



THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

A conference discussion paper

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TAKING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FORWARD.

FEBRUARY 2009.

There are two parts to this paper.

Part 1 looks at the function of community development. It identifies some key principles as a basis for constructing a simple methodology that indicates the kind of initiatives that need to be taken in order to build stable and self-reliant communities.

Part 2 identifies some tangible initiatives that flow from this approach and what forms of organisation are appropriate within and beyond the Council to implement them. It then lists key tasks to take the process forward.

PART 1: THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT.

An understanding of the changing circumstances and challenges faced by communities indicates what **community development** should be about and helps to identify tangible initiatives that need to be adopted to address these challenges.

It also helps to define what we mean by Community Regeneration, indicates what the function of 'Neighbourhood Management' and 'Place-shaping' initiatives should be, and helps in resolving what has been seen as two competing alternatives – the '**whole town**' approach versus the '**targeted area approach**'. These are not mutually exclusive alternatives. They are responses to sets of varied circumstances on the same continuum, although there may be resource debates that make them appear to be alternative options from time to time.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The self-regulating nature of organic communities has been undermined by greater mobility, changing patterns of work, substantial movements in population, a reduction in locally accessed services (including shops, post offices, as well as public services) and the introduction of seemingly more efficient services (getting rid of milkmen/ bus conductors/ centralising doctors surgeries etc). This is compounded by instant communications and the impact of a more accessible and hugely varied media that can easily create a virtual world for people to emulate or retreat into.
- 1.2. These developments have contributed to the **fragmentation of communities**, so that organic community support and regulatory mechanisms have been weakened. This is acknowledged now by Government, and is one of the major reasons for the passing of the Sustainable Communities Act which is seen by many MPs as being crucial in reversing what is characterised as 'ghost-town' Britain.
- 1.3. Participation in local political life is on the decline in part of a wider pattern of disengagement, as people withdraw from collective activity and concentrate on more individual pursuits. This decline in social capital manifests itself in people joining less, volunteering less and caring less about community problems. It is accompanied by a disinterest in politics as part of a wider opting-out of community life and an increase in 'individualism' and consumerism and narrow self interest reinforced by the promotion of a wide range of 'lifestyle' alternatives.

- 1.4. Greater mobility, changed work patterns and a diverse range of cultures, lifestyles and ideas mean that people occupy the same geographical space but live completely atomised lives. **Part of the challenge of community development is to create new focal points that bring them together again.**
- 1.5. At the same time the process of globalisation has led to the UK becoming a niche economy with the disappearance of many blue-collar work opportunities as the economy increasingly concerns itself with 'high-end' activity. Those that don't have the skills that enable them to get a job can easily become 'surplus to requirements' and run the risk of becoming trapped in a cycle of deprivation where unemployment, poor education, poor health and so on reinforce each other.
- 1.6. The majority of people (70%) live in owner-occupied or 'market housing' households. 'Social' Housing policy has evolved to accommodate those in greatest need who cannot afford 'market' housing. Increasingly social policy planners seem to see such housing as an extension of social services. For these economic and policy reasons 'social' housing and the cheap private rented sector have become concentrations of relative deprivation in which residualised communities are to be increasingly found – despite genuine aspirations and efforts by Local Authorities and Government to create 'balanced' communities in which market housing and social housing are integrated together.
- 1.7. At the turn of the millennium a Joseph Rowntree study confirmed that:
 - The existing social housing population is ageing and younger households who can are moving into the owner-occupied sector.
 - Households entering the social rented sector tend to be young. Almost 72 per cent of all newly formed households entering social renting are headed by someone aged between 16 and 29 whilst only 14 per cent of existing households in the sector are headed by people in this age range. They were also more likely to be lone parents and far more likely to be unemployed or unable to work.
 - Households changing from owner-occupation to social renting were of two broad sorts: most were ex-mortgagors who had had their homes re-possessed; the second group were older households with low incomes who had previously owned their homes outright.
 - Tenant households who moved house to become owner-occupiers were far more likely to be couples, to be headed by someone aged under 45 and to be economically active than were other households in the sector.
- 1.8. Social residualisation is economically inefficient. The structural fabric in residualised areas is subject to frequent damage. The relative cost of community management soars, and inward investment prospects are all but destroyed. Socially and emotionally, residualisation produces a feeling of segregated entrapment and a disabling loss of personal esteem among residents, who become less inclined to be engaged in economic activity and who hate the environment they live in because it contrasts so clearly with the alternative that is occupied by 'successful' people. In addition to the environmental, economic and social dimensions to community development and regeneration, there is a psychological dimension. **The highest levels of stress and mental illness are in the most deprived communities.**

- 1.9. Whereas the traditional working class had pride in its social structures, skills and organised trade union power, many brought up in the twilight world of residualisation hate their background, their communities and themselves because they are denigrated by apparent failure. They are relegated to an 'underclass' socially, culturally and economically.
- 1.10. Crude initiatives intended to remedy social residualisation can have the reverse effect. Residents who take advantage of training for employment or for a better job may, as soon as a higher level of income is available, move away from the locality. The 'escapees' see the area as a handicap to future career prospects and detrimental to their status as citizens. While people remain in an area, a proportion of their income will be spent within it. Once they move away, none of their income circulates within the area. Thus, for instance, the community does not necessarily gain from the funding allocated to it for training initiatives. Recipients of initiatives depart, deprivation remains, and the area stands subsequently to be blamed for its inability to respond to outside help. Such initiatives need to be linked to incentives for people to stay in the area.
- 1.11. Early urban regeneration initiatives concentrated on reconstructing the **physical fabric** of an area. Today it is concerned with **rebuilding communities**.

2.0. FRAGMENTATION, DEPRIVATION & REGENERATION.

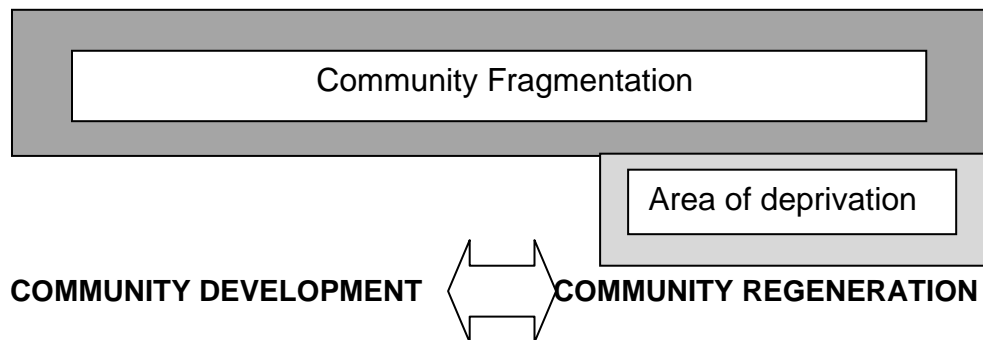
- 2.1. Community fragmentation affects almost **all** communities in **all** parts of the country while at the same time the economic impact of globalisation has increased social polarisation with concentrations of deprivation in all towns throughout the country. The dynamics that create these conditions are intensified through the process of globalisation.
- 2.2. Community development is about reconstructing the **community web** of contacts and the support mechanisms that exist within communities so that they are **more resilient** and **self reliant** – to help mitigate and act as a counterweight to the destruction brought about by the process of community fragmentation.
- 2.3. Increasing the resilience and self reliance of communities is not only important in terms of addressing immediate issues related to a range of activities such as social care or community safety, but is an important contingency measure for future circumstances which flow from threats such as the impact of disasters (the recent experience of flooding), climate change or economic collapse.
- 2.4. The relatively affluent can buy solutions to substitute for the lack of community support mechanisms. The poor can't do this and so the lack of support is particularly pronounced in poor areas. Thus deprivation increases social isolation and dependency on state services and so Community Development in areas of **deprivation** takes the form of Community Regeneration.
- 2.5. The key issues involved in this are:
 - Creating a safe community as the pre-condition for all else

- Re-skilling people to prepare them for work so that they can take the first step to self-reliance
- Socialising those people, particularly young people, who in the past would have been socialised by work experience and interaction with older people.¹
- Providing childcare so that women can work, and be ‘reskilled’ and so that children can get a firm start in life.
- Caring for vulnerable, particularly older, people and addressing health needs.²

2.6. The aim of Community Development is also about reasserting a sense of place and reinforcing the organic **social web** of contacts around everyday needs in order to boost community resilience, self reliance and identity. This should be the first task of **‘placeshaping’**.

2.7. However, a sense of place is about identity and social interaction as well as layout or design. To be effective in ‘placeshaping’ we have to avoid the crude ‘physical determinism’ of the 1960s and acknowledge that there are different categories involved in delivering a sense of place – the ‘physical’ category (planning and infrastructure) and the social category (community development).

2.8. The aim of Community Regeneration is to tackle the **needs** of people in areas of deprivation as well as to reassert a sense of place and **reconstruct** the web of contacts. In other words, Community Regeneration is **‘advanced’** Community Development – with Community Development tackling the issue of social fragmentation, and Community Regeneration tackling this **plus** deprivation. **It is not a question of posing a ‘whole-town’ approach against targeting ‘areas of deprivation.’**



¹ Structural Economic change has reduced manual and blue-collar work opportunities. In the past, many young people, particularly young men, would find unskilled work that provided an entrance into a job market that allowed progression and over time developed skills and abilities that gave them earnings and status. At the same time they were ‘socialised’ by the discipline of work alongside older people. The emphasis on academic attainment as a pre-condition for white collar ‘knowledge economy’ jobs places those who miss out on basic literacy, or who come from a background where there is no educational tradition, at a big disadvantage that means that many young people stand no chance of entering the job market without substantial re-training. They are thus economically residualised. This is extremely wasteful.

² It is important to remember that the elderly may have middle aged children with families and problems of their own. This family will be put under additional strain if an elderly parent needs support or care. This is why it is vital that there is an innovative but realistic strategy for the elderly. Partners could include Age Concern, PCT, Togetherness Trust (mental health), Sue Ryder etc

- 2.9. The approach to Community Regeneration in Cheltenham was to first fill some of the gaps in infrastructure in the identified areas of deprivation with the development of a network of multi purpose resource centres tailored to particular areas and available funding packages. The concept is not the same as the older style community centre or village hall which saw socialising and relaxation as its main function. Resource Centres are focal points from which the needs of the community are addressed – more for ‘doing business in’ than socialising.
- 2.10. They are designed with longevity and commercial sustainability in mind whilst still being local and community controlled. Designed to complement skills development, healthy living, return to work as well as community involvement at many levels, they require an active and involved community web of volunteers and customers at their heart. In areas with little or no community infrastructure larger buildings have a broad provision of community health outreach, pharmacy, doctors, dentist, skills training and lifelong learning, commercial, function rooms and sports halls and become the focal point not only for tackling community needs but also rebuilding the community web and the resilience that this brings with it.
- 2.11. Resource Centres are about creating a base which houses the resources and organisations which address the needs of local people. ‘Needs’ are different to ‘wants’. The needs are determined by those skills and services required to enable people to be as self-reliant as possible in a market economy with minimum dependence on the state. ‘Wants’ are aspirational and motivational and are things that individuals and communities have to learn to fight for and thereby value.
- 2.12. In areas where deprivation is less marked, ‘Resource Centres’ may still be appropriate, but will be centres for the coordination of initiatives designed to reinforce the resilience and self-reliance of communities so that they are less dependent on the local state and more capable of withstanding the economic, social and environmental threats that are looming. They should complement existing social capital.
- 2.13. Thus, in order for the ‘whole town’ to progress, an important precursor is to level the playing field. Resources have been targeted to reduce inequality and focus on the poorest neighbourhoods and most marginalised communities where the fight against poverty and the need to build strong, vibrant and cohesive communities is most urgent. Cheltenham is on a continuum of development. As regeneration areas and hot spots begin to lift out of deprivation the town as a whole will be ready to move on collectively.
- 2.14. **In summary:**

Community Development = mapping, reconstructing and reinforcing the community web and reinforcing a sense of place and identity.

Community Regeneration = this (ie Community Development) **plus** focussing on the ‘needs’ of specific groups of people who live in the same area and suffer elevated levels of deprivation.

3.0. PLACESHAPING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY REGENERATION.

3.1. PLACESHAPING – One commentator³ describes the fundamental role place plays in people's lives:

'Neighbourhoods help to shape people's lives because they do more than house people. They form a base for wider activities, providing many of the social services that link individuals with each other, giving rise to a sense of community. Thus neighbourhoods provide a basic line of support to families. Neighbourhoods form the most immediate environment for children to socialise outside the family to build confidence and develop coping skills. But if neighbourhoods can enrich people's lives, they can also damage them. Deprived and disadvantaged neighbourhoods can blight people's lives in many other and often more subtle ways, by restricting opportunity and reducing aspiration'.

3.2. Successful geographic communities have a clear identity and a distinct sense of place. The sense of place is physical and visual, in terms of its buildings and open spaces but it is also social because the space is functional and is used by people for different purposes. Every transaction carried out of whatever nature helps define and reinforce the sense of place as well as the relationships between people. Communities are built by and on a complex web of relationships. The more the relationships are simplified, the more complexity is undermined and the more fragile communities become.

3.3. To design successful places means that the various functions of the place have to be clearly understood. There is little difficulty in defining grand spaces – such as public squares, leisure centres, town halls or large places of performance – because their function is clear. There is a hierarchy of spaces in towns of any size, with the central areas having a formal identity and strength, and more local areas having a less formal function – such as local shops, post offices and pubs etc.

3.4. The most intimate and successful places are those that evolve naturally (organically) and in which the balance between community and privacy is intuitively understood by those who use the space. The most successful parts of the town are the ones where there are sufficient familiar buildings and faces to make people feel relaxed and secure, and where danger, particularly traffic and anti-social behaviour, is reduced or removed. These places must never be too big. The Urban Village's movement believes that communities should contain no more than 5000 individuals because this is the maximum number of faces that people can recall, even if they can't put a name to them.

3.5. **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT** – The reasons for the fragmentation of communities are understood. The consequences of community fragmentation decrease familiarity and security, and increase stress and fear. There are places (such as homes or behind shop counters) that are clearly private, and there are other places, such as pavements and post offices and shops which are community places that people identify as 'theirs'. When such familiar territory is denied them by anti-social behaviour the response is fear and

³ Professor Anne Power, London School of Economics.

stress, and a tendency to want to exercise some form of dramatic sanction to recapture them.

- 3.6. The denial of the familiar public realm to people – in its most extreme form by the territorial gang – is threatening. To strengthen community, we need to strengthen the web of relations between people. The crucial ingredients in this are: - scale; safety and relevance. Communities are functional organisations. They form around discrete activities – such as work, mutual help, shopping, or socialising, care functions or play. It is this intercourse that establishes relationships and familiarity, and allows the emergence of support mechanisms that people will rely on.
- 3.7. Strengthening the web of community contacts is central to community development. This means: identifying where people go, and why they go there, and who the key figures are. These relations ebb and flow according to circumstance, and people find their appropriate orbit in their relationship with others. With a few they will be intimate. With most they will be friendly and formal. With some, they will hide their hostility behind reserve and formality. The key issue here is that communities are systems composed of intricate human relations and relationships. The more relationships, the stronger the communities. The fewer the relationships, the weaker the community. Greater anonymity brought about by greater mobility and greater reliance on state services has, in fact, **reduced** the complexity and strength of communities and **undermined** their capacity to deal with challenges.
- 3.8. Having plotted the community web it is not difficult to identify what needs to be done to strengthen it or to add a new component to it. The aim is to intervene discretely and then retreat and let people get on with it. Local systems of democracy such as Parish Council's and the voluntary sector are important in this.
- 3.9. **COMMUNITY REGENERATION** – Community Regeneration is '**advanced**' community development. It involves tackling community fragmentation at the same time as addressing deprivation. In areas of evidenced multiple deprivation a community partnership approach to help redress the imbalance is the best approach because no single agency has 'the' answer. A team approach through partnerships of stakeholder organisations needs to form to address the issues they have a particular mandate for – whether its commerce, or youth work, or police. Senior individuals in these organisations who have the power to make decisions and commit resources, and, above all, understand what they are doing, are necessary to form a Board of Directors responsible for planning an over-riding strategy.
- 3.10. But this is not enough. Unless there are individuals who are involved with building 'capacity' within the community it will be hard to create the conditions for self reliance. Poor communities are poor not only economically, but culturally and socially. There is a cycle of deprivation that transmits weaknesses through generations. There is low literacy, poor understanding and health, and a large array of dependencies created by the stress of a deprived existence accompanied by a lack of confidence and disempowerment.
- 3.11. This is what the **Neighbourhood Projects** seek to address: they are the **people** side of the equation, set up to recruit individuals who can develop

their capacity by pursuing initiatives and projects that people relate to because they address their needs and build their capacity

- 3.12. Identifying the key problems and addressing them is the pre-condition for successful regeneration and is enormously complex. Every initiative must seek to have an outcome and can never be a 'thing in itself'. 'Fun days' (as one example) are the hook by which single mums can be relieved for a time of infants – and maybe enticed into re-skilling courses that can provide confidence and then some independence through a job. Children, in danger of being sucked into patterns of behaviour which will result in them being ill-equipped to advance their lives can be taught social skills, constructive behaviour and the importance of having work-skills so that they can earn a living and be independent. Every single event planned needs to link to others – so that an alternative curriculum of activities is offered to people by which they can change their lives. **Unless there is a strategy that takes people forward, 'Fun days' can become relegated to 'bread and circuses'.**
- 3.13. Poverty makes people creative and creates the basis for potential cooperation, but is also the cradle for divisiveness in poor behaviour, petty crime and anti-social activity. Good Community Development workers can't afford to be judgemental, but they have to know what is acceptable and what is not. The culture of people in areas of deprivation is different to main-street culture. The black economy thrives on poverty and low wages. Hostility to newcomers, which can take the form of racism, is endemic because people feel threatened and insecure. It's relatively easy to be 'civilised' if you have a well paid job and a clear social position which gives you an acknowledged role. Not to have recognition, a role and an income – to be a 'nobody' – is to be relegated into irrelevance and inevitably produces a response, and thus in poor areas patterns of behaviour that are dehumanising are increasing.
- 3.14. As communities are rebuilt, they strengthen the rules that enable co-existence. The rules are worked out as the communities evolve. They all rely on self interest and intuition rather than altruism or written directives and evolve against a consensus of what is generally understood to be socially acceptable and legal.
- 3.15. Communities, like cultures, are defined just as much by what they **condemn** as what they **condone. They offer support alongside sanctions.**
- 3.16. In fragmented communities, most problems are created by neighbours and not 'ghoulish' aliens from beyond the locality. The arrival of the Police Community Support Officers as a bridge between communities and more formal policing is crucial in recognising this and is one of the most significant steps taken in modernising policing that has occurred. It acknowledges that much of what people are concerned about and afraid of isn't the kind of 'heavy duty' crime that police have been trained to deal with, but everyday nuisances that proliferate in areas where there may be few facilities, particularly for young people, and where people don't know each other and may be afraid of each other.
- 3.17. The Neighbourhood Wardens deployed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, Park Wardens, and Community Development workers are all at times concerned with addressing the same issues by offering alternatives to anti-social behaviour. While the PCSOs look towards sanctions for anti-social behaviour (sticks), Neighbourhood wardens and Youth workers offer support

and projects (carrots). Both, at the moment, are necessary but as communities grow more cohesive and self-reliant, their interventions become less necessary.

4.0 PRACTICAL STEPS – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

4.1. Community involvement is at the heart of community development and is central to the task of revitalising democracy, improving services, tackling poverty and building a strong and resourceful ‘civil society’⁴. It is not an optional extra, but is essential if people are to achieve meaningful and sustainable outcomes for themselves and society. Residents should have the right, not just an invitation, to become active participants in their own development. They should be ‘makers and shapers’ of policy and service delivery rather than merely ‘users and choosers’ of public services. Indeed, if they are merely passive users in a condition of dependency they will never develop the ability to value such services, the people who run them or the political process that decides how or what is actually provided.

4.2. Skills and confidence development to encourage community leadership and spokespeople is essential not as an alternative to but as a complement to individual voices. Conscious community leadership is different to that of individual articulation. People evolve into leaders when they develop the capacity to weave their own vision of the world seamlessly into wider community aspirations, and this process demands negotiation and compromise, and recognition of the world not as you would like it to be, but as it is. Successful community leaders have to learn to start where the community is actually at (depressing as that frequently is), rather than where they would like it to be – while at the same time not losing hold of their vision for it.

4.3. As an important first step we need to

- plot the web of community contacts including community leaders;
- plot the social infrastructure (shops, schools, churches etc).
- Identify the gaps in provision that communities need to provide to strengthen the community web so as to
- **seek to make communities as self-reliant as possible.**

5.0 PRACTICAL STEPS - COMMUNITY REGENERATION;

5.1. Partnership working can put great demands on community representatives. They are expected to deal with strategic as well as operational issues, get to grips with complex processes, and reflect the diverse views of their community. It is therefore important to recognise that community leaders are expected to play different roles and meet different expectations in each context. Partnerships make tough demands on community representatives where the rules of engagement and technical language mean that they can feel marginalised and lack the resources they need to operate as equal partners. They are expected to become ‘expert citizens’, reflecting community views to partners and taking partnership decisions back to their communities. They also need to be able to mediate between their communities and public sector organisations, somehow managing a difficult balance of insider and

⁴ ‘Civil society’ includes all the non-official state structures – faith institutions, trades unions, voluntary bodies, and so on which help ‘glue’ communities together.


outsider roles and this is not easy to do, especially where community organisations are fragile, under-resourced or locked into a confrontational mindset. They run the risk of being seen as collaborators by their constituency or wreckers by authority.

- 5.2. The role of local government has changed along with changing circumstances and it has itself become a key agent of social change. It is expected to work closely with residents in delivering a complex agenda which includes tackling poverty, delivering area regeneration, stimulating economic development and supporting community empowerment as well as providing traditional housekeeping services such as emptying the dustbins.
- 5.3. Changing political culture is difficult. It involves challenging entrenched and negative attitudes, whether they are held by people in the government who exercise power or by local communities which have very little power - except the power to be obstructive or disruptive. It involves building new relationships between residents, elected politicians and service providers, based on mutual respect, a more equal balance of power and greater local accountability.
- 5.4. So Community Regeneration initiatives should tackle those issues important to Community Development **plus** the following: –
 - identify the **needs** of the local community and **analyse** why they arise.
 - Identify the key **stakeholder** organisations that have an interest in addressing the needs – and get them to form a Partnership and sign up to a strategy that identifies the needs and what actions are planned to address them;
 - **initiate** the formation of a community body concerned with involving people to tackle their own problems (like a Neighbourhood Project) to develop the capacity of the local community so that they can play a leading role in the Partnership. The aim should be to build the resilience of the community so that local issues can be resolved by the community rather than external bodies coming in to sort the problems out for them.

6.0. **CONCLUSION**

- 6.1. Community development initiatives seek to intervene **precisely** and to work with the local community to create more resilient and self reliant structures in order to address problems of community fragmentation.
- 6.2. Community Regeneration interventions involve a **more formal** scale of comprehensive intervention and support and is 'advanced' community development.
- 6.3. 'Placeshaping' is **social** as well as **physical**.
- 6.4. Neighbourhood Management should start **practically from the bottom up and grow organically**, rather than being imposed top-down.

A TAXONOMY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RELATIONSHIPS.

COMMUNITY CONDITION	APPROACH	COMMUNITY ACTIONS
	COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify existing web of contacts – organizations/ individuals/community leaders • Identify Community Services (shops etc) • Identify Community support mechanisms (doctors etc) • Identify gaps
	NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT	Identify community make-up <i>as above plus</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottom-up organic approach: start with operational officers responsible for crime/ ASB; roads and pavements; housing; green spaces; young people – develop organically and create structure around resolving bread and butter issues. Grow organically. • Top down structural approach – import ready-made structure with support staff and worked out processes and ample resources – a ‘mini-council’ in each locality.
	PLACESHAPING	Establish sense of place by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical planning/ local strategic action plans • Neighbourhood Management (<i>as above</i>)
	COMMUNITY REGENERATION	Community development plus : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify needs of people in the area • Define area and develop strategy with stakeholders to tackle needs, and key partners involved in addressing these needs • Establish Partnership • Create sustainable Resource Centre that generates resources to fund ongoing regeneration coordination • Support organization (such as Neighbourhood Project) to develop community capacity through the provision of local services
COMMUNITY FRAGMENTATION PLUS DEPRIVATION		

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PART TWO:

7.0 TANGIBLE POLICIES, COUNCIL ORGANISATION AND TASKS.

- 7.1. The principles and classification outlined in Part 1 translate into some tangible guidelines.
- 7.2. In future the Council, in partnership with community organisations, should be the brain that coordinates and directs the way communities develop. It should provide services as close to the community as possible, increasingly utilising the talent and resources of the community. There should be less Council direct support and more enabling: ie Council staff give advice and coordinate – but the Voluntary Sector and community organizations actually ‘do’ and are integrally involved in the development of policy based on their experience
- 7.3. We should be aspiring to create more self-reliant communities that include people from the whole range of ethnic and faith backgrounds – development should be organic and built around community development principles with local services and community focal points (a resource centre or a church or a school). We should identify geographical communities throughout the town and those areas where there is no natural community. This approach should be woven into planning policy.
- 7.4. Large scale ‘ready made communities’ don’t exist – they take time and people to build. We need to build on current structures – tap into the existing community web and strengthen it. We should be suspicious of large scale ‘homogenised’ developments such as large concentrations of students or elderly people that overwhelm local communities, and create the anonymity that is the enemy of community.
- 7.5. We should nurture smaller communities with clear local focal points that promote social interaction. The benefits of strong communities should be born in mind when making investment decisions.
- 7.6. We should plan housing development on a scale that enables people to get to know each other better – in clusters of around 30 or so houses. There should be no large concentrations of social housing and they should be made as environmentally ‘sustainable’ as possible.
- 7.7. We need to increase the leverage of community development impact by making sure that all front line service delivery staff are clear about their contribution to it – the community development team should promote and coordinate this and identify training needs. We should consider gathering certain front line staff into an identifiable Neighbourhood Warden service and allocate them to different parts of town – some wardens with statutory powers, and some with generic responsibility for community support. These wardens will help strengthen the community web and galvanise local services.
- 7.8. We should support 3rd party organizations giving training – such as Neighbourhood Projects providing training courses or the Centre for Change teaching about growing food; etc. A manual of such facilities and places to meet should be made available on the web. (This is a job for the VCS).

- 7.9. Care of older people should be in the community – **not** in institutions, unless people need 24 hr support. Older people have to be seen as a component of communities and not excluded from them – and we need their contribution in terms of voluntary sector support, childcare and wisdom. A network of community support workers is needed who are known in the area they live in.
- 7.10. We should promote organizations that provide structured activity for young people.
- 7.11. We should integrate mental health teams into Community Regeneration work.

8.0. COUNCIL - CUSTOMER/ COMMUNITY INTERACTION

- 8.1. The approach outlined above reinforces the need for the Council to make the transition from a traditional **provider of services to customers** to one that makes the **customer**, rather than the service, the starting point and which provides for their comprehensive needs.
- 8.2. A customer may need the intervention of a range of different staff or agencies in order to resolve a problem and so the first contact needs to get to know what their needs are and how they can be addressed. To do this, the first contact needs to know the responsibilities and capacity of their organisation (and other partner service delivery organisations) as well as what is available in the community.
- 8.3. There is a point at which a service response to an individual customer may become part of a broader community response because it is shared with many other individuals and in cases such as these a targeted and pro-active approach to such problems together may be the best way of proceeding in the long term.
- 8.4. Collaboration with communities will increasingly be critical in the effective provision of some services, such as social care and community safety. Additionally, in certain emergency scenarios the Council and first responders won't have the resource to provide the service without community support. People in the community are going to have to re-learn skills that have been forgotten.
- 8.5. The Council needs to understand the customer experience – “standing in the shoes” - by engaging hearts and minds to see services from the customer's perspective and by doing so achieve better performance for them. A better understanding of customer needs and perceptions can lead to a more effective and permanent diagnosis of a problem as well as less time taken up with complaints, and it can also recruit customers as helpers in using their experience in solving the problems for other people.
- 8.6. Thus there needs to be a link between the external facing engagement work such as the Leckhampton Neighbourhood Management pilot, community development, regeneration and cohesion work, **alongside** efforts to improve the Council's internal processes.
- 8.7. All this needs to be shaped within an increasingly tight financial framework and the guidance of local and national political drivers which envisage an enabling role for Council's who are charged with promoting a more pro-active role in the stewardship of their communities.

9.0. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

- 9.1. All staff need to understand the links between what they do and what other staff do, and to understand the relationship between the service they provide and wider council aspirations. For instance, housing benefit assistants advise individual clients, but are also in possession of information that could indicate trends in the concentration of poverty in particular areas, or a sudden increase in benefit claims during periods of recession which community development workers need to be aware of. Almost all front line staff have a community development dimension to their job – the coordination of these aspects of their work will provide greater ‘leverage’ by the Council in promoting Community Development initiatives. Apart from training, volunteering in the community for direct experience can make a big difference because they then become aware of what it feels like to be a customer.
- 9.2. Start looking at structures / job descriptions for frontline teams to encourage a culture where people can be more responsive to customer needs and can work across service areas and organisational boundaries.
- 9.3. Consider a ‘lead officer’ approach for Neighbourhood Management Areas to enable effective coordination of CBC services and working with partners; this could be at the INA level (4 required)⁵, police neighbourhood level (14 required) or ward level (20 required).
- 9.4. Start looking at community structures/parishes/ and identifying who can take the lead in Neighbourhood Management. Identify sources of funding and support through traditional community development work to build up the muscles of such groups.
- 9.5. Map social capital (community centres, schools, church halls, children’s centres, libraries etc). and financial profile (what all the agencies spend) in neighbourhoods.
- 9.6. Capture, analyse and use data and intelligence about our customers/communities to improve service delivery with a particular focus on vulnerable groups (disabled, elderly, people with mental ill-health, children and young people, BME groups).
- 9.7. Support the VCS so that it can be made more effective and the Volunteer Centre to recruit and train volunteers.
- 9.8. Explore the creation of Neighbourhood Wardens. Community development within CBC no longer has the resources to develop major projects but could, if differently organised, be the glue within the fabric of the community web. Development workers could be detached to defined patches getting to know and drawing together key contacts and agencies operating in their area and have developmental tasks defined by local community partnerships in liaison with their council line manager. There are front-line officers who have some involvement in this work such as Park Rangers and Community Development officers. There are more who have enforcement responsibilities that could be coordinated on a ‘patch’ basis.

⁵ The INA areas cut across other boundaries and need to be made to fit in with them for this to work best.

10.0. FUTURE COUNCIL INPUT.

Issue	Activity	Resource and Points of Contact
<p>Customer Access</p> <p>Our vision for improving access to our services is to deliver coordinated, accessible and customer-led public services in a most cost-effective way</p>	<p>Increasing points of access through coordinated IT solutions.</p> <p>Spread affordable IT accessibility.</p> <p>Increase physical accessibility to public utilities and spaces.</p>	<p>ITC Website Receptions Revs and Bens Concessionary Transport Env Health Building Control AG&M Leisure@ Waste and recycling</p>
<p>Customer Insight</p> <p>Using the knowledge derived from all the quantitative and qualitative data we hold about our communities and customers to deliver services aligned to their needs and expectations</p>	<p>Mapping existing services and budgets to neighbourhood level.</p> <p>Gap analysis.</p> <p>Use partnerships to better join up service delivery and budgets.</p>	<p>Maiden GIS CBH All service delivery divisions Lifetime Homes</p>
<p>Community Development</p> <p>Mapping, reconstructing and reinforcing the community web of contacts and sense of place and identity and building community resilience and self reliance.</p>	<p>Volunteer development.</p> <p>Skills training and ability development.</p>	<p>Community Development Maiden Parish Councils CBH/ VCA/ Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Economic Development Community Rangers Friends of groups Parkwatch Neighbourhood Wardens?</p>
<p>Neighbourhood Management</p> <p>Providing opportunities for communities to shape and influence the development and delivery of quality services and policies that reflect local needs and priorities</p>	<p>Evaluate and roll out the neighbourhood management pilot.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Management pilot stakeholders. All service delivery divisions. Parish Councils and local Partnerships and Projects CBH Community Safety Agencies Neighbourhood Wardens?</p>
<p>Equalities (within the Council)</p> <p>Cheltenham Borough Council is an organisation where our customers who access our services, job seekers and employees are treated fairly and without discrimination and individuals are respected and</p>	<p>Implementing equal opportunities in all we do.</p>	<p>Equalities Forum Community Development CBH HR and Training Single Status Implementation</p>

their contributions are valued.		
<p>Integration and Cohesion (in the Community)</p> <p>Ensuring that community engagement activities provide opportunities for participation for all sections of the community, particularly people and groups that are often missed out of community engagement activities</p>	<p>Community involvement and empowerment.</p> <p>Inclusion.</p> <p>Tackling worklessness.</p> <p>Developing community volunteering.</p>	<p>All service delivery divisions CBH BME outreach work Economic Development Crime Reduction Partnership Community Safety Fora; MAD, pensioners, CDF Play Rangers</p>
<p>Social Inclusion and Regeneration</p> <p>Ensuring that everyone across the borough has similar life opportunities regardless of where they live or their background or circumstances through a co-ordinated approach to physical, social and economic regeneration</p>	<p>Reducing health and wealth inequalities.</p> <p>Reducing anti social behaviour.</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Partnerships and Projects VCA and Cheltenham Volunteer Centre Community Services Community Safety Health and Wellbeing Economic Development Neighbourhood Wardens?</p>
<p>Placeshaping</p> <p>Ensuring the existence and feeling of place within recognisable and resident defined communities.</p>	<p>Integrating planning approach to community development, the urban environment and regeneration.</p>	<p>Built Environment Environmental Maintenance Leisure Services Strategic Land Use Economic Development Community Services CBH/RSLs/Developers</p>

11.0. FIRST STEPS.

- 11.1. Organise a seminar to take the approach forward (provisionally 24th April 2009). The target audience is front line staff and key voluntary and statutory organisations/ partners in the town.
- 11.2. Plot the natural communities in the town (and identify those that are not).
- 11.3. Use the Leckhampton pilot to map the community web (community structures and social capital etc) as a template for rolling the process out in the town.
- 11.4. Produce an updated community profile for the Leckhampton pilot area as a template for future such profiles.
- 11.5. Evaluate the Leckhampton pilot and bring a report back through informal cabinet board to agree way forward to roll out borough-wide in 2009-10.
- 11.6. Identify training needs for staff (and partners).
- 11.7. Appoint Lead Officers (2nd/3rd tier officers) for Neighbourhood Management initiatives (best to shadow County and INA initiatives).

- 11.8. Community development team to work with front line staff to increase leverage so that the community development dimension to their job is maximised.
- 11.9. Explore use of Neighbourhood Wardens.
- 11.10. A manual of appropriate training courses and places to meet should be made available on the web.