

Subject:	Development of Local Action Teams		
Date of Meeting:	10 October 2016		
Report of:	Executive Director of Finance and Resources and Acting Director of Public Health		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide an update of the Local Action Team (LAT) project work undertaken to date and the proposed way forward. It includes a short recap of the work carried out in phase 1 from June to December 2015, and the work that has taken place in phase 2 which concluded in June 2016. It builds on the report to NCE committee March 2016 [“Developing and improving the functioning and outcomes of Local Action Teams”](#)
- 1.2 The outcomes of both phases are intended to inform the council and partners in the development and delivery of the city’s neighbourhoods’ agenda and support future work around neighbourhood governance, as well as to assist LATs in responding proactively to community safety issues in their localities and improving and clarifying their relationship with public sector agencies. The work has been led by the Community Safety team with support and guidance from the Communities, Equality and Third Sector team. This has helped to ensure that as the work develops it supports and is in line with the work streams of the neighbourhoods and communities programme as reported to NCE committee in July 2016 [“Neighbourhoods and Communities Programme Update”](#). in particular in relation to neighbourhood governance.
- 1.4 The report recommends a further period of development to build upon the work conducted so far and to test a new working model (as outlined in section 3.11) to maximise the impact of Local Action Teams in the city.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee agrees the proposed 12 month targeted programme of LAT development to establish a new working model for LATs in the city as outlined in section 3.11 and 3.12.
- 2.2 That the committee notes the findings of the LAT review phase 1 and 2 as described in section 3 of the report.

- 2.3 That committee instructs officers to present the results of the 12 month development programme including recommendations on future working arrangements between LATs and the council and other public sector organisations to a future meeting of this committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 Changing arrangements for the delivery of neighbourhood working in the city, as well as the formation of the Neighbourhood, Communities and Housing Directorate and changes in priorities for Sussex Police offer an opportunity to reconsider how the council and partners interact with and support the city's network of Local Action Teams (LATs) and how the impact of LATs fits with changing council and police priorities.
- 3.2 As a community network, the LATs offer potential to assist in improved, more collaborative and more cost effective delivery of some neighbourhood services. To date this potential has not been sufficiently explored and this proposal (as outlined in section 3.11) would enable this.
- 3.3 Traditionally, Local Action Teams (LATs) are community fora where residents are able to meet with police, council officers and service providers to discuss local issues of concern and seek improvements. In the past they have been resourced by police and council officers, offering support and assistance (including financial assistance), and their role has largely (though not completely) been reactive: identifying concerns, reporting them to service providers and awaiting improvements. Previously a large part of their remit was identifying three policing priorities for the police to act on and resolve. This approach no longer accords with the delivery of neighbourhood policing.
- 3.4 LATs were mostly formed around ten years ago, and changes since that time mean that the model that they work to needs updating. The council and police are no longer positioned to offer the same level and type of support as they have in the past – partly because of service reductions and partly because we are seeking to change the way that services are delivered, towards a model which fosters independence, recognises residents and communities as being and having assets and which better enables residents to take independent voluntary action and to have a greater influence and participation in service design and delivery.
- 3.5 The aim of the Local Action Team review has been to revisit the way that LATs operate and how they work with council, police and others in order to help develop a new model of working which enables the community safety conversation to take place between residents and service providers, supports involvement of residents in design and delivery of services as well as facilitating a strong independent voice for residents to comment on and scrutinise service delivery, and to – independently and in partnership with others - take action to identify and take forward improvements in their area.

3.6 LAT Network

3.6.1 Based on research from phase 1 of the LAT review project the current network of LATs consists of:

- A loose network of some 30 neighbourhood based groups which take an interest in neighbourhood issues and community safety
- A core of committed individuals in different groups
- A mix of group types and styles, and varying levels of activity and capacity
- Differing levels governance & representation across the network
- Differing levels of stability and resilience across the network

Figure 1 shows where the LATs currently operate in the city.

Figure 1 LAT Network June 2016

1. All Local Action Teams



For a larger scale copy of this map see Appendix 1 – All Local Action Teams. To view online in Google Maps click [HERE](#)

3.6.2 Local Action teams are independent groups run by residents for the benefit of their communities. There is no standard form that a LAT should take, and as a network which has grown organically over the years, there is a wide variety groups, with differing governance arrangements, level and type of activity, scope and style. Nevertheless, the research undertaken over the past year has identified three broad ‘types’ of LAT which seems a helpful way of understanding them better. These three types are:

- Forum Local Action Team:** Constituted, good standards of governance, representation and inclusion and a positive and proactive partner keen to become involved in a range of aspects of community life, participate in service design and delivery and able to raise and maintain its own resources.
- Community Action Group:** Has rules of operation and conduct and good governance standards, and will be interested in local campaigning and highlighting particular issues which are of local concern, but more of a ‘critical friend’ of service providers, keen to scrutinise activity and promote improvements and support a shared community view on local topics.

C. Local Support Group: A group which meets informally to discuss local issues does not wish/have capacity to develop governance or formal group management strategies. Good neighbours just wanting to share concerns with each other and with the council and police.

3.6.3 It is important to note that there is no ‘better’ or ‘worse’, and that this distinction doesn’t reflect any sense of graduation or hierarchy, however the proposal is that depending upon the scope and scale of the groups activities, and how representative it is of its community, the scale of response from service providers may vary according to the type of group.

Figure 2 maps the three typologies against the current network of LATs.

Fig 2 - LAT Typologies distribution (subject to further work with individual LATs)



For a larger scale copy of this map see Appendix 2 – LAT Typologies. To view online at Google maps click [HERE](#)

3.7 Support for LATs

3.7.1 The support needed by LATs varies across the network, with most LATs being largely self-sufficient in terms of day-to-day operation, and a minority requiring additional support either ongoing or for periods of time to cover specific issues – for example to help following sudden retirement or sickness of the LAT Chair. Aside from limited practical support for LAT projects the staff of the CETs team has also provided advice on operational issues such websites, publicity and organisation and signposted LATs to other support in particular funding sources. LATs also receive direct support in addressing community safety issues from the Community Safety Team and the police when needed. In addition, some LATs receive support from community development workers commissioned to work in their neighbourhood as well as

3.7.2 In the past officers, mainly although not exclusively from community safety and city clean have attended LAT meetings on request and the police have provided

a regular presence at meetings. This aspect of support and interaction needs to be redefined to fit police and council capacity but without damaging the relationship between the council and the LAT. Moving forward the ambition is for LATs to report a concern once to one officer or agency and be confident they will get a response. It may be possible to achieve by greater use of social and digital media.

3.7.3 The Head of Community Safety, with support from the CETS Team, also provides facilitation support to the LAT Forum group.

3.8 Benefit of LATs

Under the existing model, LATs mainly offer:

- Community information
- Input into local service delivery
- Locally initiated actions to improve neighbourhoods

3.9 What Do LATs Want from the Council, Police and Service Providers?

3.9.1 At the basic level, LATs want an open and consistent channel of communication between residents and service providers. As most LATs are based around a meeting cycle, this mostly means that LATs would like attendance at meetings by ward councillors, police representatives and other relevant officers able to answer queries and initiate action. This is an area that the council and police currently find difficult to adequately resource with reducing budgets and staff numbers. How to maintain a positive and constructive dialogue and relationship with LATs whilst reducing meeting attendance must be resolved in the next phase of the work with the LATs.

3.9.2 In the past LATs have received financial support from the community safety team for small items/room hire/publicity along with some capacity support to run meetings, websites and publicity. This funding is no longer available and LATs are encouraged to bid for small sums to the Police and Crime Commissioner or apply for small grants from the CETs.

3.9.3 During the LAT review we discussed with LATs about becoming more involved in service design and delivery, and responses were mixed, with a willingness to get involved and support the council, but not take on tasks instead of the council. For this to move forward with meaning, the council will need to better articulate how this role may develop, identify opportunities and be open and flexible to which parts and perhaps how LATs want to achieve the outcomes of current services.

3.9.4 Where accountable governance and management have been discussed, LATs are keen to improve but often feel that they lack the capacity to do this without support. This is coupled with a feeling that for some, the requirements of good governance may not be proportionate to their own understanding of how they operate, and even basic features like a constitution and the need to record and circulate minutes of meetings can be seen by some groups as an unnecessary imposition.

3.10 Development Areas

Throughout the review process a series of areas have been identified where LATs may benefit from further support:

3.10.1 Governance: LATs have varying levels of internal governance structure and working practice. Some are open, accessible, democratic and accountable, whilst others are more opaque with limited formal structures. Whilst we do not intend to compel LATs to change the way that they work, it is important that the status of a group is easily understood by service providers, partners and the wider community, particularly where the input of a group may have an impact upon management of public resources. Evidence of good governance is also needed if LATs want to bid for funds.

3.10.2 Representation: Whilst survey results have indicated that LATs wish to work for the whole community and be inclusive and properly representative, there is limited evidence that LATs have been able to act on this ambition, and the LAT experience broadly, although not exclusively, is that a very small proportion of the community are aware of the existence of their LAT, and fewer still will attend meetings. We recognise that representation is not just about numbers, but also about reach and influence and feel from our conversations with LATs, that further work developing these areas would be of benefit.

3.10.3 Neighbourhood priorities: With the agenda and focus of LATs decided largely by attendees at LAT meetings, the energy of the group may focus on issues which are not broadly supported or recognised as problems worthy of additional resource by the wider population or by service providers. An improved methodology to help LATs identify and prioritise actions, as well as a more strategic response from partners and service providers should be explored.

3.10.4 Partnership working: LATs form just one aspect of community and council activity in a neighbourhood. There will also be residents association, civic amenity groups, neighbourhood watch, neighbourhood forums (planning), Friends of Parks groups, voluntary groups and support given by community development agencies, council housing resident involvement officers and others. These groups and initiatives will often work in isolation from each other and some LATs may be able to do more in terms of offering an 'umbrella' and focus point for neighbourhood activities, and benefit from having a clearer understanding of community activity in their area and improved ability to take action with others.

3.10.5 Weak LATs: LATs are independent of the council, and neither the council nor police have any formal role in overseeing their creation, conduct or demise. The only recourse which we currently have, should we wish to regulate a LAT in any way and where the group was unwilling to co-operate and improve, would be to 'de-recognise' the group. With the developing tiered approach, one option would be to reclassify the group to the level least resourced. Thus, maintain a relationship with the group but one more suited to their preferred modus operandi. This approach may also give the opportunity for increased 'peer support' – linking and partnering struggling groups up with neighbouring LATs which have greater capacity. This will also be a helpful strategy for 3.10.6 below.

3.10.6 Where a LAT has ceased to be active due to a lack of willing involvement from residents, we have in the past offered support to facilitate meetings, and tried to keep the LAT going for the benefit of maintaining a network of LATs. This may no longer be a practical proposition and we may be better served by allowing LATs to fail where they are not attracting participation in their neighbourhood and ensuring we are ready and willing to listen and engage when groups do come forward and potentially recognise the new, more functioning group as the area's LAT.

3.11 Developing a New Working Model

3.11.1 Whilst the organic development of LATs, and the independence and diversity of the network have provided strengths and documented success, it has also created a network which can lack cohesion or oversight and which it is hard to support in a strategic way. The new model of working which we seek to develop retains the independence and community led aspects of LATs, and maximise opportunities for LATs to develop and extend their role, whilst also clarifying how council services will work with LATs and how resources may be best directed around the city in this way.

3.11.2 Based on the three typologies, we recognise that LATs are different from each other, with a different self-identified role and capability. Our aim is to develop partnership work with LATs in a way that is helpful, proportionate and aims to maximise impact of any resources expended – both theirs and ours.

3.11.3 To make this happen – building upon the work undertaken by the ESFR officer seconded to BHCC community safety for phase 1 of the LAT review – it is proposed that staff time – up to 50% of a full time post – will be allocated from within the Communities, Equality and Third Sector Team, supplemented by support from the community safety casework team/neighbourhood liaison officer, specifically to carry out a 12 month targeted programme of LAT development overseen jointly by the Head of Community Safety and the Head of Communities, Equality and Third Sector.

3.12 LAT Development Programme

The LAT development programme will have the following five strands:

3.12.1 Developing the tiered typology approach

Work with individual LATs to clarify a shared understanding of where they fall within this descriptor, how this assessment may be demonstrated, what actions can be undertaken by the group and – within this process – to test and refine the tiered typology model as an approach.

3.12.2 Developing strategic service led support

Based on the tiered typology model, assist council departments to develop a strategic response to requests for information and support from LATs, and assist LATs to better understand how to engage with services, the range of channels available and the most appropriate forms of contact.

3.12.3 LAT capacity development support

Looking at the identified areas noted in part 3 (above) work with LATs and with appropriate third sector support agencies (for example Community Works, Resource

Centre) to identify a raft of independently accessed resources to assist LATs develop their capacity to manage themselves and ability to take action in their neighbourhoods.

3.12.4 LAT resources support

Work with LATs to identify areas of financial or material resource support, and with the support of the council CETs Team and third sector providers, assist LATs in better identifying their resource requirements, understanding obstacles particular to the LAT network and putting in place a supportive strategy for this area of work.

3.12.5 LAT chairs forum

Support the Head of Community Safety to further develop the LAT Chairs Forum as an independent support group for Local Action Teams which brings together LAT representatives to consider citywide issues, share experiences and seek to maximise the effectiveness of Local Action Teams in the city.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Do not further resource the development of LATs. Following this option would reduce the immediate staff input, but as the outcome is based around the development of a strengthened and independent LAT network, taking this option may increase support needs in the future and may risk weakening of the network loss of individual groups and loss of the value to communities of the works undertaken by LATs

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

LATs have been fully engaged in the LAT development process via targeted work with individual groups and through the LAT Chairs network and forum meetings.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Local Action Teams offer a strong citywide network able to engage with service providers and initiate beneficial actions within their communities. Unlike other groups, LATs have never, as a network, had community development support directed toward them.
- 6.2 LATs offer potential to increase resident engagement in service delivery and to increase neighbourhood safety and community cohesion, but without targeted structural support are less likely to reach this potential.
- 6.3 This work has been developed through secondment support from the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service over the past year, and without targeted input following on from this work, there is a risk that its value will be lost.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The delivery of the 12 month targeted programme of LAT development will be met from the utilisation of existing staff resources.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Michael Bentley

Date: 09/09/16

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The proposed programme does not involve the alteration or cessation of existing services but rather the reassigning of existing staff resources in order to support structures for facilitating community engagement which are already in place. There are therefore no legal implications arising.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Victoria Simpson

Date: 20/09/16

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. MAP – All Local Action Teams
2. MAP – Local Action Teams by typology