

**TITLE OF REPORT:** Impact of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy

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## **SUMMARY**

This report provides the fourth annual update on the impact of Gateshead's Community Together Strategy agreed by Cabinet and the Gateshead Strategic Partnership in 2012.

The report includes information on the impact of actions as a result of the strategy by a range of Council Services and partners over the period December 2014 – December 2015.

Committee is asked to note the strategy is the combined Community Cohesion and Community Development Strategies, the impact of which has been reported to this committee annually.

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### **1. Background**

- a) The Gateshead Communities Together Strategy and Action Plan were agreed by Gateshead Strategic Partnership Steering Group and Cabinet in May 2012.
- b) The Strategy sets out how partners will work together in a co-ordinated and effective way to achieve the five priority areas identified within the Strategy:
  - Community engagement & participation
  - Community capacity building
  - Information & communication
  - Involving children, young people & schools
  - Supporting positive community relationships.
- c) Implementation of the Strategy continues to be overseen through a co-ordinated approach between the Council and Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council. The multi-agency working group no longer meets regularly however, the group maintains an oversight of activities taking place in communities across Gateshead and encourages closer working relationships to share resources and avoid duplication.

## **2. Impact of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy during 2015**

Examples of the work undertaken by the Council and partners under each of the five priority areas are set out below:

### **3. Priority Area One**

#### **Community Engagement & Participation**

- a) Through partnership working with a host of volunteers, local churches, businesses, voluntary organisation and many others, in all twelve events over six weeks took place over the school holidays as part of the “Fill the Holiday Gap” scheme in Gateshead. The event was led by Churches Together; ‘Fill the Holiday Gap’ was developed to help the hundreds of local families who, because of their personal circumstances, struggle to meet the costs of feeding their children during the six week break. With financial and service support from the Council, families were not only able to enjoy a hot meal every day, but took part in events and activities including how to eat healthier on a budget, taking home recipes and ingredients to make meals at home.
- b) Working in partnership with GVOC (Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council) Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering organised a Christmas Shoe Box Appeal throughout December 2015 for young Adults leaving care at Christmas. Throughout December donation bins were present at the Civic Centre and the Central Library to enable members of the public to make donations. Using Council Info and Employee information all Council Employees were reminded of the bins and asked to please donate what they could. All donations were coordinated by Neighbourhood Management & Volunteering. The team also organised for a wrapping event to take place in Bewicks at the Civic Centre on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December. GVOC provided their Volunteer wrappers and Gateshead Council Employee Volunteers and a number of registered Volunteers were present on the day. They all worked together and wrapped shoe boxes made up presents and prepared all the gifts to hand over to the fostering team. The gifts will be presented to the Young Adults on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December at a Christmas Event.
  - A total of 7 large crates of donations were collected by Gateshead Council and 60+ shoe boxes prepared on the day. A full crate of donations were also left over to handout to those who need them throughout the year.
  - Gateshead Council agreed to assist The Home Office to meet the Government’s pledge to relocate 20,000 refugees over the term of the current parliament. In addition, the Government is keen to begin the relocation programme before Christmas 2015.
  - Arrangements are being made to receive 53 Syrian refugees (12 households) on 26th November 2015. Final arrangements are not in place as yet and may be subject to change.

- The Council has been provided with details of the families and their recent history, including any health needs that they may have. Housing, Health, Education and other services within the Council are working together to ensure that we are prepared for the arrival of these vulnerable people. Some of the Households are related to one another and so they will have the comfort of family support, others have little support

## **The Gateshead Year of Walking 2015**

This programme is aimed at getting people active through walking using Gateshead's open public space. The Year of Walking has highlighted key messages around the benefits of walking by promoting existing groups as well as developing new groups. The Year of Walking initiative has also encouraged individuals to consider how to incorporate walking into their daily routines. As a celebration of all the hard work and commitment by volunteers and local organisations the Live Well Gateshead Teams, along with Public Health arranged an event at Saltwell Park to showcase their work.

The event was held on Sunday 25th October from 10 am until 2pm it included led walks around the park provided by Friends of Saltwell Park and The Live Well Teams. There was also an opportunity for attendees to try out a variety of walking sports including Nordic Walking and Walking Football which was delivered in partnership with Gateshead Football Club. Over 60 local people attended and were given the opportunity to participate in the led walks, Walking Football and Nordic Walking. The event attracted 20 local organisations who showcased their own work around health, wellbeing and physical activity.

The event was an opportunity to further support the development of a walking culture within Gateshead by offering valuable support and training to new and existing groups and volunteers.

## **Live Well Gateshead @ Groups**

The Teams, High Fell and Bensham and Lobley Hill wards of Gateshead come within the top 10% of deprived neighborhoods in Gateshead. A number of partner organisations were working alone or with minimum support to reduce this deprivation. The Capacity Building element of the Neighborhood Management team invited key members of local organisations together to measure the appetite of developing a multi-agency steering group that could offer support not only to the residents of the teams ward but also offer support to the organisations involved. By the end of 2016 the Live Well Gateshead @ groups are working with a wide range of partners developing an Asset Based Approach to deliver the best possible services to local residents living in the three wards.

## 4. Priority Area Two

### Community Capacity Building

- a) The Gateshead Offer continues to provide a range of free advice, information and support for Gateshead's voluntary and community sector organisations. Most of the support is free to community groups in Gateshead. The Gateshead Offer is provided by Gateshead Council, GVOC (Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council) and Gateshead Community Network (GCN) using the combined knowledge, skills and expertise within the three organisations to create a network of support. Gateshead Council has a number of services that can offer support on topics that include commissioning, procurement, business planning and capacity building. GVOC/GCN can provide advice, information and training on funding, governance, finances and legal charitable structures. The Offer also promotes volunteering and community involvement opportunities in local strategic planning and service delivery, and plays a key part supporting recipients of support through the Gateshead Fund.
- b) Building on the success of the 2014 funding event, held at Gateshead International Stadium, Gateshead Council and GVOC (Gateshead Voluntary Organisations Council) repeated the event in 2015 to identify potential funding opportunities. This year the Council worked in partnership with Voluntary Organisations Network North East (VONNE) and Funding Information North East (FINE) as well as GVOC, to pilot the event as a North East Regional Funding Event. The event took place on 27/04/15 between 10:00am- 6:00pm in the Gateshead Suite at the Hilton Hotel, Newcastle Gateshead. The aim of the event was to help improve the success rate for securing funding; improve the skills and knowledge in writing funding applications and provide an opportunity for the sector to share information and ideas for potential funding. A targeted marketing and communications plan ensured maximum publicity about the event both within Gateshead and across the North East.
- c) Funders and funding support organisations were present providing attendees with the opportunity to drop in, at a time convenient to them, to speak to funders and find out more about their funding programmes and discuss any potential funding proposals. In addition to the market stalls, a programme of 11 workshops ran through- out the day.
- d) The workshops provided the opportunity to receive further advice and support about funding programmes, how to make an application, how to improve their chances of securing funding through social media; and alternative funding sources. Up to 50 representatives from VCS organisations attended each workshop.
- e) 195 individuals, representing 164 VCS organisations, from across the North East, attended the event throughout the day. 25% of attendees came from Gateshead. Evaluation forms were completed by 77 organisations. The key headlines from the feedback are:

- 100% of respondents thought the event was very useful
- 73% of respondents found the workshops informative
- Nearly 60% of participants indicated that they felt that meeting funders was the most beneficial part of the event.
- 39% of respondents thought that as a result of attending the event they would be considering making changes to the way the organisation operates
- 95% respondents felt more informed about funding and additional forms of income
- 100% of respondents thought the time of the event was suitable

### **Community Asset Transfer**

Implementation of the community asset transfer of community centres continued during 2015 with 18 community centres in phase 2 and phase 3 of the Community Centres Review now transferred to a community organisation in the form of a long term, full repairing lease. It is expected 3 community centres will sign a lease before 31 March 2016 leaving one community centre (Barley Mow Village Hall) where an option for the future is being discussed with the management committee. A further 2 leisure facilities have also been leased to community organisations as a result of the Council's approach to supporting community organisations (Gateshead Indoor Bowling Centre and Dunston Activity Centre.)

### **Gateshead Council Volunteers Plan 2013-17**

This provides a strategic and structured approach to volunteering in Gateshead. It identifies principles, priorities and the infrastructure through which the Council will significantly accelerate and develop volunteering across Gateshead in the Council Plan period. The plan ensures that volunteers are supported effectively in areas such as training, skills, expenses and health and safety so that the principles of volunteering are not undermined

- a) Since 2013 there has been a single point of access to volunteering with Gateshead Council. The Expression of Interest form can now be completed online or on a hard copy and is used for any individual that is interested in volunteering in any council service. Documents are available on the councils website
- b) There are currently approximately 1200 volunteers who have submitted Expressions of Interests to volunteer with Gateshead Council. These are all at different stages of the volunteer recruitment process. There are currently over 50 volunteer roles available and there is continuing development with services and partners to increase volunteering across Gateshead and to continue to provide added value to Council Services. Partnerships

continue to organisations and groups in the voluntary and community sectors. Volunteers can be signposted to them from Gateshead Council, and their volunteer roles can also be publicised.

- c) Since February 2015 a total of 401 volunteers have completed the initial registration process, 38% of the total EOI's submitted since 2013. The three most popular volunteer areas include; Children & Families, Community Links and Countryside & Environment
- d) Since June 2015 the volunteer hours contributed to Gateshead's Community is currently estimated at a total of 72,172 hours a month (18,043 a week). This equates to a financial contribution of £866,064 a month (£216,516 a week). This is still only a snap shot of the whole sector. It is estimated that there are a total of 6,230 active volunteers across Gateshead.
- e) Gateshead 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Volunteers Month took place in June 2015. Included below are some of the key outcomes:
- Over 56,000 volunteer's hours were recorded throughout June.
  - This was a 68 % increase from 2014 (38,244) this equates to £778,650 economic value.
  - A total of 229 volunteers were recruited in June.
  - 62 events throughout volunteer's month, with events happening every day.
  - Celebration event at Trinity square on 26<sup>th</sup> June; 16,450 people through Trinity Square on the day
  - Over 30 groups and organisations have accessed the volunteers month grants scheme, accessing up to £300 scheme and utilising the £10,000 allocated budget from the Capacity Building Fund
  - The Councils own Employee Volunteering Policy is continuing to development about approximately 15 employees now taking part in different types of volunteering activity through the policy.
  - Employees can utilise the policy and be supported to volunteer in a long term role with up to 15 hours paid leave a year. There is also the option for employees to take part in one off volunteer opportunities such as the shoe box appeal discussed at the start of this report.

Some examples of volunteering activity are included below:

- Barbara Millns - Founding Chair for Tyne United Rowing Club.  
Barbara has been at the centre of developing rowing in Gateshead, starting with the founding of Tyne United Rowing Club back in 2007. Tyne United

Rowing Club now currently has a membership of around 180 members Barbara is soon to receive her MBE at the palace for services to rowing in Tyne & Wear which was announced back in May in the Queen's Birthday Honours list becoming operational in 2009 (£1.6 million funding raised to date to fund facility development, still ongoing), her work has mainly focused around partnership working with Durham, Newcastle and Northumbria Universities, as well as the Gateshead SSP, Gateshead College

- Jackey – Countryside & Environment Volunteer. Jackey takes part in as many practical tasks as possible and is always a positive key team member. Jackey has loved spending time outside in the natural environment observing birds, plants and the landscape. She now helps with the management and maintenance of more than 20 nature reserves within Gateshead which Jackey finds very rewarding, Jackey often gets stopped by members of the public who are interested in the various tasks she is completing and who then find out further information around volunteering.
- The British Transplant Games  
This year the games were held in Gateshead and involved over 300 volunteers who delivered over 3,000 volunteers' hours.
- Gateshead Older People's Assembly.  
Supports older people across the borough with a range of activities and groups aimed at improving their wellbeing. Their work could not be achieved without their loyal volunteer network. The value of volunteering with Gateshead Older Peoples Assembly generates in excess of 1500 hours annually, a net value of circa £19,000 per annum. Through capacity building within the organisation this will potentially grow substantially in the coming year as a series of new projects are developed. These will also attract new members and attendees to their activities as well as increase further the number of voluntary hours undertaken by members.
- Gateshead College – Tourism Students  
Student volunteers supported the Funding Event in 2015 (discussed above) the event took place at The Hilton Hotel Newcastle-Gateshead, and provided useful funding information to organisations who attended from throughout the North East. Approximately 20 volunteer students attended the day and provided valuable support through the event. Some positive comments about the volunteers were included in the evaluation for the event.
- Community Links. The Volunteers at Community Links support adults with learning disabilities to live a meaningful life. Many of the volunteers use their role, whilst recovering from difficult periods in their own lives, to take a supported step into their own community. The volunteers contribute greatly to the improved health and emotional wellbeing of the service users, offering a supporting friendship and the opportunity to share the enjoyment of events and activities
- Community Volunteer Libraries - An integrated Community and Council library network. Over 90 volunteers established 2013. CBF Advisory Group agreed

to match the Council's grant contributions at each of the 5 volunteer libraries. The emerging financial forecasts indicate each has sufficient funds to cover running costs for 12 months. 2 volunteer libraries will jointly fund a funder officer to advise on a sustainable funding strategy. 3 of the libraries have now agreed to a lease of the building they currently occupy

## **5. Priority Area Three**

### **Information & Communication**

Gateshead Council's volunteering webpages continue to develop and support voluntary and community groups the Council are working with. All volunteer roles & opportunities within Gateshead can be promoted, events and activities link in and there is the potential for a community audit to be undertaken in 2016 around assets and facilities available across Gateshead as a whole.

Capacity Building to develop The Gateshead Community Centre Network which was developed in 2011 has continued. The Network brings together representatives of over 30 community centres, sports clubs, community libraries and other organisations that have an interest in building management. During 2015, the network had an agreed programme of meetings for the year, focusing on building management, business planning, and communications/PR and funding. The Network is intended to share best practice, provide peer mentoring and develop capacity as well as collaborative working.

The OurGateshead website continues to grow. By December 2015, over 1000 groups were listed and sharing information on events and activities across the Borough. In addition to the information held on the website there is ongoing ICT support for local residents, including ICT skills support for jobseekers. An application has submitted to UK Online for funding to support online health information awareness.

## **6. Priority Area Four**

### **Involving Children, Young People & Schools**

A number of joint ventures and projects have been delivered throughout 2015 involving Gateshead Schools, Colleges and Youth Groups. An example of this was the Volunteer activity day held on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2015.

- The Seven Starts Estate (Springwell) is within the 10% most deprived in terms of income, employment, Health, and education, skills & training. The Capacity Building Team, The Housing Company and a range of other organisations are all continuously working hard to reduce this deprivation. The Neighbourhood Management Team's Capacity Building for Health Team linked up with The Gateshead Housing Company who purchased through their funding approximately 500 trees and 400 bulbs to plant on the estate and the former site of St Edmund Campion School. The Capacity Building officers invited local community groups and schools to help support the initiative by planting the trees & bulbs which not only provided a sense of



community spirit but started a longer term improvement to the area. Gateshead Council also included this as a volunteer activity for their employees.

- The opportunity gave the local school children a chance to get involved in their own immediate area. Not only were they able to see an immediate improvement to the site and feel the benefit from the physical exercise, they will be able to watch the trees and bulbs grow and continue to flourish providing a long lasting environmental improvement. This will have a positive impact on the people involved knowing that they have achieved this themselves. It will act as a long lasting example of what can happen if people get involved locally. The school have also now developed a long lasting partnership with the team.

## **7. Priority Area Five**

### **Supporting Positive Community Relationships**

#### Gateshead Muslim Society

The Gateshead Muslim Society has been supported to develop a men's and women's walking group. Members of the society have been trained as walk leaders (3 men and 3 women) and are networking with the Friends of Saltwell Park on a range of walks, usually approximately a mile in length, from the Muslim Community Centre to Saltwell Park. The women's group currently walk weekly, it is linked to the regular craft group which has enabled attendees to engage in both activities.

#### Peace of Mind

Peace of Mind is a group based at Whitehall Road Methodist church the organisation was set up by a group of women in Behnam who are seeking asylum. Supporting asylum seekers, refugees & migrants from the BME community to overcome barriers & difficulties they face integrating into society.

#### Comfrey Project @ Windmill Hills

The Comfrey Project based at the Windmill Hills Centre provides asylum seekers and refugees across Gateshead with a safe, welcoming environment, which promotes personal wellbeing through a sense of place and belonging. This is achieved by various shared creative crafts including allotment gardening, cooking and crafts. We have a down to earth approach to social integration and community health. Listening, sharing and inclusion are fundamental to everything they do. Through their work they encourage integration, by introducing participants to other activities organised both by the project and by other local voluntary and community projects. They provide emotional and practical support to participants, and where necessary signpost them on to relevant statutory or voluntary agencies for additional support and advice. Support comes not just from staff but from group members as well.

### Gateshead Clubhouse

Gateshead Clubhouse is a user ran mental health community hub that provides support to people with mental health problems who live in Gateshead.

The organisation has no paid staff; their service is run entirely by our members who are themselves mental health service users. We have a community cafe, rooms for hire and IT suite.

Their vision sees the Clubhouse being a venue where people are always welcome on their own terms. The belief is that people need a safe harbour where members have the assurance that they are in control about what level of activity and participation they wish to engage in, without the fear they will have to move on before they choose to, or are ready to leave. In this way the Clubhouse could then be in a position to truly support people to build up their own resilience and, in a suitable time-frame, be able to move on with their lives.

### Equal Arts

Helix Arts, working with Gateshead Council and other partners, have been successful in securing Capacity Building Funding to enable them to offer two dedicated Make Art Happen programmes in Gateshead with local community groups that will focus on the health and well-being agenda aligned to the Live Well Gateshead model. The programmes will be delivered within Live Well Gateshead's targeted neighbourhoods and each programme will offer 10 places, ideally with up to three representatives from three community groups involved with each programme. The locations identified were

- Wrekenton is a priority neighbourhood with an emerging local partnership (Live Well Gateshead @ High Fell) considering health and wellbeing and includes the Birtley Partnership.
- Teams/Bensham/Dunston area drawing groups from the local area including the Teams Life Centre, Changing Lives, St Chads and link to work of Big Local

## **8. Outcomes and Impact**

In conclusion, the outcomes and impact of the delivery of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy's include:

- A co-ordinated approach to community engagement and development across Gateshead
- Increased levels of community engagement and participation
- A sustainable approach to community asset transfers

## **9. Current and Future Work**

There are a number of activities that the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy will continue to deliver throughout 2016. Some of the key areas of work include:

- Continue to develop the Gateshead Offer to match the capacity needs of community groups
- Building on Community Linking initiatives
- Continuing to develop and deliver ongoing volunteering projects and initiatives
- Developing, coordinating and delivering Gateshead's Volunteers Month 2016
- Coordinating and delivering the Partnership approach to "Fill the Gap Holiday Scheme".
- Continue joint work with organisation and groups within the voluntary and community sector of Gateshead.
- Supporting groups develop community projects
- Inter-generational work

The Gateshead Communities Together Strategy will continue to be overseen by the Council and GVOC and impact will be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Gateshead Strategic Partnership on annual basis.

## **10. Recommendations**

Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to: -

- (i) Note the progress achieved in the last twelve months
- (ii) Comment on the level of impact of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy and Action Plan and whether satisfactory progress has been made.
- (iii) Comment on the five priorities outlined in paragraph 2 and advise on the continued relevance of these priorities for the forthcoming year.
- (iv) Agree to a review of the Gateshead Communities Together Strategy in 2016.

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