

# A Housing Strategy for Thurrock Executive Summary

2015-20



## INTRODUCTION

Thurrock Council's Housing Strategy for 2015 – 2020 sets out our plans over the next five years and demonstrates our approach to housing across the borough, working in partnership, to deliver more for our communities.

Thurrock Council's vision is to create a place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish. The core priorities set out in the Housing Strategy reflect this ambition and run across all five priorities from Thurrock's Community Strategy which aims to:

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Build pride, responsibility and respect
- Improve health and wellbeing
- Promote and protect our clean and green environment

Providing good quality housing is key to enabling our residents to live healthy and happy lives. Our Strategy is not just about social housing and services to our tenants. It is about how the council ensures there is good quality housing of all tenures for everyone who lives in Thurrock now and in the future. It sets out our vision for working together with all housing providers to deliver both housing led growth and regeneration in the borough and improve the health, wellbeing and life opportunities for our communities. Through the Strategy, we want to unlock the door to healthy happy homes and lives for all residents living in and moving to the borough.

## OUR VISION

***Thurrock is a destination of choice with growing healthy and prosperous communities, living in high quality housing across all tenures where residents are empowered to help themselves, and supported with consistently excellent services.***

## DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

We have developed three core priorities that represent our key focus areas over the next five years from 2015 to 2020 to support our vision.

We will be proactive in our service delivery, informed by a clear evidence base to deliver maximum value through our limited resources. Critical to our success is our ability to work in partnership to deliver the aims of the Strategy. This is by engaging and working across departments within the council together with external partners to maximise opportunities for both our council tenants and residents living in Thurrock.

We have set ourselves ambitious targets over the life of the Strategy to drive forward our vision to create healthy and prosperous communities.

## RESOURCES AND REPORTING

We have developed a 30 year HRA business plan to identify the resources we have and how these will be used to improve our existing stock and deliver much needed housing. Through robust financial management, we will ensure that the housing objectives are appropriately resourced. We will endeavour to access additional funding, both from central government and by working in partnership with the third sector and the private sector, to support our objectives. Through continuous improvement and innovation, we can ensure we maximise our resources and deliver more for less.

Our Key Measures of Success will be used to report our progress against each objective and the advancement of the overall Strategy. We will provide biannual updates to our Members and produce an annual report on success to date. This will be made available to all our stakeholders and published on our website to ensure accountability and transparency.



## CORE PRIORITY 1: RAISING THE BAR

Delivering high quality housing across all tenures is central to ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes for our residents. We want to make every contact with our customers count, providing services that are personalised and address individuals' specific needs. We will ensure that our services represent value for money, going over and above our statutory duties, with high levels of customer satisfaction.

### DELIVER TAILORED AND NEEDS LED SERVICES TO ALL RESIDENTS

Through our Strategy, we will enhance the ways that residents can engage with the council, from introducing Annual Showcases to increasing the use of online communication to ensure we deliver services that meet our residents' needs. We will work to engage with all our communities including our leaseholders and Gypsy and Traveller communities and continue to invest in our Neighbourhood Action Plans, improving estates and addressing local need.

**Key Measure of Success: 20% increase in number of residents engaged, including those from 'hard to reach groups', to provide tailored and needs led services**

### ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF HOUSING IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Improving housing standards within our own stock is not enough. To enable us to support landlords and tenants in the PRS and increase the number of available properties to the council, we will set up a Private Sector Landlord Forum and explore the viability of a social lettings agency. We are also investing in an evidence based review to support the development of a licencing scheme for private landlords and better manage issues faced by residents living in the private rented sector. We will review and define our approach to the management of Houses of Multiple Occupation.

**Key Measure of Success: 40 new private landlords engaged each year**

### PROVIDE HIGH QUALITY COUNCIL HOUSING

'Transforming Homes' is our £68m ambitious internal and external housing improvement programme to substantially improve the quality and energy efficiency of our council homes. We will ensure that over the life of the Strategy, all council homes have been assessed and improved through this programme. We will empower and educate our residents to take responsibility for low level repairs in their home. We will continue to strengthen our approach to ASB, working closely with residents to reduce nuisance and crime in their local area.

**Key Measure of Success: 100% of homes surveyed and works completed on Transforming Homes programme**

### DELIVER VALUE FOR MONEY WITH HIGH LEVELS OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

We will continually review our services to ensure they represent value for money. This means making best use of our resources to deliver high quality services, raising customer satisfaction, from training and developing our staff to achieving savings in the procurement process and developing a proactive approach to repairs.

**Key Measure of Success: Increase customer satisfaction to 80%**



## CORE PRIORITY 2: IN ON THE GROUND FLOOR

We are changing the way we deliver our housing services, supporting residents early on to sustain their home and prevent them from reaching crisis – empowering them to be as independent as possible. Through our preventative approach, we can use our limited resources more effectively and enhance residents' wellbeing. Health and employment is intrinsically linked to housing and we want to work in partnership through cross departmental working and with external partners, to maximise the opportunities for our residents addressing social and health inequalities across the borough.



### EMPOWER RESIDENTS TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES WITH ACCESS TO ADVICE AND SUPPORT

We want to provide residents with the information and advice to be empowered and help themselves, with a range of support tools online. We will deliver more community based solutions with investment in mobile technology for our staff and supporting the development of community hubs across the borough. By working with schools and colleges, we will support young people and care leavers to understand the housing choices available to them and prepare them for moving on.

**Key Measure of Success: 80% of housing service and assistance requests are completed online**

### SUPPORT OUR RESIDENTS THROUGH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION TO SUSTAIN THEIR HOMES AND AVOID CRISIS

Wherever possible, we want to prevent residents from reaching crisis through early intervention and provide a targeted service for those in need. We are taking a continuous improvement approach to our services, and are undertaking the 'Gold Standard Challenge'. To increase the supply of homes for those that are in need, we will explore incentives for PRS landlords. We will work collaboratively with credit unions to support residents at risk of financial exclusion and assess the viability of a mortgage rescue scheme to support people to remain in their own home.

**Key Measure of Success: 97% of cases requiring enforcement action are successfully resolved with sustainment of tenancy**

### SUPPORT RESIDENTS TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THEIR INDEPENDENCE

Supporting people to remain independent in their own homes enhances the wellbeing of our residents and reduces demand on wider services. We want to continue to work more closely with health colleagues to ensure we can support our growing older population with the roll out of our sheltered housing services. We will make better use of our existing adapted properties and support those with mental ill health and learning disabilities to access suitable accommodation.

**Key Measure of Success: 25% increase in residents reporting an increase or sustainment in independence through housing interventions**

### CREATE EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS AND SUPPORT RESIDENTS TO ACCESS THESE

Housing can create and improve employment opportunities for our residents. With over 10,000 homes in the borough, we are in a unique position to engage with tenants furthest from the labour market and support them to find sustainable employment. Together with our partners, we will create apprenticeships and employment opportunities with targeted interventions on our estates during regeneration.

**Key Measure of Success: Over 350 residents supported to access employment pathways with 50% securing employment**





### CORE PRIORITY 3: LOOKING AHEAD

We need to ensure that our communities have access to a range of housing options both now and in the future. Increasing the supply of housing is central to this – and with the reduction in government funding together with the current housing landscape in Thurrock – we need to find innovative new approaches to provide the much needed housing, working across both the public and private sector to tackle this growing issue.

#### BOOST THE HOUSING MARKET DELIVERING NEW AFFORDABLE HOMES TO MEET LOCAL NEED

Through our HRA business plan, we have the resources to not only improve our own stock but deliver much needed housing for the borough. Together with Gloriana Thurrock Ltd and other partners, we will deliver 1,000 affordable homes over the life of the Strategy. We will support residents into home ownership, from exploring a 'Rent to Buy' scheme to the implementation of our 'Helping Hand' scheme for tenants eligible under the Right to Buy.

**Key Measure of Success: 1,000 new affordable homes delivered over the next five years**

#### INCREASE HOUSING SUPPLY, WORKING COLLABORATIVELY WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR

We know we cannot deliver all the housing that is needed alone. We need to work with the private sector to unlock sites with planning permission to increase housing supply. We will establish key relationships with Registered Providers and Developers. We have been successful in securing Housing Zone status in Thurrock. We will now identify a developer partner to access funding through this programme.

**Key Measure of Success: 10% increase over current projection in number of new homes delivered through the private sector over the next five years**

#### ENHANCE LOCAL COMMUNITIES THROUGH ESTATE REGENERATION

Estate regeneration provides the opportunity to enhance estates, address issues of health inequalities and deprivation whilst increasing the provision of housing on site. Seabrooke Rise is the first estate in our borough where we are developing a wholesale regeneration plan. The Garrison estate, in Purfleet, will be our second regeneration and represents a unique opportunity within the wider renewal plans for Purfleet to work with a private sector partner to deliver improvements in the local area. We want to develop a strategy to regenerate and improve all council estates in Thurrock, particularly the Flowers estate in South Ockendon and the Broadway estate in Tilbury, and identify a regeneration partner to deliver this.

**Key Measure of Success: Commencement of regeneration of the Garrison Estate, Flowers Estate and Broadway Estate**

#### ENSURE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR HOMES TO MEET RESIDENTS' NEEDS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

We need to make sure that our homes – new and existing – are suitable for our residents both now and in the future, supporting the local environment and sustainable living. We will build all new council homes to London Space Standard and Lifetime Homes ensuring a high quality design. This will include the development of further schemes to HAPPI standard to support our older population. From the establishment of vegetable beds to encouraging physical activity through cycle paths, we will support residents to live a healthy and active lifestyle. We will continue to strive to increase the SAP rating of our homes and conduct stock rationalisation to ensure homes are fit for purpose.

**Key Measure of Success: 100% of new council homes built to London Space Standards and Lifetime Homes, reflecting high quality design and materials**