TITLE OF REPORT: The Council and Partners Approach to Locality Working

Purpose of the Report

To seek the views of the Housing, Environment and Healthier Communities OSC on the development and progress to date of locality working.

Background

1. The enabling everyone in Gateshead to '*Thrive*' lies at the core of the council's approach to tackling inequality and deprivation. This has been articulated into a series of pledges, but these haven't yet evolved corporately into radically different practices, cultures, or roles, including ways of working that are closer to communities in their localities and reflect different needs across the borough, locality working seeks to address this.

What is locality working?

2. The most basic definition of locality working is simply a commitment of specific resources and expertise to specific places that might otherwise be centrally or universally deployed. This could include place, people, property, technology, and money.

3. Committing resources to places but within the same broad system and way of working will not be enough to satisfy the *Thrive* aspiration. To respond to the inequalities that we see, the possibility of different practices and configurations in different locations must open right across Gateshead. This requires structural and cultural change and is a key principle behind this work. We need to ensure that differences in locations and people be allowed for when working locally, rather than adhering to a standardised model where one size fits few.

4. Locality working is:

   a. A way of working which recognises people, communities and places across Gateshead are different.

   b. It is evidence led prioritisation, the resources will follow the evidence for support and intervention, recognising some people and places will need more. A great example of this is how we have organised the Citizens Advice workers in the community hubs, shoring up resource in the higher demand areas with additional adviser capacity.

   c. It will challenge the councils current organisational structure and service delivery arrangements, leading us to adapt in 4 ways:

      i. Current job roles move toward more efficient generic and empowered ways of working at the locality level; a reduction in non-value activity less hierarchical team supervision, and management.

      ii. More generic and locality focussed leadership at Director /operational management levels; a resultant reduction in service silos, management boundaries and narrow strategic and operational responsibilities.

      iii. Improved and "joined up" digital and customer contact services; providing an effective more efficient universal and transactional service offer for those households and places not requiring focussed support and help.

      iv. We also need to reflect on the changes required in terms of budget and policy matters that are currently determined centrally, moving away from organising ourselves around service themes, in favour of localities, outputs and outcomes.

d. A strengthened multi-sector approach, allowing for cross sector planning at locality level, shared prioritisation and deployment of resources, and the integration of operational delivery. And we have already started this work, joining together with the MH Transformation Programme Leads to ensure their resource is supporting locality working, and already we have identified ways to achieve this both in terms of posts and budget and we have plans to join together with the Together in Beacon Lough East work led by Edberts House (see below).

e. A catalyst for change, not just within the council, but across the system, driving system improvement, and shared responses to tackling cost pressures within and across sectors. A good example of this is the Gateshead Cares Alliance, and another is a collaboration between the Councils housing team and the Citizens Advice energy team to tackle the cost pressures anxiety and upset caused by excess condensation in council housing stock.

What locality working is not

5. Locality working is not:

- A housing or neighbourhood management initiative
- The creation of mini civic centres in community locations
- The evolution of community hubs

6. Although the development of locality working is led by the Housing, Environment and Health Communities Directorate, **locality working is about creating a new operating model for all council services**. In developing this new way of working every council service will need to re-assess their operating model to see

if they can deliver better outcomes and efficiencies by moving their service closer to communities.

7. **Locality working is not the creation of multiple civic centres in community venues**. For some services, digital or centralised delivery is absolutely the right thing for the council to do, providing efficiencies at scale. For example digital bill paying is constantly evolving and improving. But where understanding the context within which someone lives is necessary, for example early help, or housing, these services should be closer to communities and part of this new operating model.

8. **Community hubs and locality working are different things**. The Community Hubs are a VCSE resource, within which council resource, capacity and infrastructure has been developed to provide emergency support and food during the pandemic, but we do not control the community hubs, they are independent organisations, and they will continue to exist alongside locality working. They are essential to our community development goals to reduce isolation, improve resilience and skills, by providing essential support, skills building, activities, resilience, and community capacity where it is needed.

9. For example, the Birtley Hub will exist alongside locality working, and we would expect employees and partners involved in locality working (eg housing, early help, Citizens Advice, Mental Health Peer Support Workers) to be referring residents to the Birtley Hub for things like support with social isolation, digital skills and emergency food, and for the Birtley Hub to be drawing from our locality employees for questions their users may have about our locality services. The flow between the two should be constant and it should be mutually beneficial.

Getting started

10. It is important to start in a way that we know will iterate, rather than waiting to agree every facet of locality working before starting. It is likely, desirable even, for each locality to evolve differently according to the needs of the people and the fabric of the place and infrastructure.

11. There are five key and connected elements to locality working:
    - People/communities
    - Elected members
    - Local partner organisations
    - The locality team
    - The physical/built environment

11. Any design and configuration of roles and working principles should achieve the following objectives:

    - Help and support individual people and families with whatever matters to them
    - Develop strong and effective partnerships between local voluntary organisations, the council, and members of the community

- Understand recurring patterns of need and of what matters to people in communities such that relevant partnerships and new approaches can form or evolve over time
- To support the connection between elected members and communities/individuals

Phased roll out

12.   We propose to introduce a phased roll out across the Borough, starting with the South area, using the Birtley Council building in which the Library is located as our first anchor point, with a second location six months thereafter aiming to have a presence in all four locality geographies within 18 to 24 months.

13.   Running parallel to this we propose to join up our emerging locality offer with similar work that is already happening in the Borough within the voluntary and health sectors, in particular we propose to join up our efforts with Edberts House who are driving similar initiatives in Together in Beacon Lough East and in the HOPE network (health of the population in the east). This work is fairly well progressed with a strong emphasis on collaboration between health and the voluntary sector, there will be much we can learn here.

How will we pay for it?

14. The locality model is created with no expectation of additional finances for council delivery, it is anticipated resourcing will come from changes to existing services, and from an initial start-up budget already identified of £250,000 per annum for the next three years. Thereafter, as we begin the roll out and services begin to change their ways of working, we anticipate existing roles will be redesigned into these news roles at no additional cost to the Council.

15. Evidence from PSR points shows reductions in demand and increased capacity can be yielded. Case histories show that between 50%-80% of activities/steps add no value to the citizen and are internally focussed. Empowered case-working reduced this overhead to @25% and much of this became capturing learning, which arguably has a benefit on future citizens engaged by caseworkers. More empowered caseworkers can also act more quickly thus reducing the likelihood of events overtaking any initial assessment or delay. This increases efficacy and reduces demand into higher cost services.

16. Where possible and appropriate to do so there is an aspiration for this work to cross into the integration agenda and look for system level efficiencies and delivering quality together with the Health and Social Care Systems Change Board, the Primary Care Networks and with the Mental Health Transformation Agenda.

17.   We may however need to realign resources to provide additional resource for the VCSE elements of the programme, most notably a review of the CVS

commission, the development of the Food Network and capacity building generally across the sector.

Recommendations

The view of Housing, Environment and Healthier Communities OSC are sought on the roll out and further development of locality working.

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