

Report of the Director of Place to the meeting of Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee to be held on 19 November 2020

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Subject:

Stronger Communities Strategy and Delivery Plan

Summary statement:

This report gives an update on the progress of the Stronger Communities Strategy and delivery plan.

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Portfolio:

Neighbourhoods & Community Safety

Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Corporate

1. SUMMARY

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress carried out against the Bradford Stronger Communities Strategy overseen by the Stronger Communities Partnership.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 A report on the Stronger Communities Strategy was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny on the 23 January 2020. It was resolved that;

(1) This Committee requests that progress against the Stronger Communities Strategy Delivery Plan be presented in 12 months specifically focusing on the outcomes and evaluation of projects being delivered as part of the integrated communities programme.

(2) That officers develop further approaches to engage with and encourage communities to participate in the development and delivery of projects.

2.2 Implementation of the Stronger Communities Together Strategy is overseen by the independent Stronger Communities Partnership Board which is chaired by the Bishop of Bradford, Toby Howarth. This Board is one of five strategic partnerships that contribute to the Bradford District Plan 2020.

2.3 The Strategy comprises of four pillars of; Getting On, Getting Along, Getting Involved and Feeling Safe which builds on our existing strategic priorities across the District, incorporating good practice as well as innovative ideas to test and learn from what works and what does not in improving and removing barriers to cohesion and integration.

2.4 The strategy incorporates the Stronger Communities existing areas of work and the Integrated Communities Programme, which delivers under *Bradford for Everyone* and is funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) following on from Bradford's designation as one of five 'Integrated Communities Pilot Areas'. The delivery of the programme runs from March 2019 to March 2021, however subject to further funding will allow us to extend to March 2022. The programme will approximately engage with over 38,000 residents from all ages and backgrounds across 24 wards through the delivery of 50 plus projects.

2.5 The strategy defines what makes stronger, happier and well integrated communities as "*... a place where everyone feels that they belong, are understood, feel safe and are able to fully participate in the opportunities the District offers.*"

2.6 Context of COVID-19

Most of our work for the six months has been focussed on supporting the COVID-19 emergency response.

2.7 In June 2020 we joined the national longitudinal research on social cohesion, in partnership with the University of Kent, the Integration and Cohesion Network "Belong" to understand the social and psychological processes responses to the

pandemic and the impact it has had on social cohesion. The recent report from the first two wave surveys showed that Bradford district is becoming more united with a higher level of trust in local government, building more connections with neighbours and family, and that local areas that invested in social cohesion programmes are faring better in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other cities that haven't. The Bradford report can be found here;

http://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-Social-Cohesion-Investment-specific-results-Bradford-23_10_2020.pdf

- 2.8 The Stronger Communities Team redeployed some staff to support our community response at short notice and coordinated with organisations and partners to reach people most acutely affected by the pandemic. Our support included Reassurance and Engagement, communications, coordination of services and supporting the Bronze command. Over 1500 people volunteered through People Can, 11,371 food parcels were provided weekly and 13,000 activity packs prepared for children, 35 volunteers were deployed for community reassurance walks with 10,000 leaflets handed out to residents in parks and public areas and there was coordinated community response over Ramadan and Eid to support Scholemoor Cemetery. Over £277,000 were granted to VCS to support district food banks. We also captured people's feelings and thoughts through soundbites which can be heard here; <https://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/news/how-covid-19-has-affected-the-bradford-district/> during the pandemic as well through black and white pictures which were featured on BBC online. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-53606718> We also saw innovative ways of partnership working and interest free loan scheme developed with Bradford District Credit Union, and a 'Befriending Platform' designed and built to support with social isolation and mental health.
- 2.9 The Neighbourhood's area teams launched an adapted Bradford Covid Response in September 2020, to work on community, business and voluntary sector engagement. Recently this has extended to include COVID-19 Home Testing offering residents self-administered COVID-19 tests on their door step by trained staff.
- 2.10 Alongside this we continued to deliver adapted services such as Linking Network running home-schooling and support online, delivery of ESOL classes, the first 'home learning pilot' for those with long term health issues and launch of the Learning English website www.learningenglish.org.uk; a free platform for providers and learners to find ESOL classes near them, marking World Refugee Week, holding online conversations between communities on Black Lives Matters, messaging on Anti-Rumour and Critical Thinking and adapting our Innovation Fund Round Three to respond to COVID- 19, where an additional 10 projects were funded. We have now supported 29 grassroots projects in the design and delivery of these.
- 2.11 **Appendix A** shows what has been achieved under each strategy outcome, project outcomes and the learning and evaluation achieved so far. A detailed report for each project is taken to the Partnership for discussion at quarterly intervals of delivery where it is discussed based on its findings. This ensures projects that do not work, are not repeated in the Stronger Communities Delivery Plan. See **Appendix A Integrated Communities Evaluation Plan**.

2.12 The wider work of the Stronger Communities Team has continued during the pandemic and this includes support to volunteers, the Transformation Fund, support to vulnerable individuals with the European Settlement Scheme, keeping in communications with groups in our Equalities and Communities Relations Strategic Group and the VCS Infrastructure review. Further details of this work are shown in **Appendix C**.

3.0 Commissioning and Procurement

3.1 The projects within the Integrated Communities Programme (*Bradford for Everyone*) outlines a range of commissioned projects which have been advertised through YorTender which ensures fair process. Our grant funding initiatives use a wide range of methods such as participatory budgeting - which devolves decision making to local residents - and through panel assessments. Panels have involved a mixture of Partnership Board members, local people, Ward Officers, Area Coordinators and Stronger Communities staff at various stages of appraisal. These projects can be found on <https://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/get-involved/>

3.2 The *Innovation Fund* is our small grants programme which offers the opportunity to respond to emerging needs and tensions, scale-up smaller projects and test new ideas. All project activities are intended to engage all communities with primarily focus on those in poorer deprived communities. Our Project Support Officers engage and encourage communities to participate in the development and delivery of these projects by working with organisations to develop their ideas. Organisations are supported through this process, connected with other organisations and proposals are reviewed and developed further.

3.3 29 projects have been funded through three rounds. During round three, in light of the council's declaration of a "Climate Emergency" we also sought applications that recognised the relationships between integration/cohesion and the environment – this resulted in the submission of four related proposals two of which were successful in gaining funding. A list of these projects can be found on our website; <https://bradfordforeveryone.co.uk/get-involved/> Round four of the Innovation Fund has been allocated to the Area Committees.

3.4 The Partner Forum were involved in the development of the strategy. Membership includes those with an interest in integration and cohesion, previous members from the interim Steering Group which evolved into the Partnership Board, public sector services and grass root VCS organisations. The purpose of the forum is to share learning, facilitate collaborative working and inform organisations about how they can support our priorities as identified in the strategy. Our last Forum took place on the 1 October where over 70 organisations participated on line. Long term the forum should support how we measure our collective district effort in building stronger communities. The Partner Forum has engaged over 230 organisations and has a network membership of 537. Interested organisations can register here; https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKBMD/subscriber/new?topic_id=UKBMD_157

4.0 Test and Learn

As part of the strategy there has been a commitment to research and evaluation and some funding has been allocated through the appointment of an Evaluation and Project Improvement Officer.

- 4.1 To maximise the learning from the programme, robust data is being collected and evidence is being developed to help inform decisions, future investment and the direction of this work. We have established a great level of trust with our delivery partners so we can fully capture and understand why certain interventions work in some communities/ areas and not in others. We have also trained our local residents - resident sub-group; *Bradford For Everyone* Ambassadors - to undertake observations to determine the quality of provision being provided as well as being involved in their delivery. This will inform our commitment for continual improvement where things are not working and rapid evaluation process to build on what does.
- 4.2 An easy to use evaluation toolkit is being developed for the Innovation Fund projects to enable them to capture their impact. This is currently in its second iteration and being tested against our third round of Innovation Fund projects.

4.3 Research

- 4.4 Alongside this, the MHCLG has appointed IFF Research as the national evaluators for the work taking place in each of the Integration Area's. They will concentrate on three similar and equivalent aspects of delivery for each Area. For Bradford these are Community Conversations (Bfd As 1- Street Life), Community Ambassadors (*Bradford For Everyone* Ambassadors and resident sub-group) and The Linking Network which currently delivers in three of the Integration Areas. We will be including local qualitative evaluation alongside to ensure all aspects of project delivery are captured. This is not available until these projects end.
- 4.5 We also commissioned the Centre for Inclusion and Diversity of the University of Bradford to conduct research in three distinct areas. The research activities cover residential segregation, school segregation and factors in hate crime reporting in the Bradford district. The Research is Led by Professor Udy Archibong, and commenced in June 2020 with an appointment of a Research Fellow.
- 4.6 Work is well underway on the residential segregation research and the draft report on this element is expected in December 2020/January 2021. A learning and dissemination plan has been produced. The research team have been working closely with the '*Bradford For Everyone*' programme. Activities on the School Segregation research will commence in earnest early in the New Year and hate crime will commence as soon as data requested has been received from the Police.

5.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 Cross Cutting Themes

- 5.1.1 Bradford Council became a member of Intercultural Cities in November 2018. Intercultural Cities (ICC) is a Council of Europe flagship programme. Bradford is

one of eight cities in the UK and one of 136 cities internationally. More about Intercultural Cities can be found here;
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about>

5.1.2 As an Intercultural City we have continued to work actively on embedding interculturalism across the district, learning from best practice around the world and sharing good examples from Bradford district with colleagues locally, nationally and internationally. Recent work has included:

- Our *Emergency Planning* team agreed to undertake ICC training in “Migrants and Risk Management” and we delivered a well-received webinar on *Interculturalism and Inclusive Employment* to counsellors and Careers Advisers from around the world, hosted by a German University.
- Bradford contributed to the Intercultural Cities #EveryoneCounts campaign via social media and the *Bradford for Everyone* website. This campaign was part of Refugee Week and involved Lord Mayors from around the world publicly highlighting the importance of Refugees to our communities and economies, and our collective responsibility towards them.
- Bradford also contributed to the evidence base around how to support all diverse communities during the COVID-19 pandemic for the Council of Europe’s inaugural ‘*Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion*’ (CDADI) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/committee-antidiscrimination-diversity-inclusion> which took place on 8-10 September, and attended a UNHCR webinar on *Creating Inclusive Cities* which focussed on Refugees and has led to a collaborative piece of work between *Bradford for Everyone* and Cllr Richard Dunbar which sought to start supportive conversations between and around LGBTQ+ and Migrant groups. This took place on 10 September.
- We liaised with an ICC expert from Ireland in relation to our Shared Values and our contribution to an ICC Webinar on “Systemic Discrimination” – this best practice has now been published on the ICC’s “Good practice” webpage. This work led to presenting at the international webinar on 22 October 2020.

6.0 FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

6.1 The Stronger Communities Together Strategy is funded through a combination of funding such as the MHCLG and Home Office.

6.2 The Integrated Communities Programme is a two year £2.7m programme funded through the MHCLG. The programme runs from March 2019 to March 2021 but will be extended to March 2022 subject to further funding. In addition to funding from the MHCLG, match funding has been secured from LEAP (Creative People and Places) to extend the offer of arts and events and ESIF to extend the English Language Advice Hub.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

The Stronger Communities Partnership Board oversees the management of issues and risks and these are periodically raised at Board meetings. In addition, programme and methodology is deployed by the Programme Lead and Stronger Communities Delivery Coordinator.

8. LEGAL APPRAISAL

There are no legal implications apparent within the context of the report

8.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

8.1.1 The Stronger Communities Strategy and Delivery Plan support the following Corporate Equality Objectives on Community Relations, Employment and Skills, equality data and organisational equalities culture.

8.1.2 An equality impact assessment has been carried out that evidences that the proposals within the strategy and delivery plan will make a positive contribution and impact on many protected characteristic groups. There is no perceived detriment from undertaking any of the initiatives within the delivery plan.

8.1.3 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no sustainability implications apparent.

8.1.4 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

There are no greenhouse gas emission impacts apparent.

8.1.5 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

Feelings of safety can act as a barrier to people's willingness to engage in those activities that bring people together at a neighbourhood level, which was a factor raised during the consultation work carried out in support of the local Stronger Communities strategy.

8.1.6 The Stronger Communities Partnership aligns some of its work with the Community Safety Partnership and vice versa. The Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods & Community Safety is a member of the Stronger Communities Partnership and also chairs the Community Safety Partnership. Officers also attend and support both partnerships and the relationship between these two - and other major district partnerships - are key to the success of the overall strategy.

8.1.7 Many of the initiatives that sit within the Stronger Communities Delivery Plan have a positive impact on peoples feeling of safety, particularly where they bring different groups of people together, building tolerance and understanding.

8.2. HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

8.2.1 The Human Rights Act covers various rights including: Freedom from torture and inhumane or degrading treatment; right to liberty and security; respect for your private and family life and correspondence; freedom of thought, belief and religion and protection from discrimination in respect of the rights and freedoms.

8.2.2 Building understanding, tolerance and respect will help people to live their lives within the freedoms to which they are entitled.

8.3 TRADE UNION

Aspects of the strategy may focus on change in policy and approach, for example in relation to selection and recruitment practice. If any proposals have Council workforce implications consultation will take place with trade unions as appropriate.

8.4 WARD IMPLICATIONS

To be successful, work to build stronger and more integrated communities will need to take place in all wards and communities across the district. Whilst the strategy will focus on particular areas within the district, the work funded by the MHCLG is about learning what works and what does not work and what is 'scalable'. The 'Stronger Communities strategy' identifies work that is planned over the next five years, but needs to be seen within the context of a wider and more long-term strategy.

8.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING

There are no corporate parenting implications apparent.

8.6 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT

The Council is the Data Controller. In some aspects of the programme the Council will also be responsible for processing data. The Council including any delivery partners commissioned will receive information management training. Projects will be assessed on the sensitivity of their data and potential data linkage to other services within the programme. This will be supported by appropriate data sharing agreements.

8.7 NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

There are no 'Not for Publication Documents'

9. OPTIONS

9.1 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee may feel reassured with the progress made or make recommendations for any changes to the Bradford Stronger Communities Partnership Board subject to approval by the Board and the MHCLG.

9.2 Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee may determine to seek regular updates on the delivery plan and impact measures applied to certain interventions that are proposed.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the progress carried out against the Bradford Stronger Communities Strategy overseen by the Stronger Communities Partnership.

11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 **Appendix A** Integrated Communities Programme Evaluation Plan.
- 11.2 **Appendix B** Integrated Communities Programme Case Studies.
- 11.3 **Appendix C** Core programmes supported by the Stronger Communities Team

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 12.1 Stronger Communities Together, Strategy for Bradford 2018-2023
- 12.2 “It’s Your Place – Tell Us What You Think” Report of the Social Kinetic, produced 14th August 2018.
- 12.3 Report and minutes of Overview and Scrutiny for 12 December 2018.
- 12.4 Results of the Intercultural Cities Index – August 2019
- 12.5 The last Overview and Scrutiny Report