

**26<sup>th</sup> September 2019****REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY RESILIENCE****Neighbourhood Engagement and Investment****1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Elected Members an update on Neighbourhood Engagement and the various mechanisms to be adopted which will ensure our residents continue to be at the heart of our service delivery, enabling our communities and neighbourhoods to become actively involved in the delivery of the City Plan and developing Neighbourhood Investment Plans, to ensure long-term community resilience.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 Following the restructure of the Council in April 2019, the Area Arrangements function of the Council merged with a range of other services as part of the new Community Resilience function within the new Neighbourhood Directorate. The Directorate also includes Environmental Services, Statutory and Public Protection Services and Housing services as well as a range of services which support and promote individual and community resilience. This move is ensuring that all area priorities and improvements moving forward align with the City and Neighbourhood Investment Plans and are delivered and communicated effectively with our residents.
- 2.2 We are reviewing and developing all the services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate to implement a neighbourhood solutions response, which is proactive, efficient and effective and makes best use of our partnerships. These reviews are imperative if we are to address the concerns raised during the 2018 Residents Survey as well as the recent LGA Peer Review.
- 2.3 We need to improve individual and community resilience through engagement, participation and listening. Through the creation of neighbourhood solutions, we hope to create ownership of issues, removing the hands-off mentality, with every service, partner and community playing their part, so we can all say, “you said – we did”.
- 2.4 This report shares updates on the developments to-date relating to the following topics:
- Resident Engagement and Involvement Strategy
  - Neighbourhood Investment Plans
  - Crowdfund Sunderland

**3. Resident Engagement and Involvement Strategy**

- 3.1 Effective resident engagement and involvement is part of our customer service and it is everyone’s responsibility.
- 3.2 We must change our narrative with residents and start a meaningful, two-way conversation. A Sunderland Engagement and Involvement Strategy has been developed in draft to support our residents and our partners to share information and ideas and to guarantee that Sunderland City Council is transparent and accountable,

encouraging more local people to get involved in shaping their neighbourhoods, council services and the future of the city. We want to start a conversation.

- 3.3 We currently involve and engage our communities through various, inconsistent means either face to face, over the phone or on-line. We also share information during resident meetings, events and through the written word. However, the information gathered, or views received are not always shared directly with the relevant service or partner. Residents are speaking but we are not actively listening. We need to listen.
- 3.4 Most of our partners are also engaging with residents and communities daily. Everyone is gathering information for their own purposes, we need to work in partnership, listen to our residents and customers, hold a joint conversation or at the very least share the information gathered during the conversation to improve our services, our neighbourhoods and our city.
- 3.5 All our Residents, of all ages need to feel valued, involved and able to positively contribute to their community and neighbourhood as well as share their point of view, ideas and concerns. That's why we've established area Facebook pages, we're developing our Community Newsletter / Area Communications offer, and why we need to create spaces for meaningful resident engagement to take place. We've also increased the number of Area Committees per year and we must continue to make engagement easier and more effective.
- 3.6 The key outcomes and the enabling outcome for the Sunderland Engagement and Involvement Strategy are as follows:

Outcome 1 – Communities are directly involved in making Sunderland a great place to live

Outcome 2 – Communities have the power to influence matters that affect them

Outcome 3 – Activities to involve communities are focused and purposeful

Outcome 4 – Sunderland is digitally enabled and active

Sunderland enabling objective - Staff and partners are supported to involve communities effectively in everything they do

*See Annex 1 – Infographic Sunderland Engagement and Involvement Strategy*

#### **4. Neighbourhood Investment Plans**

- 4.1 Sunderland City Council in partnership with the VCS will work with residents and community and business stakeholders to produce aspirational (as well as realistic) Neighbourhood Improvement Plans for the five neighbourhood localities, working in partnership with the Area Arrangements Service and the Area Committees and VCS Networks.
- 4.2 The reason for this approach is to develop new ways for the community/residents to engage in the shaping of their respective neighbourhoods. There are already some established consultative relationships and mechanisms as highlighted above. However, it is clear from the recent Resident Survey, there is a need to engage deeper and earlier, to build more community and partner capacity to deliver the right kind of projects/services to improve our neighbourhoods.

- 4.3 The Neighbourhood Investment Plans will directly align with the Area Committee priorities moving forward, they will be long-term plans, aligned to the timeframe of the City Plan, which will also include focused, 3-5-year delivery blocks, which include capital improvements as well as service/neighbourhood solutions. Residents and partners will be able to easily track progress.
- 4.4 The need is for an all-inclusive approach to regeneration and investment that combines diverse elements, such as housing, skills, health and well-being. Furthermore, if the community is positively engaged in the preparation of the plans, there will be more confidence in the plans and a greater chance of successful regeneration as well as service improvement and partnership working. A key part of the plans will be empowerment and giving a voice to those who do not normally feel they have one.
- 4.5 To develop the five plans there is a need to engage across all neighbourhoods and across communities, generations, representative groups, businesses, and public, private and voluntary sectors. We want to focus on Neighbourhoods as a place, what's good and what needs to change.
- 4.6 To help us achieve our vision we need to work together with communities. We recognise that we need to change the way we behave, to make the vision a reality. We also need to encourage, and support behaviour change in our communities and neighbourhoods.
- 4.7 The timeframe to generate the five Neighbourhood Investment Plans is as follows:
- September to December 2019 – Significant resident and community engagement and consultation which includes re-engagement following initial consultation, to share ideas and ensure ideas and suggestions have been captured correctly.
- January 2020 to February 2020 – Draft strategy developed based upon the engagement and consultation as well as share detail in relation to service issues which have arisen through the consultation and engagement
- March 2020 – Launch Neighbourhood Investment Plans
- April 2020 – Evaluation of consultation and engagement exercise and creation of a simple tracking system to monitor delivery of the Neighbourhood Investment Plans.

## **5. Crowdfund Sunderland - Spacehive**

- 5.1 Sunderland Council is working in partnership with Spacehive to create a Crowdfund platform for Sunderland. Spacehive is an award-winning platform for ideas that bring local civic and community spaces to life. They are a trusted partner of choice for local authorities looking to transform places in a more collaborative, community-centric and efficient way. To date, Spacehive has supported over 650 projects across the Country, to raise over £13 million. They currently work with 40 authorities and have over £5m of additional funding available for projects from their partner funder network.
- 5.2 How Spacehive will work in Sunderland:
- Branded online hub for Crowdfund Sunderland that calls for project ideas – offering pledges to help people deliver them (Linked to Sunderland Council website and local area Facebook pages)
  - Hosting 'Idea Events' – creating ideas within communities which may support Neighbourhood Investment Plans, Area Committee priorities as well as improving

community resilience and participation (referenced within Resident Engagement Strategy)

- Spacehive will work with local businesses, Spacehive's national partners, local community and voluntary organisations, philanthropic grant-makers and local people, attracting even more projects and funding to the programme
- Spacehive will assess all projects in partnership with the Council and Locality, prior to them being allowed to commence crowdfunding activity, ensuring the projects are viable and deliverable and in line with the City's vision and priorities
- Area Committees, Members, VCS Networks, Partners and Officers will champion the programme and support residents to create ideas and projects
- We will be able to measure social and economic impact, as beyond the funds raised, Spacehive projects deliver a range of benefits, such as skills development for project creators, leading to increased capacity for local people to deliver civic projects

- 5.3 Supporting projects alongside the crowd will allow the Council to stretch its funding to projects with genuine community support. Spacehive's partners see on average 300% leverage. It will also help the Council to reach beyond our usual communities and resident groups, typically over 50% of Spacehive's project creators have not been involved in civic projects previously.

## **6. Summary**

- 6.1 We have a real opportunity to transform our Neighbourhoods, working alongside communities to regenerate and create more resilient communities. Area Committees will be at the heart of this transformation journey, utilising the Resident Engagement Strategy, Neighbourhood Investment Plans and Crowdfunding platform.

## **7. Recommendations**

- 7.1 Note the content of the report.
- 7.2 Refer to Area People/Place Board for further discussions on how members would wish to support and monitor delivery of:
- Resident Engagement and Involvement Strategy
  - Neighbourhood Investment Plans
  - Crowdfund Sunderland

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