

Bolton Council

Report to: Executive

Date: 13 February 2012

Report of: Chief Executive

Report No:

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Report Title: **Bolton's Community Strategy, "Bolton: Our Vision 2012 – 2015"**

Purpose:

To present a final draft of the new community strategy and a proposed way forward for the Executive to approve.

Recommendations:

- 5.1 The Executive is asked to:
1. Comment on and approve the new community strategy for Bolton - "Bolton: Our Vision 2012-2015" before its goes to Full Council on the 22 February for formal approval.
 2. Agree the proposed way forward and that a detailed report on progress and next steps is brought to the Vision Steering Group on the 24 April and to the Council's Executive in June.

Decision:

Background Doc(s):

Signed:

Leader / Executive Member

Monitoring Officer

Date:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On the 14 November 2011, the Executive considered a report that set out a draft community strategy for 2012/15 and an outline for the annual Vision conference that took place on the 7 December last year. The draft strategy was agreed in principle subject to consultation with delegates at the Vision Conference and that a final version of the strategy and a clear way forward be brought back early in the New Year. The same report and draft strategy was considered and endorsed by the Vision Steering Group on the 8 November 2011.
- 1.2 This report updates the Executive on the progress; sets out a final version of the community strategy for approval (at appendix 1) and a delivery plan containing a suite of outcomes (at appendix 2); and a process for delivering the strategy and responding to the feedback.
- 1.3 Assuming the Executive agree the strategy, it will be taken to the Full Council meeting on the 22 February for approval as part of the Council's policy framework.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Executive will recall that during 2007 the Council and its partners from across the Bolton Vision Partnership agreed a new community strategy for the Borough, "Bolton: Our Vision 2007-2017". The partnership can point to a range of significant achievements over the last four years:
 - £250m investment secured for the town centre resulting in new college campuses, Bolton One, and major retail developments such as the £40m refurbishment of the Market Place Shopping Centre.
 - Many other significant developments including the continued growth of Middlebrook, Bolton at Home becoming an independent social housing provider enabling £1.2bn investment in 18,000 homes and £7.2m investment in Queens Park.
 - Improvements across a wide range of outcomes – life expectancy, crime, anti-social behaviour, cleanliness, educational attainment etc.
- 2.2 Strong leadership and commitment from all partners from the public, private and voluntary, community and faith sector working with local people, has been instrumental in delivering these programmes and improvements.
- 2.3 During 2011, it became clear that the context and environment had changed markedly since 2007 with the impact of the economic downturn; the reductions in public sector funding and a radical programme of reform led by the coalition government. In response, the partnership agreed to revisit the community strategy to ensure the strategy was fit for purpose and that Bolton responded well to the new challenges and opportunities facing the Borough over the coming years.

3 Refreshing the Community Strategy

- 1.1 As the partnership reflected on the community strategy and the changed context, a number of key themes emerged that shaped the proposed community strategy for 2012/15:
- The strategic focus on securing **economic prosperity**, jobs and growth is still right but a recognition that this is now more difficult. The Council and the partnership had already agreed a new Economic Strategy in July setting out a clear plan in response to the changed economic context.
 - **Narrowing the gap** – between Bolton and the England average and within Bolton – is still the right focus but an understanding that this will be more challenging in some areas. However, an enduring commitment to focus resources on the most vulnerable or disadvantaged and continue with Neighbourhood Management in the 11 most deprived parts of the Borough to help improve the quality of life for those communities.
 - The six **priority themes** are broadly right but evolving ‘health’ and ‘achieving’ into ‘Health and Well Being’ and ‘Children Young People’ will help ensure a focus on these priority areas and mirror the new partnership arrangements.
 - The emergence of a number of **cross-cutting issues** that were seen as so significant and fundamental that if progress could be made, the implications for the wider strategy and the town’s future could be significant – **aspiration, skills, alcohol, complex families and community cohesion**.
- 3.2 The discussion and analysis was brought together into a draft community strategy that was commented upon by Council Members and officers and colleagues from across the partnership. It was also agreed that the Vision Conference would be used to test the strategy and thinking with the 200 or so delegates and capture thoughts and ideas about what can be done practically to help deliver the outcomes.

4 Feedback and Way Forward

- 4.1 The feedback from the conference was very positive and the detailed comments from the round table discussions and the workshops have been captured. In addition, a number of individuals have submitted comments via the on line evaluation or directly to the Council.
- 4.2 Whilst themed partnerships and cross-cutting issue leads (see below) need to ensure detailed comments and ideas are considered and where appropriate included in the plan, there was a clear consensus that the broad strategy is right – the main aims, priority themes and cross cutting issues were seen as the right strategic focus for the Borough over the next three years.
- 4.3 Whilst the detail will be considered by partnership leads and cross-cutting issue leads over the next two months, a number of issues emerged that have subsequently been discussed at a joint meeting of the Council’s Executive

Management Team and the Public Sector Leadership Group on the 19 January. These were seen as of particular significance and needed strengthening in the strategy but also key priorities for the partnership over the next 12/18 months:

- **Bolton Family** – the draft strategy doesn't reference the 'Bolton Family' which is clearly seen as a significant part of Bolton's identity and a principle that underpins our local approach. The Bolton Family is now a central tenet of the final strategy.
- **Voluntary and community sector** – whilst the important role of the sector is recognised in the strategy, this is seen as such an important part of how we deliver in Bolton that an even greater emphasis is required. The sector is vital to the town across a wide range of areas e.g. support to vulnerable groups and communities, community and social cohesion.
- **Greater Manchester** – a view that the strategy needs to put an even greater emphasis on Bolton's role within the Greater Manchester and North West economy. The strategy has been updated to reflect this.
- **Procurement and commissioning** – the need for the public sector to continue working to join up procurement and commissioning to deliver value for money and to explore what more can be done to procure locally to protect and support the local economy in these difficult economic times.
- **Transport** – the importance of transport in helping to secure economic growth and access to jobs in other parts of Greater Manchester was seen as a key priority and has been strengthened in the strategy.
- **Communication** - a comprehensive communications plan needs to underpin the strategy so that the various stakeholders understand the strategy, what the partnership is trying to achieve and how they can play a role. This will be developed as a priority and will start with a launch of the new strategy, profile in Bolton Scene, a simple briefing circulated to all partners etc.

4.4 In terms of taking the detail forward, the following was discussed and endorsed at the joint meeting of the Council's Management Team and the Public Sector Leadership Group:

- **Themed partnership leads** to prepare a response to the detailed feedback and issues and consider this at the next meeting of the partnership. These will be collated and presented to the Vision Steering Group on the 24 April.
- **Cross cutting leads** to work with colleagues from across the partnership to develop an outline strategy and action plan for taking the issues forward to again be considered by the Vision steering Group on the 24 April. This will require a commitment from all partners to support this as a priority. This initial work is likely to include the following:
 - Discussions with the Council's Management and Public Sector Leaders.
 - Discussions with Executive Members and Opposition spokespersons.
 - A range of discussions with key partners from across the public, private and voluntary sector.

- Researching policy and practice elsewhere to inform our approach.
- Developing an outline strategy and plan for how we take this forward over the next 12/18 months.

4.5 The following leads are proposed:

- **Aspiration** – Margaret Asquith, Director of Children’s Services, Bolton Council
- **Skills** – Marie Gilluley, Principal and Chief Executive, Bolton College
- **Alcohol** – David Hull, Chief Superintendent, Bolton Division and Jan Hutchinson, Director of Public Health
- **Complex Families** – Margaret Asquith, Director of Children’s Services, Bolton Council
- **Community cohesion** – Sean Harriss, Chief Executive Bolton Council.

4.6 The meeting of the Vision Steering Group on the 24 April will bring together a comprehensive and detailed way forward to deliver the community strategy. This will be an important meeting and will require commitment from Members and partners to support this work. We will bring a similar report setting out the detailed way forward to the Council’s Executive in June of this year.

4.7 The conference workshops worked well to test the strategy with a broader audience and capture practical thoughts and ideas. Therefore, the proposal is to “rerun” the workshops sometime after the Vision Steering Group in May or June to invite the attendees back to comment on the proposed plan and capture their thoughts.

4.8 In terms of the three year targets set out in the delivery plan, no specific comments have been received apart from those regarding skills. Whilst some provisional targets were developed, key partners are of the view that more work is required to develop precise targets as part of the skills strategy work to be led by Marie Gilluley. Therefore, in the delivery plan these targets will appear as ‘to be confirmed’.

5 Equality Impact Assessment

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment of the Community Strategy has been completed and is attached at appendix 3. This looks at the anticipated impacts of the refreshed Community Strategy on people from Bolton’s diverse communities, and whether any groups are likely to be directly or indirectly differentially affected.

5.2 The Community Strategy represents an ongoing commitment to and investment in partnership working to reduce inequalities in Bolton by achieving economic prosperity and narrowing the gap in outcomes. It also has a continued commitment to supporting Bolton’s most vulnerable people.

5.3 As such, it is anticipated that the refreshed Community Strategy will support the Vision Partnership to improve the quality of life for people in Bolton, and to

positively respond to its duties under national equality legislation, by tackling disadvantage; furthering equality of opportunity; and building strong communities in which positive community relations can continue to flourish.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Executive is asked to:

1. Comment on and approve the new community strategy for Bolton - "Bolton: Our Vision 2012-2015" before its goes to Full Council on the 22 February for formal approval.
2. Agree the proposed way forward and that a detailed report on progress and next steps is brought to the Vision Steering Group on the 24 April and to the Council's Executive in June.