
Stourbridge Area Committee – 16th June 2008

Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services .

Community Renewal Service)

Purpose of Report

1. To update Area Committee on the new arrangements for the Community Renewal Service (previously Neighbourhood Management).

Background

2. The Cabinet decided to transfer the Neighbourhood Management service to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) at its meeting of 31st October 2007. The transfer was completed by 1st April 2008.
3. A multi-agency Community Renewal Steering chaired by the Director of DACHS has been set up and two meetings have been held. The Group also includes strong Elected Member representation. To reflect the name of the Steering Group, the service has been re-named “Community Renewal” in response to the opportunity presented of locating the service within DACHS where good linkages are being made with the other community elements of the directorate.
4. An additional responsibility located within the Community Renewal team is that of working with the Borough’s community centres, responsibility for which was transferred from the Children’s Service Directorate in February 2008.
5. Most Members will be aware of these developments from communications that were sent to Members early in 2008 in which Members were advised of the make-up of the team. The service is structured around:
 - the 5 ‘City Strategy’ Wards of St Thomas, St James, Netherton, Woodside & St Andrews, Castle & Priory, and Brierley Hill and
 - the 3 Area Committee areas of Stourbridge, Halesowen and North Dudley where there is no City Strategy provision
 - In Brierley Hill area, support is provided to the City Strategy area but the Community Renewal Officer also provides support to the wider area committee area.
 - Support to Community Centres where we are establishing good relationships with the over-arching Community Centres Support Group and individual Community Centres

6. The Community Renewal Steering Group is developing a Community Renewal Strategy which is not yet complete. Its purpose is to bring together partner agencies and communities in a shared approach to addressing the many problems that can come together in deprivation so that no one is excluded or disadvantaged by who they are or where they live. It will also enable support to local and strategic actions necessary to achieve these objectives and is committed to the idea that community renewal is “everybody’s business.”

Role of Area Community Renewal Officers

7. Working with all partners, Area Community Renewal Officers (ACROs) co-ordinate as needed, facilitate and focus work on community and neighbourhood issues as defined by data analysis, community engagement and elected members. In addition the ACRO is responsible for producing a local community plan with Elected Members and a first draft for this Area Committee is attached as an Appendix

The Local Community Renewal Plan

8. In the Stourbridge, Halesowen and North Dudley area committee areas the plan covers the whole of the area committee area and concentrates on wider objectives focused in community localities. Similarly, Brierley Hill covers the whole area committee area but recognises the specific City Strategy activity to be carried out in this area. City Strategy work is also needed in the Central Dudley area where good links need to be made with the Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Plans (NESP) to give a more intensive focus on worklessness and the economy.

Governance and accountability arrangements

9. Elected Members are vital to the process of ensuring effective community renewal across all parts of the Borough and particularly for those facing multiple problems.
10. It is also important to draw attention to the community renewal process in achieving the aims of the Dudley Community Partnership (DCP) overall strategy and the need for partners outside the Council such as other public agencies in health, police or education services or private, voluntary and community sector services to be part of the solution in addressing the complex problems of renewal. For this reason strong links are made to the DCP.

Local Task groups and partnerships

11. Members should be aware of many - if not all – the lines of action in the attached draft plan. They will be participating and leading community renewal which is organised locally to ensure that community groups, local people and their elected representatives are engaged with service providers in deciding what needs to be done and are enabled to act upon this in neighbourhoods and localities. This activity can be co-ordinated and collated in to the local community plan or Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

Role of Area Committee

12. Area Committees have a vital role to play in the ensuring the effectiveness of the approach to community renewal in their areas. They have the ability to address key issues in communities they care about and bring some clarity to the delivery of services in complex areas such as health inequalities, community safety or social exclusion. They can also influence the delivery of basic services such as street cleaning or social care. Members will also want to ensure that within the area committee areas, the different communities and interests that make up the area are able to articulate their needs.
13. It is suggested, therefore, that the Area Committee sets up a Working Party to consider their draft plan more closely and amend it as needed to take account of Member influence working with all agencies and sectors of the community
14. It is also suggested that Members consider that as part of the representation / appointment to the Working Party, that the chairs of local NESPs and chairs of local neighbourhood partnerships as appropriate are co-opted onto the Working Party Committee arrangements

Finance

15. The draft Local Community Plan identifies work which is being undertaken through mainstream or other budget source. The Community Renewal Plan will seek to maximise the benefit derived by local communities from the investment in all public services in those areas as well as the activity of local community and voluntary sector or the business sector

Law

16. 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. Neighbourhood management is part of that approach.
17. 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

18. The objective of community renewal is to promote inclusion and social cohesion. Community renewal plans target those most in need in terms of deprivation.
19. Information is collected through each CR intervention or consultation to monitor the inclusivity and difference of various groups and people involved. Where inclusion is an issue ACROs engage through various community groups of interest groups locally to design appropriate responses to different circumstances
20. Where children's and young people are involved they are directly consulted and frequently design the response to local issues - such as youth PACT, Junior rangers, Breakfast clubs, Dance groups, football league, homework mates, places to play, young consultants, intergenerational wor

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- That area committee set up a working group to engage with the further development of the draft local community renewal plan supported by the ACRO and Head of Community Renewal Service.
- That in order to take into account the various needs of communities and interests, that Area Committee consider co-opting representatives from the local neighbourhood partnerships or NESP groups which can be determined by the Working Group with support of the ACRO



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