



West Lancashire Borough Council

Report of the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee
'Community Involvement in Service Delivery'





Community Involvement in Service Delivery - Report of the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee

FOREWORD by the Chairman Councillor Nikki Hennessy



“The Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee carried out a review of ‘Community Involvement in Service Delivery’ in 2017/18. This report sets down the outcomes of the work undertaken by Members of the Committee during that period.

We started the scrutiny project in October 2017 with an overview presentation from the former Director of Leisure and Wellbeing, to assist our understanding of how Community groups may be involved in Service Delivery. We have gained knowledge in relation to lessons learnt from previous opportunities, particularly in relation to the Civic Hall and Skelmersdale Resource Centres and meeting rooms, from the excellent briefings provided by a number of Officers, who have been very helpful in assisting us to explore all the issues.

We would like to thank all those who have been involved in the review in particular those Members and Officers who took the time to attend meetings.

In addition to the information provided by Officers of the Council, we would like to thank External partners who provided detail in respect of Community Involvement in Service Delivery both locally and wider afield.

Mrs Marion Gelder	Chief Executive of Lancashire Association of Local Council's
Mr Greg Mitten	Chief Officer CVS

THE REVIEW

BACKGROUND

Following the submission of topics by the public, Members and the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the subsequent scoring exercise, the Corporate and Environmental Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12 October 2017 agreed to undertake a review entitled 'Community Involvement in Service Delivery'.

The Project Plan (Appendix B) was agreed and updated at each meeting.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To undertake a review entitled 'Community Involvement in Service Delivery'
2. To undertake an examination of the potential for community groups (including Parish Councils) to take on certain services, currently provided across the Borough by WLBC, in their locality.
3. To present a report of the Committee's findings to Cabinet and Council, as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) That Director of Housing & Inclusion be asked to develop a webpage with contact details of relevant officers and partner agencies (such as CVS) to signpost groups who may be interested in taking on services on behalf of the Council, including those groups that undertake work on an ad hoc voluntary basis eg. litter picking.
- 2) That the Director of Leisure & Environment be asked to review the £15k revenue funding given to Abbey Lane Playing Fields each year, in the context of the overall programme of grants given to voluntary organisations.
- 3) That the Borough Treasurer be asked to investigate the feasibility of providing insurance under a blanket/bulk policy, for groups interested in taking on services on behalf of the Council, including those groups that undertake work on an ad hoc voluntary basis.
- 4) That the Council continue to explore the possibility of external funding to assist in delivering project partnership work with community groups.

INFORMATION GATHERED

Meeting held on 12 October 2017

Members agreed to undertake an in-depth study entitled 'Community Involvement in Service Delivery' and confirmed the Project Plan for the review.

Community Involvement in Service Delivery Overview (Presentation 1)

Members considered information presented by the former Director of Leisure and Wellbeing.

Members received an overview of proposals for the review to look at how community groups could be involved in service delivery in their local communities. Members acknowledged it was anticipated that a Guidance /Information pack would be developed to provide support information for community groups wishing to get involved in the management of a local service.

Meeting held on 4 January

Transferring a Community Service to a Local Community Group (Presentation 2)

The Committee received a presentation from Steve Kent, Leisure Operations Manager, which provided details of previous experience in transferring a Community Service to a Local Community Group. The presentation included:

1. Examples of community transfer:
 - Community buildings (The Civic Hall, Skelmersdale Resource Centres, Skelmersdale Meeting Rooms)
 - Outdoor sports facilities (Abbey Lane Playing Fields)
 - Outdoor activity facilities (Platts Lane Fishing Lake, Skelmersdale Allotments, Liverpool Road Allotments, Richmond Avenue Allotments)
2. The process undertaken and the lessons learnt in relation to the Community Resource Centres in Skelmersdale, the Civic Hall, Ormskirk and Abbey Lane Playing Fields, Burscough, particularly looking at:
 - The purpose of transfer ie. to reduce revenue or to generate external capital funding or a combination of both
 - The future suitability of the group ie. training requirements, management history, local support and business plans
 - The additional background investigations/work required in relation to:
 - permissions on land ownership/covenants
 - drafting of leases/licences
 - legal support
 - ensuring best value
 - the disposal process
 - liabilities ie. insurances/responsibilities
 - financial viability
 - risk assessments
 - continued support to groups following transfer
3. The following potential transfer opportunities that could be considered in the future:
 - Community Buildings (Banks Leisure Centre, Chapel Gallery, housing community/meeting rooms)
 - Outdoor Sports Facilities (Blaguegate, Chequer Lane, Whitemoss, Whittle Drive and Aveling Drive Playing Fields)

- Outdoor Activity Facilities (Abbey Lakes and Chequer Lane Fishing Lakes, Tower Hill and Clucas Gardens/Owen Avenue Allotments, Tawd Valley Park, Beacon Country Park & Golf Course, Coronation Park and Richmond Park)
- CCTV
- Dog fouling/littering enforcement

Transfer of Service Delivery (Presentation 3)

The Committee received a presentation from Phil Samosa, Deputy Director of Street Scene, who advised that experience was limited as services did not lend themselves easily to transfer, as groups in the main did not have the necessary infrastructure to support such involvement.

The Committee was advised that Street Scene were currently working in partnership with Total Reuse, a local social enterprise organisation based in Skelmersdale, providing the physical collection part of the bulky household waste collection service, with the Council providing the administration. Items are refurbished, when appropriate, and offered for sale or donated to community groups and good causes. Income generated from sales was used to create training programmes.

(The Committee noted at a later meeting that 'Total Reuse' had ceased operations.)

The Committee was further advised on the work undertaken with local volunteer groups such as the Scouts', Parish Councils and neighbourhood clean-up campaigns in providing equipment, materials and the removal of any waste collected and that national clean-up campaigns were promoted by the service such as the Keep Britain Tidy initiatives "The Great British Clean" and "Clean for the Queen" offering local action groups advice and once again the provision of equipment and the removal of waste. Requests being dealt with on an individual basis.

The Committee considered issues in relation to insurance and liability and questioned the need for the Council to provide a bulk insurance as a means of encouraging more involvement from volunteer groups and resolved to include a recommendation in its final report.

Meeting held on 1 March 2018

Legal and Procurement Matters (Presentation 4)

The Committee received a presentation from Terry Broderick, Borough Solicitor, on the legal and procurement barriers that could be encountered in relation to the transfer of services to the local community.

Information received by the Committee included;

- The transfer of services, assets, resources
- Financial support and governance matters
- An overview of the Social Value Act in relation to procurement
- Community Right to Challenge under the Localism Act 2011
- Procurement matters
- Issues associated with the perception of inadvertently granting state aid

- Powers of authority and relevant legislation
- limitations of powers (ultra vires)
- Details of the Council's estate – land, industrial units, shopping centres, community centres, meeting rooms and playing fields
- Title issues – restrictive covenants, conditions, clawback payments
- Disposal issues – freehold transfer, types, length of time, Assets of Community Value
- Best Value
- Maintenance issues – cost, disrepair and monitoring/inspections
- Staff issues – pensions, terms and conditions etc
- Risk assessments, health and safety, insurance

Meeting held on 12 July 2018

CVS – Council for Voluntary Services (Presentation 5)

The Committee welcomed to the meeting the Chief Officer of the CVS, Greg Mitten, who had been invited to the meeting to inform members what support his organisation could give to community/voluntary groups to help them through the community transfer process.

The CVS Chief Officer informed Members of the assistance the CVS could provide and explained that:

- Asset transfer could be either change of ownership or management
- There needed to be a plan of what's important and the benefits to community and residents
- The joint owned principle needed looking at
- Diligence was required before transfers of assets
- Lessons from previous asset transfers should be shared
- There may be a possibility of accessing funding that was previously unavailable

Meeting held on 11 October 2018

The Committee considered the first draft of its final report and reviewed its recommendations. It was considered that, following consultation with the Chairman, revised final recommendations should be considered at the next meeting, to include:

- Abbey Lane Playing Fields
- Webpage contact/link officer signposting
- External funding
- Blanket/bulk insurance cover feasibility

Meeting held on 6 December 2018

The Committee considered its final draft report and agreed its recommendations.

Web links for relevant information:

<https://democracy.westlancs.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=142>

<https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/community-centres.aspx>

<https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/your-community/grants-to-voluntary-groups.aspx>

<http://www.wlcvcs.org/>

<https://www.westlancs.gov.uk/more/your-community.aspx>

Membership of the Committee

2017/18

Chairman: Councillor N Hennessy

Vice Chairman: Councillor D Evans

Councillors: M Barron, Mrs M Blake, T Blane, P Cotterill, S Currie, G Hodson, J Kay, D McKay, M Nixon, N Pryce-Roberts, Savage, West and Westley.

2018/19

Chairman: Councillor N Hennessy

Vice Chairman: Councillor M Nixon

Councillors: Mrs M Blake, T Blane, P Cotterill, S Currie, D Evans, G Hodson, K Lockie, C Marshall, N Pryce-Roberts, A Owens and D West.

OFFICER SUPPORT

Lead Officer: Dave Tilleray, Former Director of Leisure and Wellbeing and Heidi McDougall, Director of Leisure and Environment

Scrutiny Support Officer: Cathryn Jackson and John Addison, Principal Overview & Scrutiny Officer and Jacky Denning, Member Services Manager

Officers Reporting: Terry Broderick, Borough Solicitor
Phil Samosa, Deputy Director Street Scene
Steve Kent, Leisure Operations Manager

Legal Officer: Tina Sparrow, Principal Solicitor
Tom Dickinson, Assistant Solicitor

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant sustainability impacts associated with this report; however, developments in this area of work are likely to involve stakeholders, especially the local community, in its on-going development.

FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial or resource implications arising from this report other than work associated with developing a Council webpage and investigating and

reporting back to the Committee on matters in relation to Abby Lane Playing Fields and provision of a bulk insurance. Financial or resource implications will need to be considered for any future projects or actions arising from this review.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact of members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders, therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required. An EIA would be undertaken for any future projects or actions arising from this review.

Appendices

None