

Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Neighbourhood Working

Thursday, 30 October 2014

Present: Councillor June Molyneaux (Chair) and Councillors Julia Berry, Charlie Bromilow, Mike Handley, Mark Jarnell, Paul Leadbetter and Matthew Lynch

Also in attendance: Councillors Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Customer and Advice Services), Simon Clark (Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods), Louise Elo (Neighbourhoods Manager) and Dianne Scambler (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

14.NW4 MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny – Neighbourhood Working meeting held on 18 September 2014 be confirmed as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

14.NW5 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of any interests.

14.NW6 SCOPING OF THE REVIEW

The Working Group considered the scoping document for the review of Neighbourhood Working which had been drawn up since the last meeting.

RESOLVED – that the scoping document be agreed and forwarded to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

14.NW7 REGISTERED HOUSING PROVIDERS

The Chair welcomed Mike Murphy from Chorley Community Housing who was attending the meeting to talk about how the registered housing provider felt engaged with the process.

Overall Chorley Community Housing felt that the current process was a positive one and in line with their housing stock they had representation at all but one of the Neighbourhood Area Meetings that were held at the Council. They felt that these meetings had effectively brought the right people to the table and that they had seen the benefits of effectively working in partnership on a number of difficult issues that had required a multi-agency approach.

Only one suggestion was made as an area for improvement at these meetings which was the need for more regular updates on the progress being made against each of the three priorities. They were also keen to understand how the allocated budget for the priorities was split across the neighbourhoods, as to whether it was based on need in a particular area, divided equally or allocated against each agreed priority. There was a

feeling amongst the Group that a rolling programme of priorities for each of the neighbourhood areas would perhaps be more preferable with a fixed budget allocated each year.

As the neighbourhood areas were representative of multi-agencies, there was also a feeling that other organisations could contribute to the budget and the Group strongly felt that this was an area that should be further explored, particularly as many of the issues were more complex, required input from different organisations and benefited all residents across the borough.

However they did recognise that there was more to Neighbourhood Working than just two meetings a year and explained the approach that their organisation took. Chorley Community Housing employed three dedicated Neighbourhood Development Officers that covered their housing stock across Chorley and with the appointment of the new Neighbourhoods Manager at the Council there was an intention to undertake a more co-ordinated approach with the authority in the future. The registered provider also saw the importance of working with the ward Councillors to tackle many issues, seeing them as the 'eyes and ears' of the neighbourhoods. There was however a feeling from Members that most of the work undertaken was reactive and urged the officers to undertake a more proactive approach.

Chorley Community Housing offered support to resident groups and organisations and had a process in place for facilitating this. Informal discussions initially took place before any formalised constituted group was set-up. This helped to tease out those residents that were active and would sustain a more formal residents group. Once constituted, the group are entitled to £200 per annum and have access to other resources, such as working with the Neighbourhood Development Officers.

The Neighbourhood Development Officers have a visible presence by undertaking regular 'walkabouts' on the estates and the organisation often runs positive news stories on its website and through using social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The Adactus Housing Group also regularly consults with a resident consumer group called the Adactus 500, of which 200 of these residents reside in Chorley and are representative of the resident profile of Chorley.

When asked about volunteer schemes, Chorley Community Housing said that they currently did not undertake any but that they would be willing to work with SPiCE to see if they avenue could further be explored. The difficulty as they saw it was their lack of ability to provide meaningful rewards.

Members of the Group asked if the organisation undertook any work around being a 'good tenant'. It was explained that this is difficult to achieve and that although the housing provider completes some background checks around finances, they have to assume that they are able to hold

down a tenancy as assessment of life skills is difficult to ascertain at pre-assessment stage.

The Director of Customer and Advice Services advised that some joint work was currently being undertaken regarding this between Chorley, South Ribble, Preston and West Lancs. Tenancy Support Training was starting to be provided for those single people that don't come through a homeless or assisted programme.

The Chair thanked Mr Murphy for attending the meeting.

14.NW8 HOW THE COUNCIL'S CIVIC PRIDE CAMPAIGNS LINK IN TO NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING

The Chair welcomed the Head of Policy (Public Service Reform), Sarah James and Communications Manager, Andrew Daniels who were attending the meeting to explain how the Council's Civic Pride campaign links into Neighbourhood Working.

The Council had developed a Civic Pride Campaign over the last 12 months and were currently reviewing how to advertise this work more effectively.

The Council's Civic Pride Campaign consists of the following:

- Campaign Kits
A number of different starter kits that will be made available 'off the shelf' to help residents in a range of activities that will help to enhance their neighbourhoods, for example, litter picking packs that will provide them with the necessary equipment to get a project started.
- Volunteering
The Council will help to support a larger project, for example, the building of a Village Hall within the community. The authority can help to secure funding or planning permission, help with erecting Jobs Boards to advertise what help is needed from within the community and what rewards will be given in exchange.
- Street Champions
The Council will encourage members of the community to become a point of contact, to organise residents by effectively signposting and advertising the use of the 'My Account' system to residents.
- Thank you Events
The Council will help to organise an event that will thank a group of volunteers for the successful implementation of a project.
- Staff and Member Volunteer Days
The Council are looking to implement three to four volunteer days for staff and elected members to work on particular projects in exchange for time credit rewards.

All the campaigns that the Council implements are tailored around Civic Pride and presently include:

- The Neighbourhoods team are currently delivering the 'Don't Mess with Chorley' campaign to encourage our residents to keep the borough clean.
- The Economic Development team are actively working on the Choose Chorley Investment scheme by getting people to invest in Chorley.

Members felt that there was currently some discord between the work that was being undertaken by the authority and the level of involvement that elected Members could be involved with. Whilst it was accepted that there was a lot of really good work being undertaken by the authority, there was criticism that this was not being communicated effectively to ward Councillors and the Group felt that this was definitely one area that needed to be improved upon. Members wanted to be included throughout the process and not just at the end when a project had been delivered.

The Group also asked what was being done within Neighbourhood Working to address social isolation issues and asked if there was a model that could be developed as part of the Civic Pride campaign. It was explained that a couple of projects were already being looked at to address these issues, that included:

- Meals on Wheels scheme – this scheme had been developed further; every person that had a meal also received an assessment undertaken by Help Direct. Members asked if this scheme could be promoted through the Three Tier Forum
- A Good neighbour scheme was currently being developed and would be implemented shortly.

14.NW9 NEXT STEPS

The Group AGREED to the following arrangements for the next meeting of the review on 13 November 2014.

The following would be invited:

- Neighbourhood Co-Ordinator for South Ribble Council

The Group are interested to understand how South Ribble Council implements neighbourhood working, particularly the format that is undertaken for the meetings, as there is an understanding that residents can participate and make decisions.

- The Chairs of Astley Village, Croston, Clayton-Le-Woods and Withnell Parish Councillors.

The Group suggested a list of questions around how effectively the Parish Council's felt or were willing to engage in the neighbourhood working processes.

The Group all AGREED that future meetings would start at 6pm.

Chair