

Stronger Communities Partnership Programme Monitoring Report Summary

1. Background and context

In 2009/10 Brighton and Hove City Council commissioned activity to support the 2020 Community Partnership in its responsibilities for community and voluntary sector representation in strategic planning and decision making.

In addition, the brief stated that activity should ensure that communities have clear opportunities to influence and be involved in strategic planning and decision-making. The programme should also support partnership approaches to delivery of the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and Community Engagement Framework.

2. Summary

In practical terms, the activity delivered helps to facilitate people from communities, groups and organisations to come together to give their views, identify issues of concern and establish priorities and solutions which are fed into decision-making processes in the city.

Below is a short summary providing examples of the activity provided. Appendix One gives an overview of some of the activities and outputs achieved in the first six months of the year.

2.1 *Networking*

Networking opportunities bring groups and communities together.

- As an example, a Your Space event called 'Making Ends Meet' brought CVSF members and others together to take part in workshops pertaining to the recession and its impact on the sector. 72 people attended. Workshops included a session on Recession Planning and another on Developing a Social Enterprise.

Feedback included comments such as:

- "Run by people who are passionate about what they do."
- "Friendly approach, non threatening for grassroots attendees"

2.2 *Representation*

Feedback from these and other networking opportunities are fed into local and citywide strategic decision-making processes via representatives elected onto partnerships. Position statements developed on the basis of feedback from the wider sector support representatives to fulfil their roles effectively.

- An example of a position statement includes the 'impact of the recession on the local community and voluntary sector', which has fed into the city's Third Sector Recovery Plan.

2.3 *Influence*

Representatives elected onto the LSP and each of the family of partnerships are responsible for presenting the views of the sector in discussion, thereby influencing decision-making processes.

- Examples of where the sector has influenced citywide activity include the refresh of the Local Area Agreement Strengthening Communities Delivery Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy refresh and the city's Third Sector Recovery Plan.

2.4 *Communication*

The Programme builds on and works with CVSF extensive membership (over 500 organisations), commissioned community development activity, and other networks, such as the CVSF children and young people's network, a mental health network and the new Equality Coalition.

This related community development activity and networks help maximise communication to and involvement from neighbourhoods and communities of interest and identity.

- Spoke Magazine is a quarterly publication produced in partnership as part of the ChangeUp agenda, and has a mailing list of 968.

2.5 *Partnership Working*

CVSF has supported the establishment of a Stronger Neighbourhoods Group (SNG) to help develop the engagement of neighbourhood communities in the work of the SCP. Work is ongoing to improve communication between neighbourhoods and to support the flow of information between neighbourhoods, the SNG and the SCP.

Commissioned community development activity supports the engagement of residents in a neighbourhood context. Residents are supported by community development workers to build their confidence, skills and knowledge to develop projects and activities and potentially become more involved in wider engagement agendas, including more strategic opportunities such as those offered via CVSF and the Stronger Communities Programme.

- Four neighbourhood representatives have been elected onto the Stronger Neighbourhoods Group which feeds into the SCP

3. Contribution to delivery of the LAA

Activity to support delivery of each of the Strengthening Communities indicators is on target and includes supporting participation in the Stronger Communities Partnership and providing briefings to representatives and feedback from meetings to the wider sector.

A subgroup of the SCP has been established to gather evidence to demonstrate the role of the third sector in supporting delivery of the LAA

Information provision to the sector, the election of community representatives onto strategic partnerships and the development of position statements on topics of interest or concern to the sector all support:

- the potential for third sector organisations and the individuals representing them to influence local decision making
- the ability of the sector to have a voice and thrive
- evidence gathering regarding the numbers of people involved in volunteering

CVSF has actively worked to engage with parts of the sector that have traditionally disengaged from statutory led agendas.

- A conference entitled 'Roots and Branches' targeted organisations and individuals to take part in a celebration and honest debate about the sectors history in Brighton and Hove and the learning from this. The event report will be used to develop position statements on many of the points of learning identified at the event.

The SCP oversaw the commissioning of a number of projects to support delivery of the Local Area Agreement Strengthening Communities Indicators and continues to support the coordination of monitoring and evaluation information onto the new Inter Plan performance monitoring system.

The commissioned projects deliver activities that complement the overall programme in a variety of ways.

3a. The Stronger Together Project

This is a partnership project led by the Working Together Project, and involving the Trust for Developing Communities, who deliver community development activity, and the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum, which delivers the Stronger Communities Programme.

The project provides bespoke training and development opportunities to residents engaged in neighbourhood activity who are interested in becoming more involved in wider decision-making in the city. This recognises that there is a significant leap between becoming involved in a local community project and wider engagement in strategic decision making. Training and development provides residents with the confidence, skills and knowledge to make that leap if they wish.

- Working Together Project ran 5 workshops at the Coldean Community Conference which brought together local residents with service providers to identify 'burning issues'
- Training needs analysis has been undertaken with the neighbourhood forum for Portland Road and Clarendon and training sessions have been planned for residents involved in the forum.

3b. The Equality Coalition

The Federation of Disabled People coordinates this new coalition, which brings equality groups and organisations together to promote discussion and respond to policy areas that affect diverse communities and groups.

- Over 70 groups have been contacted by email and 5 outreach visits to meet with groups have been made
- 11 people representing local groups and organisations attended the first meeting
- Coalition members have inputted to the consultation on the Sustainable Community Strategy

3c. The What's To Do Project

This project led by Speak Out, has supported a new group for people with mild learning disabilities to come together for mutual support and to reduce isolation. Advocacy groups engage with local disability services and other organisations to try to improve services for people with learning disabilities.

- 4 people are now involved in the new group which meets fortnightly, and 2 more are interested in joining
- 12 people are working with University of Brighton on a film to provide training for social work students
- 6 people involved in work with Theatre Royal around better access for people to the theatre
- 10 services have been engaged with

Appendix One

Stronger Communities Partnership

Summary of outputs

Networking

A number of networking opportunities have been provided via the programme. Headlines are:

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|---|-----------------|
| • Your Space event 'Making ends meet' held on 30 th April 2009 | 72 participants |
| • SCP conference 'Roots and Branches' held on 3 rd July 2009 | 60 participants |
| • CVSF AGM held on 16 th September 2009-11-16 | 92 participants |
| • Outreach visits to neighbourhood community groups | 7 visits |

CVSF has supported the development of various peer support networks, including the Equality Coalition

Quotes from events:

“We need more spaces like this- to share experience, knowledge and learn to work together”

“Really valuable input, advice”

Communication

Headlines under this area of work include:

- 6 editions of Dialogue e-magazine produced 533 on circulation list
- 1 edition of Spoke magazine 968 mailing list

Consultation and position statements

- Consultation on recession planning via ‘Don’t get burnt’ event resulting in report and two position statements 108 participants
- Position statements are being developed from feedback at the SCP conference on grassroots groups, leadership and representation 60 participants
- CVSF member response to Sustainable Community Strategy 92 participants

CVSF staff involvement in new developments, including:

- CUPP conference
- Get Involved
- Take Part

Representation

Key activities in this area of work included:

Elections of representatives:

- Mailing to members with information and guidance on process 968 contacts
- Candidates for 2009 elections 21
- Votes cast 886 from 64 organisations
- Total number of reps in post 72

Support for reps:

- Induction and training 11 reps trained
- SCP reps meetings 2 meetings, 8 reps

Partnership work:

- Convened Sustainable Communities Act Panel 23 proposals received. 9 approved

Influencing

Headline activities include:

CVSF engaged the wider third sector and fed back to groups including:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------|---|
| • Partnership Managers Group | 2 reps, | 2 |
| | meetings | |
| • City Inclusion Partnership | 1 rep, | 1 |
| | meeting | |
| • Local Strategic Partnership | 8 reps, | 2 |
| | meetings | |
| • Public Service Board | 1 rep, | 1 |
| | meeting | |

Strategic leadership:

- Deliver and monitoring of the LAA strengthening communities delivery plan
- Working group established on gathering evidence from the third sector for NI4
- Influencing BHCC recession action plan
- Supported implementation of CEF in partnership with BHCC Communities Team
- Coordinated sector response to Sustainable Community Strategy

Partnership working

CVSF has developed strong and effective partnerships and is currently involved in the following activities:

- Stronger Together Project which aims to increase community representation by providing bespoke training for neighbourhood groups. Partners are Working Together Project and the Trust for Developing Communities
- Community Development Managers group which brings together those managing community development initiatives across the city along with other organisations working with communities such as Novas Scarman and the Working Together Project.
- Spoke Magazine is a partnership initiative involving several third sector organisations. Quarterly magazines highlighting news and features are produced by the partnership Editorial Board.
- CVSF are involved in several other partnerships including supporting the Equality Coalition, the Get Involved campaign, a research project with the Community University Partnership Programme and the University of Sussex and a number of Community Engagement Framework initiatives with BHCC.