

23 January 2013

ITEM 12.1

Council

## CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT

Report of: Councillor Lynn Worrall

### Transformation and Community

As I prepared this report, it struck me that my portfolio, which is Transformation and Community might be better named Transformation of Community or Transformation with Community, as these two concepts transformation and community are inextricably linked and the transformation of our council and our community is probably the most important responsibility that we as an administration share. In this report I want to draw to your attention examples of our internal transformation and how we are transforming communities. The examples are illustrative of the scale and pace of complex change we are undertaking to mitigate the impact of the changes in public sector funding

I want our residents to experience an efficient and effective council every time they contact us and whatever the reason for that contact so the transformation team have been focussing on Customer Services. Robust independent customer insight research undertaken before Christmas provides a very strong message from residents that 86% want to do business with the Council differently - on the internet, for example paying council tax, doing more for themselves. Using the internet is fast, will enable a fully automated response and can be much cheaper than working face to face or over the phone.

My overarching strategic objective is to **create a great customer experience and achieve the lowest transaction costs possible - enabling those who can, to self serve and provide consistent support to those least able to meet their own needs.**

This will be achieved through:

A substantially new and improved website, able to handle automated customer transactions;

A fundamental re-design of processes, automating systems through to the end point of delivery;

This month Cabinet will be asked to agree the business case which will deliver efficiencies of over £600,000. However not everyone can or wants to do their business with the council through the internet or on the phone. Our most vulnerable residents are those most likely to prefer or to need a more personal

relationship with the council. This will continue; my intention is that Community Hubs will be the means to enable this more personal service for vulnerable residents

November Cabinet gave the green light to the pathfinder Community Hub, named by popular vote South Ockendon Centre, the SOC. The core purpose of the Community Hub is to develop and make real a new relationship between the citizen and the state that is crucial to meet the economic, demographic and social challenges in the future. The SOC has been fully co-constructed between Council, CVS and community.

SOC is to open in March 2013. The Shadow Management Hub Board is in place and has had its first meeting. The recruitment of the SOC Manager, an internal secondment from the Council, is underway. Careful and detailed legal work is also underway to develop an interim partnering agreement to help inform the final legal entity governance arrangements.

My vision is to see between 3 and 5 Community Hubs across the Borough. Where and when will be guided by lessons from the SOC pathfinder; what is right for and works for our local communities; and how community led action can be central to how we think about services in the future.

Critical to this is volunteering - beneficial to services, users and to volunteers who want to give and want to learn. The legacy of the Olympic Games Makers is inspiring me personally to build upon the 230 volunteers directly supporting Council services. I extend my thanks and gratitude to the time given to help improve the services offered to residents.

A number of practical steps have helped improve the Council's approach to community engagement. In 2012 we worked with Partners to refresh the Community Strategy and over 750 people took part in a public consultation to inform our new priorities. The evidence gained through this will work will inform future work so that residents know we have listened to what they feel about the borough and the area where they live. The first Community Council meeting was held in Tilbury and Chadwell to inform the Health And Well-Being Strategy, and a 'U Choose' event saw local residents decide how £10,000 could best be used by local groups to improve well being in that area.

Our relationship with the voluntary sector in Thurrock has grown through ongoing strategic meetings with senior officers and councillors through the Joint Strategic Forum. This has led to a refresh of Thurrock's Compact. The refreshed Compact was adopted by Council in November – a timely opportunity for us to reflect on our determination to work with the voluntary, community and faith sector in Thurrock as we explore new ways of working to build resilient communities.

The council spends a lot of money. A review completed in July showed that the Council spends £170m each year with over 5,000 third party suppliers. I have challenged officers to get better value from those contractual arrangements. The pressure is on Serco to come up with really strong proposals. If they don't,

work is underway to develop a Council run procurement service. I want to see at least £2m efficiency saving per annum.

The Councils IT and telephony is poor. A new strategy has been developed which enables the Council to take advantage of developments in technology and leapfrog from its current out dated systems to leading edge solutions. This will enable the Council to be flexible and agile, as it needs to be given the resource challenge we face. The new council web site is being built and will be ready by this Summer and a pilot of Google Business Applications starts in January 2013 which will support mobile working. The first projects designed to establish the Civic Offices as the administrative hub of the borough have started. The 4<sup>th</sup> floor refurbishment is underway; a space previously occupied by 14 staff will be used by up to 50 staff from February 2013. The transfer of staff out of the Culver Centre is also underway and a business case for the refurbishment of the whole of Civic Offices – enabling up to 300 staff to move into the buildings – will be completed by February 2013.

Alongside the transformation some things continue to evolve. This year ticket sales for the pantomime were 7% up on the previous year bucking the national trend and economic recession. I went to see Cinderella this year and can testify, it was a really fabulous show. The Diversity Champions Project is now 5 years old. It is based on cross party working and a strong local partnership. The Champions project has given an important voice to our young people and helped the council to promote inclusion, cohesion and a sense of community in the area. We hosted The South East Regional Equality Conference, the 'Big Debate' on the key policy issues impacting not just Thurrock but the region. The event attracted national leaders from the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, Stonewall as well as local leaders. It has had a very significant impact on the positive reputation of Thurrock in this field.

2012 proved to be an unprecedented year for community led activity. Over 40 street parties were held in Thurrock to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee last June. These proved to be a fantastic way for neighbours to come together and to get to know each other better – building strong communities from celebrating together. We collaborated with Essex County Council to take part in the 'Sparks Will Fly' event at T-Fest too. July saw the outstanding celebrations as Thurrock welcomed the Olympic torch through Grays. This was a fantastic day attended by 20 000 people when Thurrock really shone – children and performers from all over the borough took part in the parade and over 150 groups helped to make bunting to line the streets.

July also saw the first Thurrock Arts Trail. The plan was to have artists in 4 venues but we ended up with 60 artists in 11 venues across the borough. The trail will be extended next year and congratulations are due to Jonathan Curzon and Lata Upadhyaya as well as all the artists involved. I was very proud to see Thurrock's first International Film Festival at the Thameside Theatre. T.I.C.C. is planning a Thurrock festival for 2013 which will run throughout July starting with a community concert at Thurrock Civic Hall. It's an umbrella event which will publicise all the art and cultural events in Thurrock, so please look at the website and register.

Autumn 2012 saw the opening of the National Skills Academy for the Creative & Cultural sector at Purfleet, the national and international backstage training centre for stage, film and television technical skills. This gives us a wonderful opportunity to showcase Thurrock, telling our very real story of imagination and creativity.

This is not an easy time to be a local politician. We are faced with very hard choices and have to make very difficult decisions but when I reflect upon all we have achieved in my portfolio I feel huge pride and great pleasure. Everyone contributes to my portfolio, everyone in the council and everyone in the community and I want to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you. 2012 has been a fantastic year for Thurrock thanks to the efforts of everyone. We should all feel huge pride and great pleasure in all we have achieved.