



Thurrock Council's Annual Report 2025/26



A fresh start for
Thurrock

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Introduction

Welcome to Thurrock Council's Annual Report, which reflects on our performance, achievements and challenges over the past year.

This report provides an overview of how we have performed against our [Corporate and Improvement Plan 2025-2029](#) priorities, highlighting where we have made progress and identifying areas where we could have done more. It demonstrates our commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement, ensuring that residents can see how decisions, investments and services are contributing to positive outcomes for our communities.

Over the past year we have delivered a wide range of initiatives to support residents, strengthen local services and invest in our place. We have continued to focus on protecting the most vulnerable, improving customer experience, supporting economic growth, tackling environmental challenges and maintaining the essential services that residents rely on every day.



Highlights from our year

APRIL 2025

Over 91% of children found out they had been offered a place at their first-choice primary school

JUNE 2025

Our local historic landmark and visitor attraction in East Tilbury, Coalhouse Fort, received £236,500 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help secure its long term future. The funding will support the Reanimating Coalhouse Fort project, which will involve local residents and history enthusiasts in shaping the fort's future



AUGUST 2025

Adult Social Care services received a strong 'Good' rating from national regulator. The report highlighted our forward planning and innovative working with partners outside the traditional social care remit to put every person in the centre of a conversation about their care

SEPTEMBER 2025

Work began on Teviot Avenue to bring additional affordable housing to Aveley



MAY 2025

On 8th May we celebrated 80 years since Victory in Europe (VE) Day with events across the borough. Thurrock's Museum held a VE80 Exhibition for a month where you could learn about the significant role the area played in World War II



JULY 2025

Sport England awarded £9.8 million to get us more active, improve our health and wellbeing and strengthen communities. This year it included Beat the Street in South Ockendon and walking groups at Koala Park in Tilbury



2025/2026

NOVEMBER 2025

Thousands of school children learnt how to stay safe online by attending our annual online safety event



JANUARY 2026

6th Report from Commissioners praised Thurrock Council's continued improvement and can now appoint its own Chief Executive

MARCH 2026

Thurrock was selected as one of only seven local authorities across England to take part in a landmark national pilot bringing new financial support and improved services to kinship carers, where family or friends take care of children whose parents cannot look after them.

OCTOBER 2025

Young people with special educational needs or disabilities from across Thurrock took part in a special workshop at Grangewaters Outdoor Education Centre that looked to boost the skills they could use in their supported internships and future employment

DECEMBER 2025

On Christmas Day, our Children's Services hosted a festive dinner for our Care Leavers complete with presents and games



FEBRUARY 2026

Our Complex Housing Intervention Programme won in the category of Most Innovative Approach to Resident Welfare, having been recognised for delivering an innovative approach to transforming the lives of a group of Thurrock tenants at the Housing Innovation Awards



Improving and Enabling



98.81%

of customers were satisfied with telephony response from our Contact Centre



1 minute **25** seconds
is the average response time by our Contact Centre



£13.9 million

Savings identified for 2026/27



21

consultations on the issues that matter to local people with **4,637** responses



72.5%

of our tenants were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with overall service of our Housing teams (up from 69.2% in 2024/25)



91%

of children starting primary school attended their top preference school



£9.7 million

provided in Council Tax Support



95.62%

of savings made against our target

What difference did we make?

Value for money

We have made our work more open and improved how we make decisions. Because of this, trust in the council has grown, and members will now appoint our own Chief Executive rather than having one appointed by central government. The sixth commissioners' report since the 2022 intervention says councillors and staff have made strong progress in improving governance and oversight.

£13.9m of savings have been identified this year by working more efficiently, so we can protect frontline services, as residents asked us to do. However, there are still serious funding challenges that Thurrock Council faces and more work is required to understand where further improvements can be made and future savings achieved. It is only by making savings that we can continue to run our core services.

Nationally, many councils struggle to spend the money developers provide to support local infrastructure as part of the planning process, which if not spent is returned to developers. In Thurrock, we've tackled this by bringing teams from across the council together on a regular basis to better understand the issue. As a result, we have spent more on local infrastructure to benefit communities than the previous two years combined. This includes £600,000 being allocated to replace Thameside Primary School's temporary alternative provision (learning environment for children who cannot attend mainstream) with a new build which will benefit children across the borough.

It is important that we look closely at all the money being spent by the council, including that paid to our staff. This means we must continue to find ways to work as effectively as possible. After working closely with trade unions, staff and commissioners, we developed a new People Performance Management Policy that went live on 1 April 2026. This policy shows staff how their work fits into the bigger picture, makes responsibilities clear, drives productivity and ensures performance problems are handled fairly.

Learning from others

One of the issues identified during government intervention was that the council wasn't learning enough from other councils. We've worked hard to change this by building a more open and learning focused culture.

A key example is inviting the Local Government Association to carry out a Peer Review of our Housing Services. Alongside an external review of our Housing Revenue Account business plan and our Consumer Standards self assessment, this has helped us develop a clear action plan to improve services for our tenants. 72.5% of our tenants were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with overall service of our Housing teams (up from 69.2% in 2024/25).

Services designed for residents

Residents have played a bigger role in the design of our services. We ran 21 consultations with 4,637 responses. Following feedback on HGV restrictions, we have introduced traffic cameras to improve road safety, air quality and reduce congestion. Further work is planned based on residents' views, including new outdoor gyms in Purfleet-on-Thames and Corringham Town Park, as well as accessible play areas for all children in Purfleet-on-Thames and in Dilkes Park, Ockendon. These are expected to be ready by summer 2026.

Digital

Providing digital options is making our support more accessible. The Smokefree app, used by smokers to help them quit, has seen more residents in the most deprived areas of Thurrock access support.



What difference did we make?

Stronger partnerships

Strong and productive partnerships have been built, including with Thames Freeport. The Freeport is an economic zone spanning Barking and Dagenham, Havering, and Thurrock, designed to boost trade and create jobs by offering incentives and simplified customs processes. We have worked closely with Thames Freeport on a range of exciting initiatives, launching the Connectivity Innovation Lab, establishing the Health Artificial Intelligence Centre, completing the first home retrofit through the Sustainable Construction Lab, and rolling out new skills and employability programmes across all three boroughs.

The first ever Eastern Region Football Tournament took place for care-experienced young people aged 14 to 25. Our Thurrock team competed against Suffolk, Cambridge, and Norfolk—and proudly lifted the trophy after a series of brilliant matches. This event was made possible through the collaboration of participation teams across the Eastern Region as well as the support from colleagues in the After Care Teams. A true example of what can be achieved when we work together.

Where could we have done more?

Good progress has been made in improving Thurrock's financial stability, but the council still carries significant debt.

In addition to the debt, the council experiences the same pressures of any unitary council - increases in the scale and complexity of needs in Adult Services, SEND demand, and Home to School Transport are being felt across the country. One way to meet the rise in costs is by raising the amount of revenue through council tax and other incomes, and the other is through transformation of service delivery.

To continue providing high quality services for residents, it is essential that the Transformation Programme plans are fully delivered so the savings can be achieved. Much of the change will be driven by digital and automation opportunities which will lead to residents being able to access services more easily.

As the Transformation Programme progresses it must involve the people who use our services to ensure it does what it needs to and works for Thurrock.

People



99.2%

of Thurrock A Level students achieved one or more A-E grades - an increase of 3% from last year (compared to 97.5% nationally)



13,213

families registered with Family Hubs



200

residents signed up to Thurrock Works programme, with 67 already progressed into employment



£1 million

additional Sport England funding to tackle physical inactivity



3,300

people supported with an Adult Social Care service



56%

of smokers successfully quit smoking after 4 weeks of setting a quit-date



258

looked after children well cared for and supported



What difference did we make?

Health and Wellbeing

Early intervention and preventing poor health and wellbeing helps people stay healthier, safer, and more independent for longer. Reducing avoidable future demand for more serious and acute issues helps to ensure public money can be spent on the things that matter most to our residents.

We are addressing the two biggest health challenges in Thurrock, smoking and physical inactivity, which are the leading preventable causes of hospital admissions and death.

We joined the East of England partnership working towards a smoke-free future. Anyone who successfully stops smoking using our service can receive a free two month gym membership through our partnership with Impulse Leisure. 56% of smokers successfully quit smoking after 4 weeks of setting a quit date (the highest rate in the East of England).

£1 million of additional funding from Sport England has been secured to help tackle inactivity. A Beat the Street game took place across Belhus and Aveley from 23 April 2025 to 21 May 2025 where 1,956 participants walked, cycled, scooted, ran and wheeled a total of 6,213 miles together. Initiatives like these encourage regular physical activity, promoting healthier lifestyles and create accessible opportunities for people of all ages to build active habits. This supports our ambition as a council for Thurrock residents to be physically active and maintain a healthy weight.

Adult Social Care provides long-term support to approximately 3,300 people. Over 75% of support is provided to people aged 65 and over. Most support is provided by external care providers to people in their own home, and Thurrock Council has been extremely successful at enabling people to stay at home where appropriate to do so. Thurrock's reablement service is key to this success.

Adult Social Care provides a range of support options – including day opportunities, supported accommodation, and residential care. The focus of Adult Social Care is to ensure that people are able to achieve the outcomes that matter most to them giving people choice and control.

Keeping family at heart

Much of the care provided within the community is done by family members – and this often goes unnoticed and unsupported. Thurrock has been selected as one of only seven areas in the country to take part in a new kinship care pilot. This programme supports family members—such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles—who step in to care for children when their parents are unable to do so. Katie, a kinship carer in Thurrock, said: “This support will be life-changing for so many families. I've seen first-hand how kinship care can transform a child's life by giving them a stable, loving home, and a consistent parental figure they can trust. It can be a really difficult and emotional journey when you start as a kinship carer. Having enhanced support will mean carers won't feel so alone and can put more time and energy into what truly matters – helping their child to feel safe, settled and loved.”

13,213 families registered with our Family Hubs, accessing a wide range of support—from health services and parenting advice to baby groups and early years activities—all in one place. Family Hubs are helping our communities to be better connected to services and support networks, children are better prepared for school and parents less isolated with improved confidence. After receiving advice from one of our hubs, a parent has told us how they were able to access support that they were previously unaware of. The support has enabled them to better manage family life and cope with cost of living challenges by accessing cheaper and free alternatives, such as the foodbank and library.

What difference did we make?

Giving support earlier

Latest data shows that 8.1% of mums are known to be smokers when they have their baby in Thurrock, higher than the national average which is 6.1%. The Swap to Stop programme has been introduced across maternity, housing and substance misuse services, making it easier for people in these settings to access support to quit smoking. In addition, the Quit to Fit incentive scheme has been expanded, so women can now access two months of Impulse Leisure membership from four weeks after giving birth, helping them stay motivated and support their wellbeing.

To further improve support within maternity services, 100 carbon monoxide monitors have been funded. These allow remote monitoring, removing the need for face to face appointments and making it easier for pregnant women to take part in the national smoking in pregnancy incentive scheme.

Opening Doors to Employment

Hundreds of people of all ages came along to a free careers fair to explore job opportunities, apprenticeships, and training pathways. A variety of major employers were there to showcase their latest vacancies, including Border Force, the NHS, Marfleet & Bradshaw, and the Royal Opera House, giving attendees a great chance to discover new career options.

Our Thurrock Works programme has supported 200 residents, with 67 already securing jobs, with personalised advice and coaching, including support with CV writing. Thurrock Adult Community College has also delivered six skills bootcamps in two key local sectors—Childcare and Health & Social Care. By focusing training in areas where there are strong job opportunities, we've increased residents' chances of moving into work.

Where could we have done more?

The number of people smoking in Thurrock is falling, but not as quickly as we would like. We know that improving health outcomes takes time, and progress relies on continuing evidence-based approaches through our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and strong partnership working.

Services across the council have worked hard to tackle longstanding challenges - making a real difference on issues like smoking will require a whole council effort.

We are delivering excellent Children's and Adults' Services—rated Outstanding and Good by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission respectively. There is still more we can do to ensure that the targeted interventions we put in place lead to better outcomes for residents, while also reducing costs to the council—without the care and safety of people ever being compromised.

Place



284

street light
columns renewed



6,800

potholes repaired



1,500

properties visited with
wellbeing and property
checks delivered to over
3,200 tenants



On **1** Safety Day

32 drivers made safe following
seatbelt offences

67 speeding offences given,
including HGV recorded at
44mph in a 30mph zone

5 uninsured vehicles seized



99%

of household waste
collections completed
successfully



5

Trading Standards disruption
days, seized more than



£13.8m

funding from the
Freeport to fund several
infrastructure projects

110,590

illicit cigarettes and

28.02kg

of hand-rolling tobacco

What difference did we make?

Protecting our environment and safety

Our services are becoming more sustainable for the public purse, residents' own wallets and the planet. Over 6,800 potholes have been repaired, preventing danger and costs from burst tyres, 284 street lighting columns renewed, and over 99% of household rubbish bins collected successfully. A new Re-use Shop opened at Linford Household Waste and Recycling Centre that offers residents the chance to buy good quality, pre loved items at low prices—such as small pieces of furniture, homeware, kitchen items, books, DIY materials, and small electricals.

The council joined the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) in Grays to tackle dangerous driving and support Vision Zero—the goal of eliminating all deaths and serious injuries on Essex roads by 2040.

In July, the council, SERP engagement team, and Essex Police held a Vision Zero Day in Grays. Together, they focused on the “Fatal Four”: speeding, using a mobile phone while driving, not wearing a seatbelt, and driving under the influence. During the day, the SERP team spoke with more than 500 residents and local businesses about the real life impact of risky driving behaviours.

Purfleet Primary School also took part, with Year Five pupils completing pedestrian skills training.

Following feedback from the summer public consultation, traffic enforcement cameras have now been introduced in parts of Thurrock to improve road safety, reduce congestion, and prevent Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV) misuse.

Over the course of five Trading Standards disruption days, we seized 110,590 illicit cigarettes and 28.02kg of hand rolling tobacco — more than double the amount seized in 2024/25 marking the most successful enforcement year on record. Enforcement activity led to four closure orders, seven HMRC track and trace referrals, and a successful licence review at a premises selling illicit tobacco.

To protect children and young people from accessing underage products, Trading Standards conducted 53 responsible retailer visits and 36 Challenge 25 test purchases.

A brand new play area in Chadwell St Mary Park on the Heath opened in August. It features an adventure castle with slides, ladders, and a climbing wall, along with swings, a roundabout, and nature explorer boards to help little ones learn about the flowers and mini beasts they might spot in the park. The entire area has been built on a soft play safety surface to help keep children safe while they play. Children's play areas in parks have positive impacts on children, families, and the wider community. Research from UK government, universities, and the Children's Commissioner shows that well designed outdoor play spaces such as this one, improve health, wellbeing, social development, community cohesion, and local quality of life.

Transport

Residents previously told us that they want more frequent bus services. The 88, 100, and 200 bus services have been extended to run more frequently, seven days a week. This means better connections on key routes—from Orsett to Grays, Lakeside to Basildon, and Grays to Basildon via communities including Tilbury, Chadwell St Mary, Stanford le Hope, and Corringham.



What difference did we make?

Improving the place we live

Work is already underway at Tilbury Civic Square, where improvements have included upgrades to the road and footpaths, as well as new flowerbeds and green spaces on the north side of the square. This forms part of the £22.8 million Tilbury Town Deal, which will also deliver improvements to Tilbury Station and create a brand new Youth Zone in Anchor Fields.

A master developer has been appointed for the Purfleet-on-Thames regeneration scheme which means we can start working on a detailed development agreement for the project, which has the potential to provide 2,850 new homes, a new town centre, and commercial spaces.

Our libraries and community hubs are delivering services to our neighbourhoods. After recognising a need for post walk meeting space, Mummy's Day Out began meeting at Belhus Library, creating a warm, safe place for parents to connect and children to play. Even after funding ended, the group still meets weekly, with many families now library members.

The new Selective Licensing scheme for private landlords will ensure safer, more secure housing, whilst also benefiting the wider community with the ability to tackle properties that blight the area though poor condition or tenants that cause anti social behaviour to their neighbours. As a landlord ourselves, we visited over 1,500 properties and spoke to over 3,200 tenants, which has been recognised by the Housing Innovation Awards, replacing transactional audits with personal conversations and acting on issues tenant's raised including raising repairs on the spot.

More investment and more local jobs

Thurrock benefited from £13.8m worth of seed funding from the Freeport to fund several infrastructure projects. This included £1 million towards the UK's largest lorry electric charging hub that opened in the Port of Tilbury in February 2026, delivered in a partnership of Fleete, Port of Tilbury and Thames Freeport. This is a state-of-the-art facility, planned to be replicated across the UK that has launched in Thurrock. This aligns with our new approach to tackling climate change of cost and energy reduction.

The majority of other projects that received funding are due to be completed in 2026/27. This includes:

- £6 million towards the Hive to provide meeting, training and networking spaces will increase opportunities for upskilling, recruitment and business to business meetings
- £3 million towards Thurrock Youth Zone- a new youth facility in Tilbury that will provide recreational, sporting, and creative activities, alongside skills, enterprise, and employability programmes
- £1.75 million towards Stanford Le Hope station to improve rail services, increase capacity and interchange facilities.
- £2 million towards HyTilbury- a commercial-scale hydrogen production facility supplying low-carbon hydrogen to help decarbonise the port and surrounding area

What difference did we make?

Opportunities to increase local jobs for local people are being generated following our planning approvals. The Port of Tilbury expansion was approved with blueprints suggesting **6,600 local jobs** would be created once the project is operational.

Residents had a number of opportunities to enjoy Thurrock's rich cultural and industrial heritage, from marking the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe to securing new funding for Reanimating Coalhouse Fort.

Arts and culture

Thurrock Libraries Writers Circle launched at Grays Central Library in response to local demand. The Writers Circle has grown rapidly into a supportive creative community for aspiring writers. Members now collaborate beyond the sessions; with one volunteer's work whose writing has been picked up by Film Thurrock for filming projects.

We saw more than 1,000 pupils from primary schools across Thurrock join singers from the Royal Opera and Ballet House to perform in the Thurrock Junior Music Festival—a wonderful showcase of young talent from across the borough.

Where could we have done more?

We need to strengthen our approach to homelessness prevention and our role as a social landlord. Addressing this challenge will provide more effective support for residents and improve housing outcomes for some of our most vulnerable communities.

We have also identified the need to progress a Local Plan and strengthen our partnerships with local businesses. This will help create a stronger local economy, attract sustainable development and improve the places where people live and work. Delivering meaningful stakeholder engagement within project timescales has been another challenge

during the year. Building more opportunity for involvement into future projects will help ensure decisions are better informed, reflect local priorities and secure greater community support.

We need to ensure unused capital funding is directed towards projects that deliver lasting benefits for our communities. By doing so, we can strengthen services, make better use of resources and achieve greater long-term impact for local people.



How we spent public money

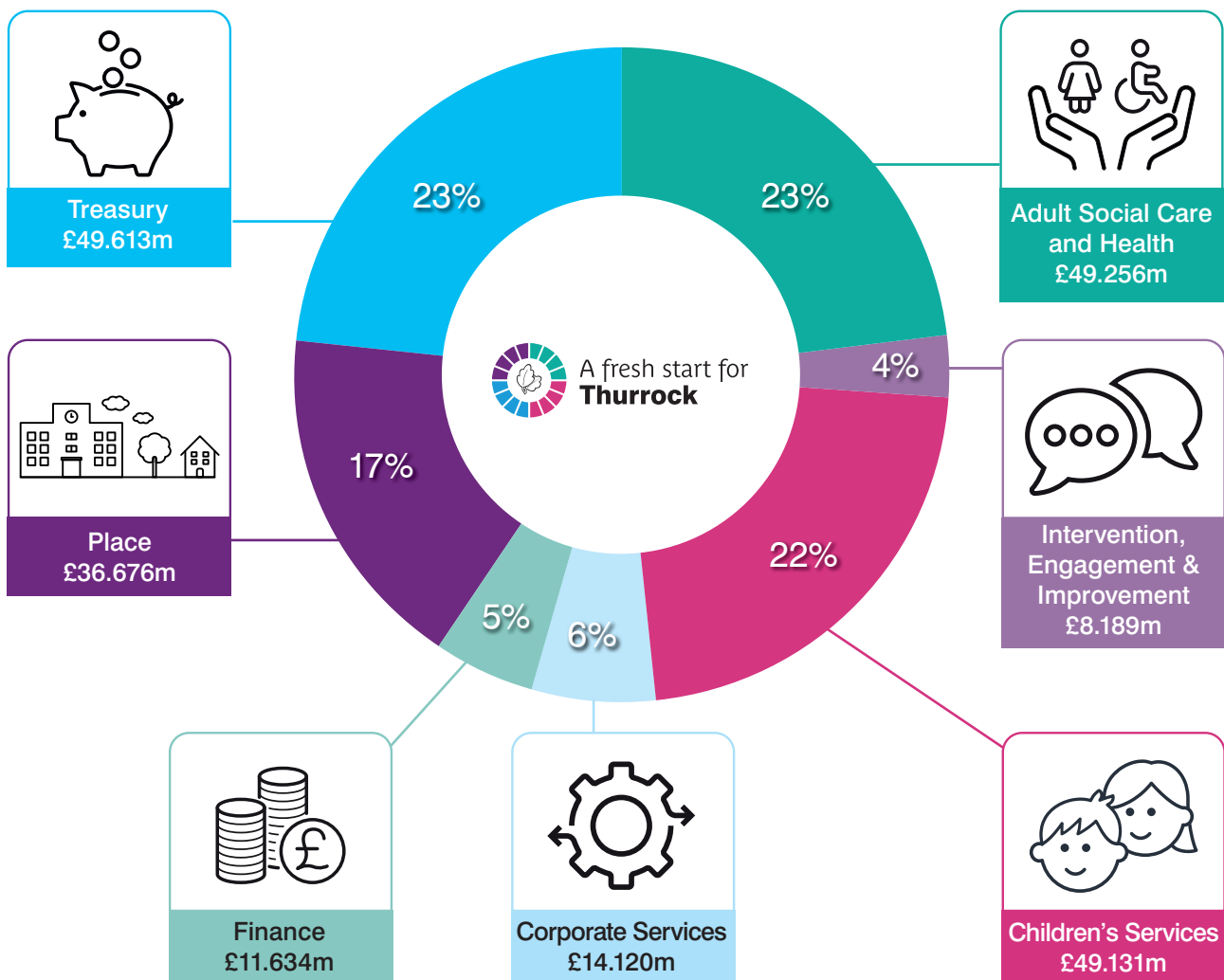
Our approach to balancing the budget continues to be focussed on:

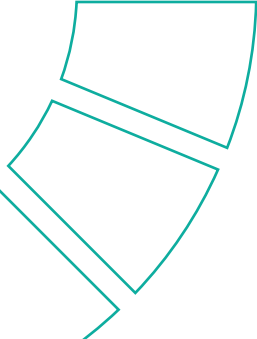
- protecting frontline services wherever possible
- working more effectively, efficiently, economically and innovatively
- trying to limit any increases that affect residents

In 2025/26 the council spent £219m, not including council housing and schools which have dedicated funding streams.

Below is how we spent each pound:

● Adult Social Care and Health	23%
● Children's Services	22%
● Corporate Services	6%
● Finance	5%
● Intervention, Engagement & Improvement	4%
● Place	17%
● Treasury	23%





Where to find out more

We are committed to our improvement journey and rebuilding trust with our residents. Reporting on our performance and assessing our impact is part of a wider suite of activity we constantly undertake to maintain progress.

You can find out more about how we monitor our performance throughout the year by visiting:
thurrock.gov.uk/how-we-are-doing/council-performance



