

Committees:	Dates:
Community and Children's Services	08/02/2019
Subject: Community Engagement	Public
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Summary

The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the work of the Community Engagement Team which forms part of Housing and Property Services within the Department of Community & Children's Services.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to note, discuss and comment on the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The Community Engagement Team forms part of the Housing and Property Services Team based in Lauderdale Place on the Barbican Estate. The composition of the Community Engagement Team and its funding source is contained in the table below:

Post	Funding Source
Community Engagement Manager	HRA (100%)
Community Events and Engagement Officers (x2)	HRA (50%) City Fund (50%)
Part-time integrated Community Development Worker (in partnership with St Botolph's without Aldgate) – 1 Year Fixed Term.	City Fund (50%) St Botolph's (50%)
Golden Lane Community Centre Manager	HRA (100%) (Expected to be covered by income generation)
Communications Officer	HRA (100%)
Community Events Apprentice	City Fund (100%)

2. The primary function of the Community Engagement Team is to engage with, support and develop local community groups by building their capacity, upskilling their members and providing support and advice where needed in order to help them develop into strong, independent and self-sufficient community groups.
3. The purpose of the Community Engagement Team's enabling role is to develop local community groups that can deliver activities and events for the local communities with little or no support from us. Ultimately, these local community groups should be run and sustained by the community they serve. Clearly however, this is a process that can take time and, some groups may initially require more support than others.

Why we do Community Engagement

4. The government's definition of community cohesion is "a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community".
5. In simple terms, and in the context of what Community & Children's Services (C&CS) is trying to achieve, community engagement is about creating estates and neighbourhoods where people feel they belong, where they have the chance to interact with others and where they feel at home.
6. In C&CS, we want to create strong, supportive communities, where people know each other and where they feel they belong, which in turn, has huge benefits. For young people, it gives them the opportunity to grow up in an environment where they feel included, where respecting other people and the place they live in is normal behaviour and, where radicalisation is less likely to occur as, different cultures and beliefs are not just accepted, but are celebrated.
7. For families, it brings a sense of belonging, somewhere where they feel safe and secure, a neighbourhood where they want to stay and work and where they contribute to and support local businesses. For older and vulnerable people, it provides supportive neighbours, people who care about them and the chance to have contact with others, rather than be isolated and lonely. For anyone at risk, it reduces the chance of abuse and the likelihood of going unnoticed because, neighbours look out for each other.

National, Regional and Corporate, Context

8. The work we do around community engagement links to, and delivers on, a number of key priorities across the City of London Corporation (CoLC), the wider City of London and national government.

National Context

9. One of the key themes of the New Deal for Housing Green Paper (August 2018), is “Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities”. Stigma was the most consistent theme raised by tenants at the engagements events organised as part of the development of the Green Paper. Tenants reported that:

“We are stigmatised for being in social housing and treated as second-class citizens”

“I am made to feel less of a person than the person that has bought his or her own house”.

“There is a perception of council tenants as benefit scroungers when many are hardworking, honest people”.

10. The Green Paper aims to break down inequalities in social housing and ensure that tenants feel at home in their community rather than seeing it just as a place to live.

Regional Context

11. One of the five key objectives of the Mayor of London’s Health Inequality Strategy (September 2018), is “Making sure all Londoners have the opportunity to participate in community life, empowering people to improve their own, and their communities health and wellbeing”.

Corporate Context

12. The work we do around community engagement contributes significantly to the values and objectives of several Corporate strategies and business plans including:

City of London Cultural Strategy 2018-2022

- Our values - we are a global, flexible and cosmopolitan city yet have a strong sense of pride in our place, history, neighbourhoods and identity.
- Our strategic objectives – better promote our world class culture and heritage offer and use our wealth of outdoor spaces to widen its appeal to a more diverse audience, enabling communities in the City and beyond.

City of London Corporate Plan 2018-23

- Corporate aim - contribute to a flourishing society
- Corporate objectives:
 - People are safe and feel safe.
 - People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
 - People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
 - Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

Department of Community & Children’s Service Business Plan Priority

- Community – people of all ages feel part of, engaged with and are able to shape their community.

City of London Housing Strategy 2018-23

- Outcome - Thriving and connected communities where people feel at home and flourish.

Our Vision

13. This report lays out our approach for engaging and developing our communities. In line with the City's commitment, we take a co-productive approach to our community engagement and development work. We work with residents to understand our communities and co-produce solutions, bringing together the skills of our residents and local organisations, alongside the facilities available in the local area to develop their strengths and their community.
14. The role of the Community Engagement Team is to help these individuals, institutions and organisations to realise the assets and strengths they have and to help develop them in sustainable ways that contribute to building cohesive and strong communities that allow people to reach their full potential. This can come through building their capacity, through training and development, support with delivery or help linking organisations into our networks both within and external to the Corporation.
15. Our offer of support to community groups that want to help build cohesive communities remains open to all and the Community Engagement team are constantly meeting and offering support to new and pre-existing groups.

Principles of Community Engagement

16. There are essentially four key principles for that underpin the work of the Community Engagement Team:
 - Co-production;
 - Asset based community development;
 - Capacity building;
 - Sustainability.

Commitment to working together

17. We are committed to working collaboratively on projects and new initiatives with residents, our City colleagues and our external partners. We are clear about available options and the decisions that will be taken. This co-operation means issues can be raised in a constructive manner and appropriate solutions found in a way that involves residents and officers.
18. Our estate teams and our Community Engagement Team, together with our colleagues across the City of London and our external partners work together with residents.

19. We aim to establish working groups with resident and community representation when delivering big events and projects, to ensure that we are co-producing events that reflect the local community in which they are taking place.

Sustainable Community Engagement

20. We believe that true community development is much more than just 'one-off' events. We work with residents to think through their proposals and assist them to develop and undertake activities that are inclusive and enjoyable for all which, in turn leads to long-term, workable and sustainable community groups.

21. To achieve truly sustainable community engagement, the Community Engagement Team will provide the following:

- Resources – to assist residents to identify funding and other avenues for resources. This will enable community members and groups to become self-sufficient and skilled on a longer-term basis.
- Support and Development – to work with resident and community led groups to support their development into independent, sustainable community organisations.
- Mediation and Time Credits – the use of mediation to improve communications with both newly-established and existing groups, to secure on-going relationships. We use Time Credits as an empowerment tool for both estate staff and residents.
- Evidence – we measure what we do and the impact it has to showcase the value of our work with residents. We encourage resident groups to cross estate boundaries and share what they do with others, working towards a City of London Community.

Supporting Social Wellbeing

22. We recognise that a strong and inclusive community can help people to feel less socially isolated. We are committed to supporting the public health agenda to improve social wellbeing by working with our residents to develop their communities.

Successful Community Engagement

23. The following are examples of the successes of the Community Engagement over the last 12 months:

Remembering Yesterday, Celebrating Today

An inclusive project that both celebrated and remembered those who fought and died in World War 1. The project culminated with Avondale Community Events partnering with the Royal British Legion, a relationship supported by the Community Engagement Team and the Estate Team, to produce community art and professional art commemorating the Centenary of the end of World War 1. The artwork was then auctioned off to raise money for the Royal British Legion's work supporting homeless ex-servicemen and women.

Aldgate Square Festival

The Community Engagement Team engaged in an extensive programme of public consultation and involvement to pull the festival together, hosting open meetings, community workshops and visiting lots of local groups and organisations to get input into how the festival should develop and how it should represent Aldgate.

The Team worked extensively with a number of local external partners including the Mansell Street Women's Group, Arts Admin, Aldgate Community Events, Sir John Cass Foundation Primary School, Canon Barnett Primary School, St Botolph's without Aldgate Church and several other City teams such as the Highways Team, the DBE Aldgate team, Libraries and London Metropolitan Archives. Together, we delivered an inclusive, co-produced and successful community festival attended by more than 1500 people across the 3 days. Along the way, we supported many local and community groups to get involved in the festival including, for example, helping to complete Risk Assessments for groups who wished to provide food and providing infrastructure, such as gazebos, for group's ideas.

Aldgate Community Events (ACE)

A volunteer umbrella group of residents, institutions and organisations that have been key partners with us to deliver both Lantern Parades and the Aldgate Square Festival. The group was formed through the process of engagement in the Aldgate Play project but, has also supported and delivered several events themselves for example, an oral history project and Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

The Community Engagement team has supported the development of ACE from a group of interested and passionate volunteers into an independent Community Interest Company delivering good community activity in the local area. This has been achieved through support, training and linking ACE into networks and connections.

Aldgate Lantern Parade and Winter Fete

The Community Engagement team delivered the second Lantern Parade and Winter Fete in Aldgate in December last year. The event was co-delivered in partnership with Sir John Cass Foundation Primary School, Aldgate Community Events and St Botolph's without Aldgate amongst many other partners, working together as a collaborative working group. It was an excellent event, with hundreds of local residents and schoolchildren taking part in the parade and the fete. Again, we conducted an extensive programme of engagement across the community, running workshops in a number of community places such as Bevis Marks Synagogue, Kahaila Café and Artizan Street Library.

Avondale Community Events

A group of committed, community minded resident volunteers on our Avondale Estate who run a number of estate-based events and activities throughout the year. The Community Engagement Team and the Estate Team have supported the

group with the delivery of events, as well as supporting them in developing partnerships with the Royal British Legion and others.

Golden Lane Community Centre Advisory Board

The Community Engagement Team has established a Resident Advisory Board to assist in the steering of direction and vision for the Golden Lane Community Centre in its initial phase of being set up as a vibrant centre for the whole community with the purpose of informing the strategic direction of the centre. The Board continues to meet to inform and support the development of the centre as we move out of the initial set-up phase. This will enable the co-production of the ethos of the centre and builds on the strengths of the local community. This has also led to a number of resident-led activities being supported by the Community Engagement team through free provision of space and support promoting the activities within the Community Centre.

Golden Social

A community volunteer led coffee and chat social event that happens weekly in the Golden Lane Community Centre. The Community Engagement Team has trained a group of residents with the skills needed to engage with the community and as part of this, has supported them developing this weekly social event with the aim of reducing social isolation on the estate.

Petticoat Lane Consultation

The Community Engagement Team has been working with our colleagues in DBE to design, support and deliver a consultation plan for our work in improving Petticoat Lane. This has involved extensive outreach work with local businesses, both large and small in the area, residents and community organisations to ensure their voices are heard as part of the consultation.

Future Projects

24. The Community Engagement Team is working, both supporting and leading on, the following projects:

- Our City – Spacehive Crowdfunding platform
- Community Events on Estates plan
- Window Wanderland
- Supporting 'Mela In The City'
- Resident Magazine
- Engagement in the 'Illuminated River' on Southwark Estates
- Community Centre Review
- Consultation regarding St Botolph's Church Hall
- Employability Project at York Way.

25. In the future, the Community Engagement Team is particularly keen to support more resident-led ideas across the whole of our social housing estates.

Funding

26. The Community Engagement Team has a small budget of around £25,000 per annum taken from the Education and Early Years' budget that has, up until recently, been used exclusively for the Community Fair. In future however, this funding will be used by the Community Engagement Team to set up and run smaller community events across the whole of our social housing estates.
27. In addition to the above, the Team has a smaller HRA budget of £5,000 which, has typically been used to set up and run smaller, more localised and specific community events across our social housing estates.
28. Members may be aware of the 'Stronger Communities Grant' which, is funding made available by the City of London Corporation to help support the Corporate objectives around community cohesion and engagement. This funding is managed centrally by the Central Grants Team. As part of its objective to engage and develop local communities, the Community Engagement Team works with local communities to help them access funding from the Stronger Communities Grant where appropriate. This support includes helping put together sustainable bids and support in navigating the applications process. The decisions as to whether applications are successful or not is entirely independent of the Community Engagement Team.

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