

**WHAT YOU TOLD US –
HELPING TO IMPROVE
COUNCIL SERVICES
2004/05**



A POEM FROM THE COMMUNITY
A Different Light – Images of Thurrock

Volunteering In the Community
Alf Adamson (1919-2004)

Working as a volunteer is a job well done
With a sense of appreciation with each passing sun.

Working as a volunteer gives you freedom of speech
It finds your voice, which is valued and deep.

Working as a volunteer allows you to understand
To have patience and faith that they will follow the band.

Working as a volunteer brings a notion of relief
Leaving no boundaries on what you can achieve.

Working as a volunteer takes you close to the community
Operating individually, or as a team, forming unity.

Taking on the role of a volunteer has
Greater rewards than it may first appear.

The gratitude from others drives your day
They gain your respect for all that you say.

It gives you a purpose and a place to be
It gives the right to say 'I'm proud to be me'.



WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?

Over the last year most of you will have been invited to take part in a postal or telephone survey, or have been invited to a meeting to discuss one of the many council services. These consultations are very important. They tell us how satisfied – or otherwise-you are with a particular service or the council generally. What you tell us will help us change what we do and the way we do it.

We always say 'we will feedback and tell you what we learned'. We know we are not always very good at this but we have started to improve in the last year. On our website you can read about the variety of consultations held during the last couple of years. This is the second annual sheet providing feedback on just a few of the consultations between April 2004 and March 2005.

We have included consultations carried out by our partners in the Local Strategic Partnership, Shaping Thurrock. The responses to these are of interest to us and can help understand how to improve our own services and to encourage others to improve the services for local people.

Unfortunately, we are unable to give you feedback on all the consultations in the last year, as there are far too many for us to cover in this document, so we have asked each council department to select one or two.

Consultation has begun on important development of a new Children's Service and there will be an update in the third edition of this document next year.

In this report we will briefly tell you what each consultation was for, what was learned and how we used, or will use, the information.

We also taking the opportunity to tell you about three examples where the council and residents worked together to produce something – this is known as community engagement or participation.

The three examples include the publication of a book of poems written by local people about life in Thurrock, the staging of the Mela Asian Festival and the work in developing the ageing strategy.

If you were involved in any other council consultation between April 2004 and March 2005 and would like to know the outcome, please let us know.

Carol O'Brien
Policy Officer
Corporate Improvement and
Performance Team
Civic Offices
Grays

Phone Number: 01375 652492
Email: co'brien@Thurrock.gov.uk
Fax: 01375 652785

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*** Full reports available on our website – www.thurrock.gov.uk**

QUALITY OF LIFE – ANNUAL TELEPHONE SURVEY

This is an annual telephone survey involving 1,266 people. We carry out the survey for the Local Strategic Partnership – Shaping Thurrock. Who used the information in the first survey three years ago to develop ‘ASPIRE – the Community Strategy’.

Last year we took a handful of the questions asked in this survey and set target against them so that we could measure whether the joint work of Shaping Thurrock and the Council had helped to make Thurrock a better place to live.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Of the 11 questions with targets, 8 have shown an improvement on last year. The two most impressive are:
 - 50% of women now feel safe if alone outside after dark this is an increase of 8% on last year.
 - 73% of you agree that your area is a place where people from different backgrounds and communities can live together harmoniously this is an increase of 14% on last year.
 - One of the two areas that has not improved but remained the same is your level of satisfaction with your neighbourhood.
- ▶ Your aspirations for Thurrock in the next 20 years has changed slightly from last year. You want:
 - Better policing/more emphasis on tackling crime
 - Improve access to sport/recreational facilities
 - Improve environment

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We have also asked about your satisfaction with your neighbourhood in the General Satisfaction Survey below. From the two surveys we are able to work out levels of satisfaction by wards/areas with this information we will target those wards with the lowest level of satisfaction and try to find out what the problem is and what if anything we can do to tackle this.
- ▶ Shaping Thurrock – Local Strategic Partnership will use your top aspirations to check that the work they are doing will aim to make the improvements you want.

Good News!

You told us you have a sense of pride about living in Thurrock. You believe it is important what people think of Thurrock as a borough, its identity, history and heritage.



ANNUAL GENERAL SATISFACTION SURVEY

In the past this survey was carried out once every three years. The three yearly postal survey is called a 'statutory survey', the government tells us we must do this, what we need to ask you and how to carry out the survey.

We decided after the last survey that three years is too long a gap and in fact if we really wanted to keep in touch with

your views on us and our services that this needed to be done once a year. Our intention is to find out where we are not providing the 'quality of service' you expect from us and to take action to improve these specific services. By carrying out the survey once a year we can then see if our efforts have made a difference by finding out if your levels of satisfaction have changed.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ We are not good at keeping land clear of litter and refuse.
- ▶ The things that most need improving are crime levels, health services and clean streets.
- ▶ Anti-Social Behaviour there are two issues of joint priority vandalism/graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles AND teenagers hanging around on the streets.

GOOD NEWS!

All eight of the services we asked you about have improved since the last survey in 2003. Satisfaction at the way the council runs things improved from 44% in 2003 to 53% in 2005



WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Each year we produce a document called 'Performance Counts' this tells you about our priorities for the year ahead, what we want to improve and how we plan to do this. We have a set of five priorities two of which clearly pick up on your concerns these are:
 - Creating a safer environment tackling crime and anti-social behaviour
 - Having a cleaner and safer environment by creating an attractive place to live.
- ▶ We monitor and report on progress against these actions on a regular basis to Councillors and will provide an update in next year's Performance Counts to show whether or not we have made the improvements we wanted to.
- ▶ We will take the opportunity throughout the year to update you via the local press in particular the Thurrock Gazette and the Community Focus page.

BUDGET CONSULTATION (COUNCIL TAX) JANUARY 2005

Each year we ask a set of questions around the council tax when setting next years budget. This helps us to compare year on year to see if your views on this remain the same or have changed.

This year we used the Quality of Life Survey to ask the questions and received 1,266 responses.

YOU TOLD US

- Your top 3 areas for spending in order of priority – schools, environment (including street cleaning and recycling), community safety and anti-social behaviour.
- 57% of you did not agree with the following statement that 'Council Tax should not be increased above inflation even if it means a reduction in services'

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Our priority areas for spending has resulted in:
 - Schools gaining an extra £6.9 million
 - Street cleaning an additional £300,000
 - Recycling and waste an additional £600,000
 - Community safety an additional £30,000 to work more closely with the police on specific tasks relating to anti social behaviour
- ▶ Council tax increased by 3.65% - which is slightly above inflation with the intention of improving the services identified above.

LAST YEAR YOU TOLD US

To begin the consultation on our budget setting and council tax earlier.

We responded by inviting members of our citizen panel to take part in a process of learning about how local government finance operates. This began in June.

At the end of each session we will ask the group for their views

HOW WELL DOES THE COUNCIL COMMUNICATE WITH YOU

Last year when you received your council tax bills we sent you a small survey asking questions about how you generally contact the council and how you have been able to find out about council services – we received 492 responses to this postal survey.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ 79% of you read the Community Focus page in the Thurrock Gazette and 47% of you read Tmail, which is also sent out in the Gazette once a quarter.
- ▶ In relation to reading these two documents you found the Community Focus easier to read (38%) than Tmail (24%)
- ▶ A large number of you want to read about
 - Changes to council services
 - Information about council services such as refuse collection
 - Useful contacts

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS

Following consultation with the local Asian Community and TRUST we staged a 'Mela Asian Festival' last year at Blackshots Grounds. This was covered on the Punjabi radio and on the day more than 2,000 people from all backgrounds attended. The event included Asian music, food, sport and costumes from around the world.

This project has brought the Neighbourhood Services closer to the Black Minority Ethnic community. And we are now working on other community projects and another event in August of this year.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We are exploring new distribution options to see if we can increase our circulation and regularly check what other inserts will be distributed with Thurrock News to minimize the competition for readers attention and interest when we circulate information inside the Gazette.
- ▶ We have adopted a new style of writing in Community Focus and used this for Thurrock News (formerly Tmail). We now keep articles short and snappy and use large pictures and bold headlines, which is the style used in Community Focus.
- ▶ In terms of Community Focus we are making further improvements to its readability. The page is now colour whereas before it was black and white. It also now appears earlier in the Gazette on a right facing page which is more noticeable. We have retained the subject list and sought to build on it with similar subjects.
- ▶ We have also realigned the focus in Thurrock News to the subjects identified by the survey such as changes to council services, information on services and useful contacts.

BEST VALUE REVIEW – SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION PASSENGER TRANSPORT SERVICE

As part of our best value service review we asked a number of different groups of people for their views on these services. We carried out one to one interviews with older people and adults with disabilities receiving social care. A postal survey was sent out via the schools for both parents and children to complete. We carried out 90 interviews and received 770 postal surveys.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ 62% of children and parents and 96% of social care client's state that the service is reliable.
- ▶ We learnt from both consultations that there are some health and safety issues that are of concern for those using the vehicles.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Councillors have agreed to a number of changes to the service over the next five years. We will aim to make the service more reliable and will measure this on a regular basis.
- ▶ One of our first actions is to develop a 'health and safety' action plan to tackle these issues this year.

GOOD AND BAD NEWS

All social clients are satisfied with the service. However this compares to only 49% of children/parents are satisfied with free home-to-school passenger transport services.

ADULT CARE TRUST

Consultation on the proposals around Health and Adult Social Care integrating to form a Care Trust has taken place. . The consultation carried out included both an informal and formal stage. The results from consultation so far confirmed that the majority of people supported the formation of a Care Trust in Thurrock.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ People with learning disabilities have clearly stated that at present they want the Council to continue to manage the provision of their Social Care services

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Services to this client group will continue to be managed by the Council.

STANFORD LE HOPE – PROPOSAL FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL

This consultation related to proposals to merge Stanford Le Hope Infant and Junior School into a single Primary School. On the advice of the schools' governors the consultation document was made available in a Bengali translation to ensure parents concerned with this proposal were actively included in the consultation process.

Responses on this consultation came from parents, governors and staff from the schools concerned. The majority of responses were from parents.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Most of you have stated that you support the proposed merger of the infant and junior schools.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Councillors were made aware of your views and have decided to approve the recommendations being made.
- ▶ We now need to comply with our statutory obligations and publish a statutory notice declaring our intention to close two schools and open a new one. This gives individuals an opportunity to lodge any objections they have. These will then be considered by the Thurrock School Organisation Committee.

POSITIVE ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE – WHAT THEY WANT

Our adolescent team has established three sets of groups that met over a period of time. At the first meeting the young people set the agenda around what interests them, which in turn sets out the objectives of the group for the next 12 sessions.

Our purpose for doing this is to gain information that tells us what young people actually want moving us away from us assuming we know what they want. Which means we can then look to change what we do to suit the needs of the young people we serve.

The three groups are a

- PAYP – Positive Activities for Young People
- Young Women’s Group
- Young Men’s Group

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Young people want to have a voice in the way in which things are planned for them.
- ▶ They feel that they are often isolated within their own community
- ▶ Some of the young people feel that there is not enough organised activity locally.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Consult with you in the planning and development of services, including asking you to present information to higher management and government inspectors.
- ▶ Creating opportunities for the wider community and local agencies to get involved in activities with you and reduce that feeling of isolation.
- ▶ Ensuring a variety of activities and ensure we have enough staff to make sure you all get a chance to be involved.

ENGAGING WITH OLDER PEOPLE

It is difficult to identify one single consultation with older people to discuss here and do justice to how well established the mechanisms are for engaging with older people and using the lessons learnt to develop good local services. Therefore the issues highlighted below have come from a number of different events.

Thurrock Older People at the Centre (OPAC) is a group of people who are 50+ and have volunteered to meet as a group and report to those producing the strategy for Ageing. They are determined that the strategy is developed with them their vision is ***'nothing about us, without us' and 'developing positive plans for people'***.

Another positive example of existing consultation and information sharing is through the activities of the Thurrock Over Fifties Forum (TOFFS).

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ TOFFS report that public services have over the year been more responsive to the needs of older people and from the work of OPAC confirm that older people feel more involved with decisions and now have influence.
- ▶ More needs to be done around involving and providing services for black minority ethnic groups and those who are housebound.
- ▶ Generally there are four issues that are of concern for older people
 - Access to medical care both routine and emergency
 - Safety and the fear of going out in the evening this creates a feeling of isolation
 - Equally public transport is also causing problems of isolation
 - The need for better communications and clarity on where to access information

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ A black minority ethnic elder now attends Thurrock National Service Framework group. There will be a day on advice around safety and falls for black minority ethnic elders and the Beehive Centre in Grays will hold multi-cultural lunches twice a week.
- ▶ Each of the four issues will be picked up in and covered by the Strategy for Ageing and already this year we have
 - A not-for-profit domestic service has been introduced and is run by Age Concern.
 - Extra health care has been commissioned and available in Thurrock, including foot care workers and a falls coordinator.
 - Held an introduction day organised by TRUST for workers from different agencies, health, social care, pensions to meet with elders and their families from black minority ethnic communities

SUPPORTING PEOPLE DEVELOPING A STRATEGY

The Supporting People service provides extra support to adults who require some help to live independently in their own homes. There is a wide range of support for example people who can help you to manage your money, learn to look after yourself for instance teaching you to cook for yourself or putting you in contact with social care and health services.

The Government expect us to produce a five-year strategy that has involved us getting the ideas for improvement from people who use these services.

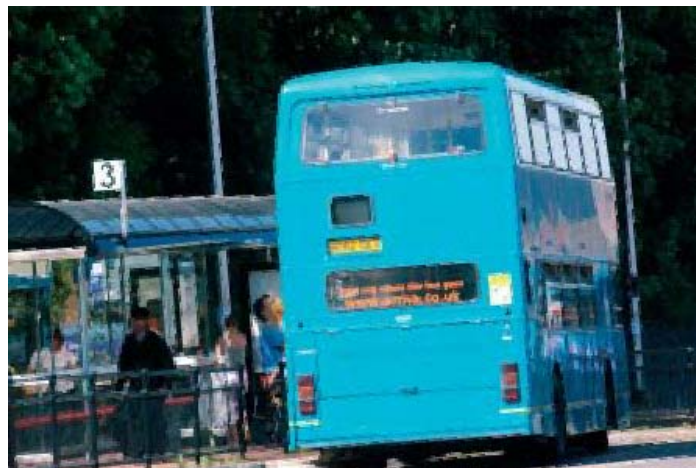
YOU TOLD US

- ▶ We still don't know how many people need this service.
- ▶ Because we don't know who needs it we don't really know what support services we should be purchasing over the next few years.



WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We have a programme up to August 2007 to find out who needs the service – starting with ex-offenders/people at risk of offending and older people.
- ▶ Once we have an idea of the demand and needs of specific groups of people we will be able to develop a plan around purchasing support services for instance with older people there may be a demand for home care.



SUPPORTED HOUSING FOR TEENAGE PARENTS UNDER 18

We leased 9 units of accommodation to them to provide semi-independent housing with support to ensure that young mothers under the age of 18 do not become socially isolated.

The consultation with the young parents was part of a review process looking at how well the scheme operates and whether or not it is in fact helping the young parents to learn the skills necessary to live independently.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Because facilities are shared and any visitor could gain access to any part of the building there are both security and potential child protection issues.
- ▶ Again because of the design and shared facilities the young parents are not able to learn the skills needed to live alone in their own property.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ A decision has been made to design and build a new property for the young parents needing to use this scheme. The current property will go back to the Council to be used as standard council accommodation.
- ▶ Current residents in the existing scheme will be involved in designing the new property



CHOICE BASED LETTINGS FOR COUNCIL HOMES

We wanted your views on us introducing a new way of offering our empty council properties to people wanting to move into council homes. Instead of us choosing individual people that we want to offer a particular property to - we want to move to a position whereby those of you who qualify for council accommodation receive a regular magazine or can log on

to find out what properties are available for renting and you can select to ask to become the new tenant of the property you like. It then becomes your choice to take on the tenancy not ours. We consulted with a cross range of people and representative groups and used a number of different methods. The following combines the key messages that we picked up on doing this.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ There is general support for us to set up a Choice Based Letting Scheme.
- ▶ There were concerns about how easy and fair the scheme will be for everyone to access and use. Examples could be people with a disability or sensory impairment, those who cannot read or have a language barrier, those without access to the Internet or lack the knowledge to use it.
- ▶ Concerns that people outside of Thurrock will get our properties.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We hope to be introducing a new 'Choice Based Letting Scheme' by the end of this financial year.
- ▶ We are working with voluntary organisations and other public agencies on agreeing a 'Vulnerability Charter' – this is aimed at looking how to make sure we give fair access to housing for everyone.

There will be people moving into Thurrock from outside it would be unfair and potentially illegal for us to just say 'no'. However, we will as a result of your concerns develop a selection criteria that will ensure that we only accept individuals with a good reason for wanting to move into Thurrock – such as someone needing to be near a sick/elderly relative to give them regular support.

MYSTERY SHOPPING IN LOCAL HOUSING OFFICES

We have developed a Mystery Shopping Scheme with our tenants who have assessed the quality of the service they received both over the phone and by visiting local housing offices.

The scheme has been so useful we are planning to carry out the exercise again. We also held a conference in July 2004 – ‘Tenants looking forward’, to feed back the results to tenants, officers and councillors.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Local Offices design needed altering.
- ▶ Front line staff needed to ensure to give their name when answering telephones.
- ▶ The leaflet racks in offices need to be regularly checked and updated.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We have improved access and layout at the local offices.
- ▶ Staff are aware of the need to give their names and progress in this area can be monitored through the next mystery shopping exercise.
- ▶ We now regularly check the leaflet racks.

COUNCIL TENANTS – RENT SETTING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

We are obliged to consult and inform tenants around our intention to change the rental amount due for any of our council properties rented out. Whilst doing this we take the opportunity to find out if there are any areas of concern that our tenants have about our landlord service. We have a number of tenants who are part of a formal consultation panel that we use.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ The Consultation Panel have asked if they can be directly involved with planned maintenance programmes.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Tenants are now involved in the selection panels for repairs contractors

COUNCIL TENANTS – SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING REPAIRS

Between April 2004 and March 2005 we sent out 8,500 satisfaction cards to tenants receiving repairs of these 1,100 were returned. We also carry out a monthly random telephone survey and made approximately 800 successful telephone calls where we spoke to someone.

GOOD NEWS – YOU TOLD US

95% of you returning the satisfaction card felt the service was satisfactory or good.

94% of you responding to the monthly telephone survey felt the service was satisfactory.

OPEN SPACES – YOUR VIEWS

A number of linked consultations have taken place over the last year looking at your views on open spaces within Thurrock. By this we mean parks, playgrounds, country parks, riverside, allotments, amenity land, countryside, cemeteries and churchyards. A connecting theme has also been leisure and sports facilities that are available across the borough. The purpose for this collection of consultations is to help us produce an 'Open Space Strategy' that will identify what we will be doing in relation to improving services over the medium to longer term.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ You are very positive about your open space, you want to conserve remaining space, and to improve it.
- ▶ You believe that open spaces are being misused. By motorcyclists, irresponsible dog owners and vandalism, which gives rise to safety concerns.
- ▶ You want to see improvements in parks in particular seating, catering, toilets and in some cases play equipment

- ▶ You do not find access to our countryside sites easy for people with a disability or families.
- ▶ A large number of you think footpaths are inadequately signposted and poorly maintained. They are also difficult for people with disabilities to negotiate

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Work has started to improve fencing to help reduce misuse by motorbikes
- ▶ We will look to improve the parks that are used a lot but are also run down.
- ▶ We are making it easier for people with a disabilities and families with prams and pushchairs to access three of our countryside sites.
- ▶ We will work with the Local Access Forum and landowners to improve the local footpath network.

YOU TOLD US THAT:

Only one in five people say they never use local parks. In contrast, more than half of those surveyed use a local park at least one a fortnight, and one in eight visit daily.

SENSORY AWARENESS CONFERENCE

We held a conference in November 2004. 80 people attended who identified their key issues of concern for local people who have sight and/or hearing problems. The conference identified 26 individual points some of which seem to overlap and touch on a number of similar themes. For instance 12 of these points touch on the need for adaptations and specialist equipment.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ You state that there is a need for communication systems that are inclusive from the council such as large print in relation to Council Tax information, adding sub-titles to our video information, Council officers attending the Lip Reading Group meetings to provide information and talk about council projects.
- ▶ Provision of adaptations and specialist equipment for instance making council venues deaf friendly and accessible. You state that Thameside Theatre need to provide facilities for the visually impaired. We should ask you to test out new equipment and give simple instructions on how you can operate the equipment.
- ▶ One very specific and important issue for the Council to pick up on – a request that *'we have more staff who are deaf aware and with whom we can communicate. Customer services – people should be trained about communicating with deaf people'*
- ▶ Transportation is generally an issue for those of you wanting to get to a health care provision, just getting out and about generally to socialise and for those who are deaf simply learning to drive.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We have started a two-day training course on how our staff communicates with local people.
- ▶ We are now looking at what adaptations and equipment we have, what needs up grading, replacing and identifying new items we need to purchase. We need to then allocate funding to pay for this over the next few years.
- ▶ We are looking at ways of encouraging and enabling staff to learn sign language and developing staff training on the diverse needs of our local population so you can receive an improved customer focused service.
- ▶ We have provided information on driving instructors for the deaf. However, at this point the other transport issues raised are to be honest difficult for us to tackle at this time.

UNDERSTANDING COUNCIL CONTRACTS

We carried out two workshops last year in April and November with our partners the Local Enterprise Agency as part of our work with local businesses. We want to help develop our relationship as a council with small to medium sized local businesses and ensure that our contracts are easy to understand.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ You wanted to know why the contracts had to be so complicated
- ▶ You didn't understand the 'jargon' used and usually found it difficult to know who to talk to within the council.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ We run 'Understanding Council Contracts Workshops' aimed mainly at 'sole-traders' and new businesses just starting.
- ▶ We provide at these workshops guidance on the rules and regulations that we must follow as a council, we work through a mock contract step by step and finally have a 'jargon busting' session.

GOOD NEWS

Many of these sole-traders have since won contracts with the council. Some have started as sub-contractors and later, as their businesses have grown, have become a main contractor.

They told us that they felt that these workshops and support of the Thurrock Local Business Initiative were defiantly a great help.

WILLS HILL TRAFFIC CALMING MEASURES

During our initial consultation with tenants about the refurbishment of the car park area at Wills Hill it became apparent that residents had a number of issues that needed to be addressed.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ People had started to park on the pavements
- ▶ Others were riding motorcycles and driving cars at speed, causing mayhem and risk of injury to children playing.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Traffic calming measures were installed with planters and heavy-duty bollards carefully placed to create a pleasant and practical environment that effectively prevented individuals from behaving in this dangerous manner.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL SERVICES – EXTENDED OPENING HOURS OF LIBRARIES

Over the last 18 months there have been a variety of activities across the cultural and recreational services that have built an overview of levels of satisfaction and identified things that people using the services 'dislike'. This includes the outcomes from the Annual General Satisfaction Survey mentioned above.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Satisfaction has improved in all areas of cultural and recreational services since 2003 – the highest satisfaction is with the Library Services now at 74%
- ▶ A very low number of those responding to consultation actually identified the thing that they 'disliked' the main issue has been the opening times of the libraries.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ Simple just extending opening hours is a costly decision. So the service through consultation sought to find out if it would be possible to change the opening hours. Closing the library at unpopular times and opening at the times you have said you want us to open the libraries. The result is that we are clear this is not really an option so we are trying to find the funding to enable us to see if we can extend opening times at certain libraries.

A DIFFERENT LIGHT – POEMS FROM THE COMMUNITY

The Arts Generate programme is a partnership initiative with Arts Council England, East in which they have been working with five local authorities working towards the regeneration of their communities. Thurrock is one of the five local authorities, and here we wanted to ***'change perceptions of the Borough, to show it in a different light, to find a way to draw attention to its hidden beauty and the vibrant life of its many communities'***.

Working through the national performance poetry agency, Apples and Snakes, their poets worked with the following groups – women refugees from Afghan, Kurdish and Albanian backgrounds, adults with learning disabilities, older people who had done voluntary work, a group of people selected through Thurrock Racial Unity Support Task Group and finally a group of teenagers from the Gateway Community College in Tilbury.

WHAT HAVE WE DONE/WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

- ▶ With our partners we brought a selection of these poems together and published a book entitled 'A DIFFERENT LIGHT – IMAGES OF THURROCK'
- ▶ Each year we produce a document called 'Performance Counts' this tells you what we will do to improve things over a number of years in relation to local services for local people. We have identified six priorities from a variety of consultations – this year we have taken at least one poem from this book that links to each of our priorities.

On the first and last page of this book are two examples of poems from this book.

YOU TOLD US

- ▶ Your views and experiences of life in Thurrock through your poems.

A POEM FROM THE COMMUNITY
A Different Light – Images of Thurrock

Super Thurrock People
Terry Jeffrey

Super Thurrock Man
Arrest the jobs and vandals
Stops them stealing car handles
They've got no feeling whilst in a hurry
He cooks a cracking curry
Works hard for many hours
Stops it raining
But he's not complaining
Super Thurrock Man
He's got Super Powers

Super Thurrock Lady
Is a sharing, caring neighbour
Helps Super Thurrock Man
Do the work the hard labour
She points the way to Lakeside
And she and Super Thurrock Man decide
How to make the traffic safer
Super Thurrock Lady's friends plant the flowers
Super Thurrock Lady
She's got super powers

