

# Thurrock Borough Council

## Improvement and Recovery Board

### Minutes – Tuesday 14 March 2023

#### 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 John Kent – Opposition Group Leader, Thurrock Council

Ian Wake – Acting Head of Paid Service

Gareth Moss – Acting Chief Finance 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

Asmat Hussain - Interim Director of Legal and Governance

Alix Macfarlane – Intervention Communications Lead

Luke Tyson – Chief Intervention Officer

Gary Staples – Transformation Manager

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

#### Apologies

Cllr Graham Snell – Cabinet Member for Finance

Cllr Kevin Bentley – Leader, Essex County 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.

## **3. Operation of the s114 Notice**

3.1. Gareth Moss presented the paper on the operation of the s114 in Thurrock since December 2022.

3.2. There has been a review of control systems and there has been a need to systemise some processes to avoid bureaucracy problems.

3.3. Where there has been some resistance, this has been down to a lack of understanding of processes.

3.4. In the discussion that followed it was clear that where statutory service levels are undefined, there has been subjective interpretation. It was also raised that reports and business cases do not yet consistently explain how the s114 is relevant in the context of the decision. Commissioners were clear; reports must do this.

3.5. It was reported to the Board that there will be a strength-based review of the s114 process conducted by colleagues at Essex County Council.

3.6. In reference to the impact of the s114 on recruitment, Commissioners asked if there had been a reduction in approaches. Jackie Hinchliffe confirmed that this was the case and that rejections were at around 10%. Commissioners agreed that this is an important metric that requires further analysis.

**Action: Periodic review of the operation of the s114 notice is required and should come to IRB as appropriate. This should include further analysis on the impact on recruitment requests.**

## **4. Improvement and Recovery Plan**

### ***Overview of IRP Report***

4.1. Ian Wake provided an overview of the progress since the last meeting.

4.2. In the discussion that followed, Cllr Kent raised concerns about the engagement undertaken with Members on the IRP. Cllr Coxshall said that there was work to do on consultation with members.

**Action: It was agreed that as part of the reframing of the IRP following the expansion of the intervention, a framework for engagement would come to a future IRB.**

### ***Theme Updates***

4.3. Jackie Hinchliffe provided an update on the leadership and culture workstream, reflecting on the conversation about engagement with Members.

- 4.4. Gareth Moss provided an update on the financial sustainability workstream. Following the budget, there is to be a focus on the review of companies, council owned properties and close work with external auditors on historic accounting and valuations.
- 4.5. Karen Wheeler provided an update on the strategy workstream, with a focus on the plans to refresh the IRP and develop that into a corporate plan for the Council.
- 4.6. Asmat Hussain provided an update on the governance and scrutiny workstream. There are concerns about the capacity to deliver good governance that the improvement work seeks to address. The next stage is a review of financial delegations.
- 4.7. Mark Bradbury provided an update on the place workstream where there is a focus on what improvement means for the local plan, a review of both capital and regeneration projects.

## **5. Communications and Engagement**

- 5.1. Alix Macfarlane provided reflections on her first period in her new role, reflecting on the well-received communications for the expansion of intervention and the planning underway for the publication of the BVI report later in the year.

## **6. Any other business**

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