

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

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| 1. | Meeting: | Democratic Renewal Scrutiny Panel |
| 2. | Date: | Thursday 10 th March |
| 3. | Title: | Update on Connecting Communities (2009-2010) and the current 'Golden 7' Project |
| 4. | Directorate: | Policy, Performance & Commissioning |

5. Summary

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update on the Connecting Communities Programme and the 'Golden 7' Project to sustain the work.

6. Recommendations

That the Panel:

1. Receive the update on the Connecting Communities (2009-2010) and the current 'Golden 7' Project.

7. Proposals and details

Connecting Communities (2009-10)

Background

In October 2009, the secretary of state at that time launched 'Connecting Communities'¹, a programme of action to support those communities that feel left out, ignored and alienated from government and from mainstream society. His priority is to counter the threat of extremism by improving community cohesion and investing in communities that are under the most pressure due to the recession. In launching the programme he said:

"We will make it clear that Government is committed to making sure, in every community, in every corner of this country, people know we are on their side. No favours. No privileges. No special interest groups. Just fairness."

The programme focussed on:

- **Leadership** – investment in councillors, other leaders and front-line staff to build the confidence and skills to listen to communities and address problems head on
- **Voice** – giving people the chance to have an honest and open debate about the issues that matter most to them, even if those issues are difficult and uncomfortable, and encouraging community champions to have a say in local decisions
- **Opportunities** – raising awareness of the opportunities available to local people.

Connecting Communities in Rotherham

Rotherham's NI1 and NI4 scores were low against the Place Survey (now discontinued) and therefore had been identified by GOYH (Government Office Yorkshire & Humber) as an area which needed resources and support. The focus was on the neighbourhoods who were suffering particularly sharply from the recession and where residents feel that no one speaks for them or is responding to their needs. The areas that were identified as priority areas for interventions were East Maltby and Dinnington.

East Maltby and Dinnington were selected as the two areas, because they were unlikely to benefit from related initiatives such as Neighbourhood Management Intensive Schemes and they were deprived communities and these were also areas which suffered from high worklessness, high crime and anti social behaviour, low educational attainment and low adult skills. We worked closely with the Area Partnership Managers from Wentworth Valley and Rother Valley South and Rother Fed (Rotherham Federation of Tenants & Residents) to identify interventions and what support we needed.

Maltby Model Village Community Association

The resources from the Connecting Communities added value and pooled together resources to ensure that the community members were equipped with the appropriate skills and knowledge to work together with the partners to develop a Neighbourhood Agreement. An Impact Survey was carried out in October 2009 which has led to identification of priorities which has informed a Maltby Model Village Neighbourhood Agreement which will address issues such as crime, environment, ASB and housing etc. The Connecting Communities programme provided a Local Improvement Advisor to facilitate the

¹ See: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1357214>

development of the Neighbourhood Agreement working with the with members of the Maltby Model Village Community Association, WV Area Assembly and local service providers to ensure they meet the local needs identified. This agreement has been agreed by the Proud Board and was launched and the Agreement was published in a calendar version. Also as part of the connecting communities resources, 12 people from the Maltby Model Village Community Association were trained as community champions to work on the Neighbourhood Agreement and 10 partners in the area have worked with the community champions to develop the Neighbourhood Agreement for the Maltby Model Village.

Work with Birk Holts TARA through Rother Fed

Initially plans were to help Birk Holts TARA organise a multi-cultural event, but instead it was agreed with Rother Fed to do some capacity building work with the Birk Holts TARA as it may have been too ambitious to expect them to organise and deliver a multi-cultural event when more work needed to be done with them before delivering activities to promote cohesion. So the work programme changed and work with Birk Holts TARA included joint Safer Neighbourhood Teams/Youth Service visit with families and support for young people to get involved in supporting the TARA, the community house and activities on the estate including capacity building training with community members.

Connecting Communities in Dinnington

In Dinnington there were intergenerational issues as there was a negative perception of young people in the area and therefore the following projects were developed as a result of Connecting Communities and NI4 TSF (Target Support Fund), as the TSF was designed to complement the Connecting Communities programme.

Tactile/Sensory intergenerational work with Davies Court Residential Home with connecting communities funding involved Dinnington Comprehensive Students in Year 12 (as part of A Level work), to turn memories captured by Dementia residents at the Davies Court Residential Home, to produce tactile sensory art pieces for display around the home and supporting Dinnington Comprehensive Students in Year 10 (undertaking a BTEC Construction Course) to build a sensory garden.

The TSF funded a Dispersal DVD which was produced with young people and showed the impact the dispersal order has had on ASB/Crime. Detached Youth Workers, Area Assembly and the JADE Project (Just Another Dance Event) which is a local project to provide an informal drop in provision and focused music technology and DJ training for young people engaged with young people during the dispersal order period to identify aspirations and choices and to work with them as part of exit strategy to identify possible projects. The DVD focussed initially on why it was required, the triggers/reasons for such radical action etc, and then go through a series of film, captions and music to take people through a journey with support from the JADE Project. The DVD show's footage of the area, will include interviews with detached youth workers, police, and young people who experienced it first hand, with a clear message that it's about community cohesion and working together. Wanted viewers of the DVD to go away thinking about the difficulties young people today face compared to when they were younger; and that young people should not be discriminated against or isolated when communities are making decisions about services or changes in their neighbourhoods.

Connecting Communities Research

The Campaign Company was commissioned to do some further research across Rotherham to look into perceptions of community cohesion. Interviews took place with senior public sector managers, front line customer facing staff, and members of the public across Rotherham. A report has been produced analysing the findings and have been disseminated in a council and partners workshops. Some of the key headlines from the research were:

- The One Town One Community (OTOC) initiative is being recognised by partners and different sections of the community and there is a need to maintain the momentum by rolling OTOC to the outer parts of the Borough.
- Recognise the continued impact of industrial decline and how this could potentially erode cultural and social foundations.
- Current economic climate poses further cohesion challenges and this needs to be managed and lead carefully
- There is a need to communicate positive messages back to the public making more use of community and residents as potential champions to 'spread the positive messages'.
- There is a clear correlation between areas where 'the Council' is active, visible and working well and community satisfaction.
- Opportunities for Elected Members and Parish Councils to be more actively involved in the OTOC need to be explored.
- Many local people do feel positive about their area and we need to build on this.

Golden 7 Project

To sustain the successful Connecting Communities work done in Maltby and Dinnington and meeting the recommendations from the Connecting Communities Research report, Rother Fed working in association with 2010 and RMBC successfully secured a funding bid from HACT (Housing Action Charity Trust) aimed at bringing communities, workers, and service users together. We are very pleased and proud to announce that our project bid has taken us through to the final 12 of this prestigious competition, and we are now in receipt of £5000 to start our project which is called the 'Golden 7' Project. This project was successfully launched on 17th February 2011 by the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Equality and Young People's Issues with 120 people in attendance made up of volunteers, Area Housing Panels, Councillors and relevant service providers.

Golden Seven is a new community involvement project linking Area Housing Panels, Tenants and Residents Associations, tenants, residents and volunteers together with vulnerable groups around Rotherham, getting everyone to work together and learn from one another. The aim is to bring together 7 projects in 7 areas to produce 7 portfolios for each area producing a 7 year sustainable project. Community volunteers are at the heart of this project. Through this project, communities will develop skills and experience around each of the seven categories. These are black and ethnic minority communities, disability, homelessness, young people, young families, community spaces and the elderly. Each Area Housing Panel will be presented with their golden envelope at the Golden Seven Launch Event where the categories each area will be working on during the next year were announced. A residential weekend at Northern College funded by various sources including the TSF has been planned for 25th-27th March to train the volunteers in project development to enable them to effectively develop projects in their area.

8. Finance

The Housing Action Charity has provided some initial funding to get the Golden Seven started. None of the monies Area Housing Panels have for environmental improvements to their own local communities are being used for this new project. Instead, we are looking for further support, mainstream, financial and otherwise, from other partners – volunteers will be at the heart of this project. We will have to apply for additional funds to help make projects happen.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There is a risk that the vulnerable groups will continue to be disengaged and isolated which could create a risk to community cohesion, if we do not engage with them and also perception levels would continue to be low.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

New guidance emerging across a range of community empowerment and engagement issues is being reflected in the new Big Society and Localism Bill.

The Localism Bill is seeking to put an end to the hoarding of power within central government and top-down control of communities, allowing local people the freedom to run their lives and neighbourhoods in their own way. The Bill contains a radical package of reforms that seeks to devolve greater power and freedoms to councils and neighbourhoods, establish powerful new rights for communities, revolutionise the planning system, and give communities control over housing decisions.

The new coalition government want the Big Society to foster higher levels of personal, professional, civic and corporate responsibility in a society where people can come together to solve problems and where social responsibility, rather than state control takes hold. The government talks about wanting to redistribute power from the state to society; from the centre to local communities and giving people the opportunity to take more control over their lives. They believe that fairness and opportunity for all can be achieved if people and communities are given more power and information and people take responsibility.

On a local level, engaging communities and ensuring no community is left behind by talking and listening to all our customers and treating everyone fairly and with respect is a council priority through the Corporate Plan which has been revised.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Frequently Asked Questions Sheet (attached) on the 'Golden 7' Project

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