

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

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **21 September 2021**

South Essex College, High Street, Grays, RM17 6TF – Room W1.24

Membership:

Councillors Lynn Worrall (Chair), Augustine Ononaji (Vice-Chair), Mike Fletcher, Maureen Pearce, Joycelyn Redsell and David Van Day

Substitutes:

Councillors Adam Carter, Steve Liddiard, Georgette Polley and Elizabeth Rigby

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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1 Apologies for Absence	
2 Minutes	5 - 12
To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 22 June 2021.	
3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. To agree any relevant briefing notes submitted to the Committee.	
4 Declaration of Interests	

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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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

Agenda published on: **13 September 2021**

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- *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?*

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- **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?**



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- relate to; or
- likely to affect

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- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
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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 Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 22 June 2021 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Lynn Worrall (Chair), Augustine Ononaji (Vice-Chair), Mike Fletcher, Maureen Pearce and Joycelyn Redsell

Apologies: Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

In attendance:

Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Colin Black, Assistant Director Regeneration and Place Delivery
Tracy John, Interim Assistant Director of Housing
Ewelina Sorbjan, Assistant Director of Housing
Susan Murray, Asset Delivery Manager
Kelly Myers, Housing Development Project Manager
Wendy Le, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the meeting, all present were advised that the meeting was being live streamed and recorded, with the video recording to be made available on the Council's website.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny meeting held on 16 March 2021 were approved as a correct record.

2. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

3. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties

The report was presented by Susan Murray.

The Chair thanked officers for the report. Councillor Redsell said that she did not agree with some points within the report particularly on ventilation as the tower blocks in Blackshots did not have this. She explained that there was water leaking inside and outside of those tower blocks and the Ward Councillors for the Blackshots area had received reports from residents with issues inside those tower blocks. She pointed out that opening windows as suggested for ventilation was not safe as children could climb onto chairs to

get to the windows. She stated that the tower blocks in Blackshots needed to be demolished instead of spending money on repairing those. She said that Mears painted over mould inside those flats and the mould would reappear again. She stated that she was not happy with this.

Councillor Fletcher asked if there were specific areas in the borough where damp and mould issues were more prominent than others such as the Flowers Estate in South Ockendon. He said that damp and mould issues had become more of an issue over the past few years and that residents felt that they were blamed for this. He noted that Resident Liaison Officers were trained but pointed out that the issue was desk based staff and said that first responders needed to understand the situation that residents were in. He went on to say that there could be an underlying issue to damp and mould which could be due to the Council housing families in small properties. He also sought further details on the Thematic Review from the Housing Ombudsman.

Susan Murray answered that there were no specific areas where damp and mould was higher than other areas. She said that it was due to the architype of certain properties. In regards to the Flowers Estate, she said that she did not have the specific damp and mould details for this area but would find out and send the information out. She explained that the damp and mould issues in the Flowers Estate had reduced due to the MVHR installations (Mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units). Tracy John added that the service was aware of the issues of overcrowding which was due to a lack of housing provisions nationally for families. She said that overcrowding would put pressure within a home and increase the likelihood of damp and mould issues. She went on to say that the Thematic Review was a call for evidence from the Housing Ombudsman which the Council had circulated to council housing involved residents and TRA groups and had encouraged them to respond. Ian Wake added that the report did not seek to blame residents for damp and mould issues and highlighted that the main cause was condensation. He said that the Transforming Homes programme aimed to improve buildings and noted that some properties had reached the end of their life expectancy which needed to be replaced. He explained that a deep dive had been carried out on the complaints in the media and social media and that the service had found that most of those complaints were in regards to Blackshots tower blocks. He went on to say that the Council was currently looking at a scheme for those flats in Blackshots and would need to work with residents on a solution.

The Vice-Chair questioned how often the service carried out inspections of their council housing properties. Tracy John answered that the service relied on residents to report faults and an inspection would follow on. The service aimed to undertake three yearly inspections as part of the tenancy audit which was primarily to check in the tenants on how things were going with regard their tenancy but also looked at the conditions of properties. She said that the service was working with Mears to identify properties with potential damp and mould problems. In addition to this, the service looked at sample checks of

council homes, condition surveys and other relevant data to pick up potential damp and mould problems.

The Vice-Chair felt that three yearly inspections were too long and needed to be on a more regular basis. The Chair said that she had never known of a three yearly inspection and asked for a report on the last three yearly inspection to be brought to committee. Councillor Redsell agreed and said that some of the properties were not in liveable conditions particularly the flats in Blackshots.

Councillor Pearce questioned the thoroughness of checks on council homes that became available. Susan Murray answered that a full void inspection was undertaken on returned properties. She said that these had to meet a fit to let standard as well as the Council's fit for habitation standard. She explained that some properties had a quicker turnaround time than others which may require a longer time if damp and mould needed treating in a property.

Referring to page 19, the Chair noted that the data was over a period of two years. She asked that more in-depth detail be provided on the issues and causes of damp and mould such as if some had been caused by condensation or if some were more dangerous types of mould. She said that a breakdown of the data was needed to identify what mould spores were present and how the condensation had occurred. She also asked if there was a qualified damp and mould specialist that checked the Council's properties. Tracy John answered that a deeper research would need to be undertaken into the details of the data. She said that the Council's surveyors were qualified and trained but that there was no specific qualification for a damp and mould specialist. The surveyors also had access to expert advice if needed.

The Chair said that families had approached ward councillors with damp and mould issues and had shown them doctor notes highlighting asthma problems as a result of mould. She questioned whether the service accepted a medical note as evidence to move a family out of that home and into a new home. Tracy John answered that the Council had a responsibility to resolve the damp and mould issues and repaired these to ensure it was safe to live in.

The Chair noted that the report stated that residents needed to take some responsibility with damp and mould issues. She pointed out that the Council needed to take responsibility too as most of the council homes were old. She highlighted that a state regeneration programme was needed and a holistic approach to be taken in resolving damp and mould issues. Regarding the Thematic Review, she stated that Councillors had not been asked and should have been despite the timing of purdah. She asked whether the Tenancy Excellence Panel had been involved and when the review would be published. Tracy John explained that the Housing Ombudsman had announced the review in the news and the Council had shared this with involved tenants and TRA groups. She said that the Council had no ownership of the review and would check when the Thematic Review would be published.

The Committee stated that they were not happy with the damp and mould issues and that they were dissatisfied with the work that had been undertaken on these. The Chair pointed out that it had been a long time since the last damp and mould report was brought to committee and needed to come back again. The Committee agreed that the report needed to be brought back to the Housing O&S meeting on 9 November 2021 and that the report needed to address the issues that Members had raised in tonight's meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to comment on the Council's approach and performance in relation to the management of damp and mould within the housing portfolio.

5. Housing Delivery Approach

The report was presented by Colin Black.

Councillor Redsell declared that she was on the Local Development Plan Task Force. She commented that the Claudian Way development in Chadwell St Mary was beautiful and that more developments like this was needed in Thurrock. She queried whether residents living in that development had come from the housing list. She said that more bungalows were needed in Thurrock. She noted that the St Chads development was mentioned in the report and pointed out that the development was no a high quality build and that residents living had complaints about the homes there. Kelly Myers explained that St Chads was built to a certain quality which had a different design quality to the other developments mentioned in the report. She said that the Council had its own design quality standards to adhere to now.

The Chair asked whether the St Chads site could be brought back to Thurrock Council where it could be managed by the Council. She pointed out that the development was an 'eyesore'. Ian Wake explained that the site was currently owned by Thurrock Regeneration Limited (TRL) and that it was possible for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to acquire the site depending on whether there were Right to Buy (RTB) receipts. He said that it would be a better option to use the RTB receipts for other schemes instead such as acquiring affordable homes in Thurrock. He briefly discussed the tower blocks in Blackshots.

Councillor Fletcher asked how the number of social homes could be increased. He noted that the housing waiting list had now decreased to 7,000 and questioned what had happened to the other 3,000 people and whether this had been due to the abolishment of band five. He commented that infrastructure needed to be considered alongside housing, schools and doctors. Colin Black explained that infrastructure was considered through the planning stages as a key consideration. He said that the allocation of housing was a part of the Local Plan process. Kelly Myers added that the service

worked with other departments in the Council to consider education and highways in terms of infrastructure.

The Committee commented that officers needed to speak with Ward Councillors on potential housing developments and that there needed to be better conversations held between council departments. They discussed how reasonable affordable housing was.

Regarding the Local Plan, the Chair commented that the number of homes identified had been 40,000, then 28,000 and was now 32,000 again. She sought clarification on the number. Colin Black explained that the figure of 32,000 was based on assessments from 2017 that addressed growth. He said that the figure would be revised following on from recent studies and the revised figure would be announced in October or November.

The Committee highlighted concerns of an increase in Thurrock's population following on from the recent national census and was concerned that this would put extra pressure on the economic growth in Thurrock. This highlighted the need for more and more houses and the Committee stated that Thurrock's infrastructure would not be able to cope.

The Chair commented that the service had built 120 houses and should be trading with TRL. She asked for an update in regards to TRL. Colin Black answered that a report on TRL had been through Directors Board and would be heard at General Services Committee on 15 July which would set out the future of TRL.

Referring to paragraph 2.12, the Chair commented that the sites on Dell Road and Argent Street had been sold to private developers. She said that these sites could have been used to build social homes on. Colin Black explained that the land on Argent Street was fairly small and it had been leased out to a metal works company. There had been joint discussions in making the site sustainable but there had been no agreement on the site and was sold off. With Dell Road, it had been concluded that a capital receipt was more beneficial for the land. He said that there had never been an intention to build on the land as it was sold to a housing association back in 2014 but the sale had fallen through.

The Chair commented that there was land ready to be developed but was being sold off. She felt that the Committee needed to have oversight of these pieces of land. Councillor Redsell commented that across the river from Thurrock, there was Gravesend which had developed its river frontage. She felt that Thurrock could achieve a similar development.

RESOLVED:

Approach to Housing Delivery as set out in the report was agreed.

6. Housing Development Programme Update

The report was presented by Colin Black.

Councillor Fletcher commented that local resident had not been kept with the proposed development for Culver Fields but the consultation process had been managed well. He said that the consultation for Broxburn Drive had one meeting which had been held over Zoom and only two people had joined and had stated their objections against the proposals of Broxburn Drive. He pointed out that the survey questions for Broxburn Drive had been designed to give certain unfair answers only and said that the second consultation needed to be better. He referred to the site options list and said that infrastructure had not been considered and questioned the rationale behind some of the chosen sites for development.

The Chair said that the site options list was not fit for purpose and most of the sites were unsuitable. She felt that work needed to be undertaken to check whether the list of sites were right for development. She said that a process was needed on how sites were chosen and that she would prefer to meet with the Portfolio Holder for Housing sooner rather than later. She commented that the Committee needed to see a list of council land. Councillor Redsell commented that a piece of land in Brentwood Road had been considered five years ago but had not heard more on this since then. She said that other boroughs were building portahomes and said Thurrock needed to do this as well.

RESOLVED:

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee were asked to:

1.1 Note progress on the housing development sites to be taken forward for further detailed work, involving engagement with stakeholders and communities.

1.2 Note that a review of the current process and reporting of the Site Options List is to be agreed with the Portfolio Holder for Housing in consultation with the Chair of Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and that any revised proposals be brought back to a future meeting of this committee

7. Work Programme

Democratic Services explained the process of briefing notes which had been implemented following on from the Scrutiny Review last year. Members agreed for briefing notes to be sent in between meetings and were aware that they could request a full report of a briefing note if needed.

The Chair asked that the Housing Development Programme Update be deferred until a meeting between herself and the Portfolio Holder of Housing was held. She also asked for a report on HMOs. Tracy John explained that the Private Sector Stock Condition Survey report would include HMOs.

The Committee asked for a briefing note on void homes to be circulated.

The work programme was updated as follows:

- Portfolio Holder for Housing to be invited to the meeting on 21 September.
- Homelessness Report – 21 September.
- Review of 3 Year Council Housing Properties Inspection – 21 September.
- Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties Update – 9 November.
- Garages Update – 9 November.
- Rent Setting – 11 January 2022.

The meeting finished at 9.03 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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21 September 2021	ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Housing Strategy 2022-27 – Engagement Programme	
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: None
Report of: Ryan Farmer – Housing Strategy and Quality Manager	
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan – Assistant Director of Housing	
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health	
This report is Public	

Executive Summary

As a local authority, it is vital that Thurrock Council has a document to share the aims and ambitions of the organisation regarding housing in the borough.

The council adopted its current Housing Strategy in 2015; however, a new Housing Strategy is now in development. It will consider recent changes to legislation and regulation, trends in the housing market, the impact of recent welfare reforms, and new opportunities for meeting the housing needs of Thurrock’s residents. The strategy will also consider the turbulence and uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic and the future impact it may have.

The Housing Strategy will cover the range of tenures available in Thurrock - social housing, owner-occupiers and the private rental sector. However, it is important to note that the strategy will consider housing needs in the borough and the barriers residents may face with accessing safe, secure and suitable accommodation, rather than analysing specific options or sites for housing provision.

Activity to start scoping and developing the new Housing Strategy began in spring 2021. The engagement period began in August 2021, and it is intended that a final draft will be presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2022.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1. **Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and comment on the emerging themes presented, in particular, to highlight the priority areas which committee members feel should be considered for inclusion within the Housing Strategy 2022-27**

2. Strategy Development and Delivery

The Housing Strategy will set out the council's plans and approach towards housing for the five years from 2022 to 2027. Key themes and high-level strategic actions will feature within the final Housing Strategy, supported by an action plan aligned with the priorities and themes of the document.

The engagement of internal and external partners and stakeholders is integral to the successful design, development and delivery of this strategy. This report has been produced to achieve direct and meaningful engagement with members of the council's Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the themes which have been outlined and the priorities and actions that members feel the council should consider including in the strategy.

Further details regarding engagement can be found in the corresponding section of this report.

In development alongside the Housing Strategy are two other critical documents for the Housing service, supporting and providing supplementary information. These are:

- the Housing Asset Management Strategy, which will outline the council's approach to managing, maintaining and investing in Housing assets to ensure that properties provide attractive, good quality council-owned homes for current and future residents
- the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy, which will set the aims and ambitions of the Housing service in improving its interaction and communication with those who live in and around Thurrock Council's homes and neighbourhoods

3. Context

3.1. This section of the report provides corporate, legislative, regulatory, national and local context within which the Housing Strategy needs to be developed. The details set out below demonstrate some of the factors considered in determining the broad themes for the Housing Strategy.

3.2. Corporate Context

Thurrock Council's vision and corporate priorities, adopted in January 2018, will underpin the Housing Strategy. The council's vision is for Thurrock to be *an ambitious and collaborative community which is proud of its heritage and excited by its diverse opportunities and future.*

Sitting alongside the vision are the three corporate priorities of People, Place and Prosperity.

3.2.1 People

The Housing Strategy will appropriately address and meet the challenges set within this priority. Resilient partnerships across sectors and empowered communities are integral to any Housing Strategy's meaningful development and success. This approach will ensure that services are provided that consistently meet and reflect the needs of those who use them.

3.2.2 Place

While the Housing service has specific responsibility for maintaining and developing the homes and neighbourhoods managed by the council, and plans for these areas will be addressed by the Housing Strategy, this document must go beyond council-owned stock and consider all tenure types. This strategy will improve understanding of households' needs across the borough, identifying the requirements for homes and infrastructure that will support current and future Thurrock residents.

3.2.3 Prosperity

The Housing Strategy will aim to deliver opportunities for residents to achieve their aspirations, including accessing skills training with partner organisations and building links to enhance economic prospects alongside major strategic projects in the borough. The strategy will also seek to expand relationships with other housing providers to increase affordable housing levels in Thurrock.

3.3. Legislative and Regulatory Context

It is necessary that the Housing Strategy is developed within and reflects current legislation and regulation, with the flexibility to adapt to legislative changes that may occur during the document's lifetime. This section outlines some elements that define the powers, duties and obligations of local authorities towards housing which must be considered in setting the direction of the Housing Strategy.

3.3.1 Legislation

Thurrock Council has many housing duties and responsibilities, with only some of these directly relating to its role as a social housing provider and developer. Within legislation, the council also has duties towards homelessness prevention and relief, enforcing property standards and licensing in the private rental sector, and strategic assessments of the borough's current and future housing needs.

3.3.2 Regulation

The Regulator of Social Housing has set four consumer standards and will intervene where failure to adhere to the standards has caused or would risk causing serious harm to tenants. As a social housing provider, the council is required to adhere to these standards.

The four consumer standards are:

- Homes Standard
- Tenancy Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard

The Regulator of Social Housing has also set three economic standards. However, as a local authority, only the rent standard is applicable. This standard establishes the limit for the maximum weekly social and affordable rents which social landlords can charge.

3.4. National Context

The housing landscape is ever-changing, impacted by alterations to government policy, significant events in the housing sector and other national influences.

Whilst Thurrock does have more localised challenges, some of which are outlined in a later section, the strategic approach towards housing in the borough is equally affected by the national context.

3.4.1 Social Housing White Paper - *The Charter for Social Housing Residents*

In November 2020, the Government published its social housing white paper, *The Charter for Social Housing Residents*, as updated in January 2021. Within this document, the Government set out its intentions for its actions to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when required.

The charter outlines the following seven elements that every social housing resident should be able to expect:

- to be safe in your home
- to know how your landlord is performing
- to have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- to be treated with respect
- to have your voice heard by your landlord
- to have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- to be supported to take your first step into ownership

Further to establishing these aspects, the Government announced that it would strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing, empowering the regulator to be proactive in monitoring and enforcing the consumer standards that social housing landlords are held to, and also requiring landlords to:

- be transparent about their performance and decision-making so that tenants and the regulator can hold them to account
- put things right when they go wrong
- listen to tenants through effective engagement

Whilst the white paper outlines these intentions, the timelines for implementing the policies and measures announced in the document remain unclear.

The Government may undertake consultation and introduce legislation supporting the social housing white paper during the lifetime of the Housing Strategy. Therefore, the strategy must be designed to meet and address the proposals in the social housing white paper appropriately.

3.4.2 Grenfell Tower Fire and Building Safety

The Grenfell Tower Fire on 14 June 2017 brought both fire and building safety and tenant and resident engagement into sharp focus for housing providers across the country. The tragedy triggered a wave of activity, such as tenant engagement roadshows by housing ministers, the development of a social housing green paper, and the commissioning of a review of building regulations and fire safety led by Dame Judith Hackitt.

Among other recommendations, the report drew particular attention to the importance of engaging with residents, having appropriate strategies for engagement in place, and ensuring that residents had access to information and involvement in decision making.

The report also highlights the strength of structured engagement through residents' associations and tenant panels and the need for cultural change across the sector regarding the relationship between landlords and residents.

The council's duties and obligations relating to building and fire safety are likely to be broadened in the coming months and years due to the progression of the Building Safety Bill and the commencement of the Fire Safety Act 2021. As such, the Housing Strategy must respond to these and flex with any future responsibilities.

3.4.3 COVID-19 – Community Engagement and Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted how people interacted, including with organisations like local authorities and housing providers. Local authorities were required to engage with their residents and communities in new ways and increased volumes. However, this period also saw communities building resilience and developing support networks organically.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic restricted and prevented traditional face-to-face interaction and engagement activity with those who access the council's services, there were opportunities to find new ways to stay connected, such as using social media and other technology solutions. The level of contact with residents also increased to ensure that those most vulnerable could receive the support they needed through exceptionally challenging times.

The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that there is demand for developing new ways of engagement that take advantage of digital tools and resources whilst retaining the capacity for traditional and in-person approaches to resident participation and information sharing.

3.4.4 COVID-19 – Impact on Housing and Homelessness

At present, there are still concerns that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing and homelessness has not yet fully emerged.

Initiatives such as 'Everyone In' and the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and introducing legislation to temporarily implement a moratorium on evictions and extend eviction notice periods provided some stability and security to households across the country during a time of significant uncertainty, but these were not permanent resolutions.

The ban on bailiff-enforced evictions has now ended. In addition, the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is due to conclude in September 2021, with the removal of the £20 per week Universal Credit increase scheduled for October 2021. When these temporary protections are removed, there will likely be a surge in Thurrock households experiencing financial hardship and at risk of homelessness.

The impacts on the private rental sector and the broader housing market in Thurrock are uncertain; however, the council must consider these factors in developing the Housing Strategy.

4. Local Context

4.1. Affordability

Affordability of accommodation in Thurrock is an ongoing challenge, both in the private rental sector and those aiming to purchase properties.

Data published in June 2021 estimates that 56.24% of first-time buyers would be priced out of purchasing a flat on the open market, with levels of unaffordability increasing for larger sized properties.

Using the same household income data to consider the affordability of properties in the private rental sector, approximately 33% of households would not afford the median rent of a one-bedroom property. Again, unaffordability increases for larger sized properties.

After being frozen for several years, the Government realigned Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates with local market rents in 2020. LHA rates reflect the maximum housing benefit or Universal Credit housing element, which applicants can claim towards housing costs in the private rental sector. In 2020 LHA rates were set at the 30th percentile of local market rents and were frozen once again.

Although LHA rates have been frozen, market rents have not. There is a growing disparity between LHA rates and 30th percentile rents. This challenge of private sector affordability directly relates to the demands for accommodation at social and affordable rents.

4.2. Social and Affordable Housing Provision

In Thurrock, the council is the primary provider of social housing. Based on data published by MHCLG, as of 31 March 2020, it was estimated that 14.3% of dwellings in Thurrock were owned by the council, with other registered social housing providers owning less than 3.1% of homes in the borough.

This imbalance has led to additional pressure and demand on Thurrock Council as the primary provider of affordable accommodation in the borough, highlighting the need for alternative provisions.

4.3. Local Strategy Development

There are a number of other strategic documents under development across the organisation that can inform and be informed by the production of this Housing Strategy.

These include the Local Plan and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy refresh. There will be areas of commonality between these documents and the scope of the Housing Strategy, presenting the council with an opportunity for strategic synergy.

5. Strategy Themes

After considering the above outlined contextual factors, six themes have emerged as areas for exploration and refinement through the engagement and development of the Housing Strategy. These themes are:

- Community Resilience and Engagement
- Safety and Security
- Health and Wellbeing
- Understanding and Addressing Housing Need
- Investment, Development and Standard of Homes
- Housing Services

This section of the report provides detail regarding each of these themes.

It is anticipated that further refinement of these themes will take place following the conclusion of the engagement period of the Housing Strategy development and the assessment of the feedback collected.

5.1. Community Resilience and Engagement

This theme provides an opportunity to build on the foundations of community resilience developed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Activity under this theme will also facilitate strengthened resident representation and participation in how housing services are designed, delivered and reviewed in the future.

This approach will empower the individuals and households that access and use Housing services following the model set in the council's Collaborative Communities Framework, which seeks to influence how the council works for the benefit of communities.

The work within this theme of the Housing Strategy will link directly to the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy. It will also address the Social Housing White Paper elements relating to residents being treated with respect and having their voices heard by their landlords.

5.2. Safety and Security

This theme relates not only to safety and security in a physical sense but also refers to the perception of safety and security that residents have within their homes and neighbourhoods.

The important topic of building and fire safety is integral to physical safety and will continue to be a significant priority to the council. The Government is actively consulting and progressing legislation surrounding fire and building safety. As such, the Housing Strategy must have a mechanism for addressing any key measures, duties or responsibilities which are introduced.

Relating to both physical safety and the perception of safety are the council's estates and neighbourhoods. This strategy will set out the council's intentions for maintaining these as safe environments for those who live, work and travel in and around them. This approach will also extend to tackling anti-social behaviour and addressing concerns around safeguarding, domestic abuse and violence against women and girls.

The above-outlined elements of this theme act in support of the Social Housing White Paper proposals regarding residents having both a safe home and a good neighbourhood to live in.

Beyond the council's responsibilities as a landlord, this theme provides an opportunity to tackle poor standards and unsafe properties in the private rental sector.

In addition, consideration can be given to opportunities to improve standards within owner-occupied properties, to develop ways that residents can access support to live safely, well, and independently in their homes for longer.

5.3. Health and Wellbeing

Housing is a key element in the health and wellbeing of individuals and households. The lack of safe, suitable and secure accommodation will ultimately impact a person's mental health, physical health and general wellbeing.

This strategy intends to take action and put measures in place to provide residents with the greatest opportunities to live well and independently within their homes and communities for as long as possible.

Supporting the health and wellbeing of the borough's residents is a factor and ultimate aim across all themes within this strategy. To reflect this, it is anticipated that health and wellbeing may be represented differently in the final draft, appearing instead as an aspect of each theme rather than a standalone theme itself.

Currently, the Housing Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy are being refreshed, providing a valuable chance to produce a coordinated approach to tackling health inequality through housing and housing services.

5.4. Understanding and Addressing Housing Need

Central to providing housing options that meet the varied needs of current and future Thurrock residents is developing a detailed understanding of those needs.

Affordability of accommodation is a challenge for many Thurrock residents. However, the differing aspirations, circumstances and needs of individuals and families in the borough mean that this strategy should consider a range of housing options.

Housing need relates not only to affordability but also to factors such as the tenure of accommodation, the size of property needed, the requirements for adaptations and the level of support necessary for those who face challenges with living independently.

This theme will also consider housing needs relating to age and the options required to address these.

The work in this theme will align with the council's Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which was approved in early 2020. This theme will also help to inform and support the development of the Local Plan.

5.5. Investment, Development and Standard of Homes

Alongside the Housing Asset Management Strategy, this theme provides the opportunity to outline how the council will deliver good quality homes, maximise the value of its assets and plan for a sustainable future.

Through this theme, the Housing Strategy will set the aims, aspirations and intentions for future Council-led residential development, particularly relating to the type, size and tenure of properties.

The Housing Strategy will also present actions aiming to explore other affordable housing options and alternative housing delivery methods.

Over the past eighteen months, people have been using their homes in vastly different ways compared to the time before the COVID-19 pandemic. This theme allows the opportunity to consider the future use of homes, including their increasing adoption as places of work, to inform development plans and priorities.

Due to the climate emergency, this theme must identify and address the challenges relating to low/zero carbon housing and energy efficiency, not only within the council's stock but across the dwellings in the borough. Further to this, action will need to be outlined to tackle the ongoing issue of fuel poverty affecting many households in Thurrock.

There is an aspiration that the Housing Strategy can serve to influence the type and size of properties that other affordable and private housing developers may seek to build within the borough, ensuring that homes are built to meet the identified needs of Thurrock residents.

It is also the intention that the Housing Strategy can identify actions to influence and drive higher standards of accommodation within the private rental sector.

5.6. Housing Services

This Housing Strategy relates to all tenure types; however, the document presents an opportunity to identify and drive improvements to Housing services for the future. This theme would aspire to ensure the delivery of high-quality resident-centric services that provide value for money and strong resident satisfaction levels.

This theme will consider how services could be transformed or redesigned to be delivered more within communities and localities whilst also exploring opportunities to improve digital engagement with Housing services and officers.

Other relationships exist between this theme and proposals in the Social Housing White Paper regarding landlord performance, regulation and complaints handling.

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The engagement period for the development of the Housing Strategy began in August 2021 with presentations and engagement meetings with officers from across the council, with further opportunities for engagement intended throughout September and October.

From September 2021, the council will undertake active engagement with community forums, resident associations, strategic partnership groups and wider community, voluntary and faith sector organisations. Further engagement activity is to be programmed and held with a range of

stakeholders and interested parties before the end of October 2021, as set out in the engagement section within this report.

- 6.2. An officer-led Housing Strategy Development Oversight Group has been formed with representation from Planning, Public Health and Housing Development to ensure strong links with other areas currently developing important and related strategic documents. The members of this group will collectively contribute towards and review the feedback received throughout the engagement period of the Housing Strategy.

During this and the development phase, group members will bring experience and expertise from a range of disciplines to ensure that a well-rounded strategy is produced that compliments the council's broader strategic aspirations.

- 6.3. It is currently anticipated that the final draft of the Housing Strategy 2022-27 will be presented to Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2022.

7. Reasons for Recommendation

- 7.1. As outlined within this report, the current Housing Strategy adopted by the council requires a refresh. With engagement and collaboration forming central priorities of the strategy development, this reports offers the opportunity for members of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make known their views and bring forward the priorities of their constituents relating to the themes proposed in this report.

8. Engagement (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 8.1. Collaboration is a critical principle in the design, development and ongoing monitoring of the Housing Strategy. There is an aspiration for wide-ranging engagement with various partners and stakeholders; however, these must be sensitive to the current context relating to COVID-19 and must also be in line with any guidance and legislation in effect.

- 8.2. It is intended that consultees will include (but are not limited to):

- Residents of Thurrock
- Council officers from a range of services, including Housing, Adults Social Care, Children's Services, Public Health, Planning, Regeneration and Housing Development
- NHS representatives
- Housing associations
- Partner organisations
- Organisations from the community, voluntary and faith sector

- 8.3. Examples of activity explored for use again include detailed sessions with council staff, partners and key stakeholders, online surveys, statistical

analysis, Microsoft Teams virtual briefings and workshops, and presentations to other key council services, committees and boards.

8.4. As outlined, the presentation of this report aims to achieve direct and meaningful engagement with members of the council's Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the development of the Housing Strategy. In addition, it provides an opportunity for members to identify and share any appropriate stakeholders for further engagement, and bring forward priorities as outlined by their constituents.

9. **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):

- None

10. Implications

10.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead - Corporate Finance

Through robust financial management and assessment of plans to improve existing stock, develop new housing and deliver housing services across the borough, the council will ensure that the refreshed Housing Strategy has the appropriate resources to deliver against any objectives and actions identified through the development stages.

10.2. 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.

A refreshed Housing Strategy will ensure that the council will deliver on its statutory duties as both a local authority and a social housing provider. Legal Services should be consulted to provide ongoing advice and assistance.

10.3. Diversity and Equality

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

Engagement activity is planned to occur with other public bodies, voluntary organisations, service users and other identified stakeholders before a new strategy is implemented. By undertaking a review, a broad range of stakeholders throughout the community can be identified and involved in the activity to develop a holistic strategy. The engagement results will help inform a Community Equality Impact Assessment before implementing the strategy to identify and address any issues affecting those within the protected characteristics.

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

Not applicable

11. Appendices to the report

- None

Report Author:

Ryan Farmer

Housing Strategy & Quality Manager

Business Improvement - Housing

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21 September 2021		ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-Key	
Report of: Jo Broadbent, Director of Public Health		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This paper provides an update on progress in refreshing the Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS) for 2021-26. The attached slide set (Appendix A) sets out the scope, arrangements and timeline for the refresh. Appendix B includes the Communication and Engagement Plan.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the project scope outlined in the attached slide set (Appendix A) and the arrangements for completing the strategy refresh:

- The overarching Vision for the refresh should be “Levelling the Playing Field”, with each chapter identifying ambitious actions required to do that.
- The actions to Level the Playing Field will be arranged around 6 key influences on health and wellbeing, including wider determinants of health, around which the strategy will be structured:
 1. Quality Care Centred Around the Person
 2. Staying Healthier for Longer
 3. Building Strong & Cohesive Communities
 4. Opportunity for All
 5. Housing & the Environment
 6. Community Safety

- **Review and sign-off of the draft strategy document will be at the HWB Board meeting in March 2022, and thereafter by Full Council.**
- **Operational oversight of the refresh process will be via: HWB Strategy / TICP Strategy Group, AD Oversight Group, and HWBS Engagement Group.**
- **The Strategy will be launched in July 2022.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The HWBS is a whole system plan for health & wellbeing and a means to engage all partners in the wellbeing agenda, co-ordinating strategic thinking of all elements of the council and all system partners to deliver quantifiable gains in health and wellbeing of residents.
- 2.2 Thurrock agreed its first HWBS in 2013. The second and current HWBS was launched in July 2016 and can be accessed here:
<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/strategies/health-and-well-being-strategy>

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Preparatory work with system partners and HWBB Chair to date has identified the 6 key influences and suggested that the HWBS needs to:
- Be high level and strategic
 - Be highly ambitious and set out genuinely new plans rather than just describe what has already been done
 - Provide a clear narrative that drives the work of all aspects of the local authority, NHS and third sector
 - Address resident priorities and be co-designed with residents
 - Be place and locality based and take a strengths and assets approach, not focused only on deficits or services
- 3.2 The attached slide set (Appendix A) sets out the scope, arrangements and timeline for the refresh of the HWBS 2021-2026. The pressures of Covid-19 have impacted on the timeline for the strategy refresh. It is intended that the strategy will be finalised in January 2022.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB) has a collective statutory duty to produce a HWBS. It is one of two highest level strategic documents for the Local Authority and system partners, the other being the Local Plan. The statutory status of the document means that the new Integrated Care System (ICS) must have regard to it when planning their own strategy.

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

- 5.1 A plan for engagement on the HWBS is below in Appendix B.

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

- 6.1 The HWBS is one of two highest level strategic documents for the Local Authority and system partners, the other being the Local Plan. It is a whole system plan for health & wellbeing and a means to engage all partners in the wellbeing agenda, co-ordinating strategic thinking of all elements of the council and all system partners to deliver quantifiable gains in health and wellbeing of residents.
- 6.2 In order to support delivery of the Council's Vision, the 6 Domains of the HWBS Strategy each relate to one of the Council's key priorities of People, Place and Prosperity, as outlined in the attached slide set.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Jonathan Wilson**
Assistant Director for Finance

The cost associated with the strategy refresh will be delivered within existing budgets or agreed through existing Council and partner agencies governance finance arrangements.

7.2 Legal

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

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 established a statutory duty for Councils and CCGs to jointly prepare Health and Wellbeing Strategies for the local area as defined by the Health and Wellbeing Board. The purpose of the Health and Wellbeing Strategies and also the Joint Strategic Needs Assessments is to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community and reduce inequalities for all ages. They are a continuous process of strategic assessment and planning, and the core aim is to develop local evidence-based priorities for commissioning which will improve the public's health and reduce inequalities.

Their outputs, in the form of evidence and the analysis of needs, and agreed priorities, should be used to help to determine what actions local authorities, the local NHS and other partners need to take to meet health and social care needs, and to address the wider determinants that impact on health and wellbeing.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Community Development and Equalities Team

The aim of the Strategy is to improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Thurrock. Doing so will mean reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing.

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

The refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy will facilitate crime and disorder priorities that relate specifically to health and wellbeing, further strengthening the relationship between the Health and Wellbeing Board and Community Safety Partnership.

8. **Appendices to the report**

- Appendix A – Refresh Scope
- Appendix B – Communication and Engagement Plan

Report Author:

Jo Broadbent

Director of Public Health (Adults, Housing & Health)

Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2026 “Levelling the Playing Field”

Refresh Scope v.1.4

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Jo Broadbent
Director of Public Health
06/08/21



Slide Pack Contents

Strategy Content

1. Introduction
2. Suggested Structure
3. Strategic Fit
4. Vision - “Levelling the Playing Field”
5. 6 Key Influences on Health & Wellbeing in Thurrock
6. Outcomes Framework

Strategy Development Process

7. Timeframes
8. Governance & Monitoring
9. Stakeholder & Community Engagement

Strategy Content



1. Introduction

- **Purpose of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy**
 - The Health & Wellbeing Board (HWBB) has a collective statutory duty to produce a Health & Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS)
 - It is one of two highest level strategic documents driving Place Making for the LA and system partners, (other being the Local Plan), which can engage all partners in the wellbeing agenda
 - It is a whole system plan for the HWBB, co-ordinating strategic thinking of all elements of the council and all system partners to deliver quantifiable gains in health and well being of residents
 - The statutory status of the document means that the new ICS must have regard to it when planning their own strategy
- **Theme agreed with HWBB Chair and HWB/TICP Strategy Group – “Levelling the Playing Field”**
 - Intergenerational health inequalities still persist in Thurrock
 - Opportunities for every resident to reach their full potential are not shared equally
 - There is an unacceptable variation in access, service quality and outcome across health, care and wellbeing services with those with the greatest need often getting the poorest services and outcomes, which is genuinely unfair
 - The strategy will drive collective action across every council department, and through the NHS and through other key system partners to address this unfairness
 - Only by taking a whole systems approach can we hope to “level the playing field” and address this inequality of opportunity. Too often services work in isolation and do not support a shared goal, e.g. the impact housing and community can have on SMI recovery
- **Work with system partners and HWBB Chair to date:**
 - Needs to be high level and strategic
 - Needs to be highly ambitious and set out genuinely new plans rather than just describe what has already been done
 - Needs to provide a clear narrative that drives the work of all aspects of the local authority, NHS and third sector
 - Needs to address resident priorities and be co-designed with residents
 - Needs to be place and locality based and take a strengths and assets approach, not focused only on deficits or services

HWB Strategy Guidance can be found [here](#)

2. Suggested Structure

1. Chair's Foreword
2. Overview / Executive Summary
3. Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Board
4. Impact of Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016-2021 – inc. strategy metrics
5. Health and Wellbeing in Thurrock - Strategic Fit
6. Thurrock's Vision for Community Health and Wellbeing
7. Key Principles
8. Overview of Thurrock the Place
9. Health and Wellbeing in Thurrock – including Impact of Covid
10. Community Priorities for Health and Wellbeing
11. Overview of Domains and Priorities
12. A focus on each domains and priorities including: supporting narrative, key outcomes for each domain, impact on vision and delivery mechanisms
13. Outcomes Framework
14. Making it Happen - Oversight and Monitoring Arrangements

3. Strategic Fit

- To truly Level the Playing Field, the HWBS needs to take a whole system approach, being a key driver not just of Council Directorate and Service Plans, but across the wider Thurrock system and the Mid & South Essex ICS as well
- To have maximum impact, the HWBS needs to align with and draw on the resources and levers in other key strategies for Thurrock, including the Local Plan, and plans shared with neighbouring boroughs such as the Thames Freeport

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In order to support delivery of the Council’s Vision, the 6 Domains of the HWB Strategy each relate to one of the Council’s key priorities of People, Place and Prosperity :



PEOPLE	PEOPLE	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PLACE	PEOPLE
Proposed Domain 1 Quality Care Centred Around the Person	Proposed Domain 2 Staying Healthier for Longer	Proposed Domain 3 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Building Strong and Cohesive Communities	Proposed Domain 4 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Opportunity for All	Proposed Domain 5 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Housing and the Environment	Proposed Domain 6 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Community Safety
“Better Care Thurrock”	“Healthier Thurrock”	“Stronger Together Thurrock”	“A Fairer Thurrock”	“Healthy Places Thurrock”	“Safer Thurrock”

4. Vision - “Levelling the Playing Field”

Thurrock experiences inequalities both as a whole when compared to England averages and also within the borough -

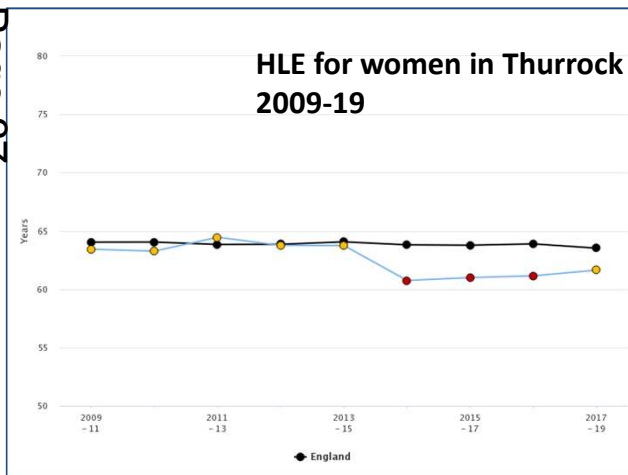
Life Expectancy (LE) in Thurrock compared to England

- LE in Thurrock has fallen **below England average** in the past 10 years
- For women, current LE is **significantly lower** than England average

Healthy Life Expectancy

- HLE for women is **significantly lower than England average**:

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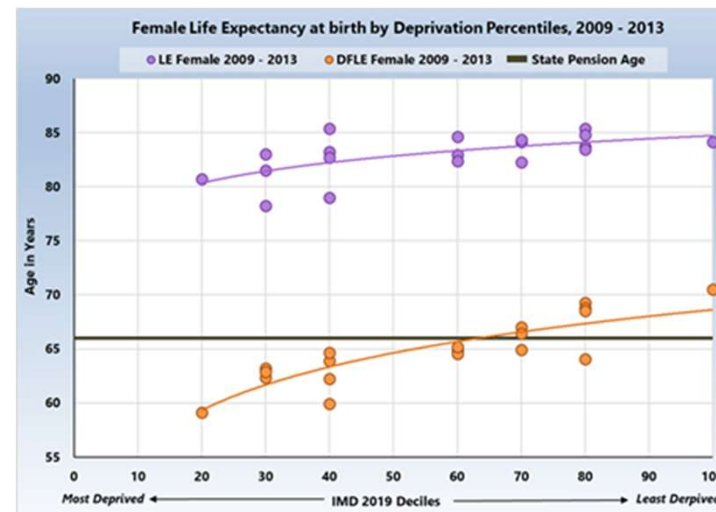
Healthy / Disability-Free Life Expectancy = the average number of years that an individual is expected to live in a state of self-assessed good or very good health ([Health Profile for England, 2017](#))

Life Expectancy within Thurrock

- **10 year LE gap** between most and least affluent communities

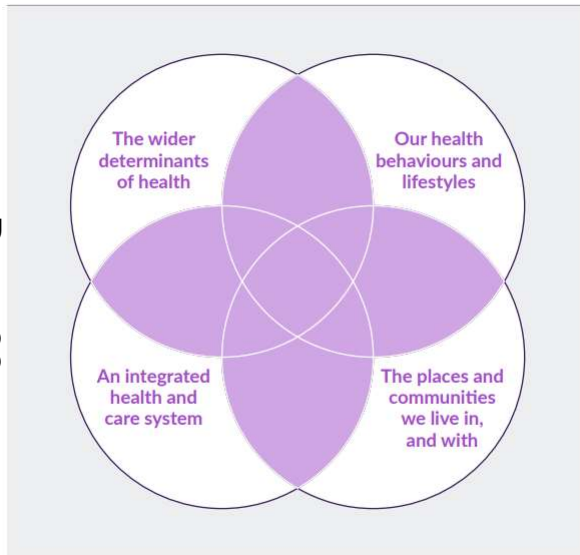
Healthy Life Expectancy

- Women in the most affluent areas of Thurrock experience **8 years more healthy life** than those in the most deprived
- Women in the most deprived areas experience **22 years in poor health**:



4. Vision – How do we Level the Playing Field in Thurrock?

Health & wellbeing status is driven by broad and complex influences –



To Level the Playing Field, Thurrock HWB Strategy needs to take a broad approach and focus on all these areas eg:

National ‘Levelling Up’ agenda opportunities for Thurrock :

- Thames Freeport & Backing Thurrock agenda – secure inclusive growth
- The Towns Fund – creating opportunity in more deprived areas; promoting arts, culture & physical activity
- Skills Fund & Apprenticeships – opportunities for local young people

ASELA Anchor Programme opportunities for Thurrock:

- Infrastructure & Housing – affordable housing, transport & infrastructure
- Technical University – skills development for adults & young people
- South Essex Estuary Park - green & blue spaces, improved air quality

The King’s Fund highlight the following wider health determinants:

- Income
- Housing
- Education
- Best Start in Life
- Spatial planning
- Strong & Resilient Communities
- Access to Green Spaces
- Transport & Active Travel
- Jobs & Work
- Environment

Source: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/vision-population-health>

5. 6 Key Influences on Health & Wellbeing in Thurrock

Engagement with subject matter experts and stakeholders has suggested we can Level the Playing Field in Thurrock through 6 key influences on health and wellbeing, including wider determinants of health, around which the strategy could be structured.

Either an existing group (1 & 3) or a small T&F stakeholder group (2, 4, 5 & 6) will develop the chapter for each of these 6 key influences, facilitated by the Public Health & Adult Social Care team:

Influence on HWB	Council & Partner Leads	Linked Strategies	T&F Group Lead
1. Quality Care Centred Around the Person	Carmel Micheals, Matt Auckburally, Kehinde Adeniji (via Locality Working Prog Board)	Brighter Futures Children & Young People's Strategy Better Care Together Thurrock Adult Place-Based Strategy	Ceri Armstrong
2. Healthier for Longer	Helen Farmer, Stephen Mayo, Preeti Sud, Jane Itangata, Catherine Wilson, Wendy Robertson	Brighter Futures Children & Young People's Strategy Better Care Together Thurrock Adult Place-Based Strategy	Jo Broadbent
3. Building Strong & Cohesive Communities	Kristina Jackson, Kim James, Natalie Smith (via Stronger Together)	Better Care Together Thurrock Adult Place-Based Strategy Collaborative Communities Stronger Together	Maria Payne
4. Opportunity for All	Michele Lucas, Gerard McCleave, Jackie Philips, Neil Woodbridge, Mark Vickers Kristina Jackson	Brighter Futures Children & Young People's Strategy Backing Thurrock ASELA inc Thames Freeport Levelling Up	Beth Capps
5. Housing & the Environment	Ewelina Sorbjan, Gavin Dennett, Michelle Cunningham, Vince Taylor, Jahur Ali, Davis, Irina Davis, Laura Pattison, Sean Nethercott	Housing Strategy Local Plan Transport & Active Travel SEE Park	Bex Willans
6. Community Safety	Michelle Cunningham, Claire Moore, Priscilla Tsang, Paula Ward, Karen Grinney	Community Safety Violence Against Women & Girls Youth Violence & Vulnerability	Sareena Gill

Snapshot of domains of influence on health & wellbeing #1

PEOPLE		PEOPLE	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PLACE	PEOPLE
Proposed Domain 1 Quality Care Centred Around the Person <i>Plus MH service delivery</i>		Proposed Domain 2 Enable people to live healthier for longer	Proposed Domain 3 Wider Determinant of Health Building Strong & Cohesive Communities	Proposed Domain 4 Wider Determinant of Health Opportunity for All	Proposed Domain 5 Wider Determinant of Health Housing & the Environment	Proposed Domain 6 Wider Determinant of Health Community Safety
Proposed priority 1A. Transformation of services to provide integrated, strength based holistic health and care services in communities	Proposed priority 1B. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure residents have access to high quality GPs and Primary Care when they need it Create four Integrated Medical Centres 	Proposed priority 2A. Improve the identification and holistic management of long term conditions, including mental ill health	Proposed priority 3A. Build Strong, well connected communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work within the Collaborative Communities Framework Address digital poverty Volunteering Prevent 	Proposed priority 4A. All Thurrock residents are enabled to achieve their potential (Building on Brighter Futures theme 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children in Thurrock making good educational progress Support young people leaving academies and schools into further education or employment To include library support around literacy, housing advice Adults can access good quality education and training 	Proposed priority 5A. We will support homelessness prevention and rough sleepers	Proposed priority 6A. We will deliver the VAWG Strategy to improve the health and wellbeing of victims of domestic violence.
Proposed priority 1C. Transform our in house care provider service to ensure the people of Thurrock receive the care that they need when they need it	Proposed priority 1D. We will work with MSE Health and Care Partnership to ensure Acute Care services reflect the needs of Thurrock residents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acute hospital services NHS 111 services Ambulance services Patient transport services 	Proposed priority 2B. More cancers will be prevented, identified early and successfully treated.	Proposed priority 3B. All Children and their families experience good emotional health and wellbeing (Brighter Futures theme 4) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen our whole school approach, with a view to ensuring all children are thriving and have access to the support they need 		Proposed priority 5B. Improve housing quality and tenants' health & wellbeing through our Well Homes programme	Proposed priority 6B. Improve response and provision for response to sexual violence
	Proposed priority 1E. Where appropriate we will integrate Health and Social Care commissioning and delivery, managed through the Better Care Fund	Proposed priority 2C. Ensure a robust Health Protection response to infectious diseases and environmental threats to health, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> maximising uptake of immunisations promoting sexual health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and implement solutions which improve access to targeted and specialist interventions. Tackling the social inequalities that put young people at a disadvantage in achieving good mental health and health 	Proposed priority 4B. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More Thurrock residents in employment, Fewer children & adults in poverty The council's single view of debt support We will support the economically vulnerable through the Economic Recovery Plan 		Proposed priority 5C. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will provide a responsive service to residents experiencing crime and anti-social behaviour Consider the needs of vulnerable adults at risk of exploitation through hate crime and fraud

Potential high level objectives identified from preparatory work are included for illustrative purposes and to help define the scope of each domain.

NB Please note that these objectives will change as the T&F Group work progresses.

Key:

Wider Determinants of Health strategies (various)

Brighter Futures Children & Young People's Strategy objective

Better Care Together Thurrock Adult Place-Based Strategy objective

Snapshot of domains of influence on health & wellbeing #2

PEOPLE	PEOPLE	PEOPLE	PROSPERITY	PLACE	PEOPLE
Proposed Domain 1 Quality Care Centre Around the Person	Proposed Domain 2 Support People to Live Healthier for Longer	Proposed Domain 3 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Building Strong & Cohesive Communities	Proposed Domain 4 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Opportunity for All	Proposed Domain 5 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Housing & the Environment	Proposed Domain 6 <i>Wider Determinants of Health</i> Community Safety
	Proposed priority 2D. Primary prevention of chronic diseases through reducing smoking, obesity, lack of physical activity, and substance misuse.	Proposed Priority 3C. Build a trusted partnership conversation between individuals, communities and services	Proposed priority 4D. We will create a vibrant local economy, supporting local businesses, to employ local people, with benefits to all including the through the Thames Freeport	Proposed priority 5D. Improve air quality in Thurrock	Proposed priority 6D. All Children live safely in their communities (Brighter Futures theme 3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackling child exploitation, including work of the Economically Vulnerable Task-Force Develop an understanding of the community impacts of serious youth violence and vulnerability and develop interventions to address challenges Public Health Lead We will tackle gang behaviour and support young people at risk of being exploited by gangs.
Proposed priority 1F. All Children are able to access the services they need and be healthy (Brighter Futures theme 2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will work in partnership to ensure the completion of initial health assessments for children coming into social care Education, Health and Care Plans will be completed within statutory timescales to the quality required We will support children and young people in care and those with SEND during transitional periods in their lives. 	Proposed priority 3D. Reduce Social Isolation and Loneliness		Proposed priority 5E. Create spaces that make it easy to exercise, be active and socialise in a safe environment	Proposed priority 6C. We will disrupt perpetrator activity and support offenders to reduce their reoffending behaviour	
			Proposed priority 5F. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop homes that keep people well and independent Improve energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty and excess cold 		

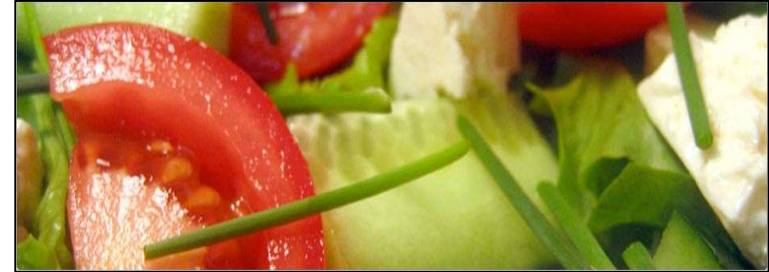
What are we aiming for in the chapter on each Key Influence?

1. Challenges = What's getting in the way of a Level Playing Field?
2. Goals = What do we want to achieve?
3. What will achieving this goal look like? ie high level objectives
4. Why is this important?
5. How will this Level the Playing Field / reduce Inequalities?

Underpinned by –

1. Monitoring Metrics
2. Delivery oversight ie which strategies underpin delivery & which groups have governance / oversight
3. Risks / Barriers / Opportunities – including wider with partners

**2016-21 chapter
example: GOAL 5
Healthier for
longer**



What do we want to achieve?

- **Reduce avoidable ill-health and death**

What will achieving this goal look like?

- A greater proportion of our population will be a healthy weight
- Fewer people in Thurrock will smoke
- The identification and early treatment of long term conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure will be significantly improved
- More cancers will be prevented, identified early and treated better.

Why?

Thousands of us will be ill or die each year from diseases which are preventable. Promoting healthy lifestyle choices is vital. Smoking is still by far the most common cause of preventable ill health and death, and obesity is a growing problem which is particularly acute in Thurrock. These issues affect physical and mental health, they result in shortened lives and poorer quality of life, and they put huge strain on families and health services. Tackling these issues is vital, therefore, if we are to improve health and wellbeing in Thurrock.

To do this, we want to help people make healthy choices. For example, help people maintain a healthy weight we want to make it easy to be active, and have a healthy diet, and provide people with good information on how to live a healthy life.

Cancer is one common reason for ill health and death. Many cancers are avoidable through lifestyle changes but when people do have cancer we want to ensure that it is identified early, through screening programmes, and treated effectively when it does happen.

6. Outcomes Framework

The outcomes framework will include key metrics with 5 year aspirations of improvement, for each of the priorities in the strategy. The 2016-21 framework was structured as below:

Goal	Objective	Indicators	Baseline	Target %by 2020	Source
A. OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL	A1. All children in Thurrock making good educational progress	% of children achieving GLD at the end of year R	72.5%	80%	SFR36. www.gov.uk.
		Gap between above indicator and % of children on pupil premium achieving GLD at end of year R			
		% of all children achieving National Standard or greater depth	85%		
		% of young people gaining the higher grades in attainment and progress across the 8 subjects making up the National Curriculum (Attainment 8 and Progress 8)	70%		
		% of children achieving 5 good GCSEs at A – C including English and Maths			
	A2. More Thurrock residents in employment, education or training.	% of working age population who are economically active	77.7%		NOMIS
		% of the population of working age claiming Employment Support Allowance and incapacity benefits	5.0		NOMIS
		% of population claiming JSA	1.4%		NOMIS
		% of 16 – 19 year olds Not in Employment, Education or Training	5.3%		
	A3. Fewer teenage pregnancies in Thurrock.	Under 18 conception crude rate per 1000	36.1		PHOF indicator 2.04

Strategy Development Process



7. Timeframes

Key Milestones

Activity	Owner	Date
Sign-off of Scope	HWB Board	23 rd July 2021
Final priorities for each domain drafted for consultation	AD Oversight Board / T&F Steering Group / Engagement Group	15 th September 2021
Engagement period	Engagement Group	27 th September – 19 th November 2021
Strategy sign-off by HWB Board	HWB Board	March 2022
Full Council sign-off	DPH / HWB Chair	June 2022
Document launch	Comms / DPH / HWB Chair	July 2022

8. Governance & Monitoring

1. **Review & Sign-off of Strategy Refresh:** HWB Board & Full Council sign-off
2. **Oversight & Direction:** HWB Strategy / TICP Strategy Group, AD Oversight Group, Directors' Board
3. **Process Management:** HWB T&F Steering Group, including 'Domain Leads'* for each of 6 domains, PH Health Intelligence, Strategy team
4. **Engagement Coordination:** Engagement Group including CVS, TCCG, BCTT, Community Engagement team
5. **Ongoing Monitoring of Delivery:** HWB Board

*Each Domain Lead to convene a small T&F stakeholder group for each of 6 key influences on health & wellbeing to:

- a. Agree overall high level outcomes / objectives for each aspect
- b. Identify c.12-15 potential priorities and c.5 key challenges in this area with brief high level summary of each challenge to be used in public engagement
- c. Agree monitoring metrics for inclusion in Outcomes Framework
- d. Identify how the outcomes identified within each of the domains can be supported by topic / domain-specific local strategies & where the governance for delivery for this domain sits
- e. Identify how action on this domain will impact inequalities and the Vision of "Levelling the Playing Field"
- f. Propose final 4-5 key priorities for the strategy, based on insight, data and community feedback
- g. Write the relevant chapter narrative, referencing material already pulled together

9. Stakeholder & Community Engagement

Thurrock Integrated Care Partnership (TICP) is building a new approach to community engagement, co-design and locality based commissioning for health and care. It is proposed that development of this approach is included as a key element of the HWBS objectives, and will be a key strategic approach underpinning future co-produced strategic developments and also commissioning approaches.

As a result of delays due to Covid, the time period for consultation on the HWBS is constrained. The following Stakeholder & Community Engagement will be undertaken between 30th July – 10th September 2021:

Qualitative community input

- Collation of views from previous engagement exercises such as *Your Place, Your Voice; Better Care Together Thurrock*
- Contemporaneous collation of views via CVS Airtable database
- Online Q&A event/s

Consultation on high-level priorities

Key challenges and priorities for each of 6 key aspects of health & wellbeing will be collated by a T&F stakeholder group, and consulted on via:

- Thurrock Council Engagement HQ online
- Existing community & stakeholder group meetings

Questions for ADs -

- What areas of the local service do you feel constitute an “uneven playing field” e.g. we build more general homes than for people with autism.
- What wider areas do we feel could impact our residents and make service provision uneven i.e. other departments/partners fail to understand how to communicate with a certain hard to reach group?
- What do we do to hear about / review potential health inequalities and an investigate level playing field issues in the service e.g. do we know how many women vs men access adult education?

Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh 2021 Communication and Engagement Plan

Introduction

1. This paper considers communication and engagement activity to support the refresh of Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWBS).

Background

2. Health and Wellbeing Boards are partnership boards that include the Council, NHS, Voluntary and Community Sector, and local councillors. The Boards are responsible for improving the health and wellbeing and reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing of their local areas. They do this through the setting health and wellbeing priorities which form part of a Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
3. Thurrock agreed its first HWBS in 2013. The second and current HWBS was launched in July 2016. It is a five year Strategy which focusses on preventing poor health and wellbeing from occurring by addressing the wider determinants of health.
4. The revised strategy for 2021-2026 is being produced, however the pressures of Covid-19 have impacted on the timeline for the strategy refresh. It is intended that the strategy will be finalised by January 2022.

Engagement of system partners and the population of Thurrock

5. Thurrock Integrated Care Partnership (TICP) is considering a new approach to community engagement, co-design and locality based commissioning for health and care. It is proposed that development of this community engagement and co-design approach is included as a key element of the revised HWBS aspirations under Domain 3 of the strategy (Building Strong & Cohesive Communities).
6. In developing Thurrock's refreshed Strategy, it is proposed that potential priorities are tested out with both local citizens and stakeholder groups.

Key Partners

7. The engagement of system partners is essential in helping determine local priorities and how improved outcomes can be achieved through adopting a genuine partnership approach for planning, commissioning and delivery services at the appropriate geographical levels comprising System (Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership); Place (Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group and the Council); and Neighbourhood /Locality levels.

8. System topic experts have engaged informally over the last year and this, alongside JSNAs, Health Needs Assessments and other key policy and research documents, have informed the development of HWBS potential priorities. However, it is vital that system partners and professionals with an interest in the health and wellbeing of the people of Thurrock are provided with an opportunity to formally respond to HWBS refresh consultation exercise.

The public

9. Part of the engagement approach is to ensure Thurrock's citizens have the opportunity to input to priorities for community health and wellbeing improvement as well as helping to identify how health and care services can and should improve.
10. The final refreshed Strategy will reflect and incorporate the range of evidence and information provided through data and comprehensive assessments of specific needs, system experts and the population of Thurrock.

Methods of consultation

11. It is proposed that the consultation exercise comprises opportunities for professionals and the public to inform the refreshed Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities by responding to an online consultation via the Thurrock Council Engagement HQ or providing their views at one of the online engagement opportunities that will be available.
12. The scope and timescale of the up-front engagement exercise has unfortunately been limited by the restrictions caused by Covid-19. However, the development of a Strengths and Assets Based Approach to co-production of initiatives in the strategy, based on the Collaborative Communities Framework, will be a core element of the Strategy itself.
13. Thurrock CVS have a tool for collating qualitative insight from communities called Air Table. This is currently being used by the Community Builders to log records of the themes of the conversations they are having with residents, along with outcomes (e.g. where the feedback was passed onto). The tool can collate these to be passed onto commissioners as required to inform each of the six areas.

Online consultation

14. It is proposed that there will be an online consultation on proposed priorities, supported by two written summaries of key challenges under each of 6 areas of health and wellbeing, one being easy-read. The written summaries will provide headline information about the challenges in Thurrock in each areas of health and wellbeing, and set out potential priorities identified through reviewing evidence and dialogue with system partners. The aim of this will be to help people identify their top priorities for each domain.

15. The approach for Domain 1 - Quality Care Centred around the Person will differ slightly to align with work on the Adult Placed-Based Strategy / Better Care Together.

Online engagement

16. Working in partnership with Thurrock CVS and Healthwatch, existing stakeholder forums and partnership groups will be asked to consider the proposed priorities through. A brief overview video will be recorded, that can be shared at partnership meeting, alongside some targeted questions on proposed priorities, with groups then asked to feed back.
17. This will be supplemented by an online engagement meeting for stakeholders and partners
18. Stakeholders that we intend to engage with as part of the Strategy refresh are provided at Appendix C.

Elected Member and Council Committee Oversight

19. Both TICP and the Health and Wellbeing Board will keep an overview of the strategy development process. To secure engagement across the Council's Directorates, an Oversight Board of ADs for PH, Skills, Economic Development, Place, Children's, Housing & Adults will be set up, chaired by Cllr James Halden as HWB Board Chair.
20. Review of the draft HWBS will be undertaken by:
- Directors' Board
 - Council DMTs
 - Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Cabinet
 - Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 4th November 2021
 - Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1st December 2021
 - Community Safety Partnership
 - Full Council

Timeline

21. Communication and engagement activity will be taking place from July to September 2021. The Air Table insight plus the outputs from the various strands of engagement will be drawn together into a single view of Community priorities for health and wellbeing to inform the HWB strategy by end of September.

Engagement Summary Timeline

Activity	Owner	Date
Sign-off of Scope	HWB Board	23rd July 2021
Final priorities for each domain drafted for consultation	AD Oversight Board / T&F Steering Group / Engagement Group	15th September 2021
Engagement period	Engagement Group	27th September – 19th November 2021
Strategy sign-off by HWB Board	HWB Board	March 2022
Full Council sign-off	DPH / HWB Chair	June 2022
Document launch	Comms / DPH / HWB Chair	July 2022

21 September 2021		ITEM: 8
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Homelessness Update – Everyone In		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: None	
Report of: Ben Tovey – Strategic Lead – Housing Solutions		
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan – Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an update regarding the impact of COVID-19 “Everyone In” initiative on the Housing department, primarily with regards to the Housing Solutions service.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1. **Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note and comment on the contents of this update report.**

2. Housing Solutions response to ‘Everyone In’.

2.1. Following Government guidance on 26 March 2020 to bring ‘everyone in’ until June of 2021 when this programme ended, Thurrock’s Housing Solutions team provided emergency accommodation to 78 people and housed a further five directly into long term accommodation from the streets.

2.2. Half of those that presented were identified in the first three months after lockdown March – May 2020, which quickly saturated our own temporary accommodation and it was necessary to requisition all the units at Stifford Clays B&B in addition to finding individual private lets. Voluntary organisations worked alongside the Council staff and our commissioned support providers throughout this period, providing logistical support in getting food packages and equipment out to the most vulnerable, providing intelligence about potential rough sleepers and checking in on those we’d accommodated, highlighting potential risks.

2.3. Given the anxiety generated by the pandemic and the additional trauma of being roofless during this period, we made an early decision that every person brought in would be assessed by our Approved Mental Health Social Worker

to contribute to our understanding of individuals care needs. Tailored offers of support were provided to all with an aim to ensure that no-one accommodated returns to the street and that everyone got at least one offer of settled accommodation. We saw this as an opportunity for people to make positive transitions into independent living. We created new positions to focus on training & employment, on becoming tenancy ready and in sustaining the tenancies we assisted them to achieve.

- 2.4. Identifying move on accommodation at that scale has been a massive challenge and the desire to see as many as possible remain close to familial and/or professional support networks meant making our landlord incentives available to all and increasing the size of those incentives. Those eligible were able to access our choice based lettings and we made direct offers in to council stock for those eligible but unable to bid. Where very high support needs were identified, we managed to secure supported accommodation (MIND) in two cases.
- 2.5. At the time of writing, we have achieved a total of 54 successful moves into longer-term secure housing. All of those moves have included a support package with particular focus on building resilience and financial independence. In the vast majority of cases, we were able to achieve self-contained accommodation with Housing Benefit being supplemented for those under 35. This involved strategic meetings with the DWP and accessing discretionary housing payments to bridge gaps in affordability. We have worked hard to be responsive to needs beyond any legal requirements and this has involved making multiple offers in the majority of cases. Seven individuals remain in TA, three of whom we have accepted a duty to house and registered on our choice based lettings system and we've committed to making private sector offers to the remaining four.
- 2.6. Where clients had no recourse to public funds and no immediate capacity for paid employment, we involved relevant government departments and Adult Social Care colleagues. Via these channels, two further people sustained their temporary accommodation with Red Cross taking responsibility for one individual and Adult Social Care another.
- 2.7. This cohort presented a myriad of challenges with over half being diagnosed with a mental health condition or having issues relating to substance misuse. We maintained a face-to-face service throughout and the work of our Approved Mental Health Social Worker helped manage risks and almost certainly saved lives. Not all the clients achieved successful outcomes with five returning to prison, five leaving the accommodation voluntarily (without notifying us or providing onward contact details), and a further ten being evicted from their TA: (five for declining suitable offers, four for not living in the TA provided, and one for violence toward another household member). None of the 54 housed long term have seen their tenancy break down.
- 2.8. Our Rough Sleeper Coordinator made an outreach video during winter to help share the word about our work. Faith groups assisted in production and provided equipment. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B3MV0aBnD4c>

- 2.9. We engaged with DWP officials and where other boroughs had ended up covering money themselves, perhaps via DHP (which quickly ran out) we managed to secure exceptional Universal Credit payments. We had great success in turning around rent arrears for clients threatened with homelessness in amounts regularly running to thousands of pounds.
- 2.10. We worked collaboratively with Rough Sleeper Coordinators across Essex to help elevate our work and act on issues as they were happening, sharing crucial insights and knowledge.
- 2.11. Our team is reflective of the diverse community we serve and their ability to speak to clients in their first language has proved valuable. (Romanian, Farsi and Bangladeshi particularly so).
- 2.12. One of the most common causes of homelessness in Thurrock is as a result of landlords imposing eviction measures in the private rental sector. With the national moratorium on eviction proceedings expiring and court proceedings recommencing, there is concern that this will lead to an increase in the number of households presenting as homeless. As the wider economic impacts of the pandemic are felt, such as at the conclusion of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme in September 2021, there may be an increase in pressure on the Housing Solutions service.

3. Housing outcomes

Outcome	Total
Housed Directly to Assured Shorthold Tenancy	5
Placed in TA and then housed in Long Term Tenancy	49
Placed in TA and subsequently evicted	10
Placed in TA and then returned to prison	5
Placed in TA and left with no forward details	5
Placed in TA and remain in TA	7
Placed in TA with responsibility passed to another agency	2
TOTAL	83

4. Next steps on *Everyone In*

- 4.1. Seven people remain in TA and all will be offered a suitable move on property before duty is discharged with support provided to sustain the tenancy.
- 4.2. This was a hugely successful programme working with a very challenging client group. The success of the programme saw some people approaching who didn't really have a strong connection to Thurrock but who were genuinely roofless and in need of help. The volume of applications was far higher than our rough sleeper counts and Street Link reports would suggest. We saw a lot of people who have insecure accommodation such as sofa surfing suddenly asked to leave as social distancing was introduced. This partly explained why some disappeared as restrictions eased and they were able to return to previous arrangements and it's an indication of how much 'hidden homelessness' exists within Thurrock and surrounding areas.

- 4.3. The difficulty and risks involved in working with such an influx of vulnerable adults demonstrated the importance of collaborative working. Completing a mental health assessment of everyone who entered the programme, ensuring weekly check in's and careful planning on who could share accommodation helped us mitigate the risks involved. Colleagues from probation services, health and social care settings and the brilliant Local Area Coordination (LAC) service were all crucial in trying to engage the most chaotic presentations. With the doors to the Civic centre closed, intelligence and support provided by the voluntary sector demonstrated the importance of joined up working in identifying and engaging the hardest to reach.
- 4.4. Even with all this support, the many specialist posts funded by MHCLG, the supplemented LHA rates and DHP claims, the funding from our Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) and Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) programmes, we still spent an additional £776k and contributed to a monthly private rented sector bill, for nightly purchase accommodation, approaching £100k. We saturated the local market for one bedroomed properties and found neighbouring areas constantly outbidding us for properties in their desperation to find accommodation. In these circumstances it was necessary to place people outside of borough with an ambition to return them when awarding the 'move on' accommodation.
- 4.5. This competitive market has made it harder to find properties within LHA rates and seen landlord expectations around incentives increase exponentially. It also encourages landlords to target the nightly purchase market rather than offering properties on assured short hold tenancies. We have negotiated with some large private providers that properties are awarded as nightly purchase for three months and then convert to an AST (within LHA rates) at the end of that period which creates more stability for those placed and less logistical support required from our team in achieving a move on.
- 4.6. Going forward we will aim to make a suitable offer of accommodation to anyone who finds themselves roofless regardless of their ability to demonstrate they meet 'Priority Need' status. We've seen what can be achieved with the right amount of support but we've also seen the scale of the challenge and its impact on our resources. We will continue to encourage those with well-established community links to seek assistance within their own areas.
- 4.7. To achieve our goals we need to transform the provision of temporary accommodation, increasing the supply of council-owned TA. We have recently had business case approved which proposes using 'Right to Buy' receipts, combined with HRA prudential borrowing, to purchase properties in line with need. This will allow more individuals and families, who we believe to be homeless, to remain within Thurrock while we make further inquiries and help us to manage our costs. In relation to those we find sleeping rough who are unlikely to meet 'Priority Need' we have traditionally relied on places within our hostels, but these also quickly become saturated with suitable move on accommodation an issue. We have submitted a bid to the Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme (RSAP) administered by 'Homes England' with a

view to providing 20 self-contained units of accommodation specifically for this client group. We'll continue to innovate, to work collaboratively and remain ambitious in our outlook.

5. 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):

- None

6. Implications

6.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
**Strategic Lead - Corporate Finance –
Resources and Place Delivery**

The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a significant increase in the costs of the delivery of Housing services. Where relevant, namely in relation to financial demands relating to homelessness and rough sleeping, additional costs are being recorded against and funded through the central government grant allocations.

As detailed in para 4.7, a more cost effective, long term solution has been formulated to in order to use more of Council owned dwelling to offer accommodation solutions, and address the increasing cost pressures

Any continued increase in the number of existing tenants claiming Universal Credit poses a significant financial risk to the stability of the Housing Revenue Account.

6.2. Legal

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

As an update report on action taken, there are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

6.3. Diversity and Equality

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

The Everyone In programme is designed to work and support people that are vulnerable and are either experiencing or at risk of homelessness. During the course of the pandemic, each person accessing the service was assessed by an Approved Mental Health Social Worker revealing that almost half (40 of 83) were experiencing mental health issues. Services have been tailored in accordance with individual needs with information on housing outcomes for individuals detailed in the body of this update report.

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

Not applicable

7. **Appendices to the report**

- None

Report Author:

Ben Tovey

Strategic Lead – Housing Solutions

Housing Solutions

21 September 2021		ITEM: 9
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Property Audits (aka Tenancy Audits)		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Peter Doherty - Strategic Lead – Housing Operations		
Accountable Assistant Director: Ewelina Sorbjan – Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report is being presented to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explain the purpose of the tenancy audit programme, provide an update on the positive action that has taken place with the programme over the past two years, and to highlight how the programme has been adapted to integrate Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans. This document provides an overview of the progress made and the plans to further develop this proactive engagement with our residents.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1. **The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee are invited to comment on the Council’s approach to property audits carried out by the Tenancy Management Team within general needs housing.**

2. Introduction and background

- 2.1. Tenancy audits were introduced some years ago to focus on combatting tenancy fraud and illegal subletting. When the programme was started, the focus was very much on enforcement and the gathering of information for the Fraud Team. However, over the last two years the audits have taken on a more tenant supportive focus.

The programme has always had a property inspection focus.

A tenancy audit involves a home visit by a Tenancy Management Officer (TMO) to check that a tenant’s household records are up to date on our system. The officer will also check the condition of the property for example, for damp and mould and provide the tenant(s) the opportunity to discuss any

issues about their home, tenancy or neighbourhood, during what is a relaxed and friendly face to face visit.

The Tenancy Management Team aims to audit around 33%, approximately 2,700, of our properties each year, so residents can expect to have a tenancy audit approximately every three years. However, where circumstances change and there is a need, one may be carried out inside this time frame.

- 2.2. During the pandemic, the welfare of our vulnerable residents was a high priority for us. The team assisted Adult Social Care in contacting vulnerable residents, checking on their health and well-being and working with various partners to ensure appropriate support was provided in a timely and effective way.
- 2.3. The Tenancy Management Team was also keen to continue contacting residents who were due a tenancy audit. Although the face to face visits could not take place during the lockdown, contact was made via telephone to check the well-being of our residents who we had not had contact with for some time.
- 2.4. The scope of the audits has been further extended over the past three months to include Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP) in high-rise residential buildings – a recommendation originating from the Grenfell Inquiry.
- 2.5. The Tenancy Management Team is now contacting tenants living on the first floor and above in both our 15 high and 662 low rise blocks to discuss fire safety with them and to develop a PEEP for tenants and household members who are unable to self-evacuate in the event of a fire. This is a high priority for the team in ensuring resident safety and providing up to date fire safety information.

3. Progress made

- 3.1. Welfare calls to support vulnerable tenants during Covid.

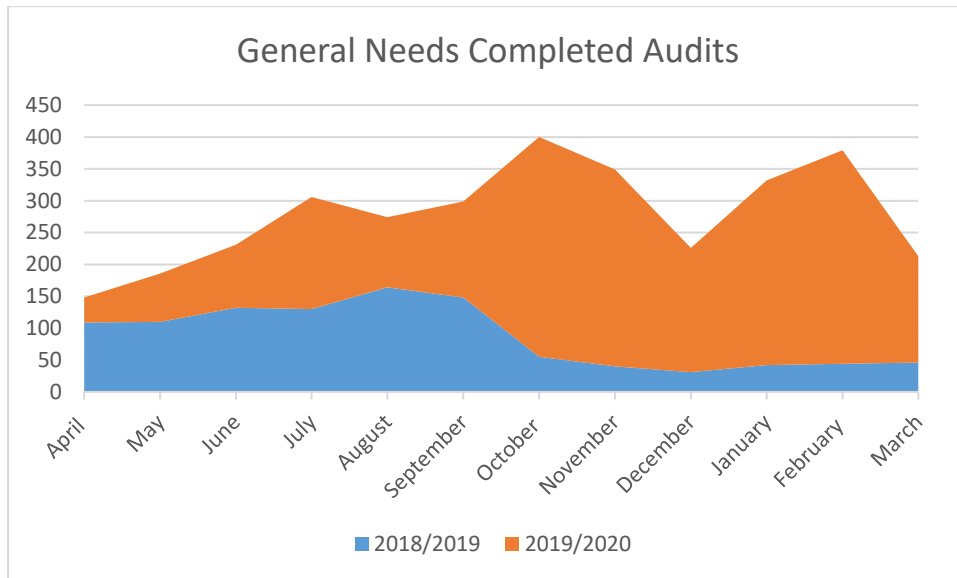
When we entered lockdown we had 2,113 vulnerable tenants recorded on our housing management system. At the time, we felt it important to contact this cohort first to check they were safe and that they were receiving appropriate levels of support. With the help of the Rents and Welfare and Neighbourhood and Resident Engagement Teams all 2,113 tenants were contacted.

This exercise has significantly improved the relationship we have with our vulnerable residents which is something the Tenancy Management Team had planned to concentrate on during the year. The welfare calls made a big difference to vulnerable residents living in our general needs properties and our staff received many compliments from those they contacted. This work filtered into the borough-wide work which was headed by the Adult Social Care team aimed at maintaining contact with the most vulnerable residents in the borough.

3.2. Tenancy Audit project

During the past year, from March 2020, and whilst undertaking the welfare calls, the tenancy audits continued albeit by telephone, due to face to face visits being suspended, with officers concentrating on contacting residents they had not been in contact with over the previous three years.

The following graph shows the progress in the number of tenancy audits completed in the two years prior to the Covid Pandemic:



During 2020 – 2021, in addition to the welfare calls we made to vulnerable residents, partial audits were also completed for tenants. These audits were completed over the telephone, the plan was for the audits to be completed once the property visits resumed. At the beginning of the reporting year 2020 – 2021 3,846 tenants had not had an audit within the previous three years. During the year 3,106 partial audits were completed or 81% of those outstanding at the beginning of the year. The remaining 19% have subsequently been followed up to further reduce these outstanding numbers.

Now that the restrictions have been lifted we have resumed face to face visits from July 2021 to ensure that the property inspection is completed.

4. Tenancy audit outcomes

4.1. Tenancy matters

The property visits are particularly important because they have enabled us to identify issues such as safeguarding, hoarding, abuse, cuckooing, changing support requirements and the suitability of accommodation. Each TMO has a target of completing 20 audits a month, or 4,320 each year over the 18 officers, subject to a full complement of staff. Officers have been reminded

that any visit or contact with a resident can be an opportunity to complete a tenancy audit.

Appendix 1 shares some good news stories following audit procedure.

4.2. Property matters

During the property audit visits, the Tenancy Management Officer looks around the property to check that the property is being utilised appropriately and is in a general good state of repair. Where there are concerns regarding the property condition, referrals to the relevant property services are made to ensure there is follow up to these matters. A number of cases have been highlighted where unauthorised alterations have been made, in some instances they have compromised the safety of the property. Each of these cases have been followed up appropriately to ensure the property is restored to a safe standard.

Other examples of referrals would be damp and mould concerns, poor state of repair and fire safety concerns including hoarding and overuse of plug sockets within the property. The team work with a variety of partners including our contractors and property surveyors to resolve property concerns collaboratively and link in with various support services to ensure residents are supported in the best way, for example mental health services and the Local Area Co-ordinators.

- 4.3. There is still much work to do in this area, however this is an excellent start and in time will improve the landlord/ tenant relationship. A number of hoarding cases, unauthorised property alterations and incorrect resident details have been uncovered through audits and such issues will reduce over time as we start to visit properties more regularly and provide a more proactive service.

5. **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans**

- 5.1. A PEEP is a plan for a person who may need assistance for instance, a person with impaired mobility, to evacuate a building or reach a place of safety in the event of an emergency.
- 5.2. The visits to discuss Fire Safety within the high rise blocks are taking place in a phased approach. The team started by contacting those classed as vulnerable. This work has almost concluded and contact is now being made with the remaining residents within the high rise blocks.
- 5.3. Once households in the 15 high rise blocks have been contacted, the service will then move onto the low rise blocks within the borough.

6. **Stock condition surveys – interrelationships with tenancy audits**

- 6.1. Whilst tenancy audits do look at the general condition of the home, they are primarily focussed on people living in the property and their immediate surroundings.
- 6.2. In addition to tenancy audits, full stock condition surveys are undertaken of 30% of the housing stock every three to four years. These are managed by the Housing Asset Management Team. The properties surveyed as part of these programmes are a representative sample ensuring a balanced mix of the asset types, including flats, houses and maisonettes taking into account the standardised construction of many building types. These are technical surveys which look at the condition of the buildings, both internal and external elements and communal areas. They also provide an overall energy assessment of the properties.
- 6.3. In 2017/18, a total of 3,223 stock condition surveys were undertaken. The next round of stock conditions surveys is currently being procured and will be undertaken in the period January to March 2022 again ensuring a balanced mix of asset types.

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

- 7.1. The impact related to the property audits and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans is positive and provides proactive support to the residents living in council owned social housing.

8. Implications

8.1. Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
**Strategic Lead - Corporate Finance –
Resources and Place Delivery**

There are no direct financial implications flowing from the report and any costs associated with the works will be contained with the existing budget.

8.2. 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.

8.3. Diversity and Equality

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

Through the course of the pandemic, the tenancy audit programme was extended to incorporate welfare calls to 2,113 vulnerable residents to ensure that appropriate levels of support were provided. Information on the impact this had on the wellbeing of residents was reported to the service at the time and since with case studies shared. To ensure that recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry are met, the tenancy audit programme has extended in recent years to incorporate Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans ensuring that, in an emergency, residents are safeguarded if they require assistance to evacuate a building or reach a place of safety. Tenancy audits enable the Housing Service to continuously update knowledge about the diverse needs of our residents and tailor services accordingly.

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

Not applicable

9. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 – case studies

Report Author:

Peter Doherty
Strategic Lead – Housing Operations
Housing

Appendix 1

Examples of outcomes following the audit processes:

1. Our Housing Neighbourhood Officer, Sophie, has been calling our vulnerable tenants to check they do not require additional support during the current pandemic. She was unable to reach a particular tenant and flagged this with the Tenancy Management Officer, Sharon, who became concerned as she has a good rapport with this resident and knows she does not leave home very often. Worried about the tenants' well-being, Sharon contacted her daughter, she had their details following an audit carried out the year before. It came to light that the tenant was staying with her daughter who could support her through these difficult times. Sharon spoke with the tenant who verified this information and was very appreciative of the call. Local intelligence is key to ensuring our residents safety.
2. Tenancy Management Officer, Julie, was worried about one of her tenants who is deaf and living on his own. Julie was concerned about him getting the right level of support during the pandemic, as he is currently unable to meet with his usual support network, therefore she has been texting him daily. This communication has been key in providing support and reassurance as the tenant has been worried when watching the news, the text conversations have been greatly appreciated.
3. Following a concern that was raised to the attention of the Tenancy Management Service, the Tenancy Management Officer completed a property audit. The purpose of these visits is to ensure that residents are being well supported in their homes to maintain their tenancies effectively. Whilst the main focus is on the residents, their well-being and possible support needs, we also look at pets being kept.

It was noted the resident had a very small, baby marmoset monkey in a cage. Seeing how distressed the baby monkey appeared and worried for its welfare, the Tenancy Management Officer raised her concerns with the RSPCA. They attended and agreed that it was in the best interest of the animal for it to be moved due to its essential needs.

He was removed the same day and taken to Monkey World where he was introduced to adoptive parents. In an emotional scene, the baby marmoset (now named Tik Tok) cried out to the adult female 'Clydie' and jumped onto her back. Clydie instantly adopted him as her own carrying, grooming and protecting him. He is now being doted on by both adopted parents, showing the innate need for parental care by both of his adoptive parents.

Tik Tok's case perfectly highlights why primates should not be available to the public and why they do not belong in people's homes. Residents who would like to keep a pet in a council property, need to seek permission to ensure the property is assessed for suitability.

4. Tenancy Management Officer, Nikki, was made aware of an issue with a resident living in unsanitary conditions following an emergency at his council property. The resident is 54 years old, and suffered many issues including anxiety and depression. When speaking with the resident it was clear he was struggling with his day to day living, he had lost his way and needed some extra support. The case was presented to Housing Manage Move Panel where it was agreed the resident would benefit from being offered Sheltered Accommodation to enable him link in with the services they provide and have the onsite support which he requires.

The resident has been supported by TMO & Local Area Co-ordinator, Helen, who kindly helped him get furniture, bedding and kitchen utensils. They also supported with changing energy providers and benefit support. He is now living happily in his new Sheltered Housing Accommodation, enjoying the peace and quiet and settled in with to his new home, with the support of his Sheltered Housing Officer, Tracey

5. Tenancy Management Officer, Eamond, and Financial Inclusion Officer, Tracy, have received a fantastic compliment from a very grateful resident following the intervention and support which was offered following a Tenancy Audit:

"I received a letter about the tenancy audit and whilst talking to Eamond, he asked me about my health & how it makes things difficult because of my disabilities he said that I could be helped with to maintain the garden & put on a list for decorating. We also spoke about my tenancy, it was a joint tenancy but my husband left in 2008"

The lady went on to explain that she was facing substantial financial difficulty and found attending the foodbank degrading. Eamond went on to pass the tenants details onto Tracy who listened to the tenant and helped her to ensure she was supported in the best way possible. The tenant was extremely grateful that Tracy took the time to speak with her and felt that she really understood her problems;

"I would like to say thank you to both of them, it has helped my family so much and it's so important to give children quality of life and not just existing. There has been a lot pressure taken off my family, it's not just adults that worry about money children worry, which is completely unfair as the children and myself were still being punished 12 years later for someone they don't even know due to him leaving in 2008. Myself and my children would like to say thank you for the help you gave my family"

**Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme 2021/22**

Dates of Meetings: 22 June 2021, 21 September 2021, 9 November 2021, 11 January 2022 and 2 March 2022

Topic	Lead Officer	Requested by Officer/Member
22 June 2021		
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties	Tracy John	Members
Housing Delivery Approach	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Officers
Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item
21 September 2021		
Housing Strategy 2022-27 - Engagement Programme	Ewelina Sorbjan	Officers
Portfolio Holder for Housing	Cllr L Spillman	Members
Health and Wellbeing Strategy Refresh	Jo Broadbent	Officers
Homelessness Update – Everyone In	Ben Tovey	Chair
Property Audits (aka Tenancy Audits)	Ewelina Sorbjan	Chair
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

9 November 2021

Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Members
Fees and Charges – TBC	Kelly McMillan	Officers
Damp and Mould in Council Housing Properties Update	Sue Murray	Chair
Garages Update		Members
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

11 January 2022

Housing Development Programme Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Members
Rent Setting	Pete Doherty	Chair
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

2 March 2022

Housing Development Update	Keith Andrews/Colin Black	Officers
Work Programme	Democratic Services	Standing item

TBC

Private Sector Stock Condition Survey	Ewelina Sorbjan	Officers
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