

# Thurrock Borough Council

## Improvement and Recovery Board

### Minutes – Tuesday 1 November 2022

#### Attendees

Gavin Jones – Essex County Council Commissioner (chair)

Nicole Wood – Essex County Council Commissioner

Patrick McDermott – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners

Cllr Mark Coxshall – Leader, Thurrock Council

Cllr Graham Snell – Cabinet Member for Finance, Thurrock Council

Cllr Kevin Bentley – Leader, Essex County Council

Ian Wake – Acting Head of Paid Service

Jonathan Wilson – Acting Section 151 Officer

Debbie Knopp – Director of Transformation, Essex County Council

Phil Cruddace – Advisor to the Leader, Essex County Council

Karen Wheeler – Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth, Thurrock Council

Jackie Hinchliffe – Director of HR, OD and Transformation, Thurrock Council

#### Apologies

Cllr John Kent – Opposition Group Leader, Thurrock Council

## **1. Welcome and Introductions**

- 1.1. Gavin Jones welcomed Board members to the first meeting of the IRB and introductions were made.
- 1.2. Gavin Jones set out that this Board is part of the formal governance of the intervention and that these meetings are the Council's opportunity to demonstrate progress of recovery to Commissioners.

## **2. Terms of Reference**

- 2.1. Gavin Jones introduced the Terms of Reference (ToR) and a discussion about the need for a corporate, Council wide recovery was reflected in the Board membership.
- 2.2. Board members discussed some members that were missing from the ToR and agreed to ensure meeting dates worked for members. With those changes, the ToR were agreed.

**Action: Amend ToR to include Cllr Kevin Bentley and Thurrock Senior Officers.**

**Action: Ensure IRB dates work for members.**

## **3. Protocols – confidentiality**

- 3.1. Gavin Jones reminded Board members of the importance of confidentiality.

## **4. Governance Overview**

- 4.1. Gavin Jones provided an overview of the governance model of the intervention and raised the importance of the process for paper clearance.
- 4.2. Cllr Kevin Bentley commented on the importance of members receiving high quality papers in good time and offered support from Essex County Council. Phil Cruddace gave a brief update on the Essex County Council process.
- 4.3. Cllr Mark Coxshall agreed the importance of these processes.
- 4.4. Gavin Jones reflected on the importance of keeping the quality of reports high and restated Commissioner expectations.
- 4.5. Ian Wake reflected that the new Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer would lead on ensuring good governance and quality.

**Action: Update governance slides to reflect workstreams.**

**Action: Essex County Council to provide advice and support on the forward plan.**

## **5. Finance Workstreams Update**

- 5.1. Jonathan Wilson introduced the report, updating on the work the Council has done with Commissioners to understand scope and governance of the intervention.
- 5.2. Work is progressing and there have been urgent decisions on investments. All this work builds into the MTFs and setting budget in February 2023 on a challenging timetable.

- 5.3. Nicole Wood reflected that the Q2 report will be published at the end of year, showing the in-year deficit and leading to a request for support and a possible s114 notice. There was a discussion that followed on the EFS process, timeline and the need for a well-developed communications and engagement plan.
- 5.4. here followed a discussion on the process and impact of a s114 notice.
- 5.5. Responding to the update, Nicole Wood made the following formal recommendations to the Council:

### **Recommendations**

**RAG reporting to be in place for all future reporting outputs and appropriate level of detail to be providing on complex outputs (notably Treasury/Assets).**

**The Commissioner requests further detail about the granular pathway for delivery of these critical products which form part of the directions, including stakeholder management.**

**Commissioner seeking assurance about internal technical capacity to deliver on these key products.**

**Provide deadline by which a written headline assessment of the net potential market value of the disposable assets (priority non HRA assets).**

**Develop a resource plan (of external and external capacity) to provide assurance over capacity and capability to mobilise this significant workstream.**

**Need to have a documented independent appraisal of the 'tail' of investments and clarity on deadline of provision of that given its implications for the accounts and MTFP.**

**Need clarity on the timeline of the procurement of financial investment advice, to assure or otherwise Thurrock is on track for a third party view.**

**Urgent requirement for gap analysis from strategic advisors' group of civil or recovery work commissioned in regard to the investment portfolio and the advisors/brokers who enabled those investments.**

**Action: Ensure appropriate communications and engagement plan is in place for the publication of the Q2 report.**

**Action: Work to continue to prepare for a possible s114 notice.**

## **6. Governance Workstream Update**

- 6.1. This is a standing item to allow for any governance issues to be raised in future meetings.

## **7. Draft Improvement Plan**

- 7.1. Karen Wheeler presented the latest version of the Improvement and Recovery Plan (IRP). This draft brings together the Directions and recommendations from reports into one place.

- 7.2. There followed a discussion on the publication of the IRP.
- 7.3. Cllr Kevin Bentley reflected that member engagement on the IRP is essential.
- 7.4. Nicole Wood asked how Commissioners would be engaged in the iterative process and reflected the IRP needs more granularity.
- 7.5. Gavin Jones reflected that the IRP needs to have a narrative that demonstrates and understanding of the issues and the determination to address them and also includes detail on programme delivery.

**Action: IRP to be iterated with appropriate input from members with a narrative that reflects the position and granularity of the improvement plan.**

## **8. Communications and Engagement Update**

- 8.1. Karen Wheeler provided an update on communications and engagement building on the discussion of the Q2 report,
- 8.2. The Board noted that the end of this month would bring some key communications moments that require planning both internally and externally.

**Action: Communications and engagement plan and media grid to be updated and circulated to the Board.**

## **9. Forward Plan**

- 9.1. The Board reflected that the detail required for the forward plan had been covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**Action: Forward plan to include a helicopter view for IRB.**

## **10. Risks and Issues**

**Action: Further work required to develop approach to risks for IRB.**

## **11. Any other business**

- 11.1. There being no other business, the meeting closed.