

Report to Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board

12 September 2023

Subject:	Neighbourhood Partnerships Team
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1. Recommendations




- 1.1 That the Board considers the update in relation to the development of the Neighbourhood Partnerships Team (NPT).

2. Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 Following a successful pilot in Rowley Regis and Wednesbury, a roll out across all six towns of Sandwell was implemented.

3. How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?

	<p>Best start in life for children and young people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting to improve quality of life • Supporting children and young people to access services • Enabling services to be accessible • Supports development of grassroot services aligned to needs of children and young people locally
	<p>People live well and age well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to improve quality of life through codesign of services • Reduce loneliness and isolation through creating local engagement opportunities and activities • Capacity building through community development activity, training and information • Improving health and wellbeing through developing local, accessible community activity, events and services • Supporting resident-led initiatives • More empowered communities through development of community-based support groups
	<p>Strong resilient communities</p> <p>Through community development activity, it will strengthen communities and enable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stronger relationships between the council and tenants and residents • Enhanced information and communication • An opportunity for tenants and residents to develop skills • Develop a greater sense of place within the community • Volunteering opportunities/development • Greater satisfaction with local area • Stronger neighbourhood infrastructure through strengthened and supported community and voluntary sector

	<p>Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to services for tenants and residents • Better value for money • Improved customer experience and satisfaction • Improved customer loyalty
	<p>A strong and inclusive economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more connected and joined up community and voluntary sector delivering services relevant to Sandwell
	<p>A connected and accessible Sandwell</p> <p>Through community development activity, communities have become more empowered and confident to raise local issues but also develop local solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement with raising concerns about local road layout and infrastructure • Assisting with consultation regarding major works planned • Developing focus groups to ensure their voice is heard.

4. Background

4.1 The Neighbourhood Partnerships Pilot was initiated in Rowley Regis in September 2020 and due to success was further developed in Wednesbury in April 2021. Within the first 12 months, it was evident that the pilot was making a significant impact at a neighbourhood level and a roll out was agreed. A full team, consisting of two officers per town, has been in place since November 2022. **See Appendix 1 – Neighbourhood Partnerships Team, Structure Chart.**

5. Current Delivery

5.1 The Neighbourhood Partnerships Team continue to work extensively with local communities, tenants and residents as well

as the voluntary and community sector (VCS), ensuring that our tenants and residents voices are heard.

- 5.2 The team are skilled at identifying local priorities and utilising the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach to deliver neighbourhood management.
- 5.3 The work of the team is also aligned to the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and in particular to strengthening the tenants voice, engagement within Housing Services and being treated with respect.
- 5.4 The team currently delivers across all six towns, supporting local residents, and acting as the catalyst to establish community-led activity in areas that have untapped social activists.
- 5.5 The team are supporting the cost of living agenda by developing 'Welcoming Spaces', enabling communities to access food and encouraging access to volunteering.

6. Impact

See Appendix 2, Neighbourhood Partnerships Team, End of Year Report, for more detailed examples.

- 6.1.1 The team complements the co-production agenda and has prioritised a 'doing with' rather than 'doing to' way of working with communities. By avoiding the 'top-down' style of neighbourhood management, the team are making a significant contribution to the council's Strategic Objectives, including *Strong Resilient Communities*.
- 6.1.2 The team continue to support key impacts of Covid by working closely with communities and VCS organisations to develop projects that support; improving mental health, combating social isolation and improving digital inclusion. The team enabled the delivery of Cost of Living training that was rolled out to all Warm Space providers across the borough.

- 6.1.3 The team are utilising previously inaccessible spaces and working in conjunction with Housing staff, passionate tenants and VCS groups who want to influence change and ensure that communal spaces are becoming more accessible and utilised by local people.
- 6.1.4 The team are delivering on key requirements as part of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 to ensure that Sandwell's tenants are being empowered to influence local services.
- 6.1.5 The team have developed strong relationships with the VCS and have supported many new groups. A total of 223 VCS groups have been supported in the last 12 months. The team have supported new groups to become formally constituted and receive funds from both the council and external grant giving bodies.
- 6.1.6 The team have led on establishing and guiding the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG). In 16 months, this has enabled tenants and leaseholders to influence local services and hold senior officers to account. A total of 1,420 hours has been committed, with a monetary value of £22,393.
- 6.1.7 The team have worked collaboratively and for the first time have supported a TRA to successfully apply for Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) funding. This approach to co-production and community empowerment demonstrates a commitment to Asset Based Community Development.
- 6.1.8 The success and feedback from the program has led to the TRA continuing the service throughout the 6 weeks summer holidays. The scheme is currently underway and on average, 40 children from across Sandwell attend each day.
- 6.1.9 The TRA, supported by the team and WMCA Digital equipment funding have been able to help families become more digitally included by helping them to access the data bank facility, preloaded wireless dongles and access a computer to update their job searched and UC portal. Further relationships have been strengthened and forged with organisations such as LEAP, South

Staffs Water, Healthy Homes Sandwell, Sandwell FIS, The Albion Foundation.

- 6.2.1 The team worked tirelessly to alleviate the cost of living crisis.. For example, in Tipton working collaboratively with LEAP (Local Energy Advice Partnership), South Staffs Water and Welfare Rights, they delivered financial support totalling £113,606.50.
- 6.2.2 The team are instrumental on the Armed Forces Partnership Panel, ensuring that the Council is upholding its new Covenant Duty that came into force in November 2022. (The Armed Forces Act 2021 imposes a duty on local authorities when exercising certain aspects of public functions in the three key areas of Housing, Healthcare and Education)
- 6.2.3 The team have worked closely with several VCS groups to support and back their applications for the King's Awards for Voluntary Service, celebrating and recognising outstanding work delivered by Sandwell's VCS groups and volunteers.
- 6.2.4 Working with colleagues in Community Safety they supported the development of the Sandwell Hate Crime Awareness video. It was also developed in partnership with the VCS. The video is to support Voluntary organisations who can then support communities/victims. It can be found on Sandwell Council's YouTube channel.
- 6.2.5 At Coyne Road / Manifoldia Grange, the team assisted the local community in addressing neighbourhood development issues and also integrating new residents of Manifoldia Grange (temporary accommodation) into the community. They worked with local residents to develop a programme of activities at the centre, including family support, community health and social activities by utilising ABCD approach.
- 6.2.6 At Addenbrooke Court the team have worked to enable residents to utilise a community flat that had been closed for some time. They have built a strong relationship with some tenant volunteers

who have carried outdoor to work with other residents. The team have supported and nurtured the group throughout and connected them with another C.I.C in the area. They have organised regular drop-ins, arts and crafts and a series of litter picks. This has culminated in Member support and raising the profile of the area so that senior officers have recently been able to re-open a basketball court that had been closed for over 2 years.

6.2.7 The team have worked in a co-productive way with Housing Service Officers to encourage tenant and resident engagement on the Ridgeway Estate. Newsletters have been produced to ensure people on the estate know who to contact such as reporting fly-tipped waste. Historically involvement has been low but as a result of intensive work regular meetings and walkabouts now take place. Building trust and rapport in any community is difficult and this has taken time to break down barriers and suspicion, but the ice is melting and there now appears to be a positive mood. This way of working is also about to start on the Moat Farm estate in partnership with Black Country Housing Group (BCHG) and a launch litter pick event is due to take place during the Tipton Safer Six week in September 2023.

6.2.8 The Tipton Love Where you live project has evolved with partners such as Summerhill Primary Academy, Tibbington TRA, SERCO, Tipton Litterwatch, Tipton Neighbourhood Partnership Team, the Police and the local PCSO's have all been involved in regular litter picks across the Princes End Ward. Children from the school have also planted wildflower seeds and have worked closely as part of the ECO Council at Summerhill Primary School, the children were recently presented by the Mayor of Sandwell with a certificate of recognition and reading books donated by Mother Earth and Dog, Duck and Cat, environment education providers again as a way of saying "thank you". More events are planned for 2023 into 2024 to ensure continuity and to make sure the areas in which the children live, and play is safe and somewhere to be proud of.

7. Implications

Resources:	There are no specific resource implications arising from this report..
Legal and Governance:	In relation to tenants it is set out in the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023.
Risk:	There are no specific risk implications arising from this report.
Equality:	The Neighbourhood Partnership Team have developed local relationships with communities and VCS which has strengthened local engagement, participation and development with all communities enabling inequalities to be addressed and challenging stigmatisation.
Health and Wellbeing:	There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.
Social Value:	There are no specific social value implications arising from this report.
Climate Change:	There are no specific climate change implications arising from this report.
Corporate Parenting:	There are no specific Corporate Parenting implications arising from this report..

8. Appendices

Appendix 1. Neighbourhood Partnerships Team, Structure Chart

Appendix 2. Neighbourhood Partnerships Team, End of Year Report 2022/23.

9. Background Papers

None.