CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

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COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of Meeting: **9 October 2008**

Title: **COMMUNITY SUPPORT REVIEW**

Report of: **Director of Community Services**

Report reference: **CS 79/08**

Summary:

This report provides details of the work carried out and the final report of SOLACE in connection with the Community Support Review.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

1. Which of the recommendations in the attached report are regarded as the highest priority by Members?
2. Are there any recommendations which Members would wish to see included?
3. How would Members wish to be involved and receive feedback with both the proposed action plan and its implementation?

Recommendations: The Community O&S Committee provide comments to the Executive.

Introduction

Appended to this report is the Executive report CS 68/08 which was considered on 22/9/08. The SOLACE report summary which forms part of that report has been compiled by SOLACE Enterprises following considerable consultation with officers, Members and groups across the city.

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: CS 68/08

This is an important review, as it comes at a time when there is a high degree of focus on many aspects of the work the unit are engaged in.

Background

The consultants have provided a series of recommendations which it is envisaged would form the basis for an action plan for the service. It is anticipated that this plan would offer a means by which Members could be involved in monitoring progress.

Conclusion

It is apparent from the consultation that the outputs of the existing service are held in high regard by the many partners and organisations the City Council is involved with in delivering services to and with. Nonetheless, the challenge for the service is to maintain this high standard whilst changing to satisfy the new demands which corporately the authority faces, both locally and those placed upon it from a legislative perspective, to which community support can contribute.

Contact Officer: Mark Beveridge   **Ext:**   7350

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

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PORTFOLIO AREA: LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

Date of Meeting: 22 September 2008

Public

Key Decision: Yes   **Recorded in Forward Plan:**   No

Inside Policy Framework

Title: **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPROVEMENT REVIEW**
Report of: **Director of Community Services**
Report reference: **CS 68/08**

Summary:
Appended to this report is the executive summary and recommendations from the SOLACE report, which was commissioned for the service review of community support and is provided for Members to consider.

Recommendations:
Executive consider the SOLACE proposals and forward to Community Overview & Scrutiny (9th October) for comment.

Contact Officer: Mark Beveridge   **Ext:**   7350

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers: CS 13/08 & CS 66/08

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The review of the City Council Community Support Service has been concluded by SOLACE Enterprises. This review has result in a final report, the executive summary and recommendations are appended. In addition saving options proposed by SOLACE are provided elsewhere on this agenda.

1.2 The brief for the consultants was originally agreed by SMT and the cross party project group set up to oversee the review. Membership of that group was Cllrs Luckley (Liberal), Hendry (Labour) & Knapton (Conservative) plus the Director of Community Services, Head of Culture & Community Services, Head of Policy & Performance and the Efficiency manager from Corporate Services.

1.3 The purpose of the review was to consider the existing services provided in light of changes and opportunities presented through new partnership working, legislation, customer expectations and priorities. In addition as part of the 2008/9 Council budget a saving target of £153,000 was set to be achieved as an outcome of the review.

2 CONTEXT

2.1 The improvement review began following work undertaken in connection with the use of resources-value for money study which was undertaken across Council services in 2006. Following that study, community support was chosen as one of the first of a number of service reviews to be carried out. An internal project team of officers was established in 2006 to oversee the review. Alongside that group an operational group of staff from the service was brought together to work on individual work packages.

2.2 The following substantial body of work was carried out by those groups:
A review of events carried out by the Council, incorporating all the events staged in around and the City both by community support and other sections of the Council. This also compared the scale of our events with those of 5 other similar sized authorities.

2.3 A survey of authorities in our "family group" was also carried out in respect of their approach to community support and the extent of their service provision. Responses were received from, Canterbury, Exeter, North Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire and Swale Council. This showed a range of expenditure of between £19,000 and £300,000 (06/07 figures) on a range of services these authorities

provided in the area of community support. In comparison the City Council spends approximately £1.5m including re-charges. However, due to the vastly different types of provision it made comparison difficult from a financial perspective alone.

2.4   The development of a play strategy was undertaken which set the context for the play section and resulted in a successful lottery award.

2.5   One of the larger elements of the community review was placed on hold pending the outcome of the unitary debate which impeded work for a number of months. After which it was time external support was sourced to help complete the review.

2.6   A tender brief was devised and agreed by the project group (O&S 27/3/08), SOLACE were the successful company appointed.   Their consultants met with a range of individuals and organisations both internal to the City Council and outwith it. They used the body of work which officers had compiled alongside their own consultation and research to produce the report as presented.

2.7   SOLACE presented their findings recently to the project group and their final report reflects the input from that group and SMT.

3   **The Proposals**

3.1   SOLACE have made a number of recommendations for Members to consider. Some of which will require additional pieces of work to be undertaken if they are to be implemented.

3.2   Due to the size of the report the executive summary and recommendations are appended, however, a copy of the report to which the appendices relate will be made available on the Council's web site.

3.3   It is anticipated that subject to decisions by the Executive an implementation plan will be devised which will outline how recommendations proposed by Solace can be developed in line with existing and emerging work areas.

4   **CONCLUSION**

4.1   This report is a comprehensive review of the current service which has itself has evolved over time.   Community Support as currently delivered is a diverse range of services, which although well thought of by our partners will need to change as it

has to-date in order to meet the new and challenging agendas which are presenting themselves.

4.2   The recommendations proposed by SOLACE provide the scope to change service delivery to meet these new agendas.

5   CONSULTATION

5.1   Consultation to Date.

SMT, Project Group, Portfolio Holder, Organisations and individuals listed in the Solace report

5.2   Consultation proposed.

Community O&S

2.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive note the SOLACE proposals and forward them to Community Overview & Scrutiny (9th October) for comment.

3.   REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To enable the review to be concluded and the recommendations for service delivery and savings to be actioned.

4.   IMPLICATIONS
- Staffing/Resources – The savings proposed by Solace will enable the budget target to be achieved.

- Financial – The saving target set forms part of the overall Council budget for 08/09

- Legal – No specific legal comments relevant to this report

- Corporate – The duty placed on the Council for community engagement will require new ways of working and proposals are made in the report to enable that to occur.

- Risk Management – Any reduction in funding will have risks attached for the organisations in receipt if grants, this might in the short term require increased officer support to mitigate this.

- Equality and Disability – The ability to re-focus work with partners could help to maximise the impact of the resources the Council has to ensure our corporate responsibility in this area is enhanced. The saving options proposed by Solace seek to balance the reduction in funds to avoid a complete removal of one or two services and alleviate the impact that would have

- Environmental – Not applicable in the context of this report

- Crime and Disorder – The establishment of new partnerships and joint working could help alongside of the work which is already being undertaken by the City Council and others to reduce the effect of this activity on the lives of people. The reduction in grant to the community centres could have an impact in this respect as a result of the work they do with young people in their communities. It is not possible to quantify what that might be at this time

- Impact on Customers – The review, depending on decisions made, will have both positive and some short term negative impacts on customers, the proposals both for savings and recommendations seek to maximise the former and minimise the latter

Service Review -

Carlisle City Council
Community Support Unit

Final Report by Andrew Chatterjee
SOLACE Enterprises
August 2008

<u>Contents</u>

Introduction

SOLACE Enterprises was commissioned by the client to review the role and function of the Community Support Unit (CSU). A specific objective of the Review is to appraise the strategic relevance of Carlisle's approach to community support and to evaluate its impact and effectiveness on internal and external stakeholders, particularly in relation to neighbourhood working, community cohesion/empowerment issues raised in the White Paper and in tackling social exclusion. Specifically the client wished to better understand how the work of the CSU was contributing towards the council's strategic objectives – Carlisle Renaissance; Cleaner, Greener, Safer and the Learning City. At the same time the client is conscious that all of the services CSU provides are discretionary. It has identified efficiencies it wants to make and has requested that a number of proposed savings options be identified and appraised.

This report presents the findings of the review. It builds on and incorporates initial research included of the baseline report of May 2008. The report includes some detailed factual information, background and history of the service and, whilst some readers may be well acquainted with these facts, others for whom this report is intended, will not be. These may include for instance, the newer elected members. It is important this context is provided. In the absence of context analysis is stripped of meaning and erroneous judgements may be arrived at.

This Review takes place at a time when talk of community empowerment abounds and when local government must rise to challenges from central government to devolve more power and authority to localities in ways that improve service outcomes and deliver social benefits. The whole thrust of government policy is towards empowering people to give them a greater say in how key services are delivered and give them opportunities to shape these services and their neighbourhoods.

Community development practitioners will be the conduit for channelling local ideas, energies and ambitions upwards into the Civic Centre and brokering a dialogue between the two worlds. To properly fulfil the function the new policy and legislation demands of them community practitioners will themselves need to be valued and empowered by their own authorities. The emphasis is also very much on improved co-operation and partnership working – practices which are redefining organisational behaviours, boundaries and calling for 'outside the box' thinking.

As ever times are lean in local government and the need to deliver continuous efficiency savings features tempers everything councils do. How can these imperatives be balanced? Solutions to both challenges may be in finding more imaginative and innovative ways of joining up services at the local level and finding ways of working together more effectively with partner organisations in ways that allow services to be shared. To do this requires trust, vision and the preparedness of some bodies to relinquish control and resources for the greater good.

For ease the term Community Development (CD) is used interchangeably with community support / community empowerment. Hereafter Community Support Unit will be referred to as CSU.

<u>Executive Summary</u>

The Government wants to give citizens and communities a bigger say in the services they receive and in shaping the places where they live. There is a political consensus on this across all the main parties. Carlisle Council has set out its stall. It wants to deliver Carlisle Renaissance, Learning City and Cleaner Greener Safer. The Corporate Improvement Plan has acknowledged the new best value duty to involve local people in decision-making on policies, and to inform them about how the authority is performing. Community development is at the heart of this work – the catalyst that secures local 'buy-in' and activates strategies and policies, translating them into real action. The current wave of government reform presents a huge challenge to community development to deploy its methods more fully than ever before. One of the key constraints on the council's ability to fulfil its new statutory duties to involve, and its own ambitions to empower, local people will be the availability of capacity-building, support and training to enable local people to actively participate in civic affairs in a meaningful way.

The CSU has been under internal review since 2006 and its component services, such as Benefits Advice and Events, have been under periodic review on and off for a number of years. There is a clear need to ensure that the work undertaken by the CSU is more effectively understood. Community development work is often hidden from view and difficult to measure directly, but it is clear from an examination of Beacon council best practice in this area that local authorities who have acknowledged the contribution of community development have found that its practice generally adds value and supports the delivery of wider corporate objectives.   Community development is not a traditional council service that fits nicely into one box but rather an approach to service delivery that should be employed across the council by all its employees. It is a hybrid skill-set, a way of working, part social work, part customer relationship management, part education, part health, part planning… it is a square peg in a round hole. A council that inculcates all its employees with a community development culture will reap the benefits for years to come. The report includes some proposals to make this happen.

This Review has delved deeply into the work of the CSU and found concrete and tangible evidence that it is contributing towards key council objectives both directly (in terms of particular outcomes) and indirectly (by creating and sustaining a local environment in which strategic priorities can flourish). It finds also that the CSU's work has strategic relevance and fits with the both the local and national policy context. The Review finds that the CSU provides a valuable service that enables and facilitates other council services to deliver on corporate priorities in ways that would not be possible without their support. It recognises also that there are areas for improvement and that the responsibility for these rests with all parties - the unit itself, the Executive and with elected members. It also considers some intermediate outputs and looks at a performance framework which will demonstrate that the unit is performing effectively.

The council, in line with national policy and best practice, wishes to take a locality working approach – devolving provision and governance down to an area level to create more locally responsive and accountable services. Other partners also share

this ambition and are actively considering how they can achieve this. Again community development is the vital ingredient – engaging with local people to involve them in the process, '*do it with them - not to them*' as the maxim goes. The report gives some thought to potential service models for locality working and associated area governance arrangements which have been applied in other areas.

The Review asserts strongly that a strategic local approach to the provision of community development neighbourhood regeneration in Carlisle is urgently needed. Work needs to be effectively and efficiently co-ordinated between the key providers in the city – the City Council, Cumbria County Council, PCT Carlisle Housing Association and the VCS. The Local Strategic Partnership is the only vehicle that has the remit and reason and whose Executive has the clout, to do this. If the political will exists this is the right time to get LSP partners on the Executive to consider pooling all their resources to create a shared community development and neighbourhood regeneration service for Carlisle, working to a jointly agreed Stronger Communities Strategy and Community Empowerment Action Plan.

At a wider level improved local collaboration through sharing community development services offers clear advantages – a team greater than the sum of its parts, more staff, more experience, greater flexibility, increased staff satisfaction from job variation and unity of purpose, a seamless service experience for Carlisle residents, better support to councillors, improved capacity, better networking and cross-referral, opening up more funding opportunities, more detailed and accurate intelligence, data collection and performance management, greater efficiencies, sharing of risk and benefits, better outcomes for all. The Review has identified that Community support is a service area in which the city council is held in high regard by partners and service users. It must continue to provide this function if it is to fulfil its new statutory duty to involve local people and in order to deliver on corporate priorities. The city council already provides children and young peoples services on behalf of the county council – a service area with potential for further growth. If partners agree a workable shared service model will need to be found. It is therefore proposed that the city council might wish to put itself forward as the most appropriate and best placed organisation to lead and host a shared service in Carlisle.

The Review has highlighted that community development activities are often undertaken in a range of different teams within the organisation, therefore it is felt that efficiencies could be gained from more efficient integration. Such reconfiguration will improve the unit's effectiveness, achieve more joined-up working internally, avoid duplication and combat the issues of silo working which the report has identified. If the council and its partners on the LSP agree on establishing a shared community development service this will make the council's CSU a more appealing 'marriage prospect' for its partners.

How would this work in practice? The Review considers the mechanics and possible management arrangements for such a set up which will allow for co-operative locality working and looks at how the potential stumbling blocks and obstacles might be overcome. A matrix management approach in which council staff from other front-line services trained in community development techniques would allow officers to be assigned to specific geographic areas and contribute towards project work in a more

co-ordinated and cost efficient way. This would add value and allow the council's various service teams to better interface with members of the community and each other. If a shared service model were adopted with partners this approach would have even greater potential, as the pooled resources would be much greater. The role of the LSP at all stages will be integral. The report looks at a number of different options such as a totally integrated community development team for Carlisle; a pilot, partially integrated city council run team with staff seconded from partner organisations; commissioning and contracting out arrangements.

The funding of community development is a key issue for the council. The need to deliver service efficiencies has been considered separately in Section Two, which considers a number of specific savings options the client may wish to consider. In broader terms this review recommends that a cultural change is needed, consistent with corporate efficiencies, which recognises the reliance that other Directorates and partners have on community development methods for the successful delivery of their own initiatives. National best practice suggests that all policies which invoke community empowerment or rely on community engagement for their implementation should have a built-in margin of their budget allocated to community development / capacity building.

Carlisle Renaissance will rely heavily on community development if it is succeed not only in its ambitious physical regeneration plans for the city centre but also for the implementation of its economic strategy 'Growing Carlisle'.   The CSU will have an important part to play in delivering this. The Learning City ambition comes with no new money but with an opportunity to influence other partners and budgets. In supporting the Cleaner, Greener, Safer agenda CSU will be increasingly relevant in ensuring local participation and engagement in neighbourhood liveability initiatives, perhaps through promoting resident service champions and in encouraging community ownership of small scale urban greening and environmental schemes. Any other service that needs community involvement, be it consultation, organising workshops or events, should first make use of the resource and expertise that exists in-house (and via the CSU their extensive local network). Re-charges should be levied accordingly. The Unit for its part must do more to sell its services both internally and externally to generate income.

The CSU is scrutinised in detail. The overall cost of the service is broken down by each discrete work area (Children & Young People, Events, Community Involvement - Community Centres / Equality & diversity, Benefits Advice & Grants to external providers). These are evaluated to understand

- impact on corporate priorities and strategic relevance
- impact on service users
- levels of partnership working internal and external
- limiting factors
- areas for improvement
- effectiveness of communicating with service users, partners, stakeholders
- evidence based approach to service planning and delivery

Based on information that was available an analysis of the shared work and resource

input of partner organisations including Carlisle Housing Association, Cumbria County, and CVS is made. The Review also looks closely at the LSP. It found that the stronger element of 'Safer and Stronger' block has been subsumed by the 'Safer' work and consequently was not being adequately addressed. Community Development outcomes lacked sufficient profile, which may have limited what can be achieved through dedicated community development support for the implementation of initiatives and interventions directed from the partnership.

The report gives careful attention to the new policy and legislative agenda which is changing the landscape of local government and which has pushed the profile of CD to the forefront. The key points of the Community Empowerment White Paper, forthcoming Community Empowerment, Housing & Economic Regeneration Bill, Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act, Sustainable Communities Act and Quirk Review are appraised. The report also considers the implications of policy trends such as commissioning, asset transfer and of relevant agendas such as localism, active citizenship, devolution, personalisation and looks at ways to future proof the council and refers the reader to some valuable resources for best practice and networking.

Finally, as requested, this report contains a separate section outlining a number of proposed savings options as the client requested. An attempt has been made to indicate the pros and cons of each option and estimate the likely impact on overall service levels, affect on the community and council's public relations.

There is a great deal of detailed information about the CSU's actual work areas in the tables in the Appendices. It is suggested that if the reader really wants to see the sort of day-to-day work the unit does, and to understand how it contributes to core council priorities, that these sections deserve attention. Additionally the reader will note that throughout the report references appear in the footnotes indicating sources of further and better particulars for important issues.

Key Recommendations

Problem: Lack of an explicit Community Development policy and vision (endorsed by the Executive and strategic partners) and an appropriate LSP mechanism to co-ordinate community development work in Carlisle

Fact: None of the council's corporate priorities or LSP targets can be achieved without CD, yet there is no definitive policy statement which acknowledges this fact or which sets out a context for CD work in Carlisle. No where in the 2007 Community Plan is community development / empowerment explicitly mentioned. There is a sentence noting an intention to '*work on developing strong community networks through devolved decision making*' but it does not say how this ambition will be achieved. The Safer & Stronger priorities focus entirely upon Safer priorities.[*] The CDRP's own Partnership Plan report acknowledges that the CDRP needs to embrace the stronger as well as the safer elements (see this report, para 99 LSP section p.51) for more details) and recommends this issue be addressed via a CDRP Leadership Group. But is this the appropriate body? In the eyes of officers, members, partners and the public community empowerment will be perceived and associated with crime reduction – when in fact it is about much more than this.

Solution: A shared vision and strategy to deliver stronger communities in Carlisle. This will be underpinned by a mechanism to deliver 'Stronger Communities' between partners, allowing for more effective and efficient co-ordination and collaboration on CD work. This mechanism should recognise that CD cuts across and supports the key LSP priorities – health, children and young people, economic, environmental. The work with the County Council on the Community Empowerment Pilot may be a start on a more co-ordinated approach but an agreed, clear and coherent contextual framework for future CD work is still required.

Recommendation 1: Firstly an explicit, Executive endorsed, internal (city council) policy statement recognising the contribution of CD in contributing to overarching corporate objectives. This statement should clarify the council's intentions for work in this area and set the context by identifying and clarifying the broader policy and strategic framework in which the community support service will operate. Secondly, a Stronger Communities /Community Empowerment Action Plan borne out of by a Refreshed Sustainable Community Strategy developed, published and driven by the LSP. There is no point in Carlisle producing a separate strategy, as it simply doesn't have the capacity to deliver core community empowerment objectives alone, nor is this desirable, since responsibility lies with all partners – not just the city council. The Action Plan will focus partners' attentions on defining and planning the nuts and bolts – the who, what, where and when needed to deliver Stronger Communities in Carlisle. It may also serve as a precursor to sharing services in this area (see next recommendation).

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[*] The Refreshed Community Plan (Summer 2008) appears to have recognised this gap. It acknowledges the LSP's commitment to empower communities to have a greater influence of decisions and identifies community planning as a way of addressing this. It states that "Difficulties remain with the formation of an effective mechanism to address 'Stronger Communities' issues… Task and Finish groups will be established to focus efforts in these areas."

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Problem: Community development underpins the strategic objectives of all the partners on the LSP, but the CSU team have to prioritise what they can achieve with the existing resources. A more joined up and efficient way of delivering this service needs to be found which avoids duplication of effort and maximises the resources available.

Fact: The city council are one of the main practitioners of CD in Carlisle with many years of experience. Other partners have similar teams with overlapping roles e.g. Carlisle Housing Association's Neighbourhood Investment Team, Cumbria County Council's Neighbourhood Development Officers, PCT's Health Development workers. More efficient use could be made of these staff by integrating and pooling human, information and financial resources. Properly harnessed and directed, this expertise and knowledge will better help the council and its partners deliver on their cross cutting objectives. It will also improve service delivery for the end user by offering a seamless service. For the most part the public does not understand the reason for mechanised and stratified public service delivery where workers from different agencies or departments operate independently of each other, yet apparently to the same end. This is extremely confusing to the service user and often leads to the complaint levelled at councils and other statutory bodies that the right arm doesn't know what the left is doing.

Solution: *A shared services model.* It is wasteful of resources in a relatively small city like Carlisle to have three or four separate agencies undertaking neighbourhood development and community support functions. This presents a very strong case for sharing services. A holistic approach is needed that maximises and pools all partner resources, including staff, budgets and information in a formal and sustainable way.

Recommendation 2: Create a new, improved Community Development Service for Carlisle. Better integrate the existing CD resources within the CSU team. Either second or wholly transfer key staff from partner organisations. There will then be enough staff to take a locality working approach (see Recommendation 8). This is now a reconfigured, multi agency team working in a co-ordinated way to a jointly agreed work plan designed to deliver the Refreshed Carlisle Sustainable Community Strategy. In this model the city council would act as the lead authority. The unitary debate is now over and there is now sufficient stability, aided by an emphasis on, and an enthusiasm for, working through partnerships, to achieve this. The grass-roots workers from different organisations all work well with each other currently so it is issues of accountability and management that would need to be resolved. It will be essential to ensure that sufficient thought is given to the arrangements proposed for leading and managing this extended team in order to empower the members of it to work positively and cooperatively under the auspices of the LSP.

If this option is favoured, a programme of work would need to be undertaken including, for example: preparatory development work and presentations to partner organisations to establish their support and build consensus together with the preparation of a full independent feasibility to consider and evaluate the potential in greater detail:
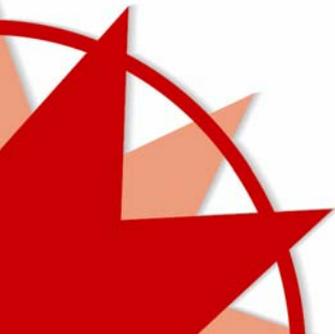
- The specific objective of the proposal
- All potential alternative service models
- An outline analysis of the business case including:

  o The capital and revenue expenditure needed to achieve the start up of the shared service and the payback period.
  o The difference in the cost of the shared service at the end of the payback period compared to the current cost.
  o An estimated quantification of the improvement in service quality, cost reduction and efficiencies.
  o Where in the supply chain the greatest improvement of the shared service will be achieved (i.e. will it be service improvement or reduction in cost or another benefit?)
  o How the potential gain for each partner is proportionate to that partner's share of the service.

- The governance arrangements proposed (i.e. to whom will the service be accountable e.g. the LSP or a separate Board or Committee?)
- The management arrangements proposed (i.e. will one organisation manage and deliver the service for its contractual partners or will their be shared responsibilities?)
- The potential impact on staff
- Preparation of a Project Initiation Document demonstrating how partner organisations will be involved and how this will work.

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Problem: Joint working within the city council could be improved to be more effective and efficient. Current CSU capacity limits its effectiveness and undermines its value to the organisation and to external partners.

Fact: There are council officers in other services who would be better placed to deliver on their own service's and on corporate priorities, if they worked much more closely and effectively with the CSU. It is also true that the CSU would be much better placed to deliver on corporate priorities if their role and the expectations of them, were made clearer. If the shared services option was seriously on the table the other partners would want to buy in to a service which comes better resourced and equipped than CSU presently does - one which has a cross section of staff with multi layered experience which will better complement their own teams.

Solution: There is a strong business case for an internal re-alignment of some posts into CSU anyway. An expanded CSU team would be better placed to explore Locality Working / Neighbourhood Management pilot. If shared service goes ahead it will be even better, demonstrating to partners the council is thinking progressively. Join together disparate posts to expedite this.

Recommendation 3: Consider integration of officers with relevant functions from Housing, CDRP, Rural Support, Economic Development, Greenspace, GIS Team, Carlisle Renaissance to add value to CSU team. See page 67.

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Problem: Need to cascade CD skills to all front-line staff to better enable them to work better with the public. There is also haziness around the nature and role of CD work that needs clearing. Many council staff have a limited view of what colleagues in the CSU actually do and how it relates to, and can support, their own work.

Fact: Local authorities are under increasing pressure to demonstrate community involvement, yet they can't do this without CD work. It underpins a lot of council work areas but is not being used as effectively as it might be. Community working is the job of all council employees. The recent Community Empowerment White Paper reasserts this and sets out plans for an "Empowering the Front-line Taskforce" to run until 2010 which will work on ensuring that front-line council staff are able to respond to a more empowered public.[1]

Solution:

1) CD workshops, facilitated by the CSU should be run to inform employees / members and raise awareness of CD practice.
2) CD training should be made available for all staff as part of employees' professional development.
3) All staff delivering on key corporate priorities should shadow CSU workers to gain insight into CD skills and work areas.
4) A Job Swap day should be organised across the council to give employees an insight into how different parts of the organisation work and how each is delivering on corporate priorities. This would lead to greater understanding, co-operation, and clarity of purpose. To be organised by Corporate HR, Chief Executives and CSU

Recommendation 4: this proposal to be implemented without delay

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Problem: Poor service engagement with members. The Review has found that working relationships with members are patchy and ad hoc. Few members have been able to attend events organised by CSU to promote their work and therefore may have a limited perception of the CSU's remit, work and capacity.

Fact: A desire for greater locality level working and recent Government proposals mean that front-line councillors are now expected to assume stronger community leadership and advocacy roles at ward / neighbourhood level.   At present, there is no formal mechanism for communicating with and briefing members about the work CSU is engaged in and how it relates to their wards. Presently CSU team members do not attend neighbourhood forums, which are serviced instead by Cumbria County Neighbourhood Development Officers (NDOs). As a consequence, the NDOs have a much closer working relationship with their CC members than the city council's CSU officers have with their city council members.

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1 Communities in Control, DCLG, July 2008 p.29

Solution: A more robust, regular and direct working relationship with members. The Service must work much more closely with ward councillors. It is imperative members are well briefed and supported to understand what the CSU team are doing in each area, why they are doing it, and what outcomes are expected. This will benefit members, the CSU and the community.

Recommendation 5: the communication links between the CSU and members are strengthened to provide for a regular formalised reporting and feedback structure. Democratic Services should be involved to support this. Furthermore as CD is so integral to overarching priorities and affects all wards in the city it is suggested the outcome and recommendations in this Review must not drop off the member's agenda and for this reason they require further consideration via a Task and Finish Group. In addition a series of best practice visits for members to authorities in other towns and cities that have well established mechanisms for neighbourhood and area community engagement ought to be considered.[2]

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Problem: Increasing public expectations of high performance from councillors often mismatched with what councillors can actually deliver. Officers and members sometimes also have different expectations of each other. Challenge is for both officers and councillors to support each other do their job professionally and more effectively in. Many backbench councillors also feel distanced from council decision-making and struggle to engage with LSPs and other structures set up to influence decisions about mainstream service allocation (the members' workshop in Carlisle certainly confirmed this).

Fact: National research has identified concern among councillors, officers and community groups about the scale and complexity of the future ward member role. The vital community leadership and advocacy role of ward councillors has been reasserted by the empowerment agenda. A locality / area working approach will entail more responsibility for local decision decision-making. The trend is towards a higher profile role - more visible community engagement from members. All councillors will need to respond to these expectations. A cultural change in officer-member-communities relations is therefore urgently needed.

Solution: Councillors Compact[3]. A voluntary, two-way agreement between the council and elected members which sets out the council's expectations of the ward councillor role, encouraging basic minimum standards of activity and performance. Compact also clearly sets out the council's commitment to provide minimum levels of support, training and remuneration for members to enable them to fulfil their role effectively.

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2   Consultant would be able to recommend suitable authorities, organise and facilitate these visits.

3 Councillor Compact was a recommendation in the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Report "Ward Councillors and Community Leadership: A Future Perspective". See p.47 http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2125-local-government-councillors.pdf
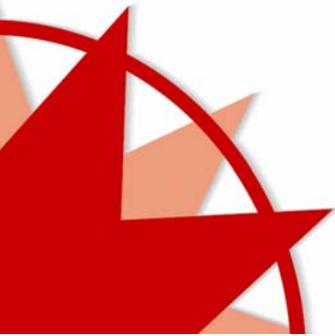
Recommendation 6: That the Council Executive give serious consideration to a Councillor Compact and initiate dialogue between senior officers and members to consider proposal. Suggest involvement of Communities Directorate, Democratic Services and external support as necessary in drawing up compact for consideration.

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Problem: Marketing and communication by CSU could be improved.

Fact: There is scope for improving communication. The Review has found that a large number of internal colleagues are completely unaware of the good work that CSU do. CD work is often hidden from view as it takes place away from the centre. However lack of knowledge about the team's work and its potential is now hindering it. There is a desire from the Corporate Comms team to provide more support to community development activities which support and deliver strategic priorities.

Solution: Enhance CSU communication internally and externally.

Recommendation 7: Explore new and more effective ways of promoting the council's and partners' community work e.g. short advertising / promotional campaign comprising road shows, regular e-bulletins to members and interested parties; engaging marketing and comms professionals to raise awareness of participation opportunities. The internal Communications team should be used in the first instance.

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Problem: Getting to grips with devolution and area based arrangements. Developing better locality working is particularly challenging in Carlisle within a two-tier/ county-district structure. Carlisle is low on the citizen participation ladder. An effective area governance structure is needed, with an area forum model that galvanises local involvement and which ensures greater service provider responsiveness and accountability.

Fact: Both district and county councils are considering improving their locality working approach. The County is actively exploring devolved service delivery and new area governance arrangements through a high level 'White Paper Working Group'. The city council needs to be in a position to respond to this. The majority of CSU's work is centred around informing, advising, supporting and consulting. The big exception was Sure Start Carlisle South – which represented a significant step up the ladder to citizen control. CHA have progressed further with devolved budgeting (see p.45) and lessons can be gleaned from this. However in general the community cannot become more empowered and the CSU cannot facilitate this process because there are currently no suitable area / neighbourhood governance structures to allow for meaningful delegated citizen power, devolved budgeting etc. The existing Neighbourhood Forums represent the most basic form of tokenistic participation.

Solution: New multi agency area governance arrangements such as local partnership boards / public service boards which provide opportunities for sustained involvement in local decision making, greater service provider accountability and devolved power
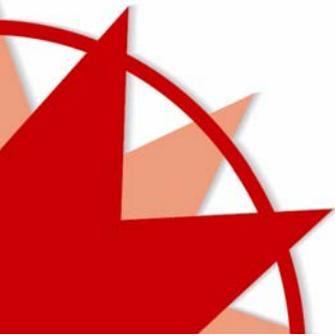
through participatory budgeting and resourcing. Such bodies can only be established with the agreement and commitment of all partner agencies.

Recommendation 8: City council to initiate discussions with key public sector partners. Commission an independent evaluation of neighbourhood forums and review of potential locality working models and neighbourhood governance structures in Carlisle.

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Problem: CSU not seen as contributing towards key objectives.

Fact: CSU has a key role to play in involving communities in the decision- making around the economic, social and environmental future of the city. Both the 'Growing Carlisle' strategy and the Strategy for Sustainable Cumbria identify a host of local involvement opportunities which the CSU can broker. There are also new work areas to explore which would contribute further towards both Learning City and Cleaner, Greener, Safer priorities.

Solution: CSU support a series of interventions with clear performance outcomes targeted around corporate priorities.

Recommendation 9: Begin discussions with relevant services regarding specific project work listed in this report.

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Problem: Rural areas / parish council reps complain of feeling sidelined by corporate preoccupation with urban areas. They are concerned about apparent lack of consultation around proposed Community Empowerment Pilot in Longtown and inadequate LSP representation. Parish Plans have not been implemented. In addition there are issues around parish council membership and the effectiveness of local representation.

Fact: The parish council system, Parish Charter and closer, more cohesive rural society, together with strong representative associations may expedite CD interventions and allow for some rural 'quick wins' that would restore confidence, build local capacity and tackle rural exclusion. A new well being power for parish councils is anticipated in the forthcoming Community Empowerment Bill (see this report p.70).

Solution: The Community Empowerment pilot in rural areas is developed in collaboration with rural stakeholders. A series of targeted interventions supported by CSU / Rural Support officers and partners will garner public support. Work with Democratic Services to improve the quality of parish council membership. New community planning exercises must not be paper exercises producing parish plans which are never realised and sit on the shelf.
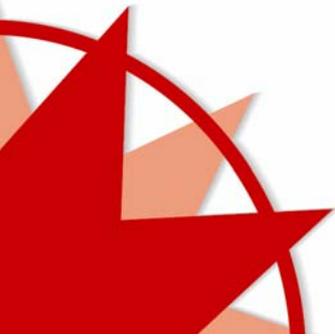
Recommendation 10: Further research and development work required. The Community Empowerment Pilot must build on best practice[4].

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Problem: Events requires greater co-ordination

Fact: Events run by CSU clearly deliver outcomes beyond CD – particularly in promoting Carlisle

Solution: A more structured approach to planning and organising Events, which would enable a pooling of ideas, skills, resources (both internal and external) that can be used more effectively and efficiently.

Recommendation 11: New Events group comprising key internal and external partners. A feasibility study into a social enterprise events company.

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Problem: Council needs to respond to Sustainable Communities Act 2007

Fact: The Act represents the biggest opportunity for many years for councils and local people to reverse community decline and enhance the social, economic and environmental fabric of the city.[5] Community participation and involvement is a requirement in formulating proposals that are sent to the Local Government Association for consideration. The important point is that this legislation is about local government and local people telling central government what they need to make Carlisle more sustainable. Central government has a legal duty 'to assist local authorities in promoting the sustainability of local communities'. So by 'opting in' councils are signing up to receive that 'assistance'.
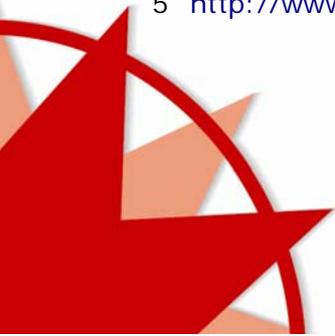
Solution: Opt-in to the process. Conduct triple bottom line sustainability audit for Carlisle (social, economic, environmental) Following DCLG guidelines establish local panels and begin public consultation. The role of CD will therefore be crucial in establishing local panels and in encouraging understanding and awareness of the process. This represents a significant community empowerment opportunity in itself.

Recommendation 12: Accept the invitation from Secretary of State to opt-in to the process. Task CSU with establishing consultative panels of representatives of local people in accordance with government guidelines. Council Executive request a sustainability audit and preparation of a Carlisle Sustainable Communities Action Plan to develop ideas and suggestions related to the matters listed in the Schedule (Section 2 of the Act: see http://www.localworks.org/?q=node/44) When local consensus on sustainability proposals has been established, the Executive

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   http://www.acre.org.uk/DOCUMENTS/communityengagement/Empowerment%20through%20Community%20led%20Planning.pdf

5 http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/681480.pdf

must sign off final proposals and send to the Local Government Association for consideration.

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Problem: 'Feedback frustration'

Fact: Consultees regularly complain that consultation is often nothing more than a tick box exercise for the council and that their views, once garnered, are ignored. This makes their participation seem pointless.

Solution: Let people know their views are valued. Implement the corporate consultation policy.

Recommendation 13: A list of all the consultations with local communities should be kept on the council website and incorporated into new service plans. The list should also state clearly what changes have been made to services as a result, thus enhancing the credibility of the local authority in terms of responding to a community's views and needs.

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Problem: Ensuring consistent and high standards of service delivery for community centres.

Fact: A recognised national standard / quality mark exists for community centres know as the VISIBLE Communities standard.[6]

Solution: VISIBLE Communities standards. Certification opens up new opportunities - access to networking, new funding, improved management, precursor of readiness for community ownership of assets.

Recommendation 14: Support all centres to sign up to VISIBLE standards. Create performance target based around this work.

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6 http://www.visiblecommunities.org.uk
VISIBLE – Community centres should be a: **Voice** for local concerns. **Independent** and politically neutral. **Service** provider for local people. **Initiator** of projects to meet locally identified needs. **Builder** of partnerships with other local organisations and groups. Strong **Local** network of people and organisations. Way to **Engage** local people to become active in their communities.