

	<p>Community Leadership Committee</p> <p>11 March 2015</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Community Participation – Implementation Plan</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Report of</p>	<p>Director of Strategy and Communications</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1 – Community Participation Action Plan</p>
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<p>Summary</p>
<p>In June 2014, Members agreed proposals to develop a Community Participation Strategy for Barnet, with the aim of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing the level of community activity across the borough; • building stronger partnerships between the community and the Council; • coordinating and improving the support the Council gives to communities; and • helping the Council take more account of community activity when it makes decisions about how it delivers services and outcomes. <p>This report updates Members on work carried out since then to develop the Strategy, and presents the proposed implementation plan, to be put into action over the next twelve months.</p>

<p>Recommendations</p>
<p>1. That the Committee note the work done to develop the Community Participation Strategy.</p>
<p>2. That the Committee agree the proposed implementation plan.</p>

- 3. That the Committee endorse the Strategy's aim to draw together and coordinate opportunities for more community involvement in service delivery from across the Council as these emerge in future.**

Summary of actions March 2015-April 2016

We will improve our information about local communities to ensure people have the right information to access the support they need. We will:

- Develop a comprehensive database of voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to help identify the services and support offered in the Borough
- Improve our existing online directories to help residents access up-to-date information about support for their specific needs
- Support the VCS, including smaller and less formal groups, to access information about their local areas.

We will make more use of current community capacity

To help the Council unlock community capacity and resources, we will:

- Work with our Local Infrastructure Organisation partner to empower local people to become more active and engaged, including through volunteering
- Support local businesses to contribute to the Borough through corporate social responsibility
- Create better support for people who currently volunteer in Council services.

We will use our purchasing power

We will use our spending power to boost the capacity of the VCS, by:

- Improving access to information about procurement and tendering
- Providing training and development for VCS groups to get them bid-ready
- Streamlining Barnet's procurement processes to remove barriers.

We will explore the benefits of working locally

We want to get a better understanding of the potential benefits of, neighbourhood-level service delivery. We will extend the pilot project carried out in Dollis Valley to

- Continue supporting the work being carried out by the community groups identified
- Roll out the Dollis Valley community mapping toolkit elsewhere in the Borough.

We will build and maintain relationships between the VCS and the Council

We will promote a strong relationship between the Council and the VCS, by:

- Setting up a Borough-wide VCS representative forum
- Building VCS organisations' networks within the Council
- Maintaining an up-to-date directory of the Council's engagement mechanisms.

We will use our resources and assets to support communities

We will continue to develop a package of measures to support communities, by

- Coordinating grants and funding to make them more targeted and easier for communities to access
- Making sure the Council's community assets are used to their full potential
- Investigating the case for a strengthened community transport offer.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

Background

- 1.1 In June 2014, the Community Leadership Committee agreed that the Council should develop a Community Participation Strategy for Barnet, in order to support voluntary and community activity in the Borough and get local people more involved in the design and delivery of services and outcomes. This is not a way of asking voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to deliver public services for free, but about formally commissioning services from the VCS where this would be likely to deliver better outcomes.
- 1.2 The Strategy would aim to:
- 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 making decisions about how to deliver against the Borough's priorities.
- 1.3 This decision recognised that increasing people's independence and resilience has benefits in its own right – enabling them to gain skills and capacity, and the communities in which they live to become stronger and more cohesive. It also recognised that, as the Council continued to develop its plans for the next five years, community participation was likely to emerge as a vital factor in enabling a number of different services, and that certain foundations would need to be put in place to facilitate this – especially at the scale and pace required.

Community activity in commissioning plans

- 1.4 Each of the Council's themed Committees has now developed a commissioning plan for the period to 2020, and each has identified areas where individual and community activity will become increasingly important in delivering the Borough's priorities.
- 1.5 In some cases this will involve expanding the number of community providers who deliver an existing service – for example, Environment Committee aims to involve more people in the management of parks and open spaces, while the Children, Education, Libraries and Safeguarding Committee wants to increase the number of childcare and foster care providers.
- 1.6 In others, it will involve extending the range of services commissioned from communities: such as new models of supported living for adults in need of support, which allow more people with learning disabilities, mental health issues and physical disabilities to live outside residential care – this will be crucial to improve outcomes and reduce the pressure on more expensive services.

- 1.7 The Council also has statutory duties to provide more effective signposting to existing community provision, such as the Care Act's information and advice obligation and the requirement for a local support framework for recipients of Universal Credit. These priorities will require the Council to improve the information it holds on its communities and find ways to make this more accessible, and to take account of this in its commissioning plans.
- 1.8 Finally, to improve outcomes for local people and to reduce pressure on public services in a period of continuing austerity, the Council's commissioning plans recognise the need for a switch in focus towards early intervention and prevention, promoting more resilient, well-connected local communities to increase overall wellbeing and reduce demand. This can help fulfil the needs of specific groups (the Adults and Safeguarding Committee is redefining the role of mental health social workers to focus on factors – such as stable jobs and housing – which promote individual resilience for this group of service users), but being socially connected is also a protective factor for the broader community.

Outcomes of this Strategy

- 1.9 The Council's Community Participation Strategy will support this agenda by working towards the following outcomes:
 - 1.9.1 **Residents and community groups will be more independent and resilient**, increasing individual wellbeing and community cohesion, improving outcomes, and resulting in less demand on Council services.
 - 1.9.2 **Residents and community groups will be able to deliver more, and to take on more responsibility for their local areas.** Where there is clear potential for community groups to support and complement the Council's role, or where more community activity would help to meet a particular need, communities would have the ability and capacity to do this – again, reducing the need for public services.
 - 1.9.3 **Services will offer more choice and be better matched to local need** – the market will have developed a more diverse range of services, providers and delivery routes. Community providers will use their local links (and, in some cases, greater flexibility) to tailor provision to fit local need and the Council will use engagement with them to shape its own services more effectively and deliver them more efficiently.
 - 1.9.4 **The Council and the community will work together to make sure community capacity is supported and used to its full potential.** The Strategy aims to understand the capacity which already exists in communities and to identify how the Council can work most effectively, in its community leadership role, to support and develop it, including at those points where it is most critical to commissioning plans.

Work undertaken to date

1.10 In June, this Committee agreed that the Strategy should be developed through four workstreams (Developing better information about our communities; Support and resources for communities; Engagement with communities; Implementation plan), and an informal Member working group of the Committee met in July and August to specify these in more detail.

Developing better information about our communities

1.10.1 We knew we would need to improve the information we hold on voluntary and community activity in the Borough, to inform the Council's strategic plans to support community capacity but also to help frontline staff – such as customer services or social workers – signpost residents to community services more effectively. To do this, we:

- Carried out an information audit, bringing together all current information held across the Council on the voluntary and community sector
- Commissioned a pilot project in Golders Green to identify small, informal groups not currently in contact with the Council, to get a sense of the scale and nature of this 'under the radar' work
- Mapped out Barnet's neighbourhoods to help us understand how community members tend to organise themselves
- Used this to create an initial snapshot of the sector.

Support and resources for communities

1.10.2 We knew resources would be an important lever to support community capacity, so we wanted to understand what support for VCS groups is currently available across the Council, identify our investment in the community and the return we expect to gain, and therefore make better decisions about how we target our resources. To understand this better, we:

- Mapped the different grant funding streams available across the Council, as well as setting up the new process for allocating Area Committee Budgets (this to be reviewed in June 2015)
- Identified the Council's current spend with VCS suppliers
- Collated information about the Council's current community asset portfolio, and worked with the Estates team to develop the Council's Community Asset Strategy in line with the community participation objectives
- Developed new guidance and a revised process for the Community Right to Bid, giving more clarity to residents about how to apply and to residents and landowners about what they could expect from doing so.

Engagement with communities

1.10.3 We knew the Council had a number of engagement mechanisms, many of which were working well but were not joined up or coordinated, making them less user-friendly and running the risk of potential duplication. We also

wanted to explore some new routes for engagement with a particular focus on delivery. To do this, we:

- Created a directory of current engagement (including routes such as the Council's Partnership Boards, Town Teams and Neighbourhood Forums)
- Mapped out points where services were already planning to build on established community involvement (including schemes such as the Friends of Parks and Adopt a Place)
- Worked to commission the new Local Infrastructure Organisation (LIO) contract to ensure the new providers of voluntary sector insight, volunteering and community empowerment (Groundwork) and voluntary sector support, representation and communication and children's safeguarding (CommUNITY Barnet) would be able to support the community participation agenda
- Reviewed existing work around the needs of the VCS in Barnet, including CommUNITY Barnet's *State of the Sector* report and their research on public sector procurement
- Commissioned a pilot project in Dollis Valley to test out two separate (though connected) ideas. The first of these is a toolkit for identifying community interests in getting more involved in service delivery, which will now be rolled out elsewhere in the borough. The second looked at ways in which services could be integrated at neighbourhood level.

Implementation plan

1.10.4 We used the three workstreams described above to identify a number of priority areas and actions to address them, which have now been developed into a twelve-month programme of work.

Implementing the Strategy

1.11 The implementation plan covers the following six areas:

- Improving our information about local communities
- Making more use of current community capacity
- Using our purchasing power
- Exploring the benefits of working locally
- Building relationships between the VCS and the Council
- Using our resources and levers

Further detail is presented below and in Appendix 1: Community Participation Strategy: Phase 1 Workplan.

Improving our information about local communities

1.11.1 We need to make sure the right information is available about the services provided by voluntary and community groups for people to access the support they need, whether they do this directly or are signposted by the Council or another provider.

This benefits residents, who have more access to appropriate support; community providers, who gain increased demand for their services, enabling them to grow and develop their capacity (and, through access to information, more opportunities to network and form partnerships with other groups); and the Council, which is able to fulfil its statutory obligations more effectively, as well as using that information to help it plan strategically for the future. To do this, we will:

- Develop a new, comprehensive database of voluntary and community sector organisations to help us identify the services and support offered across the Borough, and inform decisions about how to support the sector in the long term.
- Improve our existing online directories to help residents access up-to-date information about support for their specific needs, improving their access to services and reducing the need for them to contact the Council directly.
- Support the VCS, including smaller and less formal groups, to access information about their local areas, make people more aware of their services and become more sustainable.

Making more use of current community capacity

1.11.2 Voluntary and community groups are not the only forms of community capacity in the Borough – both individuals and businesses have a vital role to play. We know that 28% of Barnet residents report that they volunteer at least once a week or once a month – roughly the same as the UK average – and a further 13% volunteer less frequently (Residents' Perception Survey, Spring 2014). We know that businesses are keen to contribute and want to know how they can make the biggest difference while doing so. To help the Council unlock these resources, we will:

- Work with our Local Infrastructure Organisation partner to empower local people to become more active, involved and engaged, including through volunteering, in order to build their personal skills and capacity and that of the organisations for which they volunteer. We will aim to drive up the proportion of residents who volunteer regularly and consider leading by example by setting up a scheme to support members of our workforce who wish to volunteer.
- Support local businesses to contribute to the Borough through corporate social responsibility (CSR), to make sure they can direct their resources at the areas where these are most needed.
- Create better support for people who currently volunteer in Council services, to make sure people who are willing to give up their time to help the Council are supported in return.

Using our purchasing power

1.11.3 Our own procurement processes and spending power can be powerful tools to boost capacity, but we know that VCS organisations often feel that public sector procurement makes it unnecessarily difficult for them to engage. We

will review existing work and identify any additional measures which could be taken to improve access. We will:

- Improve access to information about tendering opportunities and Barnet procurement – and how this is communicated to the VCS – to make sure that this is not a barrier to VCS organisations wishing to bid for Barnet services.
- Provide training and development for VCS organisations to increase the numbers able to bid for LBB contracts – and other funding sources.
- Further streamline Barnet’s procurement processes to remove as many barriers as we can for the VCS.

Exploring the benefits of working locally

1.11.4 We want to get a better understanding of the options for, and potential benefits of, neighbourhood-level service delivery. Our pilot project in Dollis Valley involved work with local residents and community groups to identify opportunities where they thought they could either take on services currently provided by the public sector or provide a service which met Council outcomes. Within this area of work, we will:

- Work with the community to test the feasibility of commissioning groups of services at local level, in response to a particular combination of community needs.
- Roll out the community mapping toolkit developed through this initial pilot in other parts of the Borough, to identify further opportunities for engagement and possible community-led delivery models.

Building relationships between the voluntary and community sector and the Council

1.11.5 We must ensure we retain a strong relationship between the Council and the voluntary and community sector, to promote trust and mutual understanding, enable us to identify shared priorities and respond quickly to concerns and issues. VCS organisations are a valuable source of insight about the needs of the groups they represent and can potentially act as strong advocates for the Council, promoting a better relationship with residents and communities. To strengthen this relationship, we will:

- Set up a Borough-wide VCS representative forum, to make sure voluntary and community groups have a place to engage at a strategic level about issues which affect the entire sector
- Build VCS organisations’ networks within the Council, to improve the relationships between organisations and promote better understanding between the sectors
- Maintain an up-to-date directory of the Council’s engagement mechanisms, to reduce duplicate contacts and encourage join-up between different service areas when working with particular communities.

Using our resources and assets

1.11.6 We will continue to develop a package of measures to support communities through the Council's Community Asset Strategy and, as we build up our knowledge of the voluntary sector, through targeting our funding streams more effectively. We will also consider how best to address any other significant barriers which identified by Council services or voluntary and community organisations. In particular, we will:

- Coordinate grants and funding to make them easier for communities to access, and use them to shape VCS capacity in areas of need.
- Make sure the Council's community assets are used to their full potential to support community activity.
- Investigate the case for a strengthened community transport offer, to explore whether developing it further would significantly help to overcome barriers for residents wanting to access community services.

1.12 This plan sets out actions to June 2016, at which point we will review and plan for the following twelve months. We will continue to work with Delivery Units around their commissioning priorities to identify further actions over the course of this initial plan.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Council's spending power will drop by 50% by 2020, meaning that services will have to be reduced and the community will therefore need to do more. 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.

2.2 The Council has recognised this for some time and this is reflected in its commissioning plans to 2020, but historically progress has tended to be fragmented and carried out through small-scale initiatives. To gain the benefits and savings it needs to achieve, the Council needs a coordinated and large-scale approach.

2.3 The actions recommended here have been proposed in light of the scoping work carried out since June 2014, in response to engagement with the Council's Commissioning Group, Delivery Units and other key stakeholders.

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 If the Committee agrees the proposed approach and programme of work, the Strategy will be implemented as set out in Appendix 1 of this report and managed as a Council programme.

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 Community Participation Strategy will help to enable the Health and Wellbeing Strategy through support for work to reduce demand and increase the levels of community provision.

- 5.1.3 More generally, the decision will 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 MTFs and longer-term savings proposals as increased community capacity and activity will be vital to reduce the pressure on services.

- 5.2.2 The direct costs of the Strategy so far have been two pilot projects commissioned at a cost of approximately £35,000, funded through the Commissioning Support budget, and approximately £30,000 for a policy and project support post, funded through the Connecting with Barnet programme.

- 5.2.3 £100,000 has been set aside from the transformation reserve for support with the next phase of the project.

- 5.2.4 Currently the Council spends approximately £900,000 across the various grants and funding streams which support community activity.

- 5.2.5 Resources affected by the development of the Community Asset Strategy include the Council's community asset portfolio, which under the Council's current definition of a community asset totals 141 properties. Their state of repair, and maintenance liabilities, are currently under review.

5.3 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.3.1 By virtue of the Council's Constitution, (Responsibility for Functions, Annex A) the Terms of Reference of the Community Leadership Committee includes:

- To oversee arrangements for cross partner co-operation including any pooling of budgets

- To maintain good community relations with Barnet's diverse

communities enduring that all communities have the opportunity to participate fully in the Borough's affairs.

- To work together with partners on the Barnet Safer Communities Partnership including Police, Fire and Criminal Justice Agencies to help make Barnet a safer place.
- 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 continuing to communicate with Members throughout the implementation of the Strategy, and through close work with Ward Councillors where their local areas are affected.

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 time constraints: 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 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 Dedicated consultation has taken place to underpin the development of the Community Asset Strategy and the Community Right to Bid.
- 5.6.3 Further consultation and engagement will be carried out as part of the communications plan for the Strategy.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 [Developing a community participation strategy for Barnet](#), Community Leadership Committee, June 25 2014
- 6.2 [Community participation strategy - Area committee budgets and wider community funding](#), Community Leadership Committee, September 11 2014
- 6.3 [Community Asset Strategy](#), Assets, Regeneration and Growth Committee, December 15 2014.