

Report of the Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Healthy City

Cabinet – 19 January 2016

RESPONSE TO THE REPORT OF THE BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INQUIRY PANEL

Purpose:	To outline a response to the scrutiny recommendations and to present an action plan for agreement.
Policy Framework:	None.
Reason for Decision:	To comply with the requirements of the Council Constitution.
Consultation:	Legal, Finance, Access to Services.
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: 1) The response as outlined in the report and related action plan be agreed.
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Finance Officer:	Mike Hawes
Legal Officer:	Deb Smith
Access to Services Officer:	Phil Couch

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Building Sustainable Communities Inquiry report was submitted to Cabinet in June 2016 after the August Scrutiny Inquiry Panel completed a detailed inquiry into Community Action as a part of delivering this Corporate Priority. Although Community Action is actually a workstream of Sustainable Swansea, rather than a Service in its own right, it relies on a number of inter-dependencies with services across the Council to yield successful outcomes. The Inquiry focused on Community Action and how the Council can best support residents to run services in their own communities. The scrutiny report is attached as **Appendix A**.
- 1.2 Having considered the contents of the scrutiny report, and specific recommendations made, advice to Cabinet on whether it should agree, or not agree, with each recommendation is detailed in this report.
- 1.3 Cabinet is also asked to consider, for each of the responses, any relevant policy commitments and any other relevant activity and resource needs.

2.0 Response to Scrutiny Recommendations

Recommendation 1
<p>Develop a communication plan which should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Undertaking a campaign to promote the role of volunteers including celebrating and valuing the role and highlighting benefits of volunteering.b) Publicity and promotion of successful Community Action projects more widely, using for example individual success stories.c) Being clear about what assets and services are available for Community Action and communicating these proactively to communities and local councillors.d) Holding an annual open day or community fayre for community facilities and community groups designed to improve communication, networking and to share information, good practice and training opportunities. This should include information and opportunities for Community Action.
<p>Action already being undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) There are a number of volunteer recruitment and promotion campaigns underway in specific service areas, in particular: Friends of Parks; Museums; Galleries; Libraries; Archives; Community Centres; Sports Development have very successful programmes including training and development for volunteers and young Ambassadors. Annual awards are also held for some areas eg. Swansea Sports Awards; Green Flag Awards; Fields in Trust.b) press releases and good news stories are issued and published on the Council website's dedicated Community Action pages, as and when they come to fruition;c) The Asset register/audit has been completed and this identifies the status of Council assets in terms of whether they are surplus to need. All others are key to providing continued services or facilities for the community. We respond quickly to enquiries and expressions of interest but we don't promote services or facilities as being 'available' to be taken on unless we have acknowledged they are at risk of closure/ cessation of service provision.d) We hold regular events and community days for a wide network of groups including presentations on Community Action to Community Forums and Councils.
<p>New actions following from the recommendation:</p> <p>Volunteering campaign: we support 'volunteer week' provided by SCVS and display flags to indicate our support of volunteering in early summer; we will continue this.</p> <p>The Community Centres have regular open days and celebration days for volunteers and community participation to find out more. This will include Parks Friends going forward.</p>
<p>Cabinet Member Comments: Volunteers are key to many organisations across Swansea, and where relevant to the Authority we take action to encourage, assist and praise volunteers.</p>

Recommendation is AGREED – as already underway. We will ensure greater visibility.
Recommendation 2
Investigate the viability of having an annual Lord Mayor’s Award for Community Work.
Action already being undertaken: There are already several Awards for community work, hosted by CCS as well as others including the Wave/Swansea Sound. We’ve recently seen the success of the Lord Mayor’s Awards for outstanding contributions to Swansea for ambassadors/individuals of note. The Council and partners are developing a proposal for a ‘Celebrating Swansea Together’ series of events, culminating in a parade or similar, to show the Council’s commitment to the community cohesion agenda, working with key partners from public and third sectors. One of the events includes the proposal for a Swansea Stars/Good Neighbour award. Further information will be available in January.
New actions following from the recommendation: Investigate the inclusion of an overall award for Community Work with the Lord Mayor’s office.
Cabinet Member Comments: Covered above
Recommendation is AGREED
Recommendation 3
Ensure that the Third Sector Strategy includes an updated Compact Agreement.
Action already being undertaken: Part of the Councils agreement with SCVS through the Change Fund is to work in partnership to develop a Third Sector Strategy which will include an up dated Compact arrangement. Consultation and engagement has taken place with the third sector in relation to what should be included in this document to ensure the sector is developed and fit for the future.
New actions following from the recommendation: Maintain the current direction of travel to ensure this is in place by March 2017
Cabinet Member Comments:
Recommendation is AGREED – already underway
Recommendation 4
Undertake a mapping exercise to understand what advice, guidance and support is out there for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.
Action already being undertaken: This has been undertaken as part of bringing advice on Community Action together in one place with signposting, information, advice and guidance provided by SCVS; Cultural Services; Estates; Corporate Property and Poverty & Prevention colleagues. Discussions have taken place with the Welsh Football Trust in relation

to advice, guidance and support for football clubs in Swansea.
New actions following from the recommendation: Ensure we keep this up to date.
Cabinet Member Comments: With our partners in SCVS we try and understand the needs of community groups and enable them to address the need.
Recommendation is AGREED as already in place.
Recommendation 5
Conduct a piece of work that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.
Action already being undertaken: This has been undertaken and information is now all available in one place, including guidance on the process, timelines, criteria, requirements and sample documents and contacts. Officers also hold regular face to face meetings to talk users through the information and guide them during the process.
New actions following from the recommendation: Maintain the current resource and processes in place.
Cabinet Member Comments: This included the simplification of the Asset Transfer process.
Recommendation is AGREED as already in place.
Recommendation 6
All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.
Action already being undertaken: This is already in place on the Council website – with access and signposting from SCVS and from face to face meetings with groups and volunteers. Advice, guidance and support is provided throughout the process.
New actions following from the recommendation: Maintain the current resource and processes in place.
Cabinet Member Comments: Covered above.
Recommendation is AGREED as already in place.
Recommendation 7
Involve SCVS in the option appraisal stage of future Commissioning Reviews, when appropriate.
Action already being undertaken: SCVS engaged in developing options for Community Action within various Commissioning Reviews but perhaps not universally.
New actions following from the recommendation: Engage SCVS alongside the Community Action officers input when

engaging in the options appraisals, when appropriate.
Cabinet Member Comments: SCVS are often an invaluable partner in service provision.
Recommendation is AGREED
Recommendation 8
Proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with the possibilities that are available for Community Action.
Action already being undertaken: Officers regularly present on Community Action to community groups; councils and Friends groups or other smaller groups of volunteers; signpost them to the Community Action information and other relevant officers and support them through the process for expressing interest in facilities/ services that could be sustained through Community Action. Possibilities of Community Action are known once a group has already expressed an interest and it has been assessed, or if a facility/ service has been appraised as being appropriate for volunteers /community groups to maintain during a commissioning review, or through budget setting, if the facility or service is under threat of cessation/closure or reductions.
New actions following from the recommendation: Continue to ensure that Community Action is a consideration, with appropriate steps in place, during Commissioning Reviews and annual budget setting so that new opportunities can be captured and shared.
Cabinet Member Comments: Covered above
Recommendation is AGREED as already in place.
Recommendation 9
Encourage and support mixed economy applications (more than one organisations working together to make application for asset or service viable and accessible to smaller groups)
Relevant Policy Commitments:
Action already being undertaken: This is key factor of a successful Community Action project and groups/volunteers and organisations are introduced or encouraged to work together; open up facilities to other organisations or develop new ways of working together.
New actions following from the recommendation: A register of interest can be made available within parameters of the Community Action guidance; Current information to be monitored and enhanced where appropriate.
Cabinet Member Comments: As long as a sustainable plan of operation is drawn up then it doesn't matter what organisations are included, and sometimes that can give added strength.
Recommendation is AGREED as already in place.
Recommendation 10
Develop peer to peer networks and mentoring programmes to help

share expertise and support across community groups particularly around assisting new groups and with their longer term sustainability.

Action already being undertaken:

Groups and organisations are introduced to each other and meetings and forums are facilitated with examples of good practice shared. We also supply templates and 'dummy' copies of key documents such as leases; constitutions; terms of reference; agm's etc. and advise groups on governance. We request larger groups and organisations that received funding support from us previously to do the same for smaller groups.

New actions following from the recommendation:

Link this in with our promotional activity and open days;
Enhanced what's already in place in partnership with third sector.

Cabinet Member Comments: I think the way the Friends of Parks group is developing reflects this approach.

Recommendation is **AGREED – as already in place.**

2.1 An action plan for the agreed recommendations is attached as **Appendix B**.

3.0 Equality and Engagement Implications

3.1 No specific implications. Delivering the Community Action workstream enables communities to be more actively involved in sustaining services, which supports equality and engagement. Any actions arising from implementing the recommendations will individually be screened for EEI implications.

4.0 Legal Implications

4.1 No specific legal implications. SLA's, leases and other licenses may be required for service delivery or any asset transfer agreements.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 No specific implications but a resource will need to be maintained to ensure the communications, engagements, support and development functions can be sustained.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Original Scrutiny Report

Appendix B – Proposed Cabinet Action Plan