



## CABINET

22 January 2014

**Subject Heading:**

Community Action Member Project

**Cabinet Member:**

Cllr Andrew Curtin

**CMT Lead:**

Cynthia Griffin

**Report Author and contact details:**

Claire Thompson, Corporate Policy and  
Community Manager, 01708 431003

[Claire.thompson@havering.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.thompson@havering.gov.uk)

Kayleigh Pardoe, Policy, Marketing and  
Administration Manager, 01708 432080

[Kayleigh.pardoe@havering.gov.uk](mailto:Kayleigh.pardoe@havering.gov.uk)

**Policy context:**

The Community Action project was a key element of the corporate plan objective around strengthening communities through volunteering and by getting people involved in making a difference in their local area.

**Financial summary:**

All the outcomes listed in this report were delivered within existing resources.

**Is this a Key Decision?**

No

**When should this matter be reviewed?**

N/A

**Reviewing OSC:**

Value

### The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

**SUMMARY**

At the beginning of this term, ten Strategic Administration Projects were established to help deliver services more effectively and in new ways. The Projects were each to be driven by a Member of the Cabinet, working with a select team of officers, representing a diverse variety of disciplines within the Council.

The projects were:

**Council Effectiveness**  
**Think Family**  
**Open Government**  
**Community Action**  
**Harold Hill Ambitions**

**Neighbourhood Responsibility**  
**Civic Pride**  
**Future Financing**  
**Rainham Compass**  
**Romford Regeneration**

In the last year of this Administration, each Project will be reporting back to Cabinet, to note the achievements attained and the progress made.

The **Community Action** project has now been completed, although many of the initiatives it put in place will continue to be delivered as it now forms the mainstream work for a number of council services.

The project:

- **Strengthened relationships with the voluntary sector** by developing, in partnership, volunteering projects such as Cold Weather Befrienders, that utilised the specialisms of local organisations and community groups to help reach isolated older people
- **Saw over £250,000 awarded to local grassroots groups** through the Community Chest small grants programme
- **Capitalised on the Olympics and Paralympics legacy** by galvanising the huge interest the Games brought about in volunteering, and put in place the Community Clean-Ups programme, part of the 'Cleaner Havering' Campaign
- **Put in place the Active Living over 50s programme**, designed to help older people stay healthy, social and safe for longer
- **Improved the Council's offer for young people**, through the new 'Assets Framework'
- **Looked at ways of removing barriers to engagement**, by making volunteering, particularly in cultural activities, as inclusive as possible.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Cabinet note the outcomes delivered by the Community Action project.

**REPORT DETAIL**

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1. The 'Community Action' project was formally initiated in July 2011 and put in place a range of initiatives to encouraging local people to get involved in volunteering in their local area and strengthen community capacity and resilience, particularly during these times of austerity when more vulnerable people than ever need the support of the community around them.
- 1.2. The project looked at ways of building community resilience through increased levels of voluntary action, support for older people to stay healthy and independent for longer, a new 'offer' to engage young people in their communities, and removing barriers to engagement through cultural activity.

**2. SUPPORTING THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR**

- 2.1. The Council works closely with, and invests in, the voluntary (not for profit) sector who provide vital community services and social activities that are used and valued by thousands of Havering's residents on a daily basis.
- 2.2. Havering's voluntary sector consists of a broad, diverse range of organisations, from large service providers delivering contracts, through to uniformed organisations like the Scouts and Guides, community sports clubs, heritage walking clubs – all run by local people willing to give up their spare time for the benefit of their community.
- 2.3. Each year the Council spends roughly £7m commissioning vital services from the voluntary and community sector, which provide care and support to some of our most vulnerable residents, including isolated elderly people, people with mental health and other disabilities and looked after children.
- 2.4. It also provides small grants, such as the highly successful Community Chest programme, which has awarded over £250,000 during the length of this project to over 140 community projects, from allotment facilities through to cultural events, computer and sports equipment, employment projects and cookery workshops.
- 2.5. As well as this investment, the Council also contributes to the London Borough Grants Scheme, run by London Councils, which commissions projects from the voluntary sector across London to tackle issues common to all boroughs, such as homelessness, poverty and unemployment.
- 2.6. As well as funding support, the Council is keen to promote a culture of volunteering within Havering, as it is well documented what positive health and wellbeing impacts it can have on the people who volunteer as well as

the recipients of help from volunteers. The Council works closely with organisations such as the volunteer centre at HAVCO, to help members of the public find out about volunteering opportunities in their area and how to get involved. With a growing population and reducing levels of public funding, strengthening community capacity through increased levels of volunteering will be crucial over the coming years.

- 2.7 The Council owns 18 community halls that are managed and run by committees made up of local people – a fantastic example of ‘community action’. These vital centres provide services and social activities, often to between 500 and 1000 people each per week. This year, the Council has looked to further strengthen community capacity in the borough through the lease of New Windmill Hall in Upminster and Tweed Way Hall in Romford to two new Community Associations. Under the lease arrangement, New Windmill Community Association and Tweed Way Hall Community Association are responsible for the management of the respective halls and promoting activities that take place in the halls. Not only does this approach enable local communities to have more of a say over the services that are provided locally, but it also enables them to access funding for the benefit of the local community, accessing funding to keep these vital community hubs alive, that the Council might not otherwise be able to bid for.

### **3. OUTCOMES FROM THE COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT**

#### **3.1 THE ‘ACTIVE LIVING’ PROGRAMME**

- 3.1.1 One of the most successful elements of the Community Action project has been the Active Living campaign, the new programme for the borough’s older people, designed to help them stay healthy, social and active for longer, by engaging in voluntary activity.
- 3.1.2 This five-year project is being delivered in partnership with a host of voluntary sector organisations including the Over fifties Forum, HAVCO, Citizens Advice Bureau, Age Concern and the Havering Museum. It was funded by the Havering Strategic Partnership’s LAA performance reward grant in 2011.
- 3.1.3 The Active Living campaign has already achieved a number of fantastic outcomes:
- Delivered the ‘Active Living’ week, a week-long programme of taster activities for older people to get involved in, which included the Silver Sunday Awards, hosted by the Over Fifties Forum, which recognised the contribution that older residents make to the borough.
  - Enabled the extension of the hugely popular free swimming sessions for the over fifties at Hornchurch and Central Park leisure centres as well as Chafford Sports complex

- Set up the Havering Circle social membership scheme, giving members access to a wide variety of social events and access to ‘helpers’ to help with gardening, cleaning, DIY and technology.
- Funded the variety ‘reminiscence’ clubs for older people at Havering Museum, run by local volunteers
- Provided social activities such as sewing and knitting clubs in Havering’s libraries, cookery workshops, poetry readings and tea dances – all designed to combat social exclusion and help older people feel engaged in their communities
- Allowed for the continuation of the hugely popular ‘Perky Pensioners’ and Pub Clubs with Age Concern, where older people have the chance to meet each other and socialise
- Set up the Cold Weather Befrienders scheme, part of the Council’s fuel poverty campaign, which involves volunteers being given training to support vulnerable people in the community with no friends or family nearby, who are most at risk in times of severe bad weather, by calling in on them each day and helping with groceries, etc.

3.1.4 The Active Living campaign has been, and continues to be, a fantastic example of positive community action, led by local people and community groups, and will help to keep our older people healthier for longer.

## **3.2 ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE**

3.2.1 Engaging with young people was another key strand of the Community Action project and a lot of activity has taken place over the last two years, led by young people themselves with support from the council.

3.2.2 The Council has re-designed its youth service offer around an innovative “Young People’s Assets Framework”, which recognises the importance of young people reaching their maximum potential and making a positive contribution to society, utilises existing community assets. This new model is already delivering improvements in outcomes, and has attracted the attention of Cabinet office and numerous other local authorities keen to emulate our approach in delivering improved outcomes - for a lot less money than before.

3.2.3 Some early outcomes of the new youth assets framework are:

- In May, a new Young Leader, Princess Bright, was elected by young people to ensure the views of young people in Havering are represented within the Borough, across London and the rest of the UK.

- The Youth Service engaged a local media company, HYPE TV, to work with young people in Harold Hill to produce an award-winning film about the area
- An arts course was held where local artists ran workshops with young people on each of the 12 “assets”
- Youth Zone – young people’s activities are now running out of libraries rather than youth clubs that were costly and under-used
- Young People’s Friends Of Parks groups have been established to run alongside the borough’s existing Friends of Parks with a number of young people involved
- A new programme regularly involving 200+ young people is being run by youth workers and other council departments, with support from the borough’s large employers, getting young people ready for employment
- A group of Harold Hill teenagers have set up their own youth group, Piggie Lot, and have attracted national attention with their positive activities, organising themselves to fundraise through Facebook and other social media.
- A range of free courses/workshops for young people was launched in Romford through the NICHE project, which stands for ‘Non-Institute of Collaborative Happenings and Endeavours’ provided by the Council in partnership with the Romford Contemporary Arts Programme. The free courses were all run by professionals and based around the 12 personal ‘assets’ as part of the Young People’s Asset Framework.

### **3.3 THE OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS LEGACY**

- 3.3.1 The borough saw a huge interest in volunteering during the Olympic and Paralympic Games and hundreds of people were signed up as volunteers during the games as part of our Ambassadors programme.
- 3.3.2 Many of these volunteers continue to volunteer at events around the borough, including the Havering Show and are getting involved in our community clean-ups.
- 3.3.3 The Community Clean-ups originated from the Spring Clean survey in 2013, where hundreds of residents told us they wanted to volunteer in their local areas, and also formed an integral part of the Council’s ‘Cleaner Havering’ campaign. Through the volunteer centre at HAVCO, we contacted these residents and organised community-led clean up days in local areas including Hornchurch Country Park, Briar Road, Rise Park, Gooshays ward, Crow Lane, Harold Hill, Harrow Lodge Country Park, to name but a few. At these clean up days, local people organise themselves into teams and set

about making the area look better, including litter picking, pruning, planting - with clean-up packs provided by the Council.

3.3.4 The Community Clean Ups have taken a short pause over winter, with a calendar of clean-ups being planned to start again in the spring.

### **3.4 REMOVING BARRIERS TO COMMUNITY ACTION THROUGH CULTURE**

3.4.1 Key to promoting a culture of volunteering in Havering is making volunteering opportunities as inclusive as possible. The Council and its partners work hard to ensure that volunteering opportunities are open to all members of the community. Some examples include:

- The Library Service, which works with the community and partners such as Rose (Realistic Opportunities for Supported Employment) Program and PACT (Parents of Autistic Children and Teenagers) to provide volunteering, work experience and paid employment opportunities for disabled people. Many of the library volunteers also work with disabled groups, such as a reading group for Deaf people and 'listening group' for visually impaired people to improve literacy and computer skills, as well as access to services generally, for example through the investment of specialised computer software.
- The School Sports Collective, a partnership of both primary and secondary schools, and the Council's Sports Development Team, work in partnership to run a number of events throughout the year aimed at disabled Children and Young People. Over the past year these have included primary and secondary Panathlon and Boccia Competitions, Disability Swimming Gala, Disability Athletics Competition and Adaptive Indoor Rowing Competition. These are supported by Young Leaders who volunteer their time and skills to help run the various events.
- The Positive Parents Group, a parent forum for parents and carers of children and young people with disabilities and / or additional needs volunteered their time to help the Parks Team with the design for the restoration of Raphael Park. Following the forum's feedback the park now includes special play equipment suitable for disabled children and a 'Changing Places' toilet facility suitable for both disabled children and adults.
- Havering's Walking for Health Scheme is led by Walk Leaders of all ages, skills and abilities who volunteer their time 6 days a week to lead walks across the borough. Over the last few years the number of participants has more than doubled from 4,634 in 2008/09 to 10,944 in 2012/13. The walk leaders do a fantastic job of increasing the physical and mental health of residents. For example, in the borough's recent Walking for Health survey, 99% found the leaders supportive and 94% found that the walks had made them feel fitter. The walk leaders also volunteer their time outside of the walking programme to organise

special walks and also attend community events to promote the programme.

- Supported by the Council, Havering Museum is run by many trained volunteers and active 'Friends of Havering Museum' group. Opportunities for volunteering range from working in the office doing administrative tasks, to manning the reception and gift shop and putting together exhibitions. The benefits of volunteering at the museum are particularly evident for many young people who have volunteered on a short term basis to gain to skills and experience they need before entering employment.
- A new partnership between Fairkytes Arts Centre and HAVCO saw the recruitment of four 'ambassadors' for Fairkytes Open Day in June. This partnership is likely to continue and grow in the future. Fairkytes Arts Centre is the hub of voluntary and community arts activity in the borough with over 6,000 people per month visiting to take part in group, club and society activities, ranging from painting to singing, model railways, amateur radio, quilt making and flower arranging. Some activities are specifically aimed at disabled people and often run in partnership with voluntary organisations such as PACT (Parents of Autistic Children and Teenagers).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Much of the 'community action' project now forms part of the mainstream work of the Council, with almost all Council services involved in community engagement.
- 4.2 The Community Action Project leaves a legacy of positive outcomes and a new way of working with the community to help Havering continue to be the great place it is to live, even in difficult economic times.

### **REASONS AND OPTIONS**

#### **Reasons for the decision:**

This report is being brought to cabinet to provide Members with an overview of the Council Effectiveness Member project.

#### **Other options considered:**

N/A



## IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

### **Financial implications and risks:**

There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. The recommendation is simply to note the report. All activities mentioned in this report were delivered using existing resources or through small amounts of external funding.

### **Legal implications and risks:**

There are no legal implications or risks arising from this report.

### **Human Resources implications and risks:**

There are no HR implications arising from this report.

### **Equalities implications and risks:**

This Member Project has focused on engaging with both the population as a whole, and also targeted activity with specific groups such as older people, and younger people from disadvantaged backgrounds, to try and reduce inequality and barriers to engagement that many people face.

As encouraging voluntary action was such an important part of this project, and will continue to be a priority for the Council, the Council and its partners are monitoring volunteering take up according to protected characteristics in the Equality Act to monitor trends in volunteering take up and to use this information to better target underrepresented groups.