



Safer Stronger Communities Committee

Local Assemblies update (including Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy - NCIL)

Date: 21 September 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors:

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Outline and recommendations

The Local Assemblies have been part of the constitution of the London Borough of Lewisham since 2007 and remain a key elements in the Council's engagement of local communities.

This report sets out the findings of a recent review of Local Assemblies which recognises their ongoing important in supporting local elected members in engaging with their local communities. The report sets out a range of principles which may underpin a future approach to Assemblies designed to improve their outcomes and effectiveness.

The report seeks comments on these principles ahead of further engagement with elected members and local residents.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the initial findings of the recent review of the operation and impact of Local Assemblies in the London Borough of Lewisham and suggests principles for a revised approach that focus on wider community development. The report sets out a number of options to revamp Local Assemblies recognising, and building on, the strengths and benefits of the current approach but addressing areas for improvement, particularly around engagement with a wider and more representative resident-base at ward-level including those defined as 'seldom heard voices' by the recent Democracy Review.
- 1.2 The report takes into account the following drivers for change:

- Current community engagement – as identified in the “Lewisham: Our Borough’s Future Recovery” strategy, Lewisham’s local communities demonstrated significant levels of civic energy and pro-activity during the Covid-19 pandemic (people volunteering and developing ad hoc arrangements to support individual and community needs), creating a platform on which to capitalise on promoting increased levels of community engagement in supporting recovery and in democratic engagement.
- Findings from the Lewisham Democracy Review, Voices of Lewisham engagement exercise and the Community Development Team’s review of the impact of Assemblies have collectively shown that the Assembly model does not reach all residents equally, does not successfully engage residents in jointly identifying and resolving local challenges and does not always offer a solution-focused approach.
- Budget cuts - Assemblies will be subject to a significant budget cut from April 2022. This includes a reduction in staffing and the discontinuation of the current budget for meetings and engagement
- Opportunities presented through the ward based funding available through Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL)
- The emerging Council-wide work on resident experience and the development of an overarching Digital Strategy.

1.3 Overall the report concludes that the following will be key elements of a new approach with the details to be confirmed following Member and Community engagement in the coming months:

- A retention of the ward based structure (including named officers) with formal Assembly meetings highlighting issues of concern and taking a ‘programme management’ approach to coordinating local networks of activity
- Retention of formal Assembly meetings, though reduced in number and likely to be delivered on-line, with greater coordination of wider activity and advantage taken of other existing structures like the Police’s Safer Neighbourhood Teams Ward Panels
- The delivery of additional face to face events throughout the year in partnership with the local community groups and organisations. It is recognised that face to face interactions will remain important and the existence of these will be a real measure of success for the new approach.
- The use of appropriate on-line mechanisms through which issues can be raised and communication take place
- An ‘annual report’ for each ward highlighting specific local concerns for action by relevant partners and highlighting successes from the previous year.

1.4 These would represent the core service offer with the hope that wider face to face meetings can be delivered in partnership with the local ward networks. As previously elected members remain at the heart of the Assemblies and their local leadership is key to ensuring their success.

2. Recommendations

2.1. For the Safer Stronger Communities Committee to note the content of this report and consider how officers might further consult Members as proposals develop.

3. Background

3.1. Ward Assemblies (subsequently Local Assemblies) were established following the

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Mayor's Neighbourhood Commission in 2007. The aim was that they would help to deliver the "empowered and responsible" priority of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

- 3.2. The Assemblies form part of the Council's Constitution being defined as 'an important consultative mechanism [that] provide a conduit to the Council and other public service providers through which the local community can prioritise local issues and advise the Council, including on the determination of the Locality Fund'. The constitution does not define the operational management or frequency of the meetings.
- 3.3. Local Assembly delivery has been coordinated and managed by the Assemblies Team since 2008, working with local Co-ordinating Groups, running regular Assembly meetings, open to all local residents, and operating within Lewisham Council's Cultural and Community Development Team in the Community Services Directorate.
- 3.4. Since 2008 the budget available for Local Assemblies has reduced significantly. Initially there was significant officer resource dedicated for each ward while at present there is approximately 1 day per week of officer time available for each ward. In addition the below table sets out the level of funding available via the Assemblies each year since 2008.

| Financial Year | Fund Name | Value per ward | Annual Total | Notes |
|-----------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|--|
| 2007/08-2010/11 | Mayor's Fund | £25,000 | £450,000 | |
| 2011/12-2013/14 | Assemblies Fund | £18,750 | £337,500 | Includes £3,750 Discretionary Fund for local councillors |
| 2014/15-2019/20 | Assemblies Fund | £15,000 | £270,000 | Includes £2,500 Discretionary Fund for local councillors |
| 2020/21 | Discretionary Fund | £2,500 | £45,000 | |
| 2021/22 | - | £0 | £0 | All direct funding ceased. |

- 3.5. There will be a further cut of £178,274 in 2022/23 – a combination of staffing and the meeting coordination budgets, the latter including hiring of venues, publicising meetings, printing of newsletters, etc.
- 3.6. In March 2020, Assemblies were put on hold to comply with lockdown restrictions and public health concerns in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.7. Prior to the arrival of the pandemic, the Corporate Strategy and Local Democracy Review had concluded that there was a need for increased empowerment and enablement of local people, and specifically a need to actively engage with seldom-heard groups and individuals. The Democracy Review contained a number of recommendations in relation to Local Assemblies under three themes:
 - Enhance their openness and transparency
 - Further develop public involvement in Council decisions
 - Promote effective decision-making

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- 3.8. A key finding from consultation undertaken for the Review was that Assemblies could be more inclusive, with a number of respondents stating that they still tended to attract people who were already democratically engaged and that more could be done to further widen participation.
- 3.9. With the onset of the pandemic, further lessons were learnt about democratic engagement and the power of communities working together, alongside learning about need within communities. These have also been taken into account in making recommendations for the future of resident-led community development, alongside work to develop the findings from the Local Democracy Review and the emerging work on resident experience. As a result, we recognise, informed by the recent Voices of Lewisham engagement programme, that the principles which underpin a successful community development approach are:
- Visible, empathic leadership
 - Flexible and innovative
 - Agile and not focussed on boards, meetings and membership
 - Collaborative
 - Place based
 - Refocused delivery
- 3.10. The pandemic also revealed the value and vibrancy of online communities, many of which developed rapidly and effectively in response to very specific local need in individual communities.
- 3.11. The review of Assemblies was multifaceted. In addition to the wider Democracy Review context and the lessons learnt from Covid-19, the outline principles for the future of resident-led community development in Lewisham have been informed by:
- Reviewing the strengths and challenges of the current approach
 - Considering national best practice and local successes
 - Undertaking local pilot activity and workshops
- 3.12. Each of these stages is considered in turn below.

4. Local Assemblies and Community Development – Current Strengths and Challenges

- 4.1. The first stage of the review was a strengths and challenges exercise of the current Local Assembly model undertaken by the Community Development Team.
- 4.2. The strengths and challenges exercise was undertaken considering the following four areas:
- Strengths and challenges for residents
 - Strengths and challenges for the Council and elected members
 - Strengths and challenges relating to the delivery of funding
 - Strengths and challenges relating to the development of good practice
- 4.3. Key strengths included:
- Residents have a regular time and space to meet with their local councillors
 - Co-ordinating groups (co-groups) give local people, businesses and those working or studying in the area the opportunity to steer the community's agenda

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- Officers from the Council have a place to present ideas/consult with residents
 - The Council can evidence regular engagement with communities in given areas
 - The allocation of funds to local projects is overseen by those living or working in the area
 - The links created through Assemblies generate ideas/applications for Section 106 monies or other external funds
 - There is huge scope to develop more purposeful use of digital platforms including social media
 - There is the opportunity to be proactive in seeking views that galvanise a wider range thoughts around issues locally
 - Residents value regular time set aside to engage with them in a purposeful way
- 4.4. This exercise identified that challenges were similar across different wards, and included:
- Assemblies as good democratic engagement tools, but not necessarily ideally suited to people with additional barriers
 - Meetings can sometimes feel “top down” in approach
 - Similar issues across multiple wards and priorities can lead to repetition/duplication of efforts
 - Although distribution of funding is influenced by local people with a clear interest, barriers to participation can lead to restricted local input
 - Assemblies currently rely on large public meetings for communication and decision-making – a model which is resource intensive particularly when considering further cuts to the budget.
 - Issues can be raised by residents or groups of residents multiple times without seeming to be resolved by the Council or a clear response given about the Council’s position, leading to disengagement with the process
- 4.5. The over-arching conclusion drawn from the Democracy Review, Voices of Lewisham engagement, lessons learnt from Covid-19 and the Community Development Team’s review of the impact of Assemblies is that there is scope to adapt the current model for Assemblies to ensure it is flexible enough to respond to individual community needs whilst avoiding duplication of effort across different geographies and promoting shared community-based problem solving.
- 4.6. Coupled with the fact that physical meetings are no longer the only way in which communities can be brought together there is now an opportunity to further increase the democratic reach of the Council by developing new modes of communication and seeking and building the involvement of “seldom heard voices” to ensure that community development is fully informed by representations from all members of the local community.

5. Review of alternative models and local pilots

- 5.1. In undertaking the review of the Assemblies, good practice examples from around the country were considered. These included:

Leeds – Asset Based Community Development (ABCD), piloted through the Pathfinders project (click [here](#) for more information)

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Camden – a model of co-production, which:

- distinguishes three phases in the commissioning process: gaining insight into what is required; planning and procuring services; and delivering and evaluating them.
- Emphasises co-production, partnership and learning from experience as important activities throughout this process.
- Makes a focus on outcomes for people and the whole community the key driver of change.

<https://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/camden-and-coproduction.html>

Newham – a model of co-production which meant councillors, staff, service users and residents working together on an equal basis, allowing stakeholders to be involved in every aspect of a service including design, commissioning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation

<https://www.newham.gov.uk/health-adult-social-care/co-production/1>

Barking and Dagenham – a model of Participation and Partnerships, moving from a service-delivery model aimed at ‘meeting needs’, to supporting residents to be more independent, providing them with the tools they need to do more for themselves and to achieve their full potential

<https://www.lbbd.gov.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Participation-and-Partnerships-LBBD-VCSE-Strategy-2019.pdf>

Great Yarmouth – a project based on Community Development approaches to working with local people, in the places they live, to identify and act upon things that matter most to communities. The project aimed to connect local communities to the benefits of economic growth by increasing community resilience, by improving the responsiveness of Voluntary Sector support services and by increasing the participation of communities in driving forward sustainable economic development

<http://neighbourhoodsthatwork.org/>

5.2. In addition to this national review case studies of good practice locally were also considered, including:

- Bellingham Assembly, Bellingham Together
- Sydenham Assembly – first online meeting
- Grove Park Assembly and Job Fair
- Social integration + healthy eating through the intergenerational Urban Connect Project in Whitefoot and Catford
- Lee Green – Controlled Parking Zone (CPZ) review
- Perry Vale NCIL engagement
- Sydenham - SEE3/High Street Happenings and Fun Palaces
- Dementia Friendly Community (multiple wards)
- Honor Oak Estate Steering Group
- Brockley - Luxmore Gardens
- Positive Ageing Council (POSAC).

5.3. Across all of these various examples and case studies there were a number of important shared success factors which can be summarised as:

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- The promotion of community leadership and ownership of the agenda
- A bottom-up approach fuelled by the identification of the issues that matter to local communities
- Long-term and flexible rather than fixed meeting dates and a standard operating model
- Genuine partnership and engagement rather than an 'us and them' approach
- The local authority role being one of 'connectors' and 'facilitators' rather than leading or managing the discussions; but recognising that strong, confident leadership from the Council is essential to the process.

Local Pilots

- 5.4. In order to consider how these principles could be embedded in proposals for the Assemblies going forward the Community Development Team undertook two bespoke activities to test and learn from the strengths of the current community sector in the borough.
- 5.5. The first was working with primary care networks to facilitate engagement with local communities where COVID vaccine take-up is low; aiming to increase vaccine uptake, addressing long-term disengagement with and mistrust of statutory and health services and ensuring ongoing long term health and well-being gains for residents.
- 5.6. The community development team used their knowledge of communities at ward level to identify and link up primary care networks/GP practices with key VCS contacts who can help reach residents and increase take-up of vaccinations. The team supported setting up some key engagement activities between GP practices and residents in the areas prior to offering a number of 'pop-up' clinics.
- 5.7. The feedback on this 'ground level' activity is that it built trust with local communities who would not normally engage with statutory services and has both supported vaccine take-up but also brought added value in relation to addressing other health conditions within those communities. For example, setting up a pop-up clinic at 2000 Community Action Centre, resulted in 6 Chinese undocumented migrants, who were vaccinated and registered with primary care; a 65yr illiterate white male, unable to navigate the booking system and unable to reach his GP was told by a friend to come along for his 1st dose; around 50 Brazilian Portuguese speaking fast food drivers who arrived through the clinic once news had spread via WhatsApp, the majority of whom were eligible but did not have an NHS GP.
- 5.8. This kind of targeted engagement activity at ward level is proving to have impact and make a significant difference to residents' lives, connecting residents with services, increasing ongoing engagement and trust between residents and institutions and thereby having longer-term impact in terms of civic engagement.
- 5.9. The second project worked with targeted VCS organisations to address how the Council works on reaching and supporting seldom heard communities, in line with the Democracy Review recommendation that: "*The Council needs to develop and improve how it attempts to actively engage with seldom-heard groups and individuals to inform decision-making that will impact on them. A further piece of work to consider how best to achieve this, and test out various mechanisms should be undertaken. In the first instance the third sector, faith groups and other public sector partners should be actively involved in shaping and informing this work.*"
- 5.10. A workshop was held with 25 VCS organisations in May 2021 to find out from the sector about their experience of and engagement with seldom heard communities; to identify key needs and issues in relation to access and support; to explore how we collectively address intersectionality; and to identify how we can better engage with

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seldom heard communities as the Council going forward.

- 5.11. The workshop highlighted that there are many groups and organisations working across our communities and they do not find the voices of those they engage with 'seldom heard' they just need a more flexible system to engage with rather than set meetings or consultation structures.
- 5.12. The conference also highlighted that specific groups, often faith or community led, have deep insight into local needs but the Council does not proactively engage them in its current structures. The proposed community network model would seek to change this by directly reaching out to these groups to be part of the new structures.
- 5.13. Furthermore organisations working with seldom heard voices wanted a place where local groups can feed in intelligence; when something new is discovered about communities or a new need emerges, organisations wanted a place where that information could be shared and follow-up conversations could be enabled.
- 5.14. A longer-term issue identified was the need for a systematic co-production strategy so that seldom heard voices can design and co-produce the services they could benefit from. Both the revised network group structure and new online/digital approaches provide excellent opportunities for co-production directly with communities, although it is proposed that co-production is written into the terms of reference of the network groups and the approach to digital working.

6. Local Assemblies and Community Development – Principles for future delivery

- 6.1. Taking in account the findings of the national desktop review, the consideration of a number of successful local initiatives and the pilot and testing work undertaken in early 2021 it is recommended that a multi-layered and blended approach to Assemblies is developed going forward.
- 6.2. The intention is to develop a successor to the current approach which captures the strengths of Local Assemblies but promotes wider community engagement and ownership by the community which has the dual benefit of empowering communities while delivering the agreed revenue saving for the Council.
- 6.3. This locality-based model, with provision for addressing wider communities of interest, could be built around the following structures and concepts:
 - Keeping the ward based structure with formal Assembly meetings highlighting issues of concern and taking a 'programme management' approach to coordinating local networks of activity including that funded through the NCIL programme
 - A minimum of two formal Assembly meetings, delivered on-line, per year with greater coordination of wider activity and advantage taken of other existing structures like the Police's Safer Neighbourhood Teams Ward Panels
 - The delivery of additional face to face events throughout the year in partnership with the local community groups and organisations. It is recognised that face to face interactions will remain important and the existence of these will be a real measure of success for the new approach.
 - The establishment of an appropriate on-line mechanisms through which issues could be raised and communication could take place
 - An 'annual report' for each ward highlighting specific local concerns for action by relevant partners and highlighting successes from the previous year
- 6.4. An approach of this type would keep the ward-based structure and Assembly name in

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line with the constitution, but develop a community network to identify and address issues, incorporating representation from groups including:

- Local businesses
- Housing associations
- Local elected members
- Young people
- Residents' groups
- Faith groups
- Local primary care network

- 6.5. In some localities, this network is already in place and has functioned effectively alongside Assemblies. Where such networks are not currently in place, the Community Development Team would work with the voluntary and community sector and resident organisations to identify appropriate lead organisations and create a comprehensive network, increasing the inclusivity of contributions to community engagement. The fundamental difference between this and the Assembly meetings are that the community networks are resident and community owned and led, supported by the Council. There is an opportunity to build new local networks around projects receiving NCIL funding as they will be expected to have community engagement at their heart.
- 6.6. Community networks would be coordinated and organised by one or more local community organisations per ward. Elected members would be a key part of this structure and could choose to chair these networks or share the responsibility with local groups.
- 6.7. The issues to be addressed by the community network would be generated by the Community in a 'bottom up' approach to ensure that each area was focusing on current and emerging issues as well as longer-term 'intractable' issues for example employment opportunities for young people. The role of Councillors in this network would be to facilitate and encourage communities to bring forward issues of concern, to use their influence to bring appropriate partners to the table (businesses and funders for example), ensure that any issues for the Council are fed back and Council actions on any identified issue is communicated back to the group.
- 6.8. The community network model draws on the most effective aspects of the Assemblies:
- providing a space for councillors and officers to meet with residents/constituents regularly, and to work together collaboratively
 - providing opportunities for both internal and external organisations to work with communities of interest or at a local level
 - provides a pathway for residents to escalate local concerns through councillors and council officers

At the same time, the model offers the added benefits of:

- Widening the scope for councillors and officers to effectively gather local intelligence from a range of sources, and at many levels
- Allows flexibility to quickly respond to local concerns
- Allows time for collaboration with local partners on the longer-term issues for the local area
- Provides a focal point for ward based NCIL funded projects to come together

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- 6.9. The cuts to the Assembly budget in 2022/23 will mean a reduction in staffing for coordinating meetings, as well as ceasing funding for venue hire, newsletters, printed publicity and other costs associated with organising and running Assembly meetings. It is therefore important that the remaining staff resource is deployed to find and develop a sustainable, community owned and led mechanism for democratic engagement, which has clear benefits for all partners who participate in it. A key consideration for ongoing assembly meetings is how we engage residents who through digital exclusion would not be able to engage with online platforms and meetings. This blended approach will enable engagement with local organisations to explore ways to reach out to vulnerable communities and enable ongoing communication with these communities at local level.
- 6.10. In local areas where such networks do not exist, there will be a need to identify and support the appropriate organisations to lead on the community network. The new approach will challenge Council Officers to work in a much more proactive and community focused way – reaching out to a range of community groups and statutory sector partnership rather than focusing on the function and mechanics of Assembly meetings. Another key route to increasing democratic engagement is through a scheme similar to the COVID Community Champions scheme, where trusted leaders in the community can encourage and support peers to engage in a range of activities. The current Community Champions scheme is being evaluated and it is proposed that the findings of the evaluation inform if and how we can use community members in increasing our reach into communities.
- 6.11. The Democracy Review identified that there are significant numbers/groups of residents who do not fully participate in current Council engagement activities, including Assemblies. One clear advantage of the community network approach would be that, with community networks being resourced via existing local organisations, Community Development Officers would be freed up to focus on the important work of encouraging the engagement of under-represented groups including facilitating their participation in their local community network. We propose that this would involve continuing with work on seldom heard voices and working with other Council departments and our key partners on targeted engagement activities such as the Primary Care Network engagement events.
- 6.12. This locality-based ward structure would be overlaid with new and existing mechanisms to address multi-ward or borough-wide communities of interest, enabling common themes across wards to be addressed, such as clean air, congestion, policing, leisure or employment. For example, Council Officers have recently taken over the coordination of the Safer Neighbourhood Board which is the main community vehicle for Police Liaison and the new structures would make much better use of that resource. Again, council officers would be challenged to work across sectoral partnerships rather than focusing on their own individual ‘set piece’ Assembly meetings. The ward based structure would also provide a vehicle for all NCIL funded projects in the locality to come together to increase the reach of their schemes.
- 6.13. This would reduce duplication of effort and resources (reviews have identified cases of different assemblies addressing similar issues in isolation from each other) whilst ensuring that issues of concern to local communities retain their local nuances. Issues raised through this mechanism would be considered by Council Officers, working with elected representatives, subject matter experts from the local community and expert organisations, and representatives from lead community organisations to establish solutions through bespoke activities, e.g. creation of an action plan and allocation of tasks to Task and Finish groups and/or existing Council forums addressing specific issues.
- 6.14. This means that the proposal for two on-line meetings delivered directly by the Council would be very much the ‘core offer’ around which much more activity is built with the

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hope that wider face to face meetings can be delivered in partnership with the local ward networks. As previously elected members remain at the heart of the Assemblies and their local leadership is key to ensuring the success of the new approach.

- 6.15. Finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we as a society have engaged with each other, and how organisations have delivered services. As we move into recovery, this presents the Council with the opportunity to design democratic engagement using online mechanisms, promoting improved communication and involvement. Online engagement would therefore be a significant driver in the community network approach. It is proposed that activity to establish community networks across Lewisham would include exploring the development of an appropriate resident-facing community engagement platform through which issues could be raised, communication could take place, meetings could be organised and success stories could be publicised.
- 6.16. The exploration of online platforms will be undertaken as part of the overall Digital Strategy working with a significant focus on improving the resident experience of engaging with the Council.

7. NCIL – specific considerations

- 7.1. At the time of writing a report recommending a number of changes to the ward based fund for the distribution of the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) has been despatched for Mayor and Cabinet and will have been considered by the time the Committee meetings.
- 7.2. The report is available here <http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/mqA.aspx?M=6490&LLL=0> and sets out the proposed revision to the approach to the delivery of the ward based programme including the top up of the available amounts with CIL receipts collected during the period 2018-2020 and the inclusion of an additional priority that allows project proposals that will assist in Lewisham's Covid-19 recovery.
- 7.3. It is recommended that Mayor and Cabinet agree:
 - a top up of the existing ward based funds by a further £1,188,483 which was collected through CIL receipts during the period of April 2018 – March 2020 bringing the available funding through the ward based funds to £2,931,270
 - the introduction of banded funded categories for each ward with an allocation of over £50,000
 - the additional priority addressing projects that aim to assist in Lewisham's Covid-19 recovery that will benefit Lewisham's communities at a local level.
 - the removal of the online longlisting phase of the original process and the extension of the delivery timetable from up to 12 months to up to 24 months
 - that support be given to potential bidders in the form of cost breakdowns for project types suggested through consultation undertaken to date and examples from elsewhere
 - the delivery of the bespoke package of support for applicants as set out in the report
- 7.4. Assuming that this is agreed then the round of Assembly meetings in January and February will be key to the delivery of ward based NCIL. It is expected that the majority of these will be online but that face to face meetings are held where there are significant resources are available and a workshop approach may be more appropriate. Officers will also explore the use of a number of smaller events in the lead up to the Assemblies to ensure that any concerns are addressed ahead of the formal structures.
- 7.5. If agreed the new NCIL allocations will provide a total of £2,931,270 (see appendix 1 for ward breakdown) to be allocated and spent locally over the coming years and it is hoped that this activity can be the bedrock of the new community led approach as

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many local groups and activities will receive new funding and will require a point of collaboration to ensure that maximum value is derived from this investment.

8. Conclusion and next steps

- 8.1. Local Assemblies are a well understood and long-established mechanism for democratic engagement in Lewisham. Despite some of the weaknesses identified, for example representation of diverse voices and experiences, they represent a key commitment by the Council to hear and respond to residents and enable residents to influence decision-making.
- 8.2. In moving to different kinds of engagement, we are therefore proposing a blended approach that retains the Assembly meetings albeit at a reduced and virtual level, but driven by information gathered through online and digital means and through wider community networks including faith groups.
- 8.3. This is intended to ensure the Assemblies are more resident-led and 'bottom up' at ward level with community owned network groups, involving a range of local partners, taking the lead on setting agendas and driving business. This will also allow a more targeted approach to community engagement activity in response to key Council agendas such as climate change and with our health partners to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.
- 8.4. Throughout this period, we will work with colleagues developing the overarching Digital Strategy to trial different kinds of intelligence gathering, engagement and online collaboration.
- 8.5. By taking this blended approach, we hope to test the appetite amongst residents and community organisations to genuinely own and engage with the democratic process, and to engage a wider range of stakeholders than previously.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1. The principles set out in this report have equality and equity at their heart and seek to address the concerns regarding the current Assembly model and broadening the base of local community engagement.
- 9.2. This activity will deliver equalities benefits in itself but also allow for a richer understanding of the lived experience of all communities allowing for wider activity to be tailored to more effectively address inequalities.
- 9.3. In addition to the Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act 2010, the NCIL ward based fund seeks to further positively address the disproportionate impact COVID 19 has had across many of our communities including; BAME communities, people with disabilities, individuals with no recourse to public funds and those living in more deprived areas of the borough.

10. Crime and disorder implications

- 10.1. The principles outlined in this paper are based on increasing integration of various elements of community engagement and development. This includes work relating to the reduction of crime and disorder including the Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panels, the Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Board so it is anticipated that the approach will increase community ability to contribute to these forums.
- 10.2. In relation to NCIL as Community Safety is recommended as one of the priorities in 15 of the 18 wards it is expected that the fund overall will have a positive impact in reducing crime and disorder although the nature of this can not be determined ahead of the application and assessment process.

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11. Health and wellbeing implications

- 11.1. There is substantial evidence that engagement with local community activities increases health and wellbeing outcomes and reduces the level of unnecessary contact with health and care services. The approach outlined above is intended to increase the opportunities for engagement, not just in Assembly related activities, but in the wider development of the local area thus improving both individual and collective health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 11.2. The purpose of all NCIL funding is to offset any impacts of development and population growth so the expectation is that any and all projects that receive funding will improve the wellbeing of the local community.

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13. Appendices

- 13.1. Appendix 1 - New NCIL Ward Allocations (subject to approval at Mayor and Cabinet on Tuesday 14th September 2021)

| Ward | Ward amount 2015-2018 (agreed) | New ward amounts 2015-2020 (recommended) |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Bellingham | £49,057 | £86,040 |
| Blackheath | £76,262 | £128,765 |
| Brockley | £54,466 | £94,864 |
| Catford South | £19,931 | £30,958 |
| Crofton Park | £29,382 | £43,959 |
| Downham | £52,794 | £88,589 |
| Evelyn | £595,306 | £691,020 |
| Forest Hill | £32,921 | £65,926 |
| Grove Park | £32,274 | £63,499 |
| Ladywell | £49,062 | £62,923 |
| Lee Green | £16,193 | £39,349 |
| Lewisham Central | £82,402 | £465,884 |
| New Cross | £265,816 | £405,109 |
| Perry Vale | £38,838 | £145,181 |
| Rushey Green | £198,884 | £253,097 |
| Sydenham | £35,447 | £88,084 |
| Telegraph Hill | £65,340 | £96,167 |
| Whitefoot | £48,411 | £81,855 |
| Total | £1,742,787 | £2,931,270 |

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