

AGENDA ITEM 12

COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

18th MARCH 2015

REPORT OF HEAD OF COMMUNITIES & NEIGHBOURHOODS

LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the Local Community Group Capacity, Capability and Needs Study.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members of this Committee note and comment on the Local Community Group Capacity, Capability and Needs Study.

3.0 KEY ISSUES / BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Increasing austerity and cuts to funding are a threat to many local services. As a result, the Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) are increasingly taking on and running these services. Yet this sector is also facing many challenges. Local authorities must gain an in depth understanding of the local CVS that work to support and help the community and its people to flourish, in order to create lasting sustainable and resilient communities.
- 3.2 Resilient communities, as defined by the Young Foundation, are communities that have a collectively held belief in their ability to adapt and thrive in spite of adversity. Encouraging communities to harness local resources and expertise will help communities to develop ways to tackle and undertake challenges they face.
- 3.3 In the face of austerity, being resilient and sustainable is vital, as it helps communities and the CVS to deal with and adapt to any barriers they may encounter. By improving community understanding and reducing any confusion, we will hopefully inspire communities to become more resilient and sustainable.
- 3.4 There is often a lack of community participation in local groups, particularly in relation to the recruitment of volunteers to help run groups. Increasing partnership and community awareness of local groups will help to address this issue.
- 3.5 The CVS makes an enormous contribution to the local community, but increasing reductions in funding and grants pose a threat to this sector. However, many community groups are unaware of the many opportunities available to them in terms of training, resources and advice to help them to secure funding independently. Improving awareness of the help, support and advice available to the CVS will hopefully enable groups to address and tackle any pressures they may face.
- 3.6 Study Background Summary

The Local Community Group Capacity, Capability and Needs Study data allows Melton Borough Council (MBC) to make an assessment of and evaluate the capacity, capability and needs of the CVS in the Borough.

In order to equip the CVS with the appropriate skills and tools to deal with increasing pressures on resources, there was a need to locate and gain an in depth understanding of local community groups in the Borough; the main objective of the study. This was achieved through focusing on the following aims:

- To establish the priority needs of local community groups within Melton Borough.
- To assess the capacity and capability of local community groups within Melton Borough in terms of governance arrangement and capacity to fundraise.
- To match the community group's needs to funding opportunities and resources and to support groups to apply and complete funding bids independently to help to promote resilience and sustainability.

An outcome of the study was to improve the communication and partnership between groups and communities. Sharing knowledge, expertise and resources will reduce duplication and enable groups to be more efficient and effective.

In order to gather data, the survey was emailed to various identified groups, uploaded on to the MBC website and copies were sent in the post when requested. The overall response rate for the survey was 33.2%.

3.7 (Appendix 1)

Appendix 1 summarises data collected in order to gain an understanding of the composition of the CVS within the Borough. There is a broad range of groups operating in the Borough most notably sport, social and local charities and trusts. (Figure 1, p.1).

In terms of community presence, engagement and publicity, 41 groups had a website and of those 41, the majority also had other social media presence such as a Facebook page and or a Twitter account (Figure 3, p.2). The majority of groups had a healthy number of members (Figure 5, p.3). When groups have greater number of members there is the potential to improve groups' capacity and capability through encouraging members to work together and be proactive to create greater change. Linked to this is the length of time groups have been running (Figure 7, p.4). Groups can develop over time, therefore older groups may have greater capacity and capability than newly established groups.

Certain villages, such as Bottesford, are a hot spot of community activity hosting a variety of sports, creational, leisure and community groups. Melton town centre is a hub of CVS activity, particularly in the Children Centres and other community buildings in the town. Overall it appears that where there are appropriate facilities such as suitable village halls, there is a greater concentration of CVS activity (Figures 8, p.5 and 9, p.6).

3.8 (Appendix 2)

Appendix 2 summaries the data collated in order to analyse groups' governance and their overall capacity and capability. By focusing on groups' governance arrangement allowed for an assessment to be made of the groups' capacity and capability in terms of how well they were organised, how proactive they were and the groups' sustainability. Out of the 62 groups who completed the survey 51 groups had a committee (Figure 1, p.7) and 36% of committees meet monthly (Figure 2, p.7) to discuss and or review the group. Additionally 78% (Figure 3, p.8) of groups had a constitution which is vital when trying to attract funding.

In terms of external influence on the running of local groups, 60% of groups are part of a

larger, county, regional and or national organisation (Figure 4, p.8). When groups have a good governance system, are self-organised and are proactive they have a greater capacity and capability to attract funding and resources to grow in the future.

3.9 (Appendix 3)

Appendix 3 summaries the results of the survey focusing on how groups are currently funded and whether they have applied for or are thinking of applying for funding. Gaining an understanding of what sort of grants groups have applied for and their success rate is vital in assessing what help and support groups would benefit from.

The majority of groups are currently funded through membership fees. An overall concern is that when membership decreases income from fees also follows suit. It is evident that the CVS is supported by the community through the many groups who receive donations for their work (Figure 1, p.9).

Overall 38 groups (68%) had previously applied for funding and the success rate of those who had applied was 92.2%, which is very positive (Figures 2, p.9 and 3, p.10). For those who were unsuccessful, competition for funding was an issue (Figure 4, p.10). In terms of applying for funding 75% of groups would apply in the future, perhaps as a way of enabling growth and survival (Figure 5, p.11).

Positively, very few groups were unsure of the processes involved when applying for funding. Those who were unsure identified key areas of advice & training on where to look for funding and help with filling in application forms (Figure 6, p.11).

3.10 (Appendix 4)

Appendix 4 summarises the data concerning where groups need most help and support and their willingness to work in partnership with other groups to share knowledge, expertise and offer help, advice and support. Overall support with finding funding opportunities and marketing and promotion were the two key areas where groups needed most help, advice and support (Figure 1, p.12).

A major concern was how few groups had an understanding of the help, support and advice available to them (Figure 2, p.13). This is a key area of focus as it important to broaden groups' understanding of the help and support available so that they can grow and continue their work long term.

In terms of promoting and increasing partnership between groups, 86% would share knowledge expertise and offer help, advice and support (Figure 3, p.13). Lack of time and other commitments were some of the reasons why some groups would not want to work in partnership (Figure 4, p.14).

Attracting new volunteers and members, time constraints and financial pressures were some of the barriers faced by groups (Figure 5, p.14). Knowing what barriers groups face will enable MBC to help to address these barriers and help groups overcome them.

3.11 (Appendix 5)

Appendix 5 summaries data collected around the theme of sustainability and resilience. Those groups who had an agenda/action plan for the future, 75% (Figure 1, p.15), indicated greater

levels of sustainability (Figure 2, p.15). Only 5% of groups rated themselves as not being sustainable at all and despite giving a defining sustainability, 8% were still unsure of their sustainability (Figure 3, p.16). In order to improve groups' sustainability and resilience 40 groups would like to receive and would benefit from help, support and advice with regards to promoting groups' sustainability and resilience (Figure 4, p.16).

- 3.12 The recent Resilience in Your Community Conference (22/01/15), attended by many key community group leaders, was directly linked with this study. The aim of the conference was to better understand the difficulties faced by the CVS, how this sector can promote community resilience and what the CVS would want MBC to do to support this sector. From group discussions it is evident that there are committed individuals and groups in the community who make a substantial contribution to the CVS. In terms of the difficulties faced by groups lack of time, pressures on resources and recruiting volunteers are key issues.

When posed with the question- "how do you see the Council's role in helping your organisation and/or supporting resilience in the community?" The following suggestions were made:

- A CVS central database/directory (as VAL's is not maintained enough)
- Human resources and support from MBC Officers
- MBC Advertising their available resources e.g. meeting rooms
- CVS Events/fairs
- Celebrating and showcasing past existing good work to bring together groups
- A community forum/chat room- a central communication point for networking and sharing resources.

These suggestions will be considered and taken forward to supplement the evidence gained from the study. As an outcome of them conference, MBC will hold regular meetings with CVS and continue to work with and support this sector.

Next Steps

Using the funding of the study in conjunction with the suggestions and outcomes of the recent Resilience in Your Community Conference, we have an opportunity to act on a series of recommendations.

- 3.13 In the short term it is recommended that MBC take a proactive approach with regards to addressing CVS needs by offering appropriate help, advice and support so that MBC can service these needs.
- 3.14 In order to stimulate an increase in groups applying for external funding it is recommended that MBC consults with Big Lottery to highlight and address the deficiencies in the capacity and capability of groups with regards to writing external funding bids and acquiring funding. Part of this will be working towards Melton becoming an area of development for which Big Lottery can provide focused help, support and guidance to groups to increase the number of successful funding bids within the Borough.
- 3.15 In order to increase CVS awareness of what help, support and advice MBC can offer, in addition to other organisations and bodies that the CVS can be signposted to, it is vital that MBC builds on the success of the Community Resilience conference.

- 3.16 In the short to medium term, it is recommended that MBC works with partners to provide the necessary tools to enable the local CVS to develop more sustainably, whilst also promoting community resilience. For example there is the potential to work with both Voluntary Action Melton (VAM) and Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) to; promote volunteer fairs in the Borough, co-delivery of basic training such as First Aid or Health and Safety and encouraging the CVS to engage in peer support where help is offered on a reciprocal basis.
- 3.17 In the long term there is a need for MBC to continue to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the CVS within the Borough and to continue to assist the CVS by helping to address and overcome any barriers they face.
- 3.18 In order to increase the resilience of the CVS it is recommended that MBC encourages communities and individuals to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves to grow and flourish for the future. It is important that we develop strong collaborative relationships which build capacity to produce the synergy of innovative ideas needed to contribute to positive local change. It is abundantly clear that, all the raw materials, motivations and aspirations are in place. The future resilience of the CVS is about how we together make the best use of all these community assets, capabilities and resources.

4.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are clear links to priorities within the corporate plan:

- Encourage people to take an active role in their communities
- Increasing public confidence and pride in neighbourhoods
- Improving the well-being of vulnerable people
- Improve the quality of life for people living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods

5.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS

6.1 No direct legal implications have been identified.

7.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY

7.1 There are no direct community safety implications arising from this report.

8.0 EQUALITIES

8.1 No equality impact assessment implications at this stage.

9.0 RISKS

9.1 There are no direct risks identified.

10.0 CLIMATE CHANGE

10.1 There are no climate change implications arising from this report.

11.0 CONSULTATION

- 11.1 Various local community groups, clubs, charities etc. have been consulted both prior to and during the study.
- 11.2 The Project Funding Officer has consulted with various MBC departments to encourage MBC Officers to work in conjunction with community groups and leaders to ensure maximum involvement in the study.

12.0 WARDS AFFECTED

- 12.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer: Hannah Buck Project Funding Officer

Appendices: App. 1 – The composition of CVS in the Borough

App. 2 – Groups' governance

App. 3 – Groups' funding

App. 4 – Where groups' need most help and support

App. 5 – Groups' sustainability and resilience

App. 6 – Local Community Group Capacity, Capability and Needs Survey

Date: 13/02/15