

20 March 2013		ITEM 6
Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee		
COMMUNITY HUBS		
Report of: Councillor Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Transformation & Communities		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Accountable Head of Service: Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning & Universal Outcomes		
Accountable Director: Jo Olsson, Director of People Services		
This report is Public		
Purpose of Report: To update the committee on the progress of the South Ockendon Pathfinder project and the wider rollout strategy for future Hubs		

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The implementation of a pathfinder community hub, the South Ockendon Centre, was approved by Cabinet on the 14 November 2012 (Item 13 01104144). This project is a joint working venture between Thurrock Council, the Thurrock CVS and the South Ockendon Community Forum, with the Thurrock CVS as the lead organisation.

Initially conceived as a one stop shop for council services as part of an asset rationalisation programme, the Ockendon pathfinder has used the principles of Asset Based Community Development to build a much more ambitious vision of shared leadership between community and council to realise and deploy all of a community's resources to build resilience and readiness for a harsher economic future nationally and locally. The one stop shop principle, to ensure the most effective deployment of the council's resources, is included in the pathfinder.

The project has been broken down into 3 phase; Identification of strategy aims and objectives, Implementation of the Pathfinder Centre in South Ockendon, and Live operation of the Centre under a Partnering Agreement.

The final phase, Live operation of the Centre under a Partnering Agreement is designed to enable the Centre to operate in the 'real world' without the expense and time delay required to set up a formal legal entity. Plans have been developed to move this to a Community Interest Company (CIC), Social Enterprise (SE) or

something similar within 12-months of the Centre opening and once it has demonstrated its value and effectiveness.

The Pathfinder project involves the refit of the Belhus Library to incorporate open community areas for general information, meet and greet and direction to specific offerings; a self serve/assisted self serve area with access to public pc's and seating areas to enable local residents to access Council and other services online (linked to the Channel Shift Project); and the retention of the library service. In addition, there will be an office area that incorporates facilities for peripatetic council staff to hot-desk, i.e. Housing Local Area Officer, Adult Social Care Local Area Coordinators, or other officers local to the area.

Refurbishment work is progressing well and on schedule/on budget. A brand and Style Guide have been developed in consultation with local residents and is now being used to promote the centre ahead of it opening to the public, and a Facebook page has been set up to encourage feedback and advertise the Centre.

A Business and Financial Plan is being finalised, with the financial plan covering the first 3-years of the Centre. The Business Plan develops the priority target areas that have again been developed in consultation with local groups and residents who have identified issues that affect their community and where the Centre can have a marked impact. Output areas include;

- Health & Well-Being,
- Learning & Opportunity,
- Jobs & Prosperity,
- Pride & Responsibility,
- Leisure & Environment, and
- Feeling Safe

An initial response from residents identified 200+ local people interested in knowing more about the Centre and how they could become involved. Of these 50+ registered a formal interest in volunteering and 20+ of these have been interviewed in relation to becoming a volunteer at the Centre.

A Centre Manager had been seconded from the Council to the project and commenced work on the 18th February and is now driving forward the operational aspects of the project, including development of the events and surgeries calendar, mobilising the volunteers and ensuring they understand their roles and responsibilities (as well as arranging training where required), developing resource rotas and working with community groups to gain a detailed understanding of the community and its wants and needs.

The building is on schedule to open its doors on the 25th March, however, as this is Easter week it has been agreed that this will be a soft opening. A formal opening is scheduled for the 20th April and a local school, the Ockendon Academy, is designing an opening event, to give an opportunity to show their skills, promote the school and emphasise that this is a community facility run by and for the community.

The learning's gathered from the first 2 phases of the project are being evaluated and used to support and inform a borough-wide roll-out strategy. A report on the wider

roll-out strategy is being prepared and will be presented to Cabinet in March for consideration and a further report in June.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the report in the context of reshaping council services in collaboration with communities.**

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND:

- 2.1 The Council has had a strategy in place for some time to rationalise service provision and building assets and is engaged with other public sector providers to maximise the potential gains from the strategy. The council's asset disposal strategy enables significant investment in an ICT infrastructure to support 'channel shift' enabling the community to use ICT more effectively to access council services. The Community Hub programme, (alongside the re-modelling of Civic Offices in Grays) is the vehicle designed to achieve these purposes.
- 2.2 The Community Hub programme is designed to enable communities to better support themselves and thereby more successfully manage demand for vulnerable people of all ages to enter the statutory care services which can be very expensive and where demand is increasing.
- 2.3 Communities know and understand local issues and need, and can develop their own solutions, with the Council providing support and assistance in the background; the community utilising and calling upon the Council for support rather than the Council determining and delivering what it feels the community needs.
- 2.4 This is a new style of venture for the Council and therefore the approach of using a Pathfinder project was agreed between the 3 parties, Thurrock Council, Thurrock CVS and the South Ockendon Community Forum (SOCF). In order to keep costs down it was also agreed to use an existing Council premises (the old Belhus Library) and fit this out to enable, as far as is possible, a community facility to be developed that supports the aims and objectives of the initiative.

3. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS:

- 3.1 The South Ockendon Centre is a pathfinder project and the finding from this project will inform the approach, design and roll-out strategy for future Community hubs.
- 3.2 The strategy for the future roll-out of Community hubs is being progressed through the Community Hub Programme Board, Chaired by Steve Cox, Assistant Chief Executive, and will be presented to Cabinet in March 2013.

4. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 4.1 Significant consultation has been undertaken at all stages of the pathfinder project from the outset through to developing locally identified priorities and target groups and the design of the style guide and brand (including the naming of the Centre (the South Ockendon Centre))
- 4.2 Consultations have been carried out at various stages by Thurrock CVS, through Engage), the SOCF, and Thurrock Council (through Library Services), with local residents.
- 4.3 The Pathfinder Project is part of the Council overall Transformation Programme and therefore is regularly reported to the Transformation Board for their feedback and to ensure that this remains on target and aligned to the overall Transformation agenda.
- 4.4 Cabinet approved the pathfinder project in November and reports have also been presented to the Audit O&S committee and Health and Well-Being O&S committee.
- 4.5 Local community groups and organisations have been, and continue to be, involved in operational 'Walk-Through' workshops to support the development of the Centres policies, procedures and modus-operandi.

5. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 5.1 This project directly supports all 5 corporate priorities as well as developing a new way of working with the Community and Voluntary Sector that gives these groups a greater say in how the Council delivers its services to local residents.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Telephone and email: **01375 652466**
kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk

The capital funding for the project has been identified and provision made within the transformation budget. Revenue funding for the Ockendon pilot has been assigned from existing budgets within the People's and Housing Directorates. Revenue funding for the roll out is still to be confirmed and will be informed by the pathfinder experience.

6.2 **Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Telephone and email: **07971 316599**
Lucinda.bell@bdtlegal.org.uk

I have no legal comments.

6.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Carmel Littleton**
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The community hubs will be shaped by local communities and take full account of the local profile of the needs of residents. It is expected that greater access will be afforded for groups who find existing services difficult to access. An Equality Impact Analysis will need to be conducted at different phases of this project to ensure as plans develop they meet the needs of 'diverse groups' of residents.

6.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The development of the Pathfinder project in South Ockendon remains on schedule and within budget. All parties are working collaboratively together with a shadow management board in place over viewing the implementation of the pathfinder project and reporting to the community Hub Programme Board. A formal partnering agreement for the operation of the Centre is under review by each party's legal representatives to ensure that this is acceptable to all. All parties have agreed that the Thurrock CVS will be the lead organisation in the venture.
- 7.2 Learning's are being captured in respect of what has worked well and what did not go as well as had been hoped and this is informing the roll-out strategy and approach for future community hubs.
- 7.3 Suitable levels of management have been assigned by each party to ensure the project is delivered successful and the project has been assigned a full time project manager supported by a specialist subject matter expert to maintain the control and direction of the project.
- 7.4 The local community groups have been actively involved and their input has helped inform the direction for priority groups and target areas.

- 7.5 The number of local people that have expressed interest in the centre has been exceptional and the challenge is now to develop on this and retain this interest to recruit sufficient numbers to enable to centre to operate the hours it is intended to.
- 7.6 Now the brand and style guides have been approved, and as the opening date approaches communications are critical to raise awareness of the Centre, what its aims are and that it is there for the community so the more the community put in, the more they can get out.
- 7.7 There is still a little way to go before the doors open, and still some key work to do, especially in relation to developing the volunteer resources, however, the collaboration between the 3 organisations has been very encouraging and sets a positive scene for the operation of the Centre.

BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:

- Report to Cabinet
- Business Case
- Report to Audit O&S
- Report to Health & Well-Being O&S

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix One - Draft South Ockendon Centre Client Group Priority Spreadsheet

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