

TOWN CENTRE

In this cluster there is no shortage of residents and community groups who are keen to improve the area and are strong advocates for this, and equally the ward councillors have a thorough understanding of the issues.

What CPCP has done is create a mechanism which gives those groups and residents more confidence and trust that the council as a whole is serious about reaching out to them, and is genuine in its desire to work with them. As a result, the level and quality of debate and engagement has improved to everyone's mutual benefit. It has already triggered a number of modest but nonetheless potentially significant developments. For instance, the police have been linked to the council team responsible for licensing houses in multiple occupancy, which has allowed them to be more effective in dealing with landlords with properties in Broad Green where rooms have been used for prostitution.

On a larger scale, environmental action days being planned by groups in both Broad Green and Eastcott, which will be largely scoped and planned by them with support from the council. Schools are also being invited to take part, helping to bring young people into the programme and helping them understand the wider issues. Local ward members have agreed to go into Drove Junior School to talk about local democracy and accountability.

CPCP has also allowed discussions about the running of the Central Community Centre to be placed back on the table after a period when residents believed the council was being obstructive over their desire to be more involved. The way forward is now being discussed, and in a hugely improved atmosphere. The cluster has also taken on the challenge of finding out the views of people via social networking, the Cluster Chair is using networking sites and engaging with residents via Facebook. The cluster lead is writing a regular blog and other Members being encouraged through training to use these new tools to get to the heart of what matters to everyone in the community, not just those groups or individuals who are already engaged.

The cluster lead has regular meetings with all ward councillors and with community groups, with the focus now on reaching the faith groups to draw them into the process –for instance, meeting with the leader of the Mosque to try to resolve the long-standing issue of car parking in the area.