

Unlocking the door to healthy, happy homes and lives

A Housing Strategy for Thurrock Council

First Draft – January 2015

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Foreword

I am delighted to present Thurrock Council's Housing Strategy for 2015 – 2020. It sets out our plans over the next five years together with our longer term vision over the life of our 30 year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan.

It demonstrates our approach to housing and services, working in partnership with others, to maximise opportunities for our residents, supported by a clear evidence base to make best use of our limited resources.

Thurrock is a diverse place that has seen enormous growth over the past ten years – representing both challenges and opportunities for our residents. There is huge investment planned in Thurrock to support this growth and housing is a central part of that change.

Through our Transforming Homes Programme, we are already investing substantially in our own stock to improve the overall quality of our housing, totalling £68 million over five years. This includes a range of measures through our Damp and Mould Programme to improve housing standards and the health of our residents.

The Housing Team has undergone considerable change within the past year to ensure we can support and provide services to residents to prevent them from reaching crisis. We want to empower our residents to make informed housing choices and our growing relationship with Adult Social Care and Health has enabled us to enhance health and wellbeing outcomes for those we support.

We are leading the way in kick starting the housing market with the creation of Gloriana Thurrock Limited which will support our ambitious target to deliver 1,000 affordable homes over the next five years.

We have also secured grants of nearly £6 million from recent HCA Funding Programmes. This, together with our successful bid to increase the HRA borrowing cap with over £11 million of additional borrowing capacity, will result in the development of over 400 new homes.

However, we know that there remain challenges for housing in Thurrock, both now and in the future, and this Strategy sets out how we hope to overcome these covering three core priorities:

- Raising the Bar – Delivering high quality housing and services;
- In on the Ground Floor – proactively supporting residents to maximise health, wellbeing and employment outcomes;
- Looking Ahead – creating sustainable communities and boosting housing supply.

I look forward to working with our partners to build on our successes over the next five years, and realise our vision set out in this Strategy, creating healthy and prosperous communities for all our residents.

Insert Signature

Councillor Lynn Worrall
Housing Portfolio Holder

“There is huge investment planned in Thurrock to support this growth and housing is a central part of that change.”

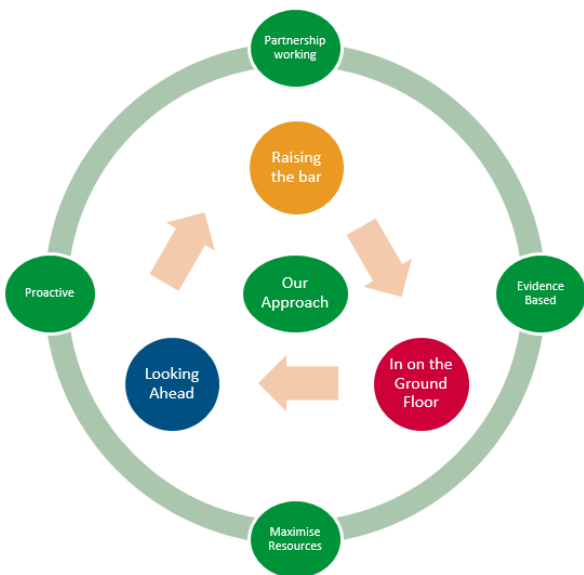
Section 1: Introduction

Housing creates opportunity: providing good quality housing is key to enabling our residents to live healthy and happy lives. This Strategy sets out our vision for housing of all tenures, across the borough and how, by working together, we can improve the health, wellbeing and life opportunities for our communities.

Our vision:

Thurrock is a destination of choice with growing healthy and prosperous communities, living in high quality housing across all tenures where residents are empowered to help themselves, and supported with consistently excellent services.

We have developed three core priorities that represent our key focus areas over the next five years from 2015 to 2020 to support our vision.



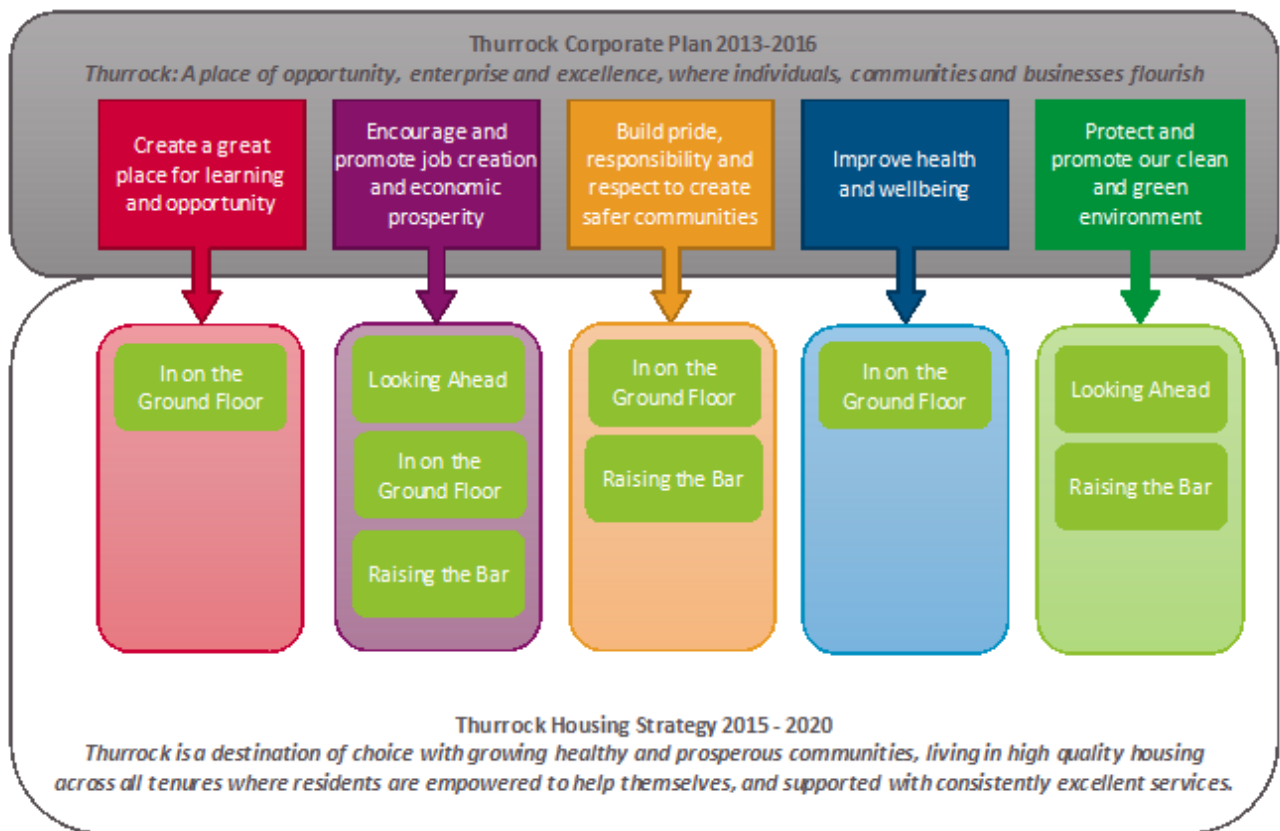
This Strategy has been produced in consultation with our key stakeholders including council tenants and Members together with our partners. The Strategy is supported by a robust evidence base (supplementary document available on our website) to identify how best to target our resources. It is intended that our Strategy is for both internal and external distribution to be shared with our partners and stakeholders to enable effective delivery of the actions.

We will be proactive in our service delivery, informed by a clear evidence base to deliver maximum value through our limited resources. Critical to our success is our ability to work in partnership to deliver the aims of this Strategy. This is by engaging and working across departments within the council together with external stakeholders to maximise opportunities for our residents.

How this Strategy links to our Corporate Objective

Thurrock Council’s vision is to create a place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish. The core priorities set out in this Housing Strategy reflect this ambition and run across all five priorities from Thurrock’s Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2013-16 which aims to:

- Creating a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Build pride, responsibility and respect to create safe communities
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Protect and promote our clean and green environment



Related Strategies:

- Corporate Plan
- Private Sector Housing Strategy 2014-17
- ASB Strategy
- Repairs Policy
- Homelessness Strategy
- Allocations Policy

- Tenancy Strategy
- Local Development Framework
- Core Strategy
- South East LEP Economic Plan

Who is this Strategy for?

We want this strategy to be a live document that is utilised by both internal and external stakeholders. Internally, it sets out a clear vision for our housing team to lead the strategic direction of housing across the borough and demonstrates our approach to our Members. For our tenants and residents, it highlights our commitment to deliver excellent services and high quality housing to the benefits of the local community. The Strategy sets out how we will work in partnership with other departments and external partners, emphasising their role in helping us to deliver our vision.

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Section 2: Background

National Drivers

The Housing Landscape has seen extensive change in recent years with the recovery after the economic recession and extensive spending cuts, announced by the Coalition Government after their election in May 2010, to reduce the deficit together with a series of reforms to get Britain's economy moving again.

Devolution of Power

The Localism Act 2011 and the concept of the 'Big Society', set out the Government's aim to devolve power, giving councils more freedom to make decisions at a local level. Subsequent to this, the Government published 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' in November 2011 setting out their ambition to *'drive local economies and create jobs'* together with *'spreading opportunity in our society'*. It highlights the scale of the problem in the current housing market where *'we have not built enough new homes for more than a generation and the impact of the credit crunch has simply compounded this challenge'*.

Housing demand outstrips supply across all sectors and this gap is increasing. The Strategy identified the importance of housing as central to social mobility, health and wellbeing. It represented significant reforms for the housing sector from changes to allocations and homelessness duties to fixed term tenancies and the introduction of the Affordable Rent Model. Right to Buy was reinvigorated to enable tenants to own their own home. The policies aimed to kick start the housing market and make best use of the limited social housing available to ensure it was prioritised for those that need it most.

As part of the devolution of power, the government ended the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system enabling councils to 'self-finance' by retaining all rental income collected. Councils were required to develop a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 30 year Business Plan to manage their housing assets and investment in their stock.

The Homes and Communities Agency became the Social Housing Regulator with a focus on co-regulation and empowering tenants to hold their landlords to account. This saw a revised Regulatory Framework and risk based approach to regulating social landlords.

Simplified Planning

To further support the delivery of new homes, the Government published a National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to simplify the planning process and achieve sustainable development through an economic, social and environmental role. The framework provides people with the ability to influence and shape their local area through local and neighbourhood plans to meet their need. The priority of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy allows local authorities to raise funds from owners and developers of land undertaking build projects.

Ensuring Work Pays

The Welfare Reforms represent significant changes to the benefit system. The reforms seek to reduce benefit dependency, simplify the benefit system and increase incentives to work. It introduced caps on the level of housing benefit and restrictions on entitlement for those tenants under occupying. Central to the reforms is the introduction of 'Universal Credit', 'an integrated working-age credit' to replace a range of existing benefits including Housing benefit and Job Seekers Allowance.

Delivering Sustainable Homes

The Government set out ambitious targets for all new homes to be 'zero carbon' from 2016 with the introduction of the Code for Sustainable Homes. This is set against a backdrop of the 'Red Tap Challenge' and a fundamental review into building standards and regulations to improve cost efficiency and reduce complexity in the house building process.

In addition, the government established the Green Deal in 2013 to enable energy improvements to be made to existing properties. The golden rule that is fundamental to the scheme is the annual repayments on the loan to undertake retrofit works should not exceed the savings made on energy bills. The Green Deal has experienced challenges to date with low levels of take-up and there has been uncertainty in the level of funding available for retrofitting properties with cuts to the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO).

Transforming Health and Social Care

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 redefined local authorities' role in health services and saw the introduction of Clinical Commissioning Groups following the demise of the Primary Care Trusts. Under the reforms, local authorities were required to establish health and wellbeing boards to assess community needs and work together to reduce health inequalities.

The Care Act 2014 places limits on the amount anyone will have to pay towards the costs of their care up to £72,000. It sets out a series of criteria to make it clear as to how local authorities will have to provide support to people placing a minimum threshold on councils. It places a duty on councils to have regard for an individual's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing when in need of care delivering preventative services. The Care Act emphasises the connection to housing in delivering health outcomes for residents.

Delivering Economic Growth

The government created Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), to replace Regional Development Agencies, and establish a link between private sector businesses and local authorities as part of their Local Growth agenda. Their role is to facilitate a relationships between local authorities and businesses to work together and drive economic growth, identifying the priorities for investment in road, buildings and facilities. LEPs are able to bid for funding to support their growth priorities and through the establishment of enterprise zones, take advantage of tax incentives and simplified local planning.

Thurrock: A Diverse and Growing Borough

- 165 sq. km
- 70% green belt land
- 18 miles of riverfront
- 20 wards
- 157,705 residents living in the borough
- 62,353 households
- 36 mean age
- 191,000 the total number of residents projected by 2031
- 7.2% of the working population are unemployed
- 2.8% claiming job seekers allowance
- £25,000 income required to buy or rent a home in Thurrock
- 20,600 additional homes required by 2031

A History by the River

Thurrock has a unique location: benefiting from large areas of green belt land and riverfront whilst being in close proximity to the nation's capital. Thurrock's position by the River Thames has long since made it a strategic location and hub for industrial growth.

Thurrock's connection to the River has remained a prominent feature of Thurrock with the development of Tilbury Port in 1886 which now comprises 850 acres and boasts 130 firms, acting as a central gateway for London to transport bulk products.

The positioning of the River Thames in relation to Thurrock is not without its problems – most significantly, the 1953 East Anglian floods which devastated the local area and people. This led to flood defences being erected in later years, and the loss of visibility of the river in some areas.

Quarrying has also played a prominent part in Thurrock's history and contributes to the varied landscape of the borough seen today. For over 50 years, the Mucking Landfill Site took the waste of six London boroughs, after all the gravel was extracted from the quarry, before recently being transformed into a nature park.

An exciting growth agenda

Today, Thurrock is a key development area as part of the Thames Gateway giving rise to industrial, commercial and residential growth and opportunity. It is home to one of the largest shopping centres in Europe and London Gateway represents the key port development for the country. The Strategic Economic Plan for the South East LEP details the ambitious growth plans for the borough and highlights the pivotal role Thurrock plays in this economic growth. Six growth hubs were identified in Thurrock to drive the regeneration across these strategic locations namely: Purfleet, Lakeside, Grays, Tilbury, London

Gateway and Thames Enterprise Park. Thurrock's growth hasn't gone unnoticed and we have attracted key institutions to the area including Dubai World Ports, Royal National Opera and National Academy for Back Stage Skills together with a new campus for South Essex College. These sit alongside existing businesses in the area including Unilever and Proctor and Gamble.

For our residents, it signifies opportunity. By attracting new businesses and working with the private sector, we can create new employment opportunities to drive economic growth. We can fund new housing and regenerate our existing homes. Residents will benefit from improved access to local services and enhancements to the environment in which they live. Ultimately, it represents improved life choices for all those that reside and work in the borough, tackling the health and social inequalities in our society.

Growing Families

Thurrock has experienced extensive growth over the past ten years, the greatest in the Thames Gateway subregion and this trend is set to continue. The population of Thurrock is relatively young with a large proportion of the population of working age. Nearly a third of households are families and lone parents with dependent children. With the current housing market, this means more young people are living at home for longer and unable to move on from the family home. Over time, Thurrock has become more diverse as a borough, in particular with the growth of Black and Black British ethnic group. The older population is projected to grow significantly by 2031, placing additional pressures on housing and social care services.

Employment and Education

Thurrock suffers from high levels of unemployment and this is particularly evident in the more deprived areas of the borough demonstrating the need for targeted interventions. Youth unemployment is prevalent and above average numbers of the working age population are long term unemployed. This is reflected in benefit claimants with high levels of those claiming key out of work benefits. Nearly half of all our general needs tenants are unemployed, reflecting the higher levels of worklessness in social housing.

The historical skills gap in Thurrock is evident through the high number of residents in elementary occupations and administrative roles with a lack of those in senior positions and professional occupations. Qualifications are below average at all levels with over 10% of residents having no qualifications, reducing employment prospects. However, through significant educational investment, young people are achieving more, with GCSE attainment rising year on year and now ahead of regional and national averages.

Thurrock is home to a relatively large number of medium and large business units creating employment opportunities for residents. We need to capitalise on these opportunities and ensure there is suitable housing for their employees as businesses grow. Equally, this can represent a risk where large organisations employ large number of residents as any decision by the business to move away or close

will have a significant impact on local people. We have to work with local businesses to understand and mitigate any impact.

Staying Healthy

The overall health of the population in Thurrock is good with fewer residents experiencing long term health conditions or disabilities. However, at a local level there are clear health inequalities with life expectancy over 8 years lower for men and 7 years lower for women living in the in the most deprived areas when compared with the least deprived. Smoking related deaths is high together with the cardiovascular and cancer rates for under 75s.

The mental health of our residents is good with low levels of depression and the majority of people with a mental health need or learning disability are in settled accommodation. Dementia amongst adults is below average, however, the support available for these adults needs improving due to the high level of hospital admission relating to dementia.

Obesity is prevalent in Thurrock for both children and adults, compounded by poor levels of healthy eating and low levels of participation in sport. This has health implications in both the short and long term and can impact on a child's development and educational attainment.

Staying Safe

Violent crime in Thurrock is significantly worse than the national average and can result in people becoming unintentionally homeless following a breakdown in a relationship. For tenants living in our homes, public order offences are most common, followed by reports of domestic abuse. Safeguarding our residents is of critical importance and preventing crime can help residents avoid crisis.

Our Housing Stock

Two thirds of households in Thurrock live in semi-detached and terraced houses with fewer detached properties. The majority own their own home but Thurrock has nearly double the regional and national averages renting from the council with a small minority renting from Registered Providers.

Overcrowding is a problem in Thurrock and indicates the need for larger homes to accommodate our growing population together with affordable accommodation for young people to move onto.

As a council, we own over 10,000 homes, dating back as far as 1920s. This includes over 1,000 sheltered housing properties across the borough. Half of our general needs properties are three bedroom homes and the remaining majority comprise one and two bedroom flats. There are large pockets of stock in some of the most deprived areas in the borough including Belhus, Chadwell St. Mary and Ockendon. Due to the age of our homes, many are less energy efficient, increasing health risks for our residents. Thurrock benefits from comparatively low levels of empty homes with the majority in the private sector.

The Housing Market

The private sector has grown considerably in the ten years to 2011 and is set to continue despite previously representing a below average proportion of homes in Thurrock. Grays Riverside now has a third of households renting privately in the local area.

Homelessness in Thurrock is significantly better than the national average with an increase in the number of cases prevented. The termination of an assured shorthold tenancy is the most common reason for homelessness and with the growth in the private rented sector this will become more apparent. An above average number also become unintentionally homeless due to families no longer be able to accommodate the individual emphasising the need for suitable accommodation to accommodate large families and enable young people to move on to sustainable housing. There is a shortage of homes in the private rented sector that can be offered to residents at risk of becoming homeless and this pressure is further increased with the London authorities using financial incentives to attract landlords.

Affordability is key issue for residents. The average income to be able to buy or rent a property in Thurrock is estimated to be £25,000 and the ratio of earnings to household price remains consistently above average, highlighting the challenges for first time buyers looking to enter the housing market. Private sector rents are comparatively high with Local Housing Allowance not keeping pace, and there has been an increase in the number of households claiming housing benefit in the private sector.

The average house price in Thurrock is comparatively low and has not yet reached levels seen at the peak before the recession. This has impacted on the number of starts on site with low land values discouraging private developers from investing in the area.

Delivering new homes for the future

The growing population will place additional pressure on the housing supply with 20,600 new homes required to 2031, equating to 980 per year. This is the highest of any local authority in the subregion and requires collaborative working with the private sector to deliver these much needed homes.

With the large number of families in the borough, nearly half of the new homes required are estimated to be three bedroom properties. For affordable housing, the demand is for one bedroom homes indicating the need for increased affordable accommodation for younger, single households.

An additional 3,400 homes are required to accommodate the growing older population.

What does this mean for Thurrock?

- Increasing the supply of family homes to support growing families
- Enabling young people to access the housing market
- Ensuring there is suitable support for the growing population of older people
- Provide homes that are able to support independence for longer

- Support residents to access employment opportunities
- Increasing opportunities for young people to enter the labour market
- Reducing health inequalities across the borough through targeted interventions
- Equip our staff with the skills to recognise and support those with dementia
- Work with our health partners to maximise health outcomes for residents
- Safeguard our residents and provide support for those experiencing domestic abuse
- Deliver preventative measures to reduce violent crime and ASB
- Improve the quality of our own stock
- Increase the availability of homes in the private rented sector for those at risk of becoming homeless by engaging with private landlords
- Working with schools to educate young people on their housing options
- Ensure that residents living in the private sector benefit from high quality housing
- Deliver affordable housing to meet the growing demand
- Attract and work collaboratively with private developers to boost housing supply
- Regenerate existing estates to improve and increase housing provision

We have developed our core priorities in response to both the national drivers and local context reflecting the needs of our residents in the borough now and in the future. We will continue to review and update the evidence base which informs our Housing Strategy to ensure that we can use our limited resources to best effect. The following sections details our three core priorities and headline actions over the life of the strategy to 2020 setting ambitious targets to enhance the housing and services available to our residents increasing positive outcomes for our communities.

Section 3: Achievements

Propose this is presented as double page spread with a diagram of statistics and imagery. Consider use of additional case studies.

How are we performing?

- 99.73% of rent collected in 2013/14
- 83% satisfaction with our repairs service in 2013/14
- Increased the number of accredited landlord to 70
- Secured £6,000 from the New Initiatives Fund to deliver a Well Homes Project which has reached 663 people so far and conducted 225 Well Homes Surveys to improve people living in the private sector.
- Completed over 20 ASB multi agency patrols to identify concerns of residents and reduce crime
- Established wholly owned housing company, Gloriana Thurrock Limited to deliver affordable homes for rent and sale
- Secured over £6m in HCA funding to deliver new homes
- Increased the HRA borrowing cap by £11.58m to fund additional homes
- Restructured the housing teams to deliver more customer focussed services
- Passed the peer review as part of the Gold Standard Challenge
- More transparent customer engagement with the introduction of the customer slip
- Standardising services to deliver consistent customer
- Recruited 10 apprentices in house through our caretaking team
- New call centre established with a triage to provide support
- New allocations policy developed May 2013
- Procured contractor framework to deliver savings
- Secured Mears as new repairs partner
- Developed healthy 30 year HRA Business Plan
- 2,058 council homes improved in the first year of our Transforming Homes programme
- 60 previous NEETs or long term unemployed completed employment programmes with 40 securing jobs or moving onto further training
- 25 apprenticeships across all programmes
- 1200 welfare reforms visits
- 144 households facing homelessness prevented or relieved in 2013/14

Section 4: Core Priority 1 – Raising the Bar

Delivering high quality housing across all tenures is central to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents. We want to make every contact with our residents count, providing services that are personalised and address individual's specific needs. We will ensure that our service represent value for money, going over and above our statutory duties, with high levels of customer satisfaction.

Our objectives are to:

- **Deliver tailored and needs led services to all residents**
- **Provide high quality council housing**
- **Deliver value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction**
- **Enhance the quality of housing in the private sector**

Key Measures of Success:

- **20% increase in number of residents engaged through variety of channels**
- **100% of homes surveyed and works completed on transforming homes programme**
- **Increase customer satisfaction to 80%**
- **20% increase in engagement with private landlords**

Objective 1a: Deliver tailored and needs led services to residents

We want to ensure that our services are flexible to meet the individual needs of our residents. This can only be achieved through better understanding of our customer's requirements.

Resident engagement is central to this understanding giving people the opportunity to influence our services, highlight opportunities for improvement and have their voice heard. This is both for our own tenants and the wider population who access our services and support. From our own tenants, we know 80% wish to be involved and we need to create a range of communication channels. Our Quality Excellence Panel provides council tenants with the chance to attend regular meetings to discuss key issues and hold us to account.

As part of our drive to be a 'Digital First' council, we want to encourage residents to engage with us through digital channels including social media. Through use of our Facebook page, twitter, website, and email, we will increase our accessibility and provide opportunities for all those who wish to get involved. In addition, we will look to develop online forums and groups to engage with specific groups of residents, for example, an online forum for leaseholders to address their particular needs.

We are working with our partners in health to ensure that services are resident led. Though our Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach we are increasing the ability to work with all in our local communities to enhance the local services. Community Builders act as a key point of contact, strengthening the connections between people and informal associations. This enables residents to

access services in their local community and support one another. We have invested in Local Area Coordinators who are key to supporting the most vulnerable in our community to access personalised and tailored services. Building relationships at an individual, family and community level, they aim to create a more inclusive community providing vulnerable people with access to the services they need.

In Sheltered Housing, we have undertaken extensive consultation to enhance our service offering and have a better understanding of individual needs. This has enabled us to start delivering bespoke activities that will best benefit residents and that they have chosen. We want to enhance our tenant engagement further with a structured approach through regular formal and informal meetings.

Our Neighbourhood Action Plans represent an annual additional investment of nearly £400,000 to deliver improvements to residents based on local need. Through working with the community, we can identify works to enhance the local area, driven by our tenants. This has included the installation of a new car park in Averley, following tenants concerns that parking was a particular issue on the estate. The Neighbourhood Action Plans enable us to target improvements where they are needed most, with tenants deciding how best to use the investment.

We will work with specific groups to understand individual requirements. We wish to engage further with the Gypsy and Traveller community to better define our service provision and the responsibilities of both parties exploring additional support service to enhance health, employment and wider community outcomes.

We manage over 800 leasehold units and will seek to increase engagement of leaseholders to review our current service provision to ensure that we continue to meet their needs. We need to develop a stronger approach that is transparent and accountable to our residents.

Objective 1b: Provide high quality council housing

As a council, we own 10,140 properties across the borough with a quarter built before 1950s. The average SAP rating is 57 with many older terraced and semi-detached homes with lower levels of energy efficiency. In 2000, the government introduced The Decent Homes Programme was a national minimum standard introduced to improve the quality of social housing by 2010. However, we recognised that this did not go far enough in addressing the key housing risks being faced by our tenants.

Through stock condition surveys, we established that damp and mould are prevalent in many of our homes representing health risks for residents. In response, we developed 'Transforming Homes', a £68m ambitious housing improvement programme to address these issues and enhance the quality of our stock. This includes £2m that has specifically been ring-fenced to address the damp and mould issues in our stock. Through our evidence based approach, we are targeting geographical areas based on the current stock condition to ensure those with the greatest need are prioritised.

Over the next five years, we will survey all our properties and identify the improvements required for each property including:

- New Kitchen units and worktops
- Ceramic wall tiling and vinyl flooring to kitchens and bathrooms
- New toilet and bath with shower attachment
- Redecorating of kitchens and bathrooms
- Electrical Rewiring
- Renewing of consumer units
- Renewing of boilers
- Installation of new extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom
- Improving the overall thermal efficiency of the home

As a landlord, we have a responsibility to repair and maintain our stock however our service seeks to deliver over and above our core duty. The demand for repairs services is above the national average across our stock at 3.7 repairs per property compared to 2.5. In particular, there are specific groups of residents that request over 5 repairs per year. This is in part due to certain properties that require more extensive repair work through the capital programme but analysis of the repairs identified that the council were also undertaking very low level repairs including changing light bulbs and unblocking sinks.

We want to support and educate our non-vulnerable residents to understand the shared responsibility between landlord and tenant to encourage them to undertake these more basic works themselves. By doing so, we can better manage our resources and residents will develop skills to help them live independently. This will enable us to prioritise and provide an enhanced level of service for the more vulnerable residents living in our homes.

Creating a safe and clean environment for our tenants also contributes to their overall quality of the area in which our communities live. Our caretaking teams are out on our estates, ensuring all areas represent a clean environment. We have provided training to all our staff to ensure a consistent approach across all our stock – investing time to maintain our communal areas and grounds to a high standard all year round. This is reflected in our customer satisfaction which exceeds 80%. We will continue to enhance this service, identifying key people within our caretaking team to drive this standard forward.

Our Anti-Social Behaviour team (ASB) work closely with residents to reduce nuisance and crime in their local area. We see this as a critical service for housing and work closely with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and East and West Local Action Groups to address crime. We support the core priorities of the CSP to reduce youth offending, safeguard vulnerable victims and prevent violent extremism. We conduct multi-agency patrols around our larger estates to increase our engagement with residents and listen to their concerns, enabling us to better tackle issues. Many of our staff have signed up to become Crime Stopper Ambassadors to support this agenda.

Objective 1c: Raise standards within private sector housing

Improving housing standards within our own stock is not enough. Two thirds of our residents own their own and the private rented market has grown from representing just 5.9% of households in 2001 to 13.2% in 2011. This extensive growth is faster than both regional and national averages and signifies the growing relevance of this sector. This is a particular challenge for more vulnerable residents accessing the private rented sector where they are at risk of living in poor quality homes from rogue landlords. As a council, we have a duty to assess and take action where homes present serious health and safety hazards.

As we become increasingly reliant on the private rented sector to discharge our homeless duty, we need to ensure that the homes are in a good state of repair and support the resident to re-integrate back into the community. Engagement with private sector landlords is critical to ensuring this and we will establish formalised forums to retain a two way communication. This will enable us to support landlords in raising the standards of their homes and increase the number of available properties.

Well Homes is a council initiative funded by the New Initiatives Fund which represents a new innovative approach to delivering services in Thurrock's private sector. Through this targeted intervention, vulnerable residents owning their own home or renting privately are eligible for a free assessment of their home to identify potential hazards impacting on their health and wellbeing. Working with Public Health, Well Homes aims to tackle health inequalities caused by poor quality housing conditions and improve access to a wide variety of services from health to employment services.

In the first six months of the project, we have contacted over 5,000 eligible residents and completed 225 Well Homes Surveys. Across both private rented properties and owner occupied, the surveys highlighted 64 Category 1 hazards that are now being resolved including inadequate heating and poor security. This has also resulted in the identification of 18 long term vacant properties to increase the supply of housing available.

We want to build on the success of our Well Homes pilot and continue to deliver this service to residents across the borough. We will work with our partners in health to identify funding to support the delivery of the service longer term, delivering savings to the NHS longer term.

There is a clear link between anti-social behaviour in the private rented sector and licencing of private landlords. We have invested in an evidence based review to support the development of a licencing scheme for private landlords and better manage issues faced by residents living in the private rented sector. We will strengthen this service offering further, using new powers under revised legislation to hold those responsible to account. This will form part of our new ASB Strategy that is being developed.

Objective 1d: Ensure services represent value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction

We continually review our services to ensure they represent value for money. This means making best use of our resources to deliver high quality services for our residents raising customer satisfaction.

Our staff are our greatest asset in improving customer satisfaction – they are on the front line delivering services to residents each day and supporting them to address their needs. We will invest further in our

staff to deliver training and development opportunities: providing clear career pathways for progression, hosting conferences to share best practice and build working relationships together with providing relevant training so staff are equipped with the skills to support our customers. We will review the scope of roles within the team clearly defining responsibilities to ensure that residents receive a joined up approach.

We have undergone extensive restructure as a department to focus our services around our customers. This has included standardising services to ensure that there is consistent quality across the borough and enhancing our monthly reporting to monitor our performance. We conduct customer satisfaction surveys on a quarterly basis to understand our own tenants' needs and take action on the feedback received. We will continue to collect information and, more importantly, use this to inform our decision making and shape services so that it delivers high levels of customer satisfaction.

Through our new transparent approach to customer contact, we have increased customer satisfaction in the first year by 9%. Our 'customer slip' tracks all correspondence with our residents to increase our accountability and ensure that the relevant action is taken in a timely manner.

We are developing community hubs to better support our communities and closing offices where we have identified that footfall was low. We are working with the community to set out the scope of the hubs to ensure it meets their needs whilst generating savings through the increased use of volunteers. South Ockendon represents the first community hub, delivering cost savings of £200,000 with the closure of the estate offices.

As part of the digital agenda, we will be moving more services online and using mobile technology to enable our staff to be out and about in the community. This will reduce the need for static offices, and we will put a strategy in place to close all estate offices within the next two years, representing significant cost savings.

With our new repairs partner, Mears, we are reshaping our repairs service in consultation with our residents to deliver value for money. Together with promoting the shared responsibility to our tenants in maintaining their property, we are shifting previously responsive services to batched planned works that maximise the use of resources. With the investment through our Transforming Homes programme, we expect to see a reduction in the number of associated repairs. We are moving to a more proactive evidence based approach to asset management with preventative and planned investment to reduce revenue expenditure on responsive repairs. We expect to see up to a 10% reduction in repairs per property as a result of our new approach, delivering savings of £265,850 per property contract each year.

We have placed requirements on contractors working with us to enhance the social value being delivered under our contracts from creating employment opportunities to renovating historical memorials. This provides additional benefits for our communities delivering value for money. Through re-procurement of our services, we will continue to ensure that we can deliver more for less. We have

made savings of £150,000 through reshaping the delivery of our hostels in partnership with Family Mosaic.

Ensuring we make best use of our limited resources can also present challenges – for example, investing in estate regeneration to improve our stock delivers improvements and savings longer term but for the residents it means waiting for these to be realised rather than seeing improvements in their own home sooner. We will ensure that we consult with all our tenants and wider resident groups on an ongoing basis, firstly to be transparent in our expenditure and investment decisions and secondly, to manage their expectations on our services and programmed works.

Case Study

A GROUP of residents will be benefiting from more secure homes thanks to funding from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Essex.

The Thurrock Well Homes Project was given a £6,000 grant via the New Initiatives Fund (NIF) which is cash made available by the PCC to encourage local organisations to develop ways to prevent and tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

Using the money, the Thurrock Well Homes Project has provided security improvements – such as fence repairs, upgrading external doors, fitting locks and security lights – to homes in the Tilbury, Grays Riverside, Thurrock Park, West Thurrock and South Stifford wards of the borough.

Lindsay Whitehouse, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, visited the home of one couple – 86-year-old Alfred and 80-year-old Doreen Osborne – in Hobart Road, Tilbury to see first-hand the improvements the OPCC money has paid for. The couple have had a new front door, back door and security light installed and locks and fencing replaced.

Mr Whitehouse said: “The Well Homes Project is very worthwhile as such a large proportion of the population in Thurrock live in privately rented or owned homes and there is no doubt that people’s living conditions has a huge impact on their health, wellbeing and feelings of safety.

“There is nothing more important than feeling safe and secure in your own home and I am pleased that the New Initiatives Fund money has contributed towards this.”

Louisa Moss, Housing Enforcement Manager at Thurrock Council, said: “Under the new Care Act 2014, councils have a duty to promote well-being and this project is a good example of where we work with a lot of partners to do just that.”

Mr and Mrs Osborne said: “We are very pleased with all the help we have received and feel safer in our home. We did not realise such help was available, until the Well Homes advisor knocked on the door.”

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a new duty to ensure homes – including privately rented or owned properties – are suitable and up to standard so as not to affect residents’ wellbeing.

In Thurrock, since June 2014, partnership work has been carried out to identify the most vulnerable residents supported by an assessment to identify risk, hazards and harm at their homes. Letters are then sent to each householder, followed up by a visit where serious hazards are identified as well as other needs such as gardening requirements, health checks and energy efficiency checks

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Section 5: Core Priority 2 – In on the ground floor

We are changing the way we deliver our services, supporting residents early on to sustain their home and prevent them from reaching crisis – empowering them to be as independent as possible. Through our preventative approach, we can use our limited resources more effectively and enhance residents overall wellbeing. This is of particular importance in the current landscape where funding continues to diminish. Health and Employment is intrinsically linked to housing and we want to work in partnership to maximise the opportunities for our residents addressing social and health inequalities across the borough.

Our objectives are to:

- **Empower residents to make informed choices with access to advice and support**
- **Support our residents through prevention and early intervention to sustain their homes and avoid crisis**
- **Support residents to maintain and improve their independence**
- **Create employment pathways and support residents to access these**

Key Measures of Success:

- **50% reduction in number of residents contacting council through office or call centre**
- **Over x number of residents supported to sustain their tenancy**
- **Over x number of residents supported to remain in their own home**
- **Over 50 young people and long term unemployed supported to gain employment and access training**

Objective 2a: Empower residents to make informed choices with access to advice and support

We want to provide residents with the information and tools to be empowered and help themselves. Our 'Digital First' approach will lead the way in achieving this. We are implementing a new housing management database which will enable residents to access a range of services online. We want to provide our tenants with easy online access to report repairs and pay their rent. We are currently trialling a new approach to advice through the use of an online service as the initial point of contact, whereby residents input their information and receive a bespoke action plan on their next steps. It is hoped that this will reduce demand on our call centres and offices whilst providing residents with the advice to support themselves. We are monitoring the impact of this service with a view to implementing this approach longer term.

Our call centre, established in 2014, now acts as a triage, signposting residents to the right information. But we want to go further. This new approach gives us the opportunity to redefine our relationship with residents: by empowering residents and reducing the demand on our call centres and office, our staff

can be embedded into the community to provide advice and support to those who need it most using mobile technology. Through increasing investment in technology, we will redesign our civic offices to provide residents with self-service points and access to information, identifying best practice from neighbouring boroughs.

A key part of empowering residents is educating and informing them on the options available to them. In response to the introduction of the Localism Act, we have made changes to our Allocations Policy to improve the choice and quality of homes and address the limited housing options available to residents.

With many young people facing difficulty in accessing the housing market, there is an increasing pressure on the limited supply of social housing. Through targeted interventions, working with local schools and colleges, we will demonstrate that social housing is not the only option to young people. We want to support young people to understand the housing choices available to them and prepare for moving on from the family home.

The accessibility of advice and information to support people to remain as independent as possible is one of the key themes from the Care Act 2014. Local Area Co-ordinators act as a local point of contact enabling vulnerable people to access information and be empowered to take control to enhance their overall wellbeing. Currently there are local area co-ordinators in Grays Riverside, Purfleet, South Ockendon and Stanford le-Hope. We will work with our partners in Adult Social Care to increase the prevalence of these co-ordinators and better support our residents.

We are redefining our services with community hubs to enable communities to support one another with access to advice and support as part of a wider council initiative. Longer term, there will be 9 such hubs across the borough, working with the third sector and community to determine the scope of the services. Our first community hub in South Ockendon is staffed by over 20 local volunteers who we have provided with training to support residents with housing advice. The hub provides computers to help residents get online to access information and services.

Objective 2b: Support our residents through prevention and early intervention to sustain their homes and avoid crisis

Wherever possible, we want to prevent residents from reaching crisis through prevention and early intervention. For those residents that approach us in crisis, we will ensure that we respond promptly to enable them to integrate back into the community as soon as possible.

By understanding the pressures and challenges faced by our residents, we can shape our services to support them early on. This requires a proactive approach – assessing why people reach crisis and reviewing the impact of our services. We know that many residents become homeless as a result of termination of an assured shorthold tenancy together with families that are unable to or no longer willing to accommodate.

We shall work more closely with landlords in the private rented sector and start the conversation with young people early on, informing them of their housing options. For those that become homeless, we

will avoid bed and breakfasts and increase the use of hostels with the aim of providing more holistic support. With competition from London Boroughs using financial rewards to attract landlords, we need to explore the ability to offer our own incentives to private landlords to increase the provision of homes in the private rented sector that are available for the council to use. We will also explore the use of Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) to support single households and young people and work with Youth Offending Team to identify vulnerable young people.

We have identified 45 properties from our own stock to provide quality temporary accommodation but will aim to limit the use and support people to sustainable housing alternatives. We will also ensure we have established pathways to signpost those that are non-statutory homeless.

Supporting residents across all tenures that are facing financial difficulties is a key priority, particularly with the impact of the Welfare Reforms and introduction of Universal Credit. Local Housing Allowance is not keeping pace with rising rents and we need to ensure services are in place to support people to manage their finances.

We currently provide a three tier approach to financial support, supporting people at every stage to be financially included. Our Welfare Reforms Assistant provides initial advice to our tenants. We have taken a proactive approach, identifying those at risk from the Welfare Reforms, supporting 105 households to downsize. Our Financial Inclusion Officer provides more tailored benefit advice support, working in the community to engage with both our tenants and those renting in the private sector. This has resulted in tenants securing on average £209 in discretionary housing payments.

For those facing crisis, we deliver a more intensive support in partnership with Family Mosaic. Where tenants have been issued with a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP), we work with them to understand their individual needs to prevent eviction wherever possible. We want to expand on these services further, linking in with employment services to provide a joined up approach.

Credit Unions also play a vital role in supporting financial inclusion and we will look to work more closely to enable residents to access a range of affordable financial products and support.

For owner occupiers experiencing significant difficulties in keeping up with their mortgage repayments and at risk of becoming homeless, we will develop a new mortgage rescue scheme to support them to stay in their home.

We are taking a continuous improvement approach to our services, as part of The National Practitioner Support Service (NPSS) framework: a government led initiative to improve front line housing services with early intervention and prevention. We have currently working towards the Gold Standard Challenge following a successful peer review. There are ten commitments, for which we have developed an action plan on how we will achieve these over the next year. A new Homelessness strategy will support the progress towards the Gold Standard, setting out our approach to supporting those who are, or at risk of becoming, homeless.

A growing area of concern is residents with leave to remain but no recourse to public funds. This represents a significant challenge for the council as they are not entitled to benefits to support them to pay for accommodation and living expenses. We will set up a working group to explore the extent of this issue across the borough and identify how we can best support these residents.

Where enforcement action is required, we will strengthen our approach to anti-social behaviour, tenancy fraud and rogue landlords, making example cases to deter others.

Objective 2c: Support residents to maintain and improve their independence

Supporting people to remain independent in their own homes enhances the wellbeing of our residents and reduces demand on wider services.

Following the establishment of Thurrock's Health and Wellbeing Board, the council introduced our programme, 'Building Positive Futures' which sets out the aims of the Board:

- Better health and wellbeing – helping people stay healthy and independent
- Improved Housing and Neighbourhoods – to give people more and better choice over how and where they live as they grow old
- Stronger local networks – to create more hospitable, age-friendly communities

The focus is on enabling people to live independent lives in their own homes through wellbeing services, rather than crisis responses. A critical part of this change is the co-ordination of adult social care and health with housing. Only by working together can we achieve truly personalised services that support independence. We want to expand our work with health services further, for example, linking in with GPs to increase referrals to our Well Homes projects where residents have health complaints as a result of their living conditions. We want to understand the health of our residents to better target services and maximise their wellbeing.

Our Sheltered Housing service has been revised to offer a consistent approach that delivers support to enhance their independence. Our aim is to create a pro-active service which caters for the needs of the residents and empowers them to be independent for longer, with choice over how they are supported. By understanding individual health concerns and needs, our officers can work more closely to support our older residents and provide services to address their health priorities. Our Health Eating vitality is one such example that is a health and weight management project delivered in partnership with the NHS. It promotes health eating and exercise, monitoring weight and blood pressure over a 12 week period. The pilot was a great success with residents losing a total of 6 stone in the 12 weeks. We are continuing to run classes and identified the addition of chair exercise classes to increase fitness amongst residents. We now plan to roll this out to other schemes, tailoring the project to meet specific resident's needs.

We want to not only support older people in our sheltered housing accommodation but those in the wider community using our schemes as hubs to resource the activity. Our aim is to roll out our sheltered

housing service to those in general needs accommodation and the private sector, to improve health outcomes for all, increasing independence.

Dementia is a growing concern among older people and despite Thurrock having below average number of sufferers, the hospital admission rates indicates further support is needed early on. We have trained all our staff on dementia and will continue to provide more specific training to identify and support residents at the onset. Many of our staff are also Dementia Friends learning how to better to support those experiencing dementia and raising awareness.

Social inclusion is a key part of remaining independent and we look to create opportunities for residents to engage with the local community. Our 'All Our Yesteryears' event raises the profile of our sheltered housing and encourages people to come along and find out more. The event is themed each year by the residents who choose a decade, this theme follows through to the decoration of the hall, band and promotion, with residents dressing up in the era depicted. Over 350 people attend each year and it provides the opportunity for residents to get together in a safe and supportive environment.

Installation of computers at our schemes also increases social and digital inclusion, assisting residents to contact family and friends via the internet with the use of easy learning tools, set up on the computer. Through such initiatives together with Community Engagement Days and partnership working, we can promote wider health and wellbeing outcomes for residents.

We provide aids and adaptations through a contractor to support disabled and older people to remain at home, identifying this as part of our Transforming Homes programme where possible.

Through the use of our own stock and the development of new housing, we will ensure residents with learning disabilities and mental ill health are supported to access accommodation. This will enable a distinction between the landlord and care function increasing choice for the residents to personalise their care and support. We will work with adult social care to identify community based solutions and support people to transition into independent living, moving away from residential care. We anticipate a rise in the number of people with Autism Spectrum Condition and will work with partners to ensure we can provide suitable accommodation. All our supported accommodation that we deliver will meet REACH standards. We will also work in partnership with Thurrock Coalition to engage with understand the needs of disabled people and older people together with their families and carers.

The introduction of our Asset Based Community Development initiative brings communities to together to understand their 'community assets', connecting local people with informal associations around common interests and concerns. This includes recognising the skills and connections of local residents and the power of local associations and clubs to the heritage and culture of the local community. Together with Local Area Co-ordinators, residents can access more support locally and rely on one another to remain part of the community.

Housing plays an important role in ensuring the safety of our most vulnerable residents. We are part of the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) which works with local agencies to safeguard children and

have invested in a Housing Domestic Abuse Officer. We want to embed safeguarding further into our approach to Anti-Social Behaviour to ensure that residents are protected in their local community.

In our Sheltered Housing schemes, we facilitate coffee mornings which provides an informal forum to discuss signs of abuse and who to raise any safeguarding concerns to. In conjunction with the community safety partnership board, we have purchase a wide range of home security equipment, which is offered free of charge to residents to increase their safety and security.

Our Sanctuary Scheme which is now delivered in house provides those at risk of violence to feel safe in their own home with the installation of security measures. This also provides the opportunity for referral onto our Well Homes initiative to identify further enhancements to properties to reduce housing hazards.

Case Study:

Sports for All

This bi-monthly project was set up with our local disabilities coalition, the local labour councillor and sheltered housing service with its residents. We have some very active residents at our schemes playing indoor bowls, darts and table tennis on a regular basis who were asked if they would like to work with people with disabilities to play these different sports. The residents have shared their knowledge in darts, indoor bowls and table tennis and the disabled groups have shared their knowledge in indoor cricket and soft archery. The project engages different age groups and abilities to participate in sporting activities to maintain a level of fitness.

Objective 2d: Create employment pathways and support residents to access these

Housing can create and improve employment opportunities for our residents. With over 10,000 homes in the borough, we are in a unique position to engage with tenants furthest from the labour market and support them to find sustainable employment. Youth and long term unemployment is high within areas of Thurrock and through our support and investment, we can help our residents to access employment and training opportunities.

We have already delivered a number of employment programmes working with partners. We jointly funded a scheme with the Princes Trust to support 18 – 25 year old NEETS back into work through training, employment skills and work experience. 22 young people completed the programme with 10 moving into employment or training.

Through our contractors and procurement processes, we are able to place requirements for those delivering services with us to create employment pathways for local people. This has enabled us to support 60 previous NEETS or long term unemployed residents with employment training of which 40 moved into jobs or training.

Our significant investment in estate regeneration and the transforming homes programme provides a real opportunity for local people to access apprenticeships and boost local businesses. 25 apprenticeships have been created across all programmes with 14 gaining permanent employment. A further 83 local people have been employed across our contracts. We are working with our partners in regeneration to maximise employment opportunities and ensure first refusal to those tenants living on the estate. We have also created apprenticeship in house, including 10 caretaker apprentices that are working across our stock.

Supporting and signposting residents to access employment and training support is also fundamental to our approach, from those in the private sector through our Well Homes initiative or our own tenants. We want to enhance our relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions to increase the employment support that we can offer. We are working together to target the most vulnerable with DWP co-located in our civic office and plan to expand on this.

We also create opportunities to support young and ex-offenders to move into employment including renovating empty homes and decorating communal facilities used by our sheltered housing residents. By working with schools and private businesses, we can improve access to employment training, through targeted intervention.

Case Study:

Seventeen year old Ian Venn from Stanford-le-Hope, is currently in the first year of his apprenticeship with Keepmoat. Ian, who attended Sinclair School, is currently working towards an NVQ Level 2 in Maintenance Construction.

Ian said: "I am thoroughly enjoying my work. I am learning lots and the people who I work with are really supportive. I have had so much experience already. I have worked in Grays, Tilbury and Ockenden doing painting, joinery, plumbing, plastering and carpentry. I really enjoy learning and experiencing multi-trades, although my ambition is to eventually specialise in plumbing."

Senior Contact Manager, Lee Anderson, commented: "Ian has really progressed well since joining us in the summer and is a real asset to the team in Thurrock. He is highly regarded by his colleagues, and his 'can do' attitude and eagerness to learn will ensure that he completes a successful apprenticeship".

Section Six: Core Priority 3 – Looking Ahead

We need to ensure that our communities have access to a range of housing options both now and in the future. Increasing the supply of housing is central to this – and with the demise of government funding together with the current housing landscape in Thurrock – we need to find innovative new approaches, working across both the public and private sector to tackle this growing issue.

Our objectives are to:

- **Boost the housing market delivering new affordable homes to meet local need**
- **Increase housing supply, working collaboratively with the private sector**
- **Enhance local communities through estate regeneration**
- **Ensure the sustainability of our homes to meet residents' needs now and in the future**

Key Measures of Success:

- **1,000 new affordable homes delivered over the next five years**
- **X number of new homes delivered through private sector**
- **Regeneration of the Garrison Estate**
- **100% of new homes built to London Design Standards**

Objective: Boost the housing market delivering new affordable homes to meet local need

Through our HRA business plan, we have the resources to not only improve our own stock but deliver much needed housing for the borough. We will deliver 1,000 affordable homes over the life of this strategy.

We have been successful in securing just under £6m of funding through HCA Funding programme which will deliver 212 new homes. In addition, we have been able to increase our HRA borrowing cap by £11.58m through the HRA extra borrowing programme, delivering an additional 193 homes.

Affordability is a significant issue for residents in the borough, in particular for young people, moving into their own accommodation. We want to ensure that our young people can find suitable accommodation and remain in the local area.

We want to kick start the market and support first time buyers and young people to access affordable housing in Thurrock. We have established a wholly owned housing company, Gloriana Thurrock Limited to achieve just this and deliver affordable housing to rent and for sale. Gloriana represents an exciting new venture for the council and a bold approach to tackling housing supply. We will unlock sites and lead the way in house building. Through our allocations policy, we will ensure that the new homes are prioritised for local people, supporting young people to access the housing market. We will explore new financial models including 'Rent to Buy' to support those that wish to move onto the property ladder.

For Tilbury and the surrounding areas where there are high levels of youth unemployment, the transition for young people to independent living is that much harder. For vulnerable young people at risk of becoming homeless, we need to intervene early on to prevent further crisis. Only by equipping these young people with the skills to live independently can we support them to integrate into the local community. Foyers present the opportunity to empower young people to access employment and training opportunities while providing them with the life skills to live independently. We will build a Foyer for young people in West Thurrock to give them the best start in their adult life. We have secured funding as part of the Extra HRA Borrowing Programme to provide a 30 unit scheme and will identify a Registered Provider partner to deliver this with us.

We are currently working with adult social care to review the provision of extra care housing in the borough as a means to support older people and those with learning disabilities. This includes an extra care scheme for older people with dementia in West Thurrock and one for residents with learning disabilities. Subject to the findings from the review, we will then identify extra care schemes across the borough to meet residents' needs.

Objective: Increase housing supply, working collaboratively with the private sector

We know we can't deliver all the housing that is needed alone. We need to work with the private sector to unlock sites with planning permission to increase housing supply. Gloriana is designed to show what can be achieved in Thurrock, attracting developers into the area, and raising land values. We want to lay the foundations for a new wave of housebuilding that is ultimately driven by our partners including Registered Providers and private developers. Thurrock has a significant number of unimplemented planning permissions which represents new homes for local people to reduce the gap between supply and demand. We will work with the private sector to identify the land available for development, maximising opportunities for new affordable housing in the borough.

We want to develop key strategic relationships with partners to take this forward. We will identify a Registered Provider partner to support our aim to increase housing provision and engage with all local RPs through regular forums. We will increase our profile as a borough through participating in external forums, engaging with private sector partners at a strategic level.

By working with private sector developers, we can access funding to deliver both new homes and regenerate existing estates to the benefit of our residents. We have applied for Housing Zone status in Thurrock through a new government initiative to create 30 housing zones on brownfield sites nationwide. If successful, we will need to identify a developer partner to access funding through this programme.

Thurrock is a key component of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) Growth Deal and Economic Plan. It supports our 'Big Skies, Big Thinking' initiative: an integrated approach connecting housing, transport, planning and landscape to deliver growth for the borough, taking a holistic view of Thurrock. Through working with businesses and developers, we can increase economic growth in the borough, driving new housing and raising land values for residential development.

Objective: Enhance local communities through estate regeneration

Estate regeneration provides the opportunity to enhance estates, address issues of health inequalities and deprivation whilst increasing the provision of housing on site. The council has identified key estates that require significant investment over that of the Transforming Homes Programme, which would benefit from wider regeneration delivering better quality housing for existing tenants and new homes.

Seabrook Rise is the first estate in our borough that we have developed a wholesale regeneration plan. Tenant consultation throughout the process is critical to managing expectations and delivering real change for the local community that is resident led. Estate surgeries provides residents with the opportunity to discuss their concerns and issues. To ensure that residents are represented throughout the works, we have also set up a Resident Steering Group to review new housing development, improvements on the estate, strategies for maximising employment and training opportunities. We will work with regeneration to ensure our works support the wider South Grays masterplanning. Homes in the first phase of the estate have already benefitted from our Transforming Homes Programme and we are addressing other issues now that are of concern to residents and impact on the wider regeneration, for example, parking.

The Garrison estate represents a unique opportunity with the wider regeneration of the Purfleet to work with a private sector partner and deliver improvements in the local area. We have applied for funding through the Estate Regeneration fund to support the works and will work closely with regeneration and Purfleet Centre Regeneration Ltd (PCRL) to deliver this significant project. The regeneration will increase accessibility to the town centre and increase connectivity, re-connect the estate with the river and local historical monuments and provide more diverse commercial and community space. We will be able to offer a range of tenure choice for residents on the estate and improve the quality of existing housing.

We want to develop a strategy to regenerate and improve all council estates in Thurrock, most significantly the Flowers estate in South Ockendon and the Broadway estate in Tilbury in the next five years. However, we recognise that this requires significant resources and investment and only by working together with a regeneration partner can we enhance our existing communities and create new housing. Through the HCA Delivery Partner Panel, we will identify a regeneration partner to deliver the much needed estate improvements in partnership with the council.

Objective: Ensure the sustainability of our homes to meet residents' needs now and in the future

We need to make sure that our homes – new and existing – are suitable for our residents both now and in the future, supporting the local environment and sustainable living.

We will build all new homes to London Design Standards, striving to deliver carbon neutral homes in line with government targets. We will explore innovative new housing methods and materials to reduce our impact on the environment including system built and self-build housing. We will build 100% of our new schemes on brownfield sites, working with the local landscape, making best use of river views and conserving Thurrock's abundance of wildlife.

We will build adaptable homes that can support people now and in the future. Following a government review by 'Housing Our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation' (HAPPI), it was identified that to meet the needs and aspirations of an ageing population required a holistic approach from planning to construction. It covers ten key design elements with a focus on making best use of the space in the home. This included shared spaces and 'hubs', together with adaptability and 'care ready' designs. We have developed one scheme using this standard and have secured funding to deliver a second. We will review the scope to utilise this standard on generic schemes to deliver housing that is fit for the future.

Our housing can also influence sustainable living through the development of community gardens and allotments. By 2018, the council has the ambition for 50% of residents to grow their own vegetables and provide all schools with regular access to allotments and gardens. We have already provided vegetable gardens in three of our sheltered housing schemes to encourage sustainable living and healthy eating. We will develop a green space strategy to identify opportunities to maximise outdoor space to the benefit of our residents from community gardens to vegetable patches.

We will continue to assess our housing stock to ensure that it meets need, including stock rationalisation. In our sheltered housing schemes, we identified properties that were not fit for purpose due to their accessibility and have begun a programme of decommissioning schemes over the next five years. We will replace any units that are removed with suitable accommodation and support those that wish to move on from the scheme. One site has already provided the opportunity to provide shared living for those with learning disabilities who can more easily access the properties.

We will enhance our existing stock, making use of the Green Deal and other external funding streams, to improve the energy efficiency of our homes. This will be delivered in conjunction with educating our tenants on how to live more sustainably to reduce our impact on the environment. Residents will be less at risk from fuel poverty and through changing behaviour reduce energy consumption and save money.

Understanding our residents' needs is crucial to be able to predict future demand. We will work closely with individual communities to understand the housing demand and undertake detailed assessment of housing need. WE will increase the engagement with our Gypsy and Traveller community to identify the services and homes they need, and taking enforcement action where needed.

Section Seven: How will we get there?

How we will achieve the Strategy?

We have developed a 30 year HRA business plan to identify resources needed to improve our existing stock and deliver much needed housing. Through robust financial management, we will ensure that the housing objectives are appropriately resourced. We will endeavour to access funding, both from central government and by working in partnership with the third sector and private business, to support our objectives.

How will we know we are achieving?

This Strategy is the responsibility of the Director of Housing. Our Action Plan will provide a mechanism to monitor the Strategy on a monthly basis internally to ensure we are delivering against the objectives. We will provide quarterly updates to our Members on progress against the Strategy and produce an annual report on success to date. This will be made available to all our stakeholders to ensure accountability and transparency.

We will monitor our housing performance on a monthly basis to ensure we are delivering against our key performance indicators. In addition, we have highlighted a number of high level indicators over the life of this Strategy to report against each objective as demonstrated below. We will use this to report on the progress of the overall Strategy:

	Objective	KPI
Raising the Bar	Deliver tailored and needs led services to all residents	20% increase in number of residents engaged through variety of channels
	Provide high quality council housing	100% of homes surveyed and works completed on transforming homes programme
	Deliver value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction	Increase customer satisfaction to 80%
	Enhance the quality of housing in the private sector	20% increase in engagement with private landlords
In on the Ground Floor	Empower residents to make informed choices with access to advice and support	50% reduction in number of residents contacting council through office or call centre
	Support our residents through prevention and early intervention to sustain their homes and avoid crisis	Over x number of residents supported to sustain their tenancy
	Support residents to maintain and improve	Over x number of residents supported to remain

	their independence	in their own home
	Create employment pathways and support residents to access these	Over 50 young people and long term unemployed supported to gain employment and access training
Looking Ahead	Boost the housing market delivering new affordable homes to meet local need	1,000 new affordable homes delivered over the next five years
	Increase housing supply, working collaboratively with the private sector	X number of new homes delivered through private sector
	Enhance local communities through estate regeneration	Regeneration of the Garrison Estate, Flowers Estate and Broadway Estate
	Ensure the sustainability of our homes to meet residents' needs now and in the future	100% of new homes built to London Design Standards

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Section Eight – Appendix 1 Action Plan for Housing Strategy

	Objective	Action	Expected Outcome	Measurement Criteria	Target Date	Lead
Raising the Bar	Deliver tailored and needs led services to all residents	Increase the ways residents can engage with the council with the use of Facebook, twitter, email and website with a structured approach including targeting specific communities.	Thurrock tenants have the opportunity to influence policy and strategy through quarterly forums	20% increase in the number of tenants across sheltered, general needs, leasehold engaged.	March 2020	
		Continue to deliver tailored local support through Neighbourhood Action Plans	Residents influence the improvements in the local area that are of concern to them.	Improvements to all estates on annual basis. % of residents satisfied with local area.	March 2020	
		Continue to work with partners in health to deliver services to meet residents needs	Residents benefit from a joined up service	Number of residents supported by LAC	March 2020	
	Provide high quality council housing	Assess all council homes and deliver improvements as per the Transforming Homes Programme	Residents live in high quality social housing	100% of properties assessed and improved. Increase in SAP rating.	March 2020	
		Educate and support residents to take responsibility for low level repairs, with extra support for the most vulnerable.	Resources maximised and residents take shared responsibility for maintaining property	2.5 repairs per property	March 2018	

Enhance the quality of housing in the private sector	Establish a private sector landlord forum on a regular basis and support landlords to raise standards	Increase standards and supply of homes in PRS	Number of landlords engaged.	March 2016	
	Roll out Well Homes initiative to ensure 100% of vulnerable people live in decent homes in private sector	100% of vulnerable people live in decent homes in private sector	Number of Well Homes visits per year. % of residents satisfied with quality of living.	March 2018	
	Develop licencing scheme for landlords to better manage the private rented sector	Residents live in safe and secure accommodation in the PRS	% of landlords accredited	March 2016	
Deliver value for money with high levels of customer satisfaction	Train and educate our staff with clear development and progression opportunities within Housing including senior roles, sharing best practice through conferences and workshops.	Staff have development opportunities and there is succession planning	% employee satisfaction within housing	March 2017	
	Monitor our performance, complaints, surveys and analyse information to inform our service provision	Services are responsive to customer needs	Increase customer satisfaction to 80%	March 2020	
	Deliver a proactive and evidence based approach to repairs and maintenance to reduce the need for ongoing responsive repairs	Reduce responsive repairs	10% reduction in repairs per property	March 2020	

		Develop strategy to close all estate offices across the borough	Staff are embedded into the local community	All estate offices closed	March 2017	
		Maximise benefits to community through social requirements when procuring services, procuring contracts to ensure they represent value for money	All providers/contractors deliver social benefits to community.	£x of additional social value delivered through contracts. £x savings in re-tendering services.	March 2020	
In on the Ground Floor	Empower residents to make informed choices with access to advice and support	Roll out of digital agenda providing residents with a range of online tools for advice and action	Residents are able to access services online reducing demand on resources	Installation of online system for all residents	March 2016	
		Increase investment in mobile technology to enable staff to go out in the community and explore potential to redesign the civic offices to accommodate new approach with automatic pay points and use of ICT.	Residents are able to access services more easily online reducing demand on resources	100% of frontline staff equipped with mobile technology. Redesign of civic offices.	March 2020	
		Educate young people on housing options through target interventions in schools and colleges	Young people understand housing options available, reducing demand on social housing	Number of school interventions per annum.	March 2018	

		Support the council with the development of 9 community hubs across the borough, providing training to volunteers on housing advice	Residents can access advice and support in the local community	9 hubs established across Thurrock	March 2020	
Support our residents through prevention and early intervention to sustain their homes and avoid crisis		Investigate the scope to provide incentives to private sector landlords to increase engagement and supply of homes for council to discharge homelessness duty	Increase the number of properties available to the council in the PRS	Number of homeless households supported into PRS	March 2018	
		Work collaboratively with credit unions to support residents at risk of financial inclusion and those affected by universal credit	Residents have access to affordable financial products and advice	Strategic relationship with credit union. Number of residents referred to credit union.	March 2018	
		Develop a mortgage rescue offer to support people to enable to remain in their own home	Prevent homelessness for those unable to afford mortgage repayments	Number of residents prevented from becoming homeless through mortgage rescue	March 2018	
		Achieve the Gold Standard Challenge and develop new homelessness strategy	Continual improvement of frontline services	Gold Standard awarded	March 2016	
		Establish a working group to identify the support available for those with leave to remain that cannot access financial support	Residents with leave to remain are supported and impact assessed by council	Number of residents with leave to remain supported	March 2017	

		Strengthen our approach to enforcement with a new ASB strategy and team covering tenancy fraud, ASB and CCTV.	Residents understand action will be taken in extreme cases	ASB Strategy. Enforcement case examples publicised.	March 2016	
Support residents to maintain and improve their independence		Work more closely with partners in health linking in with GPs and understanding the health of our residents to inform our services	Residents benefit from holistic approach maximising health outcomes	% of residents supported to improve health	March 2020	
		Roll out of Sheltered Housing model and services to deliver wider support to those in private sector and general needs	Older people supported to remain independent	Number of older people supported in private sector and general needs	March 2018	
		Ensure specialist support for older people with dementia through training and awareness building	Older people are supported to access local services to manage their condition	Number of dementia friends. Decrease in hospital admissions through dementia.	March 2018	
		Support those with mental health needs, autism and learning disabilities through working in partnership with Adult Social Care and identify suitable accommodation and support services meeting REACH standards.	Residents are supported to remain as independent as possible and part of the community	% of residents with MH, LD, ASC in suitable accommodation	March 2020	
		Embed safeguarding into housing team further through appointing champions, providing training	Vulnerable residents are safeguarded through increased staff awareness	100% staff trained on safeguarding. Safeguarding champions identified.	March 2016	

	Create employment pathways and support residents to access these	Ensure additional social value is delivered in procurement with offers of apprenticeships and local labour and recruit in house	Local residents access employment opportunities	10 apprenticeships per year through contracts and in house services	March 2020	
		Provide opportunities for local residents through estate regeneration, working with partners to target interventions	Local residents access employment opportunities on their estate	10% of local residents on estates supported into employment	March 2020	
		Enhance relationships including DWP and private sector to target residents and support to find employment. Increase employment support through co-location of DWP in offices.	Targeted interventions working in partnership for residents	No of residents supported to access employment support through partners	March 2018	
Looking Ahead	Boost the housing market delivering new affordable homes to meet local need	Deliver 1,000 affordable homes through Gloriana Thurrock Limited and funding secured prioritising local people	Residents access affordable homes for rent and sale	1,000 new affordable homes	March 2020	
		Develop housing incentives to support young people onto the property ladder with 'Rent to Buy' scheme	Young people and first time buyers can access housing market	Number of residents supported with Rent to Buy Scheme	March 2020	
		Develop a foyer in partnership with a RP to support vulnerable young people to access employment opportunities and move on to independent living	Vulnerable young people supported to move onto independent living	Development of Foyer with 90% of young people moving onto independent living in 2 years	March 2019	

		Review provision of extra care housing and schemes for older people and vulnerable residents in the borough in conjunction with adult social care	Adequate housing options for older people and vulnerable residents	Viability of Extra Care Schemes	March 2017	
Increase housing supply, working collaboratively with the private sector		Identify sites that are suitable for development and have planning permission working with developers to bring sites forward	Developers invest in new housing in the borough for residents, raising land values	% of sites with planning started on site	March 2020	
		Establish relationship with key Registered Providers to deliver additional affordable housing and engage at a strategic level	Increase affordable housing working with RPs	Registered Provider partner secured	March 2020	
		Identify developer partner to support Housing Zone status and access additional funding	Increase supply of homes with private developer	Developer Partner secured	March 2017	
Enhance local communities through estate regeneration		Complete estate regeneration of Seabrook Rise estate in line with the wider South Grays masterplanning	Residents have improved housing and new housing is created	Completed regeneration of estate % of residents satisfied with estate	March 2020	
		Work with our partners to develop Garrison estate as part of the wider Purfleet Town Centre Regeneration	Residents have access to a range of housing across tenures on the estate	Completed regeneration of estate, % of residents satisfied with estate	March 2020	

		Identify a regeneration partner through the HCA DPP to enable the regeneration of further developments including Flowers and Broadway	Strategy for delivering regeneration across our estates to the benefit of residents	Regeneration partner and strategy in place for regeneration of all estates	March 2020	
Ensure the sustainability of our homes to meet residents needs now and in the future		Build all new homes to London Design Standards reviewing new methods of construction and materials	Homes are built to a high standard that minimise impact to environment	100% homes built to London Design Standards	March 2020	
		100% of new housing is developed on brownfield sites working to enhance access to river	Greenbelt is conserved and make best use of existing land	100% of developments built on brownfield sites	March 2020	
		Identify schemes to build homes to HAPPI standard to ensure they remain accessible for vulnerable residents	Vulnerable residents are able remain independent in own home	No of units built to HAPPI Standard	March 2020	
		Identify green spaces across the borough and develop a Green Space Strategy to maximise open spaces creating opportunities for community gardens, allotments and vegetable patches	Residents have access to outside space	Green space strategy devised	March 2018	
		Access funding through the Green Deal to retrofit homes and increase SAP rating in conjunction with educating tenants	Residents benefit from energy efficient homes and reduce impact on environment	Average SAP rating increased to 70. 100% tenants educated on sustainable living.	March 2020	

		Conduct stock rationalisation and decommission units that are not fit for purpose	Homes are fit for purpose	Complete review of housing stock and decommission identified sheltered housing	March 2020	
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