

Thurrock Borough Council

Improvement and Recovery Board

Minutes – Monday 13 February 2023

Attendees

Gavin Jones – Essex County Council Commissioner (Chair)

Nicole Wood – Essex County Council Commissioner

Patrick McDermott – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners

Cllr Deb Arnold – Deputy Leader, Thurrock Council

Cllr John Kent – Opposition Group Leader, Thurrock Council

Cllr Kevin Bentley – Leader, Essex County Council

Ian Wake – Acting Head of Paid Service

Gareth Moss – Acting Chief Financial Officer

Jonathan Wilson – Acting Section 151 Officer

Mark Bradbury – Director of Place

Karen Wheeler – Director of Strategy, Engagement and Growth

Jackie Hinchliffe – Director of HR, OD and Transformation

John Jones - Interim Director of Legal and Governance

Phil Cruddace – Advisor to the Leader, Essex County Council

Luke Tyson – Delivery and Strategy Manager

Gary Staples – Transformation Manager

Debbie Knopp – Director of Transformation, Delivery and Support, Essex County Council

Apologies

Cllr Graham Snell – Cabinet Member for Finance

Cllr Mark Coxshall – Leader, Thurrock Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Gavin Jones welcomed Board members to the meeting.

2. Minutes/Actions of the previous meeting

- 2.1. The Minutes of the previous meeting and actions were agreed.
- 2.2. Patrick McDermott confirmed there was once outstanding action for Commissioners to meet officers on the resourcing plan.

3. Reflections on the minded to announcement

- 3.1. Gavin Jones reflected on the announcement of the minded-to decision to expand the Directions.
- 3.2. In the discussion that followed, the Board highlighted the importance of internal communication and engagement for staff.

4. Section 114 stocktake and learning

- 4.1. Nicole Wood set out the background and operation of the s114 notice.
- 4.2. Commissioners set out that this is an opportunity to pause and reflect on the process, take learning from how the spending panels are operating and understand the savings that have been made. It was felt that this should come in a report to next meeting of this Board in March.
- 4.3. Commissioners also raised the need for clarity on the operation of a statutory service.
- 4.4. The 23/24 budget process has highlighted that the s114 notice will have an impact, alongside driving further savings and it is important this is communicated on the rise of the budget.
- 4.5. Cllr Kent commented that oversight and transparency of the s114 process is essential for all members.

Action: Prepare a paper for March IRB that reflects on the operation of the s114 notice to date. This is to include detail on the operation of spending panels, any learning and savings made as a result.

Action: Consider communications to members and staff about the continued operation of the s114 and further savings on the rise of the 23/24 budget.

5. Improvement and Recovery Plan

Overview of IRP Report

- 5.1. Ian Wake updated on progress against the IRP and staffing to deliver it. The PMO has been aligned to the themes of the IRP and teams are building the granularity of assurance.

Theme updates

- 5.2. Gary Staples updated that the programme has been updated to the project book.
- 5.3. Gavin Jones asked about the detail of milestone management.
- 5.4. Cllr Bentley raised the importance of member ownership of the plan and there was a discussion about the all-member session in March.
- 5.5. Cllr Kent raised the importance of the IPR reflecting both the Directions and the reality of the situation in Thurrock.

Political engagement plan

- 5.6. Karen Wheeler updated on the engagement of members on the plan.

Action: Develop the detail of reporting on the IRP for the next reporting period.

6. Culture Change Plan

- 6.1. Jackie Hinchliffe presented the Culture Change Plan which reflects the IRP but is more granular.
- 6.2. Particular attention was given to the interdependencies in areas like the council vision and operating model.
- 6.3. In the discussion that followed, the Board discussed, the culture of the organisation and the starting point, and the mechanisms in place to understand the experience of staff.
- 6.4. Cllr Arnold raised the work still needed on member officer relations and there was a broader discussion on member ownership of culture and induction and training of new members.

Action: Further develop the culture change plan to reflect the discussion on the role of members and their ownership of the plan.

7. Communications and Engagement

- 7.1. Paul Masterman provided an update on ongoing communications and engagement on the intervention.
- 7.2. There was a wider discussion about measuring success in communications, and the comms grid.

Action: Confirm comms planning for the forthcoming publication of the BVI Report and any announcements on the scope of the intervention.

8. AOB

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