

Thurrock Council

Governance Recovery Board

Minutes - 2pm, Monday 9 September 2024

Attendees:

Dave Smith (DS) – Managing Director Commissioner / Chief Executive (Chair)

Cllr John Kent (JK) - Leader of the Council

Cllr Lynn Worrall (LW) - Deputy Leader

Cllr George Coxshall (GC) – Opposition Deputy Leader

Crissy Hall (CH) – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners

Claire Demmel (CD) - Interim Executive Director of Place

Amber Robinson (AR) – Executive Assistant (Minutes)

Guests:

Helen Nicol (HN) – Assistant Director Legal and Governance

Anthony Fletcher (AF) –Head of Place Performance, Support and Intelligence

Apologies:

Cllr Andrew Jefferies (AJ) – Leader

Alex Powell (AP) – Assistant Chief Executive

Daniel Fenwick (DF) – Executive Director of Corporate Services

Luke Tyson (LT) – Chief Intervention Officer

Paul Turner (PT) – Director of Legal, Essex County Council

Welcome and Introductions

1.1. DS welcomed board members to the meeting.

2. Matters Arising

2.1. Minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

2.2. DS updated the board that he has met with Thames Freeport regarding the lack of recent progress and mitigating actions have been put in place.

2.3. DS confirmed that the Head of Financial Assurance, Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance has added training on risk management for Members to the proposed training schedule. They will be invited to the next meeting to provide an update.

- **Action: The Head of Financial Assurance, Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance is to attend the next GRB to update the board on risk management training.**

3. Review of Terms of Reference

3.1. CH advised that the Terms of Reference have been updated. The significant changes are to update the membership to the board and the frequency of the board meetings to allow more time to demonstrate progress and delivery between meetings.

3.2. JK asked how we would promote the work of this board corporately, CH suggested that board members consider ways of reporting progress to other elected members, and noted that minutes of previous meetings will be published online. DS noted that there will soon be a report going to Full Council, updating members on the progress made against the IRP so we can consider which aspects of the board's work can be referenced within the report. Other suggestions included using staff briefings to provide updates to officers.

4. Constitution Review

4.1. HN presented the paper; it was noted that this follows DF's recent governance review. Previously CIPFA had been conducting a review of the constitution, however, this has now been brought back in house and will be done by senior officers.

4.2. HN outlined that it is a statutory requirement for all councils to have a constitution setting out how the council will make their decisions and how they operate. Reviewing the constitution is also a key area of focus for the council arising from the Directions and the IRP.

4.3. HN shared a timetable which showed that the constitution will be ready for May 2025 in time for the all-out elections. The constitution will be split into 4 sections (Part 1 – Purpose, Part 2 – Decision making, Part 3 – Scrutiny and open governance and Part 4 – Governance and Ethical framework). The revised constitution will go to Full Council for sign off.

4.4. JK asked whether senior officers have the capacity to do this additional work. HN agreed that this is a significant piece of work but noted that DF has previous experience of this process, that there are other internal resources that can be called upon when needed and that senior officers' time has been dedicated to this task.

4.5. HN confirmed that following the board's sign off on this process, updates will be presented at the Constitution working group.

- **Action: Final version of the constitution review paper to be circulated with GRB members.**

5. Update on Place Portfolio

5.1. CD presented a comprehensive update to the board which gave an overview of the services within Place, together with risks and opportunities for each core pillar within the directorate.

5.2. JK asked for clarification around how other directorates were involved in the council's work on economic development and how the teams worked together. CD confirmed that teams within her directorate work closely with key officers in the Assistant Chief Executive's (ACE) directorate. The roles in the ACE Directorate promote Thurrock as a place for partners and businesses to invest in, bringing in private sector interest, and then implementation sits with the team in Place.

5.3. LW welcomed the detailed update and noted that this shows how far the service has come over the past year. The Board welcomed the opportunity to take stock of progress in this area and reflect on their journey so far.

6. AOB

6.1. JK raised that there were no senior officers present at a recent People O&S committee, noting that this gives the wrong impression when we are looking to improve member and officer relationships.

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

APPENDIX I: Full Meeting Actions:

- **Action: The Head of Financial Assurance, Internal Audit, Risk and Insurance is to attend the next GRB to update the board on risk management training.**
- **Action: Final version of the constitution review paper to be circulated with GRB members.**