

Thurrock Council

Finance Recovery Board

Minutes – 2pm, Monday 9 December 2024

Attendees:

Nicole Wood (NW) – Finance Commissioner (Chair)
Dave Smith (DS) – Managing Director Commissioner/ Chief Executive
Cllr John Kent (JK) - Leader of the Council
Cllr Sara Muldowney (SM) – Cabinet Member for Resources
Cllr George Coxshall (GC) – Opposition Deputy Leader
Dawn Calvert (DC) – Chief Financial Officer / Section 151 Officer
Luke Tyson (LT) – Chief Intervention Officer
Daniel Fenwick (DF) – Executive Director of Corporate Services
Alex Powell (AP) – Assistant Chief Executive
Cristina Hall (CH)– Chief of Staff to the Commissioners
Amber Robinson (AR) – Executive Assistant, Chief Executive (Minutes)

Apologies:

Cllr Lynn Worrall (LW) - Deputy Leader
Cllr Andrew Jefferies (AJ) – Opposition Group Leader
Mark Bowen (MBo) – Deputy Monitoring Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1. NW welcomed board members to the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

2.1. CH updated the Board on the actions from the last meeting. Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Update on Local Government Finance Policy Statement

3.1 NW gave an update on the recently published Local Government Finance policy statement. It was noted that the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was still expected to be published in late December. NW's update covered plans for the Recovery Grant, the Adult Social Care grant and the two new grants which have been announced; the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, noting that this will also bring new responsibilities and the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant, which is a one-off payment, although Thurrock are yet to receive their allocation amount for this.

3.2 There has been a new national group that has been established which is the strategy group overseeing the approach to the new funding distribution for 26/27.

4. Update on Budget Preparations

4.1 DC went through the draft budget report, noting that the announcements above from the policy statement have not yet been built into the budget at this stage. DC confirmed that the budget report was circulated in draft format last week and a final version will be circulated. An updated report will go to February Cabinet.

4.2 NW raised that it was vital for the council to be transparent on their reserves policy as well as the main cost drivers and how this growth will be managed over the next 4 years. There was a discussion that this would need to be linked to a transformation intent. The Board agreed that deep dives should be carried out on these growth drivers, particularly Temporary Accommodation, Children's Services, and waste management, with updates reported back to FRB. DS updated the board that ImPower are carrying out a review of Children's Services. AP noted that strategic commissioning function is being reviewed.

- **Action: Deep dives to be carried out on the main cost drivers with updates on this work to be brought back to a future FRB meeting.**
- **Action: An update on the work completed by ImPower to be brought to a future FRB meeting.**

5. Summary of Q2 Position

5.1 DC noted that the Q2 report covers the period until the end of September. The revenue has come down slightly from Q1, but there is still a pressure of £1.8m. Additional spending measures may need to be put in place to ensure the council delivers a balanced budget if these figures remain as they are at the end of the year. There is more work to do to improve the robustness of reporting on capital, DC is looking at ensuring there is more rigour in the reporting and narrative across both capital and revenue. A series of deep dives have been carried out on revenue to make sure the identified savings can be delivered.

5.2 Between Finance and the Change team, they will be reviewing the savings tracker in early January to understand how things are progressing.

5.3 MHCLG have made a formal request for an update on the council's EFS request. A provisional request will be submitted in mid-December however discussions will continue through to February.

5.4 JK thanked DC and all of the team that has gone into the draft budget reports and the further work ahead of final budget.

6. Forward Look of Agenda Items

6.1. Board members agreed the forward look for the next meeting.

7. AOB

7.1. There being no other business, the meeting closed.

Appendix I: Full Meeting Actions

- **Action: Deep dives to be carried out on the main cost drivers, with updates on this work to be brought back to a future FRB meeting.**
- **Action: An update on the work completed by ImPower to be brought to a future FRB meeting.**