

For General Release

REPORT TO:	CABINET 20 November 2017
SUBJECT:	Community empowerment and devolution
LEAD OFFICER:	Shifa Mustafa, Executive Director, Place Kirsteen Roe, Head of Assets and Involvement
CABINET MEMBER:	Cllr Hamida Ali, Cabinet member for Communities, Safety and Justice
WARDS:	New Addington, Fieldway, Purley, South Norwood and Woodside

CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON

This proposal supports the Corporate Priority outcome 'to be open and transparent and put communities at the heart of decision making'.

Croydon's Community Strategy 2016-21 includes the following key outcomes and associated priorities:

Outcome Three: A Place with a Vibrant and Connected Community and Voluntary Sector, which includes the partnership priorities:

- Building cohesive and stronger communities connecting our residents, local groups and community organisations
- Strengthen and mobilising our voluntary, community and social enterprise sector.

Croydon's Stronger Communities Plan 2016-19 includes priorities to:

- Promote greater community participation and opportunities to influence local priorities including use of community ward budgets
- Explore opportunities for communities to have more responsibility for the things that matter most to them and their neighbourhoods.

A detailed equality analysis was provided through the work of Croydon's Opportunity and Fairness Commission (OFC) in 2016 and is a qualitative evidence base relating to the equality and inclusion issues in Croydon. The OFC recognised that continued emphasis needs to be placed on engagement with neighbourhoods, identifying community 'assets' and enabling local innovation, energy and commitment to come forward and contribute to improving the places we live. The community empowerment and devolution early adopters demonstrate the council's commitment to the recommendations of the OFC.

The Localism Act 2011 includes measures to decentralise power to localities, giving more freedoms for local government and new powers for communities and individuals.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

FORWARD PLAN KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO. N/A This report is for information purposes

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1.1 Note the contents of this report.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This is a first stage report setting out progress to date of the Community empowerment and devolution project as agreed by Cabinet in November 2016, and supporting the community strategy ambition for vibrant and connected communities.
- 2.2 This report details progress since the project inception; agreed principles and pillars that support the council's approach, funding that supports its implementation and progress in each of the three early adopter areas.

3. APPROACH

- 3.1 A report to Cabinet (14th November 2016), entitled "Devolution to Communities" [minute reference A112/16] set out the council's ambition and intention to further enhance opportunities to enable local community engagement and involvement in local decisions. Building on the successful Gateway model (which brings together a range of services around the individual or household to achieve better outcomes), this approach provides an opportunity to consider how to shape local services around the needs of neighbourhoods and communities.
- 3.2 Three early adopter areas were identified - South Norwood and Woodside, New Addington and Fieldway and Purley – and it was agreed that an update on progress would be provided to cabinet in autumn 2017.
- 3.3 Best practice and case studies were reviewed, ranging from participatory budgeting to community engagement in local initiatives through to full scale organisational change to enable local governance and commissioning. Examples can be found in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 Drawing on these case studies, a series of principles and "pillars" of the

approach in Croydon were developed.

3.5 The principles are:

- *Member led* – Ward members as community leaders
- *Local* – Responding to local context, need and ambitions
- *Asset based* – Understanding and building on the strengths of an area including existing assets (social and physical) rather than focusing on deficits
- *Inclusive* – Engaging a wide cross section of the community including underrepresented groups, while recognizing that not everyone will want to engage or will with one another
- *Managing expectations* – Ensuring that there is clarity about what can be influenced or changed and what can't
- *Evolution not revolution* – Building on existing ambitions and initiatives rather than creating something completely new
- *Flexible and proportionate* – making it easy for people/the community to engage. Balancing accountability with ease of process
- *Visible impact* – delivering quick wins and feeding back to those involved.

3.6 The five aspects or “pillars” of community empowerment and devolution that the early adopters will focus on are:

- *Inclusive and representative engagement/local involvement*
 - engagement methods
 - locally developed plans and proposals
- *Community leadership*
 - councillors as community leaders
 - the role of local groups and organisations
- *Funding*
 - local budgets – community ward budgets, S106, CIL
 - leveraging other funding sources (including external)
- *Capacity building for the community and voluntary sector*
 - sustainability (including increasing volunteering) and exit planning
 - better use of physical assets available in the borough
- *Addressing locally identified needs, issues and opportunities*
 - contribution to outcomes (e.g. growth, health, social isolation)

3.7 The council wants to work with and empower local communities so that, collectively, we achieve better outcomes. This doesn't necessarily mean people taking over and running services that have traditionally been run by the council. It's also about involving communities in local decision-making, empowering and enabling local people and groups to deliver their ambitions for their local area and supporting individuals or groups to access community funds that councils can't apply for. The name of the project was changed to community empowerment and devolution to reflect this.

3.8 Case studies show that seed funding can kick start local initiatives and feasibility funding for larger projects can enable much larger funding pots to be accessed. To this end, a total of £60k of the Community Infrastructure Levy (Meaningful Local Proportion) is being made available to the community devolution early adopters. This decision has been taken under officer delegated

authority in consultation with the Cabinet member for Homes, Regeneration and Planning. Decisions in relation to how this is spent will be taken at a local level with ward councillors having the final decision, but being informed by a local steering group and wider community engagement.

- 3.9 Guidance for the use of CIL by ward members has been prepared and agreed by the Infrastructure Finance Group (see Appendix 2). A simple form has been developed for councillors and community representatives to use when allocating funds (see Appendix 3). Whilst assurance will be provided by an officer group (to ensure CIL legislation is adhered to for example) the allocation decision sits locally in each of the three early adopter areas.
- 3.10 As part of the council's wider commitment to community empowerment, ward budgets have also been increased for 2017/18. Funding per ward is now £24,000, split equally between the ward councillors.

4.0 EARLY ADOPTERS

- 4.1 The three early adopters were chosen for their diversity in relation to demographics, location and need. Whilst each early adopter project is different and unique to that area, there are some similarities between the three. In each area a focus has emerged that is relevant to the area, a steering group is being formed with councillor and community representation and there is an expectation that this group will lead on wider community engagement. The focus for each area is:
- Purley – particular focus on the Rotary Fields Park and an emerging focus on older people and social isolation.
 - South Norwood- focus on economic growth and physical regeneration (We Love SE25) of the district centre
 - New Addington and Fieldway – focus on health and wellbeing

Purley

- 4.2 Purley councillors have held two community meetings since the summer. The group identified concerns around vandalism of public spaces and property and have identified a common concern regards Rotary Field and a desire to reactivate the space, address issues of vandalism and bring back an unused asset into a use that benefits the community.
- 4.3 In the short term the group is aiming to establish a friends of Rotary Field group and to identify a use for the inactive toilet block in the park which provides a community benefit.
- 4.4 The option of a community asset transfer will be explored.

South Norwood and Woodside

- 4.5 South Norwood and Woodside adopted the phrase 'We Love SE25' last year and had already produced a Community Economic Development Plan (CEDP) by May 2017 (see Appendix 4). The CEDP was informed by consultation with local residents and businesses through a programme of 'drop-in' style events in

March this year – two of which were targeted at local businesses. The group found this format of event to be particularly successful in terms of capturing more people's views compared to a more traditional public meeting format. As a result, the group plan to use this format to launch the plan and report back regularly to the local community.

- 4.6 Community meetings have been held twice under the banner of community empowerment and devolution and the short term priority has been agreed as involving a wider group of community stakeholders in helping to shape and deliver "We Love SE25" priorities.
- 4.7 The group plans to formally constitute a "We Love SE25" steering group or "town team" and publicly launch the CEDP in 2017. Following this they will hold a series of interactive community consultations and discussion events to inform the delivery of the CEDP.
- 4.8 In the longer term there is an ambition to attract significant funding to the area to support the delivery of the CEDP and consideration will be given to the use of the CIL meaningful local proportion funds for feasibility or match funding that could help to achieve this.

New Addington and Fieldway

- 4.9 The New Addington and Fieldway early adopter project is focused on removing barriers to being more physically active ("Active Addington"). An Active Addington steering group is being established with input from local councillors and community representatives as well as a wider virtual reference group to ensure that there is wide community input to proposals.
- 4.10 Both wards have high levels of health deprivation. Community asset mapping carried out in the summer identified a wide variety of local facilities and initiatives in relation to keeping active, but some of these appear under-used. This project will focus on increasing opportunities for individuals to be more active in an inclusive, affordable and accessible way. The scope of the project covers more formal activities and facilities such as activating the new outdoor gym and use of the community space in the new leisure centre, but will also ask questions such as "what are the barriers to increasing use of our parks and open spaces?" and "what are the barriers to increasing walking and cycling?".
- 4.11 An engagement strategy is being drafted which will center around engagement with existing social and physical assets. The aim is to better understand local barriers to use, the local demands and priorities, and to identify solutions that can encourage increase activity.
- 4.12 The Active Addington project will be trialling a digital engagement tool, *Social Pinpoint*, to assist with mapping and as a general engagement tool. Use of the tool will be coupled with a face to face engagement strategy. The council has secured a free license for this project and will be assessing its ease of use and potential for wider uses and benefits, including engagement with younger people and other sections of the community that are less likely to engage with traditional methods such as evening meetings.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 Over the coming six months there will be a continued and increased focus on wider community engagement and further community asset mapping as described above in Section 4, Early Adopters.
- 5.2 There will also be an increased focus on the role the council can play in providing data to the local steering groups being established to support evidence based decision making in each area.
- 5.3 As the steering groups become established and wider community engagement occurs, the expectation is that the CIL meaningful local proportion funds will be committed to local projects in each of the three areas.
- 5.4 There will be a review of the approach to community empowerment and devolution which will include lessons learnt from each of the three early adopter areas, evaluation of impact and recommendations for a borough wide approach to empowerment and devolution which will be presented to cabinet in summer 2018.

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 A total of £60,000 of CIL meaningful local proportion funding has been allocated to the three early adopter areas (£20,000 per area) in addition to the ward budgets already available.
- 6.2 Ward members and the local steering groups established will be responsible for defining the outcomes they intend to achieve through the allocation of the CIL meaningful local proportion funds, using the CIL MLP allocation form attached in Appendix 3. Outcomes are expected to align to at least one of the three community strategy objectives.
- 6.3 **Risks** – Risks of this approach include councillor and community capacity and the risk of raising unrealistic expectations at a time of declining public funds. These risks are being managed and monitored within the early adopter areas and will be considered in any recommendations relating to a borough wide approach.
- 6.4 **Future savings/efficiencies** – Case studies from those councils which have a more established community devolution model suggest that there can be financial savings generated through this approach. The benefits of community empowerment and devolution over the next five years could include:
 - Increased funding attracted into the borough. In some cases this could reduce reliance on council resource or funds
 - Managing demand on council services. For example, bringing community resources together to address demand through a focus on community led preventative measures such as local initiatives to tackle social isolation.

- Reducing the costs of assets where there is the opportunity for greater use of assets by other providers, services or local groups or, in some cases, asset transfer.

(Approved by Lisa Taylor – Director of Finance Investment and Risk)

7. COMMENTS OF THE COUNCIL SOLICITOR AND MONITORING OFFICER

- 7.1 The Solicitor to the Council comments that there are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

(Approved for and on behalf of Jacqueline Harris Baker, Director of Law, Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer)

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 8.1 There are no immediate HR implications that arise from the recommendations in this report for LBC staff.

(Approved by: Sue Moorman, Director of Human Resources)

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 The Council's equality policy and objectives were agreed at Cabinet in April 2016. Three objectives are particularly relevant to the early adopter projects set out above and the impact that these projects can have in supporting the achievement of these objectives will be reviewed as part of a wider review of the community empowerment and devolution approach. These objectives are:

- Increase the rate of employment for disabled people, young people, over 50s and lone parents who are furthest away from the job market (South Norwood and Woodside)
- Reduce social isolation among disabled people and older people (Purley)
- Reduce differences in life expectancy between communities (New Addington and Fieldway)

- 9.2 In addition, the project is seeking to identify means of engagement that are more accessible and attractive to sections of our communities that the council has traditionally found harder to engage with. The effectiveness of different engagement mechanisms, both digital and face to face, as well as the roles of councillors as community leaders and other local groups and organisations will be evaluated and reviewed as part of the wider review of the community empowerment and devolution approach.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 10.1 The Council will ensure that environmental impacts potentially arising from local projects are given appropriate measures, and measures to mitigate any adverse effects are developed and implemented.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 11.1 Local projects that include employment creation, supporting skills development and improving the environment have the potential to contribute to overall efforts to divert people away from crime and disorder. Regeneration and development also provides the opportunity to design out environmental factors that enable crime and anti-social behaviour to take place.
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APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT

Appendix 1 – Community devolution case studies

Appendix 2 – CIL MLP guidance

Appendix 3 – CIL MLP allocation form

Appendix 4 – South Norwood Community Economic Development Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

“Devolution to communities” cabinet paper, November 2016