

Community Empowerment



October 2021

What is community empowerment



- Community empowerment is about having the conditions in place that allow local people to make a difference to improve their localities and that encourage them to believe it is both possible and worth it.
- An empowered community is one which is:

Confident, Inclusive, Organised, Co-operative and Influential

- Transforming and empowering communities is not a quick fix solution. It needs local people, the Council, other agencies and community groups to work together to make change happen.

Local examples...

- **Community champions:** through the Care for our Community volunteer scheme, more than 1,500 signed up to volunteer across their local communities providing food and prescription pick-ups/deliveries, befriending, basic errands etc. throughout the pandemic – this work has been embedded into communities.
- **Visible community action:** Utilised s106 monies from the Dunton Green housing development to bring the existing and new communities of Dunton Green together, identifying and responding to the needs of the local community and empowering the community to continue this work after the end of the project.
- **Visible community action:** Community walkabouts with SDC, Kent Police, Community Wardens and WKHA to discuss resident priorities for tackling ASB and dog fouling and environmental improvements.

Local examples...

- **Local leadership:** Established a Voluntary Sector Forum to bring together voluntary sector partners to look at sector resilience, addressing and adapting services to suit community need.
- **Work from the communities strengths:** the Council established a Public Realm Commission, which has voluntary representation from residents, local creatives, businesses and public sector to help shape and find solutions for local place-making, looking how public realm has been considered in new developments and ensuring public art celebrates the particular story of a place and engages with the community in its making.
- **Community conversations:** substantial community consultation and conversations were undertaken with the local community as part of the Swanley master planning which has helped shape proposals for the new leisure centre at White Oak.

What is an empowered resident?



- An **empowered resident** may choose to volunteer or show leadership in addressing issues in their neighbourhoods and is happy to stand up and be counted when they are dissatisfied.
- They will be focused on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems and they will look to work with agencies when the opportunity arises.



What is an empowered community?



- An **empowered community** will be resilient to change and foster the belief that residents should help each other and themselves rather than depend on others. An empowered community is one that wants its voice to be heard, that will influence what happens locally and, when the opportunity arises, will look to take control.



Community Empowerment Toolkit



It is proposed to develop a Community Empowerment Toolkit that will:

- Promote understanding of what community empowerment means and how it can help communities do things for themselves and be more influential.
- Help people to be more active in community life – increasing peoples' individual skills and opportunities, strengthen their communities, and make sure local services reflect community need.

Community Empowerment Toolkit



- Improve skills and knowledge for empowerment through training for communities and services on how to do it.
- Support community capacity-building by helping them get involved in local issues, such as helping other people in their community. It can include training, advice, space to hold meetings and advice on funding.
- Promote discussion and consultation with residents and community groups.

