



Community Leadership Libraries Committee

20 November 2019

Title	Communities Together Network: Annual Report 2019
Report of	Chairman of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	Yes
Enclosures	Communities Together Network Annual Report 2018/19
Officers Contact Details	<p>Will Cooper, Community Engagement, Participation & Strategy Lead (william.cooper@barnet.gov.uk, 020 8359 5688)</p> <p>Danusia Brzezicka, Community Participation Officer (danusia.brzezicka@barnet.gov.uk, 020 8359 3211)</p>
Summary	<p>This report presents the fifth annual report of Barnet's Communities Together Network (CTN). The CTN was initially set up as a borough-wide forum to support community cohesion and resilience following social unrest in 2011. It was formalised in October 2013 to support the council's commitment and refreshed approach to equalities. In 2016 CTN broadened its community cohesion focus to operate as a strategic forum to support the objectives of the Community Participation Strategy and The All Party Political Group for Faith's Covenant on Faith Action. This was in response to an expressed need for a borough strategic forum to help the borough maintain strong community links and partnerships as well as to foster excellent community relationships and community spirit. This paper provides an account of the CTN's activities over the past year.</p>

Recommendations

1. That the Committee note The Communities Together Network Annual Report 2018/19 and approve its publication on the council's website.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 An Annual CTN Report is required under the arrangements agreed at Cabinet on 24 September 2013 which gave authority to set up CTN under the 'Communities Together' Action Plan and the approach for promoting community cohesion and monitoring community tensions which included an annual report to Community Leadership Libraries Committee.
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g7464/Printed%20minutes%2024th-Sep-2013%2019.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=1>

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The recommendation to note the report and approve its publication on the council's website is for reasons of transparency - to give clear information to residents and partner organisations. The recommendation will also help to advance partnership working and equality of opportunity between people from different groups. Fostering good relations between different communities is a statutory obligation of the Equality Act 2010 - and in particular s149 which sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - which came into force on 5 April 2011.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 No alternative reporting option is required. Not publishing the report would run counter to the arrangements agreed for CTN and the council's commitment to transparency.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 Following CLLC approval of the report, it will be published on the council's website and action will be taken to develop a future work programme and to support the key events outlined in the report.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 This is the fifth CTN Annual Report produced by Barnet Council under the refreshed approach to equalities following the 2010 Equality Act, and it is part of our approach to strengthening community resilience and cohesion.
- 5.1.2 The CTN supports the Barnet 2024 Corporate Plan priority to deliver safe

and strong communities.

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

5.2.1 There are no resource implications for this report.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 There are no direct social value considerations as this paper does not relate to a service contract. However, the purpose of CTN is to build an understanding of what really matters to Barnet's communities and to share information so that Barnet's diverse communities feel informed, included and safe. It also facilitates partnership working in the borough, fostering community cohesion, and empowering community groups to take on more responsibility for their local areas and to deliver better outcomes for residents in the years ahead.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 The council has statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 - and in particular s149 which sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) - which came into force on 5 April 2011.

5.4.2 Article 7 section 7.5 in the council's constitution sets out the responsibility for functions of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee which include, responsibility for civic events, community safety, emergency planning, registration and nationality service, grants to the voluntary sector.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 The CTN developed following civil disturbances in 2011 (which were noticeably less pronounced in Barnet than neighbouring boroughs) to promote good relationships between different communities in Barnet. The multi faith community relationships are an important element in community cohesion.

5.5.2 CTN aims to help members feel involved, informed and safe in both proactive and reactive activities. It acts to build community resilience and mitigate the risk of community tension by promoting good relationships and building an understanding of what really matters to Barnet's communities. It facilitates partnership working in the borough and shares information to empower people to take on more responsibility for their local areas. It also acts as the community communication channel in the event of any emergency.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.6.1 CTN is part of Barnet's approach to equalities and forms part of the council's response to the third aim of General Public Sector Equalities Duty PSED (set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) - to foster good relations between people from different groups.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

- 5.7.1 As a local authority we have responsibility for the children in care and care leavers within our borough. Corporate Parenting is about offering at least the same standards of care as would a 'reasonable parent' and ensuring that the decisions we make as a council do not affect this cohort negatively. This report does not provide any implications for Barnet's children in care, other than supporting any community group with the aim of supporting children in care and care leavers.
- 5.7.2 The CTN is committed to work in partnership with the Young Barnet Foundation and other community and faith groups in Barnet to further support young people under the council's commitment as a Corporate Parent. Support will be given to this vulnerable group to ensure they receive good education, have a sense of belonging in Barnet, keep healthy both mentally and physically and to stay safe.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 It was not considered necessary to undertake a formal consultation exercise for this report.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 At their meeting on 24 September 2013 Cabinet gave authority for setting up CTN under the 'Communities Together' Action Plan and to the approach for promoting community cohesion and monitoring community tensions
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g7464/Printed%20minutes%2024th-Sep-2013%2019.00%20Cabinet.pdf?T=1>
- 6.2 At their meeting on 24 June 2015 Community Leadership Committee noted the First Communities Together Network Annual report 2015/16 and agreed its publication on the council Website.
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=694&MId=8367&Ver=4>
- 6.3 At their meeting on 24 June 2015 the Community Leadership Committee noted the report on Faith Covenant and Charter with the Voluntary Sector and the Covenant and Charter attached to the report at Appendix A and Appendix B. The Committee RESOLVED that: 1. The Committee, on behalf of the council, adopts the All Parliamentary Party Covenant for Engagement between Faith Communities and Local Authorities, endorses its principles and authorises officers to carry out the planned actions under the five commitments.

- 6.4 The Committee noted and endorsed the planned actions to further develop and mainstream use of the council's Charter with the Voluntary Sector.
- 6.5 The Committee supported a referral of the decision to Full Council, in line with the provisions of the council's Constitution.
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=694&MId=8367&Ver=4>
- 6.6 At their meeting on 28 July 2015 Council adopted the All Parliamentary Party Covenant for Engagement between Faith Communities and Local Authorities, endorsed its principles and authorised officers to carry out the planned actions under the five commitments.
- 6.7 Council noted and endorsed the planned actions to further develop and mainstream use of the council's Charter with the Voluntary Sector.
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/g8339/Public%20minutes%2028th-Jul-2015%2019.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>

Communities Together Network (CTN) 2019 Annual Report to Community Leadership Committee 20 November 2019

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This is the fifth annual report on Barnet's Communities Together Network (CTN). CTN is a borough-wide strategic forum that aims to promote dialogue, engagement and participation with a network of local partners in the voluntary, charity, community and faith organisations. CTN aims to facilitate discussion between community organisations to come together to discuss issues that are important to the community.
- 1.2 This report looks at how the council has worked with local partners through the CTN to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan, provides examples of how CTN strives to drive change by encouraging good relations between Barnet's diverse communities and looks to further develop Barnet's Community Participation Strategy.

2. COMMUNITIES TOGETHER NETWORK (CTN)

- 2.1 The CTN was initially set up as a borough-wide forum to support community cohesion and resilience following social unrest in 2011. Since then, the CTN has broadened its community cohesion focus to operate as a strategic forum to support the objectives of the Community Participation Strategy and The All Party Political Group for Faith's Covenant on Faith Action.
- 2.2 The central objectives of CTN are to:
 - Provide meaningful, two-way conversation between the council and community groups – and the people that they represent. Other strategic partners such as the CCG and police are also included.
 - Build an understanding of what really matters to Barnet's communities and to share information between partners so that Barnet's diverse communities feel informed, included and safe.
 - Form part of the council's response to the third aim of General Public Sector Equalities Duty (set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) - to foster good relations between people from different groups.
 - Promote community cohesion through providing a space to develop good relationships and by monitoring and preventing any community tensions.
- 2.3 The CTN membership is open to all voluntary, community, faith groups and businesses in Barnet as well as council officers and the borough strategic partners including police, fire, education, and health. Councillors are welcome to attend meetings and to refer issues to CTN. In line with

the CTN Terms of Reference, there has been a drive to improve Voluntary, Community and Faith sector (VCFS) engagement and attendance at the open meetings. The CTN membership list currently lists 1261 individuals (340 of these are council officers).

- 2.4 The CTN is facilitated by the council's Strategy Team, and open meetings of the CTN are chaired by the Deputy Head of Strategy.
- 2.4.1 The CTN Steering Group meets annually in December to review CTN operation and plan the programme of work for four open meetings each year. The Steering Group has a core membership of strategic partners which comprises of: the VCFS Development Partnership – Barnet Together, Barnet Multi Faith Forum, Police, Fire, Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group and Federation of Small Businesses. The steering group is chaired by the Chairman of the Community Leadership and Libraries Committee.
- 2.4.2 CTN meetings are an open forum designed to facilitate information sharing, partnership development and networking. Each meeting has a theme, and guest speakers with relevant expertise are invited to give presentations. There is usually space in the agenda for organisations to update the wider network on key developments from their own areas of work. Following the meeting there is also a period of time for networking. Attendees consistently feed back that this is one of the most useful aspects of the meetings.
- 2.4.3 The main form of communication to the network is the CTN Bulletin. This is a fortnightly email newsletter providing succinct information on local and national issues, as well as details of current consultations and forthcoming funding opportunities. In summer of 2019 a Facebook group for the CTN was launched. Membership currently stands at 129 individuals and organisations.
- 2.4.4 The CTN has an Emergency Response function through links with the Borough Resilience Forum. Smaller emergency meetings will be convened when needed by selecting representatives from all parts of the membership as necessary, according to the circumstances.
- 2.5 The CTN Terms of Reference were refreshed in consultation with partners, VCFS and adopted at the open meeting in March 2016 as follows:
- To promote community wellbeing and encourage cohesive and safe communities.
 - To operate at a proactive and reactive level in response to emergency incidents, so that emergency services and the voluntary, faith and community sector can work together to monitor and prevent community tension.

- To allow borough strategic partners to have early sight of strategic issues affecting the voluntary, faith and community sector.
 - To facilitate and promote joint working between the voluntary, faith and community sector, council and business sector.
 - To act as a consultative forum to discuss, identify and raise issues of concern.
- 2.6 The CTN offers a meaningful, two-way conversation with the VCFS to share information and gather intelligence on emergent needs of the diverse communities in the borough.

3. A YEAR IN REVIEW

3.1 This section of the report describes how CTN has operated over the past year.

3.2 CTN Steering Group

The Steering Group met on 10 December 2018 and reviewed progress of the network over the last year. The Steering Group agreed the future workplan for the quarterly open CTN meetings and the themes that each meeting should cover, namely:

- Spring: Responding to needs
- Summer: Emergency planning
- Autumn: Mental health
- Winter: Food security

3.3 The Steering Group will next meet in January 2020.

3.4 CTN Open Forums

Meetings of the CTN Open Forum are designed to be interactive and to encourage networking and discussion amongst the membership to achieve a solution focused approach to questions, issues and challenges that face communities in the borough.

3.5 A key CTN objective is to share information and talk about what matters to communities so that CTN members feel informed and can influence relevant decision-making processes. For example, at the open meetings this year the following information was shared:

- The VCFS role in Barnet's preparations for Brexit, and the implications of a potential 'no-deal' scenario.
- Details of the Barnet Together partnership comprising Inclusion Barnet, Young Barnet Foundation and Volunteering Barnet. How

this infrastructure and development partnership can support the VCFS and how to access this support.

- Launch of 'Together we are Barnet' campaign that showcases some of the community groups in Barnet and the good work they do in bringing people together.
- Emergency planning in Barnet and the steps that the council has taken to increase resilience in the borough.

- 3.6 Council officers can give presentations at CTN where they might be developing key strategies which link to the theme of the CTN meeting. This can be particularly useful as a forum for getting the views of the VCFS on an emerging strategy. A recent example is the relaunch of the council's employee volunteering scheme (ESV), where organisations were encouraged to provide opportunities for council staff to volunteer and share skills.
- 3.7 The fortnightly CTN bulletin is sent to all members by email and promotes local events, council campaigns, funding and other opportunities. The success of providing succinct information on a regular basis has resulted in this year's distribution list increasing from 660 to 1261 email recipients.
- 3.8 The bulletin has informed the VCFS of various opportunities throughout the year. These have included public consultations and the various ways of getting involved in the Together we are Barnet campaign. It has also provided details of how to apply for free office furniture made available by the council's recent office move, and the free government-funded litter picking equipment available to local groups. Invitations to attend the themed open network meetings are communicated through the CTN bulletin.
- 3.9 An action in the current Community Participation Strategy called for a social online forum for VCFS groups to be established, in order to facilitate information sharing outside of the fortnightly bulletins and enable dialogue between CTN members on a secure platform. A Facebook group was created in the summer of 2019 that now has 129 members. It is a closed group, which means any new members must be approved by an administrator, and posts are not visible to the general public.

3.10 Details of the three open network meetings held are given in the table below (the fourth will take place on 28 November at OneStoneGrove, Edgware):

Date	Venue	Theme	Attendees	Agenda
7 March 2019	Independent Living Centre	Responding to Needs	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brexit Preparedness Planning • Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Support Needs survey • Barnet Together Community Support Service
6 June 2019	Unitas Youth Zone	Emergency Planning	23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnet’s new Youth Zone • Emergency Planning - how the voluntary community sector can respond • Together, we are Barnet campaign • Barnet Council’s employee volunteering scheme
19 Sept 2019	The council’s new conference suite at 2 Bristol Avenue, Colindale	Mental Health	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP free mental health support to individuals and employees • Mental health services in Barnet • National Lottery Community Funding • Support for consortium bidding

3.11 Responding to emergency issues

3.11.1 The CTN works as a communications channel that enables the Barnet Resilience Forum to reach the VCFS with messages in emergencies, and to coordinate responses from member groups where appropriate. In partnership with the Community Safety team and Prevent coordinator, this communication link also enables the council to monitor, understand and reduce any community tension. The Strategy Team can on request, circulate information from strategic partners such as the Metropolitan Police or the Borough Resilience Forum to VCFS.

3.11.2 The current threat level for international terrorism attack in the UK is Severe. This has been the case since 2014, except for a few days in May

and September 2017 when the threat level was raised to Critical following UK terrorist attacks. Since the last CTN annual report, it has not been necessary to send out emergency communications to CTN members.

3.12 Enabling a more cohesive Barnet – Together we are Barnet

3.12.1 The CTN brings together organisations representing Barnet’s diverse communities; enabling partnerships to be formed and opportunities to be shared. This can have real benefits to community cohesion in the borough. Launched in the summer of 2019, the Together We Are Barnet campaign highlights this by celebrating the good work of our VCFS groups. Across both phases of the campaign a total of 10 organisations have been featured in public posters and online content. The aim of this is to provide a positive counter narrative to any messages of division or hate that might arise in the borough.

3.12.2 The CTN enables relationships with the wider faith sector through the Barnet Multi Faith Forum (BMFF) in their capacity as the borough strategic partner for faith communities.

4. THE NEXT STAGE

4.7 This report will be shared with the CTN Steering Group at their next meeting and an action plan will be agreed for the coming year.

4.8 As the CTN is now five years old, it would be timely to undertake a reappraisal of its terms of reference, as well as its aims and purposes. This can be done in line with resetting objectives for the Community Participation Action Plan when this is updated in 2020.