SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REPORT OF THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION MANAGER

COHESIVE COMMUNITIES - ROLE OF CULTURE IN SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES – POLICY REVIEW 2010/11

15 FEBRUARY 2011

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: PROSPEROUS CITY

CORPORATE PRIORITIES: CI01: Delivery Customer Focused Services, CI02: Being 'One Council' CI03: Efficient and Effective Council, CI04: Improving partnership working to deliver 'One City'
Report to the Sustainable Communities Review Committee 15.02.11

1   Purpose of report

1.1   To appraise the Sustainable Communities Review Committee of the work that is being done using a cultural approach to address issues of community cohesion and integration as part of the Committees policy review.

2   Background

2.1   A broadly cultural approach using ideas about art, creativity, communication and so on can prove extremely effective in helping to tie communities together and give a shared sense of identity.

2.2   Over the past year the Diversity and Inclusion team have developed a number of projects which use a cultural approach to address key community cohesion issues in Sunderland.

2.3   In particular the key issues we are addressing are:
- Intergenerational tensions
- Insular communities
- Lack of a shared sense of belonging and a vision for the future

3   Current Position

Peat Carr and Moorsley

3.1   We have worked with members of the community to develop a community allotment. This initial project has now expanded to a wider project about food and health incorporating projects with the local schools looking at healthy eating and a tree planting scheme.

3.2   This project has helped to address some of the intergenerational tensions in the area with members of the allotments association helping younger people with their work on the community allotment.

3.3 It has also helped to address some of the problems with the area being insular, providing a place and a reason for people to come together and have a chat.

Pennywell

3.4 Working with youth groups and carrying out wider consultations with the local community it was clear that people wanted to have a community IT suite which could be used for a variety of reasons and have easy, on street access. The project is being developed along side young people who have offered time to decorate the place where the suite will be and are looking at using the equipment to develop a community history project.

3.5 This project is helping to address some of the intergenerational problems in the area, providing a link between the Youth Project and other community projects.

Southwick

3.6 We developed a project working with young people who use Thompson's Park and who had been accused of anti-social behaviour. The young people wanted to be involved in the future of the park and felt they had been excluded from consultations. After some initial, difficult meetings, we worked to set minds at rest and developed a project with the young people who have designed and are helping to commission a set of wood sculptures for the park entrance and rose garden.

3.7 This problem is helping to address some of the intergenerational problems in the area with young people been seen as part of the planning for the future.

3.8 Working with Durham University's Centre for Medical Humanities we have developed a project which will bring together participants from all three projects above. They will come together for a communal meal where the venue will be decorated by placemats and cloths made by the participants. At the meal people will be able to share their experiences of the different projects.

3.9 This problem is helping to address issues connected to insular communities by bringing people together across Sunderland who have been involved in a joint project. As part of the project is about planning for the future it will also help to build a sense of a shared future and shared vision.

4 Key challenges going forward

Sustainability

4.1   Whilst the ultimate aim is to create strong communities that do not rely on outside help to maintain that strength this will not happen overnight. We are working on a continuity plan but this is contingent upon the resources (financial and otherwise) available to support such projects going forward.

4.2   Equally it is important that such project become 'owned' by their community and not dependent upon grant funding, but this relies on mechanisms being in place in neighbourhoods where people can plan and deliver according to their own priorities.

5   Recommendations

5.1   Members are asked to note the contents of the report.