

## **BOROUGH OF TELFORD & WREKIN**

**CABINET – 26 JULY 2012**

### **CO-OPERATIVE COUNCIL UPDATE**

#### **REPORT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR**

#### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 In July 2011, the Council made a clear commitment to become a Co-operative Council and became a founder member of the Co-operative Council Network ([www.councils.coop](http://www.councils.coop)). Over the past year, there has been a growing interest in Co-operative Councils nationally, which has seen the Network expand from 13 to 21 members.
- 1.2 We stated that as a Co-operative Council we would work together with the community to build a new partnership where power and responsibility were more balanced and where our employees, local people and organisations would be more actively involved in shaping services and decision-making.
- 1.3 In November 2011, we published an organisational review, which described how we would become more co-operative by:
- Bringing more public services together so that people get what they need at the right time and place;
  - Involving local people and our employees more in the planning and running of services;
  - Supporting our community better and encouraging people to do more to help their own communities.
- 1.4 A programme of work was agreed to translate this vision into action, which focused on 4 main areas:
- Adopter projects;
  - Co-operative and Employee Commissions;
  - Partnership working;
  - Community agreements.
- 1.5 This report summarises what has been achieved and illustrates that in a relatively short period time and with reducing council budgets, we have made significant progress in putting co-operative working into practice.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes progress in delivering the Co-operative Council Work Programme, as set out in Section 4 of this report; and
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the inclusion of the Food Bank project (described in Section 4.1.4) in the Co-operative Council Work Programme.

## 3. SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Community Impact	Yes	This programme of work contributes to the Council's priority to be a Co-operative Council. Many of the projects/initiatives in the work programme are already delivering community benefits (see Section 4). Other initiatives will be assessed for community impacts as the proposals are developed.
Financial & Value for Money Impact	Yes	The proposed Service & Financial Planning Strategy for 2012/13 to 2014/15 was agreed at Council on 1 <sup>st</sup> March 2012. The strategy is set in the context of severe financial pressures facing the Council, including significant reductions in Central Government funding, service pressures due to the difficult economic climate which is having an impact on the community, in particular demands in Adults and Children's social care, and uncertainties around future funding levels with changes to both the local government finance system and the Welfare system being on the horizon. A clear priority identified in the strategy is being a Co-operative Council, working with residents, partners and local organisations to collectively deliver services to the area within the resources available. This report highlights areas of work to further develop co-operative working. There is a small co-operative council budget of £15k, intended to be used to pump-prime monies for community projects which was approved by Full Council as part of the 100 day budget in November 2011. Given the financial constraints, the scope for any additional investment is very limited and it is important that any financial implications are identified and considered when individual recommendations are made prior to approval. The Co-operative Council Adopter Programme also includes undertaking a number of reviews which will explore whether services can be delivered more cost effectively which may deliver savings in the future.

Legal Issues	Yes	The General Power of Competence under the Localism Act 2011 provides that councils are specifically empowered to do anything not prohibited by legislation and subject to public law principles and due process. In addition, the provisions regarding Community Right to Challenge are being adopted. Legal Services' advice will be sought throughout the implementation of proposals and all necessary legal arrangements such as property documentation, appropriate partnership agreements or any necessary contract documentation will be put in place.
Other impacts, risks and opportunities	Yes	The ongoing programme of work will be evaluated to ensure risks are identified and managed and any associated opportunities are maximised. Mainstreaming the Co-operative Values and ways of working throughout the authority amongst officers and members remains key to becoming a Co-operative Council.
Impact on specific wards	Yes	Borough-wide impact.

#### 4.0 **INFORMATION**

##### 4.1 **Adopter Projects**

4.1.1 One of the main ways that we are embedding co-operative working across the Council is through the delivery of a range of practical 'Adopter Projects'. In the current phase of work, agreed in January 2012, there is at least one project in each of our service areas.

4.1.2 Over the past 12 months, achievements include:

- **Apprenticeships & Internships** – we have provided new employment opportunities, including 15 additional apprentices employed by the Council over the last 3 months (with a further 14 apprenticeships agreed) and 5 new internships (short-term graduate/student placements) starting in July 2012. Through a campaign aimed at local businesses, we have also secured 60 additional apprenticeships with 47 different local employers.
- **Small Business Loans Fund** – launched in May 2012 with Impetus (a community development financial institution) to help small and medium Telford & Wrekin businesses access funding (£69k of funding has been approved as at end of June 2012).
- **Employability Centre** – launched with TCAT at Meeting Point House. From November 2011-April 2012, the Centre has had approximately 450 contacts with young people and adults who have taken part in training and advice sessions to help them back into employment, education and

training. We have delivered 24 courses resulting in 8 job outcomes and 6 people who are doing, or have registered for, voluntary work.

- **Brookside** - working alongside local residents, partners, members and the Parish Council in Brookside (pilot ward for co-operative working), we have improved street lighting, carried out an environmental clean-up and are now developing long-term regeneration plans.
- **Health Hub** – launched with the Primary Care Trust at Civic Offices. From November 2011-January 2012, more than 1,700 people accessed healthy lifestyle advice through the Health Hub, 113 of these went on to receive full lifestyle screenings.
- **Environmental Action Teams** - in partnership with Parish Councils, secured new Environmental Action Teams in Madeley, Great Dawley and St Georges and Priorslee to improve environmental maintenance in these areas.
- **Community Engagement** - involved more than 3,000 people in shaping our new priorities and more than 2,800 people in our budget consultation (more than double the number taking part in 2011/12), which this year gave local people the power to decide whether or not Council Tax should be increased;
- **Ward Co-operative Fund** - delivered a wide range of local projects put forward by residents across the Borough (£1,000 allocated for each of our 54 wards) e.g. repairs to footpaths, materials and equipment for community gardens and new notice boards and benches.

4.1.3 A number of other Adopter Projects are in progress. These include:

- **Family Connect** – developing a new single point of contact for services for children and families. We have launched a new Family Connect Website and have advisors in place at First Point to deal with enquiries about Council services and we are now working with our partners to include them within Family Connect over the next 12 months, starting with Police and Health services.
- **Dawley Town Hall** – taking steps to bring Dawley Town Hall back into community use. We have secured £140k funding and a commitment from a number of partners to be involved in the future management of the Town Hall and a business plan is being developed. A Friends group was launched in June – the group has developed a Face book page, has started fund-raising activities and will be consulting local residents at Dawley Day in July.
- **Fair-trade** – promoting Fair-trade across the Borough. We ran a number of successful events during Fair-trade Fortnight in February 2012 – this included an event involving 23 local organisations, which has led to the

creation of a working group who are now planning to launch a Telford & Wrekin Fair-trade Partnership to better promote Fair-trade locally.

- **Wi-Fi** – free Wi-Fi is now available at the new Wellington Library and we are aiming to roll this out to publicly accessible Council-owned buildings in other areas, starting with Newport and Brookside.
- **Community Ambassadors** – developing a pilot scheme where volunteers will provide peer support for families who are in the very early stages of having problems (due to start in autumn 2012).

4.1.4 We are also seeking members' approval to incorporate a new **Food Bank** project into the current programme. Food Banks provide emergency food parcels to people in need that are struggling to feed their families as a result of redundancy, illness, debt etc. Whilst a number of voluntary organisations in the Borough, such as Citizen's Advice Bureau, the Salvation Army and the YMCA already provide food parcels, it has been identified that there is a growing need for a co-ordinated Telford & Wrekin Food Bank facility and support to tackle the underlying issues. It is anticipated that the need for this will increase from April 2013 due to changes to the benefit system.

4.1.5 The Cabinet Member (ex officio) for Communications and key officers are now meeting regularly with a range of voluntary organisations to progress this and we are investigating how we can contribute, for example by using the Council's premises as a central depot for food supplies. We are proposing to allocate up to £5k from the Co-operative Council budget towards the costs of this project.

## **4.2 Co-operative and Employee Commissions**

4.2.1 We are now working alongside two Commissions; the Co-operative Commission involving community and business leaders, and an internal Employee Commission. The Commissions were established to provide a new and direct way for people to get involved in shaping the future of the Borough and our organisation.

4.2.2 The Co-operative Commission, made up of about 60 community and business leaders with a vast range of skills and experience, was established in September 2011. The Commission set its own agenda to focus on 5 priority areas:

- Economy & Image;
- Civic Pride & Volunteering;
- Employment & Skills;
- Commissioning & Procurement;
- Co-operative values and communication.

4.2.3 The Employee Commission was established in October 2011 with 87 employees taking part so far. The Employee Commission is open to all and is

employee-led. As with the Co-operative Commission, employees prioritised what they wanted to work on, identifying:

- Employee volunteering;
- Employee communication and engagement;
- Skills planning and development;
- Financial management;
- Social responsibility.

4.2.4 Both Commissions completed their recommendations in March 2012, which were formally agreed by Cabinet in May 2012. There is a strong commitment from the Council to deliver the recommendations with an Assistant Director and Member championing each Commission theme. In conjunction with Commissioners, we are now starting to implement the Commissions' recommendations— early achievements include:

- Adopted **Co-operative Values** - now being promoted to our employees and the community (supports Co-operative Commission recommendation);
- Launched a **Business & Development Charter** and published a new **Visitor Guide** and an Event Planners Guide to promote Telford as a tourism and conference destination (supports Co-operative Commission recommendation);
- Promoted volunteering as part of **National Volunteer Week** (June 2012) – event held in Town Park with Council for Voluntary Service, employees volunteered as part of Olympic Torch relay (supports Co-operative and Employee Commission recommendations);
- Piloted a new **employee mentoring scheme** – mentors now being trained for roll-out across the Council in July 2012 (supports Employee Commission recommendation).

4.2.5 Both Commissions will meet again in October 2012 to review progress and agree next steps. Examples of other initiatives that support Commission recommendations that are already in progress include:

- Launching '**Telford Automotive excellent**' prospectus to encourage inward investment linked to the Jaguar, Land Rover development (supports Co-operative Commission recommendation);
- Setting up a **Destination Telford** Working Group to drive forward the promotion of Telford as a tourism and conference destination (supports Co-operative Commission recommendation). This group will lead on initiatives, such as the Ironbridge Festival in September 2012;
- Developing '**First Point for Business**' – a one-stop shop single point of contact for all investment, business and planning enquiries (supports Co-operative Commission recommendation);
- Running a programme of **Community Games** events over the summer linked to the Olympics and developing an **employee volunteering scheme** to encourage Council employees to get involved in volunteering opportunities and projects (supports Co-operative and Employee Commission recommendations);

- Procuring an **e-learning** system to provide cost-effective learning and development for employees (supports Employee Commission recommendation);
- Widening the use of **social media**, trialling ‘**communication champions**’ in areas of the Council where employees do not have access to Council PCs and launching internal **customer service awards** during Customer Services Week in October 2012 (supports Employee Commission recommendation);
- Running a series of **social responsibility campaigns** to encourage employees to take collective responsibility for issues such as reporting environmental issues and saving energy (supports Employee Commission recommendation).

### **4.3 Partnership Working**

4.3.1 We are also working with other organisations in Telford & Wrekin to strengthen partnership working, as this is an essential part of co-operative working. Many of the projects within the Co-operative Council work programme provide practical illustrations of how we are working more closely with others. Key focuses moving forward include:

- Developing a Health & Well-Being Strategy informed by the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and a programme of engagement with stakeholders, for example we held an engagement event on 3 July 2012 that involved approximately 100 people from a wide range of organisations;
- Refreshing the Children, Young People & Families Plan;
- Two task forces now established (Strengthening Families and Employment & Skills) – these task forces are helping to implement Co-operative Commission recommendations.

### **4.4 Community Agreements**

4.4.1 To help strengthen our relationship with local people and organisations, we are in the process of reviewing our existing community agreements (Parish Charter, Customer Charter and Voluntary Sector Compact) to better reflect our new Co-operative Values and approach.

4.4.2 The **Parish Charter** has been reviewed with the Town and Parish Councils and an updated version has been agreed through the Parish Charter Monitoring Review Group. Feedback from parishes indicated that only slight amendments to the Charter were required. The Council’s Co-operative Values will be shared and discussed with the Parish Councils at the meeting of the Town and Parish Group in July 2012.

4.4.3 The **Customer Charter** is currently being reviewed and feedback is being sought from the Council’s Community Panel how the Charter could be improved. Panel members are also being asked on how residents can support the Council to deliver its services more effectively. The information from this consultation will be used to update the Customer Charter.

4.4.4 As part of delivering the Co-operative Commission's recommendations on Commissioning and Procurement, a number of sessions have been held with representatives from the **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**. A workshop was held on 26 June 2012 to develop a revised approach to the way in which the Council works with and spends with the VCS. A further 3 sessions are planned to take this forward and to ensure that the Council and the VCS are working together on developing our approach.

4.4.5 A further report will be brought to Cabinet to seek agreement on the Council's revised process. The aim is to have this process in place by November 2012 to ensure that funding arrangements for the following financial year can be confirmed at an earlier stage. The aim is to work towards 3 year agreements where possible, and to demonstrate the added value of the Council and VCS working together.

#### **4.5 Communication**

4.5.1 Finally, to give residents a better understanding of what being a Co-operative Council means, we are increasing our communications to keep people informed about what has been delivered and to let them know how they can get involved.

4.5.2 This has included a campaign on volunteering to coincide with National Volunteer Week, and more recently we have focussed on Co-operative Fortnight (23 June to 7 July 2012). Using social media, the Council's Website, press releases and internal campaigns, we have promoted co-operative working and some of our main achievements over the last 12 months.

#### **5. PREVIOUS MINUTES**

5.1 Minute number CB23-26 July 2011

5.2 Minute number CB89 - 26 January 2012

#### **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.1 None.

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