

**Connecting People, Connecting Places**

**CABINET**

**Date: 10 March 2010**

**Author: Cabinet Member for Connecting People, Connecting Places and Deputy Chief Executive**

**Parish / Wards Affected: All**

**Purpose**

- For Cabinet to approve the continuation of Connecting People Connecting Places in light of the progress made during 2009/10.

**Recommendation**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Note the progress by and learning from Connecting People Connecting Places during 2009/10.
- Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Connecting People, Connecting Places to continue to lead the development and delivery of Connecting People Connecting Places.
- Approve the continuation of the seven Cluster Lead roles for the duration of 2010/11.

**1. Background to the report**

- 1.1 In early 2009/10 the Council authorised the continued development of Connecting People, Connecting Places, including the establishment of seven clusters, the appointment of seven Cluster Leads, and a regular review of how service areas are supporting Connecting People Connecting Places.
- 1.2 At that time, the accompanying report outlined some of the characteristics, which were starting to shape Connecting People Connecting Places, including:
  - 1.2.1 Requiring a fundamental change in the way the Council works and the relationships it fosters with local people and partners
  - 1.2.2 Establishing the three principal objectives of:
    - Encouraging and enabling more meaningful engagement with Ward Councillors, people and communities
    - Promoting a sense of community
    - Developing public services that are more locally sensitive
  - 1.2.3 Learning together what it takes to deliver these objectives
  - 1.2.4 Working in new ways to support the role of Ward Members

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- 1.2.5 Inviting Ward Members to take the primary responsibility for driving Connecting People Connecting Places within their wards and co-ordinating with each other at cluster level
  - 1.2.6 Encouraging innovation, requiring flexibility and change, and recognising that both will continue to be challenging
  - 1.2.7 Establishing the first challenge for the clusters as facilitating conversations about what it is like to live, work and learn within the cluster
- 1.3 Connecting People Connecting Places has developed in each of the seven clusters, in different ways. A summary of progress in each cluster is included in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.4 The Cluster Leads have actively worked with the Members in their respective clusters. A number of meetings have been held to discuss how Connecting People Connecting Places can support the role of Ward Members. Each cluster has elected a Cluster Chair to provide leadership and to represent all Members at Borough-wide meetings. Progress has been most notable in clusters where Members have worked closely with Cluster Leads and engaged with communities.
- 1.5 During 2009/10 Connecting People Connecting Places has realised a number of benefits and has identified a number of challenges, further detail of which is provided in Appendix 1. Rising to these challenges will be a cornerstone of the future direction of Connecting People Connecting Places.

## 2. Examples of benefits realised to date

- 2.1 Some communities have shown a willingness to take action together in their local area. For example in West Swindon, the closure of the Freshbrook Community Centre galvanised a number of local people to work with Members and officers on securing the future of their Centre. This quickly led to a number of local people volunteering to manage the centre (see Appendix 1), which in turn has challenged the Council's Community Facilities Team to respond in a more innovative and responsive way.
- 2.2 The creation of a new community centre in Pinehurst is providing the opportunity to promote a sense of community there. Instead of treating this simply as a building project, we are investing in community development, so that the centre becomes a sustainable community resource designed with and managed by local people for the benefit of local people.

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- 2.3 The Family Life programme has demonstrated Connecting People Connecting Places principles in action. The result has been a highly innovative approach to enabling the families involved to build the lives they want to lead by leading the change themselves in a relatively short space of time. Crucial to this approach has been building trust between families and their public services. This has enabled families to take greater responsibility for their own lives, with the potential of developing less dependency on public services in future.
- 2.4 The Police, the Council and other partners have been working closely to develop new approaches to make the borough safer. These include:
- 2.4.1 A restorative justice pilot, which has demonstrated progress in breaking the generational cycle of inter-family hostility and anti-social behaviour. Neighbours and other residents are now experiencing less disruption in their lives.
  - 2.4.2 Multi-agency action to provide sex workers with routes out of prostitution, which in one part of Swindon, has seen over half of those engaged ceasing to operate as sex workers.
  - 2.4.3 Working with the Police to help them adopt a wider view of community issues and public services. Individuals and communities are asked to select key priorities for their local area and partners work with them on mitigating actions or resolution of issues.
  - 2.4.4 The Neighbourhood Policing Teams were restructured around the new clusters of wards, with the appointment of Sector Heads, and members of the Police Authority being nominated to represent each Cluster.
- 2.5 Connecting People Connecting Places has encouraged discussions between the Council and partner organisations to explore the potential for new and improved ways of working. Examples include:
- 2.5.1 Wiltshire Probation Area has recently established a Local Delivery Unit for Swindon, which is working with the Council to direct community payback to support the resolution of local StreetSmart issues.
  - 2.5.2 Commissioning managers within the Council and NHS Swindon are exploring how Connecting People Connecting Places can help communities and services work together to better understand and agree what needs to be brought together and delivered in a community.

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- 2.5.3 Strengthening the working relationship between the Council and local Town and Parish Councils. For example, in the North East Cluster an independently facilitated meeting with Parish Council representatives generated a commitment to experiment with a collaborative approach between the public and their councils on some relatively low cost but important local improvement projects. Work is continuing in relation to liaison with Town and Parish Councils throughout the Borough.
- 2.6 The West Swindon Area Forum has built on its existing strength with increasing public support and involvement, ranging from residents taking responsibility for setting agendas to developing a new community based web-forum.
- 2.7 In Witchelstowe in the South Cluster, Connecting People Connecting Places is enabling us to build a sense of community amongst new residents as their physical community is being developed. This is being well received and may provide a model for future developments.
- 2.8 Across the clusters, people have been experimenting with different ways of getting involved, which range from formal meetings to drop-ins, and from conversations on street corners to a range of digital media including Facebook and Twitter. For example, three hundred people attended an event in the Tawny Owl public house in the North Cluster, which produced a change to the design of Moulden Hill. As a result of a public meeting in another cluster, the school admissions policy relating to siblings was changed.
- 2.9 The Swindon Strategic Partnership's Overview and Monitoring Group and the Interfaith Forum have both taken an active role in seeking to understand and contribute to Connecting People Connecting Places. Examples include:
- 2.9.1 Organising their membership so there is a lead person for each of the seven clusters
  - 2.9.2 Acting as critical friends in the development of Connecting People Connecting Places
  - 2.9.3 Making use of their reach into local communities to raise awareness of Connecting People Connecting Places
  - 2.9.4 Ensuring that Connecting People Connecting Places is a regular agenda item at the biannual Swindon Strategic Partnership Conference

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### 3. Resources

- 3.1 The examples above have often involved service areas within the Council and partner organisations working differently to support Connecting People Connecting Places. For example, in direct response to issues and opportunities raised in cluster meetings, the Council's StreetSmart services has pledged to match local volunteers with StreetSmart operatives to work together to improve the local street scene.
- 3.2 The Council has refocused some of its existing resources to support Connecting People Connecting Places. Examples of this include:
  - 3.2.1 The Adult Learning and Engagement Team now work alongside the Policy and Partnership Team to support the Cluster Leads.
  - 3.2.2 The Council has also been successful in securing funding from the Government's Future Jobs Fund to create seven new Cluster Assistant posts for eighteen months to provide employment opportunities for unemployed young to support the work in the clusters.
- 3.3 Last year the Council appointed seven Cluster Leads to support the development and delivery of Connecting People Connecting Places. The Cluster Leads were appointed for the duration of one year with the option to extend. The Cluster Leads have made a significant positive contribution to Connecting People Connecting Places and, it is recommended that the Cluster Leads be reappointed for a further year. The allocation of Cluster Leads to particular Clusters will be reviewed from time to time.
- 3.4 External funding has been attracted to support Connecting People Connecting Places. For example, the Council has recently been awarded £80,000 to support intensive local engagement with families to uncover detailed information about aspirations and the reality of people's lives.
- 3.5 The Council is seeking to give local communities more of a say in the allocation of some areas of Council funding. Examples being investigated during 2010/11 include the Council's Grassroots Grants and Community Grants schemes, highway minor works funding, and some Section 106 monies.

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### 4 Examples of learning and challenges to date

- 4.1 The development of Connecting People Connecting Places during 2009/10 has uncovered some key learning points and a variety of challenges.
- 4.2 Local people often do not identify with the cluster, but with their local neighbourhood. As anticipated from the outset, it has become evident that clusters need to be treated as administrative boundaries and that work within clusters needs to focus on what makes sense to people there.
- 4.3 There have been a number of cases where people want to take on more responsibility in their lives or in their community, but face a variety of barriers. Sometimes people feel they lack the confidence or capability to take control of or positively contribute to local situations. Often though they face institutional barriers including the unwillingness of the Council to work in a different way because of the systems within which we currently operate or aversion to risk. Developing a more proactive and proportionate view of risk and more of a can-do culture are important challenges to the Council and other public services.
- 4.4 To date, the benefits from Connecting People Connecting Places have been realised by learning through doing. This approach has enabled local people and their public services to feel more ownership of local problems and their solutions. It has encouraged more innovation and has highlighted the requirement for public services to develop a different relationship with people, working alongside and supporting positive activity within communities. We need, however, to ensure that we build on the learning and feed it back in to the organisation to enable the system as a whole to change.
- 4.5 Having a specific task or action can mobilise people and help resolve previously difficult relationships. For example, in one cluster, focusing on a relatively small project has had a positive effect on the relationship between the Council and the Parish Council.

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### 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 As it becomes established and continues to develop, Connecting People Connecting Places will come to represent a fundamental change in the way the Council works. In order for this to be the case it is important that the Council rises to the challenges identified in section 4 above. To do so, the key next steps for Connecting People Connecting Places in 2010/11 and beyond will be as follows.
- 5.1.1 Continue to develop Locality Working to ensure it delivers more locally attuned services, through better engagement with the community. This will enable communities to be more confident in taking ownership and responsibility for their areas, as well as allowing a more trusting environment for communication and earlier awareness of issues through dialogue with staff who will either be located there or use the site as a hub.
  - 5.1.2 Build on the benefits and learning from Swindon's highly innovative and well-regarded Family Life programme. This will be achieved by inviting more families to build the lives they want to lead and, in doing so, take greater responsibility for their own lives and become less dependent upon public services in future.
  - 5.1.3 Learn from the experience with the Freshbrook and Pinetrees Community Centres, develop a new approach and best practice in working with local people to develop community facilities, their involvement in running them, and the Council and partners providing tools and support to help them be successful.
  - 5.1.4 Provide support for the Council's Members and officers, partners, and local people to share and develop their understanding of and capability to realise the potential of Connecting People Connecting Places.
  - 5.1.5 Continue to raise the profile of Connecting People Connecting Places, particularly with members of the public in terms of the benefits being realised and the opportunities it provides to engage more meaningfully with the Council and partners. This will include the publication of a timetable of cluster meetings and regular articles within Swindon News.
  - 5.1.6 We will continue to work with partner organisations across the Borough to reduce duplication, pursue efficiency and effectiveness, and explore new ways of jointly improving outcomes for people and families. For example, we will continue to work closely with the Police to build on the success of the joint priority/tasking model operating in the South and West clusters and look at how this might be rolled out across all of the clusters.

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- 5.1.7 To work within our own organisation, learning from the experiences we have already had, to change things for the benefit of the community.

## 6 Alternative Options

Decide not to continue with Connecting People Connecting Places. We have already engaged partners, community groups, members of the public and other stakeholders in the process, and a reputational risk exists if we do not proceed to the next stage of the programme.

### Risk Management

#### *Financial and Procurement Implications*

- No specific budgetary provision has been made for this programme, other than a nominal sum to cover room bookings, catering and publication of Cluster agreements so any expenditure is being contained within existing budgets. There will be more implications for how the Council manages its budgets and procurement as we move to cluster working.

#### *Legal / Human Rights Implications*

- No specific legal or human rights issues arise in relation to this report.

#### *Organisational Implications*

- Cluster Leads acting in dual roles will require a careful balance of workload and priorities and will need to be supported to ensure objectives are met and avoid a detrimental impact on service delivery.

#### *Links to Corporate Plans and Policies (in particular to Swindon 2010 Promises)*

- Connecting People Connecting Places will assist the Council to meet a range of objectives both internally and with partners and help deliver priorities set out in the Community Strategy 2008 – 2030.

### Consultees

- The Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

### Background Papers and Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Progress and challenges in the seven Clusters

### Key Decision / Decision in Forward Plan

- This is not a key decision and is included in the Cabinet Forward Plan for March 2010.

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