Item No 7

REPORT for meeting to be held on Thursday 15 December 2016

Neighbourhood Model and ward councillors

Summary:

The purpose of the report is to provide information on the council's neighbourhood model and the role of residents and communities so that scrutiny committee can consider the role of ward councillors.

Background:

The council's neighbourhood strategy sets out a vision for neighbourhoods, that a successful, sustainable neighbourhood will:

o   be clean and well cared for by the community and the Council
o   feel safe to live in and move around
o   contain community facilities and activities that cater for the needs of its community; whether young, old or with special or particular needs and interests
o   have local people who take responsibility for their own lives and those of their families
o   have lively challenging community organisations that champion the needs of the people and the neighbourhood and who work to meet those needs independently

The review of the council's neighbourhood model in 2015 identified that the financial savings required by the council for the period 2017-18 to 2020-21 provides a real challenge for how these objectives might still be delivered. A different approach is therefore required to deliver them including an increasing role for residents and collaboration with the voluntary and community sector.

Recommendation: Members are requested to review and comment on the developing work to support and encourage residents to be more active in their communities and to consider the role of ward councillors.

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Background

1. The council's neighbourhood model identifies the opportunities to enable local residents and communities to be more self-sufficient and get more involved in their local areas. This would allow the council to focus its reducing resources on those more vulnerable residents who really need our help.

2. The approach taken was to develop a programme of community enabling through a process of testing and piloting and specifically:
   - Encourage residents to look after areas where they live, to do things for themselves, potentially working with local ward members
   - Making fly tipping or littering etc., unacceptable
   - Encourage people in the local community to support and help each other
   - Facilitate local problem solving working with the council and other partners.

3. The resource to develop and deliver this programme was established from a re-focusing of the community engagement team and the broad objectives were to:

   - support channel shift so residents self-serve
   - improve local activity in neighbourhoods to reduce demand on services such as litter picking, recycling, street litter picks, take on local assets, organise active local groups such as friends of groups etc.
   - allow targeting of council services to areas and people most in need
   - supporting collaborative working between the council, voluntary and community organisations with the VCSE and communities to improve the delivery and availability of services
   - improving residents' social capital and the communities resilience in the face of a changing public sector.

4. The general driver was how the council best harnesses the power of residents to reduce demands on services.

Policy and best practice review

5. In shaping how this activity would be developed and implemented, a policy and good practice review was undertaken including visits to a number of urban areas that were implementing similar approaches. This included Lambeth, Kirklees and Oldham.

6. All three areas developed a range of interventions and activities that promoted and supported resident involvement, including:

    - Lambeth successfully developed a street champions programme

    - Many areas have developed a universal web platform to promote community activities; volunteering; resource availability and to share good practice

    - Targeted grant funding to support community activity.

7. In order to understand if these and other approaches would work in Norwich, pilot activity has been undertaken that builds on and enhances existing activity in the city. This has included:

    - the recruitment of "Street Champions" who act as facilitators within local communities to promote local activity and social action supported by the community enabling team
    - the use of neighbourhood agreements
    - supporting and developing friends of groups to adopt or support open spaces
    - the day to day work of the community enabling team to support community action

8. This activity has been reviewed, including looking at the experience from other local authority areas, to ensure it is right for Norwich.

9. This review has found that:

    National good practice

    - the street champions programme in Lambeth achieved "positive enhancements" of areas, but not any evidenced reduction in street cleaning costs (*Institute for Fiscal Studies Report)*
    - Direct volunteer management is resource intensive, requiring the management of volunteers on a regular basis. Most councils with successful community enabling models have taken a different approach, for example the *Nesta Cities of Service programmes* in Portsmouth, Bristol and Plymouth (MJ article 17.11.16) as there are other organisations better suited to do this

    Norwich pilots and best practice

- a desire from some volunteers recruited as street champions who are actively undertaking local activities such as litter picking, wish to develop a sense of ownership in their community as a participant and not necessarily as a community leader
- the work to support groups adopting open spaces as at Marlpit Woods and West Earlham Woods

- reviewing the scrutiny committee findings on building social capital

- the reducing inequalities pilot work in Lakenham, that is being developed with public sector partners and voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS)

- Many other public services are starting or wanting to replicate this type of activity and are keen to collaborate in a wider city programme where it may be possible to reduce duplication and make best use resources across all organisations.

10. Based on this review three areas of work are being developed.

11. A broader approach to get people involved in their community is being developed in collaboration with residents who came forward as street champions, local VCSE groups, other council services and other public sector organisations to create a programme that has a working title of *Get Involved.*

12. Plans to "join up" the support and resources available for community enabling/community development across different partners which will match the council's contribution with others for better value and to reduce duplication and confusion.

13. Specific projects that will continue to be tested and piloted to make best use of resources including staff time and grant funding. Examples include:

14. **Grassroots neighbourhood activities**

- Networking events and meeting opportunities for VCSE organisations and residents delivered in neighbourhoods in conjunction with local groups
- Workshop and training opportunities based on specific local requirements
- Developing a shared evaluation framework for neighbourhood action

15. **Developing a digital community sharing platform**

- For registering anything groups or partners have to share e.g. space, skills, equipment and more to encourage sharing and not buying to reduce duplication and make best use of resources

- Register as offering opportunities for being involved or search for opportunities to be involved
- Automated generation of local newsletters to online mailing lists
- Online repository of information and ideas to support residents creating their own activities and local services including H&S information and risk assessments

Crowdfunding
- Creating a Norwich *Get involved* crowdfunding platform to match fund community led projects

Community currency
- Designing a complementary community currency (e.g. Time Credits/ Time Bank) to engage residents less able or willing to participate

15. The initial investment for these activities will be met from existing budgets, external grant funding or from partners.

The role of the ward councillor

16. Scrutiny Committee set a number of questions at its meeting of 24 November 2016 which are detailed below, with the responses in the appendices.

   a) How will the public be engaged? That is to say what is being asked of residents and what support will be available to them? How will the sustainability of initiatives that reply on volunteers be secured, for example, ensuring resilience in the event of key individual residents disengaging/moving on?

   b) How will councillors be involved?

   c) How will the resource be allocated to (the) model reflect different patterns of deprivation etc., in the city i.e. areas with more engaged citizens may have an excess of capacity whereas other areas may be less well served – how can we balance this out?

18. An important element of the neighbourhood model is the role of ward councillors and it is therefore timely that Scrutiny Committee chose to have an item on the neighbourhood model in its work programme and in particular the role of ward councillors.

19. A workshop is planned in the meeting to start to answer this question and to draw out the possibilities of this role.

Workshop format and questions:

20. Working in groups, committee members will be asked to discuss the role of councillors through the following questions:

- How are councillors currently engaged and supporting local community activity?

- What do members think is the role of the ward councillor in the enabling programme?

- What support or training do members need to help communities do more for themselves?

21. This information will be used to develop the role of members and the support required to achieve this.

Appendix 1

1. How will the public be engaged? That is to say what is being asked of residents and what support will be available to them? How will the sustainability of initiatives that reply on volunteers be secured, for example, ensuring resilience in the event of key individual residents disengaging/moving on?

Residents are being encouraged to participate in their local community in ways to suit themselves. The Get Involved programme is not simply encouraging volunteering as many residents will not be ready for that level of commitment or feel it is not suitable for their lifestyles. Get Involved is designed to offer multiple entry points and tools depending on confidence, as well a development journey for residents wanting to increase their own skills and abilities.

Residents are being asked to:
- *Access the activities being put by others in neighbourhoods (e.g. attending family events at local neighbourhood venues)*
- *Participating in informal volunteering (e.g. speaking to neighbours) and participating in one off events organised by others (e.g. community litter pick)*
- *Develop their own activity-building skills by accessing workshops delivered in neighbourhoods*
- *Access support and tools to develop their own neighbourhood projects*
- *Engage with local community and voluntary organisations already in the community to strengthen their work and services*

The key is to involve everyone and make the project as accessible as far as possible so that over-reliance on any one person or group is avoided. Using theory of change modelling and behaviour change techniques, the programme aims to normalise all forms of participation into something which becomes a natural part of neighbourhood life for residents.

Get Involved aims to build on existing structures and create a better connected network of people and organisations with a shared vision for the city, where everyone contributes what they are able.

The tools available for residents will comprise of:
- *Toolkits for self-service project development and delivery (e.g. how to run a community street party)*
- *Workshops and training delivered in communities by NCC and partners aimed at the identified needs of the neighbourhood (e.g. training on grant writing, using social media, using digital fundraising)*
- *Shared resources made available and publicised (e.g. gardening equipment, litter pickers, etc)*
- *Better awareness of local assets such as space to hold events or what local services are available*
- *Templates for H&S assessments, guidance on insurance and myth-busting around permissions needed to create activities*

- *An evaluation took kit to help groups evidence their impact in a way which is comparable across the city*

As an example:

West Pottergate – *building from what started as a neighbourhood agreement and a small number of people coming forward who were interested as street champions, it was suggested to residents by their community enabling officer (CEO) that by working together and with other local organisations they would be better able to do more in the area.*

The CEO worked with residents to plan engagement events which were hosted locally and introduced complementary groups working in the area to each other. As a result there is now a residents group with a chairperson who are planning activities and lobbying neighbours to join; a renewed relationship with Grapes Hill Community Garden and the Norwich Operatic Society who have a building next to the estate who wish to use their venue as a community hub during daytimes when it isn't currently in use and have written a grant bid to pay for the associated costs. Ward councillors have been involved in shaping these meetings and participating in activities.

As residents develop and decide what activities and events they would like to run, CEOs will look at the skills they identify they need and help bring in buddy organisations who can advise them and share best practice, look for companies willing to offer workshops and training, and help them create a wider network of residents and partner organisations in the area. They will be encouraged to offer/borrow equipment for their activities, meaning they don't need to find a way to fund buying anything new; should they want to measure the impact on those taking part, they will have access to a simple evaluation model meaning they are able to bid for additional funding from external sources to expand and grow.

By having a wide network of people and groups, if any one organisation dissolves or any key residents leave, they will have other people trained and ready to move into the space to continue to network and the ethos in the estate.

2. How will councillors be involved? A workshop discussion proposed

3. How will the resource be allocated to (the) model reflect different patterns of deprivation etc., in the city i.e. areas with more engaged citizens may have an excess of capacity whereas other areas may be less well served – how can we balance this out?

   The Get Involved model is flexible and allows for self-service where skills are in place, and more involvement by officers and partner

organisations where there is less motivation or ability.

By monitoring uptake, it will be identified where areas are participating less and time can be focused on those neighbourhoods to offer more support, not only from officers and professional but by asking the successful neighbourhoods to help those less able.

The key to the programme is in the city wide network which builds, allowing peer-to-peer support and the sharing of skills and resources across geographical boundaries. Meaning that where neighbourhoods and communities are comfortable as leaders and "doers", they are part of the support solution for others who aren't.

In elements such as the Crowdfunding platform, officers will be able to be flexible with levels of funding; weighting the granting of funding so that less able areas will receive more and those capable of generating external funding will receive less.