

Subject: Progress Report: South West Ward - 6 Month Review

Report by:	Chief Operating Officer
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Purpose / Summary:	To provide elected members with an update in regard to the progress of work within the South West Ward.

RECOMMENDATION(S):

- (1) That progress and achievements are noted

That Members recommend the following for decision by Prosperous Communities Committee:

- (2) That committee co-ordination of the required work programmes to further support the Gainsborough SWW is now managed as part of an overall 'Place Based Regeneration strategy, subject to approval of the Strategy by Prosperous Communities Committee
- (3) Given that a significant amount of activity is progressing and is now integrated into the service delivery across a range of Council service areas; that the SWW work is now considered 'business as usual'; is coordinated by the Councils Senior Community Action Officer, and overseen Wellbeing and Health Manager as a work programme of an overall 'Place Based Regeneration Strategy' (in line with recommendation 2)
- (4) That the 'Placed Based Regeneration' Strategy and its associated work programmes is subject to annual scrutiny by the Council's Challenge and Improvement Committee
- (5) That a quarterly information update is provided in the form of a newsletter for stakeholders and Elected Members

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: None arising from this report

Financial : None

Staffing : None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights: None arising from this report.

Risk Assessment : None arising from this report

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : None arising from this report

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Full Council 2 July 2017 Minutes

Challenge and Improvement Committee 23 May 2017 Minutes

Challenge and Improvement Committee 11 October 2016 Minutes

Report to Prosperous Communities Committee 29 October 2015

Minutes from the council meeting 27 July 2015

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes

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No

x

☐

Key Decision:

Yes

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No

x

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1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1.1 The Gainsborough South West Ward is one of the most vulnerable and deprived communities within Lincolnshire. It has been considered a priority area for West Lindsey District Council for a number of years and has been in need of coordinated intervention to improve the area.
- 1.1.2 Previous efforts to improve the area had not been well coordinated and an overall strategic approach was lacking. A review of the activities and interventions in place to improve the area has been carried out by WLDC and work to better coordinate this and develop a more strategic approach with partners has been accelerated.
- 1.2 There are significant programmes of work underway which are directly improving the Gainsborough South West Ward. The Councils Selective Licensing Scheme, for example, is being reported to Committee separately.
- 1.3 This report provides an update in respect of the range of activities and interventions underway to further support and improve Gainsborough's South West Ward. Specific activities and updates reflect the concerns raised by Elected Members in motions to Full Council dated 27/7/15 and 3/7/17:
 - 1.3.1 Council Committee 27 July 2015

"The residents of West Lindsey expect and deserve quality, effective and responsive services. Over the past few years we have seen some of our local communities change and more often there is a need for services outside of the normal 9-5 working day.

In the past local Police have responded very effectively with issues such as low level anti social behaviour, noise nuisance, drink related incidents however now they state it is a local authority responsibility?

West Lindsey have failed to put the necessary resources in place to deal with the impact of these changes and meeting the growing demand.

Residents are left feeling powerless, resulting in them having to report incidents the WLDC 'Out of Hours Service' knowing that it offers no more than a tokenistic service.

Recently one of us had experience of contacting the 'out of hours service' in the early hours of the morning following a disturbing incident. West Lindsey failed to respond after the initial call?

We are informed residents share similar poor experiences, very little action being offered to them and having to 'put up' with unacceptable situations.

Residents are having to live in fear.

We believe residents deserve better, and would like to request that an in depth review be carried out of our 'out of hours services', We so move."

1.3.2 Council Committee 3 July 2017

“There has been a significant increase in the drug scene in Gainsborough over the past 10 years and unless we start to tackle the problem it will become a catastrophic time bomb in future years. Class A drugs such as ‘crack cocaine’ appear to be easily accessible to buy ‘off the street’.

It is extremely concerning to learn that more and more young vulnerable people in the town are becoming victims of the surge in the drug culture. We are informed that children as young as ten are being used as drug runners to supply hardened addicts. There is a desperate need from residents living in the town for agencies to seriously start addressing the problem, and of course it requires far more than just police enforcement.

Therefore a ward members of the Gainsborough South West ward we request that this council produces a report to the relevant policy committee regarding developing a strategic approach to dealing with drugs in West Lindsey, we ‘so move’.

- 1.4 This report seeks to offer assurance that there is a focussed and strategic approach in place, which is able to manage the required improvements, in partnership with stakeholders, whilst also managing effectively, emerging risk issues.
- 1.5 The need for a strategic approach to supporting vulnerable communities such as Gainsborough South West Ward is recognised in the Council’s [draft] Housing Strategy 2018 – 2021. A key action within this is the development of a WLDC ‘Placed Based Regeneration’ strategy.
- 1.6 It is proposed that the work to further support and improve Gainsborough South West Ward is included as a work programme of the Placed Based Regeneration Strategy and is therefore now considered ‘business as usual’.
- 1.6.1 It is proposed that delivery of the Gainsborough SWW work programme is coordinated by the Council’s Senior Community Action Officer and overseen by the Wellbeing and Health Manager.
- 1.7 Officers are committed to maintaining a proactive and accountable approach. It is proposed that the ‘Placed Based Regeneration’ Strategy and its associated work programmes is subject to annual scrutiny by the Council’s Challenge and Improvement Committee.

2.0 Re-alignment of resources to deliver

- 2.1 As part of its recent Management Restructure, West Lindsey DC has aligned its housing, homelessness prevention, economic growth, community safety, safeguarding, health and wellbeing, communities, employment and skills and environmental protection functions to allow for the development and delivery of a ‘social regeneration’ approach to support vulnerable communities. This is the first time a strategic approach to social regeneration has been taken. The alignment of

services in this way has identified opportunities for improved working practices and more coordinated capacity to deliver.

2.2 Officers have also highlighted specific gaps and challenges in need of specific intervention to enable progress and change. For example, there is a need for additional resource to support targeted enforcement measures and also to support landlords housing vulnerable, challenging tenants. These are:

- A need for additional enforcement capacity, focused on the South West Ward and other priority areas including those where Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) are in place. This will extend the ability to deal with fly tipping, early presentation of waste and PSPO related offences.
- A need for specific support for the private rented sector landlords aimed at increasing tenancy sustainment and providing advice, support and guidance.

2.3 Business cases are currently being developed and taken through the Councils governance processes to gain the relevant approvals to implement specific initiatives in response to the risks and challenges facing vulnerable communities.

2.3.1 It is proposed that the initiatives are funded from an existing Ear Marked Reserve to support Vulnerable Communities. Subject to Management Team approval, the proposed initiatives will be presented to the Councils Prosperous Communities Committee and recommended for approval before implementation.

3.0 Partnerships and Projects - to support and deliver.

3.1 Key to making progress is ensuring we work with, and make effective working links between, those people and partners who work to make a difference in a place, especially in vulnerable communities.

The case studies provided with this report in Appendix B show good working links with our public sector partners on specific cases.

This is being strengthened with regular casework liaison between WLDC Enforcement Officers and the Police. Monthly meetings take place to discuss the selective licencing area, to share information and agree actions. These meetings have already resulted in better shared knowledge, coordinated and proactive enforcement action and a joint approach to a landlord who had a number of properties causing concerns.

3.2 The working links and connections extend to include connecting public sector partners with key community groups.

3.2.1 Members will be aware that a motion to Full Council was raised on 5 July 2017 by Cllr Young and Cllr Rainsforth as shown above in 1.3.2. As a result of this, WLDC coordinated and hosted a multi-agency strategic

meeting to explore the evidence base surrounding these concerns and to discuss the partnership approach and opportunities more generally. Key representatives at this meetings included the Headmaster of Benjamin Adlard Primary School, Police, Addaction, WLDC Officers and Elected Members. The meeting was considered positive and has led to continued collaboration and consideration of partnership opportunities. These include:

- WLDC has coordinated a number of positive partnership meetings between Benjamin Adlard Primary School, WLDC, x-Church and Police. Supportive links have been established.
- A commitment from Lincolnshire Police to establish a 'Mini PCSO' project in partnership with the Benjamin Adlard Primary School. Partners are actively seeking to implement this. Within this initiative children will be encouraged to act as 'mini police officers' including having the chance to wear 'Mini PCSO' uniforms. The initiative is intended to educate young people, give them the opportunity to engage in community projects and achieve rewards. Successful projects are currently being delivered elsewhere in Lincolnshire.
- A commitment to support and increase diversionary activities for young people at evenings and weekends. This is being explored by the primary school and X-Church, supported by WLDC.
- An offer for the Primary School to be represented on the X-Church board
- Shared training offered by the Primary School for staff and volunteers at X Church to support their safeguarding policy and procedures
- WLDC has enabled free access to Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board training for X-Church staff and volunteers and has also ensured that a safeguarding policy is in place
- Commitment between Police, X-Church and Primary School to establish data sharing agreements
- WLDC has been working with local partners including a charitable organisation specialised in supporting children of drug and alcohol users to encourage a bespoke partnership approach that could be implemented to support Gainsborough SWW, With safeguarding and wellbeing embedded within its model, the well-established provider specialises in supporting children and young people with their resilience, confidence and ability to cope.
 - A business case is currently being developed and will be taken through the Councils governance processes with recommendations for approval to implement this specific initiatives in response to the risks and challenges facing the Gainsborough SWW community. It is proposed that the initiatives are funded from an existing Ear Marked Reserve to

support Vulnerable Communities. Subject to Management Team approval, the proposed initiatives will be presented to the Councils Prosperous Communities Committee and recommended for approval before implementation.

- 3.2.2 West Lindsey DC Officers from across the relevant departments regularly attend the community group South West Improvement Group (SWIG) meeting to discuss projects and problems within the community, and build links and knowledge about what we do. Four officers attended the last meeting including ASB, housing enforcement and empty property officers. Attendance to update on Selective Licencing is expected at the next meeting. This has been received positively by the attending residents, but would benefit from increased awareness and representation from the community and other stakeholders. This will be a focus of the work to build community confidence and awareness moving forward.

- 3.3 LEAP are an experienced charitable organisation who provide supported accommodation within Lincolnshire. They have established a subsidiary called HATS ('Housing and Tenancy Support') which provides direct support to individuals at risk of homelessness. HATS currently lease properties from West Lindsey DC as well other landlords. The Council is currently working with HATS to actively bring some of the empty properties back in to use within SWW. These properties will provide additional, well managed, supported accommodation in the area.

HATS currently provides supported housing to people with low incomes and support needs with a view to helping them move into independent accommodation. The company is also in the process of transforming a business unit on Trinity Street into a public access hub to become more involved in the local community.

- 3.4 Led by the Senior Home Choices Officer, WLDC co-ordinates a West Lindsey Supported Housing Providers Network. By their very nature the supported housing providers work to support the most vulnerable people within our district and play an important homelessness prevention role.

The work plan agreed by this group is included within this report at Appendix D.

- 3.5 To fulfil its Statutory Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation requirements, West Lindsey DC has a contract with Framework Housing Association for the provision of 5 self-contained flats (located within Gainsborough SWW), within which low level support is provided to assist with managing during the temporary accommodation period and to move on successfully. Although demand has continued to rise leading to a need for additional provision in the future, the Temporary Accommodation model has been successful, has prevented WLDC from using Bed and Breakfast accommodation by default, and has assisted us with our statutory duties and moving people into permanent accommodation with positive and sustainable outcomes.

- 3.6 Between 1st October 2016 and 30th September 2017, WLDC staff have raised 58 safeguarding and wellbeing concerns to safeguarding officers using the Councils reporting mechanism, representing 20% of the overall safeguarding and wellbeing concerns raised by staff during that period.

23 of the 58 concerns raised resulted in onward referral into statutory services, with lower level support provided to the remaining cases as required.

4.0 Implementing measures, support and enforcement to drive up standards.

- 4.1 WLDC is committed to ensuring that it has in place schemes and measures to drive up standards especially in vulnerable communities. This is supported by the structures and resources being put in place and the inter connections with our partners as illustrated in this report above.

- 4.2 Schemes are in place or being developed to help drive up standards.

- 4.2.1 The council introduced selective licensing in July 2016 in certain parts of Gainsborough to improve property standards and management and reduce ASB. All landlords need to apply for a licence for each rental property they own. Andy Gray, Housing and Environmental Enforcement Officer provided an update report on the scheme to Prosperous Communities 24 October 2017. A link to the report is provided in Appendix A.

The enforcement activity is both proactive and successful. The press release from a recent prosecutions is detailed below:

4 landlords have successfully been prosecuted, the first to be done so as part of the Council's Selective Licensing Scheme. Across 15 selective licensing offences, fines totalling £213,000 were issued along with 10 year Criminal Behaviour Orders.

The largest fine was given to Jagdish Singh (59) of Southernhay Road, Leicester. He pleaded guilty to "failing to licence" 8 of his properties, receiving a fine of £13,500 per offence. It is believed to be the largest fine issued to one landlord in relation to the failure to licence. Singh also pleaded guilty to three offences relating to the failure to comply with improvement notices and fined a further £4,500 for each offence and ordered to pay costs of £2,000.

The other three defendants who also live on Southernhay Road, Leicester, jointly own several of the unlicensed properties with Singh. Gurjit Singh and Balbir Kaur had previously been found guilty for two 'failure to licence' offences each. They were both fined £15,000 for two offences each and ordered to each pay costs of £1048.56, plus £170 surcharge. Harpal Bindra Singh previously had three 'failure to licence' offences heard and determined in his absence and was fined £15,000 per offence. He was also found guilty for one failure to comply with an improvement notice and given the maximum £5,000 fine and ordered to pay costs of £1048.56, plus £170 surcharge.

West Lindsey District Council successfully applied for Criminal Behaviour Orders on all the defendants which imposes conditions on the letting and management of any properties owned within the district for a period of ten years.

- 4.2.2** It is recognised that landlords also need support from WLDC to seek suitable tenants and support them to sustain a tenancy. In addition to proposals to implement direct support to landlords (see 2.2), a Tenant Passport Scheme has been developed for the Selective Licensing Scheme area. The policy for this was approved by the Council's Prosperous Communities Committee on 24th October 2017. A link to the report is provided in Appendix A.

The Tenant Passport is designed to support landlords and aims to help achieve sustainable tenancies. If successful, options to extend it to other areas in the district will be considered.

- 4.2.3** A scheme to deal with abandoned Trolleys is being developed.

Elected Members will be aware of rising concern in the area in regard to abandoned trolleys. This issue is now being proactively tackled. Local Authorities do have powers to enact a formal scheme to seize trolleys and charge the owner.

A West Lindsey DC proposed scheme, including draft process and charges, has been developed and will be ready for consultation with affected stakeholders over the next few weeks.

The scheme will involve the seizing of any trolleys found abandoned, and charging the supermarkets for their return, or if not claimed we would charge them for the seizure, storage and disposal of the trolley. In other areas of the Country, this scheme has had a huge impact on numbers of abandoned trolleys.

Timescales are an adoption of Schedule 4, the part of the legislation that give us the powers to do this scheme so a necessary precursor, by the end of 2017. New charges in force as of 1 April 18. The intended start date of the scheme.

Whilst we work towards this formal arrangements, a voluntary proposal about how trolleys would be dealt with, and what we expect the supermarket concerned to do to prevent trolleys being taken and to recover those abandoned in the town has been presented to the company. This is under review currently as to its success.

- 4.2.4** A Public Space Protection Order is in place to ban the drinking of alcohol in the grounds of the Trinity Arts Centre and pocket park on Cleveland St. is in place. Those breaching the order can be fined £75, rising to £100 in April 2018.

- 4.2.5** A West Lindsey Operational Environmental Action Plan is being developed to capture work areas and projects being delivered. It will allow for monitoring against key work areas. The action plan will outline our approach towards the following across the District:

- Abandoned vehicles
- Fly tipping
- Early presentation of waste

- Dog fouling
- Commercial waste
- Training, delegations and enforcement (Council, Parish Council's and Town Council's)

In the last 6 months in the SWW:

- 1 formal Community Protection Notice has been served
- 13 Community Protection Notice Warnings have been sent
- 53 early presentation warning letters have been sent
- 1 first warning letter has been sent
- Unacceptable behaviour warnings have been sent
- Fly tipping warning letters have been sent

Key actions members should see in the near future from this focused action plan will be press releases and information relating to our approach to fly tipping and early presentation, followed by signage which will be a precursor to some targeted enforcement activity.

- 4.3** In addition to the Selective Licensing Scheme in the South West Ward the Housing and Community Safety Enforcement team are ensuring that the legislative powers we have as an Authority are being proactively used. Appendix C provides an overview of the delegated powers of a Local Authority to address issues of poor quality housing.

These powers are being implemented to good effect in the South West Ward area, where the Selective Licensing Scheme has accelerated our awareness of issues. Case work examples of their work, in conjunction with our partners, is attached in Appendix B.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1** That progress and achievements are noted and that members recommend the following for decision by Prosperous and Communities:
- 5.1.1** That coordination of the required work programmes to further support the Gainsborough SWW is now managed as part of an overall 'Place Based Regeneration strategy, subject to approval of the Strategy by Prosperous Communities Committee
- 5.1.2** Given that a significant amount of activity is progressing and is now integrated into the service delivery across a range of Council service areas; that the SWW work is now considered 'business as usual'. That it is coordinated by the Councils Senior Community Action Officer, and overseen by Wellbeing and Health Manager as a work programme of an overall 'Place Based Regeneration Strategy' (in line with recommendation 2)
- 5.1.3** That the 'Placed Based Regeneration' Strategy and its associated work programmes is subject to annual scrutiny by the Council's Challenge and Improvement Committee.
- 5.1.4** That a quarterly information update is provided in the form of a newsletter for stakeholders and Elected Members.