

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	10 July 2019
Subject:	Community Wellbeing Engagement Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the most recent community engagement work within the community wellbeing team.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the community engagement work undertaken by the Community Wellbeing Team, particularly using Asset Based Community Development and strengths-based working be noted.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 Gloucester City Council adopted strengths-based working and Asset Based Community Development in 2012 with the intention of using this approach to help build stronger communities in our City. ABCD is a philosophy and approach that seeks to identify and mobilise individual and community 'assets', rather than focusing on problems and needs.
- 3.2 ABCD's premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by celebrating existing strengths, responding to challenges and creating local social and economic improvements.
- 3.3 In August 2017, phase one of the Together Gloucester program brought together officers from Environmental Health, Community Safety and Community Engagement to form the Community Wellbeing team. Despite the differences in each of these functions the overall aim of the team is to support people with their wellbeing to make Gloucester a safer, healthier and happier place for all.

3.4 Bringing these previously siloed service areas together has also provided the opportunity for officers to work in a different way and to approach complaints and issues more creatively.

3.5 The below is not an exhaustive list but includes some examples of where officers have worked together to positively problem solve:

3.5.1 **New noise service-** Launched in April 2018, the new noise service incorporates an ABCD approach in resolving issues by encouraging complainants to either go and speak to their neighbour or put a polite letter through their door to try and resolve the issue prior to the involvement of the council. From previous experience, a large proportion of residents are simply unaware that they are causing a nuisance and will try to resolve it when notified.

The change has reduced the number of complaints received and warning letters sent by the council but more importantly the change encouraged neighbours to speak to each other and build a relationship rather than further distance themselves by involving the local authority. This new approach resolves issues more efficiently with less involvement from the council which in turn improves neighbour relations and contributes to creating happier and more resilient communities. It also means that Officers only get involved when they are really needed to deal with complex cases.

From monitoring and measuring the change of the new noise service for effectiveness on dog barking complaints only - the results have shown since the 1st April 2018 to 30th September 2018 the council received 76 dog barking complaints. 33 of those complaints were sent the new noise service and 43 were sent the original noise service (due to safeguarding concerns).

25 of the 33 complaints which were sent the new noise service were a success reducing the dog barking informally without the need for the council to get involved and send warning letters and therefore preventing problems and disputes from occurring or re-occurring.

3.5.2 **Overgrown gardens** amount to 25% of complaints received to the private sector housing team. Following the initial complaint, Officers will contact the resident in question and through that first conversation discover that the resident has come into some form of difficulty and is therefore unable to maintain their garden.

Common reasons for this include –

- Physically incapable due to a recent injury
- Disabilities or sudden deterioration in health resulting in other members of the household acting as carers and therefore unable to maintain the garden either
- Financial difficulties leaving the resident unable to pay a gardening service
- Single parents without support networks, experience in gardening and/or the money to buy equipment.

Community Wellbeing started working with Private Sector Housing and Planning Enforcement in Summer 2018 following a complaint about an overgrown garden in Kingsholm. The Planning Enforcement Officer had concerns about the resident's

wellbeing so asked if additional support and signposting could be provided. A Community Wellbeing Officer met with the resident and discovered that a family friend used to maintain the garden but they had passed away and the resident was not in a position to pay for the upkeep. It was then discovered that the resident was not claiming her state pension and had not done so for the last 10 years. The officer put her in touch with the relevant department and they backdated her claim and she is now able to pay for the work to be done.

This experience has prompted officers to consider how we can deal with these complaints more effectively. The traditional method of serving notice does not always resolve the problem and often results in –

- the garden being cleared once without any plans for future maintenance
- the resident unable to pay the fine due to financial difficulties
- further disruptions between neighbours
- financial and resourceful loss to the council if the resident fails to pay the fine and have the garden cleared as the council has to arrange for the work to be completed and recharge the costs to the property
- future complaints regarding the same property

Private Sector Housing Officers now work with Community Wellbeing to look at alternative methods when dealing with overgrown gardens such as referring residents to low cost gardening maintenance services. Options include the GEM Project and Podsmead Clearance Team (the grass cutting social enterprise supported by the city council – report to follow in Autumn 2019).

3.6 Community Safety has to follow certain regulatory processes but has incorporated strengths-based working where possible such as:

3.6.1 **Street Aware** was set up to tackle street-based nuisance, this approach brings together partner agencies to work in a co-ordinated way to offer wraparound support to people with complex needs. Linking support and enforcement agencies, Street Aware focusses on the needs of the individual and works with them to achieve change. The key to success is having conversations to increase understanding of individuals situations, engaging with partners and using their skills and strengths and adopting our 'engage, support, enforce' approach.

Street Aware has three key strands with specific focusses: begging, street drinking and youth anti-social behaviour. The Youth ASB strand of street aware is also starting to incorporate community building with young people who use the City centre, to understand how and why they use our city centre spaces and aim to enhance the City's offer for them, by focussing on young people led action.

3.6.2 Using our Street Aware ethos, our approach to **PSPOs** in the City has been pragmatic and our consultation has been focussed on meaningful engagement with partners and residents in order to understand the concerns in our community. We also wanted to recognise where there were already powers to tackle issues, avoid duplication of work and look at how issues could be addressed creatively. Our PSPOs introduced an alcohol-free zone for the City centre and encourage responsible drinking elsewhere, building on the partnership work of NightSafe and

Purple Flag. Once the PSPOs came in to force, initial work focussed on engagement and education rather than immediate enforcement, to ensure we are working effectively with people seen engaging in negative behaviour.

3.7 Strengths based working and community engagement in tackling anti-social behaviour. Again, this list is not exhaustive, but some examples are:

3.7.1 We worked with residents to explore adoption of the **Rose Garden** (London Rd) which had seasonal issues of street drinking and associated anti-social behaviour. We adopted Street Aware in the area to identify the people involved in anti-social behaviour and work with them to change. Alongside this we worked with residents and partners to regenerate the area and design out crime. Currently access to the area is restricted whilst work is underway.

3.7.2 **Echoes #2 Youth Club - Coney Hill**- Complaints were received by the council and police in relation to ASB in Coney Hill, mainly in the form of mopeds racing around the area. Taking a different approach, a group of multi-agency colleagues door knocked in the area and talked to residents about how they feel about the area and what additional positives they would like to see. As a result, several residents set up a new youth club in the old building that used to be used for the youth club years ago. Using an asset on their doorstep and harnessing the energy of residents who were passionate to see change in their area, Echoes#2 has now been up and running for over a year and has around 70 young people on their books. There has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour in the area and an increase in community safety and cohesion.

3.7.3 **Intensive Engagement (IE)** is an approach whereby multi-agency partners work intensively to get to know an area and its residents and work with them to come up with solutions to issues affecting them. IE in Gloucester is being led by the City Council and Police and will focus on Widden, an area which has problems with on-street sex working, street drinking, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. It is hoped that using this approach will echo the success seen in Coney Hill, and help to bring about some sustainable long term solutions to problems that have been occurring repetitively. Oversight of the Intensive Engagement is via the Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership and an oversight group which will guide the work of problem-solving officers. We were pleased to be able to make a saving of £10,000 on consultancy for the IE process by recognising that we have well established strengths-based working and ABCD expertise within the City.

3.7.4 **The Bluelight Group** was set up by Public Health to work intensively with change resistant drinkers within the city; people who are alcohol dependent who have been impacting severely on their own health, the community or blue light services. Individuals who are referred receive assertive outreach and intensive engagement from alcohol support agencies and other agencies as needed. The group is chaired by the City Council, which has enabled a focus on engagement and support to individuals, bringing measures of success to include positive engagement rather

than focussing on traditional reduction in incidents and deficit-based measures. We have been able to make further links with partners to include social prescribing in the Bluelight process.

- 3.8 Community Wellbeing continue to work closely with the **Community Builders** in the city and most recently benefitted from partnering with the Kingsholm Community Builder. Concerns were raised by the Early Help Team (Child Social Care) about a number of families in the Dexter Way and Longhorn Avenue estate following the domestic homicide and repeated incidents of ASB.

Early Help were keen to intervene, but Community Wellbeing were concerned this may impact negatively on the work of the Community Builder. Instead, Officers door knocked with the Community Builder and had conversations with residents on the street about how they feel about where they live, ideas for how they can improve their neighbourhood and suggestions for how they can bring people together.

A few enthusiastic residents came forward and said they would like to hold a regular community drop-in where neighbours could come together and generate ideas. They held 6 sessions at the beginning of 2019 which has led to plans for a community garden, creation of a board games club, a community notice board and activities for the children in and around the area. Connections have also been made between the residents, Kingsholm Primary School and St Oswalds Retirement Village and relationships are being formed.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 4.1 ABCD and strengths-based working is at the core of our approach and has become second nature to Officers working in the engagement side of Community Wellbeing. We are using our own positive experiences of working in this way to guide and support other Officers in the council in order to work differently, in a way that is better for residents and the organisation as a whole.
- 4.2 This way of working helps move the City Council in to a position of enablement; supporting and empowering our residents to do what is best for their communities rather than creating a culture of dependency on agencies. Where a Council service is essential, we are working through processes to reshape them to be more tailored and focussed on positive outcomes for the individual. The benefits of these changes is often not measurable with traditional quantitative data and instead relies on qualitative measures as detailed in this report.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 Strengths based working contributes to healthier neighbourhoods with residents more engaged with where they live and therefore more protective of their local environment. "It works better because people who do it actually care about it, and as a consequence everyone respects the environment," said Jordan, the 17-year-old in charge of coordinating the grass cutting social enterprise in Podsmead.

Jordan also said that this initiative has actively improved the local area, leading to greater social cohesion and a decrease in antisocial behaviour by young people.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 Gloucester City Council could have continued to work in a traditional way in all of the examples mentioned above. However, this would have reduced the opportunity for residents to become more engaged and get involved in issues they feel passionate about. It would also mean that there are cases where we use enforcement options available to us when an underlying cause of a problem is overlooked, meaning a sustainable solution is not found.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 This report is to update Cabinet on the most recent community engagement work within the community wellbeing team.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 Community Wellbeing will be working with residents in Matson and Podsmead to ensure the consultation of the Supplementary Planning Document for the regeneration is carried out in a meaningful way. This will require partnership working with key community organisations in each area who are well established and trusted by local residents. The overall aim being that residents feel listened to and that they can actively shape the plans, so the regeneration happens 'with' them and not 'to' them.

8.2 The Community Wellbeing and City Improvement Teams will be working closely with Active Gloucestershire to deliver Beat the Street 2019 as part of Gloucestershire Moves. Beat the Street is a fun, free 6-week challenge to get the whole community moving. Anyone living, working or going to a school in Gloucester can score points and win prizes by walking, cycling or running from point to point and tapping a registered Beat the Street card or fob on sensors (Beat Boxes) which are placed on lamp posts across Gloucester. Beat the Street was a success in 2018. It ran from Thursday 7 June to Thursday 19 July and saw 74,487 miles covered by 10,156 residents.

8.3 Community Wellbeing will be assisting Planning Policy and KKP (consultants) with community consultation to create a Built Indoor Facilities Strategy. The report due to be compiled by KKP will focus on the current supply and quality of existing built sports facilities, and future needs to provide for the population. The final report is expected in August 2019.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 There are no financial implications as a result of this report as it is an update report covering activities funded through the budget and remit of the Community Wellbeing Team. (Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 None

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 There are no risks associated with this update report.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not relevant for this report as it is giving an overview of work undertaken rather than proposing service changes.

12.2 Considerations are given when undertaking all community engagement to ensure that we do not adversely impact on any group and that we are fostering good relations and promoting advancement of opportunities within the community.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 From a community safety point of view we have found that working with residents, including alleged perpetrators, has led to more creative problem solving and solutions that are more sustainable because they are led by the individual rather than the agency. In cases such as Dexter Way we have found that the appetite from residents is to use their energy towards positive activities and interactions in their community rather than towards securing enforcement against others. These positive activities breed further positive activities, which then push out negative activities in the area.

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 None

Background Documents: None