

Halesowen Area Committee 9th September 2010

Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Community Renewal Working Group

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Committee on the progress made by the Working Group in progressing and updating the Halesowen Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

Background

2. At their meeting on 3rd August the Working Group was given an update on the first meeting of the Neighbourhood Services Group held on 28th June. Minutes of the meeting had been circulated to all Halesowen members, inviting them to refer any issues requiring a Multi-agency approach to the Area Community Renewal Officer (ACRO)
3. An updated copy of the Area Committee Community Renewal Plan had been made available to members. The ACRO reported that the plans to install a Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) on Highfield Park had been placed on hold following resident complaints about the cutting back of the hedges and trees. The working group noted that MUGAs are seen as providing positive activities for young people, and their installation in other parts of the Borough have been accompanied by significant reductions in Anti Social Behaviour. The working group discussed the disappointment the decision had caused to local young people, and the ward member agreed to seek assurances from the Cabinet Member and the Leader of the Council that the funding would remain in place and would request a new installation date.
4. As part of the overall master plan for the area, environmental improvements to derelict land at the rear of Beeches View Avenue at Fatherless Barn were progressing, with the allotments for the disabled under construction through the Abbey Road Allotments Association. The Play Pathfinder Scheme on the same site had been scaled back due to time constraints and had proved a disappointment to residents as the adventure equipment had been cut from the master plan. Caslon Community Partnership has agreed to seek funds with the aspiration of enabling an upgrade in line with the original plans. The Community garden plans were progressing as programmed.
5. Use of specialist substance misuse Outreach Workers had been considered for the Highfields area in the past, but not implemented due to reduction in demand. Current policy is to train other contact staff (PCSOs, Youth Workers etc.) in Drug Awareness and referral and this section will be removed from the plan but remain monitored.

6. Members discussed the problem of under age drinking in the town's parks and this had also been identified by the Neighbourhood Services Group. The ACRO advised that some Coffee in the Dark Sessions had been arranged by the police and that once the new Park Rangers had been appointed he would be arranging a Tasking Group involving them, the Police, and the Youth Service to address the issue. Members were complimentary about the improved Police response since the reorganisation under Programme Paragon.
7. The ACRO reported that the Hope Centre had successfully applied for a Grass Roots Grant of £5000, and had also been awarded UK on line Centre status which included financial support towards running costs. This would enable them to improve services including the tackling of unemployment. A Member noted that assistance to tackle worklessness was also available at the Zion Centre.

Finance

8. In line with the draft local community plan, Area Committees plan in line with the overall Council Plan and priorities whilst encouraging innovation in the commissioning of activities from a variety of partners which will add value and achieve objectives for their area.

Law

9. The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to establish a Local Strategic Partnership to address collaborative working and develop a community strategy and local neighbourhood renewal strategy. Community Renewal is part of that approach.

Section 2 of the Local Government Act 1980 enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well being of the area.

Equality Impact

10. One of the objectives of Community Renewal is to promote inclusion and social cohesion. The Community Renewal strategy addresses those in areas which suffer from inequality in terms of social and economic outcomes.

Information is collected through each Community Renewal intervention or consultation to monitor the inclusivity and difference made for various groups and people involved. Where inclusion is an issue Area Community Renewal Officers engage through various community or interest groups locally to design appropriate responses to different circumstances .

Where children and young people are involved they are directly consulted and involved in designing solutions.

Recommendation

11. That Committee Members note the report and accept the Plan as a working document for the year ahead, and with the Community Renewal Service reporting progress to the Committee through the Working Group.



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List of Background Papers

None