

## **Cabinet – 19 March 2014**

### **Community Hubs First Year Evaluation Report**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Shires, Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector

**Related portfolios:** All

**Service:** Communities and Partnerships

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** No

**Forward plan:** No

#### **1 Summary of report**

- 1.1 The report sets out the evaluation of the first year of operational activities of the two Community Hubs pilot projects in Moxley and Ryecroft, considering how Hub activities have impacted on organisational working practices and how this has changed individual people's circumstances and take up of services. The framework has been selected to evaluate activities that have been running for less than twelve months.
- 1.2 The first complete year of activities has shown the benefits of closer collaboration between delivery organisations to ensure that residents can access a number of services through a single point of contact. This collaboration is intended to be increased over 2014/15 and may be an opportunity for delivery organisation to reduce some costs without limiting frontline services. It has also shown barriers to greater collaboration which will need to be addressed during 2014/15.
- 1.3 By attempting to increase access to services, some of the hardest-to-reach residents have been accessing services, showing progress to reduce their long-term dependence and starting to lead more independent lives.
- 1.4 Towards the end of 2014/15, a full evaluation of the Community Hubs project will be completed to demonstrate cost savings and how greater collaboration increases the impact of local services.

#### **2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet notes the evaluation of the first year of activities of the Community Hubs project in Moxley and Ryecroft.
- 2.2 Cabinet agrees its preferred approach to providing grant funding for the Community Hubs projects from the options set out in paragraph 3.7.2.

- 2.3 If Cabinet selects option 3 or 4 in recommendation 2.2 above, Cabinet agrees to receive a future report on the final evaluation of the Community Hubs pilot project.

### **3 Report Detail**

#### **3.1 Context**

- 3.1.1 The original proposal agreed by Cabinet on 25 July 2012 stated the challenges faced by the council in delivering public services:

- substantial reduction in financial resources for the foreseeable future requiring major changes to how the Council operates,
- the need to improve the life chances of residents and to help overcome the inequalities that exist in and between different parts of the borough,
- the need to redesign council services around the needs of customers and to take out wasteful activity that does not contribute towards this.

- 3.1.2 Cabinet agreed to develop two Community Hubs in Moxley and Ryecroft to pilot activities that would increase the role of community-based organisations in the delivery of local services. Two existing organisations were selected (Moxley Peoples Centre and Ryecroft NRC) that were expected to develop a role as a single point of contact for multi-purpose facilities and services. These services would include youth activities, adult social care and family support services to enable people to lead more independent and self-sufficient lives to reduce future costly support from the council and other statutory agencies.

- 3.1.3 Initial work in both pilot areas included scoping local service delivery, checking delivery against area profile data and undertaking health checks of the two organisations. This showed a disparity between the needs of the local area and the ability of the organisations to fully respond given their size and existing competences. Cabinet agreed on 24 April 2013 to develop an alternative model where a broader partnership would co-operate to deliver the early pilot activities while skills and assets were improved. In slightly differing levels in each area, this included Public Health, NHS, Walsall College, local schools, GP surgeries, training providers and voluntary sector organisations.

- 3.1.4 This 'federated partnership' approach is expected to demonstrate an increased effectiveness in future service delivery by:

- better targeting of resources against local needs,
- creative engagement of organisations and individuals to help prioritise and co-ordinate local services, better utilizing local assets,
- a close dialogue with residents and frontline services to identify improvements to services.

- 3.1.5 The Moxley Community Hub has been delivering activities since March 2013.

- 3.1.6 The health check for Ryecroft showed that the existing premises used by Ryecroft NRC were unsuitable to accommodate an increase in services and required approximately £280k to be spent just to ensure the building reached current building standards. Ryecroft NRC's board considered their options and agreed to move to the Dartmouth Youth Centre and former Property Services offices in New Forest Road, approximately 200m from Dartmouth House. The NRC moved into the youth centre in Autumn 2013 and renamed it the Ryecroft Community and Youth Centre. They will be moving into the former Property Services offices in Spring 2014 and renaming it Ryecroft Enterprise Centre. As most of the focus for work has been on moving premises, less Community Hub activities have been delivered although a smaller range of activities started in July 2013.

## **3.2 Progress since April 2013**

### **3.2.1 Moxley**

A project steering group has been established in Moxley since May 2013. This has brought the main delivery partners together to share information on activities in the area, including those funded by the Community Hubs and those who have brought external resources into the project. This has overseen Community Hub activities and developed joint projects between organisations.

- 3.2.2 The focus of activities has been on two of the four original priorities – health inequalities and jobs/training. The other two priorities are still relevant (children/young people and environment) but activities are only supported when they also contribute to the main two priorities. This has included providing physical activities for young children to improve their fitness levels and providing training activities within Moorcroft Wood.

- 3.2.3 A timetable of activities has been produced to publicise the activities being delivered locally. This has been promoted on the council's website and by partners, with activities being promoted using social media channels. It has also been distributed as a leaflet to all households in the Moxley area, which is proving to be the most effective method to promote information.

- 3.2.4 Two weeks of concentrated events have been run during the summer holidays and before Christmas, which were used to promote all activities that were taking place and allow residents the opportunity to influence the future programme. Some activities that have been taking place as part of the Community Hubs project include the following:

- Job club - targeting unemployed residents in Moxley led by Darlaston JET. In five months, it has received 130 visits, resulting in 16 people attending training courses, over 30 qualifications awarded and 5 people gaining employment.
- Interventions for 0-5 year olds and their parents, including a new support group at the local GP surgery and fitness activities at Moxley Peoples Centre.
- Extending the school library at Moorcroft Wood Primary School to allow timed access by residents on Saturdays and Thursday evenings. Two

local residents were employed to manage the library and the school attracted £6,000 to buy additional books.

- Investigation into elderly residents at risk of isolation, led by the GP surgery. This identified 75 residents who have been provided with extra support, contacted to inform them of activities taking place and visited their homes to give flu vaccinations.
- After school and holiday club activities providing physical activities for children that allow parents to access jobs and training facilities.
- Bringing together services at Moxley Peoples Centre for elderly and low income people, such as healthy breakfast options, welfare rights and information sessions.
- Physical activities at a boxing club in Moxley Peoples Centre providing exercise and building confidence for children.

3.2.5 As the Community Hubs project requires organisations to work closely together and engage local residents in service delivery, two time-limited sub-groups have been established examining greater collaboration between organisations and increasing volunteering opportunities.

#### 3.2.6 **Ryecroft**

Due to the change in premises, operational activities have taken longer to develop, although an operational plan detailing activities planned for the next year has been finalised. The plan has activities under themes for health, young people, jobs, community and crime but the same principle applies as for Moxley that the principal objectives are to reduce health inequalities and get local people into jobs.

3.2.7 The Community and Youth Centre has had the kitchens and toilets refurbished and is being decorated with support from the Prince's Trust. The Enterprise Centre is receiving a major refurbishment in March 2014 to convert it from council offices to more suitable space for Hub activities.

3.2.8 A major work activity in the Ryecroft Hub is the development of self-employment and support to micro enterprises as a route to employment. This is partly a response to the perceived number of jobs available in the local area as well as building on the skills and experiences of Ryecroft NRC. Some the activities already started or planned to start shortly include the following:

- Training in IT, employability, personal development and business studies to City & Guilds, Cisco and Microsoft accreditations.
- Self-employment and small business club, with business networking events and development workshops.
- Job club for local unemployed people with support from Jobcentre Plus, Princes Youth Trust, training agencies and other local community organisations.
- Young enterprise - a school holiday enterprise that will allow young people the opportunity to see all aspects of running a business with support from local schools, Walsall College and Children's University.

3.2.9 Three local enterprises have already committed to operate from the Enterprise Centre from April 2014 - a local printer, a gym and a beautician. Walsall Foster Carers Association will also be based at the Enterprise Centre.

3.2.10 Other activities that have already started or will be starting shortly include the following:

- A range of health activities targeted at local residents led by Public Health, WHG and NHS Lifestyles Team, covering exercise, diet, awareness and well-being.
- Young people's holiday clubs providing supervised holiday activities for 4-12 year olds. The activity delivered in summer 2013 gave students from Wolverhampton University experience of running their own enterprise.
- An allotments scheme on part of the Ryecroft site that will provide plots for young people to grow fresh vegetables with support from Goscote Green Acres.
- A local enterprise has offered to run tea dances for elderly residents which will provide light exercise and companionship.

### **3.3 Evaluation framework**

3.3.1 Cabinet agreed in April 2013 that an evaluation framework will be developed that monitors three key areas:

1. Outcome improvements – ability to show improvements in service delivery performance data leading to reduced inequalities across the borough.
2. Resource improvements – actual cost savings generated.
3. Process improvements – changes in service delivery that can lead to increased effectiveness of activities.

3.3.2 The performance management framework that has been developed for the project recognises the challenges faced in measuring change in the early phases of the project (0-1 year) to the medium to longer term (2-5 years). This approach acknowledges that the kind of changes required to achieve the objectives of the initiative requires investment not only in resources but also time for behaviour change to embed and produce results. For this phase (0-1 year), the evaluation of activities is considering two areas, noting the importance of capturing resource improvements as they potentially emerge in the longer term:

1. Process improvements – considering whether organisations have changed their working practices, with examples in section 3.4.3.
2. Outcome improvements – considering whether initial activities have changed individual people's responses and circumstances. This is supported by individual case studies showing where people have moved from a position of dependence on public services to more independent lives, in section 3.5.1.

3.3.3 The qualitative evaluation has been undertaken by discussions at the project steering group, face-to-face interviews with project staff and data provided by delivery partners from monitoring reports.

3.3.4 For the period 2-5 years, should the project be continued, it is proposed that the above approach is maintained but also other measures are recorded, such as:

- actual reduction in service delivery costs,
- increase in long-term employment in the area,
- number of higher-level qualifications achieved,
- economic contribution of volunteer activities linked to reduction in service costs.

### **3.4 Process improvements**

3.4.1 The Community Hubs projects were established to enable people to lead more independent lives and reduce the long-term dependence on public services. Area profile data shows that there are some indicators that show a high level of dependency on public services, particularly around health and economic profiles.

3.4.2 Despite recent cuts in funding for services there is still an adequate level of services available to local residents in both areas, although it is sometimes necessary to travel a short distance to access some of these services. However, there is a perception that is regularly voiced in consultation events that services are not **available**, although it is more likely that these services are not easily **accessible**, particularly for people who need to access multiple services due to their needs. Further cuts and rationalising of services may mean services appear even less accessible, for residents who may need to access services more in the short term to reduce their longer term dependence.

3.4.3 This implies that successful Community Hub projects need to operate in a way that brings services together from a service users' perspective, which may not be the existing or most straight-forward structure to implement from a delivery organisation perspective. Examples of where this has been tested are listed below:

- Moxley job club. The job club has developed high level of users despite being a voluntary service, primarily because it is central to Moxley residents and word-of-mouth support has increased its popularity. Staff introduced additional services to the users by bringing relevant organisations to the job club, not by referring users to other services. This resulted in the trust that had developed between the services users and the job club being shared with other organisations. An example of this was when the job club introduced a training organisation to provide training and qualifications in security. Despite some of the residents having no previous qualifications, most of the group were willing to take the training and the 16 people who undertook the training achieved an NVQ level 2. The job club is introducing additional organisations to the job club including the Pathways Troubled Families project and smoking cessation.

- Get up and go. Led by WHG, a healthy lifestyles programme aimed at women who are parents of children at Moorcroft Wood Primary School. The women were already familiar with each other which has enabled them to build their confidence quickly. Some of the activities were delivered at Moxley Peoples Centre and this enabled the group to access other services being offered there – all twelve members attended an introduction to the job club. Following the course, four users have joined a smoking cessation programme, three have started volunteering locally and nine have enrolled on a NVQ level 1 health course being piloted through Darlaston Sure Start.
- Moxley healthy lifestyles group. The GP surgery has formed a group of patients who want to improve their health by changing aspects of their lifestyle. The group has received presentations by other organisations to determine their interest in undertaking activities to help them lose weight. This allowed the residents to choose the activities that were subsequently delivered for them. The group were interested in walking as light exercise and some of the diet and food-related activities. They chose not to undertake any of the volunteering activities in Moorcroft Wood resulting in this activity not taking place.

3.4.4 The level of success of activities that were shared across organisations in some part depended upon the willingness of organisations to collaborate much more comprehensively than they do now. While all the organisations have an open and proactive approach to working in partnership, there were some difficulties experienced by organisations when developing activities with new partners:

- The time taken to develop a trusted, working relationship when both organisations will be held to account for a project's success.
- Different organisational cultures, particularly across organisations from different sectors (health, education, voluntary sector, community development).
- Attempting to improve process and non-output activities when the organisations are funded to deliver outputs.
- A fear that closer collaboration means giving something up, or that partnerships might not be equal.

3.4.5 This last point was demonstrated by one organisation whose own activities had low residents attending when self-promoted but had good numbers attending with good feedback when delivered as part of another organisation's programme. The organisation has acknowledged that it will need to change the focus of its delivery for future activities.

### **3.5 Outcome improvements**

3.5.1 The Community Hubs project has focussed on ensuring that services are available for residents who do not currently access the level of services available to them. Some examples of residents who have changed their response to services are shown below:

- Nigel was homeless and jobless after returning from abroad, finding it very difficult to rebuild his life and self esteem. With support from Darlaston JET at the job club, he attended the security training at Moxley Peoples Centre and gained good results and certifications. His advisor found him a position as a Warehouse Manager and sent his CV with a covering letter to the company. With personal encouragement from the advisor, Nigel is now back at work and has a sense of direction for the future.
- Ann and Alison are pensioners who had no IT skills. They went to a training course at Ryecroft NRC following a recommendation as they felt left out without these skills. With support from the NRC they learnt how to use computers and the internet. They are now keen tablet users and use many apps to enable them to lead more independent lives. Ann and Alison now knit tablet covers that they sell on Ebay with the money raised going to support a local charity.
- Noreen lives in Moxley and had never used a computer. She received a leaflet promoting the activities at Moxley Peoples Centre and walked past the centre several times before staff saw her and invited her in. With gentle guidance, she gradually gained confidence in using a computer and was able to put her CV online and search for jobs. She now supports new people using the computer facilities and has encouraged other residents to access the job club.
- Paul has recently started a printing business from his home with a partner. This would have remained a small home business until they were given the opportunity to base their business at the Ryecroft Community Hub which has allowed them to expand their business and develop a more professional approach. They have been able to invest in equipment and allow potential business clients to visit their new premises. They are mentoring new enterprises that are developing through the Hub and volunteering on Ryecroft NRC's board.
- Zak joined the Moxley job club to develop skills and gain employment. He grew in self confidence and developed new friends, so suggested organizing a breakfast event that recognised different faiths in December. Zak planned the event, discussing with different residents of their needs and ran an enjoyable event. Zak has since had two job interviews and is confident that he will get a job soon.

3.5.2 The activities delivered through the Community Hubs have increased the overall level of services accessed in the pilot areas. The initial activities delivered through the Ryecroft Youth and Community Centre have increased from 13 hours per week at the start of the project to over 60 hours per week by December 2013. Over 7,000 visits have been made by residents accessing the services in Moxley between April 2013 and December 2013.

### **3.6 *Evaluation conclusions***

3.6.1 Although the evaluation is only considering activities that have been running for less than a year, many of these activities have been successful in engaging residents who have found some existing services difficult to access. This has been helped by services being provided geographically close to residents but



also by delivering through organisations that have gained the trust of residents by explicitly demonstrating that their needs are understood.

- 3.6.2 Residents accessing a single service have been encouraged to access other activities; this has been done primarily by bringing these services to the organisation that the residents have developed a high level of trust and relationship with. This has been more successful than signposting residents to other services, even when these are available locally.
- 3.6.3 This approach requires organisations to collaborate more closely than they currently do. It is possible that this is an area which needs considerably more work for local frontline services to prepare for funding cuts over the next year. Organisations may need to plan activities and bid for resources with organisations that they have not actively worked with in the past. In case of severe funding cuts, organisations may need to be prepared to share non-frontline services rather than duplicating functions such as customer engagement, finance or HR.
- 3.6.4 Organisations that have collaborated more closely have been able to benefit by accessing other resources that may sustain activities after the initial pilot Community Hubs project has finished. Examples include the partnership between Moxley Peoples Centre, Darlaston JET and British Training Academy which has already secured over £30k of external funding or the partnership between Ryecroft NRC and other community associations where the NRC is providing progression routes for trainees for work experience and self-employment support.

### **3.7 Year 3 activities**

- 3.7.1 Cabinet agreed the funding for project activity for 2013/14 and 2014/15 at its meeting on 24 April 2013. This will allow grant agreements to be developed for activities starting in April 2014.
- 3.7.2 In reviewing the evaluation conclusions, there are a number of options available to continue activities into year 3. Cabinet will need to agree its preferred option from the following:
  - 1. Stop all funded activity for year 3. This would allow the allocated funding to be recovered as savings although it would present difficulties for both pilot areas, particularly for the development of the new premises in Ryecroft. It would not allow greater collaboration between delivery organisations that may lead to future savings in delivery costs.
  - 2. Continue with the existing project funding but do not provide additional funding for project management (as detailed in section 6.2). The agreed levels of funding for project activities were £147k in 2013/14 and £129k in 2014/15. Some level of funding from 2013/14 may be required to be carried forward into 2014/15. This would expect local partners to manage the Community Hub and take on the project management function without any additional resources from the council. As such, it is unlikely to be accepted by the local organisations.

3. Continue project management in 2014/15 together with existing project activities. This will provide maximum impact and allow an evaluation of the cost savings generated by improving service delivery towards the end of 2014/15. It does require additional unbudgeted funds of £50k to pay for salary and associated costs of project management. Cabinet recognise that this will incur a cost of £50k which is not in current budgets for 2014/15.
4. Roll-out the Community Hubs project across other locations in Walsall subject to a further report being brought back to Cabinet once the criteria is established and financial implications are known. While the pilot activity has identified ways for greater collaboration between organisations that has led to some hard-to-reach residents accessing services, extending the project before cost savings have been quantified would require the council committing considerable funding resources to the project. This will require a detailed consideration of the criteria for establishing new Community Hubs as well as requiring considerable investment which is not yet quantified. Costs for rolling out of community hubs is currently unknown and therefore no budget exists for this in 2014/15 or beyond.

3.7.3 If option 2 is chosen, this will allow the funded projects to be monitored to ensure outputs are being achieved.

3.7.4 If options 3 or 4 are chosen, this will allow the project management to continue and increase the impact of the project. This will contribute to the council's recent six calls to action for residents to help prevent future cuts in services by delivering a number of activities including:

- Increasing communication between all partners through steering group meetings, publicity, leaflets and events.
- Engagement with residents to volunteer with local services, both to increase their skills and reduce the impact of cuts.
- Focusing funds for activities between organisations that show a collaborative approach to increasing access to services by residents.
- Investigating external funds and resources that can be used within the pilot areas.
- Towards the end of 2014/15, undertaking a more detailed evaluation including a review of where different approaches have reduced costs.
- Developing a succession strategy to ensure activities continue after the pilot phase.

## **4 Council Priorities**

4.1 The proposed approach offers the potential to make a major contribution towards the council's priorities of:

- **Supporting business to thrive and supporting local people into work** – job clubs are key priorities for both Hubs projects and the Moxley Hub

has already achieved good numbers of attendees. Enterprise and self-employment is a priority for the Ryecroft Community Hub.

- **Improving health including well-being and independence for older people** – the Community Hubs will be expected to provide services and activities that will assist residents lead more self sufficient and independent lives. Crucially this will require greater emphasis on health and well-being to avoid alternative and costly demands on the health and social care systems.
- **Creating safe, sustainable and inclusive communities** – the Community Hubs will be recruiting volunteers as a way to increase local involvement in services and build social capital.
- **Improving safeguarding, learning and the life chances for children and young people** – both Hubs are ensuring that 0-5 year olds and their parents are involved in activities that improve life chances for young people.

4.2 The Community Hubs project directly supports the Marmot Principles through the following activity:

- Give every child the best start in life – both Hubs are developing activities that link local primary schools, GP surgeries and Sure Start.
- Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives – delivered through the ‘children and young people’ priority.
- Create fair employment and good work for all – ‘jobs and training’ is an identified priority in both areas to ensure local residents can access jobs
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all – the Hubs’ priorities will ensure that health and quality of life are improved
- Create and develop healthy and sustainable communities – the role of volunteering and community cohesion are important elements of the Community Hub project
- Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention – reducing health inequalities is a key priority for both Hubs.

## 5 Risk Management

A risk assessment of proposed activity in 2014/15 through the Community Hubs project will be undertaken.

## 6 Financial

6.1 Budgets for activities for 2013/14 and 2014/15 were approved by Cabinet in April 2013.

6.2 Funding for the project management has previously been sourced from existing budgets which are **not** available for 2014/15. Cabinet is requested to approve

£50k for the project management to ensure the activities listed in section 3.7 take place effectively. There is no budget for these funds currently in 2014/15.

- 6.3 Where any activity is delivered through a third party, the Council's existing grant agreement process will be used to administer and manage the funds.

## **7 Legal**

Legal Services has been involved in the development of the grant agreements.

## **8 Property Implications**

Both Moxley Peoples Centre and Ryecroft NRC operate from Council-owned properties without a lease. This situation is unsatisfactory for all parties and Property Services is currently negotiating long-term leases for both organisations to assist with their sustainability.

## **9 Staffing Implications**

The project has benefitted from use of a temporary post fulfilling the project management role. The request in section 6.2 is required to continue project management of the activities and maintain the staffing level.

## **10 Equalities Implications**

- 10.1 An Equality impact assessment will be carried out for Community Hubs during 2014.
- 10.2 The Community Hubs approach is for locally responsive and resident-driven organisations to take the lead in developing local services. Typically these organisations will be better placed to engage traditionally hard-to-reach groups such as minority ethnic communities, faith-based communities, disabled groups and individuals, young people and people on low incomes.

## **11 Consultation**

The development of the pilot has involved substantial consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including the local community, customers of Council services, service providers, partner organisations and potential funders.

## **Background Papers**

Cabinet report, 25 July 2012 – Strengthening Community-based Services  
Cabinet report, 24 April 2013 – Community Hubs Pilot Evaluation Report

## Authors

John Leach  
Head of Service  
Communities and Partnerships  
☎ 01922 653702  
✉ [leachj@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:leachj@walsall.gov.uk)

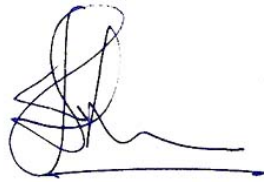
Richard Bubb  
Community Hubs Project Manager  
☎ 01922 653706  
✉ [bubbr@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:bubbr@walsall.gov.uk)

Jamie Morris  
Executive Director



10 March 2014

Councillor Ian Shires  
Portfolio Holder



10 March 2014