

# EXETER CITY COUNCIL

## SCRUTINY COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

4 MARCH 2008

### UPDATE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD ENGAGEMENT PILOT

#### 1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members of the Committee on progress in the Council's Neighbourhood Engagement Pilot

#### 2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Exeter City Council launched the Neighbourhood Engagement Pilot, "My Neighbourhood" in June 2007 aiming to increase citizenship participation at neighbourhood level in four areas in the city; Exwick, St David's, Newtown/Polsloe and Kings Heath/Clyst Heath.
- 2.2 The object of the 18-month pilot is to set up and develop *inclusive* Local Partnerships, embracing existing local community groups, as well as inviting and enabling local people not currently involved, to join the partnerships. Each partnership has the brief to identify local issues, to raise these with the agencies concerned – not just the City Council – and, being allocated an initial budget of £5000 per area, will be able to decide on the use of small local grants for local initiatives to improve the neighbourhood.
- 2.3 Exeter Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) and Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) have allocated a part-time worker each to engage, develop and support the Local Partnerships, in addition to offering their existing services and resources to complement the project (eg funding, constitutional advice and training).
- 2.4 The City Council Community Involvement and Inclusion Officer works closely with project co-ordinators from ECI and Exeter CVS, and meets quarterly with a Steering Group comprising a range of Local Councillors, Council Officers and external agencies – particularly the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary. Local Councillors in the pilot areas have demonstrated support for the project by regularly attending partnership meetings.
- 2.5 Devon and Cornwall Police have started on a process of promoting their Community Engagement work through the launch of the PACT (Partners and Community Together). They are aiming to have quarterly meetings in each locality to invite residents to share their concerns regarding community safety and any other issues related to their community. It has been agreed that in the four pilot areas the police would work together with the city council to promote 'My Neighbourhood' and use this opportunity to collect the information they need for PACT. There were initial teething problems with PACT in some areas where the message of joint working had not reached local beat managers who were continuing to organise PACT meetings. This led to some confusion for local people about the purpose of the different meetings and for officers

involved in delivering the work. After various meetings with team leaders and Neighbourhood Beat managers this confusion seems to have been resolved and we are now able to focus on a on a positive partnership approach.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1 As well as building the capacity of local people and partnerships, the project aims to improve statutory agencies' responses to local issues identified through the Local Partnerships. Project workers will record issues raised through the partnerships and their progress through the system monitored. This will enable tracking of the progress of issues, and allow more effective feedback to be given back to the community on the outcome or status of an issue raised.
- 3.2 Careful monitoring will underpin the project throughout and allow for learning to take place and to be disseminated, across the city, for future roll-out, and in the region through 'Every Voice Counts'. This approach is being promoted through the SHIP and the officers group who are looking at community engagement issues for the council.

### **4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The City Council allocated a total of £71,000 to the project, which includes project staff from Exeter Community Initiatives (ECI) /Exeter CVS and a budget of £5000 allocated to each Local Partnership.

### **5 RECOMMENDED**

- (1) That the Committee notes progress in the Pilot.
- (2) That the Committee notes at Appendix 1, the review of activities in each of the Pilot areas

ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

S:LP/Committee/308SCC11  
21.2.08

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT

**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

**Background papers used in compiling this report:-**

None

**MY NEIGHBOURHOOD PARTNERSHIP  
Review and planning for 2008**

**Newtown/Polsloe**

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database quite strong (60) after doing a number of summer events to promote the project in the area.</li> <li>• Contact made with numbers of positive individuals who are committed to working together to improving the community for all.</li> <li>• Vibrant active community, most of which is focused around Belmont park.</li> <li>• Good support from Police colleagues and local councillors.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Database mostly focuses on Newtown residents, not Polsloe.</li> <li>• Lack of suitable venues for meetings in the Polsloe area.</li> <li>• Lack of community focal point – shops, as in Heavitree and Cowick, where people meet</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good links with churches, community organisations, action groups.</li> <li>• Links with student community to support community events.</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical geography/road layout of the two areas means that it will be difficult to develop one Partnership that is representative of both areas.</li> <li>• Area quite disparate in terms of community members</li> <li>• Large transitional population, mainly students, in Polsloe – hard to engage.</li> </ul>

**Action for 2008.**

1. January - planning meeting for local councillors and Neighbourhood Police Officers to plan dates and venues for partnership meetings for 2008.
2. Personal letter and leaflet to every resident in area inviting them to make suggestions for use of the £5,000 grant available for area, also to give information on main concerns and ideas for improving the area.
3. Plan the launch of the Partnership by inviting all community organisations/faith groups/action groups to attend an event on the 6<sup>th</sup> March in St. Marks Church Hall. Offer opportunity for organisations to make an application to bid for monies from the £5,000 grant.
4. Carole (ECI) to offer support to community organisations on their development and to support community campaigns. Carole to support Residents associations/Community groups to develop a Community Plan for progression through the partnership.
5. Emma (CVS) to offer structured and informal 'Speaking up in your community' support to individuals and groups.

## St. David's

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good support from Police colleagues and local councillors.</li> <li>• Strong existing community organisation – St. David's Neighbourhood Partnership (SDNP) who have established vision and action plan. Need little support from the ECC 'My Neighbourhood' initiative other than access to grants.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing SDNP potential to monopolise focus of initiative, and applications for grants.</li> <li>• Difficulty of engaging with the transitional members of the community. Organisations representing these groups have not responded to requests for input to the partnership.</li> <li>• Only 30 on data base for the whole area</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To give half of grant available to the existing SDNP to enable them to progress their action plan for the area.</li> <li>• To focus energies in the area on the other areas in St David's not covered by the existing SDNP.</li> <li>• To involve businesses in the partnership.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor turn out at open meetings that have taken place to date (outside of the launch in September at the SDNP AGM.)</li> </ul> <p>Anecdotal tales of some residents' resentment of SDNP, which could de-rail initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical geography of the area – huge ward with many disparate parts; city centre, quay, residential area etc. This includes businesses/student housing/ hostels for vulnerable people with complex needs, private housing, social housing and sheltered accommodation. Will be difficult to develop one Partnership that is representative of whole area.</li> <li>• Large transitional population, students, and people in hostels. – hard to engage.</li> </ul>

### Action for 2008:

1. January - planning meeting for local councillors and Neighbourhood Police Officers/PCSO's to plan dates, venues and to confirm proposals for way forward in area for partnership meetings for 2008.
2. Dawn continue to attend SDNP meetings to keep up to date with their progress. Negotiate responsibility for awarding grants from the £2,500 with Councillor involvement in decision-making.

3. Focus on developing partnership with Shilhay residents with support from ECC housing officers.
4. Carole and Emma to support other groups in raising their concerns and contributing to action plan for area.
5. To look at potential for developing Partnership for other parts of the area not covered by SDNP. If going ahead, organise an event inviting organisations to make bids for finances from the £2,500 grant to support improvements in the area.

## Exwick

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good support from Police colleagues and local councillors.</li> <li>• 46 currently on database in area.</li> <li>• New community venue on Kinnerton way.</li> <li>• Three venues in different parts of the area suitable for meetings.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical geography of the area – huge ward with many disparate parts; will be difficult to develop one Partnership that is representative of whole area.</li> <li>• Area splits into three distinct communities; Redhills, Foxhayes and Kinnerton way.</li> <li>• Community Association at present not strong enough to attract new members and help build a Vision and action plan for the area. Needs a lot of support.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two campaign groups in the area – opportunities to engage people in the partnership.</li> <li>• To capacity build the Exwick Community Association (ECA) to enable them to represent local residents views on the Partnership.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor turn out at open meetings that have taken place to date.</li> <li>• Campaign groups could breed dissatisfaction with pilot if they feel their views are not influencing decision-making. The two campaigns are currently in opposition to council decisions re. granting of permission for charity to provide house for ex-offenders in area and against the proposals for Social Housing on St. Andrews road.</li> <li>• Poor response from housing Associations in area, therefore difficulties in making contact with the ‘hard to reach’ parts of the community.</li> <li>• History of efforts and disillusionment</li> </ul>

### Action for 2008

1. January - planning meeting for local councillors and Neighbourhood Police officers/PCSO's to plan dates, venues and to confirm proposals for way forward in area for partnership meetings for 2008.
2. Invite local organisations/faith groups etc across the Exwick ward to attend a launch event for the Exwick ‘My Neighbourhood’ Partnership. Groups to be invited to bid for grants of up to £250 (20 grants) prior to day, and make their presentation as part of the

event. Councillors, Police and community rep. to make decision on allocating grants at first Partnership meeting.

3. Carole (ECI) to support ECA in developing their capacity, and to develop proposals for action plan to present at Partnership. Emma to offer informal Speaking Up support at existing groups and with individuals.

## Kings Heath

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good support from Police colleagues and local councillors.</li> <li>• 90 + currently on database in area.</li> <li>• Three very well attended public meetings to date. (Two with 60 – 70 residents present)</li> <li>• Motivated group of residents who are contributing to the planning and organisation of the Partnership meetings.</li> <li>• Good support from partner organisations in attending public meetings: Devon Youth Service, Devon Children &amp; Family Services, RSL's, school governors, Chief Inspector of Police (attended two meetings).</li> <li>• Excellent support from Clyst Heath Primary School in providing an excellent venue for meetings, also in displaying the minutes of the partnership meeting on their web site.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary school is only infrastructure in area. Difficulty in identifying other organisations/projects to take part in the partnership as very few represented in area.</li> <li>• Although good attendance at meetings, this does tend to represent the more articulate and active members of the community.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support for development of a residents association to help take the partnership forward and to ensure representation across the community.</li> <li>• Opportunity to build from new a strong community partnership with partner organisations support.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High expectations of residents who have contributed to meetings so far who will want to see action and results very quickly.</li> <li>• The difficulty of resolving some issues as some of the land is still in the ownership of developers and confusion over responsibility for some issues.</li> </ul>

## **Actions for 2008**

1. Initial meeting in January to be used to support the setting up of a Residents association (Carole)
2. Start of partnership meetings with representatives from residents association and other organisations in area. Partnership to meet at least quarterly.
3. Quarterly open meetings/events to give feedback on progress to the big group of residents who have already shown commitment to the partnership.