

Update on Thriving Communities January 2022

- *To promote safe, confident, resilient, and thriving communities, improving the well-being of residents and visitors and building on our community assets*

The Covid-19 pandemic changed the landscape completely and quickened the pace of hub development as the Council strived to ensure that residents had the local support they needed during the Lockdown and thereafter. The experience of the pandemic has not only influenced where additional hubs were established but also the learning gained throughout this period - the engagement with residents and partners, and the feedback received - have shaped what we have in place today.

Currently RCT has the following **hubs**:

- Aberdare Library/Cynon Linc (Aberdare)
- Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash)
- Garth Olwg Lifelong Learning Centre
- Llantrisant (Library/Leisure Centre)
- Llys Cadwyn (Pontypridd)
- Porth (Plaza)
- Yr Hwb (Ferndale)
- Treorchy Cultural Hub over 2 venues - Library and Park and Dare Theatre

Core to the development has been the **Community Support Steering Group** established with partners initially to address the needs of residents during the Lockdown but that has gone from strength to strength and widened its remit. The partnership is strong and able to address a wide range of resident needs collaboratively:

- Joint applications for funding continue to be developed for example to Wales and the West Utilities
- Joint approaches to new challenges for example we worked together to highlight and provide support for people affected by changes to Universal Credit
- the offer of LFD test collections for residents has been introduced from 20 December 2021
- Homelessness support and Probation services are expected to be present at hubs shortly
- Probation Services are engaging with the Local authority to better integrate support services for offenders with Neighbourhood partnership arrangements
- The Community Development team in collaboration with Adult Services, Community Groups and CRVs proposed to provide people with a Learning Disability with access to supported volunteering opportunities. An agreement has been co-produced between Adult Services, Community Groups and residents with a Learning Disability and supporting paperwork to provide volunteer placements for people with a Learning Disability within community groups.
- Closer links developed between the hubs and Adult Social Care has continued and there is a recognition that the community hub model can reduce pressure on statutory services. There has also been significant development in the relationship with the Health Board as the response to the pandemic has illustrated the assets that are available among partners and

community groups to provide support to residents who are at a vulnerable stage in their lives but whose needs could be addressed without a health intervention if the correct infrastructure is put in place.

The **infrastructure** developed during the pandemic for example, the online e-form and the one Council Contact Centre number for requesting support remains in place as has the process for referrals through the hubs to relevant organisations as they have proved to be effective in the most challenging of circumstances. It has ensured and continues to ensure that anyone who needs support knows how to contact the Council. This does not mean that the Council provides the support required in each instance. Referrals are transferred through to the most appropriate partner or community group.

Community Resilience Volunteers continue to support residents and the work of the hubs and they are managed through the GROOP community workforce approximately 35 are actively involved on a regular basis providing on-going support to those in need. Work continues to support our CRVs and provide access to training and information so that they can be transferred over to support local community groups over the longer term now that life is beginning to return to more normality. The current multi-service CRH virtual staffing team reflects these new relationships

The focus over recent months has been on establishing, and in the case of the pre-Covid hubs, re-establishing the **Neighbourhood Networks** so that communities have an opportunity to identify what is important to them and what their priorities are. Neighbourhood Network and Food Support Funds have been made available to enable local groups to apply for funding to address priorities identified locally.

- **Neighbourhood Network Fund** – Not for profit organisations can apply for up to £1,000 to meet identified local or strategic needs. 2 WG grants and RCTCBC contribute towards this Fund. Released in December 2021 to date, 9 Community Groups have benefitted from across RCT with a variety of interventions planned, which will be reported upon at year end (March 2022)
- **Food Support Fund** - Not for profit organisations can apply for up to £500 to meet identified local or strategic needs. 1 WG grant, RCTCBC and Trivallis contribute towards this Fund. The Food Support Fund has been available to groups throughout the pandemic and during the last quarter to end December 2022 a further 6 organisations providing food support to residents have benefitted.

To further support the development of Neighbourhood Networks an RCT Together online **resident survey** has been carried out (and remains live) and the results shared with the CTM Population and Wellbeing Assessment teams.

The Community Development Team have provided support to the 2 CTM assessments. Lisa and Kirsty attended all the Neighbourhood Networks initially and met later with interested and specific groups as and when required.

Challenges

- Whereas it was originally anticipated that the majority of community hubs would be supported by anchor organisations and that they would undertake the community coordination role, this is not currently the case although we continue to explore possibilities.

- The sudden and unexpected arrival of short-term funding (WG/WCVA mainly) whilst welcome is disruptive and places significant pressure on our service area. This ‘knee jerk’ approach taken does not support longer term, sustainable community development, or resident support.
- The pressure to support the Community Hub and NN developments from a financial basis has been on the Council in the main although applications for external funding (for example, ICF for 2021/22) have fortunately been successful enabling continued support for the model. Funding for capital developments has been easier to access than revenue funding and this has been true both for the Council and for the third sector. While buildings are important, the role of the Community Coordinator is crucial in ensuring the success of the wider Neighbourhood Network.
- Other public services benefit from the work undertaken by the hubs but do not contribute to the costs! If there is to be longer term sustainability, then this needs to be addressed.

Update against the Delivery Plan Actions

Actions	Milestones	Completed/Progress
Improve access to information and services through a single point of contact approach at the Community Hub within each Community Zones, joining up/integrating ‘one public service’.	To sustain and further develop the role of RCT’s Community Resilience Hubs by embedding some of the partnership mechanisms set up to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic.	Yes
	Develop the strength and role of the Community Support Core Steering Group, including wider partners if necessary as recovery continues.	Yes – additional partners included but will be kept under review and further enhanced as appropriate.
	Improve the RCT Together Web page to make it more accessible and interactive. RCT Together Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (rctcbc.gov.uk)	Yes
	RCTCBC to apply for the UK Community Renewal Fund to UK Government to provide financial support for the work of the neighbourhood Networks and their identified and	Yes but application unsuccessful

	agreed priorities. Total Project value of £613,265.25 of which £75,848.48 will be available for Capital Investment.	
Communities to be positively engaged and empowered so they have a real say in the services they receive and how they are organised and delivered in their community together through a co-production approach	To undertake a resident survey across RCT, asking residents to identify 3 things they'd like to see more of and 3 things they'd like to see less of http://inform/en/news/2021/june/rctresidentssurvey.aspx . The results will be shared with neighbourhood networks	Yes Survey Summary results shared with Population and Wellbeing assessment teams. (Attached) with further local breakdowns eg Older persons being shared with OPAG next week for discussion.
	To ensure adequate support to meet resident needs is available through partnership with third and voluntary sector.	On-going – good relationships established, new referral routes set up but this work will continue as resident needs change and new groups are developed.
	To ensure residents are heard and have the opportunity to influence decisions, activities & services in their communities	On-going but one resident survey completed and shared with NN and other partners (including PSB team)
	Develop RCT as a Sustainable Food Place in partnership with communities	On-going – huge developments in this area with a Sustainable Food Coordinator appointed and extensive partnership established.
	Further develop the “RCT Together” Community Asset Transfer approach to ensure the successful transfer of Council Land and buildings to community organisation can actively address service priority needs identified by local Neighbourhoods and communities.	Policy review being undertaken

