

Community Safety and Community Services Select Committee

6th November 2008

Report of the Director of Adult Community and Housing Services

Community Renewal – an update

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Select Committee on the arrangements for the Community Renewal Service (previously Neighbourhood Management) and some current activities.
2. To illustrate some specific examples of the Community Renewal Unit's work and impact through a short presentation.

Background

2. Following a decision of the Cabinet in October 2007, the Neighbourhood Management initiative was transferred to the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS) from 1st April 2008 and restructured to form the Community Renewal Service.
3. The service has 8 Area Community Renewal Officers and a Community Development Officer for the Community Centres. 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. In Brierley Hill, whilst support is provided to the City Strategy, the Area Community Renewal Officer also provides support to the wider area committee including Pensnett, Brockmoor and Kingswinford.
4. Responsibility for Community Centres was also transferred to DACHS from the Children's Services Directorate and now also forms part of the new service and a full audit of provision and areas for development is currently underway.

5. **The Community Renewal Strategy**

The Community renewal strategy was finalised and approved by the Cabinet on 10th September 2008 and a copy is attached for members' information. The Strategy sets out a series of principles and an overview of general direction. This includes:

- Community renewal is “everybody’s business”
- a recognition of the principle of coordination of strategies and activities to address community regeneration
- an appreciation that involving communities achieves better and more sustainable regeneration outcomes
- the context of the community strategy and the new local area agreement and the council plan as well as Comprehensive Area Assessment

6. The purpose of the strategy, therefore, is to:

- Bring together partner agencies and communities in a shared approach
- address deprivation so that no one is excluded or disadvantaged by who they are or where they live
- Enable ‘buy-in’ to local and strategic actions necessary to achieve the objectives.

7. A key component in developing the service was to link the activity of the team even more closely to Area Committees. In the first cycle of the municipal year 2008-09, a Report was taken to the all Area Committees with an up-date on the development of the service and requesting Area Committees to form Working groups that would develop Local Community Renewal Plans. Area Committees were invited to involve partners at the local level in recognition of the fact that community renewal is “everybody’s business” and that the Council could not deliver on its own. These Local Community Renewal Plans are the basis for implementation by all concerned including the Community Renewal Team. The Area Committee Community Renewal Plans are now being developed in consultation with the area committee working groups for community renewal. The object of this is to enable local Elected Members to have overview of community needs within their locality and to monitor how these are addressed through public agencies and their partners and how local people are involved in the working together.

8. **Role of The Area Community Renewal Officer**

The Area Community Renewal Officer is responsible for working with Elected Member producing a local community plan with Elected Members and working with local communities and agencies to fulfil the objectives in the plan. To do this the Area Community Renewal Officer assists with co-ordinating, facilitating and focusing the work of partner agencies onto community and neighbourhood issues as defined by data analysis, community engagement and elected members. This is done through a variety of partnerships, including PACTs, local environmental groups, community forums etc. brought together to tackle particular issues.

9. Community renewal business 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 as part of the Council’s democratic structure. The information is co-ordinated and collated in to the local community plan or Area Committee Community Renewal Plan.

10. Planning Arrangements

In the Area Committee areas of North Dudley, Stourbridge, Halesowen and Brierley Hill, the plan covers the whole of the area committee area and concentrates on wider objectives focused in community localities that generally are considered to be areas of deprivation which require more support to enable them to be connected to the life of the borough and to require a more intense focus from services to address the complexities of community renewal

- 11 In the wards of St James, St Thomas, Castle & Priory, Netherton, Woodside & St Andrews the local plan contains a more intensive focus on worklessness and the economy as a reflection of the City Strategy and the focus of the new generation local area agreement on economic development and regeneration. Brierley Hill ward is also a City strategy ward with the City strategy element managed through Brierley Hill community forum and links to the wider area committee plan.
- 12 The Local Community Renewal Plan area plan brings together top down and bottom up approaches to addressing local needs and aims to arrange, with elected member input, what is needed to make various service strategies complement each other and mean something for local communities. For example, in relation to worklessness, Area Community Renewal Officers have the responsibility for coordinating and managing the Neighbourhood Employment and Skills Partnerships and Plans. These bring together local skills and training providers together with community representatives and other providers such as housing associations, children's centres, neighbourhood learning centres to address worklessness. Worklessness can be defined as both "lack of access or availability of well paid local jobs" and "too many people dependant on benefits". Work is focussed on addressing barriers to work and skills deficits as well as local brokerage with the underpinning value of sustained employment.
- 13 In other areas a Youth Task Force has developed through community commissioning, and has been successful in attracting over £50,000 to the area to address weekend youth detached work, play for the 8-13s, a social responsibility scheme for local off- licenses, pastoral support and engagement for families and young people, Football in the Community through Wolverhampton Wanderers FC at Castle High School and alcohol support through Aquarius. The programme is supported by partners including the neighbourhood policing team; value is added consistently through the joining up of the effort of the agencies with communities.
- 14 At Wallheath, a social responsibility programme together with neighbourhood policing and joint working with the PCT has provided a means of young people and their families accessing alcohol awareness training locally.
- 15 At Sledmere a consistent approach with partners has engaged a group of some 20 young people in an environmental group which is supported through the PCSOs and a nominated neighbour's scheme run in conjunction with housing in the area is having a positive effect on community reassurance and intergenerational understanding.
- 16 In Halesowen continued joint working and building on the foundations of a well established partnership with Caslon school is incrementally addressing the environmental and learning needs of the community – the latest development being a school community garden.

- 17 At Woodside the same “community anchor” model is being developed with the local GP practice to address local health needs by joining up with other partners in the wider community, including the children’s centre, school and community centre as well as the church and tenants associations.

Finance

- 18 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

19. 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.
- 20 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

- 21 The objective of Community renewal is to promote inclusion and social cohesion. Community renewal plans target those most in need in terms of deprivation. Information is collected through each CR intervention or consultation to monitor the inclusivity and difference made for various groups and people involved. Where inclusion is an issue ACROs engage through various community or interest groups locally to design appropriate responses to different circumstances
- 22 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

Recommendations

23. That Members of the Select Committee note the report and continue to support the work of the Community Renewal team in community localities



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List of Background Papers

Community Renewal Strategy

Community Renewal Strategy Steering Group minutes and papers