

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	11 November 2020
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. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update Cabinet on the community engagement work of the Community Wellbeing Team.

2. 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. Background and Key Issues

- 3.1. The Community Wellbeing Team have continued to support Gloucester City Council's approach to strengths-based working and Asset Based Community Development since its adoption in 2012 helping to 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. The challenges faced by the team multiplied rapidly this year as the Covid-19 pandemic opened up entirely new areas of engagement. Officers have been able to use their skills to support and enhance the response to support the residents of the city and approach issues in a creative way, focusing on strengths.
- 3.3. Officers, along with partner agencies, have adopted a shared model of Engage, Support, and Enforce to address more complex issues where they may occur in our City. We believe that where engagement is effective it leads to successful support, and where engagement and support succeed, enforcement is not required. Enforcement is included in this approach for the cases where individuals themselves refuse to engage with community led work, outreach or support and continue to

behave in a way that impacts negatively on others. We will enforce only where we cannot resolve issues through appropriate engagement and support.

- 3.4. The outcomes of community engagement are qualitative. The below is a snapshot of activity and shows the change of our focus from delivering to enabling.

4. Examples of where officers have worked together to positively problem solve:

Community Help Hub

- 4.1. The Hub developed out of the need to broker the support offered within the community and those in need of emergency support during the lockdown. It was supported by a number of staff volunteers from within the City Council and continues to be monitored as we move to return to a 'new normal'.
- 4.2. The team also refers vulnerable people for prioritised grocery delivery services. This is for people who have no other way to get food and who are able to shop online.
- 4.3. The total number of requests for assistance received to date is 877 with the main request types being 'I need help making sure I have enough food and other general supplies to cover a few days' and 'I need help collecting prescriptions', Other requests included support required putting out Bins, and cutting Lawns and one request from a retirement home for linking with street performers to entertain the elderly residents. Some requests have been followed up more than once based on the conversation with the person in need e.g. further assistance with shopping in two weeks.
- 4.4. The requests for food and collection of prescriptions continue to form the majority of requests. There are a few instances that highlight the need for mental health support coming out of conversations and with these cases officers have referred individuals through to Adult Social care and Safeguarding where appropriate.
- 4.5. Example Interactions:
 - 4.5.1. *I was speaking to someone in need of help who used to be a nurse and was forced to retire due to health problems. These same health problems are causing her to have to shield during the current pandemic. While she needs help now, she is used to working in a caring capacity and is not entirely comfortable with receiving help. I recommended she sign herself up as a volunteer on the Help Hub to offer support to others in isolation by being someone to talk to. This took away the guilt aspect of being helped.*
 - 4.5.2. *A Gentleman was referred in as he has had a knee operation so couldn't walk and his benefits had been delayed – called a community volunteer and a food parcel was delivered to the gentleman within 20 minutes of my call.*
 - 4.5.3. *A couple who needed regular supplies of bottled water as well as food shopping was matched to a local volunteer and a food champion. They told us that both volunteers have helped and continue to help. They also told us another good news story- they have been receiving food parcels from the government and have an excess of some items. They called their local pastor to see if there was anyone that could benefit. That morning he had been contacted by a probation*

officer with a client in need so it was arranged for the excess items to go to a man who had just left prison.

Blackbridge Community Sports Hub update

- 4.6. Positive progress is being made with the development of the Blackbridge Community Sports Hub project in Podsmead. The proposed scheme will see the provision of a full-sized Artificial Grass Pitch and natural grass pitches for football, rugby and other sports, as well as a hub building which will feature changing rooms, a dance/exercise studio, health and fitness gym and social and meeting spaces.
- 4.7. Here are some of the highlights from recent months:
- A successful local community consultation event was held in February, where residents were able to learn more about the project and share their views
 - Regular meetings of the Blackbridge Community Land Trust (who are overseeing the development of the project) are taking place, with day to day support from Active Gloucestershire
 - Ongoing talks with prospective user groups, including Tuffley Rovers FC, Quedgeley Wanderers FC, Gloucester All Golds Rugby League Club, Widden and Old Cryptians Rugby Union Clubs, Rugby For Heroes, Crypt School and others
 - An outline Programme of Use and indicative business plan are being developed
 - Close working with Gloucestershire FA and the Football Foundation around an application for funding towards the 3G artificial turf pitch. Consideration being given to seeking additional sources of funding, e.g. Rugby Football League Facilities Fund, charitable trusts, wider community share offer
 - Technical reports (including archaeology and drainage) have been completed and a planning application is being prepared
 - An updated professional cost analysis is about to be commissioned, Discussions with potential operators of the facilities will be held in October
- 4.8. The indicative timeline for the development and delivery of the project is as follows:
- Late Autumn 2020: full planning application
 - January 2021: application to Football Foundation
 - May 2021: tender main contracts
 - Summer 2021: start on site
 - Spring/Summer 2022: opening

S106 Civil Service Ground

- 4.9. We have been working with local Councillors, Kingsholm and Wotton Neighbourhood Partnership and other partners to discuss the s106 funding available for Sports Provision from the Civil Service development. The local community have brought forward ideas around sport and we are supporting discussions with Planning Policy and the City Improvement Team as to how best deliver a grant programme to ensure the best use of this pot of money. We have had discussions about implementing it in a similar way to the Pitch Improvement Grant which is facilitated by the Gloucestershire Playing Field Association. We are keen to involve a partner that can facilitate the scheme, have local knowledge and add value to the scheme.

Open Spaces Strategy Consultation

- 4.10. The City Council have recently updated the Open Spaces Strategy. The strategy sets out the Council's ambitions for Gloucester's Parks and Open Spaces over the next five years and contains a series of objectives for the development of parks and open spaces, giving officers and partner organisations ambitious targets to work towards. It also gives residents a clear understanding of the Council's aspirations in respect of parks and open spaces and explains how residents can get involved in helping to care for their local green spaces.
- 4.11. The Open Spaces Strategy provides evidence for the development of robust, sustainable policies within the City Plan, ensuring the protection of existing open space, and helping to create new, appropriate parks and open spaces. We have worked alongside the City Improvement Team and Planning Policy to deliver the consultation which has recently ended.
- 4.12. We had a number of plans for a world café type event however due to Covid these were unable to take place so we spoke with key partners to gauge what response there would be to an online platform and the general consensus was that an online survey would be the best option given capacity of organisations and community groups and the effects of lockdown. We circulated a survey to all of our key community contacts, organisations, partners and residents and will be able to feed results back in the next few weeks.

Cathedral Quarter

- 4.13. We have been working with the City Growth and Delivery Team on the community engagements aspects of the Heritage Lottery Funding for Westgate Street. The Cathedral Quarter Partnership is led by Gloucester City Council and comprises representatives of the main community and commercial stakeholders within Westgate Street.
- 4.14. As a city, we are committed to Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and the partnership will use the HSHAZ as an opportunity to further apply community-led place-making to deliver regeneration within a heritage context. Feeding directly into the City Centre Commission, it will link with the city-wide work of the Community Building Collective CIC and the Gloucester Culture Trust.
- 4.15. Through community engagement, we will identify local knowledge, skills and strengths as well as the challenges and needs of residents, visitors and businesses. We will use this insight to co-produce an awareness-raising, activity and intervention programme that delivers regeneration, whilst drawing out measures of success to create a sustainable legacy.

5. Stronger Safer Gloucester Partnership

Through the SSGP we have several priority projects:

Gloucester Park

- 5.1. In the autumn of last year a working group was established to focus on improving the perceptions of Gloucester Park and people feeling safe to use it. As a group and having listened to concerns of local people we decided that the Green Flag criteria would be good to base the project work on and ultimately achieve the award.
- 5.2. We involved the Friends of Gloucester Park in the discussions alongside Gloucestershire Police, Victim Support and Community Organisers CIC. We were planning an engagement to speak to local people and users of the Park unfortunately this was cancelled due to lockdown. We are in the process of bringing this group back together.

Intensive Engagement

- 5.3. Gloucestershire Police have been leading on a strengths-based approach to the issues in the Widden area of Barton and Tredworth. An engagement event was held at the Olympus Theatre in February and brought together a small number of people from the local area that are willing to get involved in activities and another event was planned for the Spring to continue those conversations however lockdown has prevented that and we will be discussing with the Police the next steps.

Food Consortium

- 5.4. Gloucester was very quick to respond to the pandemic and introduction of lockdown measures; we saw several community networks form organically alongside existing community groups to support the most vulnerable in our areas.
- 5.5. To support the community efforts the Gloucestershire Community Help Hub was formed for each Gloucestershire district for people to register their need of help, offer of help or concern for a neighbour or business offering help. It quickly became apparent that food poverty was a high priority for many individuals, couples and families whether that was due to furlough, loss of jobs, home schooling or illness. We recognised this and to support the efforts of the local food bank we helped a few local businesses to come together to open a food consortium. This ran for 8 weeks and £28k was spent on 5733 tonnes of food.
- 5.6. We confirmed that requests for support were continuing and we anticipated that they would increase when furloughing reduces/ends, mortgage and loan holiday repayment schemes stop, and children don't return to school during what would have been the school holidays alongside free school meals stopping.
- 5.7. We have seen an increase in people approaching us struggling with their mental health during lockdown and a simple cooked meal or food parcel can make all the difference supporting them with their wellbeing and it gives us an opportunity to

connect with them and signpost them to local agencies to offer further community support.

- 5.8. We have worked with Gloucestershire Gateway Trust and The Club @ Tuffley Park to co-ordinate phase 2 of the Food Consortium and secured £40k from DEFRA to purchase food and delivered a further 8 weeks of food and Holiday Kitchen which was set up to encourage our local families to meet up in safe outdoor community spaces to socialise, share a free hot lunch and pick up some resources to help keep children creative and active.
- 5.9. We worked with 30 partners to ensure the food was distributed to those most in need and offered resources and signposting to provide a wraparound approach. We have now moved onto phase 3 and are looking into how we can support those partners with their ideas to reduce food insecurity.

6. Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) Considerations

- 6.1. 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.

7. Environmental Implications

- 7.1. 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.

8. Alternative Options Considered

- 8.1. 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.

9. Reasons for Recommendations

- 9.1. No recommendations are made in this report, it is for information only.

10. Future Work and Conclusions

- 10.1. 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.

11. Financial Implications

11.1. 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.)

12. Legal Implications

12.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

13. Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

13.1. There are no risks associated with this update report.

14. People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

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

14.2. 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 and inclusion.

15. Community Safety Implications

15.1. 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.

16. Staffing & Trade Union Implications

16.1. None

Background Documents: None