

Thurrock Borough Council

Improvement and Recovery Board

Minutes – 2:30pm, Monday 23 September 2023

Attendees

Gavin Jones (GJ) – Essex County Council Commissioner (Chair)
Dr Dave Smith (DS) – Managing Director Commissioner and Chief Executive
Cllr Andrew Jefferies (AJ) – Leader
Cllr Deborah Arnold (DA) – Deputy Leader
Cllr Graham Snell (GS) – Cabinet Member for Resources
Cllr John Kent (JK) – Opposition Group Leader
Cllr Lynn Worrall (LW) – Opposition Group Deputy Leader
Steven Mair (SM) – Acting Chief Finance Officer
Jonathan Wilson (JW) – Acting Director of Finance
Jackie Hinchliffe (JH) – Interim Director of HR, OD and Transformation
Asmat Hussain (AH) – Interim Director of Legal and Governance
Alix Macfarlane (AM) – Intervention Communications Lead
Claire Demmel (CD) – Interim Director of Public Realm
Tina Dempsey (TD) – Strategic Lead for People and Organisational Development
Patrick McDermott (PM) – Chief of Staff to the Commissioners
Vince Waddams (VW) – Assurance Manager
Kerry Thomas (KT) – Chief of Staff to the Chief Executive
Gary Staples (GS) – Transformation Manager
Keilah Gallardo (KG) – Business Support Officer, Chief Executive (minutes)

Apologies

Mark Bradbury (MB) – Interim Director of Place
Luke Tyson (LT) – Chief Intervention Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Matters Arising

- 2.1. Minutes were agreed, no actions updates were discussed.

3. Managing Director Commissioner Update

- 3.1. DS provided an update on reaching a conclusion to the IRP, emphasizing the importance of differentiating it from the Corporate Plan. DS noted that this was subject to the IRP going to Council this week, there will be a development of the Corporate Plan this autumn and winter.
- 3.2. DS provided an update on the SLT recruitment, noting it concludes next week. DS noted key considerations of finding the right balance of skills in the new SLT.
- 3.3. GJ inquired about the Corporate Plan collaboration, emphasizing multi-party involvement. DS agreed and stressed the importance of involving all parties for the benefit of the council.
- 3.4. In respect to SLT restructure and change, DS outlined risks associated with organizational change, including potential loss of momentum and limited experience in change management within the council.
- 3.5. LW noted that the level of change demands time from members that cause fatigue. GJ agreed, noting that the feeling is common for councils in intervention. DS shared officers are experiencing similar issues. AJ emphasized the need to flag run-up time, with GJ stressing the importance of feedback for a sustainable future. DS acknowledged the need to address time and availability issues.

4. Commissioners' Second Report

- 4.1. GJ spoke on the Commissioners' Second Report to the Secretary of State. GJ noted there is due to be another update to the Minister in December.

5. Enhanced IRP

- 5.1. GJ expressed that Commissioners were well versed in the enhanced IRP, thanking LT and other colleagues. GJ noted critical goals were to ensure a clear structure that pinpointed issues and properly identify outcomes.
- 5.2. GJ asked Members if they felt they were consulted in the process and given the opportunity to input. JA, DA, and GS noted that they felt they were involved throughout the process. JK noted that there was good engagement from the start but felt that he and LW did not have as much involvement.
- 5.3. LW asked how residents and backbenchers see KPIs as it was felt this wasn't reflected as strongly. GJ clarified that delivery metrics typically come after in the reporting and implementation process. DA asked for clarity on the point that expressed the Corporate Plan being on hold. DS clarified that the Corporate Plan is on hold because the IRP was due to be finished first. DS noted that the intention was to start the Corporate Plan as soon as possible, with a draft form ready for the new civic year.

Action: Develop an executive summary of the EIRP following its approval.

6. IRP Reporting by Exception

- 6.1. SMa updated the Board regarding the divestment of assets. A further report to members will follow.
- 6.2. SMa noted that the new staff structure for finance teams will go out next Wednesday, allowing recruitment to commence.
- 6.3. GJ inquired about the timeline in the context of recruitment, particularly divestment. SMa noted that advisors and other colleagues are assisting with this. DA raised a concern on the progress of audits but being behind on scheduling noting some projects are off target. SMa and Nicole Wood to speak to DLUHC regarding audit.
- 6.4. DA raised questions about meeting criteria in leadership culture and strategic direction from a governance point of view. AH explained the new restructure process allows for corporate oversight of governance.

7. Communications and Engagement Update

- 7.1. AM noted the preparation for an awareness campaign to focus on the council's changing role in the community.

8. Any other business

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

Appendix I: Full Meeting Actions

Action: Develop an executive summary of the EIRP following its approval.