

To: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 3 February 2015

Report of: Head of Leisure, Parks and Communities

Title of Report: Communities and Neighbourhoods

Summary

Purpose of report: To provide an update on the Communities and Neighbourhoods team work programme and building stronger communities

Key decision No

Executive lead member: Councillor Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Policy Framework: Oxford City Council Corporate Plan – Strong, Active communities

Recommendation: That the Scrutiny Committee note the report.

Appendices to report

Appendix A Examples of case studies

Background

Introduction:

1. The Communities and Neighbourhoods (CAN) team is part of the Leisure, Parks and Communities Service.
2. Our aim is to consult, involve, listen and respond to communities in priority areas to engage residents in social, economic and physical improvements and to support capacity building and provide opportunities thus developing sustainable communities.

3. Since April 2013 the resources of the team were re-focused on the areas of greatest need in order to address the following priorities:
 - a) Regeneration areas and Community Partnerships
Barton, Rose Hill, The Leys, Wood Farm, Northway, Littlemore and Cutteslowe – *to strengthen neighbourhood partnerships by involving more residents; build capacity of residents through local training; develop more innovative ways to involve residents especially young people*
 - b) Community Associations
Ensure policies and procedures are up to date; support development of CAs to attract more members; training for trustees. Currently direct management of Blackbird Leys/Jubilee.
 - c) Community Centre redevelopments
Rose Hill, Northway/Cowley, Wood Farm – *major input with consultation, community involvement and partnership involvement*

Current work

Community Partnerships

4. The approach to neighbourhood working and developing Community Partnerships:
 - supports project delivery in our priority areas, engaging with communities on major developments in their area
 - engages with local people to supplement the information derived from data and local members
 - helps coordination of City Council and partner services in priority neighbourhoods
 - encourages dialogue between residents in priority neighbourhoods and the Council
 - supports local people to tackle socio economic issues beyond the direct control of the council
5. The CAN team works to build and support strong local partnerships to develop social regeneration initiatives which respond to the priorities of local communities in Barton, The Leys, Wood Farm, Northway, Littlemore, Rose Hill and Cutteslowe. The partnership areas have:
 - Seven Community Plans produced based on census data , local needs and service priorities with action plans
 - Community Partnership meetings held bi-monthly or quarterly
 - Themed groups in each area to take forward local priorities e.g. environmental issues, health, young people.
 - Two walkabouts in each area per year with relevant officers, councillors and residents

- Six areas have local newspapers produced regularly with the involvement of local people that reach 20,000 residents

6. Street Meets - to increase engagement with residents in the priority areas we regularly hold Street Meets. Residents are asked to tell us two things they like about living on their estate and if they had a wish, what is one thing they would improve.

The CAN Team have held 20 street meetssince May 2014 with over 695 residents and generally there is a good community spirit in our neighbourhoods and people enjoy the green spaces they have. However, we are also addressing the issues that have come up in the Street Meets. For example, dog fouling is a high priority for residents and we are working with the Community Response Team to do targeted campaigns to tackle this.

Other methods of communication include; Website, SMS texting, noticeboards, social media. We are also producing regular monthly updates for ward councillors in the seven areas and also producing case studies which will be publicised via the website and local newspapers. An example of case studies can be found at Appendix A

7. Quality of Life survey – in April 2014 this survey was carried out in the Community Partnership areas to gain further insight on local needs and views.

1,117 questionnaires completed across all areas

Location	Number of returns
Barton	239
The Leys	239
Rose Hill	94
Littlemore	160
Northway	85
Cuttesslowe	183
Wood Farm	117

We are currently carrying out an extra 200 questionnaires across the areas to specifically target under-represented groups. The data from the initial questionnaires has been analysed and used to inform the local Community Plans and also with other services to inform service planning e.g. where to target Cleaner, Greener campaigns.

8. Each of the areas covered by Community Partnerships has had a review meeting over the past few months. This included ward councillors, Board Member, Director of Community Services, CAN Locality Officer, CAN Team Leader and Head of Service. From these meetings priorities for each area have, or are being agreed and this information will inform the Community Plans. Each area also has a

Senior Manager from the Corporate Management Team supporting the communities officer on more strategic issues.

9. The challenges and scale of Oxford City Council's involvement in each area varies. As there are significant capital investment projects happening in Rose Hill, Barton and The Leys there are internal OCC officer groups supporting and coordinating the work within these three areas.

Community Centres

10. Oxford City Council supports 19 Community Centres with 17 Community Associations running these Centres. There are currently two Community Centres under direct management of Oxford City Council. Support to all these Centres contributes directly to the Council's aims of strengthening local communities and addressing social inclusion. The Centres offer a range of community activities, which contribute to the health and well-being of residents across the city.
11. The range of activities/events/services that Community Centres provide are wide ranging including:
 - Meeting spaces and Function rooms
 - Youth facilities
 - Welfare and advice services
 - Computer centres
 - Music recording and arts studios
 - Work clubs
 - Community offices
 - Kitchens
 - Sports & cultural activities
 - Social Clubs
 - Older people's groups spaces
 - Training facilities
12. The main focus of the CAN team's work is with the new developments especially Rose Hill, Northway and Cowley as well as directly managing the Blackbird Leys and Jubilee Community Centres. Both centres have had more investment with increased usage over the last year and the new IT Hub has attracted more users and is now regularly booked for 9 sessions per week as well as having general public access. We are also running a training programme for Community Association trustees in conjunction with OCVA.

13. A steering group has been set up to support the development of a Community Centre Strategy for the city. The group is made up of the CEO of Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action, the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Federation, the lead councillors for Labour, the Liberal Democrats and Greens along with the Service Area Manager, Head of Service and Director with the remits for communities.

Other areas of work

14. **Older People** – this is the subject of another report on the Scrutiny agenda.
15. **Diversity**—we have made significant inroads supporting diverse and faith based communities and as such the success of their applications to City Council grants has increased. Oxford Polish Association has written a number of successful small grant applications which has supported well attended events and built their presence within the community. Oxford City Council's Social Inclusion Fund has also been an opportunity for minority groups to apply for funding which will support their growth. 25% of applications to the Social Inclusion Fund 2014/15 came from diverse communities which is an increase on the previous financial year.
16. One of the successful community groups has been Oxfordshire Somali forum, who secured funding to pay for room hire of East Oxford Games Hall and to run a six week pilot project for their young people. The CAN team met with the Somali Community a number of times prior to the application to establish their priorities to ensure their application was representative of the community. The three identified priorities were that they needed a regular meeting space that was separate to the Madrasa, activities for women and activities for the youth.
17. The funding they have secured will enable them to have more hours in East Oxford Games Hall where they will be running a minimum of two unaccredited courses in partnership with Oxford County Council's Skills and Learning Service. The subject of these courses will be decided by the community, with textiles and ESOL currently the favourite. They also applied for 6 weeks of staff time from Positive Futures to engage young people and then signpost them on to the mainstream provision. In addition to this a minimum of five members of the Somali community will sit on Community Partnerships ensuring the Somali community have a voice on local issues affecting their geographical community.
18. **Grants**
The community and voluntary organisations (CVO's) grants programme is co-ordinated and monitored through the CAN team. The CVO's grants programme has two elements to it.

Open Bidding – one off grants, community and voluntary organisations can apply for on an annual basis or on a smaller scale throughout the year.

Commissioning – funding for activities that have been identified by the Council as making a substantial and central contribution to the achievement of our corporate priorities.

The Grants budget is £1.4 million and all awarded grants are monitored by the Grants Officer. A detailed report each year is published on the Council website.

19. **Additional key areas of work**

- Supporting Ward Councillors in co-ordination of Area Forums and management of ward members budgets
- Working in partnership with Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) to deliver support to voluntary sector
- Developing a sustainable model for community based Work Clubs

20. **Performance Information**

The CAN team collect monthly information for CorVu which has the latest monthly performance results.

21. **Summary**

The work of the CAN team has been focused on the key priorities identified in 2013 and there have been some significant successes in greater engagement with communities and taking some key projects forward.

22. **Next steps** – The Committee is asked to note the report.

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Reducing Isolation Case Study

FriendLeys



Location

Blackbird Leys

Partners

Communities and Neighbourhoods Team
Leys Community Partnership
Blackbird Leys Parish Council

Oxford City Council Investment

Three months free room hire to aid development of group.

Other Funding Secured

£600 grant from BBL Parish Council.
£25 voucher from Sainsbury's.

The Communities and Neighbourhoods Team in Oxford City Council are keen to develop schemes to increase the use of the Blackbird Leys Community Centre by local residents. It also has a commitment to reduce isolation amongst older people.

In February 2014 the CAN team identified the potential of the community centre to host a weekly coffee morning for local residents. The local officer shared this idea with a local resident who expressed a keen interest in serving at the coffee morning and helping to publicise the group.

This resident was supported and encouraged to develop her own ideas for the group which led to her quickly taking on the group.

The group has subsequently given itself a name and established a committee and a bank account.

Nearly thirty people have been through the door of the group which regularly attracts 15 residents a week. They have also organised day trips and meals out together.

A relative of one of the members of the group told the organiser: *"It's the highlight of her week and it's a relief for us to know she has a group of friends. I just wish it was more than once a week."*

New Youth Journalist

Location

Oxford

Partners

Leys media

Leys Festival organisers

As part of the Cutteslowe estate walkabout in August 2014 we chatted to a parent who was out with her son in Sunnymeade Park – the young man had fallen over and our Community Development Officer was applying 1st Aid.

Whilst talking to the parent it became apparent that the young man (Harry) was in the area taking photographs a hobby which he had become increasingly interested in.

To further encourage Harry to become involved he was invited to come along and take photos at the Leys Festival where he could work alongside the professional photographer that had been employed for the day.

Harry attended the day and enjoyed his time learning new techniques, he was also introduced to Sarah Edwards (Editor Leys News) and he expressed that he would like to get involved.

Harry is now a Youth Journalist for the Leys News and provides articles for the paper, he older brother has since shown interest in volunteering for the paper.

TVP Have Your Say Sessions



Location

Blackbird and Greater Leys

Partners

Communities and Neighbourhoods Team
Thames Valley Police

Oxford City Council Resources

Officer Time

Other Resources

Thames Valley Police Officer Time

The Neighbourhood policing team for The Leys carry out monthly 'Have Your Say' meetings, an opportunity for residents to speak informally to police officers about general matters or more specific concerns.

For various reasons, historically very few people spoke to the officers, more often than not no residents would speak to them during these sessions. Here, as elsewhere in the city, the Police were considering their viability in future.

The CAN team offered to join the police in one of their sessions and suggested placing the session outside the health centre late on a Friday afternoon to maximise passing footfall.

During this hour-and-a-half session the CAN officer spoke to 15 residents using the 'two things' cards as the hook, more than in all the previous Have Your Say sessions combined.

More often than not the residents raised anti-social behaviour or crime as a concern and the police were able to immediately interact with the resident on their issues. This allows the resident to see prompt action whilst the concept provides the CAN team an opportunity for public engagement whilst also increasing police engagement with the public.

The CAN team will continue to join the police on their Have Your Say sessions, the future of which on The Leys is now secured.

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