

# TOWN AREA COMMITTEE

12<sup>th</sup> March 2018

## REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE,

### COMMUNITY ACTION GROUPS – ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL SERVICES

#### 1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 For members to acknowledge the impact of community action groups, including Melton Matters, and to explore future ways of closer partnership working and potential future formal partnership/alignment

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That members support the principle of increased partnership/collaborative working with community action groups such as Melton Matters
- 2.2 That members delegate responsibility for engaging with community action groups, including standardising reporting processes and regular liaison, to the Housing, Welfare and Safer Communities Manager
- 2.3 That members provide guidance to officers regarding points 5.1 and 5.2 of the below report.
- 2.4 That the Housing, Welfare and Safer Communities Manager provides the Town Area Committee with a progress report and proposed operating framework towards the end of 2018/19.

#### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

##### Background

- 3.1 Community action groups provide a valuable resource to the Melton Borough, both as a focal point for voluntary action, and an important issue identification and notification tool. Often with an active online presence, with a dedicated social media following groups can be high profile and command significant attention from local media.
- 3.2 Melton Borough Council is currently engaged with a number of community action groups, alongside tenant and resident groups and neighbourhood watch schemes. Each currently engages with the Council in a different way, which can lead to inefficient reporting processes and inequality of response from services.
- 3.3 Recent engagement with Melton Matters has raised the possibility of building closer ties with such groups, particularly in the environmental and community engagement facets of Council operations. Melton Matters is a local community action group, with strong social media presence and an active volunteer base. Currently un-constituted, the group undertakes numerous community 'patch walks', identifying issues, liaising with residents and MBC tenants, and undertaking prevention/assistive actions such as litter picking, and feeding back into MBC services.
- 3.4 Recent funding of work regarding priority areas within Melton will also have a focus on obtaining a greater understanding of communities and their needs. Understanding the groups within these communities will form a vital part of the Neighbourhood Support Officer roles over the coming months.

## **Existing Relationships**

- 4.1 Any issues or reports from residents are usually received through Customer Services, either by telephone, email or face to face at the Parkside Offices. Occasionally, residents also use online reporting forms which raise the necessary action from services. This service is well used, and ensures a standardised response to the majority of resident and business enquiries, however, the reporting of issues across multiple channels can lead to duplication of reports and confused responses to residents and their issues.
- 4.2 Community Groups, however, do not currently have a standardised reporting procedure, or contact within the Council. Often, reports are made through individual officers within service areas, and therefore creates a non uniform response to demand and frustration can build within community groups.
- 4.3 The Council is not currently aligned or affiliated to any community group, yet recognises that there is considerable untapped resource within such groups to extend the reach of services to within the communities they serve. Official alignment, involving shared correspondence to residents, joint advertising on garments and correspondence and shared operations to tackle ongoing, long term issues would create improved links within communities, the building of increased trust in the Council and a potentially wider reach of online and social media messages.
- 4.4 A recent LGA Peer Review of the Council made reference to greater partnership/collaborative working in Melton Borough, and the Council has acknowledged the benefits that such partnerships could realise.

## **Future engagement possibilities**

- 5.1 The potential of engaging with such community action groups is reliant on ensuring there is equality within reporting processes, service response and liaison points. It is therefore proposed that the Housing, Welfare and Safer Communities manager assesses how each group, including Melton Matters, reports issues into Council services. This should include:
  - Whether issues should be reported through customer services or direct to each relevant service area
  - Whether this reporting process should differ from the offer currently given to residents of the borough
  - Explore the development of online reporting forms and their use by community action groups, particularly within the My Account area on the MBC website
  - Provide a single liaison point for regular engagement with such groups, ensuring issues are not 'bounced' around services ,leading to confusion and inefficient responses to queries
  - Explore the potential to use digital apps such as 'Love Clean Streets'
- 5.2 Consideration should also be given towards greater partnership working and formal alignment with community action groups. Melton Matters has recently submitted requests for joint Melton Matters/MBC logo's on hi-vis garments, the sharing of maps and other borough wide information and greater operational alignment, and this should be considered by members before a full response can be provided. The increased and efficient use of social media to advise residents of current issues, through media such as Facebook, Twitter and other platforms should also be explored as part of this assessment.
- 5.3 Greater alignment with such groups could also lead to increased risk regarding the public image and reputation of the Council through unforeseen events. Members should therefore give consideration to the risk involved when potentially seeking to align with community action groups.

5.4 Without robust procedures in place, there is an increased risk regarding un-managed, potentially vigilante activity, that could cause reputational risk for the Council. Increased management of activities from a Council perspective will reduce this risk, and ensure that any activity is positive. Conversely, fully engaged groups can provide a valuable resource in clarifying Council actions to social media audiences, allowing for a nuanced take on Council policies and procedures to be communicated to engaged residents.

**6.0 POLICY AND CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 None identified

**7.0 FINANCIAL AND OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 Potential low budgetary impact from activities listed in section 5.2, however it is anticipated that these costs would be satisfied within existing budgets aligned to the Town Area Committee.

**8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS/POWERS**

8.1 None identified

**9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY**

9.1 No direct Community Safety Implications have been identified.

**10.0 EQUALITIES**

10.1 Standardisation of Council response to groups should eliminate any inequality in the way the Council deals with issues reported by community groups.

**11.0 RISKS**

11.1 **Probability**



Very High A				
High B				
Significant C				
Low D		1		
Very Low E				
Almost Impossible F				
	IV Neg- ligible	III Marg- inal	II Critical	I Catast- rophic
	<b>Impact</b>			

Risk No.	Description
1	Risk regarding potential reputational impact of aligning with community action groups

**12.0 CLIMATE CHANGE**

12.1 No direct implications have been identified.

13.0 **CONSULTATION**

14.1 None identified

15.0 **WARDS AFFECTED**

15.1 All wards are affected.

Contact Officer: A Wilson – Housing, Welfare and Safer Communities Manager

Date: March 2018