

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING	Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING	21st July 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
TITLE:	Performance Reward Programme- the Better Together project	
WARD:	The Better Together project has particular relevance for Southdown, Radstock and Combe Down wards	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report invites the Panel to receive a presentation on the Better Together project, one of 16 which have received investment from the Performance Reward Programme's "Main Fund". It also sets out how projects of this type have helped inform the Connecting Communities programme and invites the Panel to consider whether it wishes to receive a further report on this.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To note and consider the report
- 2.2 To receive a presentation from Action to Regenerate Community Trust on the Better Together project
- 2.3 To consider if it wishes to receive any further information on the impacts delivered by projects delivered through the Performance Reward Grant Main Fund
- 2.4 To consider if it wishes to receive a report on the Connecting Communities programme

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

3.1 The Better Together project is funded from the Performance Reward Programme, whereby the Council received funding from central government as a result of meeting challenging performance targets set out in its Local Area Agreement.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 This report is being prepared under the powers provided to the Council to undertake Scrutiny roles. The Better Together project potentially impacts on a wide range of Council responsibilities including the Localism Act and equalities duties. Alongside our Connecting Communities programme it therefore addresses the Council's Equality Objective of highlighting "new ways to engage communities that in the past we have struggled to communicate with".

5 THE REPORT

5.1 In the period 2007-2010, the Council operated a Local Area Agreement with central government. In return for meeting performance targets, the Council received a sum of £1.3m as a performance reward. This funding was unringfenced but was a one off sum. Rather than be used to support ongoing service budgets, Cabinet therefore agreed that £300,000 of the £1.3m would go to a "small grants pot", with £1m allocated to a larger-scale investment fund. This "Main Fund" had the following key principles:

- to build capacity in the community
- to be one-off funding only
- to "pump prime" activity which becomes sustainable in its own right
- to reduce the need for future funding and be built around Invest to Save
- to have an exit strategy in place
- to include realistic milestones

5.2 An open process took place which saw groups and organisations bring forward potential projects to meet these principles, with clear criteria and under a number of themes. Following scoring of these proposals, the LSP Public Services Board (comprising elected members and representatives of local agencies) recommended that the 16 projects identified in the background information to this report be recommended to Cabinet. Cabinet at its meeting of May 2012 agreed that negotiations take place to secure appropriate milestones and funding agreements for each of these recommended projects.

5.3 One of the projects funded through this scheme is *Better Together*. The project began in January 2013 and comes to an end in December of this year. It is being delivered by Action to Regenerate Community Trust and will be the subject of a presentation to the Panel.

5.4 Better Together is designed to help local people get involved in improving their communities. It builds on previous projects undertaken by Action to Re:Generate Community Trust in Bath & North East Somerset, as set out below:

- An initial scheme in Whiteway, begun in November 2008, was established with pump-priming funding provided by the Council, local partners and central government
- In January 2010, funding from central government saw the approach extended to London Road and Snow Hill and Keynsham South
- In 2012, central government funded for one year only additional Community Organisers in Foxhill and Odd Down, Radstock; and Timsbury, Farmborough and Camerton

5.5 The Better Together project has been allocated a total of £106,000 of Performance reward Grant over the 2 years January 2013 to January 2015. The project is subject to regular performance monitoring with key outcomes including:

- Further development of projects begun through previous work, particularly those with potential to reduce demand on public services. An example of this is the Proud of your Doorstep scheme in Whiteway, which aims to reduce flytipping and which organises local community clean ups.
- Engaging local residents, particularly in Radstock and Foxhill, in “face to face” conversations to hear their views, build trust, and help them get involved locally. Over 800 residents have so far been listened to. Information on local needs and views gathered in this way can also be summarised and made available to help set priorities.
- Working with local residents in Radstock and Foxhill to develop new projects, for example at Springfield Park in Foxhill.

5.6 These and other local engagement projects have provided valuable experience in how listening to local people can generate community action. Many projects have initially been small-scale- for example, litter-picking, work with young people and community events. However, these projects benefit from being grounded in local priorities and being able to draw on local networks and “one the ground” knowledge. As they are rooted in local communities, there is the potential to grow and sustain these projects. For example, the Proud of Your Doorstep scheme has been established as a social enterprise which in turn can generate additional funding.

5.7 Experience of working with local communities through these projects has helped inform the Connecting Communities programme, adopted by Cabinet in May 2013 and which was reported to the Economic and Community Development PDS Panel also in May 2013. The key lessons incorporated into the design and implementation of Connecting Communities have been:

- The key role of of local elected members as local community leaders
- The importance of working differently in different communities, to reflect local needs. In some areas, for example, this might mean working to establish and sustain a local residents group where none previously existed. In other areas, by contrast, there may be a large number of thriving local groups.
- The importance of listening to local people and working with them on priorities

- The potential for improving public services through involving local people- but alongside a recognition that it can take time to build the relationships required to make this a reality.

5.8 Connecting Communities has been designed to deliver this collaborative approach in ways that are best suited to local areas but with the common goal of “providing a mechanism for collaboration between communities and public bodies”. Three new forums are being created in Keynsham, Chew Valley and Somer Valley. These bring together local elected members, public services and parish councils and rationalise existing arrangements. The Forums do not have delegated decision-making powers or budgets but they will be supported to find local solutions to the issues facing each area.

5.9 Connecting Communities is also about encouraging a wider engagement with local people. For example, this year’s Bath City Conference attracted over 300 people to take part in a “marketplace” of local groups and activities.

5.10 Both Better Together and Connecting Communities are relevant to the Resources PDS Panel as they aim to mobilise all the community resources available to an area - including the energy and ideas of local people. They therefore have the potential to identify innovative ways of tackling local issues without incurring additional costs to public services. “Better Together” should also be seen as part of the wider “family” of Performance Reward Grant projects, including schemes such as Employee Volunteering, Village Agents, Bath and West Community Energy and Somer Valley Radio. These all have in common the aim of growing our own local organisations so they can engage more effectively with local communities and get better results. The Panel is therefore invited to consider if it wishes to receive any further information on the impacts delivered by projects delivered through the fund.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 It is considered appropriate that this Panel receive an update on work funded through the Performance Reward Programme which is deigned to use all the assets of the community to secure local outcomes.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 This has taken place with the Chair of the Panel, the Strategic Director-Resources, the Director of Strategy and Performance, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

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

Contact person	<i>Andy Thomas, 01225 394322</i>
Background papers	Performance Reward Programme – Recommendations from LSP Board relating to the £1m Main Grant Fund http://democracy.bathnes.gov.uk/documents/s17002/Appx%201%20Recommendations%20LSP.pdf
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	