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| 27 November 2013 | ITEM: 12 (i) |
| Council | |
| CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT | |
| Report of: Councillor Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Communities | |
| Communities | |

As Portfolio Holder for Communities, I hold responsibility for a wide range of services including community development, equalities, culture and heritage. All share the Community Strategy objective of building pride in Thurrock and as I write this report and reflect on the past year’s work, I hope Council shares pride in the effort made in these services to go the extra mile to deliver so much on very restricted budgets.

1. Introduction

Below are brief outlines of the services and some examples of the ways in which residents benefit from their work.

2. The Services

a. Community Development

The aim of this service is to help ensure that communities in Thurrock are fully able to develop their skills and confidence to improve local life. This may be through taking voluntary action in a neighbourhood, developing a service to respond to local needs or engaging residents in decision-making.

Invariably, much of the team’s work depends on a close relationship with the voluntary, community and faith sector as conduits into communities. Thurrock has a strong CVS and this relationship underpins positive communication between communities and the Council to help ensure the council considers its impact on communities and organisations in all we do.

The Community Development team has overseen the delivery of the Voluntary Sector Development Fund – the management of grants to the voluntary sector that enables key organisations to thrive. This year’s budget discussions highlighted the need for the Council to continue this investment of £432,600 into the voluntary sector if we are to successfully help grow and strengthen the sector to do more in the face of demand on public services. A key decision was taken by Cabinet to administer this fund through CVS. This decision recognises the role of CVS in being best placed to develop the sector, and to make the best investment decisions in partnership with the Council. CVS has completed the application process and is currently supporting a panel to consider bids against set criteria.

Strong relationships must underpin our work with communities – if we are to truly encourage people to take action to improve their own lives, they must feel confident that the Council is there to support and recognise this effort. Last November, Cabinet approved the refreshed Thurrock Joint Compact. Over the last year we have evaluated our approach to the Compact with Braintree's Compact using the East of England Peer Review. The Compact has helped to frame a number of conversations around how we work with communities over the last year – not least in relation to one of the most exciting initiatives I have the pleasure to hold responsibility for - Community Hubs.

The initial success of South Ockendon Community Hub has spurred a partnership between the Council, voluntary sector and communities to implement a roll out programme of Community Hubs. One example of this success is that five of the volunteers at the South Ockendon Centre have gone on to secure paid employment, something they see as a testament to the confidence they gained through volunteering.

An initial meeting with Community Forums and key neighbourhood groups in March '13 resulted in nine expressions of interest for communities to explore Hubs. In recent months, four working groups have been established to develop local plans, and we expect the next Hub to open next year.

It is easy to revert to thinking about buildings when we speak of Hubs but I want to use this opportunity to stress the role of Hubs as enablers. At one level, Hubs will enable a better, more co-ordinated expression of the assets in an area and the services and resources available to residents as required. At another level however, Hubs will bring people together as they express what they would like to see in the future. The Hubs therefore hold a great opportunity to spark community led action – and possibly even a blossom in micro enterprise and local delivery of more activity to build thriving communities.

Throughout the development of the Hub programme, as well as through the recruitment of Local Area Co-ordinators in Adult Social Care, Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) has been embraced in Thurrock as a concept to underpin our approach to community development and engagement. Its impact has the potential to transform our thinking to all services – including the design and development of services. ABCD has the potential to be transformational to all aspects of what the Council delivers. I encourage all councillors to take part in future opportunities to learn more about a strength based approach to building community in a way that embraces people's willingness to be public spirited towards vulnerable people, families the environment and safer communities.

A key principle of ABCD is to ensure that people are able to help themselves using the assets and informal associations around them first and before traditional service models. Often, not knowing what is available locally is a key barrier – something Hubs will help address. However, community builders and connectors within local areas can help to highlight and grow opportunities at a grass roots level, therefore further enabling a more sustainable approach to community service. An initial two day workshop in spring '13 has unleashed a great deal of enthusiasm for ABCD and

the language and approach promoted is becoming the norm in a number of arenas. I am particularly encouraged to see how ABCD has helped to speak up Thurrock – recognising our assets and strengths as a foundation for the future.

The final role of Community Development I want to highlight is the Council's Volunteer Programme. A great deal of effort has been taken to ensure that Thurrock Council has a robust offer available to residents who want to give their time. Just under 250 volunteers are currently active in a range of roles across a number of services. Our pride in this role is expressed through hosting a volunteer manager network for staff supporting volunteers, a volunteer network and annual events to celebrate and thank volunteers giving their time to the Council. We are always looking for new ways in which to capture the enthusiasm of residents to volunteer with us. When an appropriate placement is not available, we are lucky to have a thriving Volunteer Centre in Thurrock based at ngage. I would particularly like to share that ngage secured a wave three of NCVO's Volunteer Centre Quality Accreditation this year. This is a fantastic achievement and we are proud to have this level of support in Thurrock.

The extent of volunteering and community led action in Thurrock is a living legacy to the community support demonstrated in last year's Olympics and Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. Long may this continue to build pride in Thurrock.

b. Corporate Diversity

The corporate diversity team has worked hard to support our communities and residents through stronger joint working between our community development team and community partners and this has strengthened our ability to tackle social exclusion, and create communities in which everyone can participate. Our work with the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations has allowed us to better understand the specific needs of residents by actively seeking the views of service users on policy developments.

The team has taken practical action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality and to ensure a voice for under-represented and disadvantaged staff groups. Contributing to the achievement of Gold Investors in People through highly regarded staff training and joint work with HR and OD teams.

The team has maintained a framework for Equality Impact Analysis (EqIA) across new policy developments and budget decisions. The team has worked to build community capacity by embedding inclusion throughout the work of the Council – for example through policy advice and strategic equality projects. The team has delivered key community cohesion projects through the direct delivery of events which bring people from different backgrounds together, for example T-Fest, Black History Month and International Women's Day. In addition we have promoted tolerance and diversity throughout the workplace through promoting workforce diversity plans.

c. The Museum and Heritage Service

In addition to the normal enquiry, identification and gallery tours for schools and community groups, a range of historical lectures have been given to clubs and societies in Thurrock and beyond.

The Service has worked hard with the Tilbury Riverside Project to raise pride in Tilbury Town with talks and events including the commemoration of the 1953 floods. A notable effort was also undertaken to support the Empire Windrush special event at the Port of Tilbury, with an exhibition at the Tilbury Riverside buildings and narration on the boat tour. The museum participated in the Horndon 'Feast and Fair' as well as Stanford-le-Hope festival working in partnership with the Horndon Arts Group and the Corringham Light Railway Project. We were also present at the Big Lunch organised by Community Development, supporting a consultation about a possible Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid to enhance Grays Park, using heritage photographs of past use of the park. In partnership with most heritage groups in Thurrock a major contribution to the Thurrock Council display at the Orsett Show was 10 heritage groups showcasing their aims and outcomes on Thurrock's unique heritage. With the addition of an apprentice some new and temporary displays have been made in the main museum gallery. The museum has 10 volunteers and has given work experience to a number of students. In partnership with one of our museum volunteers a new local history book "Where the Bad Boys Go", a history of the Shaftesbury Training establishment moored off Grays, has just been launched. The museum has committed to skills and training opportunities for the creative and cultural industries as an industry supporter. A project with Thameside Primary this term will include pupils visiting the museum to understand more about Little Thurrock's heritage and how museums work. A temporary museum is planned at the school during this time to focus on their 125th anniversary.

With the centenary of the Great War starting in 2014, the museum has been securing information on Thurrock's role in the war both in terms of recruitment and the industrial production of war goods; this will be fed in to a major exhibition in the museum and in a touring exhibition for which a Heritage Lottery grant is being applied for. A wide range of events, projects and commemorations are being planned to ensure the Thurrock communities can learn from past commitments and local history related to the 1914-18 war. Ground work with our military sites, groups and individuals with interest in the history of this time is being co-ordinated to engage with as many people as possible.

d. The Theatre and Arts Service

This year has been a busy one for the arts in Thurrock. In May we were pleased to host the opening event for the Thurrock Arts Trail and the Essex Summer Of Art at the Barns at High House Production Park. This is a local event run by local artists and we welcomed Mayors and Members from councils around Essex. It was the lead event of the 30 plus arts trails that exist in Essex and gave an appropriate opening to the purpose built artists studios at Purfleet which are now home to 26 professional artists.

The exceptional Thurrock Drama Festival was joined by the first Thurrock Speech and Drama Festival for young people, and in September a second Thurrock International Film Festival welcomed guests from London, Wales and two film makers who had flown in from Arizona especially to see their film in competition. They won a category but rather pleasingly, out of 250 entries worldwide, top honours went to Thurrock Filmmakers Jonny Harrold and James Kavanagh.

The National Skills Academy Backstage Centre at Purfleet opened for business last November and during autumn half term Thurrock apprentices, pupils, students and members of the public attended master classes in lighting, sound, make up and scenic design.

In July the Thurrock International Celebration of Culture presented a series of events; - The Grays Street Festival and Olympic Heritage Trail was closely followed by the visit of the Orchestra du Bretagne with guest soloist Chris Brubeck. The concert also included 90 Thurrock Youngsters from the Music Service and the RM19 Youth Choir. There was also a Battle of The Bands, a choral festival, Jazz workshops all ending at the Big Lunch in Grays Park.

It has been an interesting year for the Thameside Theatre. The number of community groups who wish to hire the space and put on shows remains as high as ever but as you might expect in a recession, big audiences are hard to find. Theatre programming is changing to reflect public wishes with even the local amateur groups offering weekday matinee performances.

The theatre has been working with partners Serco to upgrade the box office facilities in line with the Council's transformation process. Different service delivery options are being explored along with an email based marketing system. The online system now offers a seat option which means that, for some shows, over 40% of tickets are being booked online.

The Thameside pantomime this year stars Natalie Cassidy who played Sonia in Eastenders – she is proving a popular panto star with bookings up 24% on this period last year. Eleven Thurrock Schools have booked to see the panto. It's always a pleasure to hear people's appreciation of the Thameside as they walk in the door.

3. Contribution to a Corporate Agenda

The services within my Portfolio contribute to all Council priorities. However, they are particularly important to creating a great place for learning and opportunity as well as building pride in Thurrock. The services I hold responsibility for also contribute to improved health and well-being in the borough, providing opportunity for people to make the most of social networks and informal associations.

4. The Future

Despite the continuing economic challenges faced in the public sector, I am confident that the services in my Portfolio will continue to provide cost effective services whilst finding creative and efficient ways to maximise the budgets invested by the Council and secure external funding. We are currently supporting an opportunity to bid for Arts Council Creative People and Places funding. Thurrock has been identified as one of only eight places that are able to apply. If successful the programme will be defined by the community and increase the numbers of older people and people with dementia engaging in the arts as a catalyst to reduce loneliness and build a dementia friendly community. The bid also aims to build capacity in our creative and cultural sector locally.

Like many other services, we have embraced the shared services model within Community Development and Equalities to create a single service area shared with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. Not only does this provide an opportunity to share best practice in two areas with familiar issues, but has also enabled us to secure the future of this important service on a more efficient footing.

We are now seeking nominations for the civic awards, a celebration of the unsung heroes in the community. We have eleven awards which will be presented at an Oscars-style ceremony on Friday 21 February. We are especially grateful to our sponsors, especially our headline sponsor intu Lakeside. As councillors we know many of the people in our wards that make a real difference in their communities. While we will be encouraging nominations from people across the borough, I want us as councillors to take the lead and make sure each and every one of us makes at least one nomination. A straightforward process, you can complete your nomination on the website.

In recent months it has become clear that my role as Chair of the Working Group to plan events in commemoration of World War One will see some exciting and innovate joint working from across my service areas in respect of one joint programme of work. The programme continues to develop as an opportunity to celebrate Thurrock's heritage from the Great War, including arts and cultural opportunities, and ensuring the involvement of all diverse communities within different neighbourhoods. I can genuinely say that the services in my area offer something that everyone can access, enjoy and learn from, and the World War One commemorative programme demonstrates that perfectly.

Financial Information:

(A Motion agreed by the Council on 23 January 2013 requires the Cabinet Member to cover all finance and budget issues of their portfolio that they consider relevant, including (but not limited to): fiscal management; budget responsibility of the cabinet member; receipts and actual spend vs. predicted spend; the levels of virements; and value for money.)

The services within the Communities Portfolio cover Community Development and Diversity within CEDU (including Community Hubs) and Arts and Culture within Adult Social Care.

Diversity

The Diversity service comprises of 3 areas:

1. Diversity Service
2. T Fest (Thurrock Festival)
3. Diversity Business Unit

- 1 Diversity Service Budget for 2013-14 is recharged entirely to all service departments within Thurrock Council and the actual figures for 2012-13 were as follows:

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| Employees | £118,091 | |
| Supplies & Services | £ 7,139 | |
| Project Work | £ 46,053 | |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £ 61,395 | £233,128 |
| Less Recharged to Departments | | £233,128 Cr |
| Net Expenditure | | £0 |

2 The T Fest account covers all expenses for the running of the Festival and it is funded by Sponsorship (Internal & external) and by credits earned by the Business Unit. Actual Figures for 2012-13 were;

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| Equipment | £21,115 | |
| Professional Fees (Artists) | £33,331 | |
| Supplies & Services | £ 2,140 | £56,586 |
| Sponsorship, Contributions and Diversity Business Unit | | £56,605 Cr |
| Net Income | | £ 19 Cr |

3 The Diversity Business Unit provides Training, Translation and Interpretation services for a wide number of activities throughout the Council. Its purpose is to be self sufficient and contributes to the T Fest service where practicable. The actual costs for 2012-13 were;

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| Training, Fees | £ 5,393 | |
| Project Work | £43,486 | £48,879 |
| Receipts | | £50,428 Cr |
| Net Income | | £ 1,549 Cr |

Arts Development

This service promotes and encourages Arts within Thurrock Council and provides advice, contacts and support to Schools, Thurrock organisations and links with the Educational establishments throughout the borough.

Expenditure for 2012-13 was as follows;

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| Supplies & Services | £ 251 |
| Professional Fees | £5,475 |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £3,020 |
| Net Expenditure | £8,746 |

Thameside Theatre

This service provides Drama and Entertainment facilities for the Council and puts on shows, pantomimes, plays, music and general entertainment for the community and non residents. The shows are managed either by the Councils own Arts and Theatre Manager or can allow Professional Organisations to run their own Promotions/shows etc who rent/hire the facilities that the Theatre offers.

Expenditure for 2012-13 was as follows;

Thurrock Shows

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| Employees (Including Box Office) | £227,426 | |
| Premises | £ 8,024 | |
| Supplies & Services (Including Bar & Confectionery) | £ 70,513 | |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £156,430 | |
| Administrative Building Costs (Incl Capital Charges) | £256,114# | £718,507 |

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| Income | | £154,107 Cr |
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| Net Expenditure | | £564,400 |
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Thurrock Promotions

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| Supplies & Services (Equipment) | £ 7,939 | |
| Professional Fees | £156,797 | |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £ 13,645 | £178,381 |

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| Income | | £175,990 Cr |
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| Net Expenditure | | 2,673 |
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Community Development

This service provides support to communities and the Voluntary Sector who promote Community Support programmes to the residents of the Borough in tandem with Statutory functions carried out by Thurrock Council.

There are 3 areas

1. Community Development Direct
2. Community Involvement
3. Voluntary Grants

The expenditure in 2012-13 was as follows;

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| 1 | For Community Development Direct | | |
| | Employees | £101,649 | |
| | Supplies & Services | £ 9,590 | |
| | Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £ 38,151 | £149,390 |
| | Income | | £ 8,000 Cr |
| | Net Expenditure | | £141,390 |
| 2 | For Community Involvement | | |
| | Supplies & Services | £ 5,267 | |
| | Project Work | £29,595 | £34,862 |
| | Income | | £3,856 Cr |
| | Net Expenditure | | £31,006 |
| 3 | For Voluntary Grants to Voluntary Organisations | | |
| | Supplies & Services and other Misc Grants | | £432,600 |
| | Credit Union shares debit | | £ 80,000 |
| | Income | | £ 32,485 Cr |
| | Net Expenditure | | £503,450 |

Museums and Archives

This service, located at the Thameside complex in Grays, provides storage for the Councils antiquities and records of its heritage and history.

Expenditure for 2012-13 was as follows;

Museum

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| Employees | £ 39,504 | |
| Supplies & Services | £ 1,228 | |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £ 37,006 | |
| Administrative Building Costs (Incl Capital Charges) | £186,308# | £264,046 |
| Income | | £ 2,875 Cr |
| Net Expenditure | | £261,171 |

Archives

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| Contribution to Essex CC | £ 33,393 |
| Other Internal Charges (SLA's) | £ 34,991 |
| Administrative Building Costs (Incl Capital Charges) | £184,137# |
| Net Expenditure | £252,521 |

NB - The Council is required to charge services a Capital Charge that reflects the value of the capital assets they use. These are in the main, depreciation, but can also reflect one off changes to values brought about by revaluation exercise.

Community Hubs

Community Hubs – As approved in the MTFS, £3.4m capital has been identified over the next three years to develop community hubs as a key transformation project that enables other transformational work – eg self service. Additional revenue funding is available to support programme management, community development, capacity building and volunteer involvement 2013 – 2015. A number of options are being explored post 2015 – these are likely to include a mixture of Council funding with alternative funding sources where appropriate in partnership with Hubs as they develop individual business plans.

SOC Pathfinder – The SOC pathfinder project opened on scheduled on Monday 25th March 2013. This was delivered within budget (Business Case £372.9k, Actuals £335k) which is a great credit to all those involved. Estimated running costs for the 1st year were £123.5K and as at month 6, the centre is on target for this spend. Funding for this 1st year has been provided equally between Housing and Children’s Services, both contributing £75k, allowing for contingency. Any balance at the end of this first year will be rolled over to reduce the funding required next year.