TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 January 2016
Subject:	Place Programme
Report of:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor Mrs K J Berry Councillor R J E Vines
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

The Place Programme is an internal 'cultural change' project to support officers across the Council's services to better appreciate and respond to the different 'places' within the Borough and to support Elected Members in their community leadership roles. A pilot has been completed in the east area and, following an evaluation, it is proposed that the programme be rolled out across the Council. The Executive Committee is asked to endorse the approach and its implementation across the whole Borough.

Recommendation:

That Members ENDORSE the full implementation of the Place Programme across the Borough.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Given the significant challenges facing local government as a whole, and Tewkesbury Borough Council in particular, it is essential that all of the available skills and information within our workforce and from the Council's Elected Members are effectively used to maximise positive outcomes for the community. Creating and supporting additional resilience and capacity within the varied and diverse communities within Tewkesbury Borough is an essential role of the local authority as public services are reduced and communities need to be prepared to accept more responsibility. In modern local government it is increasingly important that professional and specialist officers are supported to recognise the crucial role of 'place' within their everyday work. Shifting cultural attitudes and supporting officers to better instil the variety of place within Tewkesbury Borough can be difficult but clear Elected Member support is an essential ingredient to achieving this outcome.

Resource Implications:
This work is being undertaken by existing staff and as such there are no additional resource requirements. As new roles are developed across the Council clear responsibilities to participate in the programme will be built into job descriptions and person specifications.
It is anticipated that the approach will save time by avoiding duplication and staff and Members working more closely and efficiently.
Legal Implications:
None directly relating to this report other than to mention that the Place Programme is aligned to the principles of the Localism Act 2011 which gives the public a number of rights and freedoms to enable them to make a difference within their local communities.
Risk Management Implications:
Not actively engaging with 'places' creates potential risks that any Council solutions developed for local issues are not properly tailored and thus more likely to fail.
Performance Management Follow-up:
Performance Management monitoring will include 'area' based data to enable Members to track progress against the plethora of Council objectives aligned to the three geographic areas.
Environmental Implications:
None directly.

1.0   INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1   Given the impact of financial austerity and reductions in funding across the public services it is imperative that more priority is given by public agencies to supporting individuals and communities to help themselves.

1.2   Tewkesbury Borough Council is well placed to deliver against this objective as the Borough is home to a range of strong, active and dynamic local community organisations and Parish and Town Councils that already take responsibility for finding their own solutions to local issues. In addition, the Council has 38 active Ward Councillors who work hard to engage with their communities and act as invaluable champions for their local neighbourhoods.

1.3   Different communities experience different issues and it is important that the Council actively recognises these differences and is well placed to respond to them effectively. Many of these will be geographically related, e.g. the villages along the River Severn and flood risk, while others will impact across the Borough e.g. development pressure. However in all cases the best most sustainable decisions will be taken when they are founded on good quality local intelligence.

1.4 The Borough Council, along with other partners within the public service family, recognises both the spread and creativity within communities across the Borough and that the quality of locally developed and owned solutions often far exceeds any public service response delivered from the 'top down'. However it is incumbent on the public agencies to take a direct responsibility to facilitate and assist this local community action, utilising the various tools we hold as the Council, for Tewkesbury Borough as a whole.

1.5 In this positive position it is imperative that the Borough Council works with the grain of this local capacity and ensures it is nurtured and supported for the future.

1.6 The Place Programme is an internal 'transformation' programme to ensure the Council's workforce is suitably informed and arranged to make the best use of this local intelligence and support community activity in its widest form.

1.7 **Current Operational Arrangements**

1.7.1 Despite significant reductions in funding over the last five years the Council has maintained a dedicated Community Development Team that works to support and facilitate community action. Arranged across three geographic areas (Appendix 1), a single Community Development Officer takes responsibility for enabling and assisting local initiatives within their patch. These Officers work remotely from locations within their area, usually in Parish or Town Council offices or other locations, to maximise their engagement with local communities and build partnerships with other parts of the public sector and voluntary and community sector. The feedback from Parishes has been very positive and they welcome the opportunity to build up relationships with specific Officers.

1.7.2 This area split is pragmatic and reflects an attempt to chunk down from the whole Borough into more local areas and to mirror the ways other public agencies reflect the different parts of our territory. However of course within these areas are many different and distinctive villages, hamlets and neighbourhoods.

1.7.3 During this period the Council has also maintained a Community Grants Scheme and recently employed a Funding Officer to work with local groups to access external funding to enable community projects and initiatives.

1.7.4 The Community Development Team has been successful in building extremely positive working relationships with the Parish and Town Councils in their patch along with many local community groups/agencies and have developed a deeper understanding of the issues affecting the different geographical areas of the Borough. This broader appreciation of local issues has been invaluable to ensuring an effective 'can do 'approach to supporting local community action.

1.7.5 It is important to be clear that the focus of this work is not concerned with 'doing to' our communities but very much about offering the skills, information and access to resources we have, to stand side by side with our community in this endeavour. The Council by virtue of its legal position has lots of valuable and useful information and skills to support communities to help themselves and it is important that we make these available as widely as possible to build this essential social capacity.

1.8 **Place Programme**

1.8.1 In order to strengthen and deepen the reach of this work it is important that involvement and awareness is shared more widely across the various service teams of the authority.

1.8.2 Traditional service specialisms have developed over many years and, in common with every other part of the public service, Tewkesbury Borough Council has professional teams which work within functional silos. The Council is fortunate that with its size and open plan working practice information flows between teams is relatively good but there is always room to improve. This is not to suggest that Officers do not value the different areas in which their specialist work impacts but it is relatively difficult for an Officer responsible for 'delivering x number of planning decisions / housing benefit applications' to always spot the specific context in a local neighbourhood.

1.8.3 The following table provides a flavour of the kind of support the Council can give to enable community action.

Coordination	Between areas of the public services e.g. Highnam pilot – Gloucestershire County Council / Tewkesbury Borough Council / Highnam Parish Council coordination of street cleanings / grounds maintenance activity
Communication	Provide consistent messages / tools e.g. helping a community group set up a facebook page, providing information on relevant funding grants, or setting up forums/marketplace events.
Facilitation	Providing help to groups to make things happen e.g. Tewkesbury Nature Reserve – transfer of land from developer to community group.
Provide Support	Navigate complexity e.g. bringing in Fastershire for explanation of rollout of broadband, understanding planning process.
Share Info / Data	Intelligence can be shared e.g. providing MAIDeN statistics for an area, or Citizen Advice Bureau figures.
Connect People	Make introductions and build relationships e.g. Cleeve Big Picnic bringing local organisations and general public together.
Share Good Ideas	Provide the platform to make this easier e.g. Town and Parish Council events, Clerk's events.

Small Amounts of Funding	Matched amounts to get projects started (small grants) e.g. youth activity grants in areas that have taken on provision from the Borough Council. Other examples through the new community grant scheme include Winchcombe Skate Park, extension to Woodmancote Village Hall, and edible garden in Prior's Park.
Act as Advocates /Champions	Utilise position to lobby for change e.g. Financial Inclusion Partnership or Flooding issues.

1.8.4   The Place Programme is a corporate approach to recognising and valuing the distinctive places within the Borough and a coordinated way to ensure we support the building of self-reliance communities within our borders.

1.8.5   It is not a structural reorganisation but it is a cultural reorganisation. As such Officers in existing service teams will not be physically moved to work in different teams but there will be a virtual structure established to facilitate information sharing and coordination around our different places which will require a shift in thinking and or mind-set.

1.9   East Area Pilot

1.9.1   In order to 'test' the approach the Place Programme has been trailed in the east area. The Community Development Officer for this area, supported by members of the Group Manager cohort, has created a framework for Officers from within all the key services of the Council to share intelligence and has facilitated Ward Councillor meetings to address key issues of specific interest to this geographic location.

1.9.2   In this area there is a Gloucestershire County Councillor who is not also a Tewkesbury Borough Councillor and he also attends the Member meetings.

1.9.3   The Councillor meetings are largely informal and range across issues that directly affect the Borough Council and those more broadly relevant within the public service family. Feedback from local Councillors who have been part of the pilot has been very positive and participation has been high.

1.9.4   During the pilot, quarterly meetings have taken place in the east area since March 2015, including three Officer meetings and three Member meetings. A number of key focus areas have been addressed in relation to their impact on this geography e.g. funding, broadband voucher scheme, Fastershire, planning, improving / creating cycle networks, Ubico, housing enabling, the new policing model, choice based lettings, creating a clean and green environment for residents in the east area. A log has been developed to capture community activities taking place within the area to ensure effective communication. The Members meeting is very much an opportunity for local Ward Councillors to raise issues of local importance and to gain additional information on behalf of their localities.

1.10 **Operational Implications**

1.10.1 As outlined above, the Programme is focused on creating new internal arrangements to maximise the profile of 'place' within the authority overall. Using the three geographic areas within Tewkesbury Borough, the east, the north west the south, Officers from different services meet quarterly to share area specific information.

1.10.2 To date only the Community Development Team have actively utilised these areas to arrange their work. It is proposed that the whole authority will embrace these local areas in relation to capturing data, illustrating information and understanding communities. Over time performance management information will be presented to reflect the area profiles.

1.10.3 The purpose of these Officer meetings will be to create a log of key projects, initiatives and actions taking place within these communities to be shared between Officers to aid understanding and develop greater coordination of support. This log will then be enhanced with information gathered from the Member meetings.

1.10.4 The quarterly Member meeting will complement the above Officer arrangement to bring together the Elected Councillors within an area to share the key issues as part of a two way dialogue. It is expected that this greater level of understanding, and the analysis of key local data, will naturally develop into more area focussed priorities and a 'plan' to drive action.

1.10.5 The east area is already in operation and meetings scheduled for Councillors and agendas developed. The remaining two areas will be scheduled for early 2016 and Members notified accordingly. The Member meetings will usually be arranged within the patch at a convenient location.

1.10.6 The Place Programme is dynamic and will evolve as it becomes 'custom and practice' within the Council. There is strong interest in this approach from our partners within the Public Service Centre as all sectors within public service recognise the need to better understand local difference and enable greater community capacity.

1.10.7 Staff that already have an area focus from Gloucestershire Care Services are attending the internal Officer meetings and working closely with the Community Development Officers from each area in coordinating customer services. Severn Vale Housing Trust and Gloucestershire Police are also keen to engage positively and it is hoped that over time the programme will encompass the whole public service 'system 'within the Borough.

2.0 **CONCLUSION**

2.1 Building self-reliance across society is a necessity as funding for publicly organised services diminishes and working differently is a feature of the Council's transformational agenda. Research work carried out by INGLOV for the University of Birmingham on the '21st Century Public Servant' highlights the need for new skills in the future public service workforce. Rather than specific technical skills in one area staff will need to be expert in negotiating, identifying multiple sources of funding, navigating complexity and designing new solutions across whole systems. Central to this will be the need to be clearly rooted in the 'place' and the locality to effectively reflect the nature of the different communities served.

2.2 To meet this emerging agenda the Place Programme aims to provide active support to Officers from across the functional services to better understand and respond to local place difference and is a key part of the Council's transformational need for cultural change. By recognising the wealth of local intelligence and knowledge held by Elected Councillors, and arranging the organisation to capture and respond in a more locally effective manner, the Council and its partners should be in a much better position to support greater community capacity and enable our communities to build resilience for the future.

3.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

3.1 None.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Staff have been engaged through Group Managers, wider Management Team presentations, Staff Briefings and attendance at team meetings. The Programme has been amended in response to these consultations.

4.2 In addition, the Programme has been presented to the partners within the Public Service Centre and key organisations directly engaged to participate.

5.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

5.1
- Council Plan - Priority: to provide customer focused community support.
- Enabling Active Communities Policy – Gloucestershire Health and Well-Being Board.

6.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

6.1 Localism Act 2011.

7.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

7.1 There are no additional resources required, however, expectations to participate within the Programme will form an essential element within all new Job Descriptions as the workforce develops.

8.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

8.1 The Place Programme will impact positively on the community, economy and environment through better co-ordination and focus on the community's needs.

9.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

9.1 None at this stage, although projects arising through the Place Programme may impact positively on equalities and ensuring all parts of the community are listened to.

10.0   RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

10.1   None.

Background Papers: None.

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Appendices: 1. Area Maps.