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To: Scrutiny Committee
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Title: Community Engagement Forums (CEFs)

Summary:

This report and accompanying links update the Scrutiny Committee on the role of CEFs.

CEF Board members and other service representatives have been invited to attend to give a wider perspective on the role and effectiveness of CEFs.

Recommendations:

- To consider feedback from the Scrutiny Committee on the role and function of the CEFs in conjunction with key CEF representatives.

Reasons for recommendation:

To provide update to the Scrutiny Committee on the Community Engagement Forums and how they support the Council Corporate Plan (2018) objective: 'to make Selby District a great place to make a difference'

1. Introduction

- 1.1. There are 5 Community Engagement Forums in the Selby District. The accompanying overview presentation gives an outline of the purpose and functions of CEFs, the geographical areas they cover and the priorities local representatives have identified in their bespoke Community Development Plans (CDPs). All information for each CEF is publically available on the Council's website at <https://www.selby.gov.uk/cefs>

In brief:

- CEFs are made up of local councillor representatives from parish/town, district and county local authorities from the wards which the CEF serves. There are

also 'co-opted' community members on each Partnership Board. Each CEF differs in its range of representation.

- Each CEF has the support of a Community Development Officer (CDO). For Central CEF this is Groundwork North Yorkshire. For Eastern, Southern, Tadcaster & Rural and Western CEFs this is Selby District AVS. This is a contracted provision to the value of £4k pa per CEF. The current contracts run until 31st August 2020.
- The Community Development Officers assist the CEF members to engage their local residents to identify their local priorities as part of a Community Development Plan and to consider how to deliver the plan alongside local services and local community groups.
- Internal Selby District Council (SDC) resource is limited to a secretariat role through Democratic Services to minute and arrange the Partnership Board, Forums and grant administration. The Head of Community, Partnership and Customers supports through formal grant decision records, partnership liaison, attendance at CEF chairs meetings and through contract monitoring. Local Neighbourhood Officers attend the quarterly forums to ensure any relevant council service issues raised by residents can be addressed. Where a relevant topic is being discussed (i.e. planning development, policy engagement) then relevant officers will attend. Some are engaged by the public more than others.
- The Board is allocated funding of £20k pa per CEF to then be able to either develop projects of its own, lever in other investment or to support community grant funding in line with the Funding Framework.
- Open public forums are held on a quarterly basis and include the opportunity to hear from local public and community services/groups as well as to feedback local issues. North Yorkshire County Council Highways and North Yorkshire Police Neighbourhood Team representatives attend each forum as a standard offer and where operations allow. Some are engaged by the public more than others.
- Due to the rural nature of most CEF wards, CEF members complete 'roadshows' taking the forums to different community venues to ensure a wider connection with the geographical area.

1.2. There will be some members of the CEF boards, Community Development Officers and officers from different services available at the scrutiny committee meeting for active dialogue.

2. Impact and Effectiveness

2.1. An Annual Report is produced each year by the Community Development Officer to identify progress on each CEF Community Development Plan and how local funding has been spent. They can be found on the Council website under each individual CEF area.

The Annual Reports outline examples of impact in the community, including feedback from grant beneficiaries. There is evidence of the forums that have been completed on a 'roadshow' basis and how they link to localised issues (i.e. planning consultation, flood resilience, crime) as well as important information on local community service support and activities to get involved with (i.e. Energy Doctor, District Vision, Fairburn Community Café, Church Fenton Village Shop).

- 2.2. Examples of how CEFs have made an impact include:
- The establishment of a U3A in Tadcaster after an interactive forum on the topic.
 - Selby Park Run set up – averaging 150-200 runners per week from the district and beyond; focused on ‘couch to 5k’ encouraging wider population health and well-being activity.
 - Fairburn Community Café - Funding support to pump prime an initiative which engages with other groups in the area, providing all age activity to increase social networks.
 - Church Fenton Village Shop and Pub – Funding support to pump prime a local volunteer business initiative to continue local service provision of vital commercial, social and leisure services.
- 2.3. The 2018-19 Annual Reports are due to be submitted to Full Council in December 2019 and will identify further impacts and use of local funding.
- 2.4. The reports also indicate that moving the ‘roadshows’ around the district areas and tuning into what local people like to hear about has improved engagement. In the majority of areas, attendance at CEF forums attracts in the region of 15-20 attendees. At best, forums have seen around 50 attendees (Tadcaster being most successful). This depends on the topic at hand and its relevance to the area at that particular time. Central CEF however is an exception and does struggle to get public engagement in the same way with attendance extremely limited. However there are other community engagement mechanisms in the central area such as Selby Big Local and Tenant and Resident Participation that also create a localised voice and influence point for specific areas and communities.
- 2.5. Invariably, community engagement in this way can attract limited involvement at times unless there is a ‘hook’ for communities to engage with. Communities of interest (i.e. those with a common goal) can often develop activities and change for themselves (whether geographical or topic specific), looking for minor support with funding or knowledge. General engagement is usually a reactive approach to issues such as a sudden crisis (i.e. flood) or major change (i.e. new building, significant change to/stopping services). CEFs do accommodate such agendas but also try to maintain a proactive approach to helping shape ideas, activities and service delivery in local areas as well as provide an avenue to engage and formally consult on public service policies or agendas.
- 2.6 Communication and digital approaches
Social Media and Communication analysis would suggest that word of mouth and local area leafleting/newsletters have been most productive in raising awareness and gaining attendance at forums keeping engagement very localised and relevant. Analysis of Twitter and Facebook use over the last quarter would suggest that community activity and events in general trend well on Facebook (i.e. Selby 950, classic car rally, Cawoodstock) as well as ‘hot topics’ such as recycling. Announcements from CEF activity do not trend as well. Twitter similarly shows higher activity around business engagement (place branding i.e. Church Fenton creative development) and information on events (i.e. Tour de Yorkshire, Selby 950) but CEFs are not active material.
The council has a small following on Instagram which makes it currently difficult to track trends until this method of communication matures.

3. Review of the CEF model

3.1. The CEF model has been in place since 2009/10 and has seen a number of evolutionary changes in that time. Some of this has been to the structure of the funding and contractual arrangements. CEFs in general have evolved at different paces and with some offering more community representation than others.

3.2. In order to maintain a view on the effectiveness of CEFs, CEF chairs and Vice Chairs met in September 2018 and completed an evaluative workshop facilitated by Skyblue Research Ltd, funded and supported by NYCC Stronger Communities.

3.3. The workshop was structured in five sections using an “ABCDE” format. Brief summaries of each section are given below.

- **Achievements** of CEF in the recent past:

A diverse array of achievements were discussed, including improvements to the funding process, signposting groups to other support, responsive funding via the grants they decided upon and building capacity within the network. All felt proud to be supporting their community, but recognised they did it in different ways. It was suggested that achievements could be celebrated more, and that different media could be used to communicate greater impact.

- **Blockers** to CEF ambitions and aspirations:

Emerging themes included communication (between CEFs and other stakeholders) and the balance of Partnership Board membership between councillors and co-opted members to consider the CEFs truly community led, fully engaged and using the diverse skills and energy of local residents and businesses. CEF geographical boundaries, ‘control’ of the board and reviews of the constitution were also mentioned here. Forum attendance varied in each locality and all felt that this was linked in general to relevance of topic or the CEF’s profile in those areas.

- **Changing landscape** affecting CEFs positioning in future:

This section concerned the changing context of communities and government, with regard to austerity, the new civil society strategy, and the forthcoming local elections. It was felt that CEFs could take on a more strategic view of shaping and investing in service delivery to their local place. In addition, greater alignment between different local partners could enhance benefits. Interestingly there is not perceived to be a lack of locality funding, rather the way it could be galvanised.

- **The Difference** that CEFs have made or could make:

Participants welcomed a new data tool called Local Insight, offering heatmaps of a range of metrics at a local level to see where strengths and gaps in local communities lie (i.e. housing, access to services, crime levels). There was also general consensus that it would be beneficial to present Community Development Plans in a bright, clear, simple format. This would be readily

understood by the communities served, and by potential funding applicants. A future workshop looking in more detail at how outcomes and impact are measured and reported was suggested for consideration.

- **Extraordinary results** that CEFS might be able to achieve together:
A number of shared future opportunities were identified. Communication was mentioned, both in terms of marketing to the community (and online channels), and standardised reporting enabling stronger stories about value to be delivered. Collaboration was discussed – both between the various CEFs, and in terms of greater strategic alignment with other local community development stakeholders and funders. Opportunities for economies of scale were identified for social media resourcing, and potentially also around the CEF support functions. It was also suggested that role descriptions for Board members be revisited to achieve a better skills mix, and composition of more “doers” as well as thinkers and innovators.

4. Future Considerations

4.1. The above workshop and discussions highlighted areas for the CEF Chairs and subsequent boards to consider further development. This work is reviewed through the quarterly CEF Chairs meeting:

- **Achievements** – Consider some form of annual event to thank and celebrate CEFs, beneficiaries, and community activity. *(not yet established)*
- **Boundaries** – CEF chairs to consider adjustments to geographical boundaries of the CEFs (particularly Barlby). *(discussed by CEF Chairs)*
- **Community Development Plan formatting** – CEFs and CDOs to trial a simpler and more visually engaging format for future CDPs, similar to the Big Local example. *(CDPs presently under review by Community Development Officers)*
- **Collaboration** – explore locality budgets, look at potential synergies with Stronger Communities and Big Local as a *minimum*, extending to other local/regional/national funders. *(For Partnership Boards and Community Development Officers to consider)*
- **Control & constitution** – together with CEFs, SDC to consider appetite for formally relinquishing more control to CEFs, particularly with regard to the proportion of councillors on Partnership Boards. *(for further discussion)*
- **Data** – officers to establish logins to Local Insight mapping tool for each CEF. Community Development Officers to support CEFs to utilise this tool, particularly when reviewing CDPs. CEF members to consider robust evidence of community need when developing CDPs, and in funding applications. *(Log-ins distributed)*

- **Engagement** – in addition to existing activity, all CEFs to specifically consider online channels. Actions could include assigning a PB member with responsibility for social media, or wider collaboration and direction. (*social media/communications analysis ongoing*)
- **Future session** – NYCC Stronger Communities and SDC to consider a second workshop to explore outcomes and impact in more detail linked to a slightly more detailed discussion around the future changing landscape affecting CEFs. (*to discuss and shape the scope*)

5. Legal/Financial Controls and other Policy matters

5.1. Legal Issues

None identified.

5.2. Financial Issues

As identified, the current CEF funding budget equates to £20,000 per annum, per CEF. The funds are to be used in line with the Constitution Part 4 – CEF Procedure Rules. This identifies that funding shall be managed in line with the application criteria, Funding Framework and governance arrangements for the CEF.

5.3. Impact Assessment

The very nature of CEFs is to engage the range and diversity of our local resident populations, to assess local strengths and needs and to develop a community led plan to meet those needs. Benefits to a wide range of community representatives has been evidenced through the separate community development plan priorities, the wide range of community interest or identity groups that have benefitted from CEF support and the movement of forums around the CEF areas to address issues such as rurality. Reviewing who engages, which groups benefit and how residents are reached is a continual process of the CEFs alongside Community Development Officer support.

6. Background Documents

Community Engagement Forums overview presentation

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