

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Neighbourhoods, Community & Customer Services  
**DATE:** 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I**

#### **INFORMATION**

#### **Slough Borough Council support for Neighbourhood Action Groups**

##### 1. **Purpose of Report**

To follow on from the report to N&CC Scrutiny in September 2014 on reviewing and developing support to Neighbourhood Action Groups (NAGs) and specifically

- To share feedback from NAG chairs, and others, for the future support of NAGs and community forums in Slough.
- To review options on how NAGs and community forums can shape the future delivery of the priorities for Slough and the councils Five Year Plan objectives
- To make recommendations for the council's future support of NAGs and community forums within the limited resources available.

##### 2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

- The Panel is requested to note the report and agree recommendations on how the council provides support in the future for Slough's NAGs and community forums.

##### 3. **The Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Corporate Plan**

###### 3a. **Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities**

Neighbourhood Action Groups and community forums have considerable potential to impact positively upon the '**Safer Slough**', '**Housing**' and '**Regeneration & Environment**' priorities of the Joint wellbeing Strategy

Cross-Cutting themes:

Neighbourhood Action Groups strongly support **Civic responsibility**, the part that residents can play in delivering Safer Communities and in improving Slough for the benefit of everyone.

#### 4. **Other Implications**

##### (a) Financial

There are no financial implications of the information report. Delivery will be within existing team budgets

##### (b) Risk Management

There are no risks associated with this information paper

##### (c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no Human Rights Act Implications associated with this information paper

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

##### 5.1

The report to N&CC Scrutiny in September provided background to the current position with NAGs, and community forums, in Slough and it was agreed that as;

*'multi-agency problem solving groups consisting of partner agencies, key stakeholders but most importantly members of the local community brought together to plan and action the main concerns identified by the local community'*.

NAGs have the potential to be a valuable community asset in helping to support and improve communities in Slough.

##### 5.2

It was also identified that whilst some work very well, effectively focusing local activity around key community priorities, in other areas NAGs are working less well, experiencing a variety of difficulties surrounding membership and ongoing commitment; there is varied success in that community engagement is inconsistent across the borough. Also some NAGs have evolved to become part of Community Forums which have a wider remit.

##### 5.3

Since the previous report there has been considerable work completed on the Five Year Plan around agreeing outcomes for the future whilst delivering services within the financial strategy and with reducing resources how to prioritise that delivery. The 5YP recognises the council's strong community leadership role and the importance of, *'working with local people and helping them to do more for themselves'*. Thus support that the council can provide via its officers and Members to help to facilitate NAGs, community forums and other local groups become more effective, delivering action that is important to their communities and which are also likely to impact positively upon the overall ambitions for the town.

## 5.4

Feedback from a workshop held on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015 given in detail in Appendix 1 indicates that:

- Inconsistencies remain in NAG coverage in Slough; some NAGs are considering joining together and others are concerned about their sustainability. The need to have 3-4 committed members to share organisation of a group was considered essential
- Engagement is sporadic; residents attend for key issues but then lose interest. It was agreed that work to identify what people wanted for their area was important.
- Engagement by a council, or police officer has a strong positive effect upon motivation of group members
- Communication generally is of concern. Some use social media but are wary of its potential for abuse by a minority. Others feel that the council has many contact points which potentially causes delay. All felt that they needed to understand how to focus communication effectively for their individual community e.g. older people tend not to use social media although social media could be a way to engage younger people more effectively.
- Learning from the participation initiative currently being rolled out by the Neighbourhood Services Transition Board could be very useful
- The role of elected Members was discussed and that utilising Member support to encourage and actively promote engagement with NAGs and other community groups was crucial.
- It was recognised that the current review by Thames Valley Police of Neighbourhood Policing had not yet been concluded and that the outcomes of that review may impact upon how NAGs operate in the future.
- The opportunity to provide single points of contact within the council for NAG/group chairs was discussed as were annual forums for chairs/secretaries; for both ideas were seen as being very positive.

## 6. Comments of Other Committees

None

## 7. Recommendations

### 7.1

It is recommended that in order to more fully support community engagement that the following actions are considered and agreed as appropriate:

#### 7.1.1

That a Members Task & Finish Group is established to

- Engage with existing NAGs and community groups and assess the need for specific support on a ward by ward basis. Including sustainability of groups, options for merging groups, extending or restarting groups and whether an area is best served by a NAG or other type of community group.
- Assess and promote the role of NAGS and other groups in increasing community engagement, helping to delivery the council's 5YP outcomes as part of the council's and members community leadership role and the council's reducing resources.

- That more research into how other local authorities support NAGs and in particular examples of good practice in development of Communications strategies, support packages and whether a single point of contact for NAG and other group chairs is feasible in Slough. Together with consideration of other partnership agency reviews, i.e. TVP neighbourhood Policing
- Propose next steps and agree future expectations and performance

## 8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Notes from NAGs Workshop – 10<sup>th</sup> February 2015

## 9. **Background Papers**

'1' - Five Year Plan 2015 – Growing a place of opportunity and ambition