

Meeting of the Council - 13th October, 2008

Report of the Cabinet

Community Renewal Strategy

Purpose of Report

1. To seek approval from the Council for the draft multi-agency Community Renewal Strategy (available in the Member's Room and on the Committee Management Information System on the Council's website).
2. To note the progress made within Community Renewal since its transfer to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) in April 2008.

Background

3. At its meeting of 31st October 2007, the Cabinet agreed to further develop the Neighbourhood Management service through transfer of the service to DACHS to strengthen linkage with other community responsibilities within the Directorate.
4. A multi-agency Steering Group chaired by the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services was set up in accordance with the Cabinet report of 31st October 2007 to support the development of the service. The Steering Group has strong Elected Member representation including the Leader, the Cabinet Member for Adult Services, representation from Chairmen of the Area Committees, as well as from Dudley Community Partnership (DCP), the Police, health community and voluntary sector.
5. The Steering Group has worked to up-date our approach and this is the basis for the Community Renewal Strategy. The title of the Strategy indicates the idea that community renewal in Dudley is "everybody's business" i.e. from all sectors – public, private, voluntary and community – alongside the leadership of the democratically elected members of the Council within the Dudley community
6. The team working to support this Strategy have also been re-named the Community Renewal Service and additional responsibility for the Borough's community centres was transferred from the Children's Services Directorate in February 2008 to the team which has also strengthened the community focus of the team.

7. Following the Cabinet's direction, therefore, the service is structured around:

- the worklessness agenda linked to the 5 'City Strategy' Wards of St Thomas's, St James's, Netherton, Woodside and St. Andrews, Castle and Priory, and Brierley Hill which includes co-ordinating the Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Partnerships and Plans (NESP's)
- the 3 Area Committee areas of Stourbridge, Halesowen and North Dudley where there is no City Strategy designation
- Support to Community Centres where we continue to support the Community Centres Support Group and 30 individual Community Centres

The Community Renewal Strategy

8. The Community Renewal Steering Group purpose is to bring together partner agencies and communities in a shared approach to addressing the complex issues of deprivation in a way that:

- supports Elected Members as community leaders
- empowers and involves communities in civic responsibility
- encourages innovation and makes effective use of all public resources
- enables support to local and strategic actions necessary to achieve these objectives
- is committed to the idea that community renewal is "everybody's business."

The aim of the Strategy is "to renew Dudley's communities so that no one is excluded or disadvantaged by who they are or where they live."

The Role of Area Community Renewal Officers

9. Working with relevant partners, Area Community Renewal Officers (ACROs) co-ordinate as needed, facilitate and focus work on community issues as defined by Elected Members, data analysis and community engagement. They work together with local partners in services and communities to address the complex issues of individual localities. In the City strategy areas the Area Community Renewal Officers work with partners and communities to address the gaps and meeting targets under worklessness and skills.

10. These activities are reflected in the Area Community Renewal Plan for which the ACRO is responsible and is to be developed with Elected Members through Area Committees in the current municipal year and a draft Plan for each Area Committee area has been submitted to the first cycle of Area Committees for 2008/09.

Area Committee - Local Community Renewal Plans

11. Draft Area Committee Local Community Renewal plans have been developed for the five Area Committees and consultation is under way. The plans identify current activity and further activity needed in the form of service alteration or development of a new service. Where possible, current activity is focused into areas of greatest need and joined together with other complementary activities to achieve economies of scale and greater effectiveness; in other cases external funding or specialist funding is sought.

12. In the Stourbridge, Halesowen and North Dudley Area Committee areas, the plan covers the whole of the area and highlights members' and community priorities focused in community localities. Area Community Renewal Officers are working with both individual ward Member groups and with the Area Committee Working Groups to develop the plan as well as with local communities and service providers. In addition these officers are working on some selected NESPs (Coseley, Halesowen Highfields, and Lye /Wollescote) to address the workless issues and Economic Regeneration targets.
13. Brierley Hill covers the whole Area Committee area but recognises the specific City Strategy activity to be carried out in the Brierley Hill ward and the significant role of the Brierley Hill Regeneration Partnership and associated bodies in developing this activity.
14. In the central area, the City Strategy has already been identified by the Cabinet as the focus for activity. Area Community Renewal Officers are responsible for coordinating the NESPs to give a more intensive focus on worklessness and skills and in working smarter together.
15. The community renewal steering group has also identified essential links to the borough challenge and Local Area Agreement and has aligned plans to take account of these mandatory targets.

Police And Communities Together (PACTs)

16. At the time of writing PACTs are under review through a multi-agency steering group chaired by a Police Chief Superintendent. They are fundamental to the operation of engagement and resolution of local issues such as crime and environment and are supported by the Community Renewal Service. These engagement arrangements have built on previous arrangements. A programme to 'roll-out' the "Beat Sweep" approach to support PACTs has been supported by the Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services and this is coordinated through the Community Renewal Service.

Governance and accountability arrangements

17. As local leaders, Elected Members ensure effective community renewal across all parts of the Borough and particularly for those community localities facing multiple problems. Area Committees have a lead role in ensuring local accountability and scrutiny and ensure 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 clarity to the delivery of services in complex areas such as health inequalities, community safety or social exclusion. Members also influence the delivery of basic services such as street cleaning or social care and are able to assist the different communities and interests that make up the area to articulate their needs.
18. 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 and so as mentioned above, the Steering Group is made up of partners from the Dudley Community

Partnership as well as elected members and Council Officers to enable the strategic steer to be given to community renewal.

19. Local Task groups and partnerships formed to carry out the plans and to articulate and explore needs within a locality are also part of the governance arrangements through peer group accountability.
20. On consideration of the information contained in this report, the Cabinet at its meeting held on 10th September 2008, resolved to recommend the Council to approve the recommendations set out in paragraph 28 below.

Finance

21. The draft Community Renewal Strategy and the draft Area Community Renewal Plans identify work which all partners are and will undertake through mainstream or another 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.
22. The Community Renewal Service is funded by the Council, with a contribution from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund in 2008/09, although it is recognised that other partners contribute significant community based service provision targeted at deprived neighbourhoods.

Law

23. 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.
24. Section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000 enables the Council to do anything which is likely to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area.

Equality Impact

25. Among the objectives of the Community Renewal Strategy is the promotion of inclusion and social cohesion. Local Community Renewal plans target those most in need in terms of deprivation.
26. Information is collected through each Community Renewal 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 or interest groups locally to design appropriate responses to different circumstances.
27. Where children 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 work.

Recommendation

28. That the draft multi-agency Community Renewal Strategy be approved.

David Caunt

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Leader of the Council