



# Overview and Scrutiny

Annual Report

2014-15



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# Introduction

Overview and Scrutiny in Thurrock during 2014-15 have tackled a wide range of issues from supporting young people into pathways into work and the future of the Thameside Complex. Members have also established three significant task and finish reviews in order to consider in detail matters that are important in the Borough.

The agendas and associated reports of each Committee can be accessed by the following link: <http://democracy.thurrock.gov.uk/>

Sadly in 2014 Thurrock lost two much valued members of Council. Councillor Andy Smith, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Highways and Transportation and Labour Ward Councillor for West Thurrock and South Stifford was an experienced and dedicated Councillor who was committed to improving the lives of the residents he represented. In September 2014 Councillor Maggie O’Keeffe-Ray, Ward Councillor for Aveley and Uplands and valued Member of the Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, passed away and we would like to pay tribute to their work for the wider community of Thurrock.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank all Members who sat on the Committees for their efforts this last year, as well as the specialists and visitors who attended to help better understand some of the issues facing our communities. Council officers, third sector partners and residents also contributed to our work and their role should also be recognised.

## What is Overview & Scrutiny?

In general terms, Overview and Scrutiny is the process whereby Councillors investigate, scrutinise and oversee the work of the Council. More specifically Overview and Scrutiny pays particular attention to:

- The decisions made by Cabinet, Council and officers in relation to Council policy or key decisions.
- The activities carried out by the Council and other bodies (such as the National Health Service (NHS)).
- The performance of the Council in relation to its targets and objectives.

## Work Programme

The work programme for Thurrock’s Overview and Scrutiny is informed by a combination of:

- What Councillors feel are important topics (this is gathered from their work in their wards and activities across the whole of the Council).
- Members of the public highlighting issues for debate, either through Call-Ins or through consultation.
- Requests by Thurrock’s Cabinet for Overview and Scrutiny to undertake “pre-decision scrutiny” prior to policies being taken to Cabinet for consideration and decision.
- Council officers requesting Overview and Scrutiny to investigate and consider certain issues on their behalf.

## Committees

At Thurrock, the work of the Overview and Scrutiny function is carried out by six committees, which each have a specific remit:

- Children’s Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Corporate Overview and Scrutiny
- Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

## Membership

The membership of Thurrock’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees is made up of Councillors drawn from the political parties of the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny function enables Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet (also known as the Executive) to have an active role in the decision-making process of the Council.

Thurrock has a number of non-Councillors sitting on Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The Children’s Services Committee has two parent-governors as well as a diocesan representative from the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches respectively. There are also two co-opted members on the Health and Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Committee representing health interests.

In addition, sub-committees or panels may also be formed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to undertake specific tasks, such as a review, the membership of which is decided alongside the remit of the review.

## The decision making process

In Thurrock, Overview and Scrutiny plays a key role in adding value to the Council's decision-making process. It also reviews the existing practices of the Council and makes recommendations to Cabinet to enhance and improve service provision.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committees meet in an informal atmosphere and engages with people who can help with their work and provide evidence for their reviews. Members of the public are welcome to attend meetings of the Committees and at the discretion of the Chair may even be able to take part.

## Overview and Scrutiny Online

Overview and Scrutiny has a dedicated section on Thurrock Council's website and can be found at ([www.thurrock.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny/overview-and-scrutiny-committees](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/overview-and-scrutiny/overview-and-scrutiny-committees)).

Thurrock Council's website provides the most up-to-date information on Overview and Scrutiny in Thurrock. Participation from the public is actively encouraged and promoted online.

A number of documents are available and easily accessible, including our Overview and Scrutiny annual reports. Reports, agendas and minutes from each Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting are also available electronically from Thurrock's website.

## Getting in Touch

The Overview and Scrutiny process at Thurrock is managed by our Overview and Scrutiny Team. The Team is located within Democratic Services which is part of Legal Services. Democratic Services manages the Council's decision making process and services a wide range of Council decision making bodies including the Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Cabinet, Planning Committee, Licensing Committee as well as full Council.

If you have any queries about this report or the Overview and Scrutiny process, or if you are interested in participating, please feel free to contact us.

Email: [scrutiny.team@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:scrutiny.team@thurrock.gov.uk)

Address: Overview and Scrutiny Team, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays  
Essex RM17 6SL

# Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny

This year the Committee have continued to build strong links with Youth Cabinet, with two Youth Cabinet Members attending meetings to give young people a voice on matters affecting children and young people in Thurrock. Members have found this arrangement to be beneficial, with Youth Cabinet representatives contributing their views on the work experience and apprenticeship offer in Thurrock.

In November 2014 the Committee established a Task and Finish Review to identify further opportunities to support pathways into work for young people – with a view to addressing some of the sector specific opportunities locally.

Members have monitored the progress of the Education Commission to keep well-informed of Thurrock's school improvement strategy and have welcomed a number of notable achievements, including the launch of the Thurrock Education Awards, Thurrock's success in recruiting and retaining Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT's) and fostering strong governance in schools.

In light of the findings from the Jay Report regarding Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham, the Committee scrutinised the arrangements the local authority had in place to address this issue. It was highlighted that Thurrock was working in partnership with Southend-on-Sea Council and Essex County Council to develop strategies to address child sexual exploitation and support the needs of children both within the Borough and across wider Essex. This will continue to be of high importance to Members, with the action plan referred to future meetings in order for Members to monitor implementation.

In February 2015 the Committee also considered the learning points from the Serious Case Review of "Julia", with Members keen to ensure that officers remained vigilant and that mechanisms were in place to ensure that any concerns in future were identified and acted upon as soon as possible. In response the Committee instructed that a protocol to be referred to the Corporate Parenting Committee for informing Members of such cases in future, a Peer Review for Thurrock's Social Work team to be undertaken based on the findings of the report and for the multi-agency action plan to be reviewed by the Committee.

The Committee also continued to receive updates in relation to the budget and savings proposals and in January 2015 considered a proposed consultation document which set out a number of options recommended for consultation on how savings could be achieved in the library service. There was an overwhelming 3,102 responses to the consultation which highlighted the importance of the library service to residents and users, following which a proposal was referred to Cabinet for approval in March 2015.

# Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny

One of the key issues which was scrutinised by the Committee over the past year was fly-tipping in Thurrock, in light of the challenges that were faced by the service in summer 2014 in Cory Wharf, Purfleet. Prevention and enforcement action against fly-tipping has remained a priority of Members, the rates of which had fallen by 55% between 2008-2012 but have started to rise since – with the cost of removing fly-tips in 2013-14 totalling £117,916.

Improvements and developments have been made since, which include:



- Vehicle details from unlawful encampments are put on the Police National Computer, which allows the Police to better track vehicles that have been subject to Section 61 and prevent future unlawful activity.
- Teams are better informed about their powers relating to unlawful encampments and are better equipped through body cameras to identify unlawful activity.
- Essex Police developed a toolkit to better deal with issues such as Cory Wharf. For example, there was suspected fly-tipping activity in Schoolfield Road in November relating to an encampment. Police intelligence was used and a number of waste bearing vehicles were stopped. Following this action the encampment disappeared within five hours.
- Fly-tipping in Orsett had seen the Police use CCTV to identify suspect vehicles and this has been passed onto the Council.

Local Air Quality Management was also examined and the Committee recommended to Cabinet that a new air quality management area be established along Dock Road, Calcutta Road and part of St Chad's Road in Tilbury.



The Committee also considered various saving proposals which were then referred to Cabinet, which included revisions to waste collection and disposal arrangements, the restructure and review all grounds maintenance operations and the implementation of area based working and optimising routes.

The Committee worked on a number of key issues for the Council this year. Our biggest achievement was to instigate a new working protocol between the Council and Essex Police to deal with major fly-tips. We also contributed to budget setting by making specific recommendations against reducing bin collections to fortnightly collections, a recommendation the Cabinet endorsed.



***Councillor Cathy Kent***

***Chair of Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee***

# Corporate Overview and Scrutiny

Due to the considerable savings and efficiencies that were required to be delivered the budget was subject to much debate and discussion, and as a result was a key feature of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee last year.

At the Committee's first meeting in July 2014 the budget savings proposals were discussed at length, in particular relation to the Council's funding and support of organisations such as Thurrock Citizens Advice Bureau and the impact of budget savings on the Community and Voluntary Sector. These discussions, combined with those concerns raised through the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Committee by Trans-Vol, resulted in the convening of a special meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Chairs in October 2014. This enabled the impact of savings proposals on Thurrock's Voluntary Sector to be discussed in more detail.

The Committee considered the progress of the Transformation Programme which was focused on enabling services to make savings through revised working arrangements and processes. These different ways of working, customer service and channel shift were further reviewed later in the year which detailed the new website and increased digitisation of council work through 'my account' where the public could access services direct online, the role and use of the contact call centre and the implementation of a modern telephony system.

One of the key issues which was scrutinised by the Committee over the past year was the future of the Thameside Complex. Members considered the approach taken to complete the options appraisal, identified some of the emerging themes and reviewed the impact of the existing savings targets. Subsequently the Thameside Complex Task and Finish Review was established in February 2015 which set out to build upon the work completed to date, understand the challenges and benefits of the Thameside Complex and providing services from it, consider the proposed future options and provide a thorough and balanced report.

2014-15 saw a number of important pieces of work in relation to the budget and the Thameside Complex, which is an emotive issue close to many residents' hearts. This is just a brief overview of the work undertaken by the Committee during the past year. I would like to thank all members, officers and partner organisations for their hard work, commitment and desire to secure the best future for Thurrock residents. Special thanks to the vice-chair Councillor Shane Hebb for his support throughout the year.

***Councillor Yash Gupta MBE***  
***Chair of Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee***



# Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny

The Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee continues to be one of the busiest Committees and one which scrutinises topics of much local interest. In July 2015 Members considered the results of the Meals on Wheels public consultation and the future of short break services for disabled adults in Thurrock.

The Committee had to review some challenging issues in light of the considerable budget pressures faced, as the adult social care service is demand led with two-thirds of the budget spent on placements. This included determining efficiencies in Public Health Commissioning, Voluntary and Third Sector Contracts and the Supported Living Review.

Members considered the impact of the Care Act 2014, which had been described as the most significant piece of legislation affecting Adult Social Care for over 40 years. It built on the review of the “patchwork” of Acts covering Adult services undertaken by the Law Commission and put into legislation the recommendations for how Adult Social Care was funded as proposed by the review undertaken by Sir Andrew Dilnot. Local authorities were required to meet the Care Act’s duties, statutory guidance and regulations from April 2015.

The Committee were regularly updated on the establishment of the Better Care Fund (BCF) pooled fund to promote integrated care and support services. The purpose of the exercise was to drive through significant changes to Thurrock’s health and social care systems so that care was more effective, efficient and economic, and so that users, patients and carers experience better co-ordinated care and improved outcomes.

One of the Committees key items of interest regarded the work that Thurrock Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had conducted so far to facilitate the process of decision-making on the future of the Thurrock Walk-in Centre.

The Committee valued the contributions from the representatives from HealthWatch and Thurrock Coalition, who provided important input on issues relating to patients’ care in the Borough.

# Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thurrock has seen enormous growth over the past ten years and with huge investment planned in Thurrock to support this growth, housing is a central part of that change. As a result the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee have had the opportunity to examine a number of interesting topics thought the year.

The Committee have kept up-to-date with the Transforming Homes Programme, the £68 million programme to improve Council housing stock over the next five years. This includes a range of measures through the Damp and Mould Programme, which has remained a priority for the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee to improve housing standards and the health of residents.

The progress of Gloriana Thurrock Limited has remained high on the agenda for the Committee, which considered a report in January 2015 as to the latest developments in the ambitious target to deliver 1,000 affordable homes in Thurrock over the next five years. This included plans for over one hundred new homes on the former St Chad's School site in Tilbury.

In May 2013, following an extensive public consultation, the Council introduced a new Housing Allocations Scheme along with a new online housing application form. A first year review of the scheme was undertaken from July to September 2014 which the Committee subsequently scrutinised. Members considered the survey results and information obtained from feedback sessions and an online survey for staff, members and partner organisations and recommended changes and improvements to the scheme which included the continuation of priorities and concessions for the armed forces.

Another subject under review was the decommissioning of selected Sheltered Housing units due to their lack of desirability or being unfit for purpose. The Committee examined the outcomes of the Sheltered Housing Consultation, supported the items put forward and recommended for approval a new sheltered housing service model.

Members of the Committee also had the opportunity to review the Draft Housing Strategy which set out the vision and direction for housing from 2015-2020.

They endorsed the vision and proposed action which was:

*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.*

There were three core priorities that underpinned the Housing Strategy vision which included:

- Core Priority 1 – Raising the Bar: Delivering high quality housing and services
- Core Priority 2 – In on the Ground Floor: Proactively supporting residents to maximise health, wellbeing and employment outcomes
- Core Priority 3 – Looking Ahead: Creating sustainable communities and boosting housing supply

The progress on delivery against the vision and core priorities will be an area for further investigation for the Committee in 2015-16.

# Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

The Planning, Transport and Regeneration Committee have had an interesting year and considered a significant number of high profile regeneration developments that are set to stimulate Thurrock's local economy for years to come.

The Committee considered and endorsed a number of wide ranging developments such as the Purfleet Regeneration Programme and the Grays Town Centre Regeneration scheme which are of great interest to Thurrock residents and the local business community.

At the July 2014 meeting of the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee it was agreed that a Community Transport Task and Finish group be established in order to help determine the impact of the suggested proposal to cease grant funding to TransVol on both the charity and residents, and identify whether there were any viable alternative funding stream options available.

The Task and Finish Group was formed of 3 Elected Members, one from each political group, and during discussions at the meeting the following key points were identified:

- That Members of the Review Panel agreed with Officers that community transport was required within the borough for its elderly and vulnerable residents;
- The service provided by TransVol was valued by its Members;
- The Council statutory priority was to users who had little or no public transport or those who had disabilities and required medical appointments or to use shopping facilities.
- TransVol were proactive in admitting that with only this amount of funding it would be almost inevitable that the charity would have to close.

Throughout the year a number of other key issues were also examined by the Committee, which included European Union Funding Programme, Economic Development, Parking Charges within the Borough, Thames Enterprise Park and Grays Rail Station Regeneration.

Members were also presented with proposals and contributed ideas on the development of the Lakeside Growth Hub, during which the following key points were highlighted:

- The Shopping Centre itself was 23 years old and has become an ambitious area thanks to its assets;

- Since the Thurrock Core Strategy was introduced in 2011, there had been a lot of commercial interest within the area including retail, homes and jobs. This strategy had now become part of the Thurrock Local Plan 2035;
- That lakeside was the major shopping centre serving Thurrock and had unique qualities to the borough, which were integral to the vision of turning Lakeside to a Town Centre rather than being focused on as just an area for shopping;
- It was considered a key challenge to look at changing retail, economic and social trends, this was due to the rise of online shopping which impacted on investment decisions and shopping patterns.
- The growing competition to Lakeside's established retail and leisure role within the borough and the need to improve visitor experience and attractiveness of Lakeside as a destination, this would include the need to improve access to and within the Lakeside;
- The accessibility to lakeside by car and other means of public transport. This would include keeping road capacity maintained and to improve local connection, with an increase of the choice of routes. There was the possibility of a network of bus and pedestrian routes and new transport interchange to encourage people to walk once inside the centre;
- The Council was working with Partners and Stakeholders, to bring forward growth developments to make Lakeside more people friendly.

Members also had the opportunity to re-examine a Cabinet decision in relation to Investment in Highways Lighting which was called-in in November 2014. Members listened to all suggestions and new proposals put forward and were informed by Officers that LED lights were more reliable and a trail of 500 lights within Thurrock were being monitored.

The key role of Overview of Scrutiny in the decision making process was ever more evident this year and its importance demonstrated through the Committee's work with TransVol. I'm pleased that the Overview and Scrutiny process assisted TransVol in putting their case forward and initiated a Task and Finish review which helped investigate this issue in more detail.

The work on the A13 Widening Scheme, Purfleet Regeneration Scheme and the Lakeside restyle and improvements are all something I am very proud of and look forward to the completion which will help all our local residents on their daily travels.

***Councillor Sue Gray***  
***Chair of Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee***



# Budget Overview and Scrutiny

This year the scrutiny of the budget was a priority for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees, which was also a subject of much public interest, particularly around savings proposals involving the Library Service, Day Nurseries, Grangewaters Outdoor Activity Centre, Waste Rationalisation and the impact of budget cuts on the Community and Voluntary Sector – including TransVol and Thurrock Citizens Advice Bureau.

Members were keen to scrutinise the budget to ensure that the Council was on target to achieve the significant budget savings and to identify if further value for money and efficiencies could be realised. With challenging public sector cuts and the knowledge that more was to come, Members were keen to ensure that Thurrock was doing all it could to ensure value for money and ascertain any new income streams whilst protecting services that were important to local people.

Scrutiny Committees held productive and engaging debates on a number of key issues in order to maximise efficiency savings to the authority. In response to public concerns raised through the Overview and Scrutiny process regarding the impact of budget cuts on the Community and Voluntary Sector, particularly in relation to TransVol and Thurrock Citizens Advice Bureau, an informal meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees was convened.

## Meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny Committees

In August 2014 Cabinet agreed to convene an informal meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to consider the impact of savings proposals to the Voluntary Sector. This suggestion was made by Councillor John Kent (the Leader of the Council,) and supported by Councillor Richard Speight (as Portfolio Holder for Communities) at Cabinet 27 August 2014 in response to concerns from the voluntary sector through Thurrock Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) acting as the umbrella and infrastructure organisation for Thurrock's voluntary sector.

In October 2014 a meeting was held, chaired by Councillor Shane Hebb, during which the impact of savings proposals on Thurrock's Voluntary Sector – from both the perspective of the Council and the Voluntary Sector were set out.

Thurrock CVS agreed to represent all groups affected by the proposed cuts to the voluntary sector, even those that were not members of TCVS. The sector was concerned that decisions were being taken in the silos of each directorate and the



wider impact to voluntary organisations could not been seen. A report was examined to ensure that Thurrock was doing everything it could to ensure the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny committees were fully informed of the wider impact of the proposed savings on voluntary sector organisations.

The current financial position of the Council was also considered that sought to provide some context as to why savings that impact on the voluntary sector needed specific consideration.

At the meeting an alternative budget proposal was supplied by the voluntary sector which was reviewed and studied to ascertain its viability and it was agreed that the Voluntary Sector would provide plans on how they could work together to provide joined up services in the future.

Officers and Portfolio Holders were also instructed to review the proposals for outsourcing council services to the voluntary sector and for savings proposals to be qualified in future so Members could understand the value of savings in terms of value for money.

We had a unique opportunity this year, when a full and frank debate was had between councillors from all parties (who led the Scrutiny committees for the municipal year), and voluntary sector leaders representing groups who fight for improved health outcomes for those who need it. The Leader of the Council and the Shadow Cabinet member also contributed to the debate, and there were a number of actions which came out to be addressed.

Like many organisational conflicts, the root cause was gaps in communication from the council. Once we agreed on what needed to be done better, the dialogue flowed for a better outcome for those we all represent!

***Councillor Shane Hebb***  
***Chair of informal meeting of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of***  
***Overview and Scrutiny Committees***



# Overview and Scrutiny Reviews

Overview and Scrutiny Committees can establish Scrutiny Review Panels to investigate in-depth issues which have come to their attention. In 2014-15 three Scrutiny Review Panels were established, the details of which are set out below.

## Community Transport Review

At the Planning, Transport and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee in July 2014 it was agreed to establish a Task and Finish Group in order to explore the implications of various levels of financial funding to TransVol to provide community transport in Thurrock.

The Community Transport review panel undertook an investigation into community transport provided by TransVol and explored whether the same service could be provided to residents within budgetary constraints. At the meeting of the Community Transport Review Panel in October 2014 the panel were particularly interested in identifying as to whether there was an option to carry on providing funding to the charity. Participants included representatives from TransVol, senior officers and Members.

The aim of this review was to look at ways other local authorities' provided funding for community transport and to see if there were any other ways to grant continued financial aid to TransVol. During the review it was clear that there is a need for community transport within the borough; discussions moved on to whether the service provided was value for money. An open conversation took place on community transport and whether the funding granted to TransVol provided value for money for the Council. During the review representatives from TransVol explained that without the funding provided the charity would be unable to supply the current service for their clientele.

The review panel considered four options in relation to the grant funding for TransVol and recommended an additional alternative which was subsequently agreed, in order to provide 'one off' financial support of £50,000 to support continuity of service whilst other viable options could be secured by TransVol and a business development plan formed.

## Thameside Complex Review Panel

The future of the Thameside Complex has been a longstanding, recurring topic of discussion which has been thrown into sharp focus in recent years as cuts in public sector spending have given rise to linked debates over the costs of running and

maintaining the building, its use, the quality of the services being provided from within it and its ultimate fitness for purpose in a much changed cultural landscape. These debates routinely provoke passionate responses from various parties, driven by concerns that the Council is seeking to unilaterally close the building and cease providing the services currently hosted therein – particularly the Thameside Theatre.

In August 2014 Cabinet received a report entitled ‘Thameside Complex – securing theatre provision for Thurrock’. The report set out some of the context surrounding the Thameside and sought approval, duly given, to undertake an options appraisal with a view to securing the long-term future for a theatre within the Borough. The complex is important to many local people, both for the services it contains and for what it represents; placing Grays at the heart of culture, heritage and the arts in Thurrock and as the administrative and civic centre of the Borough. As was apparent from discussion amongst Cabinet Members during the meeting even the proposal to carry out an options appraisal had raised concern.

In January 2015, the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee received a report on the Thameside Complex. It was decided at this meeting that a cross-party Task and Finish group could usefully support the detailed consideration of the options for the future of the services and the complex. Members of the committee felt the complex and its services were vitally important to Thurrock and needed proper consideration. The purpose and the aims of the review panel were to:

- Building upon the work completed to date, understand the current challenges and benefits of the Thameside Complex and providing services from it.
- Consider the proposed future options for the services as outlined in the Cabinet report of February 2015, using witness sessions, consultation and other research to provide a balanced view of each.
- Provide a thorough and balanced report to Cabinet outlining the Group’s consideration of each option.

A witness day was held to meet with voluntary sector tenants, service managers and theatre specialists in order for panel members to gain an insight into the challenges faced by the Thameside Complex and the benefits.

A final report is currently being prepared that sets out a vision for the Thameside Complex and for securing theatre provision in Thurrock.

## Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People

The topic of work experience was brought to the fore by the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which wanted to explore how the work experience offer could be improved in Thurrock to help young people into work locally. This was supported by the Youth Cabinet representatives who attend meetings of the Committee, who have been an active voice on matters affecting children and young people in the Borough.

Work experience has undergone significant change over the last four years. With a change of central government the statutory duty to provide work experience was removed and schools were given the opportunity to decide whether to continue with work experience or remove it from the timetable for young people aged 14-19.

As a result in November 2014 the Committee agreed to establish the Supporting Pathways into Work for Young People Review Panel to examine how Thurrock Council and its partners currently support young people into the workplace, particularly through teaching employability skills in education and the work experience offer in Thurrock. The group will make recommendations on how value can be added to the current offer.

The work on this review panel is currently ongoing and it is expected an update will be provided by the Committee in due course following which the panel will make its final recommendations.

# Call-ins

Thurrock's Call-In process is a vital aspect of the Overview and Scrutiny function. It allows Councillors or Members of the public to ask that a decision of the Cabinet not be implemented until it has been subject to scrutiny by the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

A Call-In of a Cabinet decision can be requested by two elected Members who are not members of the Cabinet, a voluntary group with an interest in the Borough, a local business situated in the Borough or ten residents in the Borough. The Call-In must be in writing and include reasons for the Call-In together with an alternative course of action.

The Call-In once it has been verified as legitimate and in accordance with the provisions of the council's constitution is then referred to the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration. The Committee receives all the evidence relating to the issue in question and following consideration, makes recommendations about whether the original decision should stand or whether Cabinet should be requested to reconsider its original decision.

During 2014-15 the Overview and Scrutiny Committees considered two Call-Ins as detailed below:

## Shaping the Council 2015 and Beyond

In July 2014 the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a Call-In in respect of Shaping the Council 2015 and beyond, which related to budget setting process. The Members who called-in the decision felt that further detail should be provided so that Members could evaluate the rationale for the savings proposals.

The Committee considered the comments of the Call-In Members together with the views and comments of officers and the Leader of the Council. Following a debate the Committee agreed to reject the Call-In on the basis that the Council Constitution distinguished between Council and Cabinet functions and it was within Cabinet and the Leader of the Council's authority to make in-year budget savings and efficiencies in line with the budget framework determined by Council.

## Investment in Highways Lighting

In September 2014 a Call-In was submitted in relation to Investment in Highways Lighting which related to the introduction of a more reliable LED light across the highways network. The Members who called-in the decision cited that the decision maker failed to undertake due consultation or have due regard for individuals and

communities served by Thurrock. Following a debate the Committee agreed to reject the Call-In, and that progress of the implementation of LED lighting would be monitored.