

Item 5

KEY DECISION

REPORT TO CABINET

8th November 2007

**REPORT OF ASSISTANT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Social Regeneration and Partnerships Portfolio

COMMUNITY APPRAISALS IN SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report covers the reasons and methodology for undertaking a comprehensive set of community appraisals throughout the Borough. For those areas that already have up to date appraisals a “light touch” refresh will be undertaken. These appraisals will provide locality specific information to fit with the strategic and performance management intelligence being held, whilst linking with the Town and Parish Council’s that are undertaking Parish Plans achieving limited economies of scale. Overall this information will add to the local intelligence which informs the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 1.2 The tender process will fit with the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) due to the level of investment. The brief (Appendix 1) encourages the use of a local community infrastructure organisation as a local specialist organisation dealing with community capacity building and partnership support, which can assist in the longer term development and support of groups if required.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet agrees that:
 - i. Community Appraisals are undertaken for all wards within the Borough, and
 - ii. the OJEU process is undertaken to appoint a consultancy to complete the Community Appraisals throughout the Borough.

3. COMMUNITY APRAISALS

- 3.1 The Borough Council would wish to have appraisals completed for all of the 19 wards in the Borough of Sedgefield and aggregated up County Divisional level because of ongoing transitional issues, to inform the future development of our local communities in a way that reflects the wishes of local communities. It will also inform the refresh

of the Community Strategy and measures distance travelled since the last appraisal, both in the priority areas but also in those areas that have been highlighted as having deprived SOAs (Super Output Areas) within them. The completed appraisals will allow each community to access charitable and other funding sources to improve the conditions within their neighbourhood for local priorities. They will also provide a prioritised list of local issues which will supply a further check mechanism for the operation of the Local Improvement Programme.

- 3.2 A community appraisal is designed to provide a clear understanding of the key factors affecting a community and the gaps in provision to that community. For example, services and transport, current and background economic position, community capacity, and the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to that community. As a result of this type of evaluation a priority list of what the community needs to improve its circumstances is usually provided from the consultation with residents. This set of appraisals will go much further.
- 3.3 The methodology that will be employed will not only ensure an appropriate community appraisal in each of the Borough's wards but will provide a firm community base with the capacity to move forward. In those areas where little or no community activity is present the successful consultancy will ensure interested individuals will be brought together and empowered to work within their communities. In those areas where there is significant community engagement the consultancy will ensure that current capacity is improved and volunteers work closely with the professionals to produce their appraisals.
- 3.4 The volunteers from the local community/ local volunteer bureaux (CAVOS and PCT) could be trained in community engagement and surveying the local population, to provide the community profile and community consultation sections of the appraisal. They will also assist with the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, however, the provision of area framework data will be from the Borough's Strategy and Regeneration Section.
- 3.5 The added value that will be brought by engaging a specialist consultancy to this programme of appraisals is:
 - Increased community capacity for each of the Borough's wards,
 - Formal community structures the Council can engage meaningfully with,
 - Increased work opportunities for the volunteers,
 - Community ownership of the appraisals because of their involvement and independent facilitation,
 - Sustainability for the Community and Voluntary sector by promoting their procurement opportunities,
 - Greater understanding for the general public in progress made within localities,
 - Improved links with the Area Forums and LSP,

- Increased participation in community organisations and partnerships,
- Improved Children and Young People's participation and engagement.
- Linkages with service providers,
- Links with Parish and Town Plans,
- Provision of missing information in the suite of documents from the Community Strategy and Corporate Plan to local intelligence,
- Opportunity to identify and refresh local priorities and link to LIP appraisal,
- Provide local context for development of Area Frameworks, which will help shape discussion and activity in refreshed Area Forums.

3.6 This methodology is the most sustainable of all the models as local people volunteer and are trained to consult in their own communities, building local capacity as part of the process. The focus is on the process of capacity building as well as the appraisal document. This will leave a legacy of improved community capacity that will ensure continuous engagement with a community that understands the issues and can engage and influence the decisions of service providers in the Borough. Residents also have a clear picture of how information has been gathered, used and analysed and therefore have full ownership of the document once produced.

3.7 The timing of the Community Appraisals links neatly with the refreshing of the Area Forums that has been recently undertaken and will provide a list of priority actions for each community, following substantial community engagement. The community appraisals linking with the refreshed Area Forums will ensure that a customer focus is always maintained, while feeding into the refresh of the community strategy into a Sustainable Community Strategy.

4. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Financial Resources

4.1 It is envisaged that the cost of these appraisals will be £173,000 over an 12 month period that will straddle two financial years (2007/09). This demonstrates value for money as a one ward appraisal would usually cost in the region of £13,000 ex VAT and the number of wards to be covered in the Borough is 19.

4.2 The financial resources for this appraisal will be available from the Community Regeneration Revenue Budget and the LSP. These appraisals will improve community planning and localised intelligence encouraging further community involvement to ensure the recommendations are implemented.

Human Resources

- 4.3 The contract will be managed by the Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager and the Strategy Officer (Consultation) who will also be the Borough's first contact for the consultancy. It is expected that this contract will run over approximately 12 months so the time commitment although not substantial will be regular and ongoing.
- 4.4 The Strategy Officer (Consultation), as the appropriate link to the consultancy, will ensure the correct bonds are forged with the refreshed Area Forums and Local Strategic Partnership activities, alongside other community groups and partnerships and the local community infrastructure within the Borough.

5. CONSULTATIONS

- 5.1 Consultation has been undertaken with CAVOS to determine their ability/willingness to contribute to the scope and context of the community appraisals especially with respect to capacity mapping if required.
- 5.2 Significant in depth consultation and engagement will be undertaken in each of the wards within the Borough through this process, along with the Town and Parish Councils some of whom are undertaking Parish Plans.
- 5.3 The LSP Data Management Group will be a useful conduit for the provision of neighbourhood level information to the consultants, but also to disseminate harvested information from the consultants.

6. OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Links to Corporate Objectives / Values

This proposal will contribute to the delivery of the Councils Corporate Ambitions and support the refresh of the Council's Community Strategy and the fit within the Council's approved Key Policy Framework. In particular, it supports the delivery of the Councils Key Aim to have Strong Communities – by engaging and improving capacity in those communities and by the production of a document specific to each ward that will enable those communities to access resources (both physical and financial) to work toward achieving their community's priorities. This proposal also fits with the Council's corporate value of Engaging with our Communities.

6.2 **Legal Implications**

- i. Due to the level of investment in this project the OJEU process must be undertaken.
- ii. Once the tender has been accepted using this process a formal contract will be drawn up in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and in consultation with the Borough Council's Solicitor.

8.1 **Risk Management**

The timescales for this project present specific risks in relation to local government reorganisation, however, the need for accurate and up to date intelligence on the needs, strengths and aspirations of our communities is recognised as being a requirement for the new authority as well as existing authorities. The implementation of the community appraisal project will be undertaken in consultation with partner local authorities to ensure that information gathered is shared and provides future benefit.

6.4 The project will be managed using Contract Meetings held on a monthly basis with the Contract Group including the successful consultancy, the Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager, and the Strategy Officer (Consultation). Any day to day issues that need to be resolved will be dealt with by the Corporate Policy and Regeneration Manager and the Strategy Officer (Consultation).

6.5 Slippage in timescale and increased cost are the major risks that can be mitigated by regular monitoring and the use of a Grant Offer Letter/ Contract that states the maximum that will be paid for the outcome of Community Appraisals for each ward.

6.6 **Sustainability**

The key element in using this methodology for completing community appraisals is the sustainability of the mechanism within the various communities. The use of volunteers from these communities increases the individual's capacity, which then creates a chain of capacity building in the locality. This works through the individual improving their own capacity and bringing in others into activity from the community thereby increasing their capacity and those individuals bringing in others, and so on.

6.7 **Equity and Diversity**

Equity and Diversity considerations have been factored into the tendering process for this project. Every effort will be made to ensure the successful consultancy complies with their Equity and Diversity Policy.

6.8 **Crime and Disorder**

Localised Crime and Disorder issues will be recognised and suggestions for relieving them will be part of each final document.

6.9 Procurement

The OJEU procurement route is appropriate in the circumstances, as the Community Appraisals cost is anticipated to be £173,000 which is above the £144,000 OJEU threshold.

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The usual scrutiny arrangements will apply to this project.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

- 8.1 Community Appraisals Brief.
 - 8.2 Community Appraisals Pre Qualification Questionnaire
 - 8.3 Community Appraisals Memorandum of Information
 - 8.4 Community Appraisals Assessment of Weightings for PQQ
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Contact Officer Graham Wood
Telephone Number 01388 816166 Ext. 7754
E-mail address gwood@[sedgefield.gov.uk](mailto:gwood@sedgefield.gov.uk)

Wards: All Sedgefield Borough Wards

Key Decision Validation: This is a key decision as the full cost will be more than £100,000 and the project covers more than two wards.

Background Papers:
None

Examination by Statutory Officers

	Yes	Not Applicable
1. The report has been examined by the Councils Head of the Paid Service or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The content has been examined by the Councils S.151 Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The content has been examined by the Council's Monitoring Officer or his representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The report has been approved by Management Team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>