

Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee

8 November 2010

Community Self Help: Update

In July this Committee conducted a select committee investigation into community pride/self help and put forward a number of recommendations.

These were considered by the County Council Management Team (CCMT) on 28 July.

The intention was to produce a draft strategy by the end of September 2010 for Scrutiny to consider in November. The extra work caused by preparing for the impact of government cuts to budgets has meant that it has been delayed until January – due to these pressures on capacity partners were unable to meet as early as we would have wished.

However, the following progress has been made:

Overall there is consensus about priorities for community self-help: reducing barriers to volunteering, improving access to advice and support (including simpler access to grants), and supporting community development where possible.

On 23 September the County Council led a meeting about community self-help with district council colleagues and the Director of Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA) and agreed that the local authorities will work together and agree a combined approach to community grants, future funding of voluntary sector infrastructure development organisations, and the funding of advice services.

On 4 October John Jackson (Director for Social & Community Services) and Stephen Capaldi (Assistant Chief Executive – Strategy) attended the Oxfordshire Stronger Communities Alliance (OSCA) meeting (the county-wide voluntary and community sector partnership) to discuss the likely impacts of the Government's spending review for the county council and the voluntary sector.

OSCA organised the following meetings in October which we attended to discuss:

- Preparing for change – discussing cuts and options for rationalisation in the voluntary sector.
- Big Society – practical solutions, developing self help priorities.

In summary, we are waiting for the Council's Revenue Support Grant/ financial settlement from the Government at the end of November before we can fully understand the impacts for our services and the voluntary sector. In the meantime we have set the scene about the importance of community self-

help with district councils and voluntary sector colleagues and agreed some priorities to work on together.

Paul James
Head of Partnership Working
Chief Executive's Office
27 October 2010

Tel: (01865) 323959