



## City and County of Swansea

### Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Meeting of the

## Scrutiny Inquiry Panel – Building Sustainable Communities

**At:** Committee Room 5, Guildhall, Swansea

**On:** Tuesday, 17 October 2017

**Time:** 10.00 am

**Convenor:** Councillor Terry Hennegan

**Membership:**

Councillors: P Downing, E W Fitzgerald, C A Holley, L James, G J Tanner and T M White

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### Agenda

Page No.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

**2 Disclosures of Personal and Prejudicial Interest**  
[www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests)

**3 Building Sustainable Communities Inquiry Impact Report and follow up**

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Invited to discuss progress are:

**Sue Reed** (*Community Recreation Development Manager*)

**Attached are:**

1. Impact Report from Cabinet Member
2. Original Scrutiny Inquiry Report
3. Original Cabinet Response

**4 Panel to discuss thoughts on progress and agree feedback**

Panel discuss their thoughts on progress and agree the feedback they wish to make to the Cabinet Member and Scrutiny Programme Committee via their letter from the Convener.

*Huw Evans*

**Huw Evans**  
**Head of Democratic Services**  
**Tuesday, 10 October 2017**  
**Contact: Scrutiny 637732**

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## Report of the Cabinet Member for Future Generations

### BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES INQUIRY PANEL PANEL DATE – 17 October 2017

#### IMPACT REPORT: SCRUTINY INQUIRY INTO BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

<b>Purpose</b>	To help the Scrutiny Inquiry Panel to assess the impact of their report into Building Sustainable Communities
<b>Content</b>	This report deals with three questions related to the impact of the inquiry: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?</li> <li>2. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?</li> <li>3. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?</li> </ol>
<b>The Scrutiny Inquiry Panel are being asked to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider the contents of the report</li> <li>• Reach conclusions about the impact of the inquiry</li> </ul>
<b>Lead Councillor(s)</b>	Cabinet Member for Future Generations – June Burtonshaw and Mary Sherwood
<b>Lead Officer(s)</b>	Tracey McNulty – Head of Culture and Tourism Rachel Moxey – Head and Poverty and Prevention Sue Reed – Community Recreation Development Manager Jane Whitmore – Partnership, Performance and Commissioning Manager
<b>Report Author</b>	Sue Reed – Community Recreation Development Manager

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 The Building Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel undertook an in-depth inquiry in 2015/16. The resulting final report is attached at Appendix B. The Cabinet Member response and action plan are attached at Appendix C.

1.2 The reporting timeline of the inquiry is as follows:

Commenced	26 Nov 15
Agreed by the Scrutiny Programme Committee	12 Sep 16
Presented to Cabinet	20 Oct 16
Cabinet Response agreed	19 Jan 17

1.3 The final stage of the scrutiny inquiry process is the follow up. It is at this point that the original panel reconvenes in order to assess the impact of the work.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to assist the panel as it seeks to answer the following three questions, each of which will be dealt with in detail below:

- What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?
- Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?
- What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?

## **2. What has changed since the report was presented to Cabinet?**

2.1 Since the inquiry concluded the following changes [to the measure] have taken place. Community Action has been removed as a measure against this priority as it is a workstream for Sustainable Swansea, Fit for the Future and not a 'service' provision.

## **3. Have the agreed recommendations been implemented?**

3.1 In responding to the inquiry an action plan was drawn up showing what steps would be taken to implement all of the scrutiny recommendations agreed by Cabinet (Appendix A).

3.2 The table at Appendix C shows progress against each recommendation and specifically:

- the Cabinet decision in respect of each recommendation
- the action taken / proposed to implement the recommendations
- the responsible officer(s)
- timescales involved

## **4. What has been the impact of the scrutiny inquiry?**

4.1 Local elected members becoming aware and supporting local groups which exist across the authority and encouraging people to engage with services.

**APPENDIX A**

**Scrutiny Inquiry of Building Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel  
Cabinet Action Plan**

	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Action already being undertaken</b>	<b>New Action Proposed</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
1.	<p>Develop a communication plan which should include</p> <p>a) Undertaking a campaign to promote the role of volunteers including celebrating and valuing the role and highlighting benefits of volunteering.</p> <p>b) Publicity and promotion of successful Community Action projects more widely, using for example individual success stories.</p> <p>c) Being clear about what assets and services are available for Community Action and communicating these proactively to communities and local councillors.</p> <p>d) Holding an annual open day or community fayre for community facilities and community groups designed to improve communication, networking and</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Volunteering campaign: we support 'volunteer week' provided by SCVS and display flags to indicate our support of volunteering in early summer;</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>	6months	Tracey McNulty

	<p>to share information, good practice and training opportunities. This should include information and opportunities for Community Action.</p>	<p>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</p>			
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		days for a wide network of groups including presentations on Community Action to Community Forums and Councils.			
<p><b>COMPLETED – YES</b></p> <p><b>Progress:</b> A joint forum meeting between Friends of Parks and Community Centre Committee members took place in June 2017 and it has been agreed that this will continue annually to share best practice, individually the groups will meet separately quarterly. Community recreation Development team report that there has been a dramatic increase in requests to form Friends groups and have therefore produced an information booklet to guide them through the process.</p>					
2.	Investigate the viability of having an annual Lord Mayor's Award for Community Work.	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	Investigate the inclusion of an overall award for Community Work with the Lord Mayor's office.	6months	Tracey McNulty

Progress as at Oct 17 :

		<p>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.</p>	<p>Progress as at Oct 17:</p>		
<p><b>COMPLETED – YES</b></p> <p><b>Progress:</b> Our Abertawe: Celebrating Swansea Together event, took place on Saturday 4 March, 2017. The event was successfully attended with a view that it would encourage positive connections and forge stronger relationships between Swansea's growing, diverse, multi-cultural population. Discussions are currently ongoing with regard to the event taking place in June 2018.</p>					





	for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.	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.			
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<p><b>Progress:</b> Toolkits for Community Groups have been produced and include; Setting up of Friends Groups, Setting up and Developing Community Groups and Community Building Induction Pack for new voluntary management committee members available via community development/action webpages together with hard copies if required from the Community Development Service.</p>					
5.	Conduct a piece of work that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.	This has been undertaken and information is now all available in one place, including guidance on the process, timelines, criteria, requirements	Maintain the current resource and processes in place.	6months	Tracey McNulty

Progress as at Oct 17 :

		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.	Progress as at Oct 17:		
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<b>Progress:</b> Process is as previously and Estates and Community Development Manager liaise frequently.					
6.	All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.	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.	Maintain the current resource and processes in place.  Progress as at Oct 17 :	6months	Tracey McNulty
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<b>Progress:</b> Process is as previously and maintained by the Community Recreation Development Manager who also meets frequently with the Volunteer Centre Officer within SCVS.					

7.	Involve SCVS in the option appraisal stage of future Commissioning Reviews, when appropriate.	Put forward to colleagues with responsibility for governance of and implementing Reviews and is welcomed where appropriate.	Engage SCVS alongside the Community Action officers input when engaging in the options appraisals whenever the opportunity arises.  Progress as at Oct 17 :	Ongoing	All Commissioning leads across services
<p><b>COMPLETED – YES / Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Progress:</b> An example to date is that there are two internal cross cutting reviews looking at Adult Community Learning and Welfare Benefits. SCVS were involved at the scoping stage and will be involved in the options development together with Citizens Advice. These examples of good practice will be shared with other commissioning reviews going forward.</p>					
8.	Proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with the possibilities that are available for Community Action.	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	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.	6-9months	Tracey McNulty / Commissioning leads

		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.			
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<b>Progress:</b> Awareness has been raised about working together with communities to meet the challenges ahead but also bearing in mind that many communities do not have the capacity to sustain services without support from the Council.					
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)	This is key factor of a successful Community Action project and groups/volunteers and organisations are introduced or encouraged to work together; open up	A register of interest can be made available within parameters of the Community Action guidance; Current information to be monitored and enhanced where	Ongoing	Tracey McNulty

Progress as at Oct 17 :

		facilities to other organisations or develop new ways of working together.	appropriate.  Progress as at Oct 17:		
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<b>Progress:</b> Community Asset Transfer Policy encourages partnerships to ensure sustainability. An example of which is currently been reviewed by Cabinet.					
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.	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	Link this in with our promotional activity and open days; Enhanced what's already in place in partnership with third sector.	Ongoing	Tracey McNulty

			Progress as at Oct 17:		
<b>COMPLETED – YES</b>					
<b>Progress:</b> Model Constitutions, Licence and Lease for use by community groups is included with the Information packs previously mentioned. Community Development Officers are also able to provide governance support and guidance to voluntary groups.					

# Community Action

*How can the Council best support residents to run services in their own communities?*



The Building Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel  
City and County of Swansea - Dinas a Sir Abertawe



August 2016



## Why This Matters



### Foreword by Councillor Terry Hennegan (Convener)

The Council is facing significant budget cuts which mean that we need to take a radical look at the way things are done. This includes what services and assets we continue to manage and which we are unable to support. The Council's Sustainable Swansea – Fit for the Future Strategy is about transforming Council services, ensuring the financial viability of the Council, and improving outcomes for residents. This means finding new models of service delivery which are sustainable. Within this aim, Community Action and the relationship between residents and public services has been the focus of our scrutiny inquiry.

I firmly believe that a community can only be sustainable if all its members have an equal opportunity to participate fully in the life of that community.

Community Action is about placing more say and control in the hands of local communities to meet their needs, wants and expectations so they are more self-sufficient. To this end the Council has embarked on a journey to work with the voluntary, community, public and private sector in Swansea and the wider region to promote Community Action, build capacity and develop projects for communities to run services or manage assets.

We understand that the Council is at the beginning of that Community Action journey and we have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in developing the way forward through this report. We are pleased to see the progress made particularly around sports and leisure services. Our report draws and number of conclusions and makes recommendations focused on how the Council can best support residents to run services in their own communities. Many of these have a particular emphasis on communicating and working closely with residents, community groups and our third sector partners.

We need to be better at communicating and working with communities as well as at collaborating with our partners in the third sector to ensure that services continue and are of good quality. We recognise that Swansea Council for Voluntary Service is one of our key strategic partners and has an important role in preparing and supporting community groups and volunteers to take on more responsible roles within our communities.

We would like to thank all those people who have contributed to this inquiry including Councillors, Officers and those from community centres who attended a focus group along with all the survey respondents who took the time to complete our questionnaire.

## **Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations**

How can the Council best support residents to run services in their own communities?

The panel believe this can be done by

1. Raising the profile of volunteers and community groups so that they feel more valued.
2. Ensuring that information and advice for potential applicants is readily available and easy to access.
3. Improving communication around Community Action projects and the Transformation Fund.
4. Supporting groups and volunteers to access learning and development opportunities.
5. Addressing barriers for groups who apply for Community Action projects.
6. Generating interest, commitment and involvement in volunteering.
7. Improving the sustainability of community groups by developing opportunities for networking and sharing of skills.

### **Recommendations for Cabinet**

We recommend to Cabinet that the following recommendations are considered as part of the development of the third sector strategy and that these should be developed in conjunction with the Councils partners in the third sector in particular Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS):

1. Develop a communication plan which should include
  - 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.
2. Investigate the viability of having an annual Lord Mayor's Award for Community Work.

3. Ensure that the Third Sector Strategy includes an updated Compact agreement.
4. Undertake a mapping exercise to understand what advice, guidance and support is out there for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.
5. Conduct a piece of work that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.
6. All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.
7. Involving SCVS in the option appraisal stage of future Commissioning Reviews, when appropriate.
8. Proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with the possibilities that are available for Community Action.
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)
10. Develop peer to peer networks and mentoring programmes to help share expertise and support across community groups particularly around assisting new groups with their longer term sustainability.

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# 1 WHY WE PRODUCED THIS REPORT

## Overview

1.1.1 This report focusses on the following question:

***How can the Council best support residents to run services in their own communities?***

## Selecting the topic

1.1.2 The Inquiry into Building Sustainable Communities was proposed by the Annual Scrutiny Work Planning Conference in May 2015 and was subsequently included in the scrutiny work programme by the Scrutiny Programme Committee.

1.1.3 This topic was chosen because:

- We need to build and support sustainable communities because this will result in better outcomes for people and reduce the cost of services
- Current models of service delivery are unsustainable and do not always provide the best outcomes for people
- Transformation of services is vital to meet the challenges of the future and this is made more urgent by the significant budget cuts we are facing.

The panel agreed to investigate the following aspects:

***What does the Community Action strand mean in practice?*** What is the Community Action Strand and how does it help to Build Sustainable Communities?

***What is the level of support?*** What level of support is provided?

***How will transition work?*** How will the transition of services from the Council to communities actually work in practice and are the processes effective?

***What finances are available?*** How will the transition and support be financed?

***How are we working across the Council and other organisations?*** How do we/will we work across the Council and with others to deliver the Community Action schemes?

***What are the views of Communities?*** How are we working with local communities to develop this strand?

***Impact so far?*** What has been the impact of Community Action schemes to date?

***What does Good Practice look like?*** Look at successful and unsuccessful Community Action schemes and good practice here and elsewhere

***How can Sustainability be ensured?*** How do we/will we ensure continuity of the service provision?

## The context of the inquiry

1.1.4 Community Action is about recognising that the Council needs let go of some of their responsibilities and devolve them to those local communities who want to take ownership of certain services.

1.1.5 The Council needs to build and support sustainable communities because it will result in better outcomes for people and reduce the cost of services. Current models of service delivery are unsustainable and are not always providing the best outcomes for people. Community Action is specific to delivering the Sustainable Swansea work for new models of delivery, as a means of sustaining present services despite financial reductions. Community Action relates specifically to current services the Council may no longer be able to provide.

### ***Intended contribution***

1.1.6 As a panel we believe that we can make a valuable contribution to this topic. We recognise that, while there are no easy answers, success will only come from a conversation that everyone is able to contribute to. It is in this spirit that our conclusions and recommendations are offered.

1.1.7 Specifically this report aims to contribute to this vital debate by:

- Drawing together some general principles for the development of Community Action and in building sustainable communities
- Offering proposals for improvement
- Providing a councillor perspective
- Pointing to good practice examples
- Sharing the views of different people involved

1.1.8 We are also happy to recognise the limitations of the inquiry. Given the complexity of the topic and the time that we had this report provides a broad view.

1.1.9 Finally, many of our conclusions are in line with the Council's current direction of travel and these are offered in order to provide reassurance. Others may be either additional or contrary to what has already been agreed. These are intended to offer challenge and to stimulate debate. Where we have made recommendations these are intended to help improve the service.

### ***Use of key terms***

1.1.10 There have been a number technical terms and acronyms used when looking at this subject. In the report we have tried to write for the layperson and have avoided acronyms whenever possible. There are, however, a few terms that we use throughout the report that should be clarified from the outset.

- *Community Action*: Council letting go of some of their responsibilities and offering them to those local communities who want to take on ownership of certain services.
- *Community Transformation Fund*: a fund available to community groups to help develop proposals to run Council services locally and/or to transfer community assets.
- *Commissioning Review*: reviewing the options for future service delivery
- *Community Asset Transfer*: when a public sector body, usually a Local Authority, passes on the management and/or ownership of a facility to a community group.

## 2 EVIDENCE

### ***Evidence collected***

- 2.1.1 Evidence was collected between January and June 2016. The evidence gathering activities undertaken included:
- a. Overview of Community Action
  - b. Survey of public, councillors, community councillors and other organisations
  - c. Overview of Transformation Fund
  - d. Discussion with Head of Legal and Democratic Services
  - e. Session with representatives of Community Centres in Swansea
  - f. Two sessions with different people working within communities including SCVS, Communities First, Housing Tenancy, Community Connectors
  - g. Session with Cabinet Member and Head of Service/lead for the Building Sustainable Communities Corporate Objective.
  - h. The revised structure and delivery model for Communities First
  - i. How Community Action fits with the reducing poverty agenda
  - j. Meeting with Swansea Council for Voluntary Service
  - k. Desk based research giving good practice examples
- 2.1.2 For full details of the evidence gathered including details of all of the findings from each session please see the evidence pack for this inquiry. This can be downloaded at [www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications](http://www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutinypublications)

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

This report considers how the Council can best support residents to run services in their own communities. Each of these conclusions, therefore, is a suggestion about how the Council's Cabinet might approach this problem. Specific proposals are identified throughout and listed separately in the recommendations section that follows.

We recognise that the many organisations that run groups and assets across Swansea are independent from Council control. There are, however, a number of ways that Cabinet can influence the work of these voluntary bodies such as through information, advice and training.

We believe that the Council can best support resident to run services in their own communities by:

#### **3.1 *Raising the profile of volunteers and community groups so that they feel more valued***

3.1.1 There was a consistent message from our evidence gathering that many community volunteers and community groups do not feel valued either by their communities or by the Council.

3.1.2 The inquiry consultation included a survey of community groups, charities, councillors and community councils, along with a focus group with Community Centre representatives. It told us that some feel it is difficult for volunteers to cope with all of the things that they are being asked to do and that new responsibilities are being placed on them all of the time. Some of those consulted did say, particularly in the context of increased responsibilities in recent years, *why would anyone want to do it?*

3.1.3 Community Centre representatives, at a focus group with panel members, were asked about how we can improve the numbers of people volunteering. They said some of the ways to do this is by:

- Annual showcasing of good work
- Media stories and raising profile of work of volunteers
- Improving appreciation of what volunteers do, make those volunteering feel valued by the Council and local communities
- Recognition is important and goes a long way to motivating people

3.1.4 The Chief Executive for Swansea Council for Voluntary Service said that *the Council must show a strategic lead and that it values its third sector.*

3.1.5 We believe that recognition for the work of volunteers is important not just because this is the right thing to do but also because it provides encouragement and it lets them know that they have the support and backing of the Council and the wider community.

3.1.6 For this reason alone we felt that we should be publicly praising the work of volunteers and the vital difference they make to their communities. As a panel



we certainly want to record our thanks and admiration to community groups and volunteers who are working hard in our communities.

- 3.1.7 We will propose that Cabinet considers what extra steps might be taken to recognise the good work being done by volunteers and community groups. This might be through a media campaign or an award scheme of some kind. We recognise that this does not necessarily have to be done by the Council but rather by SCVS who are working with volunteers and community groups on a daily basis.

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We therefore recommend to Cabinet that:

- R1 A communication plan is developed that will include:
- a. Undertaking a campaign to promote the role of volunteers including celebrating and valuing the role and highlighting the benefits of volunteering;
  - b. Publicising and promotion of successful Community Action projects more widely using individual success stories
- R2 We will also ask Cabinet to look at the viability of recognising the work of volunteers by having an annual Lord Mayors Award for community work.
- 

### **3.2 *Ensuring that information and advice for potential applicants is readily available and easy to access***

- 3.2.1 Communities and applicants are not always clear at the outset of an application what they want and what they can offer in relation to Community Action. It is essential that they are fully advised at this point, that clear information is available and easily accessed.
- 3.2.2 We identified that potential and current volunteers and community groups find information on community action and volunteering from a number of places, including from the Councils website and SCVS. We felt that it would be beneficial to have all the information available in one place even if the services provided are across different organisations.
- 3.2.3 We consider it essential to have a clear picture of what training, advice and guidance is out there for volunteers and community groups, including who provides what, recognising that a large number of groups exist that may not have contact with the Council or our partners but provide vital support in communities. We believe that the better the information we have the better the reach into communities will be. We would therefore like to see a mapping exercise carried out across the whole sector in Swansea to identify what community groups and services exist (we recognise that this can only be a snapshot but feel it would be beneficial when communicating and developing Community Action projects moving forward).
- 3.2.4 We are pleased that a protocol for Community Asset Transfer has been written and believe it will be extremely useful for both councillors and their communities. We found the Community Action and Transformation Fund

process to be complex and agree they should be simplified wherever possible especially in relation to smaller applications.

- 3.2.5 We would like to see a piece of work conducted that properly considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from a 'user perspective'. This would help the Council and our partners to understand the issues from the applicant's viewpoint and enable processes to be put in place that reflect their needs rather than imposing what the Council thinks they might need when using the Community Action process.
- 3.2.6 Finance, management, organisational skills and communication are seen as key by survey respondents when asked *what would help run and sustain community groups*. We therefore feel that information, advice and training on these areas need to be easily understood and readily available.

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We therefore recommend that:

- R3 Ensure that the Third Sector Strategy includes an up dated Compact agreement.
- R4 A mapping exercise is undertaken to help us understand what guidance and support is out there for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.
- R5 A piece of work is conducted that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.
- R6 All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.
- 

### **3.3 *Improving communication around Community Action projects and the Transformation Fund***

- 3.3.1 A popular response in the survey when respondents were asked about *how people can be helped to get involved in running a service or asset* was overwhelming 'publicity' letting people know what is going on and how they can get involved.
- 3.3.2 Survey respondents said the following when asked how the Council could help them to promote, increase and sustain services in their community work
- With the ward councillors and any current residents groups, work closely with the media. Listen to residents and take their concerns seriously.
  - Direct mailing, discussion forum, ongoing training and mentoring facilities
  - Hold open days, highlight where good things are happening
  - Education, information, training support.
  - Financial management guidance
  - Have a community hub
  - Marketing on the Council's website and community new letters
  - Advertise widely and use the Council's experience and contacts
  - Be clear and consistent about what the Council 'can' and 'cannot do'. Be much better at listening to communities and ward councillors
  - Partnership, events and social media

- 3.3.3 SCVS said that they are aware of asset transfer and the Transformation fund but have not been involved in it. We recognise that they do not need to be involved in the actual asset transfer process but it is important that they are kept informed and are linked to what is happening in order to help identify possible applicants, train and develop those making applications as well as helping to support and advise on issues like funding and longer term sustainability.
- 3.3.4 An equally important aspect is the involvement and inclusion of local ward Councillors in the process of Community Action especially when looking to communicate and reach out to communities. Councillors are in a good position to assist both community groups and the Council having a key role in signposting potential applicants.

*'Important to be on the ground and developing what is needed inside communities, huge benefits to groups developing in the community and keeping it local. People in the community know what they want and what they need day to day.'*  
**Local Area Co-ordinator**

- 3.3.5 Front line staff working in communities (for example Communities First, Local Area Co-ordinators, Tenant Support Officers) should be informed of and understand Community Action so that they can signpost people as well as being able to inform individuals of what might be happening in their communities if they are asked.
- 3.3.6 We also highlighted the role of community councils in Community Action. They are already involved in many Community Action projects and may be in a good position to take forward further possibilities.

*'Following the asset transfer of Graig Y Coed, the Community Council will run all the services in the ward. This including recreation grounds, tennis courts, bowls pavilion, football field and playgrounds. All these facilities are provided for individual and clubs within the area and the Community Council works in partnership in order to ensure as many people can enjoy sport and participate in activities.'*

*'Our services at Ty Croeso have won an award for service to the community from the Community Council. Although none of our activities are large, they receive strong praise from those who come: Swansea Foodbank, Welsh Learners Group, book club, bereavement support group.'*

*'De La Beche Association who have raised funding to refurbish Uplands market'*

*'COBRA Bonymaen, Community House run by the community for the community: Credit Union, breakfast club, teenage club, over 50's and advice service.'*

*'If the Council wishes to transfer assets to groups within communities it must ensure that there are sufficient funds available to encourage interested parties and furthermore it should ensure that the transfer is done effectively and efficiently at no cost to the recipients.'*  
**Survey respondents**

- 3.3.7 Evidence suggests that communication is central to improving the understanding and reach of Community Action. We would like to see a

communication plan for all aspects of Community Action to include not only how we communicate with community groups and our partners like SCVS, but also internally across the Council.

- 3.3.8 There must be a co-ordinated approach to developing Community Action and its projects and this includes connecting more closely across Council departments especially those who are currently working with potential assets or services that may be considered for Community Action. One important way of doing this will be through the Council's Commissioning Reviews (each part of the Council will carry out a Commissioning Review over coming years and will identify potential areas for Community Action). Communicating these potential opportunities for Community Action out to communities and groups will be the vital next step. It will be important at this point to work with our partners, Councillors and existing networks to reach out to local people and groups. Whether this is SCVS, Council services or initiatives like Communities First; using all the avenues open to us to get the message out.
- 3.3.9 The next important step must then be how we support and assist applicants to make an application. This should include assessing their capacity to apply; given that they are often lay people who may not have detailed knowledge of what is involved in and the responsibilities of managing an asset or service. We need to help them assess their own capacity to take on an asset or service; identifying what knowledge or training gaps they may have and help them to address these.
- 3.3.10 We recognise the important role that SCVS has in developing and building capacity in communities and in communities groups through their different roles including training and development, advice on funding and guidance around setting up and sustaining a group. They also have a key role in developing the volunteering strategies in Swansea. SCVS said that they find some things that are done by community organisations are duplicated by the Council, particularly when organisations are funded to do things on its behalf, for example, the Council developing volunteering activities whilst funding SCVS to do the same.
- 3.3.11 The Council must work more closely with SCVS to ensure that both organisations are using all the resources available and to ensure effort is not being duplicated unnecessarily. The Council must use SCVS and their expertise and communication networks to get the message out to communities around Community Action projects and the Transformation Fund.
- 3.3.12 Community Action possibilities will be an important outcome of many of the Councils Commissioning Reviews where areas will be identified for potential asset and service transfer. We felt that it would be useful for SCVS to be involved in the Commissioning Reviews at the 'options appraisal stage'. Where they can give their experience on the potential for those asset transfer possibilities and help reach out and prepare community groups for these potential Community Action projects.
- 3.3.13 Representatives from Community Centres expressed their concerns about some aspects of Community Action and volunteering to us at a focus group. Particularly communities understanding that services are not all run by the

Council but some by volunteers. They felt that many people have an expectation that the Council run most services and that this will be a barrier which needs to be overcome before communities can understand they may need to take on some services or assets or lose them.

*'Fear factor puts people off especially new volunteers. Taking the fear away so people feel confident and able to take on services, this includes providing back-up and support, will be vital to encouraging people to take on services and community assets.'*  
**Community Centre representative**

3.3.15 Community Centre representatives also felt that in some cases asset transfer has been seen as a threat rather than an opportunity. Some worry that their services will be taken over by someone else and then others are concerned about the level of service and the commitment provided if the Council are not involved. We would like to see better communication about what Community Action is and how it will affect those communities.

*'Community centre volunteers give up their time for the benefit of the community but they also need support, they said they do not want to go it alone but wish to continue to be part of a bigger network with back up and support from the Council. They felt other Community Action applicants may feel this way.'*  
**Community Centre volunteer**

3.3.16 We would like to see successful applications publicised and celebrated and one way to do this is by using individual case stories. This will help to make it 'real' in communities who can then connect and understand what is involved in the process of Community Action and what a positive outcome can mean.

*'Communities are beginning to realise that opportunities are there but we need to build on this with stronger communication.'* **Cllr Mark Child, Cabinet Member**

3.3.17 We were keen to see the 'Compact Agreement' updated as part of the process of developing the new Third Sector Strategy. We recognise the importance of an agreement being in place for co-operation between our third sector partner SCVS, Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board and the Council but also feel that this could potentially be extended further now that other organisations like community councils are running many of our services. This is only likely to increase given the current emphasis on Community Action and Asset Transfer.

3.3.18 Interestingly, results of our survey told us that 85% of the respondents understood the term Community Action and 42% had heard of the Transformation Fund, with 17% making an application to the fund. This indicates to us that the message is starting to get out for Community Action but there is less of an understanding of the role of the Transformation Fund.

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We will therefore recommend that

R4 A communication plan is developed that will include:

- c) Being clear about what assets and services are available for Community Action and communicating these proactively to communities and local councillors;

- d) Hold an annual open day or fayre designed to improve networking and sharing of information. This should include information and opportunities for Community Action.
- R7 SCVS is involved in the options appraisal stage of the Councils commissioning reviews when possible assets/services are identified for Community Action.
- 

### **3.4 Supporting groups and volunteers to access learning and development opportunities**

- 3.4.1 It is important to raise capacity in communities, to enable and encourage the development of skills and confidence to volunteer and therefore increasing our communities' potential to be involved in projects like Community Action.
- 3.4.2 We believe that, in order to be effective, volunteers involved in taking on an asset or service need to be trained, especially those who are responsible for managing it.

There are number of essential skills that were identified by the survey respondents, some of these include:

- financial management and applying for funding
  - advertising and promoting service
  - business management skills
  - how to establish a community group
  - organisational and people skills
  - There were also a number of practical training needs highlighted including for example: health and safety, building management, digital skills and child safety.
- 3.4.3 It was also highlighted as part of the survey that it is not only the practical skills but certain personal attributes that are needed when being involved in the running of a service or asset. These include for example: listening and negotiation skills, empathy and compassion, patience and enthusiasm.
- 3.4.4 It is important that community groups have a business plan and that their income and expenditure is realistic. They must demonstrate they are a sound organisation that is able to take on and sustain a service and or asset in the longer term. Training and support in the aspects needed to manage an asset and run the service need to be available and easy to access.
- 3.4.5 The idea of mixed economy applications was raised (different organisations working together to make one application) and we were interested in the possibility of working with third sector partners to enable a more proactive approach to encourage this. The Director of SCVS said that there may need to be more mixed economy applications as smaller groups may not be able to take on an asset or service themselves fully but if they do it in combination with others it becomes more feasible
- 3.4.6 We discussed whether we need to be more proactive in relation to Community Action more generally and felt that the Council could be more proactive in

targeting or approaching organisations who might be interested (with assistance from our third sector partner). Approaches could be made by asking questions like: Have you thought of this? Your organisation may be in a good position to consider this? Have you thought about doing this in conjunction with another organisation?

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We will therefore recommend that

R8 We proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with those possibilities that are available for Community Action;

R9 Encourage and support mixed economy applications (more than one organisation working together to make application for viable)

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### **3.5 Addressing barriers for groups who apply for Community Action projects**

3.5.1 Some of the barriers and challenges experienced by communities when considering developing Community Action projects were identified in the our survey including:

- Lack of willingness to engage in active volunteering
- Belief that the Council are solely responsible
- General apathy and lack of local commitment
- Many community centres are run by aging volunteers and are struggling to survive due to the lack of younger people coming forward
- Residents often have little spare time to develop Community Action projects
- Transient student population in some areas so little commitment to community activity
- A parent child relationship between community and the Council
- Getting people who have the time, knowledge, capacity and commitment to run a service
- Finance is always going to be one of the major concerns, continually looking for funding, grants and sponsorship
- Finding people willing to take on the responsibility and who have the capability to develop the service
- Tackling the anxieties of local communities when taking on extra responsibilities
- Lack of will, community spirit, money, facilities and volunteers to take on what the Council wants to offload.
- Engagement and confidence of communities to get involved.

3.5.2 When asked in the survey *how the Council could help tackle the barriers faced*. Survey respondents said this can be done through training, advice, support particularly around legal, financial, health and safety, and promotion (particularly raising awareness, marketing, media).

3.5.3 We undertook a desk based research exercise where we looked at a series of good practice examples including community run services, social enterprise and community interest companies including:

The Muni Journey (Rhondda Cynon Taf)

Abercynon Paddling Pool (Rhondda Cynon Taf)  
Cordale Housing Association (Scotland)  
Community Volunteering in Alness, Ross-shire (Scotland)  
Explore York Libraries and Archives  
Harwich Connexions  
Hammersmith and Fulham Membership Circle Social Enterprise

We concluded following this exercise that:

- Grants and funding have been crucial to all of the case studies mentioned in this report
- Partnership working is important to maintaining services. You can't do everything by yourself
- Volunteers are at the heart of running community services. Without them many of the examples outlined would not have got off the ground
- Building and maintaining relationships is integral when working together within a community/organisation to run a service
- All those involved in running the service need to have a shared vision/ aim
- Many of the authorities mentioned in this report have some kind of Community Action plan which empowers and supports communities and organisation and gives relevant information
- There is a lot of work involved in taking over a community service

3.5.4 We found that clear information needs to be available on what assets and services are available for transfer through Community Action. Members felt that *'we need to think about what we want from communities and then make that clear to them'*. A list of those assets and services available should be publicised clearly to communities, once they are identified as available for transfer rather than just a large list made available of all assets the Council owns (experienced by some panel members). Groups can then themselves explore and consider implications and the viability for them from what is available.

3.5.5 The Head of Poverty and Prevention said that *Community Action must be collective action across the whole Council*. We agreed with this and are pleased to see departments working together more closely in relation commissioning reviews and this cross department working should be used as an example for breaking down departmental silos. We did feel that working practices in many areas of the council still indicate that more improvement is needed to ensure cross departmental working and a seamless service to the public.

3.5.6 We would like to see the asset transfer process and applying for the Transformation Fund to be simplified; making it easier to access and understand. Council processes can be long and unwieldy; we need to change that culture being quicker and more responsive. We need to be less process heavy especially for smaller applications. We must do everything in our power to make the asset transfer process as straightforward and as smooth a process as possible.



3.5.7 We recognise that we are at the beginning of the Community Action journey and feel that the Council has made a positive start although we believe there does need to be more of a proactive push to move things forward.

3.5.8 Finance and access to sustainable funding was highlighted as a barrier. We recognise the importance role of SCVS in advising and assisting groups to apply for funding and in giving advice on sustainable funding sources.

### **3.6 *Generating interest, commitment and involvement in volunteering***

3.6.1 The main challenge or barrier to developing Community Action identified by survey respondents was a lack of volunteers and interest from the community including lack of longer term commitment. This issue also came through strongly in the evidence gathering; particularly the difficulty in the recruitment of volunteers; especially finding people who are willing to take on the responsibilities for running a service. Many people are willing to assist in a limited capacity but do not have the time or ability, for whatever reason, to commit to taking on the full responsibility of managing a service or asset.

*'Need to have a core of people who have dedication and commitment to the centre or service in the longer term to ensure sustainability.'*

*'Many people are willing to be involved in the short term to run and be involved in groups but do not want or are unable to commit in longer term.'*

*'Often people do not want the full responsibility of taking on all that is involved in managing an asset/running a centre.'*

*'Time is a key element and barrier to taking on services, people have busy lives and do not or cannot commit enough time to be that involved.'*

*'Many of those running services/centres are elderly and as they are no longer able to do it there is no one coming up behind to take on/sustain these services.'*

*'Taking the fear away so people feel confident and able to take on services, including providing back-up and support will be vital to encouraging people to take on services.'*

**Community Centre representatives**

3.6.2 We reviewed a question that had been posed by the Council in Swansea Voices earlier this year which asked:

*Swansea Council is considering introducing a new initiative whereby local residents will be able to manage facilities and services on a voluntary basis.*

Should this initiative be introduced in your local area, would you consider volunteering to help run the following services?

- Around half of respondents (51%) would not consider volunteering for any of these services.
- Around a third of respondents (32%) said that they would consider volunteering to help run the local library.
- Around a fifth of respondents would consider volunteering to help run the local community centre (22%) and the local park (17%).
- However less than 1 in 10 respondents would consider running local sports pitches (7%) or a local playground (6%).

- Respondents were asked if they had any other comments or suggestions relating to Community Action. Comments mainly related to a disagreement with the use of volunteers/ volunteers shouldn't replace paid staff, respondents who are unable/have no time to participate and comments that Council Tax should pay for these services.

3.6.3 Concern was raised about the longer term sustainability of services when many of the people currently in these positions are from the older generation and that no one is 'coming up behind' to take on those roles. We recognise the role of SCVS in building capacity and interest in communities as helping to address the need for ongoing succession planning. Succession planning can be a major problem for third sector organisations.

- *Community leadership is vital and needs to be embedded in local culture, not least amongst young people*
- *The next generation must be able to keep things going when pioneers start to run out of steam*
- *You have to build practical partnerships with other organisations – you cannot doing all on your own*

**Good practice example: Cordale Housing Association**

3.6.4 There is also a huge barrier around engaging people to become involved in community activity. It is vital to develop interest, the capacity and commitment in communities to take on important community roles. We understand that the Council does recognise the importance of this and do fund SCVS by approximately £100,000 (£50,000 core funding, £40,000 for community group development and £10,000 small group development).

*'There are many people who want to get involved in their community, but don't know how. More promotion would be good including advertising and also linking in with local councillors who can help in the campaign to enlist volunteers.'*

**Survey respondent**

3.6.5 The engagement of young people in community volunteering is seen as essential to the sustainability of services in the future. It was recognised that in order to engage young people into volunteering some things may have to do be done differently including

- considering the times and hours in which young people are involved, including for example;
- ensuring they are reimbursed for any expenses incurred for i.e. travel
- look at how to we advertise opportunities to young people,
- tailoring our medium of communication and language
- making opportunities interesting and having possibility of future benefit to young people (experience gained for future employment etc.)

3.6.6 The Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Healthy City Cllr Mark Child said that one influence on this agenda is the Wellbeing and Future Generations Act. This puts a clear focus on increasing independence and recognising the individuality of communities instead of a one size fits all approach. Communities are

therefore more able to do what suits them. We need to empower communities helping to reduce demand on Council services.

3.6.7 The Survey also asked *how the Council can help to tackle barriers and challenges to communities taking on Community Action projects*. Survey respondents said:

- Ongoing support from Council until able to go it alone
- Put on some training and maybe assign a mentor to new groups. Have a link person available to help in the future should this be needed to develop new ideas, sustain existing initiatives and ensure succession planning of current initiatives.
- More publicity around Community Action. The community needs to stand up support services or lose them.
- Enhance working relationships with the Council and have joined up activities
- Raise awareness of what's available in an area
- Finding out what matters to the community rather than assuming or telling the community what it is important
- The barriers exist because residents feel that there is nothing to gain by being responsible for something, they fear that it would backfire and end up being sued for something that they would not have any control over.

3.6.8 It is important that we reach out more to communities to encourage interest in Community Action projects and we believe this can be done by using networks already in existence; by *piggybacking* on existing community relationships in partnership with SCVS.

3.6.9 Time is a key element and a barrier to some in becoming involved in taking on an asset or service. It was recognised that people have busy lives and find it hard to commit enough to be that involved. People have many demands on their time. Many survey respondents highlighted their concerns around the increased responsibilities that are involved in taking on an asset.

### **3.7 *Improving sustainability of community groups by developing networking and sharing of skills***

3.7.1 We were informed that the Transformation Fund has been created to support the delivery of the aims of the Community Action in particular funding being aimed at developing proposals to run Council services locally and/or transfer of community assets.

3.7.2 We looked at a summary of the applications that have been made to the Transformation Fund, which gave us an understanding of the different types of applications being made, particularly those that are suitable and those that are not. We found quite a number of the applications were not suitable and had been refused because for example savings were not apparent or the application did not meet the criteria. We believe that this indicates that more advice, information and support are needed at the pre-application stage.

3.7.3 One issue that arose from this discussion was how important it is for people who are looking to set up a new group or who may be considering making an

application to take over an asset to be able to access the knowledge and experience of others who have been through the process.

3.7.4 We were pleased to hear from the Cabinet Member Cllr Mark Child that more and more groups are recognising the benefits of doing things more collaboratively, pooling and sharing expertise for example, Friends of Parks.

3.7.5 Friends of Parks are a good example of groups working together. Friends groups come together on a regular basis to share experience. There is also a good relationship between Friends of Parks and the Council's Parks department. Although we did recognise that most parks are still managed by Council and they enhance the work of parks rather than managing them.

*It is about linking people across the community rather than linking to the statutory service. It's about self-empowerment and feeling of worth. I think there is a vast amount of untapped ability in communities of all types, and it is not related to wealth or any other factor. There is also a huge level of satisfaction to be gained from providing a service, a kindness to another.*

**Survey respondent**

3.7.6 Sharing information across groups would also be of benefit to all groups and services in the third sector especially when looking to sustain their services. Being able to contact someone who has the experience of aspects of running a group and or in maintaining an asset will help others to be more resilient in the longer term. This may include developing networking opportunities like for example peer to peer support programmes, mentoring, e-sharing across organisations.

3.7.7 We need to consider encouraging more mixed economy applications from community groups and others including community councils, charities and private sector. Some groups or organisations may not feel confident or able to apply themselves but would be interested as part of a wider application. Developing networks across organisations would help to encourage more shared applications.

3.7.8 We recognise that there is a wealth of skills and experience in many of the established groups in Swansea which could be tapped. Particularly those skills needed to run and sustain a community group. We felt that as community groups grow in experience it is important for them to share their good practice especially with those who are starting out.

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We will therefore recommend that

R10 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.

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## 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel commends Cabinet to consider all issues and ideas raised by this inquiry and, in particular, the recommendations set out below. The panel recognises that the Council

- (a) will need to ensure that any subsequent actions are legal and meet the requirements of any relevant legislation;
- (b) has a responsibility to make the best use of limited resources and that any additional costs will need to be considered carefully as part of the annual budget setting process.

The panel has kept these principles in mind in the course of its investigations.

### **Recommendations for Cabinet:**

It is recommended to Cabinet that the following recommendations are considered as part of the development of the third sector strategy and that these should be developed in conjunction with the Council's partners in the third sector in particular Swansea Council for Voluntary Service (SCVS):

- 4.1.1 Develop a communication plan which should include
  - 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.
- 4.1.2 Investigate the viability of having an annual Lord Mayor's Award for Community Work.
- 4.1.3 Ensure that the Third Sector Strategy includes an updated Compact agreement.
- 4.1.4 Undertake a mapping exercise to understand what advice, guidance and support is out there for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.
- 4.1.5 Conduct a piece of work that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.
- 4.1.6 All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.

- 4.1.7 Involve SCVS in the option appraisal stage of future Commissioning Reviews, when appropriate.
- 4.1.8 Proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with the possibilities that are available for Community Action.
- 4.1.9 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)
- 4.1.10 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.

## 5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The panel would like to record its thanks to the following people who came and gave evidence to us:

- Swansea Council for Voluntary Services
- Community Centre representatives
- Community Connectors and Local Area Co-ordinators
- Staff from Communities First
- Community Buildings Development Manager
- Housing Tenancy Support
- Head of Poverty and Prevention
- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
- Cabinet Member for Wellbeing and Health City
- Head of Adult Services
- Head of Corporate Property Services
- Head of Culture and Tourism

We would also like to thank all the people that contributed to our Community Action survey.

## 6 ABOUT THE INQUIRY PANEL

The **Building Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Inquiry Panel** is a team of Councillors who are not members of the Cabinet. Their role is to examine a strategic issue of concern and to make recommendations about how policies and services can be improved.

### **Members of the panel, Councillors**

Terry Hennegan (Convener)  
June Burtonshaw  
David Cole  
Chris Holley  
Wendy Fitzgerald  
Keith Marsh  
Lynda James  
Anthony Colburn  
David Lewis  
Gloria Tanner  
Mike White  
Phil Downing

The inquiry was supported by Michelle Roberts from the Council's Scrutiny Unit.

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Front page photo credit: Picture Credit: Flicker Richard McKeever Community Action banner

## 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

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

<b>Recommendation 1</b>
<p>Develop a communication plan which should include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Undertaking a campaign to promote the role of volunteers including celebrating and valuing the role and highlighting benefits of volunteering.</li><li>b) Publicity and promotion of successful Community Action projects more widely, using for example individual success stories.</li><li>c) Being clear about what assets and services are available for Community Action and communicating these proactively to communities and local councillors.</li><li>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.</li></ul>
<p><b>Action already being undertaken:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>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.</li><li>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;</li><li>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.</li><li>d) We hold regular events and community days for a wide network of groups including presentations on Community Action to Community Forums and Councils.</li></ul>
<p><b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b></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><b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> Volunteers are key to many</p>

organisations across Swansea, and where relevant to the Authority we take action to encourage, assist and praise volunteers.
Recommendation is <b>AGREED – as already underway. We will ensure greater visibility.</b>
<b>Recommendation 2</b>
Investigate the viability of having an annual Lord Mayor’s Award for Community Work.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Investigate the inclusion of an overall award for Community Work with the Lord Mayor’s office.
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> Covered above
Recommendation is <b>AGREED</b>
<b>Recommendation 3</b>
Ensure that the Third Sector Strategy includes an updated Compact Agreement.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Maintain the current direction of travel to ensure this is in place by March 2017
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b>
Recommendation is <b>AGREED – already underway</b>
<b>Recommendation 4</b>
Undertake a mapping exercise to understand what advice, guidance and support is out there for community groups and volunteers across Swansea.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Ensure we keep this up to date.
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> With our partners in SCVS we try and understand the needs of community groups and enable them to address the need.
Recommendation is <b>AGREED as already in place.</b>
<b>Recommendation 5</b>
Conduct a piece of work that considers the information needs of Community Action applicants from the user perspective.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Maintain the current resource and processes in place.
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> This included the simplification of the Asset Transfer process.
Recommendation is <b>AGREED as already in place.</b>
<b>Recommendation 6</b>
All information on Community Action, the Transformation Fund, training, advice and guidance for groups and volunteers is available from one place.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Maintain the current resource and processes in place.
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> Covered above.
Recommendation is <b>AGREED as already in place.</b>
<b>Recommendation 7</b>
Involve SCVS in the option appraisal stage of future Commissioning Reviews, when appropriate.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> SCVS engaged in developing options for Community Action within various Commissioning Reviews but perhaps not universally.

<p><b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Engage SCVS alongside the Community Action officers input when engaging in the options appraisals, when appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> SCVS are often an invaluable partner in service provision.</p>
<p>Recommendation is <b>AGREED</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p>
<p>Proactively link community groups, community councils and volunteers with the possibilities that are available for Community Action.</p>
<p><b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> Covered above</p>
<p>Recommendation is <b>AGREED as already in place.</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p>
<p>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)</p>
<p><b>Relevant Policy Commitments:</b></p>
<p><b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> A register of interest can be made available within parameters of the Community Action guidance; Current information to be monitored and enhanced where appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> 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.</p>
<p>Recommendation is <b>AGREED as already in place.</b></p>

<b>Recommendation 10</b>
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.
<b>Action already being undertaken:</b> 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.
<b>New actions following from the recommendation:</b> Link this in with our promotional activity and open days; Enhanced what’s already in place in partnership with third sector.
<b>Cabinet Member Comments:</b> I think the way the Friends of Parks group is developing reflects this approach.
Recommendation is <b>AGREED – as already in place.</b>

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