

Thurrock
Area Assessment
20 July 2009

About Thurrock

An introduction to Thurrock

1. Thurrock is a place of contrasts. Located on the north bank of the Thames in the South East of England, it has 4 main towns and 20 communities situated in a mix of greenbelt, semi-urban and heavy industrial environments.
2. There are 150,700 people living in 63,500 homes. The population is expected to increase by 23% (some 34,000 people) by 2031 as a result of the planned 18,500 homes, improved health and inward migration. The population is not only growing but also changing in profile.
3. Thurrock is an identified area for growth in the Thames Gateway. For Thurrock this means addressing the historical deficit in public infrastructure and services by seizing the opportunity presented by growth and regeneration. This is key to minimising the negative impact on social cohesion arising from the rapid pace of change.
4. Thurrock owes much of its prosperity to its 29km of riverfront. For centuries Thurrock has been a strategic point for industry and trade. Today, the largest regeneration initiative in Europe is taking place at the east of the borough. Dubai Ports investment at London Gateway, a deep-water port, is expected to create an additional 12,000 jobs.
5. Thurrock is well served by strategic communications – the M25, A13, Dartford river crossings, and direct links to London. There are plans to improve the strategic network “north-south” of the borough to enhance residents’ ability to access facilities, services and potential new employment in the area.
6. Thurrock is delivering an economic-led regeneration programme that will see the creation of an additional 26,000 jobs. Despite an increase in unemployment resulting from the recession, the number of residents in employment remains higher than national average.
7. More than 12 large-scale capital projects, supported by considerable range of revenue programmes are planned to deliver economic growth in six priority areas. This is expected to diversify job opportunities for residents and increase average earnings.
8. Royal Opera House is relocating its set-design and production facilities to Thurrock. The Production Park in Purfleet will include the development of a National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural Industries, creation of community facilities through the restoration of a listed building complex, and floor space provision for additional business investment.
9. Thurrock Learning Campus in Grays as well as a wide range of initiatives with local business and education providers have been introduced to encourage more adults and young people into higher and further education, a significant issue in Thurrock.
10. The educational attainment gap between Thurrock’s children and young people and national average is narrowing at all key stages. The number of young people in education, employment and training has been improving significantly each year.
11. The current age structure is relatively young but the population will age significantly in the coming years with key care age groups (65+, 75+ and 85+) all growing substantially. Proportion of Thurrock’s population living in disadvantage is quite low at 10%, however life expectancy of those residents is 8 years less than residents of more affluent areas.
12. The health of residents generally compares to national trends. Thurrock’s smoking cessation rates are the highest in the region and overall mortality rates and premature mortality from heart disease and stroke have improved.

Partnership working in Thurrock

13. Shaping Thurrock is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for Thurrock. Established in 2002, the partnership brings together representatives from the Local Authority, NHS South West Essex, Essex Police, Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation (TTGDC), and representatives from the voluntary and community sector and the business community.
14. Thurrock is a unitary authority that shares coterminous boundaries with Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Corporation. Essex Police is structured with a District of Thurrock and Basildon, with NHS South West Essex having the more complex set of partnership arrangements with its boundaries including Thurrock, 2 District Councils and Essex County Council.
15. The partnership is structured with its Board, Executive Group and five (5) programme boards responsible for delivery. The Programme Boards have clear responsibility of delivery of strategic objectives from the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and associated Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets. Thurrock agreed its first LAA in 2007, with 21 reward targets for which Thurrock could earn £4.5 million in performance reward. The new-style LAA, agreed in 2008, contains 35 designated indicators.
16. Partners are working well together to deliver service improvements for local people. This is demonstrated in improvements to all 12 objectives of the Sustainable Community Strategy. Government Office East of England review of the LSP in January 2009 indicated that performance management arrangements for LAA07 reward indicators have been particularly effective. The majority of LAA07 reward targets are on track to achieve performance reward.
17. All 35 LAA08 action plans have been drafted, with 33 endorsed by the Shaping Thurrock Partnership Board. All major partners have incorporated LAA targets into their corporate plans and strategies. Performance management across the partnership is being streamlined and data sharing between partners continues to improve. Progress against LAA08 indicators where baselines were available in 07/08 is being monitored and appropriately managed.
18. Thurrock Council has embarked on a considerable improvement agenda since its 2008 Direction of Travel judgement. The appointment of Bob Coomber as Interim Chief Executive and the appointment of the new Leader of the Council has been positively received by partners. The increased visible community leadership demonstrated by the new Leader has instilled confidence in partners and has resulted in a strengthening of relationships across the partnership.
19. Partners raised concern in January 2009 about lack of clarity about the role of the Partnership Board, the Executive Group, and that the partnership was not maximising the effectiveness of its structure to deliver our cross-cutting objectives.
20. In May 2009 Terms of Reference for a Review of Governance were agreed. The review has been conducted with support of IDeA and GO East. Partnership Board members, elected members, programme board chairs and delivery leads are amongst those consulted. A final report will be available by end July 2009 and considered at the next Shaping Thurrock Partnership Board on 12 August 2009.
21. The voluntary, community and faith sectors continue to make major contributions to meet the many and diverse needs of the people of Thurrock and they actively support the successful delivery of a wide range of LAA targets. The Community Involvement Board was developed to foster good relations between programme boards and individual organisations within the third sector and to build relationships that have traditionally not been good and not enabled the capacity of this sector to be fully developed. We are confident this will bring practical benefits and significantly improve on our national indicator score for a Thriving Third Sector.

22. Feedback from consultation undertaken for the LSP review of governance indicates that Third Sector would also benefit from clear leadership and direction from partners to enable them to play their supporting role. Thurrock Council has introduced regular meetings with the Sector to enable consistent and reliable community leadership. Thurrock CVS on behalf of the Third Sector is leading the development of a Thriving Third Strategy, of which has been identified as a priority piece of work by the Shaping Thurrock Partnership Board.
23. Discussions surrounding the review of governance have further highlighted concerns that the partnership needs to create capacity through focus. With a growth agenda that rivals that of any large county, Thurrock's partners are aware they will need to embark on a journey to tighten the partnership's vision for Thurrock as a place, and its priorities for improvement. Discussions with GO East about possible rationalisation of LAA priorities have been positive to date.

Our Key Successes

- i. In the three years until March 2008, Thurrock Community Safety Partnership reduced crime by 25%. Up until March 2009 partners had not only sustained this improvement but were able to reduce crime by a further 9%.
- ii. At March 2009, the number of reports to the Police of anti-social behaviour has fallen by 15% from the previous year due to the introduction of multi-agency working in Chadwell St Mary and the creation of new protection team at the Council.
- iii. The Drug, Alcohol and Action Team (DAAT) has increased take-up of treatment by problem drug users and increase of alcohol related interventions. Partners have reduced number of woundings (typically exacerbated by alcohol misuse, the 'drug of choice' for Thurrock residents) by 39% since 2007. This is reflected in the Place Survey results which show fewer residents feeling that drug use or drug dealing is a problem locally.
- iv. Thurrock residents and businesses are recycling more waste than ever. 32% of all waste was recycled in 2008/09, as opposed to 4% in 2003/04. Investments in civic amenity sites now enable 68% of waste to be diverted from landfill. This is also reflected in the Place Survey results with an 8% increase in resident satisfaction with recycling facilities and places Thurrock in the second quartile nationally.
- v. The above improvements are reflected in resident perception of where they live with more residents expressing higher levels of overall satisfaction with their local area in the results of the Place Survey.
- vi. The strength of partnership working has seen the number of young people in employment, education and training increase by 35% since 2004. Additionally, Thurrock has the highest number of diploma arrangements in place in the Eastern Region.
- vii. The Children Trust's focus on raising standards has secured one of the highest proportions of "outstanding" secondary schools in the country, and improvement of 7% in the number of young people gaining 5 or more GCSE's at A*- C.
- viii. The Council and its partners have increased the independence of adult social care users with take-up Direct Payments increasing by 47% over the previous year and the number of people in receipt of assistive technology increasing from 31 to 161 in past twelve months.
- ix. Smoking cessation rates in Thurrock's most disadvantaged areas are the best in the Eastern region. Premature mortality caused by heart disease and stroke have reduced to 78.0 which is below national average of 79.1.

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- x. As a commitment to delivering sustainable improvements to social cohesion, Thurrock has invested £48,000 and allocated 39 new grants to local groups to fund activities within the community. The "Love Thurrock" brochure highlights the depth of community-led events taking place in summer 2009 with support of local partners.
- xi. All schools in Thurrock have School Travel Plans. As a result, the number of pupils travelling to school by car has fallen from 42% to 27.7% in the four years up to 2007/08 school year. An increase in cycle paths has seen the use of bicycles increase by 18% in 07/08 from the previous year.
- xii. Creative and cultural industries are an identified employment growth sector for Thurrock. Work has commenced on Phase I of The Royal Opera House's set-design and production facilities which was recently launched by a government minister.
- xiii. The TTGDC and Thurrock Council - in partnership with local and regional education providers - have opened Phase 1 of Thurrock Learning Campus. The campus will increase the provision of higher and further education for young people and adults. The Campus's first intake of students will commence their studies in September 2009.
- xiv. NHS South West Essex is developing a new community hospital in Grays expected to be open for use in 2013. The current consultation is being delivered in partnership with Ngage, a local voluntary sector organisation over a 16-week period modelled on best practice.

Thurrock's Sustainable Community Strategy

24. The partnership has used its community intelligence to arrive at a shared and ambitious long-term vision and set of priorities. Drawing on consultation feedback of over 2,300 responses, Thurrock's Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) was refreshed in January 2007 and is outlined below:

*Thurrock will be the location of choice
a place where people thrive and prosper;
where you can access services that will make a difference;
and where development is sustainable and
supports our new and existing communities as they grow*

25. The current vision is supported by 3 themes and 12 strategic objectives.

Theme 1: A place where people thrive

SO1 - A diverse and strong community voice

SO2 - Safe, clean and inviting surroundings

SO3 - Promote Thurrock's culture and heritage and improve access to sports and leisure

SO4 - Promote healthy living and reduce health inequalities

Theme 2 : Services that make a difference

SO5 - Support to increase the aspirations and educational achievement of our youth

SO6 - Better access to learning opportunities for skills and personal development

SO7 - Reduce crime and the impact of drugs and anti social behaviour

SO8 - Health and care services that meet individual needs and promote choice

Theme 3: Development that supports our new and existing communities

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SO9 - Well planned quality housing & sustainable development

SO10 - Invest in our economy to create diverse local employment opportunities

SO11 - Improve access to and use of alternative and sustainable modes of transport

SO12 - Conserve and improve our environment

26. In recognition of changing circumstances, the council has begun the process of working with partners to reconsider and review the existing Sustainable Community Strategy vision and priorities. A new Leader of the Council, a new and very experienced Chief Executive developing a new set of relationships internally and with external partners – along with a changing economy – provides the opportunity to take stock and ensure the vision for Thurrock is both aspirational and better grounded in evidence about the area.
27. The LSP governance review and the implementation of its recommendations will be closely followed by a revised vision and set of priorities that will enable all partners to focus on delivering solutions that ensures Thurrock thrives both economically and socially and delivers on its priorities. Our aim is to work through the Shaping Thurrock with a view to seeking adoption in the early autumn

SO 1 – Strong and diverse community voice

28. Thurrock has a very strong base of social capital. There are over 470 voluntary and community groups accessing a variety of funding sources from within and external to the borough. The partnership has a Community Involvement Board that specifically enables the Third Sector to influence and contribute to the partnership's agenda. The partnership has invested in the development of Thurrock's Community Empowerment Network to strengthen engagement with harder to reach individuals and groups, which has been particularly useful in understanding needs of Thurrock's emerging communities.
29. Thurrock has 20 community forums with budgets they can allocate within certain guidelines. Principles of Community Engagement and a toolkit to assist partners to with engagement have been developed and widely promoted. Thurrock Council earned Equality Standard Level 3 in 2008. This summer, Thurrock has an unprecedented number of community led events taking place. Partners have come together to host large scale events such as the Big Weekend, Thurrock Festival and V-One: School's Out (see more under SO3).
30. Thurrock can be described as a collective of urban villages - there is a strong identity in towns and villages but not as strong ties with other areas or 'Thurrock'. This presents challenges and opportunities. On the index for community cohesion Thurrock has remained consistently low level for many years with only 54.3% of residents believing that people from different backgrounds get along well together. Only 27% of local people feel able to influence decisions. Partners conduct regular tension monitoring and levels of race-hate crime continue to be low, suggesting that from a social cohesion standpoint, something unique is happening in Thurrock.
31. Partners have conducted research to better understand these perceptions. We understand that people in Thurrock often feel that decisions are taken that do not reflect their opinions – they feel 'done too' and that some decisions are made that have not taken the needs of long-term residents into account. Thurrock's demographics are also changing with the non-white population now comprising 10% of the population in 2008. At the same time as changing demographics Thurrock is facing significant physical and social change as a result of the growth agenda and some long established communities are feeling left behind. The change is sometimes perceived as a threat with little awareness amongst the population of the benefits of change.
32. In response to the social cohesion agenda, the partnership has established a Task Group that developed a cohesion action plan endorsed by Cabinet in November 2008. A community cohesion officer was appointed in April 09 to assist delivery of a strategic approach to improving community cohesion, which includes the following:

- **A programme of grants** - which has resulted in £48,000 being awarded through 39 grants to voluntary, community and faith organisations providing events including sports events, street parties and cultural events.
- **Empowerment and engagement** – supporting activities, with the voluntary sector, to address low levels of volunteering, active citizenship and participation. The Council is a pathfinder council for the Take Part initiative, which is about empowering communities to increase their skills, confidence and opportunities to take up civic roles. This work is supporting the deliver of the LAA indicator ‘NI 4’
- **Communication and social marketing** – developing a new approach to communication, involving and engagement to help change perceptions about how residents feel about Thurrock as a place to live. Thurrock has adopted the 2012 Cultural Olympiad’s statement of values ‘fair play, equality, one world’ and the grant programmes in 2009-10, 2010-11 will support communities in playing an active role in building cohesion. An example of this approach is that the 2009 Thurrock Festival is supporting the London 2012 Open Weekend.
- **Economic and social regeneration / targeted interventions** - The Council is leading the development of a Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy on behalf Shaping Thurrock, which will link, with the large scale outcomes of Thurrock’s wider regeneration programme. Community Cohesion will be one of a number of issues that the Strategy will explore.

33. Over the last year effective steps have been taken to improve social cohesion and community interaction. However as evidenced by perception surveys there remain some significant community cohesion issues which the Council and its partners are continuing their work to address.

SO 2 – Safe, clean and inviting surroundings

34. For many local people, living in safe, clean and inviting surrounds is a priority. Partners have actively engaged with local communities in the design and performance management of this agenda. The new Waste Strategy was informed by significant local consultation – 1,000 residents were interviewed, there was a letter drop to every household and community forums were visited to enable face-to-face consultation. The Council’s Cleaning and Greening Panel sits every two months and is made up of local residents and user groups. New environment policies, such as the “graffiti policy” were developed through the Cleaning and Greening Panel.
35. The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership organised Environmental Action Team days to improve the quality of life and feeling of well being for people. Several times a year, the partners focused on an area to clean up rubbish, identify potential fire hazards, look for and remove abandoned vehicles, take action against the owners of untaxed vehicles, photograph tags and clean up graffiti. The partnership also run EAT engagement days where partners local in an area to discuss issues with the community and offer advice.
36. Investment from partners to the value of £1.1million to enhance play areas in Thurrock were delivered with the direct involvement of children and young people in the design of these schemes. Following an initiative led by Thurrock Council and the Friends of Grays Beach the riverside park regained its Green Flag Status in 2008 and is now a major attraction.
37. Thurrock Council’s ‘Be Smart’ campaign has won national recognition, securing the Green Organisation’s, Silver Green Apple Award. Green Apple Awards are presented annually in recognition of companies, councils and communities carrying out projects that enhance environment.
38. The rate of recycling for household waste and composting has increased from 4% in 2003-04 to 32% in 2008-09 and are on target to achieve LAA performance reward. The current rate of recycling still places Thurrock in the third quartile when nationally benchmarked but the recently approved Waste Strategy sets a target of achieving 60% recycling by 2014. This target has been backed up by significant investment in infrastructure including a new additional Civic

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Amenity Site, which is being built in West Thurrock at St Clements Way and will open in August 2009. Funding the £2m project has been provided by the TTGDC and the Council.

39. Partners have using the opportunity of the Civic Amenity Site to support social enterprise in the environmental technologies sector. The new facility will feature a 're-use' service, operated by a local social enterprise, that will enable unwanted but serviceable white goods and furniture to be diverted away from land fill and re-allocated to local households.
40. The Council will shortly award a five year 'treatment contract' to ensure future diversion from land fill resulting in 68% of Thurrock's waste being sent for treatment to produce energy from waste. The Council is also looking beyond the lifespan of this contract to develop a long term waste solution which could involve the development of a new treatment facility.
41. The Council will shortly sign a new waste and recycling contract – to commence on 1 April 2010 - that will have better contract management arrangements including penalties for service failure and under performance, which are being incorporated to improve service outcomes for users.

SO3 – Promote Thurrock's culture and heritage and improve access to leisure

42. Partners are working together in response to feedback from local people that provision of sports and leisure opportunities available in Thurrock needs improving. The Cultural Forum consists of a wide range of local and regional groups and agencies, and is a subgroup of the Sustainable Communities Programme Board. Thurrock's cultural strategy was developed in 2007 with a view to maximising opportunities for economic development, social regeneration and social cohesion.
43. The Council and its partners have undertaken intensive marketing and publicity activities to promote Thurrock's Culture and Heritage to residents. These include Innovative outreach work, curriculum enhancement packs, the museum website and the weekly "Down Memory Lane" an informative and entertaining article in the free local newspaper. Special events such as the Dracula day, "Remember Us", (promenade theatre looking at migration from and to Thurrock), Coalhouse Fort open days, heritage walks and heritage plaques attracted over 4,500 people over the year.
44. Alongside large-scale partnership funded events, partners have provided community led and accessible initiatives with resources from a community cohesion grant. The Love Thurrock brochure highlights the diversity and quantity of community-led events on offer during the summer 2009. Branding of the social cohesion agenda is being linked with the cultural Olympiad with the 2009 Thurrock Festival supporting the London 2012 Open Weekend.
45. Over 70,000 people attended performances and events at various venues as a result of the community biased monthly article in the local free newspaper, with the promotional highlight being the family extravaganza of Twelve Days of Christmas, attracting 1200 young people perform alongside professionals. The production was so highly regarded that it won a national award – the Arts & Business Community award.
46. The Council has successfully implanted phases 1 and 2 of the library modernisation strategy (Grays, East Tilbury, Stanford and Corringham). The re-opening of the Corringham library after modernisation has recorded an increase of 11% in footfall. Plans for Grays cover include the theatre, museum and a social enterprise café managed by a local charity.
47. Thurrock has the only service in the country to achieve two consecutive years of improvements to meet compliance with public library standards. In terms of expenditure, Thurrock's library service costs less than others within our benchmarking group.

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48. Over 1 million visits were recorded in the year (author and illustrator visits, reading groups for adults, family history events) with 1,200 visits to the Dalek Day at Grays and over 1000 listening to stories at Lakeside shopping centre during National Family Week. An electronic hip-hop concert at Grays attracted over 300 young people who were not regular library users. The state-of-the-art mobile library is reaching our 'hard to reach' communities. Also, Older people have the benefit of a combined library membership card and free bus pass.
49. Through innovative collaboration, the library service is supporting the health agenda through collections in 5 libraries supported by Macmillan Cancer Care and promoted by doctors' surgeries. Also, the Library Service supports an Early Years Partnership in an initiative (PACTWin) aimed at children with behavioural difficulties and their parents.
50. Creative and Cultural Industries has been highlighted as growth sector in the Economic Development Strategy increasing opportunities for employment and the development of small and medium enterprises. Long-term feasibility studies for Coalhouse fort have been conducted. Partners have also secured £150,000 for Coalhouse Fort restoration project as well as funding for the restoration and modernisation of the Woolmarket in Horndon. Investments such as the Royal Opera House Campus are already in place. The Royal Opera House have implemented a successful community education initiative 'Sun and Heir' in conjunction with local schools that brought Thurrock's older residents and young people together to design and develop sets for the production.
51. Partners have produced a Sports and Leisure Facilities strategy, which identifies the need for two Sports and Well-being hubs in the borough. This is being jointly progressed by Thurrock Council and the TTGDC. In addition, Thurrock Council collaborates with Impulse Leisure to improve access to sport and leisure. Prior to the government's free swimming scheme, 50p swims were introduced for all adults with an increase in adult swimmers of over 1300 in a two month period (beginning of April 2008 – end of May 2008). Free swimming for the over 60s was introduced in April 2009 and by mid May 2009, there were 1045 registered users of the scheme.

SO4 – Promote healthy living and reduce inequalities

52. The health of Thurrock's residents generally compares to national trends. The proportion of Thurrock's population living in disadvantage is quite low at just over 10%, however life expectancy of those residents is 8 years less than those living in more affluent areas. Smoking prevalence in Thurrock is relatively high however our smoking cessation rates are the highest in the region and overall mortality rates and premature mortality from heart disease and stroke have improved.
53. In March 2008 Thurrock's Health and Well-being Plan was endorsed by Cabinet. The document brings together commitments from across the wider partnership to improve Thurrock's key determinants of health. The plan is a user-friendly document that incorporates a range of LAA targets, specifically Thurrock's health improvement and adult social care indicators. The Plan has been informed by analyses of factors that impact on health and well-being, highlighted in the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. Regular performance monitoring and management of the Plan is provided by the Health and Wellbeing subgroup of the Healthier Communities Programme Board.
54. The Plan makes connections to strategic planning to ensure future development and planning policies promotes and supports healthy lifestyles. Policies include, housing design for life, improvements air quality, designing out crime, improving access to green/open space, and promoting healthy and active lifestyles. Recent investment from NHS SWE towards key determinants of health has had a positive impact on delivery against key determinants of health.

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55. There are good initiatives in place to promote good health – such as providing people with information, advice and signposting. There is increasingly targeted work to improve the health of vulnerable people, which includes a Council produced DVD to promote the take up of health action plans for people with a learning disability. Virtual Healthy Living Centres have been developed using workers and volunteers and to promote healthy living in deprived areas of the borough.
56. Over 5,000 people have accessed “vitality” services through the virtual healthy living centres funded by NHS SWE. Major lifestyle changes include more regular uptake of exercise, participation in weight management programmes to improve diet and activity, and assistance to quit smoking. Thurrock has smoking cessation targets that specifically address areas of disadvantage and targets for the population as a whole. The vitality programme utilises pharmacies, GP surgeries, workplaces and mobile vehicles to maximise outreach of the programme. Thurrock’s smoking cessation rates are the best in the Eastern region.
57. Teenage pregnancy is down by 25% since 1998, a reduction of almost double the national average. The number of schools achieving healthy schools status has increased to 86% and is on track to achieve LAA reward target. As of March 2009 the number of children successfully participating in MEND weight management programme is 83. The number of children participating in mini-MEND is also increasing.
58. The LAA includes a theme aimed specifically at supporting vulnerable groups. This theme aims to meet emotional, physical and mental health needs of vulnerable people such as children and young people. The Open Door project is an advice service for young people and vulnerable adults in Thurrock, providing counselling, advice on substance misuse and general advice. It also provides outreach services via a mobile bus. Many projects are jointly funded and resourced. For example the PCT and Council are part funding an intervention and substance misuse service such as needle packs in designated pharmacies for vulnerable people.
59. To increase the number of people who exercise, a free transport scheme (Physical Thurrock Bus Club) has launched in collaboration with Trans-Vol (Thurrock’s Community Transport service) on a regular weekly basis to all Impulse Leisure sites and open spaces in Thurrock. An independent survey has been carried out which reveals that although people are aware of the benefits of being active, time, cost and motivation were main issues that prevented them from being active. Funding proposals are being put together to introduce interventions that will primarily increase access to facilities to (reduce time as an issue) and introduce subsidies or free initiatives (to reduce cost as an issue).

SO5 – Support to increase the aspirations and educational achievement of our young people

60. Thurrock has made significant progress to educational attainment across all key stages in recent years. Thurrock’s schools have a significant improvement agenda to increase attainment levels of their pupils which has resulted in number of 15 years olds achieving 5 or more A* to C GCSE’s increasing by 66% since 2000. The gap between Thurrock’s scores and national average continues to close for Key Stages 1 and 2.
61. Previous years inspections have found some services not to be effective. Changed structures and plans for improvement over the past twelve month have lead to service improvements. Children’s social care have set challenging targets to improve timeliness of assessments without compromising quality of such assessments. Thurrock Council’s performance has been promising considering the local impact of the national media surrounding “Baby P” case in 2008.
62. The rapid changes in Thurrock’s demographics can be most noticeable in pupil attendance in Thurrock’s schools with some schools experiencing more than 50% of admissions to BME students. Schools feature strongly in the community cohesion action plan and reducing the

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number of young people who are victims of crime is a priority shared with Thurrock Community Safety Partnership.

63. Considerable progress has been made to move forward the review of the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and delivery on the Joint Commissioning Framework. As a result, the Children's Trust has been refining its structure work stream groups to more effectively manage the Trust's priorities arising from Laming report. In response to new statutory guidance the Trusts' Memorandum of Agreement is being updated. The LAA action plans developed for LAA08 will be part of the suite of delivery plans beneath the refreshed CYPP.
64. The Face to Face consultation programme has gained momentum across the borough. The focus of these consultative sessions is to ask parents their views on their experience of children's services. The information gathered is incorporated into the 'One Workforce Self Assessment Tool', which is a self assessment that all Children's Trusts have to undertake to gain a view as to whether the children's workforce is fully integrated or fragmented.
65. There are emerging areas of outstanding to exemplary practice within Children's services. The work on the Playbuilder programme is recognised as among best practice and is used as an exemplar by DCSF, the work of our Music Service was recently judged externally as being good with outstanding features and the quality of our 14-19 partnership arrangements has secured Thurrock a position as the authority with the highest number of diploma arrangements in place in the Eastern Region. Thurrock's Early Years provision has enjoyed a growing reputation regionally and nationally and is now recognised as an example of good practice by the National Strategies.
66. Key to improving performance is the provision of a comprehensive range of high quality services that are available for children, young people and families within their communities. We have fully implemented the requirements for targeted youth services, provided Full Extended School services in every area and continued our investment in our Phase III Children Centre programme. The total number of Children's Centres in Thurrock has risen to 16. Targeted activity with Children centres in Ockendon, Averley and Chadwell is resulting in pre-school literacy improvements.
67. The number of young people achieving good grades at GCSE is rising. However, this is still below average and children and young people do not have high aspirations, particularly the white working class population who perform more poorly. Educational attainment such as the number of 15 year olds achieving 5 or more A* to C GCSEs increased to 60 per cent in 2007 (up from 40 per cent in 2000).
68. Partners have worked well together to address a range of issues such as extra tuition for pupils with special needs and those who have been excluded, leading to improved results in this area. Improvements have also been achieved in better housing for young people who are looked after.
69. Our capacity to deliver on Building Schools for the Future has been similarly enhanced through additional to secure a full time project director and a project manager and this increase in capacity has contributed to the Council's high position of ninth on the provisional list of Local Authorities seeking to secure early entry to BSF.
70. Support from high performing and outstanding schools are effectively contributing to improvements in performance in small number of schools in Ofsted categories, which continue to make good progress. In last 12 months the Council has progressed two schools to become Academies and in the case of the first Academy this has already secured improvements in attendance and attainment and seen the school move from being one of the least popular among parents and pupils to being one of the most popular in the borough as a choice of secondary education.

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71. Since 2007, the Council has significantly improved the timeliness of its social care assessments at the same time as effectively using resources to carry out considerably more assessments and meet the increasing demand for support. The quality of support for Looked After Children continues to be very good overall and the preventative strategy is being effectively implemented through innovative re-distribution of resources, underpinned by a comprehensive strategy and growth in capacity to deliver commissioning
72. The Council has realigned its spending priorities to introduce more effective long-term measures to meet the increasing demand for social care services, especially fostering and adoption provision for our most vulnerable young people where cost for such services per head is higher than national averages and that of statistical neighbours.
73. A new joint commissioning framework was developed based on needs assessments and evaluations of performance. The framework, which gives priority to prevention rather than later intervention, has been used to grow the internal voluntary sector market so that it has greater capacity to meet needs than ever before and has been used to secure more effective and more targeted use of resources which is crucial in current economic climate
74. This commissioning work, known as 'Thinking Families' has now culminated in the letting of a range of service contracts to 8 new and existing providers. This represents a significant achievement and a tangible contribution to providing earlier support to children and families in Thurrock. In the main these services will be accessed through the multi-agency groups that are located within the four school cluster areas.

SO6 – Better access to learning opportunities for skills and personal development

75. All partners recognise the importance of improving learning opportunities and aspirations in Thurrock. Adult skills levels across the spectrum are considerably below national average, and number of young people who progress to higher and further education is half the national average. Though unemployment is below national average, there are pockets of Thurrock where families are experiencing multiple generations of worklessness. There is concern about more vulnerable young people such as teenage mothers, young people supported by the Youth Offending Team and those leaving care whose attainment is not as high.
76. Partners have been working together to enhance opportunities for young people and attract funding to improve the experience and prospects for children, young people and adult learners. With a short supply of jobs available the economic downturn demand for education and training programmes has increased. The partnership has effective mechanisms to ensure that as many local people, of all ages, get access to learning that is appropriate for their needs.
77. Participation in employment, education and training, and success rates for those over 16 are improving. Approval has been given for the 14-19 partnership to provide mentors and guidance to those young people most at risk of being not in education, employment and training. By working with employers young people will be supported back into employment or training. Funding has also been approved for Groundwork Trust to support the Pathways to Employment programme to develop innovative and engaging initiatives to increase the employability of hard to reach young people and disadvantaged groups in partnership with Connexions and Jobcentre Plus. A Learning and Working careers fair was held in April with participation from 15 local businesses and 12 education providers. Several young people were offered positions of employment as a result of the event.
78. A range of measures are in place to increase training provision in those sectors where economic growth is expected. These include increasing support for Train 2 Gain and identification of new Train 2 Gain suppliers in Thurrock. The Council is reviewing its procurement / tendering processes to ensure that businesses employ Thurrock residents and have adequate training provision that will lead to staff obtaining formal qualifications. An apprenticeship programme has been established across the borough and a new (sector

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focused) Further and Higher Education Curricula delivered at the learning campus and other key locations. Thurrock Adult Community College, in partnership with Thurrock Council, have a work programme to increase number of adults who achieve a formal qualification from family learning. Results from second year of the programme will be available in September 2009.

79. There have been significant improvements in the planning and delivery of activity across 14-19 partnership has taken place in last 12 months. The opening of the new Thurrock Learning Campus has already successfully attracted a number of new students into FE provision and will see around 300 students on roll by September. This is matched by excellent progress in extending the range of sixth form provision across the borough with one 6th form collaborative beginning in September 2009 in the North East of the borough and plans for 6th form provision in two further schools well under way. Thurrock has sourced best practice from outside the borough and used it to build capacity, such as utilising South East Essex College (SEEC) as a partner for our second academy and undertaking a merger of SEEC and Thurrock and Basildon College. These changes to sixth form, FE and adult education provisions are at the heart of our strategy to raise the aspirations of young people borough wide
80. The Learning and Skills Council has allocated approximately £100 million for the development of further education facilities (the Thurrock learning Campus) to ensure that local skills are developed to meet the new jobs planned for Thurrock. This includes a new college in Grays, as part of the wider plan to redevelop the area and improve educational attainment.
81. The Learning Skills Council and its partners secured capital funding of around £150,000 to support the development of a state of the art learning centre, which provides flexible learning opportunities for a range of different clients. The funding supported the total refurbishment of a fit-for-purpose learning facility that can accommodate a wide range of areas of learning. A complete IT suite forms a key element of the facility, with interactive technology in each room of study. Such equipment could be transferred to the proposed new campus when completed. This would promote the value of vocational learning to not just disaffected and lower achievers, but also the gifted and talented as a viable option to further progression within the new pathways. It is envisaged that the centre will be in operation for up to five years until the new Thurrock Learning Campus is opened.

SO7 – Reduce crime and the impact of drugs and anti-social behaviour

82. Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership has a strong history of highly effective partnership working. Between 2005/6 and 2007/8, recorded crime was reduced by 25%. Not only have these reductions been sustained, crime in Thurrock has fallen by a further 9% at March 2009. In particular there have been decreases around vehicle theft and theft from vehicles. However the economic climate is starting to evidence an increase in shoplifting, domestic burglary and cycle theft. Outcomes for victims of crime have improved through working with the police, probation and other key agencies in planning initiatives. Joint working is contributing to the overall reduction in crime in the area.
83. The successes of the joint work to reduce crime and disorder have yet to be reflected in the perceptions of local people. The 2008 Place Survey revealed that 21.8% of residents are satisfied with the way the Police and the Council deal with anti-social behaviour and that whilst the fear of crime during the day seems to be reducing the fear of crime at night has increased.
84. There have been outstanding levels of partnership working across all the safer communities indicators of Thurrock's LAA. This is having a positive impact on performance, with the number of incidents of wounding improving to 6.75 per 1,000 population in 2008-09. In addition, the rate of reoffending of prolific and priority offenders has reduced to 40.2 (as at quarter 3 2008/09) and the proportion of offences classified as domestic violence which results in police action have increased to 66.9%.
85. The overall reduction in crime has been achieved through implementation of following:

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- Reduced burglary in the last quarter of 2008-09 through close performance monitoring and target setting and prevention initiatives
 - Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) systems have been extended across Thurrock and signage relating to ANPR is visible at all entry points to the Borough
 - Improved information sharing of domestic abuse between Police, Children Education and Families and the health sector to improve safeguarding arrangements
 - Establishing a hate crime panel to tackle repeat incidents of hate crime, and strengthening of the Promoting Tolerance Group who have effectively undertaken tension monitoring for the past twelve months.
86. Further work will be undertaken in Thurrock to address serious acquisitive crime – in particular in respect of vehicle crime and domestic burglary where performance is below the most similar crime family average. A continued reduction in re-offending rates will inform activity over the coming year. Other areas of planned activity include:
- development of the Integrated Offender Management Programme for PPO's
 - 'No cold calling zones' initiative and ANPR continue to be rolled out
 - develop initiatives to tackle crime triggered and impacted on by the current economic climate
 - commission a review of domestic abuse services across Thurrock and develop and implement an improvement plan from this.
 - Develop relationships with businesses to tackle business crime
 - improve links with safeguarding adults and children Boards to protect more vulnerable residents
87. There is an improved approach to partnership working to address drugs and crime & disorder issues. The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) is demonstrating improved performance, which has been achieved through increased resources and restructuring the DAAT. Further work will be undertaken this year to develop and implement an alcohol strategy across the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership, Healthier Communities Programme Board, and Children's Trust Board. Other achievements include:
- Feedback from the National Treatment Agency on the Council's performance against its 2008-09 Treatment Plan has been positive
 - Sustained increase in take up of treatment by problem drug users
 - Increase in the number of alcohol interventions
88. There has been a decrease in reports to the Police of anti social behaviour of 15%. To further develop the work on anti-social behaviour multi agency locality action groups are being developed to address concerns raised through neighbourhood action panels. Further work includes plans to extend the 'Geo' work (This is partners working together in an area for 3 months with the community to address their concerns) to Tilbury to further address local concerns. Other achievements include:
- A new community protection team established in the Council to address anti-social behaviour
 - Focused work in Chadwell St Mary to address residents concerns of anti-social behaviour
 - Establishment of out-of-hours noise complaints team over the summer months
89. Finally, the Partnership has commissioned research to enable a better understanding of residents' perceptions of crime together with an accompanying communications strategy. A programme of awareness raising events has also been commissioned and last year they visited 28 locations across the Borough. The Council and its partners has also launched community TV at 10 locations in Thurrock. There are aims to broaden the use of Community TV across the 5 programme boards in 2010.

SO8 – Health and care services that meet individual needs and promote choice

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90. Partners are transforming the way our collective resources are commissioned to increase independence and choice for service users. By maximising opportunities for greater efficiency partners can better manage demand for services across the continuum of the care. The Council is embarking on a significant transformation programme to meet Government's targets for social care clients receiving self-directed support. Choice of LAA targets reflects partners priority to increase the quality of provision of support services for Thurrock's more vulnerable residents.
91. Additionally, there is a considerable deficit in health and care infrastructure in Thurrock and an equally considerable capital investment programme for NHS South West Essex to increase the provision of health care across the acute, primary and community care settings.
92. After a recent visit from a senior Health Department official, we received feedback that described Thurrock's approach to social care as "groundbreaking". Thurrock was also commended as exemplar for its case management and commissioning work and the modernisation of day opportunities programmes for adults with learning disabilities. The Council's Adult Social Care department has established a Transformation Board that is led by the Director of Community Wellbeing to lead and deliver on the Transformation Agenda as required through the 'Putting People First' (PPF) agenda. Improved joint working with health partners has led to a range of new joint initiatives including:
 - Contact and Connect
 - A pilot Out of Hours service
 - End of Life domiciliary care
 - Dignity in Care services
93. Social work teams have been re-organised in line with PPF so that they allow for the development of self-directed support. Furthermore a new Community Solutions Team has been established and acts as the front door to services including signposting and solving at the point of entry where possible.
94. Partners have undertaken work to improve people's feelings of safety at home and to improve their home living environment. Following some targeted work with vulnerable people over 86 per cent reported feeling safe in their own home and 83 per cent reported feelings of improved well being. A range of lower level support services or preventative services are available through the voluntary sector. These include shopping and housework, a befriending service, multi cultural lunches and access to a handyperson scheme. Some people have been able to move from Council provided services to preventative services provided by the voluntary sector. Those who have moved to services provided by the voluntary sector are making a smaller contribution to the cost than when they were provided with a Council funded service.
95. There are very strong partnerships in place between Thurrock Council and social care providers which have enable the implementation of cutting edge service developments such as the outcomes based commissioning of domiciliary care (which is acknowledged as an exemplar nationally) and recent pilots, co-funded with the PCT, of an out of hours home care service and "Contact and Connect" a service aimed at older people not currently receiving social care. These initiatives could only have been commissioned through a highly collaborative approach with our providers, the strength of the partnership being a feature of the recent social care inspection outcomes.
96. NHS South West Essex (the PCT) has just developed its 5 year Strategy that will enable the organisation to focus on its priority areas for improvement. The PCT will be working with providers and partners to improve its priority pathways. The organisation does not have coterminous boundaries with any of its partners. This has made partnership working at local level extremely complex. In light of this, the PCT will be implementing a restructure that will enable the organisation to more effectively engage in partnership working.

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97. Partners have established joint working to promote the health and wellbeing of the local community. There are some good initiatives in place to promote health, providing people with information, advice and signposting. There has been considerable investment in safeguarding vulnerable adults including the appointment of an Independent Chair of the Board, establishment of a dedicated team and improving the strategic and operational focus of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Board and a recent council resolution requiring all Councillors to be CRB-checked thereby showing their commitment to children and vulnerable adults. There is some targeted work to improve the health of vulnerable people, which includes a Council produced DVD to promote the take up of health action plans for people with a learning disability. Work is being done to reduce the number of admissions to hospital and another to reduce the number of people in hospital for more than 50 days.
98. There is an effective integrated Strategic Service Plan for Older People. The vision of Thurrock Council and the PCT is to “promote independence, well-being and good health for older people, protect vulnerable adults and listen to views of service users and carers”. Supporting this are action plans that are monitored by Shaping Thurrock. Priorities and action plans for implementing the older people National Service Framework incorporate accountabilities and time scales for outcomes and are identified in partners’ plans.
99. Good work has been done to prevent falls, which has resulted in a reduction of the number of people admitted to hospital with a hip-fracture (down from 183 in 2007 to 139 in 2008), and the number admitted as a result of a fall. Performance in reducing the number of delayed transfers of care has improved on last year, but remains relatively high and the number of delayed transfers of care for which the Council is responsible is relatively high but consistent with last year.
100. A new community hospital facility will be built in Grays. The PCT has undertaken a series of consultations on the hospital in line with the necessary stages of development. The current consultation is being undertaken over a 16 week period in partnership with Ngage, a local voluntary sector organisation, and is being delivered as an example of best practice. A site for the hospital has been found and a compulsory purchase order is in the process of being finalised. The hospital is expected to be open for use in 2013. The PCT has also developed its strategy for primary and community care, of which action has already taken place to address capacity “hot spots” in Thurrock. A site in the town centre has been found for the Grays Equitable Access Centre, and the site is expected to be open by the end of 2008.

SO9 – Well planned quality housing and sustainable developments

101. Thurrock has a considerable task of delivering an additional 18,500 homes by 2021 accounting for 50% of overall growth in the Thames Gateway South Essex region. Thurrock’s ambitious targets for housing completions are set in the Regional Spatial Strategy for East of England. With house prices in Thurrock seven (7) times larger than average annual local earnings, Thurrock will be ensuring 35% of the new completions be “affordable” for local people. Despite considerable investment in skills and adult learning across the partnership, adult skills levels of working age population continues to fall. There is concern that the lack of “aspirational housing” in Thurrock is resulting in many highly skilled workers leaving Thurrock for neighbouring localities in South Essex where such housing is in higher supply.
102. The economic downturn has had a negative impact on local housing market with housing completions at an all-time low, despite a good supply of housing sites available for development. Importantly, Thurrock is a regeneration area with a considerable infrastructure deficit. Local people are reluctant to accept the new housing in the area, given the pressure it will place on already stretched resources, but do so on the basis that the associated infrastructure will address the deficit. This means that some of the options available to other localities to stimulate the housing market through relaxing of Section 106 conditions are less desirable in Thurrock.

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103. The difficulty of the housing market has meant partners are working together more closely, effectively and more innovatively to address some of the key housing related challenges to support regeneration, growth, and provision for Thurrock's more vulnerable residents.
104. The TTGDC who have considerable planning powers in Thurrock, continue to progress their master-plans for their six spatial planning areas with several now at quite an advanced stage. Thurrock's Local Development Framework (LDF), based on Thurrock's Sustainable Community Strategy, is progressing well. The Core Strategy and Site Specific DPD are at a stage of pre-submission, having completed Preferred Options stage in 2008. The LDF working group, consisting of elected members from both political parties, officers from both the TTGDC and Council, meet regularly to advance the LDF. Working group discussions in recent months have reviewed site specific housing density to ensure a sustainable housing mix, reflecting particular concerns about deficit of aspirational housing.
105. The TTGDC have been spending considerable efforts working closely with housing developers and regional bodies to explore ways to stimulate the local housing market. The Council, in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord partners, is embarking upon more innovative asset management to increase the provision of affordable housing in Thurrock. A bid for £1.5 million of Local Authority New Build grant is currently in development. Thurrock's provision of sheltered housing, a less popular choice for local people given recent population and demographic changes, is being reviewed with plans to decommission some sites and invest in facilities that provide more intensive level of care for our growing older population. A new development is taking place that utilises HCA funding, Council revenue funding and Council's capital receipt. The RSL partner will own and maintain the asset which will be developed to increase the provision of supported accommodation for young mothers.
106. On behalf of the wider partnership, the Sustainable Communities Programme Board has revisited its approach to neighbourhood renewal. The scoping study draws on the considerable body of work undertaken at Garrison Estate in Purfleet, aspirations for an Eco-Quarter in Tilbury, and the multi-agency geographic group established by Thurrock Community Safety Partnership. A neighbourhood renewal strategy is being developed as a more effective way of connecting local people to spatial planning and service improvement.
107. Thurrock Council's private housing service has been elevated to four star status within the Green Organisation, one of the country's leading environment groups in light of an ongoing commitment to energy efficiency. This achievement is based on work of Thurrock Energy Partnership, managed by Climate Energy and builds on the success of being awarded Green Apple Awards. Based on existing energy efficiency initiatives, Thurrock Energy Partnership has developed a Decent –Warm-Healthy-Homes initiative, valued at £3 million that will be delivered across the Thames Gateway South Essex region. Thurrock is the only locality in the sub-region who has negotiated a fuel poverty indicator in our LAA.
108. Additionally, the provision of public sector housing continues to maintain good performance. The Council is on track to have no families in temporary accommodation by 2010. Rent collection continues to be perform well, at 99.37% whilst importantly Thurrock maintains low levels of evictions from rent arrears. Council is on track to deliver 2010 target for decent homes, with 90% of current stock meeting the standard, SAP ratings on local authority stock is very good and tenants continue to express high levels of satisfaction with repairs.

SO10 – Invest in our local economy to create diverse employment opportunities

109. Thurrock's economic agenda is both exciting and extremely challenging. With 26,000 new jobs to be delivered by 2021, Thurrock is embarking on a considerable jobs-led regeneration programme. The presence of the TTGDC is clearly adding capacity. The range and scale of the capital investment projects in development in Thurrock rival that of a large county and through partnership working, sharing resources and skills successful delivery of this agenda can be possible. For example, the London Gateway project raises significant opportunities

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such as the £1.5 billion development of the deep port and 12,000 new jobs making it the country's largest jobs creation project.

110. The sheer scale of these capital projects will enable them to see through the worst of the economic downturn. However, the retail sector has already seen significant jobs losses in Thurrock, particularly part-time employment, and Thurrock's small and medium size enterprises will be particularly vulnerable over the next two years. Average earnings of local residents are slightly below the national average at £473.3 (National Average £481.3); however the employment rate is higher at 75.5% which is lower than the national average of 74.5%.
111. Innovation and enterprise are recognised priorities for Thurrock and the sub-region. Social enterprise in Thurrock is not particularly strong, and although Thurrock has recently started to exhibit an increase in rates of new business growth this needs to continue and accelerate if we are to develop a more diverse economy. The success of an employment-led regeneration programme is dependent upon local people benefiting from economic prosperity that comes into Thurrock.
112. The Council, along with partners from the LSP have signed up the Thurrock Economic Development Strategy, originally developed by the TTGDC. The Economic Development Working Group, who reports into the Sustainable Communities Programme Board brings together the Council, TTGDC, Thurrock Local Enterprise Agency, Business Link and EEDA and the private sector. An action plan has been developed that sets out the delivery priorities for achieving the ambitions of the Strategy and allocates responsibility for delivery across the partnership.
113. Twelve (12) key programmes have been identified in key economic hub locations which are fundamental to economic growth in Thurrock. These include: London Gateway; Royal Opera House Production Campus; Lakeside Leisure Development; Lakeside Expansion; Academy of Transport and Logistics; Grays Business Centre; Purfleet Centre (Botany Quarry); Thurrock Learning Campus; Thurrock Community Hospital; Arena Essex; Tilbury Power Station; Tilbury Port Expansion.
114. To strengthen Thurrock's brand and make Thurrock more attractive location for investment the TTGDC in conjunction with partners are in the final stages of producing an Inward Investment and marketing strategy. This will be incorporated with a Business Engagement Framework which will highlight Thurrock's offer (across the wider partnership) to the business community. The Council in conjunction with TTGDC and other business support providers have held quarterly business breakfasts to discuss strategic issues affecting the business sector. Thematic discussions have included transport (improvements to Junction 30/31 and C2C railway), procurement, skills, and the economic downturn.
115. Local initiatives established in response to economic downturn include the launch of a £500 business support voucher for small businesses who employ less than 250 people. Business Link advisers provide free one to one advice and where appropriate the advisor can help the business choose a suitable consultant to put plans into action. This is delivered through a mobile unit that travels across the borough to sites that are accessible for local businesses. The £500 e-voucher can be used on a range of professional advice, including marketing, legal or financial services and are provided with support of the Council and TTGDC. Partners will continue to support delivery and development of the BusinessNet brand; development of new products to support businesses focussing on recruitment, retention and maximising sales
116. The Council has implemented the prompt payment initiative to ease cash flow problems by reducing invoice payment times to 10 working days for all valid invoices for goods and services received. Approval has recently been received for a £500,000, 3-year project to help Thurrock businesses to improve their environmental performance through innovation. Up to 65 local businesses will benefit from the project.

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117. The £2 million Economic Participation Programme managed by the Council on behalf of the partnership is supporting projects that will improve:
- Skill levels to enable people to better compete for job opportunities.
 - The employment rate, especially for younger people and those living in specific areas where there are excluded communities and
 - Increasing the capacity of the third sector and social enterprise support mechanisms.
118. Thurrock Learning Partnership has applied in the first round of the government's Future Jobs Fund to provide funding for up to 30 long term unemployed people aged 18 – 24 who have been out of work for a year. The Council will work with its partners, especially those in business, to improve an employee's long term employability by providing a full year of "real work for real pay" accompanied by quality college and work based learning thereby providing motivation, increasing morale and a positive attitude towards work. The Council will be taking on a number of apprentices across departments and working with local education institutions to help train people in public sector roles.

SO11 – Improve access to and use of alternative and sustainable modes of transport

119. In autumn 2008 the Council published its first ever long-term transport strategy, covering the strategic planning period to 2021. The strategy sets out a policy-led approach to improving transport infrastructure and service provision in the Borough. It is supported by a comprehensive body of evidence that clearly identifies where Thurrock's strengths and weaknesses lie. The document has been influenced and shaped by the Partnership's Transport Forum, which brings together transport infrastructure and service providers alongside representatives from local communities and interest groups.
120. Transport is a pressing issue for most residents in every part of Thurrock. High numbers of HGV's and high traffic flows on strategic roads are adversely impacting on local air quality, CO2 emissions, and congestion. Growth could well make this worse. Worsening air quality will increase respiratory problems whilst increasing congestion could harm job creation and economic performance particularly with regard to international gateways, such as London Gateway.
121. There is generally good accessibility by public transport and walking to many services, but poor access to further education and hospitals could exacerbate low skills and health issues, the latter being a particular concern with the ageing population. Many of the new jobs will be at London Gateway, which is away from the main urban areas and so less accessible for employment access by non-car means, which may limit opportunities for many social groups and fail to deliver equality of opportunity
122. There are very low levels of walking and cycling which could fuel increasing obesity and so it will be necessary to learn from the success of recent School Travel Plans in increasing walking and cycling. It will be important to maintain the increasing use of public transport to limit traffic growth, especially given forecast increases in congestion and CO2 emissions.
123. Feedback on the Transport Plan from the regional Government Office has been very positive, and it is acknowledged that the Council is in a good position going forward. Partners across the Forum continue to work with Government to advance development of major projects for the strategic road network including improvements to Junction 30/31, and creation of South Essex Rapid Transit.
124. Thurrock was the only locality in the Eastern region to jointly negotiate a target with the Highways Agency. Through a wide range of partnership activity from both Thurrock Community Safety Partnership and the Thurrock Transport Forum the number of Killed and Seriously Injured people on Thurrock roads was significantly reduced to 78 incidents in 2008

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and is on target to deliver a rather stretching LAA target. Road safety initiatives include: community wheels, road runners, and a “for my girlfriend” campaign targeted at young male drivers.

125. There has been an increase in usage of all sustainable modes of transport. Rail patronage increased by 12% in 07/08, and capacity improvements to rail network continues with extensions to platforms at Grays Station complete. Bus patronage also continues to grow, reflecting strong relationships with operators and with neighbouring transport authorities in the delivery of services. Passenger journeys rose to 4.1 million in 2008/09 an annual increase of 20%. The Council also continues to subsidise the ferry service between Tilbury and Gravesend, providing access to employment and leisure opportunities on both sides of the river. Introduction of free crossings for Thurrock residents with concessionary bus passes has seen patronage on the ferry rise by 31% in 08/09.
126. Through close partnership working with developers and cycle interest groups such as Sustrans provision of cycle paths has increased which has seen use of bicycles increase by 18% in 07/08. The most prominent investment was made by the TTGDC in 06/07, who contributed £1.7m towards the implementation of three circular cycle routes and completion of the east-west spinal route across the Borough. In 2008/09 partners commissioned the development of a new bridge across Mardyke Valley as part of the cycle network along the Thames riverfront.
127. We are beginning to see the success of our school travel plans. In 2007 the Council became the first authority in the country to have Travel Plans adopted by every school within the authority area. In 03/04 42% of pupils travelled to school by car, but in 07/08 this was just 27.7%. This equates to almost 3,500 children changing their travel habits to using public transport or walking or cycling to school. The Council has recently refreshed its Road Safety Strategy to ensure that this progress can be sustained.

SO 12 – Conserve and improve our environment

128. Residents have told us over the years that Thurrock’s green, open spaces and natural environment are part of what people like most about living in the area. With over 18 miles of riverfront and 60% green belt land and a range sites of historic, scientific and special interest, Thurrock’s environment is an asset that partners have been working together to conserve, but also to improve.
129. Thurrock’s CO₂ emissions are the highest per capita in the Eastern Region, with industry contributing significantly to such emissions. Three years ago significant concern was raised about Thurrock’s poor performance on waste disposal. Delivering a significant growth agenda means that tough decisions will need to be taken about sites across the borough. Partners are mindful that environment factors should be given equal weight to social and economic factors. Active management of biodiversity sites is a priority for the partnership as is sustainable design and construction. As of March 2009, 19 sites of local biodiversity are being actively managed. Between 2005 and 2006, Thurrock achieved a 5.97% improvement in the reduction of CO₂ emissions, this equates to 0.76 tonnes per person.
130. Given Thurrock’s historically poor performance on reducing waste to landfill, increasing recycling and reducing overall waste production, Thurrock’s partners have prioritised resources into the development and implementation of a strategic approach to waste reduction as a critical success factor of enhancing Thurrock’s environment. (This investment is explored in more detail in Strategic Objective 2). However a range of other initiatives have taken place
131. Thurrock Environment Partnership was formed in 2006 and brings together a vibrant mix of local environmental champions. The partnership directly influenced the environmental indicators that were chosen in Thurrock’s LAA, and the majority of environmental projects are delivered in partnership with national and local organisations within the Third Sector.

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Considerable investment has gone into the Mardyke valley with increase in cycle paths and biodiversity management of the local Water Vole habitat.

132. The overall strategic vision for enhancing Thurrock's green infrastructure is outlined in Thurrock's Greengrid. Our shared approach to the Greengrid has been highlighted as best practice by CABI and Natural England. Greengrid is a forward thinking partnership approach to planning, design and management of multi-functional green infrastructure across Thurrock. The Greengrid vision is to 'create a sustainable network of multi-functional green space and links with Thurrock's towns and countryside'. Thurrock's Greengrid strategy complements the South Essex Greengrid and has informed the development of the LDF.
133. Effective working with partners across the Thames Gateway South Essex Partnership has resulted in significant investment of 3 parklands projects across Thurrock. More locally, good progress is being made on Thurrock's sites earmarked for greenflag status. Grays beach continues to maintain its greenflag status, and investment in Coalhouse fort in 08/09 should see successful delivery of Thurrock's LAA target by 2011. Additionally feasibility studies of Coalhouse Fort, Davy Down and Tilbury Marshes have been jointly commissioned by the Council and TTGDC.
134. Partners have been working on their own carbon management programmes. The PCT has started its Carbon Management Programme and the Fire Service has developed a Carbon Footprint for its operational buildings across Essex. Thurrock Council has signed up to the Nottingham Agreement and has completed the Carbon Trust Local Authority Carbon Management Programme. The Council has recently approved the procurement of more fuel-efficient and low emissions fleet of street cleaning and waste collection vehicles.
135. A climate change action plan was recently adopted by Cabinet, and given the Council's assets are not energy efficient a funding allocation has been made available in 09/10 which will be used as a self-sustaining pot for future investment. The partnership is looking to develop a shared approach to carbon reduction and sharing of best practice. The TTGDC have agreed an approach to looking at sustainable design and construction which will be reflected in their planning documents and policies contained within the Council's LDF.
136. Additionally, Thurrock has been leading the development of an innovative Local Carbon Economy programme on behalf of sub-region. The programme will be funded by ERDF with local match-funding which will support businesses to adopt 'Green Systems' appropriate to their particular industry.

Building on our success

137. In the past twelve months partners in Thurrock have delivered a vast array of improvements and achievements that are improving the lives of local people. Thurrock Council has made dramatic and significant progress in terms of responding to the Audit Commission's CPA Direction of travel judgement that the Council was 'not improving adequately'. As a consequence, relationships between partners continue to strengthen. Additionally, the LSP has actively sought out ways to improve partnership working in Thurrock so that the "added-value" of partnership meetings is maximised.
138. There are also a number of real challenges that partners in Thurrock are working together to improve. These include:
- Historically low levels of attainment
 - A local economy with low-skilled, relatively low wage jobs in a narrow range of sectors
 - Historic deficit in infrastructure which growth particularly in the current economic climate, is likely to place additional pressure
 - Social cohesion which is exacerbated by the rapid pace of change in Thurrock
 - Though the proportion of local people in disadvantage is relatively small in Thurrock, these residents experience inequality across a range of social and environmental factors

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- Relationships with “Third Sector” that need strengthening

139. Together partners have a range of tools at their disposal to address these challenges. Thurrock Council has established an ‘Improvement Board’ to steer the Council’s improvement journey. The Board is made up of the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council, The Cabinet, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Chief Executive and Directors Board and a number of sector partners that provide opportunities for peer challenge in the improvement process.
140. The new Leader of the Council, who is also the Chair of the LSP, displays a collaborative style of leadership. He invited the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition to sit on the Improvement Board and he has also actively engaged with the TTGDC to improve relationships and the delivery of shared agendas. The Council and TTGDC have considerably closer working relationships that aim to minimise the impact of the economic downturn.
141. In recognition of changing circumstances, the council has begun the process of working with partners to reconsider and review the existing Sustainable Community Strategy vision and priorities. A new Leader of the Council, a new and very experienced Chief Executive developing a new set of relationships internally and with external partners – along with a changing economy – provides the opportunity to take stock and ensure the vision for Thurrock is both aspirational and better grounded in evidence about the area.
142. The LSP is reviewing its governance arrangements to bring about a series of changes that will improve the added-value of partnership working, from operational day-to-day delivery through to the LSP’s more formal meeting arrangements. Recommendations will include changes to structure and membership, particularly to the Partnership Board and its Executive Group functions to bring about greater clarity in decision-making and leadership at all levels.
143. The governance review and the implementation of its recommendations will be closely followed the refresh of Thurrock’s Sustainable Community Strategy which is anticipated to be ready for adoption in Autumn 2009. The revised vision and set of priorities that will enable all partners to focus on delivering solutions that ensures Thurrock thrives both economically and socially and delivers on its priorities.
144. Feedback from consultation undertaken for the LSP review of governance indicates that Third Sector would benefit from clear leadership and direction from partners to enable them to play their supporting role. Thurrock Council has introduced regular meetings with the Sector to enable consistent and reliable community leadership. Thurrock CVS on behalf of the Third Sector is leading the development of a Thriving Third Strategy, of which has been identified as a priority piece of work by the Shaping Thurrock Partnership Board.