



Cabinet
13 March 2017

Report from Head of Strategy and Partnerships

For Action

Community Action Groups Review Pilot - January – July 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to provide a review of the Community Action Groups (CAGs) Pilot conducted January – July 2016 by the Partnerships and Engagement Team. It will also provide recommendations identified following the review.
- 1.2 This report considers the following:
- CAG Overview
 - CAG Pilot
 - Review Recommendations
 - CAG Budget Spend

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 For Cabinet to:
- 2.2 • Approve the discontinuation of the CAG pilot
- 2.3 • Approve the allocation of funding to support the Love Where You Live (LWYL) Campaign
- 2.4 • Approve the grants process set out in paragraph seven
- 2.5 • Approve the launch of the LWYL grant funding in April 2017

3. Community Action Group Overview

- 3.1 The CAGs pilot was approved by the Corporate Management Team in December 2015. Community Action Groups were the model through which the council intended to provide that necessary bit of help to release capacity in local communities and help turn good ideas into reality. The model was developed to provide support, empowerment and engagement with residents for initiatives at a very local level with access to a small pot of funding.
- 3.2 CAGs are a very broad-based mechanism and involve a number of different elements, organisations and sign-off to provide local level initiatives which seek to bring communities together, encourage community resilience, a pride in where you live and build a stronger more engaged relationship with the Council

3.3 The aims of the CAGs were to:

- Provide a meaningful consultation and engagement with residents and service users
- Ensure that the necessary redesign of services is delivered effectively and collaboratively, while still achieving better outcomes for all stakeholders and the borough
- Offer small grants to enable bespoke support for local projects that matter to local people and in turn make a difference to their quality of life and make a real difference where they live.

4. CAG Pilot Review

4.1 Three areas were identified to pilot the CAGs:

- **Harlesden** – comprising Harlesden, Kensal Green and Stonebridge wards
- **Kingsbury** – comprising Fryent and Queensbury wards
- **Neasden** – comprising Dollis Hill, Dudden Hill and Welsh Harp wards

4.2 The delivery of the CAGs included inviting councillors in the pilot areas to meetings and providing detailed briefing notes. The meetings were an opportunity for councillors to provide their input on local priorities that can be linked to an effective development and success of the pilots.

4.3 Initial meetings generated a number of ideas:

- Harlesden: clean-up days, raising awareness of dog fouling around Furness Road open space and encouraging volunteer support for the community library
- Kingsbury: clean-up days, an Eastern European education programme, reducing social isolation, road safety awareness and tackling childhood obesity.
- Neasden: clean up days, tackling street drinking, crime and gangs around Neasden shopping centre, tackling street drinking in Church Lane, illegal housing conversions and developing activities in Gladstone Park

4.4 Some of the comments and feedback from councillors engaged during the CAGs pilot included:

Kingsbury

- Councillors raised concern about getting people to engage if they don't think the council is getting the basics right, such as street cleaning.

Neasden

- Work could be split into themes .e.g. two months tackling fly-tipping then move to next issue
- Maximise use of electronic media e.g. Your Brent e-newsletter
- Dovetail with existing new initiatives and campaigns e.g. Love Where You Live
- Make use of Brent Connects to publicise activities (in conjunction with other publicity)
- Use of action days and drop in days as a good way of engaging residents –

- especially at venues used by the local community
- Initiatives could be developed around established events e.g. an inter-school competition themed around the World Cup or projects which seek to tackle social disconnect and isolation
- Not all people want to be engaged. There is also meeting fatigue. People may be reluctant to get involved unless they can see how they can influence the decision making process
- There are people taking action locally, it isn't about having endless meetings, there has to be resources to support it
- In Welsh Harp they wanted officer support to help train young people in sustainable event/community management

Harlesden

- Brent Connects already lets people take action and do things for themselves, so no need to duplicate with CAG
- Those who come to surgeries are desperate; they're not interested in engaging
- There are people taking action locally, it isn't about having endless meetings, there has to be resources to support it
- We need funds to do things, we can't keep on talking

4.5 Councillors' feedback that residents may have meeting fatigue which resulted in low interest in the CAGs pilot. As the existing CAG framework is fairly bureaucratic and requires a level of organisation and that in itself may have been viewed as a barrier to local residents, resident and community groups applying for the small grants available. Additionally that CAGs should be dovetailed with existing new initiatives for the example the LWYL campaign and utilising action days as a good way of engaging residents especially in venues used by the local community.

4.6 It became apparent during the pilot that the framework involved setting up an entire structure with councillors leading projects, working in a multi-agency approach to fund small community projects. This approach was identified as being unappealing to local residents and take-up to deliver projects and apply for funding was very low. Only 3 projects were identified and no applications were submitted.

4.7 The feedback and comments made by Councillors support a grant scheme that encourages residents to engage in their local areas, supporting and expanding community cohesion, providing residents with an opportunity to access funds with less bureaucracy and fewer meetings, Councillors were keen that projects were linked to new initiatives and specifically the Love Where You Live project and made use of digital technology.

The development of the recommendations took into account the comments and feedback made by Councillors involved in the pilot.

5. The next Steps

5.1 Following discussion with Councillors, CVS and officers who have been working on the pilot, discussions started on looking at developing alternative proposals which included aligning the funding with the Love Where You Live brand – streamlining the structure and widening access to the small pot of funding to allow any active resident to apply. Grants would offer a low level of funding of a maximum of £500 to provide support to community projects across a wide range of areas – this would fill a gap that was identified by Councillors, officers and the CVS of need for small amounts of funding that

could not be met elsewhere. Funding would be wide-ranging and have a flexibility that current funding pots do not offer. Funding would include community cohesion, environmental projects, events, activities community engagement.

- 5.2 The Love Where You Live campaign is one of six priority 'Gold level' campaigns, sought to encourage residents to take greater pride in their area by nudging them to take one or more simple actions to help make Brent's streets cleaner and greener. Due to the effectiveness of the campaign approach and ongoing challenges, a second phase of this campaign is now proposed to build on the strong foundations we now have in place.
- 5.3 The remit of the LWYL campaign is wide-ranging and will be promoted across the Borough to groups and individuals including:
- Local residents
 - Residents' groups
 - Schools
 - Religious and faith groups
 - Community groups
 - Cleaner, greener groups e.g. Keep Wembley Tidy and Harlesden Environmental Action Residents Team
- 5.4 Following on from the successful Love where you Live Campaign, an impressive number of residents across Brent engaged in environmental projects and cleaning up their local areas. It is a logical next step to consider the alignment of the two programmes and expand to include a grant provision to encourage community cohesion activities and projects.
- 5.5 The CAGs engendered the same ethos and the project attempted to set up very similar projects within a more bureaucratic delivery framework. LWYL resonates with the key aim of CAGs, promoting citizen empowerment along with a sense of civic pride in Brent.
- 5.6 It is the logical next step to integrate the models for engaging with local communities and specifically providing funding to local residents, residents and community groups. The grant will enable, establish and strengthen community cohesion, building sustainable relationships within neighbours, community groups and other local stakeholders whilst taking pride in their local neighbourhood. Additionally building and strengthening relationships with Brent Council through the LWYL funding programme and support provided for developing and capacity building communities. With changing demographics and increasing populations it is an ideal opportunity to focus on community cohesion, supporting and encouraging robust communities and neighbourhoods that engage positively with their local Council.
- 5.7 Aligning CAGs with LWYL will contribute positively towards the council's Brent 2020 vision, as well as the targets and outcomes in the borough plan by helping to support Brent residents locally – where it matters to them. It will encourage more involvement in local initiatives and promote volunteering in the borough.
- 5.8 A programme supporting residents to initiate, develop and deliver local projects requires a more streamlined structure with easily accessible funding and would be a perfect complement to the LWYL campaign.

6. The benefits of aligning with Love Where You Live Campaign

- 6.1 To align with a campaign that successfully engaged with residents providing local improvements and benefits to the Council. The results to date have been very promising:
- Supported by the service changes in 2015, since the campaign began, there has been an 11.5% increase in recycling (per tonne) recorded.
 - Within the six months since the launch of LWYL, 12 clean up days have been organised. This represents a 200% increase compared to the same period the previous year
 - To provide the opportunity for resident-led initiatives in addition to the current environmental projects.
- 6.2 To support the expansion and embed the ethos of Love Where You Live a small grants fund of up to a maximum of £500, per project, would provide the opportunity to increase engagement by financially supporting local community projects initiated and delivered by residents that enhance and support community cohesion and pride in their local neighbourhood.
- 6.3 LWYL will align with the Brent Connects areas and funding will be apportioned equally between each area approx. £10k each. Promotion of the grant funding will be in line with the LWYL phase 2 campaign and the Partnerships and Engagement Team will work closely with Communications colleagues to market and promote the grants in each locality.

7. Governance Arrangements

- 7.1 The bureaucracy involved in LWYL will be minimal and will take a resident-led approach. Projects will be initiated, developed and delivered by residents in their local neighbourhoods. The scheme is intended to be light touch with an emphasis on supporting small scale interventions. Ward councillors will be informed of the applications and projects within their ward by the partnerships and engagement team.
- 7.2 Capital grants will be available up to £500 for developing community resilience, a community-led approach to tackling environmental issues and events which foster and develop community cohesion, particularly where this works across communities and cultural groups. The scheme will seek to encourage new groups who have not previously been funded by the council. Criteria will not overlap with existing Council grant programmes to avoid applications from the 'usual suspects'.

8. Actions: February – May 2017

- 8.1
- Partnerships and Engagement Team to work in partnership with the communications Team on the LWYL project and campaign to launch April 2017
 - To finalise the grant application documentation and the process, upload online and to ensure that partner organisation upload links on their web-pages
 - To promote the grant programme alongside the LWYL marketing action plan
 - Provide a full annual update of the outcomes, impact and difference made in local neighbourhoods in May 2018 and an interim update in November 2017.

9. Legal Implications

- 9.1 Under S1 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a general power of competence to do anything which an individual may do unless it is expressly prohibited. The giving of grants to voluntary organisations is a discretionary power which must be exercised reasonably taking into account all relevant considerations and ignoring irrelevant considerations.
- 9.2 In awarding grants, Officers will need to have regard to the general duty of best value pursuant to section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 and to the public sector equality duty pursuant to the Equality Act 2010.
- 9.3 To ensure the council acts appropriately, officers in the Partnerships and Engagement Team will need to have regard to the award criteria and processes set out at section 7 of the report in the award of grants.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1 The budget for the LWYL funding of £50k is available from the small grants pot provided within the 2017-18 Strategy and Partnerships budget.
- 10.2 Administrative support for the scheme will be funded from existing resources with the Partnerships and Engagement Team.

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