

	<h2>Community Leadership Committee</h2> <h3>25 June 2014</h3>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<h2>Developing a Community Participation Strategy for Barnet</h2>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	Stephen Evans – Assistant Director, Commissioning Strategy
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	All
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	Public
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<h2>Summary</h2>
<p>This report sets out proposals to develop a Community Participation Strategy for Barnet, aiming to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase the level of community activity across the borough; • build stronger partnerships between the community and the Council; • coordinate and improve the support the Council gives to communities; and • help the Council take more account of community activity when it makes decisions about how it delivers services and outcomes. <p>These aims are designed to benefit both the Council and the community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing residents' independence and resilience; • improving the quality and efficiency of services by tailoring them more effectively to people's needs; and • reducing demand on the public sector, which will be crucial during times of continued austerity. <p>Various initiatives are going on across the Council which support this agenda, but unless action is taken to bring them together and make them work in a coordinated way, the</p>

Council will not realise their full benefits.

Over the next five years, funding restrictions mean that the Council will have to do less in certain areas. To ensure Barnet continues to thrive, the Council will need to build stronger relationships with the community and share more responsibility.

This report seeks the Community Leadership Committee's endorsement to take forward the development of a Community Participation Strategy. The report sets out the rationale for the Strategy; its aims; the approach we plan to take; and the key areas of work this will involve. It also sets out the specific products which underpin the Strategy and which will be brought to back to the Committee for agreement over the next six months.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee approve the proposed aims and approach for the Community Participation Strategy.

2. That the Committee agree that the items indicated in this paper should be brought back to the Committee over the course of the next 6 months for agreement.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Background

Increasing community participation to manage demand

- 1.1 This paper proposes the rationale that if the Council can help residents and community groups become more independent and resilient and take on more responsibility for their local areas, there will be less demand placed on statutory services. Individual residents will benefit through opportunities to develop their skills and capacity, while communities will have stronger networks and become more cohesive because of this.
- 1.2 Making this happen will require changes to the ways in which the Council delivers services to the community, to share more responsibility, work more effectively in partnership, and get local people more involved in work to improve outcomes for the Borough.
- 1.3 **Case study: Barnet's allotments**
The Council has already tested out such an approach when the Borough's allotments were transferred to the community. To do this, the Council worked in partnership with Barnet Federation of Allotment Holders and with groups of residents to set up elected committees, and then leased the sites to the committees, who act as landlords to the rest of the community. Barnet's allotment sites needed significant investment in their infrastructure, and now that residents are owners they can choose to make use of their own skills to maintain the allotments and invest the rental income in improvements to the sites. Decisions about the sites are have been delegated down to their users, who are able to respond in the most suitable way for the individual site.

- 1.4 If changes like these are brought in at a larger scale, they will not only give communities a greater say in the issues that matter to them but will also help the Council respond to the inevitable reductions in public funding over the next five years and the need to find savings of a further £72m by 2020.

Services informed by local need

- 1.5 It is also likely that, as communities become more active, the greater range of activities available means the Council and residents will both have more choice about how services can be delivered.
- 1.6 While Members will continue to set the political and strategic direction for the Borough, getting the community more involved in identifying local needs and selecting local priorities, planning services, and – in some cases, delivering them in partnership – will let the Council make use of communities' in-depth knowledge of their local area and the activity going on there. Services planned in this way have the potential to be better quality and more efficient because they are more closely fitted to what is needed locally.

1.7 Case study: North Finchley Town Team

In March North Finchley's Town Team, an independent group of local residents and business people who were supported by the Council, organised an apprenticeship programme, using their community networks and knowledge. Fifteen young people who were not in education, employment or training learned how to run a business and gained work experience with the help of local employers. Three apprentices have so far gained employment as a direct result of the programme. The Council's support has now ended as the town team has become able to sustain itself and is organising projects independently, including work to revitalise empty shops in North Finchley by using them as a gallery, a business hub, and a community space.

A more coordinated approach

- 1.8 Having a dialogue with communities about local priorities and activity also gives the Council opportunities to join up its services with work that is already being carried out by businesses or voluntary and community groups, and to avoid duplicating this existing work. As a result, the Council will be able to target its resources more effectively where there are genuine gaps.

1.9 Case study: Sport and physical activity

For example, the residents' consultation which underpins the current review of sport and physical activity indicates that residents like to exercise outdoors or in informal settings, as well as leisure centres, meaning that the Council can target some of its resources at signposting people towards existing activities in local green spaces, sports clubs, and community settings rather than trying to increase the service it provides more directly, and will meet the community's needs more effectively by doing this.

Engaging with harder to reach groups

- 1.10 In some cases, residents and community groups will be better placed than the Council is to both identify and develop solutions to local challenges. Communities often have more freedom than the Council to act on new ideas or to avoid red tape, and this can mean that when community groups provide a service this gives better value for taxpayers' money. Local people and

groups will understand where need is within their communities and will have the networks and connections to be able to act on this, which can lead to better results than statutory services.

1.11 **Case study: Community Coaches**

For example, Barnet's Community Coaches programme – initially piloted in Grahame Park – began by recruiting 15 volunteers to work as lifestyle coaches for people within their communities. The programme's clients were 'hard to reach', vulnerable people who were leaving statutory support, including people who had been through the Troubled Families programme and some young adults leaving care.

1.12 The volunteers helped clients navigate their way through public services more effectively and access the support they needed. Clients gained skills to engage with public services more efficiently as well as accessing other support, and their contact with the public sector dropped by 46%. The costs avoided came to approximately £72,000, against the £68,000 cost of the programme, while clients' lifestyles improved significantly.

1.13 The programme succeeded because the volunteers, seen as part of the community, were better placed than the Council to get people to engage with the support they offered, and to make sure that support was tailored to people's individual needs. For example, some support focused on issues such as money management but other clients needed more customised help, such as that provided by a volunteer who got a donated cooker to a young care leaver who had been living in an unfurnished flat and surviving on takeaways.

1.14 The programme was able to give this support because the Council 'got out of the way' and let residents decide – and deliver – what was best for them. It also benefited the volunteers who delivered it, giving them the chance to develop new skills, and increasing their future employment opportunities.

Summary: issues for the Strategy

1.15 The Council therefore needs to understand how to decide when services are better delivered from within the community, how it can better support and coordinate with the work of existing voluntary and community groups, how it can work more effectively with formal and informal networks, and how it can support communities who do not currently have a high level of either to develop these in the future.

1.16 This report sets out proposals for a Community Participation Strategy which, if the Committee agrees, seeks to address these issues by defining and implementing the following approach.

Purpose and outline of the Strategy

1.17 The Community Participation Strategy aims to draw together a number of pieces of work which will have an impact on this agenda and which are currently going on in separate areas across the Council, and to use these to:

- increase the level of community activity;

- build stronger partnerships between the community and the Council;
- improve the support the Council gives to communities; and
- help the Council take account of community activity when it makes decisions about how it delivers services and outcomes.

1.18 If the Committee approves the overall approach set out in this paper, the Strategy will be developed through the following four areas of work. Where the Committee will then be asked to consider and agree products, this is set out below.

Insight and influence: developing better information about our communities

1.19 Firstly, the Council has an opportunity to develop better information about work that is currently going on in the community, so that it can link this with information about its own services, identify where there are gaps, and understand what it can do to fill them.

1.20 This improved information can also be used to give people a better understanding of what is going on in their local area. Residents would gain access to a broader range of local services and the information would also support Members in their role as representatives of their Wards.

1.21 If the Committee approves the overall approach proposed in this paper, it would then be asked to consider:

- **Proposals for what the Council needs to know about the kinds of community in the borough in order to engage with them effectively. For example, the Council often engages with residents on the basis of their living in a particular ward, but it may make more sense to work in some cases with people linked to a particular town centre or who live within a smaller locality such as a housing estate**
These proposals would be brought to the Committee in September 2014.
- **Proposals for how the Council will compare different ways of delivering services. Because there will be a much greater variety of activities to choose from, the Council will need a framework which takes the value of different options into account and lets it make informed decisions between them.**
These proposals would be brought to the Committee in November 2014.

Coordinating our engagement

1.22 Secondly, the Council could do more to coordinate its engagement. The Council has already developed a Consultation and Engagement Strategy which links up the different ways in which the community can be involved in Council planning and decision-making. It should now consider how it can join these up with work where the community is more involved in delivery (for example, instances where the Council commissions services from businesses or voluntary and community groups), and with other kinds of engagement taking place through, for example, nominations for the Community Right to Bid.

- **The Committee would be asked to consider the framework which would bring these routes together, and to agree that they should be used to support the aims of the Strategy. These proposals would be brought to the Committee in November 2014.**

Support for communities

- 1.23 Thirdly, the Council should consider how it can best support communities. This would involve identifying the support needed to develop more capacity in communities. It would also mean considering what the Council's ongoing role should be in supporting groups who are already providing activities or delivering services.
- 1.24 This would involve thinking about how we can best use the various funding streams which are used to support communities. There are a number of these across the Council, including the budgets which are being devolved to the Area Sub-Committees.
- 1.25 The paper on the Area Sub-Committee budgets - which is also being considered by the Committee at this meeting - sets out a framework for how these can be used to improve community participation by helping residents become more involved in conversations about local priorities and in decision-making, including decisions about resources are allocated, as well as supporting community projects.
- 1.26 The Council can then coordinate these with other relevant funding streams.
- **The Community Leadership Committee would be asked to consider proposals for how the Council can coordinate community funding. These proposals would be brought to the Committee in September 2014.**
- 1.27 As well as funding, the Council can provide other resources to support the community, such as skills development, access to ICT, or use of its buildings and properties. Work to produce the Council's Community Asset Strategy will be coordinated with the Community Participation Strategy to consider the benefits of using physical assets for community support.
- **The Community Leadership Committee would then be asked to consider how funding for the community should be coordinated, along with other options, as part of a package of possible measures to support the community, and to decide on the level of support the Council can continue to offer based on the value it would bring. These proposals would be brought to the Committee in November 2014.**

Implementation plan

- 1.28 These three areas of work will then be used to identify opportunities where the community could deliver all or part of an existing service, and to build these into an implementation plan.
- 1.29 This plan will also be informed by two pilot projects which will test different ways of identifying and working with existing community leadership within a

defined area in the borough. They will both identify existing community activity and capacity in that area and recommend how it could be developed further. Each project will also produce a transferable tool which can be used to roll out the approach elsewhere.

- The first project will produce a toolkit for identifying community leadership in localities.
- The second project will produce a toolkit for identifying local networks and their strengths.
- **The Community Leadership Committee will be asked to consider the proposed implementation plan and approve the proposals. These proposals would be brought to the Committee in November 2014.**

The Council's Voluntary and Community Sector Development Partner

1.30 Finally, alongside the development of an effective strategy, the Council will need a strong voluntary and community sector (VCS) development partner to help realise its vision, and has gone out to tender for a partner with the appropriate networks, local knowledge, independence, credibility, and understanding of the reasons why people choose to get involved in their local areas to support these aims.

1.31 The Council will work with this partner to unlock the potential of Barnet's communities through initiatives to increase volunteering and participation; build networks of people with shared interests; set up community trusts to support capacity; develop social investment models; and nurture grassroots initiatives that harness the high levels of social capital in the Borough.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Council's spending power is expected to be 50% lower in 2020 than it was in 2010. This is likely to mean that, in certain areas, the Council will not be able to do as much as it currently does and will need to find other ways of delivering services to support its desired outcomes.

2.2 It will be challenging for the Council to achieve change at the necessary pace over the next five years unless the community is willing to participate and support it.

2.3 The Council has recognised this for some time but progress has been through a series of small-scale initiatives, some of which are highlighted as case studies in this paper. However, to gain the benefits and savings it needs to achieve, it is recommended that the Council develops a coordinated and large-scale approach, underpinned by the products outlined in this paper.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

3.1 The Council could decide not to implement a coordinated approach or formal strategy, but this risks the success of other savings proposals as well as losing opportunities to realise the additional benefits of coordination.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The Strategy will be managed as a Council project and the items which Members will be asked to consider will be added to the work programmes for the relevant Committees.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 This decision contributes to the Corporate Plan's objective to promote family and community wellbeing and support engaged, cohesive and safe communities by improving engagement, increasing independence and resilience, and strengthening community networks.

- 5.1.2 The decision will also improve local people's life opportunities by increasing their skills and capacity, empowering them to take part in a broader range of activities, and increasing the choices available to them for how they access services, contributing to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy's priority to increase wellbeing in the community.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 The Strategy supports the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and longer-term savings proposals as increased community capacity and activity will be vital to reduce the pressure on services.

- 5.2.2 The Strategy requires some support from other Council services, which has been agreed through the project team structure.

- 5.2.3 The direct costs of the Strategy are to commission two pilot projects at a cost of approximately £35,000. These costs will be funded from the Commissioning Group budget.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 Council Constitution Part 15, Responsibility for Functions, Annex A states the terms of reference of the Community Leadership Committee, including 'to approve any non-statutory plan or strategy within the remit of the Committee that is not reserved to full Council or Policy & Resources'.

5.4 Risk Management

- 5.4.1 This is a complex project which requires coordination across a range of services to get the full benefits, and there is therefore a risk of failure to get buy-in across all the services and workstreams which need to be involved. This is to be mitigated by ensuring the project team is set up to liaise with and involve all necessary services and workstreams, and by use of a programme management framework to ensure the benefits of coordination are identified

and realised.

- 5.4.2 The Strategy will need Member support to succeed. The risk that Members will not want to engage with the project will be mitigated by asking Members – through the Community Leadership Committee - to engage throughout the process and with the pieces of work produced through the Strategy.
- 5.4.3 The Strategy needs the support of the community and will need clear and consistent communication to ensure this. This will be addressed through a dedicated communications and engagement plan.
- 5.4.4 It is possible that an external event may have a negative impact on our reputation and disrupts residents' perception of the Council. This will be mitigated through horizon-scanning and early identification of likely issues to put mitigating actions in place on a case by case basis.
- 5.4.5 There are conflicting constraints relating to time: the nature of capacity-building work is that relationships and trust evolve gradually, but savings timescales may require some elements of the project to move forward more quickly. This will be addressed through the structure of the implementation plan, and the adoption of a pilot approach.

5.5 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.5.1 The Strategy will support the three strands of the Public Sector Equality Duty by:
- Monitoring the engagement activities undertaken to ensure they are representative, and identify and eliminate any barriers to access, eliminating unlawful discrimination
 - Ensuring that all residents have the same opportunities to develop skills, independence and resilience by developing capacity across the Borough, advancing equality of opportunity between people from different groups
 - Building stronger networks and improving cohesion, to foster good relations between people from different groups.

5.6 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.6.1 The Strategy has been developed in part following consultation undertaken to support the PSR, where residents identified the need for responsibility to be shared more evenly between the Council and the community and suggested some resources which would support this.
- 5.6.2 Further consultation and engagement will be carried out as part of the communications plan for the Strategy.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 None.