

PSB Strong Communities Objective Update

Purpose:	To update the Scrutiny Programme Committee on the Strong Communities Objective.
Content:	An update on progress to date and the developing future priorities.
Councillors are being asked to:	Consider the progress made with the Strong Communities objective and discuss future developments.
Objective Lead:	Group Manager, Steve Davies
Objective Owner:	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Roger Thomas.
Report Authors:	Roger Thomas / Steve Davies.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2018 Swansea published its Wellbeing Plan with the overarching vision to work together to make Swansea a place which is prosperous, where our natural environment is appreciated and maintained and where every person can have the best start in life, get a good job, live well, age well and have every opportunity to be healthy, happy, safe and the best they can be.
- 1.2 Using information from the Assessment of Local Wellbeing and by engaging with relevant stakeholders, four Objectives and a cross-cutting action were identified where working together will make the biggest difference to improve Swansea's well-being.
- 1.3 This report provides the Scrutiny Committee with an update on the priority development and progress for the Strong Communities Objective.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Whilst the ongoing pandemic has caused a considerable delay to the progression of this Objective, with the majority of partners and stakeholders being required to re-direct their resources to maintaining business as usual, it is clear to see from the updates provided below from individual organisations, that there have been some key areas of work delivered to the benefit of the communities within Swansea.
- 2.2 The pandemic has required partner organisations to not only work differently but to also strengthen collaborative working arrangements in order to continue to deliver business as usual services to communities. There are a number of notable examples of the work undertaken outlined within this report.

3. Strong Communities Objective - *To build strong communities with a sense of pride and belonging.*

3.1 The Strong Communities Objective identified the following 'steps' in the Wellbeing Plan.

- People feel safe and confident in their communities.
- Individuals and communities are connected and feel a sense of belonging.
- Work towards a thriving economy in which households achieve at least the minimum income standard.

3.2 As previously stated progress has been limited in achieving the individual steps detailed in the Wellbeing Plan due to the availability of partners following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Overview of work within Strong Communities

4.1 SCVS originally led the Strong Communities Objective. Since the introduction of new governance arrangements, this Objective has been allocated to Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS). This change also led to a review of the current action plan to chart progress to date and ensure alignment with future workstreams. The review has included identifying actions that are now complete, those that are ongoing and new actions that need to be considered going forward.

4.2 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, several meetings had taken place between the former and new lead officer and a new strategic stakeholder group was identified. This group was convened to ensure that it included partners who were able to reflect the work of the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) and the Transformation programme, as there were many close links and common goals, which have links to a number of actions within the workstream.

4.3 The group's membership facilitates and promotes intelligence sharing and joint working across other PSB Objectives and between other agencies and departments.

5. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (MAWWFRS) contribution to Strong Communities.

5.1 During the last twelve-month period, (MAWWFRS) have been involved in several initiatives that have contributed to Strong Communities in Swansea, these include:

- The COVID-19 pandemic required the Service to work closely with a wide range of partners to ensure that key services could continue to be provided to the communities we serve. Advice and resources were provided to third sector partners, such as smoke alarms which were then able to be delivered to homes where required.
- Amendments were made to Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to reflect the changes required to assist partners in delivering Safe and Well Visits. These

amendments helped to ensure the highest level of support continued to be provided to vulnerable members of the community, whilst adhering to COVID-19 guidelines.

- The multi-agency taskforce, set-up to bring a dedicated focus on deliberate and accidental grass fires across Wales (Operation Dawns Glow), continued to make good progress, with information about the multi-agency collaboration publicised at Public Services Boards and Community Safety Partnership meetings across the Service area. Further information can be found on the Service's website www.mawwfire.gov.uk
- The key messages for Operation Dawns Glow were developed to include a more holistic approach to messaging via partners and included a specific reference to COVID-19 considerations. This messaging ensured that consistent safety messages were promoted on community risks as they became apparent, such as the temporary closure of waste recycling centres and the hazards of burning domestic garden waste.
- Operation BANG (Be a Nice Guy) saw an adapted multi-agency approach to Halloween and Bonfire night in light of COVID-19 restrictions. Safety messages were successfully co-ordinated between the Police, the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, Education Officers, and other agencies to incorporate new parameters and guidelines.
- MAWWFRS staff have supported the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust during the COVID-19 pandemic (WAST) by driving ambulances.
- MAWWFRS staff were available to provide mortuary assistance.
- Community Safety (CS) staff assisted with the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccination programme.
- Educational Resources were widely developed to ensure that our safety education messages were accessible to our target audience, schools, and parents through HWB.
- The Service's Arson Reduction Team maintained partner links and adapted collaborative working practices to safeguard personnel and reduce the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions when attending multi-agency initiatives.
- Home fire safety intervention equipment, such as smoke alarms were provided to food banks across the Service area to be included in food parcels.
- The Service supported digital awareness, and volunteers were trained in digital skills, which enabled them to become digital champions, who have been able to share their knowledge and skills within the community.
- The Service has fully trained digital champion volunteers, who can share their knowledge and skills within the community.
- The Swansea Public Services Board secured £8,000 worth of grant funding from Natural Resources Wales, to enable the Service's Arson Team to identify areas of high risk within Swansea that would benefit from the provision of fire breaks. See Appendix 1 for further information.
- Training was provided to partners to allow them to deliver telephone Home Fire Safety Check (HFSC) audits to their clients. Training was also provided to new partners to allow for referrals to be made to the Service.
- The Service's Business Fire Safety (BFS) team developed a local engagement strategy to provide guidance and support to businesses who were about to transition from lockdown to a state of progressive unlock, with the aim of

providing fire safety guidance that was specifically relevant to the current situation whilst ensuring that fire safety considerations were not neglected.

- The (BFS) team provided support in the safe delivery of the temporary field hospitals in Swansea.
- The Service signed up to the zero-tolerance policy to racism in Wales and is committed to promoting racial harmony and equity, supporting the Zero Racism Wales campaign. Furthermore, the Service is committed to implementing the commitments, together with taking a stand against racism and promoting a more inclusive and equal workplace and society that gives every individual in Wales the right to feel safe, valued and included.
- The Service's Corporate Plan 2021-2026 outlines our commitment to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how our Improvement and Well-being Objectives contribute to the seven Well-being Goals, by demonstrating how each one helps the Service to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. Further information can be found on the website www.mawwfire.gov.uk

6. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (MAWWFRS) partnership working during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6.1 With the COVID-19 pandemic guidelines and the restricted working within the community, our priority remained looking after the most vulnerable at a time when things were very uncertain.

- During the pandemic, MAWWFRS's CS team adapted the way in which it worked and engaged with partner organisations and vulnerable communities.
- Following the Welsh Government's (WG) shielding guidelines for vulnerable people, Local Authorities, the voluntary sector, and community networks initiated delivering meals, groceries, and medication, to the elderly and vulnerable. Assistance was offered with the addition of offering home safety advice.
- A supply of smoke detectors and safety leaflets were provided to foodbank services to be included with food parcels.
- Assistance was provided to Third Sector partners by undertaking wellbeing calls via telephone.
- HFSC's were adapted so that they could be delivered online to partner organisations that were engaging with their service users. The training enabled staff to signpost vulnerable members of the community to the Fire Service for a HFSC, as well as the ability to identify risks within the home if they were conducting a visit and fitting smoke detectors. Some of the agencies that received the training included Platform, Llys Nini animal centre, British Red Cross.
- Age Connect Volunteers and staff were also trained to enable them to conduct telephone HFSC's whilst making welfare calls to lonely, isolated older people.
- The team also worked in collaboration with Oxygen Nurses, Smoking Cessation, and Baywater to help and support patients on Oxygen.
- Surplus fire safety equipment was issued to partner organisations to enable them to be provided to vulnerable members of the community.
- To keep in touch with hard to reach groups, virtual coffee mornings were conducted to discuss home safety to tenants through Housing Associations.

HFSC training and advice was also provided to the Gas Safety Teams undertaking home visits.

- Work was undertaken with the Burns Team from Morriston Hospital to look at burns prevention, with a focus on older adults over the age of 65, as they are more likely to suffer from a life threatening burn and take longer to recover from a serious burn.
- In collaboration with SCVS, HFSC training was offered to all volunteers as part of their introductory training. Befriending service calls were made to people suffering from loneliness and isolation. Following this training, befrienders provided home safety advice and referred vulnerable individuals to the Service for further assistance.
- Work was undertaken with the Community Cohesion Team to assist with monitoring potential tensions within the community, such as hate crime. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood disputes and tensions around transmission. The meetings enabled the consideration of immediate responses, that would mitigate those risks or any tensions escalating. The Service also shared information on Arson hotspots and key areas of concern with the team.
- The Partnership Officer worked with key stakeholders, including Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) and Public Health Wales (PHW) on the 'Tell Me More' campaign, which provided accurate information to allow people to make informed decisions about the vaccine, with the hope that more people, including those in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities would decide to take up the offer of the vaccine.
- The CS team continued to provide Violence against Women Domestic Abuse Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) training to all staff to enable the identification of those experiencing abuse within the community.

7. Swansea Council for Voluntary Service's (SCVS) contribution to Strong Communities.

7.1 During the last twelve-month period, Swansea Council for Voluntary Services (SCVS) have been involved in several initiatives that have contributed to Strong Communities in Swansea, these include:

- Formal and informal volunteering and voluntary organisations contributed hugely to ensuring that communities have remained resilient over the last year.
- Very few Third Sector and community services utilised the furlough scheme, as they were still required to continue providing vital services, all be it whilst utilising alternative ways of working, such as online, outdoor, and socially distanced visits.
- SCVS were able to obtain COVID-19 specific funding, for example, emergency VSEF and Comic Relief funding, the Austin Bailey Foundation and Moondance Foundation which provided funding for COVID-19 related activities.
- Additional funding was also received from WG to fund volunteering opportunities, with local and regional partners working together to ensure a volunteering legacy and plans for the future.
- Previous "hidden" community needs became apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with regards to food insecurity, barriers to accessing transport and access to healthcare settings.

- Groups have started to look at the longer-term responses to the impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, obesity and other health and behaviour impacts linked to lockdown sedentary lifestyles.

8. Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Services contribution to Strong Communities.

8.1 During the last twelve-month period, Swansea Council's Tackling Poverty Services have been involved in several initiatives that have contributed to Strong Communities in Swansea, these include:

- One of the priorities identified at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic was supporting access to food.
- At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the team engaged with food banks in order to understand their concerns and challenges, which were; an expected rise in demand for crisis food support, food bank volunteers becoming vulnerable themselves and the risk of food supply to food banks. In response to their concerns, 4 Food Distribution Centres across Swansea were established to procure and store surplus food which helped to meet the rise in demand and ensured that supplies were available. Food bank volunteers were equipped with essential travel letters, FareShare Membership for the independent food banks was paid for to ensure a weekly supply of food coming in, and Local Area Coordinators provided strong links in the communities which helped this to work effectively.
- In response to the emerging COVID-19 pandemic, Matthew's House, Zac's Place, Swansea Council, Swansea Council for Voluntary Services, The Wallich, Crisis Skylight South Wales, Neath Port Talbot Council, Caerlas/Goleudy, YMCA, Mecca Bingo, Where's Doris, The Shared Place, Sameerea Foundation, Goggi's Cuisine, Swansea City Football Club, Thai Bach, NHS, Public Health Wales and local politicians came together to ensure that homeless, vulnerably housed and vulnerable people received meals daily in a safe way.
- 55 organisations and 100 volunteers collaborated to deliver a project to ensure that people's basic needs of daily food support were met safely, this ensured that everyone on the streets was offered a bed, and the winter provision was extended to all year round, including a substantial hot meal every day. This crucial bit of work helped keep rough sleeping in Swansea to the lowest levels for over 20 years.
- Each week volunteers in five venues (Matthews' House, Goggi's, The Shared Plate, Swansea City Football Club and Mecca Bingo) prepared hot meals, which were transported using community transport schemes and volunteers to get the meals to those who were unable to either cook for themselves or were having difficulty buying food.
- Over 18,000 prepared meals were delivered over a four-month period (seven days a week) to 21 locations. 307 emergency food parcels were also delivered during this period. Once the lockdown period had ended, plans were put in place to offer a takeaway service instead of a delivery service.
- The Swansea Together network created a seven days a week emergency outdoor food service, which was available on regular days, times, and locations to enable people to access a hot meal if they need it. This initiative is now

meeting an even greater need as the number of people at risk of homelessness is rising.

- As the demand continues to grow, so has the provision to match it in a way that is collaborative and effective, with an opportunity every day of the week for people struggling with housing to touch base with a person who can help.
- A Council COVID-19 helpline was established with a food help administration team processing requests for food help, together with help with shopping directed to Local Area Coordination Teams and SCVS. 850 requests for food help were processed and 7,700 shielding food parcels were delivered.
- Third Sector Grant Support received 41 Food Poverty grants, 19 Period Dignity in communities' grants and 17 Men's Sheds grants.
- Staff across the Council whose normal roles were restricted were reallocated to crisis response roles, such as the COVID-19 helpline, food administration team, and local area coordination team.
- The Local Area Coordination team supported vulnerable community members impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, supported over 23,000 requests for food, medication, or support for social isolation, and provided coordination and support for community and voluntary action working with over 5,000 community and street champions.
- The welfare rights advice line was extended to be open 5 days a week, with additional information kept up to date on the Council's Coronavirus help webpage.
- The Lifelong Learning Team moved their learning to online classes, and they also established help for the digitally excluded to access devices and support to use it to help them stay in touch with family and friends and gain access to services.
- The Employability Team and Swansea Working supported the delivery of free school meals, provided employability support online, and introduced an ICT loans scheme for digitally excluded clients.

9. Safer Swansea Partnership's contribution to Strong Communities.

9.1 During the last twelve-month period, the Safer Swansea Partnership (SSP) have been involved in several initiatives that have contributed to Strong Communities in Swansea, these include:

- The SSP worked alongside partner agencies to deliver the Operation BANG initiative to reduce Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents during the Halloween/Fireworks period.
- The management of 33 Hot Spot cameras was utilised to capture evidence to help deter ASB, fly-tipping, and criminal damage.
- CS teams continued to play a key role through community engagement in key areas and empowering the local community, by providing sustained and positive solutions, such as Paws on Patrol.
- Engagement sessions and a monthly newsletter were published for the Paws on Patrol initiative.
- Through the work of the ASB team, the CS team also assisted with the identification of emerging ASB hotspots and trends and assisted in the mapping of local networks to identify other at-risk young persons.

- Work was undertaken to reduce criminal activity within the Sandfields and Vetch areas through the Vetch Development Scheme.
- Regular target hardening survey site visits were conducted to premises ranging from domestic properties, building sites, parks, schools, and open spaces, with advice given regarding stopping/reducing the risk of the area becoming a target for criminal activities.
- Support was provided to the monthly Problem Solving Groups (PSG) with other key partners in each sector, to provide solutions to developing issues within that area, following an increase in youth annoyance over the past 6 months, significantly in December, which aligned with the easing of restrictions over the Christmas period. Neighbour annoyance continued to make up the majority of complaints, which consisted mainly of both statutory and non-statutory noise nuisance complaints.
- The Management of the City Centre Crime Prevention Christmas public event and Christmas Advent Calendar Social Media Crime Prevention campaigns were undertaken.
- Community engagement/consultation events targeting hot spot areas in the city, including Hight Street (City Centre) and Sandfields were held. As a direct result of these community engagement sessions, 19 residents requested and received bespoke crime prevention advice as well as targeted hardening packs.
- The Swansea Contextual Missing Exploitation Trafficking multi-agency forum (CMET) developed and embedded a contextual safeguarding approach, which was supported by the University of Bedfordshire. The pilot is working in Townhill as well as in 16+ and Youth Justice Services. The pilot is not about stopping young people from being young people but understanding them and their context and making places and their relationships sustainably safe or safer.
- The CMET forum consists of representatives from social services, Early Help, Community Safety, Police, YMCA, NSPCC, Barod and many more. CMET pulls together to see who is best placed to do what is required to achieve what matters, which is to disrupt criminal networks and behaviour by acting on the context in which the harm occurs or potentially could occur.

10. Regeneration Swansea's contribution to Strong Communities.

10.1 During the last twelve-month period, Regeneration Swansea have been involved in several initiatives that have contributed to Strong Communities in Swansea, these include:

- Regeneration Swansea continued to meet virtually during 2020/21, with a focus on informing Swansea Council's Economic Recovery Action plan, which sets out the actions the Council needs to take in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to support businesses, support individuals and improve the resilience of the local economy.
- The partnership gathered city centre business intelligence information from BID, considered Demand and Supply of Office Floorspace in the city centre and received feedback from the construction sector via 4the Region, all of which will help inform future plans and activities.
- The partnership heard about proposals to establish an Urban Farm and room to grow space in Uplands, to maximise green infrastructure within the City.

- Funding was secured to launch a shop local campaign. <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/shopmorrison> and work continued to bring vacant properties back into use.
- Funding to support the development of a Green roof on the Post Office building was granted and work on this to improve the biodiversity of the area has been completed.
- As local project board for the Welsh Government Transforming Towns / Target Regeneration Investment (TRI) Programme, the Partnership supported three new Property Enhancement Development Grant schemes in 2020, which between them will bring 870m² of commercial floor space back into use in the City Centre and Morrision. These schemes will accommodate 6 enterprises creating 36 jobs.
- The partnership awarded funding for a shop front improvement pilot scheme in Morrision and funding for a pilot 'meanwhile use' project led by Urban Foundry.
- Eight WG Transforming Towns TRI schemes approved in previous years were completed in the city centre and Morrision in 2020, which gave rise to 1047 m² of commercial floorspace becoming available for use and 19 new housing units.
- Following the award of WG Valleys Taskforce Property Enhancement Development Grant funding for the South West Wales Valleys Taskforce areas, the partnership awarded £224,069 to three schemes in Clydach and Pontarddulais.
- Seven Town Centre Loans were approved with £2.19m funding released on an interest free terms mostly over five years.

11. Challenges and Barriers

- 11.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a considerable delay to the progression of this Objective, with the majority of partners and stakeholders being required to re-direct their resources to maintaining business as usual.
- 11.2 Further challenges include the wider impact from the COVID-19 pandemic, linked with individual organisations' return to the workplace, access to longer term funding and the impact of remote working, particularly with public facing, community-based roles.
- 11.3 The ability to ensure consistent and appropriate representation from all stakeholders, ensuring success from different partnerships is captured effectively, together with the capacity of partners workloads particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic has continued to be a challenge.
- 11.4 The lack of hypothecated funding available to PSBs, in comparison to other strategic partnerships, has certainly reduced the effectiveness and speed of delivery of PSB Wellbeing plans, and in particular the Strong Communities Objective.

12. Future Activity 21/22

12.1 Future activity for the 21/22 year includes:

- To embed amongst all our partners, approaches that support individual, family and community resilience.
- To work together more effectively in order to identify and deliver collaborative working arrangements for the benefit of our communities.
- To deliver collective action to remove barriers to participation including fear of difference, sharing resources wherever possible.
- To further embed our Intercultural City approach to promote Welsh language whilst also recognising and celebrating the other cultures, languages, and communities in Swansea.
- To fully embed the economic regeneration plans within all our partners and actions will be taken to enhance a social benefits approach.
- To work together and jointly design and implement local projects that support the achievement of the Minimum Income Standard.
- To review and evaluate our joint working arrangements during the COVID19 pandemic in order to shape and develop future working practices.