report will provide further analysis around care leavers but recognises that we do have a number of adults who also required supported accommodation and when looking to procure new providers this will be factored into the process and the ongoing work.

Our current accommodation offer for care leavers is met through our Headstart Housing team working closely with the Children Services Aftercare Team. This work is carried out on an individual basis and identifies suitable accommodation for our care leavers. Some of our young people require additional support and this is

provided by a supported accommodation offer. Due to some of the complexities of need particularly related to mental health challenges there is currently a shortage of supported accommodation to meet certain needs and this can result in young people having accommodation outside of the local area although it should be noted that in a small number of cases, this is sometimes in the best interests of the young person.

It is proposed that, subject to Cabinet approval, the procurement of external placements is undertaken to encourage a wider range of provider's locally with the potential to consider whether the provider could also provide supported accommodation for 16-18 year olds. It is proposed that the Council reserves the right to open the contract for new applications, if required, to support the development of this market. Commissioners also recommend on some occasions we block purchase accommodation on a limited basis where this would meet a young person's need and improve the stability and value for money of the offer being made.

The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers, which includes the following priority:

'The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after'. In particular the action 'develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs'

These proposals, as a part of an overall partnership approach would improve the offer to young people and support the delivery of the local authority's statutory duties.

1. Recommendation(s):

- 1.1 That Cabinet agree to commence the procurement of contract(s) for supported accommodation for 18-24 year olds.**
- 1.2 That Cabinet agree the option to block purchase places through the contract(s) where this represents best value for the Council to meet demand.**
- 1.3 That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Childrens Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder to award contracts following completion of the procurement process.**
- 1.4 That, in line with Rule 13 of the Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet agree that the Corporate Director can seek to invoke the waiver provisions of the Contract Procedure Rules due to the nature of the services being purchased.**
- 1.5 That Cabinet agree to delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's Services and the Portfolio Holder where:**

- **The placement cannot be made on the contract to be awarded under this procurement exercise;**
- **The purchase is required in order that the Council may meet its statutory obligations and;**

1.6 That, as recommended by Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet investigate opportunities to invest in housing to help meet the provision that Children’s Services need to meet the supported accommodation requirements for care leavers.

1.7 That Cabinet note the joint work that is already in place and the statutory duties on the local authority including to develop a jointly commissioned support offer for those aged 18+ who need additional support to be able develop independence as an adult and where possible this is extended to provide support for the 16-18 year olds.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers and includes the following priority.

‘The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after’. In particular the action ‘develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs’.

2.2 This report sets out proposals to improve the provision of arrangements for those aged 18-24 years by further developing the offer for those in need of supported accommodation for the transition to independent living. With a view to utilising these new commissioning arrangements to support over vulnerable young people in Thurrock.

2.3 Whilst the focus of this piece of work is care leavers aged 18-24 years it also contributes to the following priorities in the wider Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy:

- *To redefine and simplify pathways for vulnerable households to access health and wellbeing services across the borough, especially in relation to mental health*
- *To consider ways in which the council could develop support and accommodation options for people with complex needs’.*

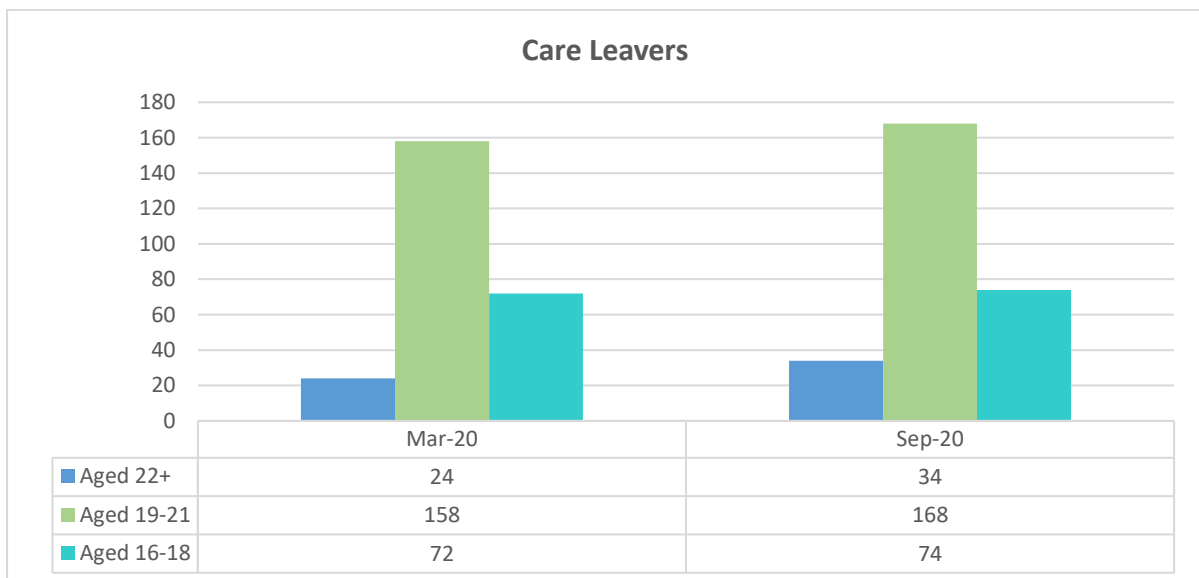
2.4 The Children Act 1989 guidance on planning transition to adulthood for care leavers indicates that there should be links between children’s and adult services commissioning arrangements and those for housing related support

services to support the provision of a range of support options based on assessed needs. Through this project we are seeking to extend the existing joint working to jointly commission support for the most vulnerable young adults.

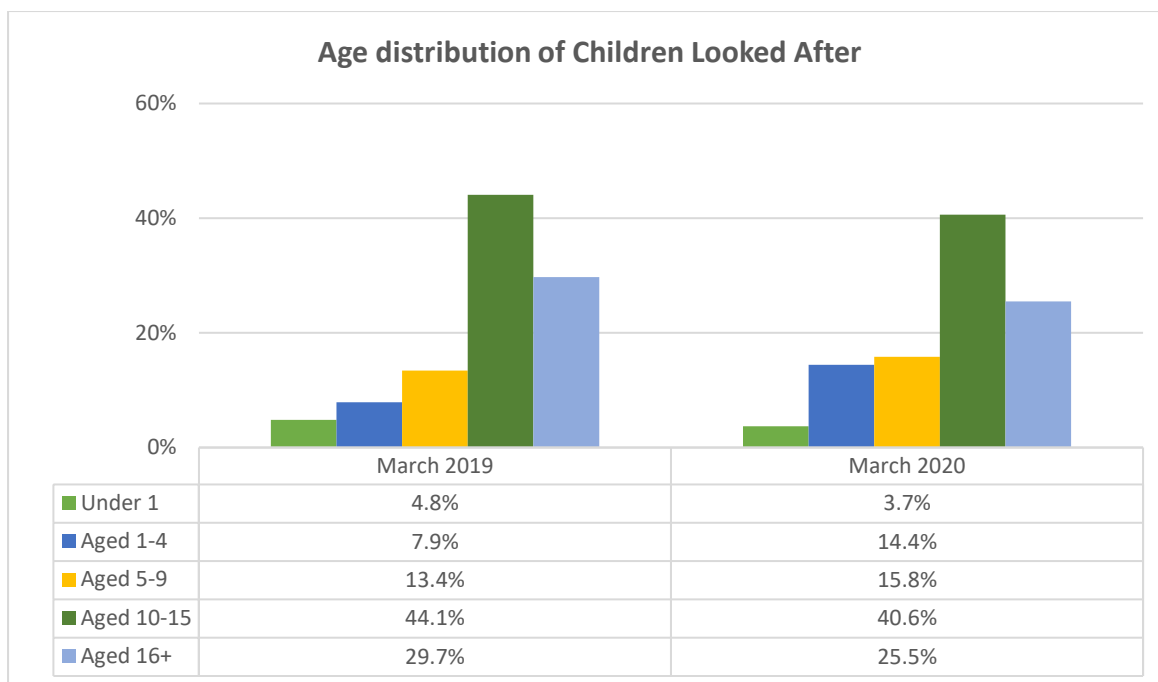
3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Ensuring we have the right support for Care Leavers is a priority for Thurrock as this supports transition into adulthood.

3.2 A number of interlinked projects have already commenced that bring together partners such as Housing, Adult Services and Children’s Services to identify and meet support needs and find housing solutions locally. As a part of our sufficiency planning an analysis of need has been undertaken, at the end of March 2020, 276 Care Leavers, were receiving an Aftercare Service, this is a slight increase from March 2019.



3.3 To support forward planning for care leavers the sufficiency assessment also provides a breakdown of the ages of children looked after. The highest percentage of children in care in Thurrock are those aged 10-15 years, this has remained broadly stable over recent years with this age group representing 40.6% of the children in care population as at 31 March 2020.



3.4 The high levels of Care Leavers combined with the cohort of 10-15 year olds who will become Care Leavers in the coming years has identified that we need to commission further post 18 accommodation in the local area. Our strategy is wherever possible to house young people locally this enables them to access the wider support of Inspire and ensuring young people can access education and employment opportunities. We recognise that for some of our care leavers we need to source accommodation outside of the borough. Joint working has already commenced across Children's, Adults, Housing and Public Health to integrate commissioning and identify opportunities to better use existing funding.

3.5 At the end of September 2020, 276 Care Leavers aged 18+ were receiving an Aftercare service. Working closely with the Aftercare team, Head Start Housing provides a range of transitional accommodation whilst young people develop the independence skills required to manage social housing, this is in addition to the supported accommodation that is a focus of this report. Now managing a portfolio of 114 beds, including 42 supported by key workers, the service provides a tailored approach to support young people to develop.

3.6 There remains a shortage of:

- Post 18 low need 24/7 Supported Accommodation
- Post 18 medium / high need CQC Registered accommodation
- Floating support for Care Leavers aged 18-25 years old
- Linked local supported accommodation provision for young people aged 16-18 years to move into when they reach 18 years old who need it including for young people who are unaccompanied asylum seeking children

- 3.7 To address the identified need we currently undertake a spot purchase against a local specification. This commissioning work seeks to move this to the procurement of external providers both local and where necessary out of borough to meet the needs of care leavers. By providing an opportunity to the market and highlighting the need for local provision we aim to stimulate the local market and support the development of high quality supported accommodation in borough.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Thurrock Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency Strategy has identified the need to focus on development of the offer for care leavers and includes the following priority.

‘The provision of a range of offers for those aged 18 and over to ensure that they are able to continue to meet their potential once they cease to be looked after’. In particular the action ‘develop the work through Headstart Housing to improve our accommodation offer to care leavers with different levels of support needs’.

- 4.2 The recommendations set out make proposals to improve the provision of arrangements for those aged 18-24 years old by further developing the offer for those in need of supported accommodation for the transition to independent living. It is proposed that this is done by the implementation of a procurement approach contract subject to Cabinet approval.

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

- 5.1 Feedback from children and young people was used as a part of the Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy to help shape the priorities.
- 5.2 Direct discussions with Care Leavers have been held and these will be used to shape the commissioning exercise and included in the specifications developed.

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

- 6.1 This work contributes to the following corporate priorities:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay

Prosperity – a borough which enables everyone to achieve their aspirations.

7. Implications

- 7.1 **Financial**

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

By developing the procurement approach to move away from spot purchasing there is the opportunity to engage the market and move towards improved value for money. In addition the consideration of block purchasing will reduce the risk of high cost emergency placements. The new procurement will also provide opportunities to support council wide supported accommodation solutions.

7.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Courage Emovon**
Principal Lawyer / Manager – Contracts & Procurement Team

The procurement proposals set out in this report falls within scope of the Council's duties and statutory obligations and any tender process must comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. It is noted that Volume 3 of the Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations as amended by the Leaving Care Act 2000 'planning transition to adulthood for care leavers' provides guidance, primarily addressed to local authorities and their staff in England, about their functions under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989. It is issued as guidance under section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 which requires local authorities in exercising their social services functions, to act under the general guidance of the Secretary of State. This guidance should be complied with by local authorities when exercising these functions, unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation. The proposals contained within this report will support the local authority in meeting these requirements and ultimately its statutory obligations.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

The Children Looked After and Care Leaver Sufficiency considered a range of information alongside protected characteristics of individuals as defined by the Equalities Act 2010. This information was used to ensure that the needs of children and young people were met in the priorities that underpin these proposals. The ongoing engagement with young people, as this project develops, will ensure that specific needs are considered. Community Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out if and when required.

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

None

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

- Children Looked After and Care Leavers Sufficiency Statement
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/strategy-childrenlookedafter-careleavers-202012-v01.pdf>

9. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1: Stage 1 Form – Approval to Proceed to Tender (EXEMPT)

Report Author:

Sue Green

Strategic Lead Integrated Commissioning

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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