

30 January 2019

ITEM: 14

Council

Report of the Cabinet Member for Regeneration

Report of: Councillor Mark Coxshall, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

This report is public

1. Introduction and Overview

I am delighted to present my portfolio holder report which summarises the considerable work carried out over the last 12 months. Of greatest profile and significance has been the progress with Issues and Options (Stage 2) and the Council's response to the Lower Thames Crossing. Both are critical to the future of our Borough. Significant progress has also been made in our asset management and release programmes, delivering on my corporate commitment to dispose of assets we no longer require. We have also made real progress in reviewing our leases, generating income for the Council.

The Development Management service continues to go from strength to strength, performing at the highest levels nationally. It is currently managing three major planning applications over the next few months which will potentially deliver approximately 5,000 homes and 5,000 jobs.

One of those is the regeneration of Purfleet, where I am pleased that agreement has been reached with the Environment Agency regarding their objection relating to the potential new Thames Barrier. Thurrock Council also continues to lead major business support programmes across the South East details of which are set out this report.

2. Local Plan

- 2.1 Work on preparing a new Local Plan for Thurrock has continued over the last year, commencing with a series of well attended 'Your Place, Your Voice' engagement events, which provided a depth of information that will assist greatly in the Plan's preparation. An important milestone was reached on 11th December when the Council agreed the Thurrock Local Plan Issues and Options (Stage 2) Consultation Document. Public consultation will run for 12 weeks from 12 December 2018 to 8 March 2019 with a further seven Your Place, Your Voice events
- 2.2 Following the conclusion of this process a Report of Consultation will be prepared. The responses and feedback received will be used to inform the preparation of a Draft Local Plan. The Local Plan is clearly a key strategic

document and I am delighted to be able to report this positive progress towards getting a community-driven, infrastructure led Plan adopted at the earliest possible opportunity.

3. Lower Thames Crossing

- 3.1 I have made my views on the Lower Thames Crossing very clear. As it is currently configured there is no possibility of me supporting it.

On 10 October 2018, Highways England commenced the statutory consultation on its proposed application for the Lower Thames Crossing. Since announcements made by Highways England last year, there have been a number of proposed changes to the scheme. Those changes include the inclusion of a motorway rest area adjacent to East Tilbury, the removal of the Tilbury Link Road, changes to the accessibility to LTC at its junction with the A13 and three lanes north of the A13 junction. None of these changes appear to deliver any benefit for Thurrock or its residents.

- 3.2 The consultation ran for 10 weeks closing on 20 December 2018 and the Council held an extraordinary Council meeting on 11th December 2018 to agree its response to the current proposal. The Council's position in relation to the scheme can be summarised as follows:

- The Consultation Scheme does not meet several of the national and HE's strategic policy tests and scheme objectives, particularly relating to option testing, the delivery of economic growth and achieving sustainable local growth;
- The Consultation Scheme does not make provision for, and is inconsistent with, the housing and development potential for Thurrock and the aspirations for the Borough and for the wider South Essex area as set out in the emerging Local Plan;
- There are specific design elements of the Consultation Scheme which require modification and/or further consideration by HE in order to contribute to meeting the Government's and LTC's policy and scheme objectives

- 3.3 Highways England currently plans to submit its application for a development consent order in autumn 2019. In the coming months, officers will have to engage with Highways England to influence the changes Members would like to see in order to get the best possible outcome for Thurrock and its residents. Time is of the essence with regards to the work to be done, not least because of the constrained programme Highways England. We as Members will continue to support our Officers in regard to this work.

- 3.4 Key to this will be the ongoing work and contribution of the Task Force which will continue to provide valuable input into the process. The Task Force meetings will continue to focus on the mitigation schedule and ensuring that the benefits are maximised and the impacts minimised. It will, I hope, also

guide the work of the Council and our partners up to and through the DCO process.

4. Strategic Planning and Joint Strategic Plan

- 4.1 The Council continues to play a leading role in responding to the emerging London Plan both on behalf of the South Essex authorities and the East of England. The Strategic Planning team is also responsible for making representations on the Local Plans being prepared by neighbouring local authorities and in response to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects being proposed in adjoining Boroughs. In 2018 this included the submission of representations on the Basildon, Brentwood and Castle Point Local Plans.
- 4.2 In July 2018 the Association of South Essex Local Authorities (ASLEA) signed a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) which includes the intention to prepare a Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) to guide the future development of South Essex. Thurrock is the lead authority for the preparation of the Joint Strategic Plan which will set out a wider vision and spatial strategy for the development of South Essex including a range of high level strategic policies over the period to 2038.
- 4.3 Work is ongoing on developing the evidence base which will underpin the JSP and it is intended to produce a first consultation document in the summer of 2019.

5. Development Management

- 5.1 The Development Management (DM) service at Thurrock is not an ordinary local authority team. I am extremely proud that throughout 2017/18, the team maintained their position as one of the fastest, most accessible and proactive planning services in the country and is currently ranked joint 1st in MHCLG national tables. The performance and approach of the Local Planning Authority continues to be one of the primary factors that developers take into account when deciding whether to invest in a particular location. Indeed, significant investment can either be attracted or deterred by these factors. Sustaining a position so highly in the national tables places Thurrock in an extremely good position to attract investment from outside of the Borough whilst also providing homeowners and existing business within the Borough with confidence.
- 5.2 The Team has developed strong relationships with the development industry, championed forward thinking and commercial awareness, and created a culture which helps drive investment and growth in the Borough, with its contribution worth over £113 million to Thurrock's economy. This has significantly boosted investor confidence and stability in commercial decisions in an area where there are major challenges around the viability of development. It has resulted in an overall uplift in 'place value' through improvements to design and quality delivered through effective developer partnerships, maximising the contributions made from new development.

- 5.3 During 2017/18, the DM team continued its Managed Service arrangement with Brentwood Borough Council, whereby the Service provides management support to Brentwood's Development Management team. The relationship has continued to be successful, resulting in an improved service at Brentwood (both in terms of quality and performance) and by providing an income stream for Thurrock which protects jobs and services locally.
- 5.4 Its holistic approach to service delivery sees staff development and training, innovative work practices and a continual drive to improve efficiencies and customer satisfaction, all part of the successful model.

6. Corporate Property

- 6.1 The Corporate Property team manages the Council's significant non-housing land and property portfolio. My priorities for the team are to optimise value from our interests and support the Council's broader objectives. The team works closely with the facilities management provider and will continue taking on a corporate landlord role in respect of the Council's assets and property related activities.
- 6.2 The Corporate Property Team also includes valuation, acquisition and disposal of land and property for a variety of purposes, energy and efficiency monitoring and surveying services for operational and non-operational properties (excluding residential and housing stock).
- 6.3 The EELGA health check of the team in 2017 identified some strengths and weaknesses in the service and there is a recognition that there is a core of knowledgeable, dedicated staff, an appetite for improvement and a move towards a corporate landlord model of operation. Most importantly the 'health check' identified that the role of the corporate property service may also be changing – from being a purely technical function to one which has a more strategic perspective so that they can optimise the portfolio to meet our regeneration and growth objectives and generate income to support Council services.
- ### **6.4 Disposal Programme**
- 6.4.1 The disposal of Council properties which are no longer required is an important part of our drive to improve estate management and create an efficient, fit-for-purpose and sustainable estate that meets future needs and generate value that that can be ploughed back into front-line services.
- 6.4.2 The Corporate Property Team has been and are actively involved in the Council's disposal programme. A thorough review of the Council's assets under the 3Rs Programme – Retain, Reuse, Release was undertaken at the beginning of the year. This programme challenged the rationale for holding the asset resulting in the classification of assets as either:

- Released (for example to dispose of immediately or develop for housing)
- Re-used (for example for different services or more intensive or changed use)
- Retained (business as usual, little need or opportunity for change identified)

6.4.3 Numerous sites were identified for release, and the Corporate Property Team has been reviewing these to determine whether they can be redeveloped for another use. Any opportunities arising from the 3R's programme will continue to be promoted, analysed and considered for formal declaration of "surplus to requirements" through a designated consultation process which is managed through the Council's Property Board.

6.5 **Asset Management Strategy**

6.5.1 An Asset Management Strategy is in preparation with the intention that it sets a broad direction for asset management over the medium term enabling the Council's property portfolio and associated professional support to be optimised to meet identified needs. It is anticipated that a final completed strategy will be completed and in place in the 2019/20 financial year.

6.6 **Asset Valuations**

6.6.1 The Corporate Property Team undertakes these valuations in-house annually. Undertaking capital asset valuations for land and property is crucial for the Council's balance sheet. The process of undertaking capital asset valuations for land and buildings requires the interpretation of the various regulations and standards to ensure compliance. The team has recently met with the new external auditor and will continue with regular meetings and interactions.

6.6.2 To date external auditors have been confident that the team are compliant in the approach and methodology adopted by the Council and is in accordance with the RICS 'Red Book' and the Code of Practice on Local Authority accounting.

6.6.3 The council's residential housing stock is reassessed annually at the end of the financial year, to capture any movement in property values borough-wide; the current valuation of the housing stock stands at £1.94 billion.

6.7 **Village Hall Review**

6.7.1 The Council has over 30 village halls located throughout the borough. These are managed by trustees or organisations and in some instances are no longer used for general community purposes and have been sublet.

6.7.2 A review of the village halls has commenced and the team is working with trustees and occupiers in order to modernise leases and make responsibilities clearer. The Council will retain management of some halls that will reflect population concentration, areas of deprivation, community identity and

demand, but with an expectation of Borough wide coverage to fulfil general community needs. It will be considered whether the transfer of assets to 'community ownership' is a viable one ensuring the safeguarding of long-term viability of services and buildings.

6.8 Housing Acquisition Programme

6.8.1 The Corporate Property Team is assisting with the acquisition of residential dwellings within the Borough to assist with the demand for housing and homelessness targets. This programme commenced in November this year.

6.8.2 A lease renewal under the Landlord & Tenant Act 1954 often provides a good opportunity for both landlord and tenant to modernise the terms of a lease.

6.9 Essex County Council Land Transfer

6.9.1 The Corporate Property Team continues to work with Land Registry and property colleagues within ECC for the transfer and collation of property interests that should have transferred to the Council under the statutory instrument for the unitary status of the authority in 1998. During this financial year, the team has identified properties that have not yet transferred to the Council. It is envisaged that all assets and associated documentation where available will be captured by the end of the financial year 2018/19.

6.10 Asset Management System

6.10.1 The East of England Local Government Association Health Check highlighted the lack of an electronic Asset Management Database system which is essential for the efficient management of assets. Following a rigorous procurement exercise the Concerto system was chosen and is now being installed. This is a major project for the team as it entails converting and cleansing data which has been accumulated in various forms (paper as well as electronic) over a number of years into a format that can be used by the system. Overall, the project is expected to be complete late in 2019.

6.10.2 Despite being a resource intensive exercise which initially places extra demands on staff time, a great start has been made to the project and a list of all council assets has recently been entered onto the system containing site and mapping details. The next stage is to focus on detailed occupation usage and operational information for 16 core council sites. This will allow the introduction of a help desk function as well as ensuring that the buildings are compliant with all statutory requirements required for public buildings. This phase will set the template for the rest of the assets portfolio and will allow the asset team to manage property in an increasingly efficient and proactive way.

6.11 Lower Thames Crossing

6.11.1 The team are assisting with the compilation of property data, ownership, landlord responsibilities and GIS mapping for the land interest questionnaires

that have been received from Highways England. Presently 50+ questionnaires have been received.

6.12 Sustainability & Energy

6.12.1 To date, £899k of Salix energy efficiency loans have been delivered. From April 2018, a new legal standard for the minimum energy efficiency applied to commercial buildings. Buildings within the scope of the MEES Regulations cannot be granted new leases or have leases renewed if the building has less than the minimum energy performance certificate unless they are eligible for an exemption. After 1 April 2023 no buildings can be continued to be let which have an EPC rating of less than E. A programme of EPC inspections are presently being undertaken in conjunction with new lettings and the granting of new leases.

6.13 Facilities Management

6.13.1 The Facilities Management Team is responsible for minor capital works to the Corporate Estate. A new minor capital works programme to modernise and improve facilities was put in place earlier this year, and works across the Corporate estate are being co-ordinated and implemented.

6.13.2 A series of property condition surveys are underway following a successful trial in November 2018. All corporate landlord buildings will be surveyed providing a forward plan of works, with information being imported into the new Asset Management Software. This will inform future budgets.

7. Progress of Growth Hubs

7.1 Tilbury

7.1.1 The Council has been successful in its bid to secure both ERDF and ESF funding totally £2.2million for a programme of Community Led Local Development in Tilbury. The proposals are based on a local grant scheme model, whereby local organisations will bid to the Council for funding to support local initiatives focused on volunteering, skills development, employment and business support projects in the town. The programme will run from 2019 to 2021, will bring a significant amount of external investment into the Town and crucially will put local people at the heart of decision making ensuring that activity effectively responds to local needs and challenges. This level of funding for this type of activity focused solely on the two Tilbury wards is unprecedented in recent times and has the potential to change the lives of large numbers of Tilbury residents.

7.1.2 Building on the Civic Square Masterplan that was approved by Cabinet in 2016 we have continued to work with the CCG and partners in the wider health sector to develop proposals for an Integrated Medical Centre to be located on the central Civic Square site at the heart of Tilbury. We will continue to work with partners throughout 2019 and beyond to bring these

plans to fruition and to bring high quality health care and community facilities to the residents of Tilbury and Chadwell as well as to three other locations across Thurrock. The delivery of the IMC programme is linked to a wider reconfiguration of hospital services across South Essex, which is now under review by the secretary of state. This may have an impact on the IMC delivery dates but the Council remains committed to developing these important facilities and bringing them into operation as soon as possible.

7.1.3 Public realm works to improve the environment between the station and the Civic Square as described in the Tilbury Masterplan are commissioned and will soon demonstrate visible improvements.

7.1.4 Tilbury is surrounded by Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects with proposals coming forward for the Lower Thames Crossing and the expansion of Tilbury Port. The Council continues to interrogate these proposals and challenge where appropriate to ensure that these projects provide maximum benefit to local residents. Of particular importance at present is the Council's continued engagement with Highways England on the Lower Thames Crossing during the consultation phases.

7.1.5 Following the completion of a comprehensive community consultation exercise around their proposals for a port extension at Tilbury2 the Port of Tilbury submitted an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) in October 2017. A 6-month period of examination into the proposals was undertaken by the Planning Inspectorate and concluded in August 2018. The examining panel of Inspectors presented its recommendations to the Secretary of State in November 2018 and a final decision on whether to grant a DCO will be made in February 2019.

7.2 **Purfleet**

7.2.1 The Purfleet Centre programme will capitalize on the town's location on the riverfront bringing new homes, amenities and jobs to the area and improving connectivity by replacing the level crossing with a pedestrian and vehicle bridge. The Council's developer partner, PCRL, submitted an outline planning application for the site in December 2017. As is to be expected with a scheme of this scale and complexity, statutory consultees to the planning process have commented on the proposals but PCRL have responded to address many of these, including opposition to the scheme from the Environment Agency and Highways England.

7.2.2 I am pleased to report that the Council with PCRL has signed a Section 30 agreement which safeguards land within the Purfleet development area for the purposes of a new Thames Barrier should that be needed. It allows interim uses in the meantime, including the potential for a modular housing factory to support homebuilding on the site.

- 7.2.3 It is expected that the outline application and a reserved matters application for the first 61 new homes will be considered by the planning committee in spring 2019.
- 7.2.4 An application to the Housing Infrastructure fund has been submitted to MHCLG to support the high up-front infrastructure costs which are required to address the historic infrastructure deficit and tackle significant infrastructure challenges such as the removal of the level crossing. Should the application be successful and the scheme generate sufficient profits some of this funding can be recovered from development receipts and retained for future regeneration use in Thurrock further supporting our wider regeneration objectives.
- 7.2.5 The scheme benefits from significant local support and with the backing of Swan Housing Association, a shareholder in PCRL, will be well set to start construction of the first phase of homes swiftly after achieving planning consent.
- 7.2.6 The secondary school in Purfleet is under construction and is expected to open its doors in September 2019. This will bring much needed additional capacity to our education offer in the West of the Borough and will provide sports facilities which will be available for use by the wider community.

7.3 **Lakeside**

- 7.3.1 In 2017/18 the Council's long held ambition to transform the Lakeside Basin into a modern 21st century town centre became a reality with the first phases of a residential development coming forward by Bellway Homes. Money secured from the s.106 agreement has contributed towards improvements to the local highway network, making non-vehicular movement in the Basin easier and safer.
- 7.3.2 In addition, regular liaison meetings continue to be held between the Planning Service and land owners within the Lakeside Basin to ensure there is a consistent and comprehensive approach to development. In order to facilitate this the Council has commissioned an up-date to the Lakeside Development Framework which was originally prepared in 2016. To guide the process a Steering Group has been set up which comprises representatives from the two major landowners at Lakeside – intu and Land Securities, as well as London Strategic Land, c2c, and Highways England. It is intended to complete revision to the Development Framework in Spring 2019.
- 7.3.3 intu Lakeside's leisure scheme has reached 'practical completion' and fit out of the restaurants and leisure units are underway. The scheme which will include offers from Hollywood Bowl, Putt shack, Nickelodeon and Flip Out is due to open in May 2019. This scheme, which was given planning permission by the Council's Planning Committee in November 2016 builds upon the success of intu's Boardwalk and is set to diversify the recreational offer in the

Lakeside Basin. Discussions are already on-going between the Planning Service and intu in relation to the next phases of their leisure plans.

7.3.4 Finally, after pre-application discussions with the Planning Service, an application for the development of Arena Essex was submitted by London Strategic Land in November, which proposes an ambitious regeneration scheme providing 2,500 new homes, lido, school, bike trails, parkland, medical centre, and community centres. The scheme is important because it also proposes to connect Arena Essex to the basin via pedestrian / cycle tunnel and by upgrading pedestrian links to Chafford Hundred train station, promoting sustainable travel within the basin. The planning application is likely to be considered by the Planning Committee in the spring of 2019.

7.3.5 I am also delighted that government has committed to provide funding for and help deliver the £46m east-facing slips project at Lakeside, which is a crucial infrastructure priority for Thurrock.

7.4 Grays

7.4.1 The Grays Regeneration Framework Refresh reported to Cabinet in November last year provides the Council with an ambitious plan for the town centre encompassing the extension to the Civic Offices, a new pedestrian crossing to the rail line, new public squares and new retail and residential units on development plots created by the proposals.

7.4.2 To progress the pedestrian crossing element of this programme the Council has completed a delivery services agreement with Network Rail for the next stage of work which will provide a scheme for Approval in Principle in the Autumn of 2019. Network Rail have appointed their design team, Volcker Fitzpatrick and W.S Atkins, to work alongside the council's team including our external Urban Design team Steer to progress public consultation and design during 2019. The Council has also submitted its Business Case to the Local Enterprise Partnership to draw down the first tranche of the Local Growth Fund grant for the project from April 2019.

7.4.3 The funding package to deliver the project is in place notwithstanding potential changes to the financial commitment to the scheme by Network Rail. Affected local landowner and leaseholders have been written to regarding the scheme and the acquisitions necessary to delivery it.

7.4.4 Plans to extend the Civic Offices to provide a modern flexible space for provision of the Council's services alongside meeting space and venues for businesses and residents are progressing with a planning application proposed to be submitted early in 2019.

7.5 London Gateway

- 7.5.1 London Gateway Port continues to establish itself as a major operator in international shipping. The first three berths (of an eventual six) are now open meaning that the port has 1250 meters of quay wall, providing three deep-water berths and more ultra-large container vessel capacity than any other port in the UK.
- 7.5.2 Whilst shipping activity clearly continues to build, the development of the logistics and distribution park remains slower than anticipated. The bulk of the jobs anticipated from London Gateway will be generated through the logistics park and, therefore, the Council remains keen to work with the port owners to secure further development and create job opportunities at all levels for local residents.
- 7.5.3 UPS obtained consent to develop their London distribution centre on 18.6 hectares in the distribution park in just 17 days via the London Gateway Local Development Order. Speed of decision-making is paramount to attracting growth and investment and this case highlights the proactive and efficient approach taken by the Council's award winning Planning Service. The UPS facility is now operational with the creation of 542 jobs and the Council has formed a taskforce to help UPS to recruit their workforce and to look at improving accessibility to these jobs from across Thurrock.
- 7.5.4 Recognising the benefits of the LDO and the fast track planning process, SH Pratt Group, one of Europe's leading fruit importers recently announced that they are to take leave on a bespoke temperature-controlled facility measuring 108,555 sq. ft. The prior notification of development application was determined at the end of 2017. Two submissions for new buildings pursuant to the Local Development Order were submitted and processed in 2018.

7.6 Thames Enterprise Park

- 7.6.1 Since acquiring the site in 2015 the applicant (Marcol / ISEC) have engaged with the Planning Service and Design Council CABE to develop their plans for the site.
- 7.6.2 Planning consent was granted in September 2017 to remediate parts of the site and to protect biodiversity assets around the creek ahead of the application for the entire site which was submitted in September 2018. The outline application seeks planning permission for the comprehensive re-development and regeneration of the entire site. The application seeks planning permission for a range of employment generating uses including food processing, manufacture, storage and distribution, energy production [including energy from waste], along with a new sustainable energy park and central hub accommodating a new skills academy, research and development, training and conference spaces. The application predicts that up to 4,450 employment opportunities would be created as a result of the proposals.

7.6.3 The planning application is likely to be considered by the Planning Committee in the summer of 2019.

8. Wider regeneration and economic development

8.1 Alongside Regeneration activities focussed on each of the growth hubs, my priorities for the Economic Development Team have been to work with the business community, training providers and with stakeholders such as the Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure a range of projects and services are available for businesses and residents across Thurrock. In the past year this has focussed on:

8.2 Playing a leading role in the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) and in the Opportunity South Essex (OSE) partnership. As a result of ongoing engagement with these partnerships a significant amount of Local Growth Funding has been allocated to support projects in the borough including the widening of the A13, the Purfleet Regeneration scheme and the Grays South Regeneration scheme. Officers have been using these funds to support land acquisition, design and now works on site. A new call for proposals for a pipeline of projects that can be supported through further allocations of Local Growth Fund has recently taken place and Thurrock submitted a number of project ideas which are now under consideration.

8.3 Strengthening relationships with the local business community is of great importance to me. This has been achieved by supporting the Thurrock Business Board and a number of events and activities that enable the business community to network with each other and with the Council. The business dinner which draws together leaders from the business community across South Essex recently took place at High House Production Park and the annual Business Conference is now being organised and will take place on 6th March;

8.4 Assisting the delivery of a simplified and co-ordinated approach to business support working with the BEST Growth Hub (Business Essex, Southend and Thurrock). In the past year more than 120 Thurrock businesses have accessed support from the Growth Hub and the Council have supplemented the offer through arranging a series of local training sessions on subjects including bookkeeping and marketing;

8.5 Working with other Local Authorities across SELEP to lead or support a number of business support initiatives funded through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF) including:

- Thurrock Council is leading on a SELEP-wide ERDF-funded project to support the Creative, Cultural and Digital industries worth a total of £5.1million across the South East region. The South East Creative Cultural and Digital Support programme provides business advice, mentoring and grants to support and encourage businesses to start-up,

develop and grow, and will also support cluster development across the region. The programme is in start-up phase and is preparing to launch in January 2019, completing in December 2020;

- Thurrock Council is also working as one of the lead partners to deliver the Low Carbon Across the South East (LOCASE) programme worth £18.5million across the SELEP region helping businesses adopt low carbon technologies and solutions and reduce emissions while improving resilience, profitability and business competitiveness. Thurrock Council, as the lead for the Energy Efficiency Strand on this programme has worked with more than 600 businesses across the South East helping them to reduce emissions by an estimated 6,000 tons of CO2 while improving business performance;
- The Council has successfully secured £2.2m of ERDF and ESF funding for a programme of Community Led Local Development in Tilbury reported in the earlier section on Tilbury.

8.6 Working with NWES, the Council's appointed operator, to provide accommodation for small businesses in the borough. The Council's portfolio of business accommodation has continued to perform well with new businesses taking space and achieving an occupancy target of 85%. Occupancy is expected to continue to grow in the coming months;

8.7 Businesses in Thurrock will only thrive if they have access to a workforce with the necessary skills. Working with the Economic Development and Skills Partnership the Council has supported a number of projects in line with my priority to support businesses in Thurrock.

8.8 Continuing to facilitate and work with the Love Grays Partnership (LGP) - the Grays Town Management Partnership – to identify opportunities and plan and deliver a series of projects/events to promote the town centre and to encourage local people to make use of the shops and facilities available to them. The partnership has supported a number of events including the Grays in Bloom, open air cinema and Christmas Lights switch on which saw a significant increase in business sponsorship this year.

9. Challenges for the coming year

9.1 The following will be the priorities areas and challenges for the coming year

- Progress the Local Plan
- Getting the best possible outcome for Thurrock on the Lower Thames Crossing
- Continuation of the 3Rs assets programme
- Maintain leading national position on development management
- Continue to liaise with and support businesses

10. Financial information

Service area	Revised budget	Forecast	Forecast Variance
	£000s	£000s	£000s
Lower Thames Crossing	449	449	0
Economic Development	436	436	0
Planning	1,723	1,718	(5)
Assets	5,617	5,617	0
Total	8,225	8,220	(5)