



Transformational Government

Enabled by technology

Local Government

Delivery experts working in local government have worked up, in their own words, some hypothetical examples that give a glimpse of what may be possible in the future. These scenarios are not policy statements of what will happen: they are illustrations of what might be possible in a simple pragmatic way when the principles of the strategy are delivered. These illustrations simply apply existing technologies to public sector delivery models, rather than trying to stretch the technology too far.

Thanwick MBC is a fairly typical Metropolitan Borough Council. It has a population of 250,000 citizens, a 1960s overspill town to the west, agriculture in the middle and two leafy country towns in the west that are becoming highly popular as the long distance commuter trains to London become faster and more reliable. The Council is highly ambitious for the area but appreciates that it is a very complex mixture of neighbourhoods differentiated by history, geography and different levels of self sufficiency. It is not simply an east/west split within the borough, although that may be your first impression.

Thanwick Council has its own electoral mandate which is at the heart of its responsibility. It provides an enormous variety of services with the knowledge that if it is to make a difference it must work with government, police, the health service and others who contribute to the well-being of its citizens.

Thanwick needs to decide how best to join up services and tailor them to improve the lives of local people. This includes helping

citizens personally contribute to the lives of others by:

- **caring for elderly neighbours and family.**
- **ensuring parental support for children's education.**
- **voluntarily organising sport, drama and other leisure activities .**
- **sharing values and behaviour towards the local environmental.**

Thanwick has learnt from its citizens how it can design services, in collaboration with its partners, to suit their needs. It sees a neighbourhood approach as being one of the best ways of achieving this engagement. Neighbourhood working could even offer the opportunity to delegate some decisions at that level to strengthen citizen engagement and improve decision-taking. Thanet has just introduced a number of key themes such as "environmental sustainability" for decision-taking at neighbourhood level.

(a) General service improvements

Thanwick is making service delivery readily available through a variety of direct channels from which the citizen will make the choice that suits them best.

Janice Starkey is 35 and she has two kids at secondary school. Her partner Ted is the manager of a car tyre business that is starting to diversify and things are looking up. They live ten minutes away, not too far from the local shops where Janice works part-time at the hairdressers. Janice started using the internet to help her son Jake find pictures and information for a project on frogs that he did at primary school. The turning point was when the teacher suggested that she might like to use the computers (PCs) in the library by St Peter's Church or the community centre on the high street. The library service centre had trained staff to provide personal assistance for new or tentative users and helped Janice to print off the images from the internet. Janice still pops in to see them when she has problems.

She has noticed how readily you can access a PC these days. Both the local supermarkets have them and there is one in the Doctor's waiting room with a front page that helps direct you to voluntary organisations, social services and the council's leisure facilities.

They now have interactive digital television (with a feedback loop) at home they can use that to access public services, which they used when the refuse collection round missed them.

Her mobile phone gives her piece of mind. Jake went down with a stomach bug at school and because the secretary could reach her immediately at the hairdressers, she could go and pick him up without delay. Her sister Jackie is a fashion buyer for a high street chain. Always on the move, she has a Blackberry mobile that can do so much it's almost like a mobile office. Last week, while on her way to a fashion show, she booked the Civic Suite for their mum's golden wedding anniversary. Janice doubts that Jackie even knows where her local one stop shop is.

Janice's friend Pat still prefers to telephone the council's call centre where the operators are supported by digital systems. This means a solution to a problem can be obtained through the first contact in 80 percent of cases and queries can be passed on in a reliable manner whenever this is not possible.

Her mother prefers to deal with people face to face and has more time, so she visits a nearby one-stop-shop that offers similar support to the call centre and she can come away with a note from them if necessary. Yesterday she wanted to get her gas meter read because felt she might be slipping in to arrears and the staff arranged it promptly.