

**Item number: 8**

**Meeting:** Safety Panel

**Item for:** Information and Discussion

**Meeting Date:** 23 April 2010

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD REGENERATION AND TACKLING DISADVANTAGE**

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**Lead Member:** Councillor Birchley

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report presents to Safety Panel an overview of the work undertaken to promote neighbourhood regeneration in Milton Keynes and tackling inequalities in Buckinghamshire County, through the activity of the Community Safety department and by Fire Station Operational Neighbourhood Plans.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1** That the issues and progress be noted, and members monitor progress of BFRS Neighbourhood planning activity via Authority briefings and IRMP action plans.

### **3. Issues and Choices**

Tackling inequalities has been identified as a priority for partnership activity through the family of *Buckinghamshire Sustainable Communities Strategies* and the *Buckinghamshire Local Area Agreement 2008 – 2011*, as well as the Milton Keynes Neighbourhood Regeneration Strategy. We have already seen some success in working collectively in priority communities, but we need a much clearer and long term strategic approach if we are to make a real difference to improving outcomes.

A strategic approach to sustainable community improvement requires commitment and co-operation from partners in the short to medium term if it is to become self-sustaining in the longer term and reap lasting benefits for the community. Developing community capacity so members of the community can support each other takes time and some of the outcomes of this project will be achieved over several years

#### **3.1 Neighbourhood Regeneration in Milton Keynes**

In December 2008, the MK Neighbourhood Regeneration Strategy was signed off by the Council's Cabinet. This strategy sets the overall framework for the delivery of regeneration in the most deprived neighbourhoods of MK. The strategy highlights the key challenges facing the whole city, focussing on those which are concentrated in the deprived areas, and sets a framework for the development of Neighbourhood Action Plans.

The aim of the regeneration strategy is “to close the gap between the most and least affluent neighbourhoods by improving the conditions and life chances of the most deprived”. The central premise of the strategy is that neighbourhood regeneration will not work if it is “top down” and solutions should be tailored to each area.

The objectives are to:

- Provide a framework for addressing the needs of the more disadvantaged & deprived estates in MK.
- Set the strategic picture for the production of Neighbourhood Action Plans.
- Provide a basis for partner & community engagement in addressing the issues of deprivation in the estates.
- Build the capacity to empower communities to develop solutions via Neighbourhood Action Plans.
- Coordinate & target new & existing policies & investments on neighbourhood solutions & opportunities for regeneration.
- Focus on communities of place rather than communities of interest e.g. a geographical community, rather than a group.

### **3.2 Tackling Disadvantage Pilot Projects – Buckinghamshire**

#### **Oakridge and Castlefield (High Wycombe)**

The project implementation group being led by WDC is aiming to deliver a mixture of short term deliverables and longer term changes around joined-up service delivery, maximising household income, raising levels of educational attainment and narrowing the gap between those experiencing the worst health and the rest of the population in Buckinghamshire.

A Resident’s Action Group has now been established with Terms of Reference and membership agreed. The first meeting was held on Monday 22nd February and feedback given at the NAG public meeting on 23rd February. The second meeting will take place on 9 March and will discuss other work within the Connecting Communities programme, including a £20,000 participatory budgeting exercise; a community website & film plus two community Information Kiosks.

#### **Quarrendon (Aylesbury)**

First meeting of prospective Project Board members for the Quarrendon project is to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010. At their first meeting, the Project Board will be asked to:

- Agree membership
- Identify key stakeholders
- Establish the project area boundary
- Consider the focus for the Quarrendon Project and potential objectives
- Decide on the Project Board member role description

Initial analysis of data identifies Crime, Education and Income as the top three issues in terms of disadvantage in the Quarrendon area.

## **4. Implications**

### **4.1 *Equality & Diversity Issues***

The Service has a statutory obligation under equality legislation to eliminate unlawful discrimination, both direct and indirect, against everyone regardless of individual circumstances. The Single Equality Scheme and action plan will support us in meeting our requirements. If our policies and practices are fair and equal then our service users will approach us and have greater levels of satisfaction. If we have greater representation of our diverse communities then we will be able to find solutions to barriers in relation to employment and accessing services.

There is clear evidence to show the benefits to an organisation in actively developing good practice in relation to equality and diversity and public engagement. The key benefits are in relation to a healthy, happy and productive workforce and services that meet the needs of the people improving their quality of life.

The general and specific duties are enforceable by judicial review. Any person or body affected by a failure to comply with the general and specific duties may take action through judicial review proceedings. Failure to comply exposes the Service to financial and reputational risk.

### **4.2 *Policy***

Work on neighbourhood regeneration and tackling disadvantage complements the Single Equality Scheme and the Authority's response to the National Framework and strategy for equality, diversity, community cohesion and engagement.

The IRMP 2010/11 contains targets related to ONP's activity around health inequalities. BFRS will work with the two PCT's to deliver messages around healthy living and lifestyle advice, for example smoking cessation.

The Community Safety team has been involved in many aspects of intelligence gathering on behalf of thematic partnerships. This includes fuel poverty, and other risk indicators contained within the Vulnerable Localities Index (VLI).

### **4.3 *People, Health, Safety and Welfare***

The Service's Equality, diversity and community cohesion programme aims to improve fire safety and reduce risk for everyone within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, and those who visit or travel through the area. It also aims to improve the working environment for our staff, increasing satisfaction and motivation at work. It will also increase confidence within the organisation as well as raising the profile and engagement with the community.

### **4.4 *Equipment***

The VLI has been used as a complimentary means of measuring disadvantage and has given a more precise view, rather than ward and estate based information used in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD).

#### **4.5 Communication / Consultation**

A comprehensive consultation programme has been initiated both internally and with external partners to ensure the Authority is best placed to move this agenda forward in a positive and co-ordinated way.

#### **4.6 Financial**

Any specific neighbourhood planning activity will be funded from within the Community Safety departments base budget.

Funding for both Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes has been set as a priority by the responsible Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP's). The funding may facilitate BFRS youth courses and new initiatives around diversionary activity.

#### **4.7 Legal**

In addition to the need to comply with equalities legislation, the Service has legal duties to actively promote equality and become a pro-active agent of change through effective community engagement promoting community cohesion.

#### **4.8 Environmental Impact**

BFRS has successfully targeted the number of rubbish fires in areas of highest deprivation via previous IRMP action plans. A reduction in secondary fires, anti-social behaviour, and serious crime (e.g. burglary) are seen as positive impacts, benefiting communities, social and physical environments.

### **5. Progress monitoring**

The development of performance indicators for neighbourhood regeneration and tackling disadvantage will flow from community mapping and lessons learnt from pilot projects.

The primary focus of the project is to deliver tangible benefits to the communities we serve. These improvements will be measured against a suite of performance indicators for the project.

Anticipated business benefits include:

1. Delivering public service policy agendas with respect to supporting vulnerable people, helping people and communities to help themselves, a focus on families and targeted preventative work,
2. Understanding and finding an effective and appropriate response to issues around relative deprivation,
3. A joined-up partnership approach to priority communities which gives expression to key policies that seek to address disadvantage and inequalities,
4. Delivering objectives within the family of Buckinghamshire Sustainable Communities Strategies and the Local Area Agreement
5. Meeting the challenge of the Comprehensive Area Assessment which will focus on how the wider partnership in Bucks is working together to meet the needs of vulnerable groups and in particular localities,

6. Clear channels of communication with the community,
7. Improved effectiveness of services in reaching targeted service users,
8. Opportunities for cost reduction through an increase in preventative work, early intervention, maximising resources and joint working
9. Workforce development improving cross sector understanding and increasing skills such as community development
10. Meeting the requirements of future assessments particularly in the areas of CLG's FRS Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018; CAA, Public Duties, organisational assessments, operational assurance and ICI duty.
11. Support for IRMP targets, e.g. reduction of V.L.I score in areas of high deprivation, and preventing primary and secondary fires.

**6. Review date**

Annually.

**7. Background papers**

None.

**8. Contact details for authors**

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