

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Review of Community Conversations</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	Health and Wellbeing Board
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	30 March 2017

**Purpose of Report:** To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with information on progress to date with Community Conversations

**Recommended Action:** That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the information and discuss the areas for future development outlined in section 14.

**Key background documentation:** None

Contact Officer Details	
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### Implications

**Policy:** Continuation and development of the Building Communities Together initiative

**Financial:** A Building Communities Together Grant of £19,249 was awarded to Empowering West Berkshire in March 2016 to co-facilitate Community Conversations. This responsibility transferred to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire in October 2016. Funding is being utilised to support Community Conversations covering the cost of renting space, refreshments, mileage and officer time.

**Personnel:** The newly formed Building Communities Together Team (April 2017) to assume responsibility for Community Conversations

**Legal/Procurement:** None

**Property:** None

**Risk Management:**

<b>Is this item relevant to equality?</b>	Please tick relevant boxes	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:		
• Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
• Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
• Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
• Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
• Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	X
<b>Outcome</b> (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)		
Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at <a href="http://www.westberks.gov.uk/eia">www.westberks.gov.uk/eia</a>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Not relevant to equality		X

# Executive Report

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board has adopted the following as a Strategic Priority for 2017/18:

*Increase the percentage of communities where community conversations have successfully run and local action plans have been jointly developed*

1.2 The Board has requested an update on progress of Community Conversations from the Building Communities Together Partnership which is being formed as a sub group within the new governance arrangements.

1.3 Community Conversations commenced in March 2016 under the Building Communities Together Programme and to date progress has been reported to the Brilliant West Berkshire Programme Board.

1.4 The Building Communities Together programme has sought to empower local communities and individuals to find their own sustainable solutions to improve quality of life and reduce the likelihood of residents needing more specialist help.

1.5 The Strategic Priorities of the Building Communities Together programme are:

- Improving mental health
- Reducing school exclusions/increasing attainment
- Increasing return to employment and training
- Increasing domestic abuse reporting – reducing repeat abuse
- Increasing take-up of alcohol/substance misuse support

1.6 The aim of Community Conversations within the Building Communities Together programme was to:

*Develop a community led restorative approach*

1.7 Responsibility for the coordination and further development of Community Conversations will be the responsibility of the new Building Communities Together Team from April 2017 and it is timely therefore to review progress to date and consider future direction and potential development.

## 2. Selection of Communities and instigation of Conversations

2.1 Communities were selected for this initiative based on data analysis conducted in July 2015. The data fields included:

- Police reports
- Anti-social behaviour
- Youth re-offending
- Looked after Children
- Adults in contact with Community Mental Health Services
- Children receiving early intervention
- Children on Child Protection Plans
- Economically active residents
- Young people on waiting list for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

- 2.2 In addition to the analysis of data some communities were also selected for inclusion based on existing work within them that offered potential for community engagement.
- 2.3 The Communities identified for this initiative were:
- Hungerford and Lambourn Valley
  - Calcot
  - Thatcham
  - Burghfield and Mortimer
  - Greenham
- 2.4 Empowering West Berkshire was awarded a Building Community Together Grant in March 2016 to co-facilitate Community Conversations in each of the locations identified and this responsibility subsequently transferred to the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire in October 2016.
- 2.5 Community Conversations have been instigated in 4 of the 5 communities selected and arising from some there has been notable change and achievements.

### **3. Community Anchors**

- 3.1 It was identified that in order to establish Community Conversations in addition to co-facilitation there would need to be a resource within the community to support their development. The concept of Community Anchors was established and a number were engaged and 'trained' at the start of the initiative. Currently there are only a few still 'active' and there have been a number of very valid reasons why Community Anchors have had to 'stand down' from their role including sickness, redundancy and changing roles.
- 3.2 New Community Anchors are being trained in Restorative Practice in February 2017 with the intention of running a targeted conversation in Newbury facilitated by Newbury Baptist Church and supported by partner agencies.

### **4. Community Conversations and Achievements**

- 4.1 The following is a brief summary on each Conversation.

#### **Hungerford and Lambourn**

Conversations held on following dates:

- 2/216
- 9/2/16
- 25/4/16
- 29/6/16
- 4/10/16

These conversations have benefitted from an extremely effective Community Anchor and there has been active participation of a good number of local residents and multi agency staff.

Topics of conversations have included:

- School transport
- Building a sense of community cohesion
- Helping parents with more challenging home situations manage and look after their children
- Designing innovative approaches to pastoral support and inclusion within primary and secondary schools
- Supporting professionals on how best to work together to meet emerging needs early
- Local charity working with more vulnerable young people to give them a positive experience of producing a film
- Social isolation
- Community transport

A group of 7 volunteers started a youth club for children with additional needs who attend a mainstream secondary school. This is now running successfully and is affiliated to Berkshire Youth.

Depression Alliance is exploring the potential to expand their services into Hungerford to work with people who have mental health problems using peer to peer support groups.

A group of faith based volunteers came together to provide a Christmas dinner for around 50 people who would otherwise have been on their own thus reducing social isolation.

In response to a request for the opportunity to meet and discuss shared issues and challenges and to be able to share support, signposting and solutions a multi agency professionals forum has been established. The discussions are thematic including anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.

More detailed information on the Hungerford Community Conversation is given in Appendix 1.

### **Calcot**

Conversations held on following dates:

- 26/1/16
- 18/6/16
- 10/10/16

Topics of conversations have included:

- Transport
- Communication on community events and resources

Due to changes in Community Anchors it has been challenging to get Community Conversations well established however some 'scoping' of local initiatives has taken place.

Friday Friends is an informal group of generally older members of the community who come together to share a cup of tea and play games.

Lack of transport to enable older people to get to supermarkets or to attend local groups has been identified as an issue.

The need to improve communication has also been identified as an issue. There are some community orientated communication mechanisms but they are not well coordinated.

In order to re-energise activities Love Your Community (formerly St Birinus Church) are due to launch a public facing Community Conversation in March 2017.

### **Thatcham**

Conversations held on following dates:

- 2/2/16
- 17/2/16
- 2/3/16
- 16/3/16
- 27/3/16
- 25/5/16
- 6/7/16
- 21/9/16

Topics of conversation included:

- Youth Anti-social behaviour

In respect of the youth anti-social behaviour a problem solving meeting was arranged and attended by a number of residents and wide range of partners. A survey had been carried out prior to the meeting to gauge the public views and the results, along with police data, were used to inform the problem solving discussions. Actions arising from the meeting are being overseen by Thatcham Vision including engaging with young people in Thatcham. The Detached Youth Team has been a key partner in seeking a resolution to this problem.

Thatcham Vision has 6 groups and 35 volunteers all working towards priority areas of children, older people, transport, culture & leisure, community safety and population & development.

A Community Development Worker has been appointed by Thatcham Town Council and this post will be key to future developments.

### **Burghfield and Mortimer**

Conversations held on following dates:

- 13/7/16
- 26/9/16

Topics of conversation included:

- Lack of youth club provision
- Proximity to Reading and not feeling part of West Berkshire
- Improving communication through collaboration

The conversations have benefitted from a very proactive Youth Outreach Worker and the lack of youth club provision was one of the concerns raised. It was agreed that any further discussions and planning should be led by young people in the community. Berkshire Youth has agreed to carry out some scoping work.

Concerns were raised about young adults who are 'care leavers' living in their own accommodation who are isolated. The potential for engaging them in the community through involvement with social media was identified along with the idea of their supporting older people with the use of gadgets and mobile phones.

Prior to Christmas 2016 Mortimer St Mary's school was 'open to the community' for a week. A number of residents visited and offers of support captured by this event will form the foundation of the Mortimer Community Plan.

Both of these communities have websites, facebook pages and community publications and benefit from a number of community events throughout the year that raise significant sums of money for charities both local and national.

There is a befriending service which gives anyone who feels alone the chance to have personal face to face contact through coffee mornings, lunch clubs and outings thus addressing social isolation.

## **5. Additional Community Conversations**

- 5.1 To support St Bart's School engage with the Building Communities Together initiative and to adopt Restorative Practice the Volunteer Centre facilitated 4 school based community conversations on the following dates:
- 20/4/16
  - 25/5/16
  - 7/6/16
  - 28/6/16

## **6. Action Plans**

- 6.1 To date the issues that have been raised at Community Conversations have not required details action plans in order for them to be addressed.

## **7. Volunteering Support**

- 7.1 In addition to co-facilitating the Volunteer Centre provides support and advice to anyone who wishes to volunteer be it arising from a community conversation or other activity across West Berkshire. It has been recognised that it is extremely important that if someone steps forward to volunteer that they have a clearly defined role and on going support.
- 7.2 There are currently approx 110 volunteers engaged with Community Conversations.

## **8. Young People's Voices**

- 8.1 It has been recognised that it is important to engage with the voices of young people in the Community Conversations and an opportunity has been identified to support this.
- 8.2 Within West Berkshire secondary schools there is a network of Peer Mentors, who work with primarily Year 7 children who need extra support/guidance. It has been identified that Peer Mentors could potentially be supported in feeding their experiences and views into their local Community Conversations.
- 8.3 This idea is going to be discussed at a meeting of Peer Mentor Coordinators in February 2017 and consideration is also being given to having Community Conversations on the 'agenda' at the Peer Mentor's annual conference in November 2017.

## **9. Restorative Practice**

- 9.1 There has been significant investment by West Berkshire Council in adopting Restorative Practice including, in the context of Community Conversations, the training of Community Anchors and a number of Council and Partnership officers in Restorative Practice.
- 9.2 It will be important to sustain this investment in order that Community Conversation can continue to strive to achieve the stated aim to 'develop a community led restorative approach'.
- 9.3 In a Restorative Approach context the Building Communities Together initiative seeks to build on the skills, assets and strengths in a community to:  
*Help people help themselves and help people each other*

## **10. Learning Event and Toolkit**

- 10.1 A Learning Event was held at Newbury Baptist Church on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2017 and provided an opportunity for Community Anchors and other practitioners to share good practice. Restorative Practice Methodology (a problem solving circle) was used to share and discuss:
- What works well in community conversations
  - What to consider in planning a conversation
  - How to approach a conversation
  - Who to involve
  - The scale and range of solutions that can arise
- 10.2 It is anticipated that this learning will be captured in the development of a Community Conversation Toolkit. It is intended that this resource will be a helpful tool that any community could pick up and used to extend the use of this way of working. It has been proposed that the Toolkit will be brought to the Health and Wellbeing Board for consideration in Spring 2017.
- 10.3 It was identified by those attending the Learning Event that achieving the vision of change within communities where people feel supported and able to help themselves needs to be long term. It was also acknowledged that this is challenging work that takes time to develop and become embedded.

## **11. Problem Solving**

- 11.1 At the Learning Event described above there was a presentation from a Thames Valley Police officer on Enhanced SARA Problem Solving. The SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) approach to problem solving has been used by Thames Valley Police for some time and the enhanced model is adaptable to 'problem solve' in a community setting.
- 11.2 In respect of a Community Conversation this approach was used when an issue with youth anti-social behaviour was identified and a SARA meeting was convened with actions arising. Importantly the Problem Solving meeting was structured utilising Restorative Practice Principles and the community was supported in identifying and owning arising actions.
- 11.3 This experience demonstrated that by taking a restorative approach to problem solving, utilising the enhanced SARA model, communities can be supported in clearly identifying and understanding a problem, considering appropriate actions and taking ownership of outcomes. Importantly the SARA approach enables identification of other sources of help and input and also enables communities to see that often solutions lie within their own resources.
- 11.4 Problem solving will be a key aspect of the role of the Building Communities Together Team, consisting of officers from West Berkshire Council and Thames Valley Police.
- 11.5 The Building Communities Together Team will also have responsibility for further development and coordination of Community Conversations alongside multi agency problem solving.

## **12. Community Conversation Review Meeting**

- 12.1 This meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2017, was convened by the Volunteer Centre and was attended by a range of participants from across all Community Conversations.
- 12.2 There was an honest exchange of views and ideas throughout the meeting that can be summarised by the following points:
- Community Conversations have been a good networking opportunity for professionals
  - Generally residents attending Conversations were already 'active' in their community
  - Conversations could feel more 'real' to residents than traditional public consultations
  - There needs to be a 'mapping' of community assets
  - There isn't any clear structure for the Conversations
  - The 5 'Priorities' don't match the 'issues/concerns' raised in the Conversations
  - 'Meetings' are 'old hat' – need to communicate on other ways – especially with young people
  - Go to where people are already 'talking'
  - Professionals need to be able to signpost more efficiently – be more informed

- Need to have the right people at meetings e.g. GP, Council Member, Teacher, Neighbourhood Police Officer, etc.
- Need link things up – websites etc.
- Need to be clear about what the Conversations are seeking to achieve and why people should join in
- Need to try and engage with ‘hard to reach – hard to hear’ communities
- Communities need to see things change or they will disengage

12.3 These views need to be incorporated into future planning for Community Conversations.

### **13. Conclusions**

13.1 Community Conversations commenced in March 2016 as part of the Building Communities Together Programme.

13.2 Conversations have been co-facilitated by Empowering West Berkshire/Volunteer Centre West Berkshire in 4 of the 5 communities identified.

13.3 The range of issues identified during conversations has been diverse and some community orientated solutions identified.

13.4 Volunteers have been forthcoming with approximately 110 currently engaged in Community Conversations.

13.5 A professional’s forum has arisen from one Community Conversation.

13.6 Restorative Approaches and Problem Solving have underpinned the conversations with residents and partner working together to identify issues and solutions.

13.7 Engagement needs to be improved particularly with young people and hard to reach groups/communities.

13.8 Restorative Approaches need to be sustained.

13.9 SARA Problem Solving is a useful tool within Community Conversations.

13.10 Learning from ‘review’ meetings held in January 2017 should influence future plans.

### **14. Future development**

14.1 The Building Communities Together Team will assume responsibility for the coordination and development of Community Conversations from April 2017.

14.2 It is proposed that the Strategic Priority for 2017/18 is reframed to:  
*Increase the number of Community Conversations through which local issues are identified and addressed*

14.3 It is proposed that the Building Communities Together Team:

- Conduct an audit of Community Conversations currently underway to clarify outputs, outcomes and impacts during 2016/17 and to celebrate success – *May 2017*
- Identify existing community forums and activities that have potential to become ‘new’ Community Conversations – *September 2017*

- Conduct Community Engagement activities to support the development of ‘new’ Community Conversations and to identify local community based issues – *March 2018*
- Develop a Project Management Structure for Community Conversations – *June 2017*
- Use data to support individual Community Conversations in identifying issues and, where appropriate, to monitor change - *ongoing*
- Work with the Volunteer Centre West Berkshire to support Community Conversations - *ongoing*
- Produce an Annual Report for the Health and Wellbeing Board – *April 2018*

## **Appendices**

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Appendix A – Detailed information on Hungerford Community Conversation

## **Consultees**

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**Local Stakeholders:**

**Officers Consulted:**

**Trade Union:**