

Report to:	RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Relevant Officer:	Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health
Date of Meeting	Thursday 27 April 2017

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1.0 Purpose of the report:

1.1 To provide an update to the Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee on the work of the Community Engagement Team and specifically the Volunteering Strategy.

2.0 Recommendation(s):

2.1 To note the content of the report. To provide any further feedback, as considered appropriate in relation to the proposed activities.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation(s):

3.1 The Community Engagement activity has recently moved directorates; this is in response to a changing landscape across the Public, Voluntary and Community Sectors and will provide greater opportunities for collaborative Community Engagement activities in the future. This change is relatively recent and therefore allowing some time for the change to become embedded and the plan to be delivered would give Members a greater sense of its effectiveness than can be measured right now.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? **No**

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? **Yes**

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

The only alternative would be for the Council to resist the collaborative approach to Community Engagement and continue down a route of delivering in isolation. This would have resource implications as collaboratively it is possible to deliver more than the Council can alone with its current Community Engagement staffing complement.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priority is:

- “Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience”

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Following the successful allocation of £300,000 in the Fylde Coast Vanguard for Community Engagement, it was sensible for the Community Engagement Team to move from Governance and Partnerships Directorate to Public Health Directorate. This allows a greater synergy between the Vanguard work, the Fairness Commission (the management of which also sits in Public Health) and the Council’s core Community Engagement work.

5.2 In December 2016, the team moved across to the Public Health directorate. Due to the pressures caused by the budget cuts it was also necessary to extricate Community Engagement from the Equalities work, as one of the two Equalities specialists left their position and the team’s capacity subsequently reduced. Additionally having the Community Engagement work managed by the Public Health Specialist who manages the Vanguard relationship allows for a more seamless approach and in the long term will reduce duplication and ensure work is joined up.

5.3 Over the last three years, the Fairness Commission has focused on Community Engagement and Community Resilience projects, having worked on:

- Grange Park Community Farm;
- Resilience projects such as Easter Buddies, Acts of Kindness and Community Connectors;
- Leading on the Dementia Action Alliance and Fairtrade Working Groups.

5.4 The membership of the Fairness Commission Board is also heavily weighted towards the Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector with 43% of the Board members being Voluntary Sector Leaders. Additionally, the Board has the Chief Executive of Blackpool Council, Chief Executive of Blackpool Teaching Hospitals, Chief Superintendent of Police, a GP representing Primary Care and the Director of Public Health (Chair) included in its membership.

5.5 This provides some opportunities for all of the partners to work together to deliver Community Engagement activities in the future, creating a seamless approach which will be further enhanced by the work undertaken through the Vanguard.

5.6 The Community Engagement activities of the Fairness Commission, of which the Council is a lead partner have included:

- Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Showcase Event in March 2017 – An event where over 50 Organisations showcased their activities to an audience which included Public Sector Senior Officers, Commissioners and each other. It was very well received and the groups found it extremely useful to have the opportunity. The event was attended by Councillor Mark Smith who gave an opening address.
- Easter Buddies – A network of seven coffee mornings which will take place across the town during the two weeks of Easter, designed to connect people and combat social isolation and loneliness.
- Kindness Convention and Acts of Kindness Campaign – The 2017 Acts of Kindness Campaign will launch in June with a Kindness Convention at the Winter Gardens. The purpose of the Campaign and the Event is to explore what Communities can do to support and help each other. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that where communities are able to create a “buffer” around each other it makes people more resilient at times of crisis and gives them greater coping strategies and support networks and therefore lessens their dependency on public sector services. Invitations will be circulated to all Elected Members a little nearer the time and Councillor Maria Kirkland will give an opening address.

5.7 In addition to the considerable Community Engagement work being undertaken by the Council and its partners through the Fairness Commission, additional work is underway through the Vanguard, this has largely consisted of Community Orientated Primary Care. This essentially is a group of 12-15 people who are brought together from the heart of a community and encouraged to work with the team over several weeks to share what would make the greatest difference to their health and wellbeing. It works in a similar way to a “People’s Jury” where the participants are able to bring a range of experts to the table to discuss their views. The first of these programmes ran in Central West Blackpool and has been hugely successful with the participants opting to stay together as a taskforce and community action group going forward. There are plans in place to roll the programme out across five other areas over the course of the next 12 months. Senior Council Officers have engaged with the pilot, with the group asking to interview Dr Arif Rajpura, Director of Public Health and John Blackledge, Director of Community and Environmental Services, along with Dr Amanda Doyle from the Clinical Commissioning Group and Chief Inspector Lee Wilson from Blackpool Police. A report on their findings will be published at the conclusion of the pilot and will be shared at the launch event. Elected Members will

be invited to the event.

- 5.8 Officers have done some work on a common “One Council” approach to volunteering and a framework has been developed. However, in the meantime Lancashire Police offered the Authority the opportunity to participate in a Volunteering Partnership, which they are leading. This will provide us with many more opportunities to manage our volunteers more effectively and to offer them greater rewards. The Fairness Commission is currently working on a Time-Banking/Time Credits initiative, the Lancashire Police Lead is a key participant in the working group and this will allow us to reward volunteers for their commitment and loyalty by providing them with vouchers and discounts in local businesses. This will also be good for the local economy as it will encourage people to use the “Blackpool Offer” in a way they might not otherwise.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

List of Appendices:

Appendix 5(a): Blackpool Fairness Commission Annual Workplan

6.0 Legal considerations:

- 6.1 None.

7.0 Human Resources considerations:

- 7.1 The collaborative approach to Community Engagement has been a response to the reduced numbers in the Council’s team due to budget pressures. By jointly utilising our own resources and those of our partners it is possible to undertake a greater amount of activity than could be achieved by the in-house team alone.

8.0 Equalities considerations:

- 8.1 The activities are all delivered in a fair and equitable manner, consideration is always given to accessibility, communication support, fair representation across gender and ethnicity.

9.0 Financial considerations:

- 9.1 The Fairness Commission has a small budget of £5,000 but has been able to lever in additional funding through the Voluntary Sector partners around the table. In particular the Board are awaiting the outcome of a number of external funding bids for the Community Farm – these bids would not have been possible without the collaborative approach to work.

9.2 The Vanguard Project has £300,000 assigned to Community Engagement activities across the Fylde Coast this financial year.

10.0 Risk management considerations:

10.1 There are no significant risks presented by the proposals, the risks of not doing it are that the Council becomes disconnected from its citizens.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 None.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 The Fairness Commission's annual work plan is agreed by all of the partners. The wider Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector is also consulted on key decisions.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None.