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# Community Conversations

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**Report being considered by:** Health and Wellbeing Board

**On:** 25<sup>th</sup> January 2018

**Report Author:** Susan Powell

**Item for:** Please select:

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## 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on Community Conversations.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board:
- Encourage partner agencies to engage with Community Conversations
  - Encourage partner agencies to consider adopting a 'community conversation' approach to consultation and engagement
  - Task the Building Communities Together Partnership with overseeing further development of Community Conversations and providing, by exception, reports to the Board during 2018/19

## 3. How the Health and Wellbeing Board can help

- 3.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board can assist the ongoing development of Community Conversations by encouraging partner agencies, particularly those represented on the Board, to take part.

<b>Will the recommendation require the matter to be referred to the Executive for final determination?</b>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>	No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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## 4. Introduction/Background

- 4.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board has received a number of papers and presentations on Community Conversations since April 2017 when the responsibility for their development passed to the Building Communities Together (BCT) Partnership and BCT Team.
- 4.2 In March 2017 the Board received a paper summarising the instigation of Community Conversations under the Brilliant West Berkshire Partnership and a review of their status at the time of 'transfer' to the BCT Partnership.
- 4.3 In addition to oversight by Health and Wellbeing Board, the newly created Building Communities Together Partnership (formed May 2017) has also monitored the development of Community Conversations and importantly overseen the creation of and the initial development stages of the BCT Team.

- 4.4 Both the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Building Communities Together Partnership have encouraged partner agencies to consider Community Conversations as opportunities for community engagement. Partner agencies have also been encouraged to consider new ways of working that support building community resilience.
- 4.5 Since the BCT Team was formed (April 2017 – with TVP officers joining in June 2017) there have been vacancies within the team however since mid-December the Team is fully staffed and crucially the permanent appointment of the Community Coordinator (Engagement) will ensure that progress in respect of Community Conversations can be consolidated.
- 4.6 The progress that has been achieved to date has been due to the hard work of officers within the BCT Team (WBC and TVP), supported by colleagues from across the partnership. The Team will now be able to make more progress particularly around communication and engagement using tools such as the BCT website, twitter, facebook, newsletters, Blog, etc..
- 4.7 The BCT Team are undertaking a review of Community Conversations to inform future activities.

## 5. Supporting Information

- 5.1 As previously reported to the Board a number of Community Conversation were instigated by the Brilliant West Berkshire Partnership and in April 2017 there were 2 ongoing and these continue to date in Hungerford and Calcot.
- 5.2 The Health and Wellbeing Board set a priority to increase the number of Community Conversations and conversations have subsequently taken place in the following communities:
- Hungerford – Community Conversation in addition to the Professionals meeting
  - Calcot
  - Newbury
  - Thatcham
  - Aldermaston
  - Burghfield and Mortimer
  - Lambourn
  - Hermitage
- 5.3 In addition a Community Conversation approach has also been used at the following:
- Re-launch of the Newbury Youth Council
  - Annual Peer Mentors Conference

- Rough Sleepers consultation
  - Establishing the Independent Advisory Group
  - Thinking Together Events
  - The Health and Wellbeing Boards Problem Solving Meeting
- 5.4 A number of the Community Conversations have started in response to a community issue such as anti-social behaviour (Hermitage, Burghfield and Mortimer, Thatcham and Lambourn) and are being supported to evolve into Community Forums to sustain the 'conversation' and potentially seek to address other community issues.
- 5.5 Similarly Neighbourhood Actions Groups (NAGs) are being supported to become Community Forums and the BCT Team will continue to try and identify other community groups and forums that can become forums for their community – particularly for communities of interest. Neighbourhood Watch and Thames Valley Alert is 'promoted' at all conversations as opportunities to build community resilience and create 'connections' within communities.
- 5.6 The Community Conversations in Newbury and Calcot did not start in response to an issue but were started by members of the community wanting to engage with others, to identify local issues and use local assets to potentially co-design solutions. These 2 conversations are both currently focused on developing a Community Hub or Community Café to support community cohesion, information sharing and addressing social isolation. Similarly the Agape Lunch held in Burghfield brought members of the community together to share food and make connections. The BCT Team will be considering the outcomes of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness (published December 2017) as Community Conversations could provide opportunities for improving health, wellbeing and community resilience through addressing loneliness.
- 5.7 All the Community Conversations are building social capital and potentially building community resilience however it must be acknowledged that this is a 'slow burn' activity and it may take some time before the potential benefits are fully realised.
- 5.8 As previously reported to the Board there have been some outcomes from some of the conversations, most notably from the Hungerford Professional Lens meeting, and other outcomes include:
- Hermitage – Youth Council being explored
  - Rough Sleepers – information incorporated into MEAM Project design
  - Lambourn – Youth Club being explored
  - Peer Mentor Conference – workshop to be repeated in next year's event and learning from this year's workshop cascaded to all schools
  - Burghfield and Mortimer – significant decrease in anti-social behaviour and notable reduction in the number of reports to Thames Valley Police
- 5.9 With the Community Coordinator (Engagement) coming into post the BCT Team are currently reviewing Community Conversations to identify what's working well and

why and will use this information to support the future implementation of more conversations. The following are being considered:

- Conversation Set Up Template – a ‘how to’ guide
- Problem Solving Training – to skill communities in addressing issues
- Restorative Practice Training – to build skills and knowledge in communities
- Conversation Newsletters – to link conversations and to share ideas
- Workshop for Town/Parish Clerks – exploring the potential for community conversations
- Promoting Conversations – increasing and diversifying attendance
- Facilitation Training – to support effective conversations

5.10 Members of the BCT Team have attended all of the Community Conversations and they have observed the following:

- Effective promotion of the conversation is essential using a wide range of media
- Effective facilitation is essential
- The meeting needs structure but the conversation must not be constrained
- All participants need to be able to contribute however they wish
- Joining in a conversation that is already taking place is a good idea
- Drawing people together who have a shared concern can be effective
- The ‘topic/s’ of conversation must be what that community want to talk about
- The community need to be supported in taking ‘ownership’ for the actions and ambition of the conversation

5.11 The BCT team will be taking the above into consideration as they continue to promote and support Community Conversations.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The number of Community Conversations continues to increase and the BCT Team are reviewing progress to inform future development.
- 6.2 The BCT Team will be exploring ways to improve the effectiveness of Community Conversations and working with communities to increase participation in them.
- 6.3 This is a ‘slow burn’ activity and it is essential that progress is at ‘the community’s pace’ and that the conversations ‘go in the direction that communities wants’.

- 6.4 It is not appropriate to make any presumptions about what the community want to talk about and it is important that the conversation are supported with relevant information so that discussions and action planning are well informed.
- 6.5 Work to instigate conversations with Communities of Interest needs to be progressed.

## 7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1 Jo Reeves, Nick Carter

## 8. Appendices

None

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### Background Papers:

None

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### Health and Wellbeing Priorities 2017 Supported:

- ☐ Reduce alcohol related harm for all age groups
- ☒ Increase the number of Community Conversations through which local issues have been identified and addressed

### Health and Wellbeing Strategic Aims Supported:

The proposals will help achieve the following Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim(s):

- ☐ Give every child the best start in life
- ☐ Support mental health and wellbeing throughout life
- ☐ Reduce premature mortality by helping people lead healthier lives
- ☐ Build a thriving and sustainable environment in which communities can flourish
- ☐ Help older people maintain a healthy, independent life for as long as possible

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Health and Wellbeing Strategy aim by increasing the number of Community Conversations through which local issues have been identified and addressed.

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