

Report of the 'Big Society' Working Group of the Executive and Resources Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee

Empowering individuals and their local communities

July 2012

Preface:

The concept of the 'Big Society' which will be known as 'Active Citizen' in Bromley, is by no means a new innovative idea, but is one that has been rekindled to promote individual and community responsibility.

Elected Local Authorities have delivered services across England and Wales since the 19th Century, with varying levels of power and authority. People outside this formal structure have continued to offer their skills and time to shape the area they live; from being a member of a residents' association, to looking after their neighbour, right through to engaging with a full breadth of local volunteering roles.

The London Borough of Bromley already displays numerous examples of its great community-centric aura. Be it through the success of the Borough's 'Friends' initiatives or the 2190 voluntary organisations already operating right across Bromley.

With the state of the UK's finances, Local Authority Central Government Formula Grants have been cut by 26%. The London Borough of Bromley has not been able to maintain its expenditure on public services at pre-2010 levels. This has called on a radical rethink on how we deliver services that the people of Bromley rely on, in an efficient way.

For too long, different levels of Government have acted as the middle man to take, and to give. Nationalising social responsibility in this way has led to the demise of personal and family responsibility, which is essential in a healthy productive society.

This report identifies where the Council are already engaging with volunteers to deliver services, and how new innovative schemes can be inaugurated, to be both provided by, and for, the people of Bromley.

**Cllr Richard Scoates
Chairman
'Big Society' Working Group**

Index:

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Recommendations.....	5
3.0 Encouraging and retaining public participation.....	7
4.0 Using social media and technology to promote volunteering.....	9
4.1 Community Map	11
4.2 E-Community.....	12
5.0 Building and expanding existing volunteering opportunities	13
5.1 Staff Volunteering.....	13
5.2 Apprenticeship scheme	13
5.3 Bromley Youth Support Programme	13
5.4 National Citizenship Scheme.....	14
6.0 Volunteering Through Partnerships	16
6.1 Southwark Circle	16
6.2 Community Links Bromley	17
6.3 Business Improvement Districts	18
6.4 Signposting volunteering roles across the borough.....	18
6.5 Corporate responsibility through volunteering.....	18
7.0 Community Enabling.....	20
7.1 Community project examples.....	20
7.2 Bromley Mytime.....	23
7.3 Community project overview	23
8.0 Legislative Issues	25
8.1 CRB checks	25
8.2 Community right to challenge.....	25
9.0 Appendices	26

Acknowledgments:

The 'Big Society' Working Group was formed by the Executive and Resources PDS committee and consisted of the following Members:

Councillor Richard Scoates (Chairman), Councillors: Kathy Bance, Nicholas Bennett, Ruth Bennett and Russell Mellor. The group held 5 meetings.

The Working Group would like to thank Harriet Martyn for her support in facilitating meetings and her general support of the Group.

The Group would also like to thank the following witnesses who either provided written or oral representations at the Working Group's meetings:

Dan Jones – LBB (Assistant Director, street scene and greenspace)
Cllr Bob Evans – LBB (Portfolio Holder for Care Services)
Lorna Blackwood – LBB (Assistant Director for Commissioning)
Patrick Phillips – LBB (Head of Parks and Greenspace)
Paul King – LBB (Bromley Youth Service)
Rob Vale – LBB (Trading Standards)
Louisa Allen – LBB (Community Development Manager)
Ailsa Reid-Crawford – LBB (CYP)
Bethany Russell - Director at Veneratio
Colin MacLean – Director, Community Links Bromley
Sue Southon – Chairman, Community Links Bromley
Pippa Knott – Cabinet Office
Rhiannon Relfe – Westminster City Council
Juliet Oliver – Bexley and Bromley Shared Library Service
Judith Mitlin – Bexley and Bromley Shared Library Service
Ryan Lang – Southwark Circle
Carrie Bishop – Future Gov
David Pickup – Bromley My Time
Debra Weekes – Bromley My Time
Jon Clarke – BeckenhamTown.us
Andy Holcombe – Fire Borough Commander

1.0 Introduction:

The Big Society Working Group was established by the Executive and Resources PDS Committee at its meeting on the 10th January 2012. The terms of reference for the group was to evaluate the current local position on voluntary service contributions, and upcoming national and local developments, to identify ways the Council can better create and market opportunities for local people to become involved in shaping and delivering services to achieve involvement and improvement, and greater efficiency and effectiveness.

The definition of the voluntary sector for the purposes of this review, includes organisations or people who: -

- Are generally in self-governing groups (but can be providing labour or individual input only).
- Mostly formed voluntarily (but some are statutory, e.g. governing bodies).
- Work for community/group benefit, rather than primarily for financial gain;
- could be quite transient if they are a specific pressure group;
- are not confined to those who are members of Bromley Community Links.

Voluntary activity ranges across substantial contracts run by national charities, delegated management arrangements for certain facilities, residents' and special interest groups, Friends' groups for various facilities, individual efforts, young people's groups (Scouts, Guides, etc); and individual participation in the running of statutory bodies (e.g. school governors).

The Group paid particular attention to:

Information and Infrastructure – getting the right information:

- Improving the Council's shared corporate knowledge base about local groups and individuals contributing to community life.
- Which groups currently work directly with us; what is the 'value' of hours/effort donated vs cost of attracting this.

Better delivery by volunteers – getting the right services:

- What are the available models for involvement of voluntary groups/individuals.
- What should we be offering to support their efforts more effectively – e.g. more self-sufficiency in work on bids (or a shared bid writer), training/development shared between departments; creating invest to save opportunities to set up useful groups/social enterprises, etc
- Where might there be new opportunities to develop volunteer roles – libraries, environment, etc – and how do we identify and develop them.

Marketing – getting the right people:

- What makes people volunteer, and how do we present opportunities for engagement to widen the pool/attract different range of talents (e.g. any differences between age groups, issues around fitting engagement in with other commitments, etc)
- How widely do we go to create awareness of roles available (e.g. school governor).

- How do we more effectively seek input/expertise from people in local businesses rather than just private individuals?

Legislative issues – getting the right balance

- Meaning and impact of the community right to buy/challenge.
- Impact of proposed community budgets (introduction in 2013).

The Group also examined, outside the terms of reference, how volunteering can build up young people's skills and confidence, to get back into work.

Areas which the Working Group looked at further included:

Youth unemployment

- Apprenticeships
- Volunteering opportunities which could lead to employment
- Improving sense of community amongst young people – targeted through their employers

Social media

- To improve brokerage and marketing
- To target specific groups of people

Partnership working

- Improve opportunities for joint working between organisations with similar/same client groups.
- Improve opportunities for matching volunteers to organisation.

The Group decided that they did not wish to focus on volunteering schemes that already existed. Instead they wanted to look at participation in society in the wider sense, with a focus on encouraging people to take the initiative to interact, and improve their community without support or mandate being necessary from the Council or another statutory body.

2.0 Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: To refer to the 'Big Society' initiative in Bromley as 'Active Citizen'

Recommendation 2: Create a 'Volunteer For It' Icon alongside the Report It – Pay For It – Apply For It icons, to be used to promote various community based volunteering roles including:

- (a) To create a 'What Needs to be Done Map' so that the street friends and the wider community can be allowed to become more proactive to:**
 - (i) Implement a trial scheme to allow residents to cut their own grass verge, using the interactive map.**
 - (ii) Allow the report of litter to be included, and the provision of online tools to allow residents to be more proactive and less reliant on officer time.**
 - (iii) Facilitate and support residents' ideas for new schemes.**
- (b) To create a 'Community Map' to identify local volunteering roles, and facility for participants to sign up and apply of their own accord.**
- (c) To link in social media (Twitter/Facebook etc) to encourage discussion and participation across the borough. Including links to independent community based websites and social feeds.**

Recommendation 2: Fund an e-community of residents' email addresses, so that a monthly volunteering news letter can be emailed encouraging public participation, by highlighting the work of others.

Recommendation 4: Promote volunteering advertisement and role creation on independent community based websites, such as those for Beckenham, Bromley, and Orpington, and provide them with support and contacts with local charities and CLB.

Recommendation 5: CLB to identify and offer support to organisations wishing to start up a rewards evening in the Orpington and Bromley & Chislehurst parliamentary constituencies, to follow on the success of Beckenham's Night of Honour.

Recommendation 6: The Leader to write to local MPs to encourage the costs of CRB checks to be reduced.

Recommendation 7: LBB to consult the Cabinet Office to tailor NCS scheme to focus more on volunteering, and allow the scheme to be locally tailored.

Recommendation 8: Young people should be used more as witnesses in working groups, and where relevant, participate in Council Committees when

an issue affecting young people is identified by a PDS Chairman; and develop YC working parties to submit recommendations to the Council regarding specific issues.

Recommendation 9: Assess the feasibility in setting up a Bromley Circle with CLB as the service provider. Conduct a financial review on the cost to reward ratio over time of the initial pump prime of Council funds.

Recommendation 10: Bromley Mytime should be encouraged to:

- (a) Create an online forum, friends, or user group, to capture users' feedback effectively.**
- (b) Study the cost benefits of forming a reciprocal arrangement with volunteers. Whereby, their time earns credits that can be used towards a free swim or a round of golf.**

Recommendation 11: To implement a wider understanding of various volunteering opportunities amongst LBB staff and partner agencies. In order to inform members of the public of services that they could benefit from when in contact with an LBB/CLB or partner official.

Recommendation 12: To formally acknowledge members of staff who volunteer in their spare time by creating an award, and introducing a competitive element through competitions and highlighting individual employee achievements within the voluntary sector.

Recommendation 13: CLB should assemble a comprehensive database of voluntary and commercial organisations.

3.0 Encouraging and Retaining Public Participation:

The Working Group were grateful for the participation of the many witnesses who either provided written submissions, or presented material at one of its meetings. Their wealth of experience from various areas, and involvement within the remit of volunteering, have been useful in developing ways that Bromley residents can be encouraged, and retained in a volunteering activity.

It is important to brand the 'Big Society' differently, as it is often perceived to be a Government scheme to replace paid jobs with cheap labour. For the Working Group the big society does not have the same interpretation, but is deciphered to bring back personal and family responsibility – a core factor in any healthy 'society'.

A report by Rob Francis, '*Unlocking Local Capacity*', expresses views of how Council's can engage their residents to become active participants, and provides inputs from local authorities who have begun to engage with the 'Big Society'. In the report many interviewed authorities found the 'Big Society' brand to be a hindrance for numerous reasons. Liberal Democrat and Labour authorities generally do not sign up to the brand, as it's perceived to be a Conservative idea. However many Conservative authorities also do not use it, as it can muddy the waters and turn participants off from assisting in what are generally perceived to be good voluntary schemes.

“The Big Society is a hindrance, we never use it... For me it's poisonous... and it's recognised that locally, it doesn't help us make our case.”

“When we suggested this was part of the Government agenda in terms of the Big Society, we got a big push back. There's a view that the Big Society is about using the voluntary sector to do things on the cheap.”

It was therefore the view point of the Working Group that the 'Big Society' brand should not be used. The 'Big Society' is about empowering local people to take responsibility for their local area, by supporting community projects, or helping to support vulnerable adults and children. Thus, the concept should be referred to as the 'Active Citizen' scheme.

Individuals are less likely to be put off from participating, if they are not expected to provide the tools to proceed with a particular role. This is evident with the Snow Friends scheme, where the Council provides the grit and snow shovels to the voluntary groups. However, the provision of tools is also in relation to providing the training and support that individuals will need to do a job successfully. People who volunteer like to know that their time is appreciated, and training not only offers them this, but also makes sure the Council passes on its expertise to ensure the service delivery is maintained at an excellent standard.

Overbearing time commitments, individual feelings of not being capable of carrying out a particular role, along with perceived lack of recognition, were identified as being factors which deterred volunteers. In addition, individuals who require help from volunteers were often put off from asking for help, if it felt like charity, or their prides were damaged by a perception of being 'in need'. However, this is easily overcome by incorporating a sense of reciprocation within particular schemes. This is a process that a number of authorities utilise, and can be done in the form of a 'Timebank', which also adds an incentive element to volunteering which will encourage a wider range of residents.

A 'Timebank' scheme is particularly useful when asking for volunteers to help elderly people with unmet support needs. Doing so, will aid continual independent living; for every hour an individual volunteers for, they receive time credits which can be used for volunteers for themselves, or credits towards a free swim or use of their local gym.

4.0 Using Social Media and Technology to Promote Volunteering Roles:

Within the course of the Working Group, many witnesses gave evidence on how they use social media, technologies, and userfaces, to promote their volunteering roles and to promote further public participation using Council assets and resources.

Electronic communities are easily created to boost wider involvement. The successful community website known as: beckenhamtown.us actively engages with the local community by encouraging users debate local issues, and advertise and promote local events. The website consists mostly of directories, but also has forums where people can discuss local topics. Anyone is able to create events or post surveys on the site. Originally, the site was formed to discuss the proposed CPZ in Clockhouse, to provide a wider discussion base for the issue.



Figure 4.1: BeckenhamTown.us

The owner maintains, and takes pride in keeping the website independent, with the ethos of it being created by locals, for locals. Beckenhamtown.us is also very successful in providing a platform for local neighbours to communicate to each other, thus enhancing community spirit.

The website is constantly evolving and has now expanded onto Twitter, Twlyah, Pinterest and Paperli. In fact, the Twitter account has now become more active than the website because of up to the minute, live, local newsfeed, which displays directly on the main site every time the word 'Beckenham' is detected.

The use of QR codes, which is an application consisting of a bar code, is being used to pull more people into the website. QR codes could be printed on any correspondence from the Council, posters etc and the codes could be scanned using a smartphone to be automatically re-directed to the Council's website. This piece of useful technology is being used more and more in general marketing ploys by various organisations.

BeckenhamTown.us and other similar websites, should be used as a platform to advertise local businesses, and promote the 'Active Citizen' scheme. The very nature

of the site's various functions provides readership from a broad section of society. In doing so, it provides a good platform to target, and link volunteers to specific roles. This will be done more effectively, than that of only creating a specific page on the Council's website. Mr Clarke is interested in advertising different volunteering opportunities on the site, not just from Beckenham, but across the entire Borough.

This form will be completely separate from the Council, with roles being evolved right from the community. It is advisable to put Mr Clarke in contact with CLB, and various charities that operate in the Borough to provide a communication base for future roles, and then to let the community escalate the process of their own accord.

Using independent social media in conjunction with Council run media, should be used to engage with the public, and to provide a forum so that new innovative schemes and projects can be evolved and delivered in the future.

Councillors, have the unique benefit of local connections with their electorate, and are therefore beneficial in spreading and promoting the 'Active Citizen' in Bromley, and also feeding back new projects that the Council can offer support in their implementation.

A report called the 'Pathways Through Participation' which was produced by NCVO, IVR and Involve, offered an interesting insight in how social networks can be important in motivating individuals to become more active citizens. Social media can shape and influence an individual's view point, and can trigger community participation along with determining whether their participation will be sustaining and successful.

People who can influence an individual's behaviour whilst using social media sites are, close family members, friends, colleagues and organisations, or people who are not personally know by the individual, but are in close contact, e.g. Local Authorities. It is important that the Council uses these forms to unlock the individual capacity to encourage further involvement. This process has partially begun with tweeter feeds for road gritting in wintery weather, for example.

There are studies that show blanket advertising for resident participation has limited affect. However, if volunteers, who have had a positive experience of a particular scheme, then relay their experience on to their neighbour or friends; further participation can be expected to grow.

Libraries being a community hub for many people will be an essential part of relaying roles and activities onto the public via notice boards and appropriate sign posting. Libraries should also use their existing volunteering networks to encourage participation in other vital roles across the Borough, and to encourage individuals who may benefit from volunteers to come forward.

The Council can promote the 'Active Citizen' by adding a '**Volunteer For It**' icon on Bromley's homepage. Various community projects, and social action volunteering opportunities, should be displayed, and will benefit from Council website footfall.

Westminster City Council actively work with organisations that support volunteering, in order to push ahead with greater community involvement. This is further aided by a 3 year contract that had been awarded in Westminster to support volunteer brokerage.

The Council also adopts a proactive approach in working with Job Centre Plus, and setting up referrals for skills development. Westminster have also created specialist programmes, such as City Guides (to show tourists around Westminster), Uniforms for events, and Sports volunteering.

4.1 Community Map:

Westminster City Council has set up a community map facility, which is used to advertise opportunities for volunteers. There are currently 130 opportunities in Westminster with 75 registered organisations. The map allows any organisation or individual, to self-register, and currently receives 35-40 visitors every week. Westminster are currently looking at forming a partnership with Volunteer Centre Westminster, to be used as a broker to the service. The website can be found at: <http://www.mycommunitymap.co.uk>

Therefore, a Westminster City Council styled Community Map should be established to indicate the full breadth of volunteering activity in an individual's local area.

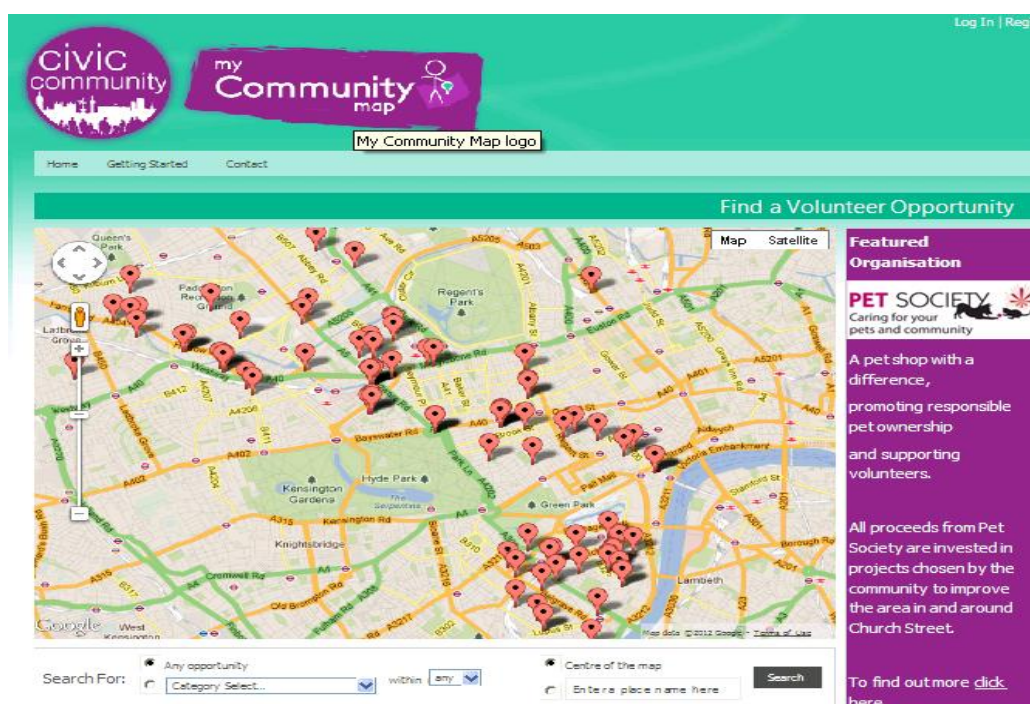


Figure 4.2: My Community Map

The community map could also be exploited to record where individuals actually volunteer, so that the brokerage method can be better tailored. This is including usefully targeting the brokerage contract at specific groups of people such as those who are out of work.

Westminster has also implemented an annual Civic Community Award, which normally receives 230 nominations for categories such as 'work with young people' and 'improving Westminster'. This could be achieved in Bromley by adding specific tailored awards on the annual Mayor's awards to congratulate member of staff's achievements within the voluntary sector, outside of their normal hours of employment. Furthermore, CLB, as the LBB's volunteering broker, should take the Community Map idea forward as part of their service delivery.

4.2 E-Community:

The Council currently have a collection of residents' email addresses who involved in friends groups, and Chairman of residents' associations. This should be transferred onto a central system, so that a further email addresses can be collected from as many residents as possible.

The working group noted how Safer Neighbourhood Teams in Bexley have developed an e-community of residents' email addresses in order to relay fast and efficient information on to them.

If there is appropriate funding available, the e-community concept should be encourage in Bromley, so that a monthly newsletter showcasing volunteering success, and pushing volunteering websites can be sent out to a wide audience. Furthermore, if the useful refuse collection timetable in the Environment Matters newsletter is transferred into electronic form, this will encourage residents to engage in the process, and will make a saving for the Council. Obviously, residents without an email address should still receive a hard copy.

Many local authorities, such as Hertfordshire Council, have a formal process in place to be used as a platform of communication between local voluntary groups, residents associations and street wardens. This should be expanded in Bromley to not only build communication and feedback opportunities for local residents and voluntary groups, but also to expand on wider public participation.

5.0 Building and Expanding Existing Volunteering Opportunities:

The borough already has an expansive list of volunteering schemes which have room to expand further.

5.1 Staff Volunteering:

The Working Group were encouraged to note that many members of the Council's staff were already engaged in volunteering outside their working hours in some of the voluntary schemes they are developing. This is essential to show that the Council is seen to lead by example, and to remain a distant part of the service delivery. However, it is important that this is not taken for granted, and the staff should be recognised and awarded within a special volunteering category in the Mayor's award.

Volunteers and volunteering, both require recognition. This is not only to congratulate excellent work and time commitment to a particular activity, but to create a competition in which to spur people on, and to advertise the volunteering positions. Currently, Beckenham hold a 'Beckenham's Night of Honour' which is an Oscar styled event to reward local people and organisations who benefit the local area. The Council should foster ways in supporting independent and self financing, rewards evenings within the Orpington and Bromley & Chislehurst parliamentary constituencies.

5.2 Apprenticeship Scheme:

Full Council agreed funding to implement an apprenticeship scheme that will be rolled out across the Borough.

An apprenticeship acts as an entry-level job but includes an NVQ qualification. If the apprentice is between 16-18 years old, their training is fully funded. However, as the apprentice gets older, the scheme becomes self-financing.

Currently, the training providers were paid based on outcome over a period of time. In Bromley, further development of the apprenticeship scheme is being put forward as one of the one-off initiatives to invest in. The Leader is keen to join up with the private sector to provide such opportunities with organisations such as Veolia and English Landscapes. Full Council approved £500k for the setting up of such a scheme, and has provided a useful step forward.

The apprentice scheme should work closely with the Bromley Job Centre, who can specifically target the unemployed. It is also important that these schemes are also advertised on the Council's job section, and the recommended 'Volunteer For It' icon, to provide appropriate coverage.

5.3 Bromley Youth Support Programme:

Last year a consultation had been issued to determine how best youth centres could be used. Currently two centres are being trialled as 'shared use sites' which related to the fact that they are community run using Council owned assets. These buildings are available for anyone to lease and run as a community hub.

There are opportunities to encourage the Youth Centres to explore sponsorship possibilities such as through the Community Safety team. The Youth Centres attract 4,000 10-19 year olds per year, and should be used to foster the nature of volunteering at an early age. This can be done by encouraging 19 year old users to return as a Youth supervisors themselves, or engage in other forms of volunteering.

There are over 500 voluntary organisations existed with a focus on young people, such as uniformed groups. One of the biggest issues facing Scouts and Girl Guides, is that they are short of adult volunteers to lead and supervise the movement, and thus leading to an oversubscribed waiting list for places for young people. This is a greatly missed opportunity, that could fully engage a larger proportion of young people with activities that promote self confidence and life skills, that will not only benefit the individual, but could lead to less strain on other services, and voluntary organisations.

Bromley Council for Voluntary Youth Services (BCVYS) receives grant funding from the Council to help support uniformed groups through staff training and stick replenishment, and was perceived to be beneficial in maintaining volunteering levels within the uniformed groups. However, further work is needed in this area to grow the volunteering levels.

Integrated Youth Services could benefit from support to attract more volunteers to its services, and that the Council could help signpost and promote these opportunities more efficiently. Current methods of promotion included the Council website, word of mouth, leaflets and usual council forums.

The Youth Council (YC) representatives have recently been placed on most of the Council's Policy Development and Scrutiny Committees (PDS Committees), to engage young people further. However, whilst this is a good idea, the PDS Committees should bear in mind that quite a lot of what is normally discussed, would not affect young people, and making them sit through 3 hour meetings could disengage them. What would be more effective is for the PDS Chairman to notify the YC when a topic is due to be heard that they may have an interest in, and allow them time to prepare their views before the meeting. The YC should also be supported to set up their on Working Parties to draw up recommendations to the Council, particularly regarding encouraging young people to volunteer.

5.4 National Citizenship Service (NCS):

The NCS is currently in its pilot phase. The Cabinet Office are using the NCS as its flagship programme under the 'Big Society' banner.

The second year of the pilot was now underway and there were up to 90,000 places in 2014 for participation by any young person leaving school. The scheme is seen as a personal / social development programme offering an opportunity for young people to mix with a variety of peers. Currently it is being run over 3 weeks as a summer programme. Young subscribers live in a community residence, and help with developing local projects to improve a particular community. An evaluation report of the scheme is being planned for the end of April.

So far 29 providers including the Challenge Network are working with NCS to deliver the programme. Marketing is carried out through schools and other social media

channels such as Facebook. In Bromley, there are 210 places available this year in schools. To date, only 46 have been taken up, with 12 different dates over the summer are offered for flexibility.

In order to develop the programme locally, local organisation and people are interviewed to find out what the needs of the community are, so that the programme can be suitably tailored. At the end of the three weeks, young people are expected to make a Dragon's Den pitch in order secure funding for their local community project. The Renewal and Recreation Portfolio could provide volunteering opportunities for young people to work on as part of the scheme.

Nationally, the least interest in the scheme has been in London schools. In Bromley, only Hayes, Bishop Challoner, Kemnal Technology College and Farringtons School have engaged in the programme. This is perhaps a sign that the scheme does not add to the social action projects that the borough's schools are currently engaged in.

The Working Group were interested to learn that Oxfordshire County Council, and Harrow Council, acted as the local providers of the scheme in their areas. The Working Group felt that the scheme was too structured, and would therefore not be fitting for various young people who were not 'adrenaline junkies' and should be reworked to allow the scheme to be locally tailored.

6.0 Volunteering Through Partnerships:

6.1 Southwark Circle:

Southwark circle was created in 2008 by Participle, who in turn are an organisation who work to radically change how public services are delivered. They follow a highly commendable set of 3 principles:

- ***A determination to be radical***
- ***An attack on the five giants of 'want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness'***
- ***A commitment to co-operation between the state and the individual.'***

The initiative received backing from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Sky, and Southwark Council. Southwark Circle initially received £1million spread over 3 years, with the aim of moving towards a self-sustaining organisation.

The project is aimed at people whose family members live far away from them, people of third age, and people who are not well networked, offering them a chance to socialise with others, as well as practical help around the house. Neighbourhood Helpers have a range of different skills, come from a variety of backgrounds and are aged from 17 to 83 years of age. Helpers are both paid and unpaid.

The key to Southwark Circle is that there is no set structure to volunteering. Volunteers can log onto the website to see what jobs are available near them on the interactive map.

In addition, Participle further supports the elderly population with a London-based scheme known as 'Get-Together' which aims to rectify social isolation amongst the ageing population, and is currently being linked in to the numerous Circle organisations that are being implemented.

Membership to the Southwark Circle costs £10 a year online, and £20 a year including paper updates/information. All Helpers are CRB checked and asked for references, to try and mitigate unwanted liability issues. Tokens are used to pay helpers and cost £10 each for an hour of a volunteer's time, and can be used for a variety of activities, such as gardening, changing a light bulb, right through to learning how to send a text message.

Southwark Circle currently has 1,200 members, with a healthy position of having more registered helpers than people needing help. They also have a number of supporting schemes which focus on the fundraising activities of the network, and also promotes local businesses and social cohesion. Such schemes include the home ward scheme for Southwark and Lambeth, which aims to prevent, and reduce, hospital admissions. The Dine Out scheme allows members to benefit from a 25% discount on their food bill with 20 participating local restaurants. This acts as bait in attracting a proportion of society to join.

Southwark Circle is also looking at other services currently provided by the council which could potentially be delivered by them.

The main form of contact between Southwark Circle and helpers is over the phone, with an opportunity to develop a phone app. This will be particularly useful for potential volunteers who are willing to help out on their way back from work, who do not wish to speak over the phone. Social media/app software had been built into the existing

IT systems but there was a financial cost in developing the software. However, there is a similar scheme in Suffolk, who used Facebook to interact with its helpers, which could be easily set up with minimal cost.

The Circle projects can also be used as facility to engage young graduates in in-house internships, with regards to marketing and general organisational running. Participle has also developed similar schemes in Hammersmith and Fulham, Nottingham and Suffolk. Internships were offered at Southwark Circle, there is currently one person on a gap year doing events management and volunteers working in the office.

If a similar scheme were to be set up in Bromley, Participle would be the initial port of call as investors in a new 'Circle'. They would carry out a scoping project to identify local needs and adapt as necessary.

The Care Services Portfolio, are already engaging with the voluntary sector to support their work, it was found that a volunteer would cost £3.15 per hour in admin costs, compared with £13.30 an hour for a full time member of staff. The possibility of, at this stage, engaging with CLB to increasing the signposting of volunteering positions will be the way to progress.

The benefits of a Circle for the Care Services Portfolio, who are already contracting services through voluntary organisations, are potentially encouraging. The concept of which will allow more of control of service delivery to move away from the Council, and into the hands of volunteers.

However, a Bromley Circle is likely to require an initial pump-prime of £1million, this may prove cost prohibitive, especially since Southwark Circle is still operating within the 3 year stage where it is receiving Council funding. It is therefore not clear that the scheme will be self funding after that period. It would therefore be beneficial to monitor the progress that the Southwark Circle makes over the next couple of years to assess the 'invest to save' benefit.

Furthermore, charities such as Veneratio, who operate in the Biggin Hill area, are currently working on providing Circle type help to the elderly. If similar independent charities are provided with appropriate support, the need for a Circle will be non-existent.

6.2 Community Links Bromley:

The Council should explore ways of implementing an asset-based approach of how existing resources and volunteering networks can be better utilised. This is particularly the case with Community Links Bromley (CLB). CLB should be a pivotal deliverer and promoter of the 'Active Citizen' in Bromley.

Bromley has an extensive list, and history, of volunteering and community groups. The Council should be more creative in the way they support the 3rd sector. Some Councils have even started to advertise volunteering roles on their main job section to target a wider audience.

CLB receives an annual grant from the Council to join volunteers with volunteering roles, and should progress with the previously mentioned Community Map of voluntary organisations and positions. The Council should focus on aiding signposting by using the recommended '**Volunteer For It**' icon for the Council's own

volunteering roles, and for the successful community websites to be an alternative self organisational volunteering matching service, to complement the service provide by CLB.

6.3 Business Improvement Districts:

Through Westminster City Council's Civic Community Charter, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are used to help promote volunteering in specific local areas.

BIDs allow local businesses to reaffirm their community stakeholder status in their local area, by taking over some of the local services. With business' commercial mindset, they can often deliver services with greater efficiency and at reduced costs to the tax payer. BIDs from around the country are already delivering council services, such as street cleansing, waste management, marketing and events, destination management, market inspections, policing of street entertainment and asset management. These experiences have proven positive for all parties.

This concept should be explored further in Bromley.

6.4 Signposting Volunteering Roles across the Borough:

Bromley's Trading Standards have a good relationship with the local community, and are continually forming strong links. District Nurses and Social Workers are actively involved in reporting back to Trading Standards if they suspect one of their patients is a potential victim in a scam. With District Nurses and Social Workers in significant contact with vulnerable people, they should direct their patients onto the Council's 'Active Citizen' initiative via CLB, both in terms of extra support services, and if the patient would like to volunteer themselves.

Councils such as Lichfield, have set up a training programme so that their frontline workers learn about each others' work, so that when they are on their visits, they can mark a checklist to ensure they have covered all relevant bases within the wider remit of services on offer. Bromley have already started to work on improving their network of frontline staff; working closely with domiciliary carers and developing links with Waste services, but this programme needs to be expanded and pushed across the entire Council.

6.5 Corporate Responsibility through Volunteering:

Many corporations of varying sizes actively support staff volunteering in the locality of their office, and or, with their chosen charity. Often this is done in the member of staff's own time, however, the Government are currently proposing tax relief on wages given to an employee who has spent the time volunteering in working hours.

Business organisations that operate within the boundaries of this borough form an integral part of Bromley's make up. Businesses offer employment opportunities for local people, and are the major backbone to the local economy. Bromley also plays host to the many people who are employed in local businesses, but themselves not Bromley residents, and thus form part of the wider customer base.

The working group were in contact with Andy Holcombe, Bromley's Fire Borough Commander, who confirmed, that since the fire service operated on a shift basis, his staff could easily fit in with a Circle type help.

7.0 Community Enabling:

Bromley residents care very much about their environment, and are not afraid to lend their support in various projects. This is clearly supported by Bromley being the foremost Borough in London for recycling levels, and through the great success of the 'Friends' groups.

7.1 Community Project Examples:

Surrey County Council Help Out

This project focused on the power of volunteering and new technology e.g. mow your own verge. Residents could look at an interactive map to identify where people wanted things improved or where people wanted to maintain high standards. The scheme gives local people a sense of place, and empowerment. Residents are encouraged to claim a local area/spot, and to do what needs to be done, and report back.



Figure 7.1: Surrey County Council Help Out Web Page

Bromley already has the basis to expand this project further. Following advice from the New Technology Working Group, the Council's website was updated to include an interactive: **Report it – Pay for it – Apply for it** icons, which enables residents to interact with Council, in not only a more convenient way, but also in a more cost effective way. A new **Volunteer for it** icon can easily be added to the interactive website, and can include volunteering opportunities identified by the Council, but for the local community.

Many residents in Bromley have a front garden, and a metre or so away from their front wall; also have a grass verge. In many cases, it would not be difficult, or unreasonable, to encourage a resident mowing their front garden, to also mow the grass verge outside their house, and report on an interactive map that they have done so.

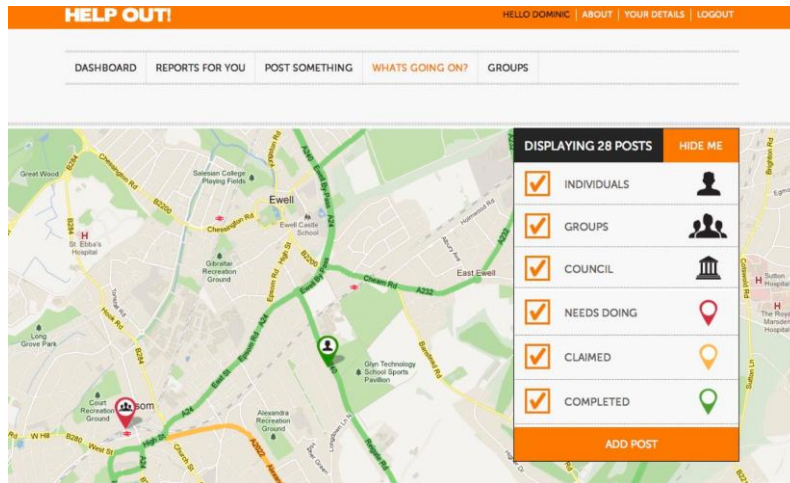


Figure 7.2: Surrey County Council Help Out Map

Casserole – Reigate & Banstead:

This is a scheme involving people who enjoy cooking, to cook an extra portion of their meal for a local elderly person, or a vulnerable adult. The scheme also has potential to be extended to working mothers with young children, and people who were temporarily less able to move e.g. with a broken leg.

This particular scheme started small, and did not use social media/technology to promote itself, but through the old fashioned medium of word of mouth and a physical presence with a market stall at the Redhill market. The scheme also advertised itself through targeting local groups that were known by the Council, which helped the project to become a big success.

Interestingly, the elderly and the Cook’s preferred form of communication was via a text message. CLB can sign up volunteers to cook extra meals, and assign them to a particular person(s) who will be the recipient of the meal.



Figure 7.3: Casserole scheme sign up page

Room for Tea:

Many internships based in London can be cost prohibitive to many applicants who live outside of London, due to acquiring suitable accommodation. This scheme tries

to address this obstacle that may be deterring applicants, by using a matching process between young interns and older people with spare rooms. The project originally worked with Google who acted as a referee for their interns.



Figure 7.4: Room for Tea scheme

The Group learnt that not all forums were keen on this idea e.g. Gransnet. However, there are considerable opportunities to develop this scheme in line with 'Rent a room' where you can earn £4,250 p.a. tax free. This scheme could also become particularly useful if the person with a room to spare is an elderly person, and the intern who is renting can carry out certain chores that the elderly landlord would otherwise struggle with.

Patchwork:

This project joins up various practitioners, including social workers, to form a single IT system network to cross-reference practitioners dealing with the same client. Patchwork can be used to compliment the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) which focuses on co-location of partner agencies, compared to Patchwork which uses technology to bring practitioners together.

Other initiatives:

- **Swindon Council** mapped all of their community groups and the group with the most members was Vodka Revolution bar. However, this group was used to take forward discussions relating to cabs, licensing etc. Social media sites such as Facebook should not be underestimated as a means of engaging with local groups.
- **Horse's Mouth** – a mentoring scheme.
- **Open Cinema** – for homeless people to watch films and socialise.
- **Enabled by Design** – designing stylish occupational therapy equipment.
- **Good for Essex** – identifying opportunities for young people to learn new things and skill up.

- **Simpl** – Social Innovation Market Place.
- **Camden Innovation Fund** – working with LA to help stimulate growth in the voluntary sector.

FutureGov advises Councils on how to better engage volunteers and retain their support and commitment, this included setting up competitions that could be used as incentive for volunteers.

Overall, Bromley already has the foundations to build up many of these schemes, but ideally needs to help encourage volunteering opportunities, but remove the liabilities on the Council, by encouraging people to take complete ownership of the various schemes, and advertise and organise them on independent websites.

7.2 Bromley Mytime – Engaging Volunteers:

The Group learnt of the current involvement that Bromley Mytime currently has with various volunteering organisations. David Pickup, who is the Vice-Chair of Pro-Active Bromley, set out the four 4 divisions of Mytime charity: leisure centres, golf, health (preventative) and dealing with consequences of cardiovascular/stroke. Pro-Active Bromley also acts as an all-encompassing organisation for smaller sports groups in the Borough.

The Group acknowledged that Mytime did not receive much funding through Bromley's clinical commissioning group. However, there is room for Mytime's revenue to be increased through the leisure division, and through the well regarded golf courses.

The Group identified where Mytime could expand their volunteering base, particular with Mytime members who use the golf courses. Although there were some volunteers recruited, and used on the golf courses, the recruitment and organisation were not carried out in a consistent or structured way across all Bromley courses.

The Group also noted the use of incentives for volunteers across Mytime, via charging a lower rate for using local golf-courses; Prime time buddies get credits to use, and it was recommended that Mytime should further publicise this and flesh out a wider scope. In many cases, Mytime may find incentives to be at the very least cost neutral, and foster a volunteering ethos within the organisation.

7.3 Community Project Overview:

The 'Active Citizen' in Bromley, hopes to foster ways of supporting individuals to participate, and take responsibility, for themselves, and their fellow Bromley residents. The success of the 'Friends' groups, has reaffirmed the view that the people of Bromley already exhibit a community ownership ethos. This should ease the problematic hurdle of convincing residents to become active contributors to Bromley's society, rather than relying on the Council's 'interference' to make a difference.

To promote community involvement in community projects, it is again confirmed that a '**Volunteer For It**' icon on Bromley's homepage will be beneficial for this purpose.

This page should display volunteering roles specifically for the benefit of community based projects. Such as interactively reporting when grass verges are in need of a cut, and then allowing residents to volunteer to cut the verges in their street and report back to the map when it is completed.

The creation of a **'What Needs to be Done Map'** will also aid the work of the Street Friends, who could have their capabilities unleashed, to become more proactive, and less reliant on officer time. These community projects will not necessarily make a significant saving for the Council, but creates further participation of local residents.

The 'What Needs to be Done Map' should display minor local issues that are reported to the Council, and then offered to the wider community to help out. To implement the scheme, a trial area should be drawn up in an appropriate area of the borough.

To do this, it will require the Council to be both brave and bold. It will undoubtedly be an uncomfortable step for the Council, to go from supporting community voice, to supporting community action. However, it is one that is vital in implementing wider community participation; providing many residents with a volunteering taster that will encourage them to also get involved with other community projects.

This is also a step that has largely, already been taken by Surrey County Council. Grass cutting is perceived to be a core task of any local authority's purpose, but local residents can easily, and cheaply, carry out this task in a low risk, high profile way. However, the liability risk to the Council due to accidents will need to be assessed. It will also be important to be clear what the residents within the trial area is responsible, and what the contractor/Council is responsible for.

If a trial area and period are successful, the Council should be wary of continuing to take control of grass cutting in certain areas of the Borough. This could lead to residents being concerned over equity, i.e. why does one person pay for a service that another gets in a neighbouring town, whilst they have to take responsibility for it in their own town. However, studies have suggested that making the scheme Borough wide can be very successful - the concern of losing the service drives people to step up to the mark, according to 'Pathways To Participation'.

The Council should continue to expand their use of social media to communicate with their volunteers, and also to provide avenues for the fostering of new ideas. Such schemes should come from the residents, with the Council there to offer support in helping them to be successful.

Bromley Mytime should also be encouraged to implement a reciprocal voluntary scheme which allows volunteers within their organisation to build up credits, which could be used towards a free swim, or a round of golf at one of their centres. Mytime should also be kept up to date with the work of the wider voluntary sector across Bromley, and sign post their volunteers to become more involved.

8.0 Legislative Issues:

8.1 CRB Checks:

Many volunteers of the past were put hindered and held back by red tape, and bureaucracy. A classic example of this is through additional CRB checks that were required on acceptance of every new volunteer role with children or vulnerable adults.

New legislation, which is defined in the Freedoms Act 2012, will see CRB checks being portable through roles. The existing vetting and barring scheme will be replaced with a new scaled-back scheme, which focuses on roles working most closely with vulnerable groups. However, the changes are likely to result in higher cost for the charity or voluntary group, and should be lobbied for reduced costs at the appropriate Government level.

8.2 Community Right To Challenge:

It is also important to be aware of the 'Community Right To Challenge' which is set out in the new Localism Act.

The Community Right To Challenge sets out the right that the people have to take over a service, or public facility, that they see as either not being run properly, or that is deemed to be at risk in the future. These types of volunteers are known as 'Challengers' and their right to have their request to take over a public service has to be considered. In many cases, this should be judged as positive action, to have the public participate in this way. Volunteers are now being proactively sourced to secure the viability of our library service. These volunteers are known as 'saviours'.