

Thurrock Council

Governance Recovery Board

Terms of Reference

Context

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities used his Best Value powers to appoint Commissioners at Thurrock Council on 2 September 2022. He directed the Council to prepare and implement an Improvement and Recovery Plan to address the failures in the finance functions of the Council.

On 16 March 2023, the Secretary of State further directed the Council to include in their Improvement and Recovery Plan an action plan to strengthen the Authority's governance function and gave Commissioners responsibility for all functions associated with the governance, scrutiny and transparency of strategic decision making by the Authority. On 17 July 2025, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution announced an extension of the intervention at Thurrock Council until 30 April 2028 and issued new Directions.

A Governance Recovery Board is required to oversee work to address the Directions made by the Secretary of State; and to consider and report on progress as required by the Directions.

The Board will meet at least 6 times per year and will report to the Improvement and Recovery Board.

Purpose

The Council is directed to continue to implement and report on plans for their continuous improvement and recovery, to ensure all required actions and changes are fully implemented to the satisfaction of the Commissioners, with resource allocated accordingly to drive, embed, and sustain improvements across governance, culture, partnership, use of resources and service delivery.

The Board will oversee the Council's governance recovery activity, including actions to:

- Strengthen the Authority's system of internal controls, notably risk management and internal audit (elements of this will also be overseen by the Finance Recovery Board).
- Embed governance improvements across the organisation.
- Ensure that the role of Accountable Body to the Thames Freeport is exercised to the satisfaction of the Commissioners.

The Board will also enable the Managing Director Commissioner as Chair to provide assurance to the Improvement and Recovery Board that the Council has proper management arrangements in place to achieve these objectives.

To this end, the Board will:

1. Promote a corporate, Council wide culture of effective and open governance alongside a culture of trust, collaboration, accountability and transparency and

- review the implementation of policies and procedures to achieve the improvements set out in the Directions and determined by Commissioners.
2. Oversee the delivery of the governance and scrutiny elements of the Council's improvement plans and the actions identified within the Governance Review to ensure desired outcomes are achieved within a reasonable timeframe, and report progress to the Improvement and Recovery Board.
 3. Manage the formal governance reporting element of the progress reports to the Secretary of State to the timescales set out in the Directions or as determined by the Commissioners.
 4. Oversee the forward plan arrangements and improvements relating to the quality of formal decision making and ensure appropriate and timely plans are put in place to deliver appropriate governance and scrutiny.
 5. Oversee the process of assurance to Commissioners of the exercise of the Accountable Body for Thames Freeport by Thurrock Council.
 6. Provide advice, guidance and challenge to the Council on the actions required.

It is for the Council to take the actions required to deliver improvements, using the policies and procedures it already has in place or introduces to enable its improvement plans to be delivered.

The Board will act as a consultative forum, providing challenge and advice as appropriate. The Commissioners will exercise the powers given to them by the Directions as and when necessary.

The Board will consider wide-ranging and potentially contentious solutions to rectify the current financial position of the Council. For the Board to operate effectively, it is critical that Board members and deputies agree to treat these sensitive discussions as confidential. The Board will not meet in public. Its minutes will be published on the Commissioners page on Thurrock.gov.uk.

Membership

- Dr Dave Smith – Managing Director Commissioner/ Chief Executive (Chair)
- Gavin Jones – Lead Commissioner
- Denise Murray – Finance Commissioner
- Cllr Lynn Worrall – Leader of the Council
- Cllr Lee Watson – Deputy Leader of the Council
- Cllr Lynda Heath – Cabinet Member for Public Protection, Constitutional and Civic Affairs
- Cllr George Coxshall – Opposition Group Leader
- Cllr Barry Johnson- Opposition Group Deputy Leader
- Daniel Fenwick - Executive Director of Corporate Services, and Monitoring Officer
- Helen Nicol – Assistant Director of Legal and Governance, and Deputy Monitoring Officer
- Dawn Calvert - Chief Financial Officer and Section 151 Officer
- Satinder Jas – Interim Head of Financial Assurance, Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance
- Alex Powell – Assistant Chief Executive

- Claire Demmel - Executive Director of Place
- Luke Tyson – Corporate Policy and Improvement Manager
- Crissy Hall – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners
- Amber Robinson – Executive Assistant

Deputies to attend as required, fully briefed and able to contribute. Other attendees may be required as determined by the matters considered by the Board.

Updated: October 2025