Bath & North East Somerset Council	
MEETING:	Economic and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	23rd May 2013
TITLE:	"Connecting Communities": Update
WARD:	ALL
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	

List of attachments to this report:

Report to Cabinet Connecting Communities: A Local Engagement Framework for Bath & North East Somerset

Cabinet Report Appendix One: Connecting Communities: Our Framework for Change

Cabinet Report Appendix Two: Connecting Communities Toolkit

Cabinet Report Appendix Three: Connecting Communities Action Plan

1   THE ISSUE

1.1   This report provides an update on the Connecting Communities programme and highlights issues for consideration by the Panel.

2   RECOMMENDATION

The Economic and Community Development Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to agree that:

2.1   The Report received and decisions made by Cabinet on 8th May in respect of Connecting Communities be noted

2.2   It consider key issues relating to the implementation of Connecting Communities, including:

(1) Information to be included in the proposed "Cluster Profiles"

(2) The proposed "Cluster" arrangements

(3) The timing and approach to implementation of the project at local level

(4) The content of the "Connecting Communities" Toolkit.

2.3   It request any additional information required on specific projects contained in the Connecting Communities Toolkit

2.4 It considers how the Panel can assist in the development of Connecting Communities

3   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Financial implications relating to Connecting Communities are set out in the report to Cabinet. These noted that Cabinet in May 2012 agreed to allocate £105,000 from the Community Empowerment Fund specifically to improvements to local engagement. This will be used to deliver the programme and ensure maximum benefit from it for local communities.

4   THE REPORT

4.1 Cabinet considered a report at its meeting of 8th May which set out recommendations in relation the Connecting Communities programme. The project is an initiative of the Public Services Board (which comprises Council, Police, Curo, Clinical Commissioning Group and Fire and Rescue Service, with recruitment for a voluntary and community sector representative currently underway). It aims to improve engagement with local communities in our area. The report to Cabinet sets out the proposed overall approach, which is based on the following principles:

To LISTEN - *always being open to ideas* Our commitment is to understand what it is that communities are asking for, rather than making assumptions based on existing ways of working.

To PRIORITISE *- making sure local needs come first* Our commitment is to work with local communities to identify the different needs of each area, rather than adopting a "one size fits all" approach to deciding priorities. We will support communities to make decisions grounded in the best possible evidence.

To JOIN UP *- working in partnership with our local communities* Our commitment is to act as "one Council", and increasingly as "one public service", so that when communities talk to someone who works for a public service they can gain access to all public service resources without duplication of effort

To WORK WITH YOU - *helping communities find the best way to tackle local issues* Our commitment is to always be open to new ideas and to look for solutions rather than barriers

To SHARE IDEAS - *building on what works* Our commitment is to share information and best practice across our area and to encourage learning and innovation

4.2 This approach should be seen in the context of the commitment to deliver "one Council" and "one public service" in communities, building trusts and relationships and reducing duplication of consultation and engagement. This will have the following benefits:

(1) Making better use of the strengths and capacity of our communities and build on what works well

(2) A quicker response to local issues and concerns

(3) An opportunity to see the "big picture" across all public services in an area

(4) More support for local innovation - for example the Proud of Your Doorstep initiative in Whiteway

4.3 Appendices to the report then set out:

(1) The Connecting Communities Framework (Appendix 1). The "Core Offer" includes our work with "communities of interest" across Bath and North East Somerset, including equalities groups, and the "Locality Offer" is based on working more closely with local communities building on local strengths. It is important to note that, although this Locality Offer contains proposed "Clusters", these are primarily designed to form a starting point for public services to work together rather than as hard-and-fast engagement boundaries. As Connecting Communities is developed, the importance of natural communities and open engagement will be paramount.

(2) A "Connecting Communities Toolkit" (Appendix 2) which sets out good practice and initiatives which can be used as appropriate in localities to get things done.

(3) A draft timescale (Appendix 3) for implementing the scheme identifies a first phase for the implementation Local Offer in three Clusters. It is envisaged that these will initially be in areas where there is significant planned regeneration activity in order to maximise the benefits of this work and link with other engagement activities.

4.4 Cabinet discussed this report at its meeting on 8th May and agreed to

(1) Adopt the "Connecting Communities Framework" set out in Appendix One, along with other public service partners working through the Public Services Board

(2) Request officers to begin the implementation of the framework through widely publicising the "Core Offer" set out in the "Connecting Communities Toolkit" in Appendix Two

(3) Delegates to the Divisional Director, Policy and Partnerships in consultation with the Council Leader the detailed plans for implementing the "Local Offer" set out in the "Connecting Communities Toolkit"

(4) Request the Divisional Director, Policy and Partnerships to work with local groups and communities to keep updated the Connecting Communities Toolkit in order to share good practice in local communities

(5) Notes the Draft Action Plan set out in Appendix Three and request a further report in 6 months updating on progress in implementing Connecting Communities

4.5   At the time of preparing this report the formal minutes relating to this Cabinet item is not available. However, the webcast of the discussion at Cabinet can be found here (Agenda Item 14)

http://www.bathnes.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/103908

4.6   Given this, there will continue to be discussion on implementation and development of Connecting Communities. Input from the Panel would be particularly valued on the approach taken to clustering and in particular the proposed template for a "Cluster Profile" containing information about local issues, concerns and assets.

4.7   The Connecting Communities Toolkit sets out a wide range of projects which together form a "menu" for localities. For example, the "Better Together" project builds on the Cabinet's Community Organiser scheme to provide focused community engagement work in Radstock and Foxhill. Better Together was allocated £106, 806 by Cabinet in May 2012 for a project to 2015 to engage on a one-to-one basis with local residents whilst also helping build local capacity to establish local groups and social enterprises. Linked to Connecting Communities, the project will also provide training, development and other support to both residents and public service staff in order to make the most of local opportunities and ideas. The Panel is invited to request further information on aspects of the Toolkit.

4.8   As part of its "Core Offer", the Council will continue to work closely with Parish Councils. The Parish Charter was approved in 2006 and reviewed in 2009 with only minor changes following this. Given the Localism Act 2011, Connecting Communities and other recent changes it may be considered appropriate to undertake a review of this document and a further report to the Panel will be made in due course.

5   RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1   A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance

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6   EQUALITIES

An EqIA has not been completed for this report for the following reasons

6.1   An EqIA was undertaken as part of the report to Cabinet and key issues arising from this are set out in the report

7   CONSULTATION

7.1   Cabinet Member; Section 151 Finance Officer; Monitoring Officer

7.2   Views were sought on an initial draft of this report and feedback incorporated

8   ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1   Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Young People; Human Rights; Corporate; Other Legal Considerations

9   ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	