

Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services –

10th September, 2009.

Report of the Director of Adult Community & Housing Services

Community Renewal: Engagement in Community Safety

Purpose of Report

1. (a) To provide the background to and brief summary of community engagement in relation to community safety through the Community Renewal processes and joint working.

(b) To inform the Select Committee of the rationale for community engagement in relation to community safety and the benefits of improving community safety as part of a package of measures to improve the borough by addressing poorer performing neighbourhoods and communities.

(c) To provide the committee with some examples of community safety and the wider outcomes resulting community engagement for community safety.

Back ground and Rationale

2. Community Safety is a high profile community issue which is pertinent to all neighbourhoods in the borough. This is especially so in some areas where perceptions and actual issues of community safety impact on the quality of life for local people and upon the reputation of Dudley Borough.
3. Community Safety is an original “floor target” within the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, and recognises that some neighbourhoods have more challenging problems than others. Neighbourhood Renewal floor targets set a spectrum of measures for poorer performing neighbourhoods – these measures include health inequalities, educational attainment, jobs & skills, the environment (street scene, decent housing, access to parks and green spaces, derelict land) and recognise that particular areas and communities suffer from multiple, interlinked issues.
4. National policy research, National Neighbourhood Renewal pathfinder evaluations suggests very strongly that the best regeneration results are achieved where local communities are directly involved in shaping the solutions required, rather than having solutions imposed upon them by public agencies. (Social Inclusion Unit Policy Action Team 4). This involvement also increases interaction and social capital. As social capital increases so do the positive benefits to society, such as cohesion, reduced crime and better health.

5. Community Safety remains a basic essential for quality of life regardless of location. Community Safety, Decent Housing and Environment are all primary needs to be met within a community or neighbourhood and are part of the building blocks of sustainable communities. These form the place-based elements of community renewal.
6. As a general rule, without a reasonable level of community safety, communities generally, are not able to move forwards to improving health, jobs, education, and skills development – the people based elements of community renewal. As such, Community Safety is strongly interwoven with other elements of community renewal and vice versa and is inextricably linked with wider public service issues. For example the crime of drug dealing or use in an area impacts and is correlated with poor health, poor outcomes for children, poverty, unpleasant environments, and unemployment.
7. The partnership approach and community involvement are therefore key success factors and so, Area Community Renewal Officers (formerly neighbourhood managers) have sought to address local community safety through a process of talking and acting together with communities about what is happening locally; what are the important problems for them and then drawing together partnerships with both public and voluntary agencies to address the issues. These groups were known locally as local community safety management groups or partnerships.
8. Local community safety partnerships were spread across the borough mainly focusing on the neighbourhood renewal areas. They formed a ready basis for PACT meetings which were part of neighbourhood policing changes and where community involvement in problem solving around community safety was already established.
9. These groups feed the Area Committee Community Renewal Plans and also the Safe and Sound (CDRP) Strategic Assessment, providing a strong element of the local perception and community priorities contribution to the wider picture. Because Area Community Renewal Officers are also engaging with communities and public and voluntary agencies about health, unemployment and skills, young people's outcomes and the environment they are well placed to join up and make links between the various strands which impact on quality of life and community safety.

Information and examples

10. Members of the committee will already be aware of borough initiatives such as Beat Sweep and the Social Responsibility Scheme. Some further illustrative examples are summarised below with more detail available as a separate appendix to this report.
11. Netherton and St Andrews "Sector C" working and youth coordination
In 2005 prior to the advent of neighbourhood policing, the neighbourhood managers from Netherton, Woodside and Saltwells joined together with their sector inspector to form the Sector C community safety management group. With the object of feeding in local issues to the more strategic partners in order to achieve changes needed in communities. Four years on this partnership

underpins the Netherton and Dudley Wood/Saltwells PACT known locally as the safety and wellbeing partnership. The group is well attended by elected members and 26 regular members of the community.

12. Its achievements have been to channel the energies of local groups into delivering and acting on the issues that they see as most important for them in improving the safety and wellbeing of their neighbourhood and this has developed overtime to the present situation.
13. Most notable have been the developments initiated through community groups to deliver youth activities to their young people in an effort to divert them from criminal activity. The Area Community Renewal Officer (ACRO) has been instrumental and has taken a hands-on role in working with St Andrew's Residents' Trust and the youth service to develop a peer mentoring scheme, intergenerational activities and a youth PACT. Young people have been involved in community service type activities rewarded by trips and activities. Much of the funding comes via the St Andrew's Fair Share Lottery Fund (where the neighbourhood manager Now ACRO was also a key player in attracting the funds to the area)
14. In addition the Area Community Renewal Officer has led a partnership of those groups and services involved in youth activities to ensure that activities are coordinated and competition for funding between groups is kept to an acceptable level.
15. There is a recognition that this activity does not target the most "hardened element" of young people intent on criminal damage but is providing options for those who want to chose something different with the support of their community. .
16. Blowers Green/ Scott's Green multi-agency partnership
This is a community renewal led partnership activity which has established, developed and delivered on an area specific action plan to address the multi faceted issues of anti-social behaviour, child protection, housing, street scene, education, community cohesion.
17. The issues of serious antisocial behaviour and community tensions were surfaced through a community renewal participatory appraisal session with residents following a PACT meeting. The multiagency partnership consisting of the Antisocial Behaviour Unit, Connexions, Police, Private Sector Housing , Education and Children's Social Services has implemented parenting support, positive activities for young people, common assessment frameworks for vulnerable young people and dealt with cross border funding and placement issues with a neighbouring local authority. It has dealt with vandalism and antisocial behaviour and neighbour conflict.
18. The outcomes are that the neighbourhood appears more peaceful and tensions are reduced; the children are back in school and receiving appropriate agency support; agency processes and confidence around the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) appears improved as do partnership processes (agency views and views of residents are being formally evaluated as this is written)
- Sledmere – antisocial behaviour strategy
19. Residents on the Sledmere estate were subject to continual harassment, vandalism, graffiti, vehicle damage, broken windows and various fires set in the

surrounding area. Complaints were made by residents to a variety of agencies in the area to little sustainable effect.

20. Through the Neighbourhood Community Safety group agencies, namely Police and Housing Officers collated the responses used to deal with the reported incidents e.g. warning letters to residents, increased P.C.S.O & Police patrols, and visits from housing managers. A detached youth worker was employed to engage with the identified group of young people.
21. There remained a “core group” determined not to engage with the detached programme and who began to give rise to concern for their wellbeing, particularly around the issue of fire setting. Approaches from agencies were received negatively by the families and it was determined that a more stringent approach was needed for this core group which would have resulted in ASBOs and the resultant impact on the future of the young people, and agencies each pursuing separate interviews – this would have involved up to 32 separate interviews. The current approach was failing to address cause, prevent escalation and modify behaviour.
22. As an alternative parents and children were invited in 2 groups of 4, to an interview with the public agencies at Dudley Police Station. Whilst the individual agencies were able to reiterate the consequences of this behaviour continuing, the neighbourhood manager was able to offer families a unique opportunity to work together with the agencies to resolve the issues and to also receive support. The Neighbourhood Manager was able to impress upon the families that the residents of the area were collectively not prepared to tolerate this anymore and that all of the agencies and the residents were working together to secure convictions etc to stop this.
23. Of the 8 members of the core group, 7 showed up to interview and all have now progressed on to positive activities in their community through activities now led by the PCSOs. This group of young people is particularly known in the area for its environmental works and the group has expanded to include other activities and young people. This approach has led to reduced reports of ASB and better outcomes for the young people. The partnership showed services working in collaboration with each other; gave clear indicators to the community and the families involved that action was being taken; provided an opportunity to put in place intervention strategies. This partnership approach has been sustainable and duplicated successfully elsewhere and forms part of the local agencies approach to ASB where appropriate.
24. Stourbridge Street Pastors
From July 2009 Stourbridge Town Centre saw Street Pastors out on the streets in a new initiative aimed at people who are out revelling over the weekend. This initiative is entirely community led and intended to build trust on the streets and create a safer community. The project is run by a local coordinator, with volunteers from the local churches. It operates under the umbrella of the Ascension Trust. Street Pastors are all trained volunteers who wear distinctive uniforms.
25. Street Pastors are strongly supported by the Police and the Area Community Renewal Officer. The ACRO is part of their management committee and feeds in intelligence gathered from the Street Pastors to the relevant local authority departments, for example street lighting.

26. Street Pastors' have yet to be evaluated in Dudley, although we know they have been successfully set up in 140 areas throughout the UK since 2003, over 2500 Street Pastors are currently engaged. Wherever they have been introduced there have been tangible benefits of reduced crime and improved community safety. The initial Street Pastor reports have provided highly qualitative intelligence, including those they have helped who are in distress and the positive "customer response" to their service.
27. Neighbourhood watch
Community renewal officers have been particularly involved with neighbourhood watch as a means of building up community engagement in community safety and as a means of establishing some area based community representation around PACTs and community safety management groups. Joint working has taken place with the West Midlands Police Partnerships officer to establish the watches and Area Community Renewal Officers have actively chaired meetings and worked with residents and PCSOs to enable them to become sustainable.
28. Other examples
There are a number of further examples of the work of community renewal officers in engaging communities around community safety. This includes identification of drugs and alcohol interventions within programmes to address worklessness; alcohol education within programmes to address health; involving young people in matters of community safety and supporting the voluntary sector response to diversionary activities for young people. Since 2003, up to 10 community volunteers each year are identified through the community renewal team to undertake voluntary youth worker training and subsequent referrals made to the youth service. Young Advisors are working with Woodside Community Centre to develop the usage of the centre by young people and at Hawbush Community Gardens Amblecote Christian Centre has provided youth volunteers to work on the site. Young Offenders and Probation service community punishment teams are well utilised by Community Renewal Officers on community projects. Community based projects are also supplied to the Princes Trust team.

Future developments

28. The area community renewal officers are well placed because of their local knowledge and partnership ethos to coordinate ASB problem solving groups in 4 hot spot areas in the borough. This is being done on behalf of JAG and is reported back to them and the area committee community renewal working groups, where elected members will be kept apprised of the progress and outcomes and also invited to attend the problem solving groups should they wish to. Community renewal officers are being supported by the ASBU manager.
29. Members of the committee will also be aware from their area committees that community safety forms a work strand within the Area Committee Community Renewal Plans where activity is integrated with other work streams within the plan.

Finance

30. The Community Renewal Locality Plans identify work which is being undertaken through mainstream or other budget source and also gaps in provision or need. The Community Renewal Service seeks to maximise the benefit derived by local communities by focusing day to day activities in a different way into a defined area to achieve shared intelligence, common purpose, reduction in duplication and added value.

Activities arising from community renewal engagement with communities are financed from either from existing agency resources and rely on the alignment of the activity of a variety of agencies and partners onto specific neighbourhood issues or from external funding pots drawn down by community groups.

Community renewal involvement in community safety is financed from within DACHS.

Law

31. 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.
The 1998 Crime & Disorder Act places an obligation on local authorities and the police to exercise its functions with due regard to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area.

Equality Impact

32. One of the objectives of community renewal is to promote inclusion and social cohesion. Community Renewal team activity whilst working across the borough, targets areas and communities most in need.
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 Area Community Renewal Officers engage through various community of interest groups locally, to design appropriate responses to different circumstances.
Where children and young people are involved they are directly consulted and frequently design the response to local issues.

Recommendations

33. That members note the report and endorse the local partnership approach



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Background papers

An appendix of detailed activity will be made available to members at the meeting.