

A Better Crewkerne and District (ABCD)

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Purpose of the Report

To update members on the work of ABCD regeneration charity based in Crewkerne that develops projects and initiatives that help make improvements in the town.

Public Interest

This report provides a regular update on the activities and projects carried out by the registered charity ABCD, which is a community regeneration group based in Crewkerne.

Recommendation

That members note the report and continue to support the work of ABCD.

Background

ABCD is a charity with the aim of helping to make Crewkerne a better place to live. In 2004 the group was awarded funding from the then Market & Coastal Towns Initiative which allowed them to carry out extensive consultation with residents and organisations in and around Crewkerne. The results of that consultation were used to produce a Community Plan for the town which was published in 2005. A number of significant projects benefiting the town emerged from that Plan and they include:

- George Reynolds Centre a new purpose built sports and youth facility for Crewkerne
- New pedestrian link behind the M&Co store
- Various walks & promotional leaflets
- Business Showcase
- Theatre in Shops

New Community Plan for Crewkerne

Throughout 2015 a significant amount of work took place to produce a new Crewkerne Community Plan. A household survey was delivered to every home in the town to consult residents on issues relating to the town centre, green spaces, community life, safety and getting about. 708 (20%) of households completed and returned their surveys and the data from that, along with data from a focus group with Wadham School students and the 2011 Census, has been used to draft a new Community Plan for Crewkerne which will span the next 10 years.

Some of the main issues that have arisen are:

- Desire for a greater choice of places to eat in the evening
- More evening events, particularly music and arts related and especially for young people

- More markets and town centre events at the weekend
- General lack of awareness of what services and activities some of the local organisations provide
- Interest in short term volunteering for one off projects and activities
- Overgrown shrubs and fallen trees restricting use of paths
- Poorly lit paths in residential areas at night
- Poor lighting in parts of town centre
- Poor pedestrian crossing at top South Street
- Lack of bus shelter to protect passengers from poor weather
- Inconsiderate parking – on pavements and outside Nationwide

A Community Plan document has now been drafted and 5 themes have emerged:

- Strong community
- Vibrant Town Centre
- Easy Access to get about
- Thriving Local Economy
- Local Environment

ABCD has started putting together an Action Plan of potential projects to address the issues identified. The draft Action Plan will be presented to the public where residents will get the opportunity to have their say and contribute comments and proposals for relevant projects. The final version of the Crewkerne Community Plan with accompanying Action Plan will be available later in the year.

The new Community Plan with its accompanying evidence will be used to influence decision makers and convince funders to support the projects identified in the Action Plan.

Creative Projects & Activities

After the success of Theatre in the Shops in 2014, many people said they wanted more arts events and activities in the town. During 2015 ABCD started to build on the interest generated and create a legacy from Theatre in the Shops by putting on a number of events and activities:

- New Rope String Band, a very popular folk band performed at the Victoria Hall last April.
- Performance Poets Hip Yak Poetry Shack delivered a number of free poetry workshops and performed those poems live in various locations around the town centre in May 2015.
- Creative Crewkerne was launched in July at a garden party consultation, aimed at engaging with Crewkerne's arts lovers, particularly those interested in helping to bring more arts events into the town.
- Pom-pom making workshops commenced in the autumn and over the past few months dozens of residents have been making pompoms, which will be used in a decorative fashion later this year.

Creative Crewkerne are now working on a community singing project, involving a variety of singing groups based in the town, which will culminate in a performance at the Henhayes Fete in June 2016.

Financial Implications

Although there are no financial implications relating to this report it should be noted that the Area West Committee has supported ABCD projects that emerged from the first Community Plan. The new Community Plan will identify new projects to meet the needs of Crewkerne's residents, so there may be requests for funding contributions towards those in the future.

Council Plan Implications

Working in partnership with ABCD helps address Focus Four of the SSDC Council Plan:

To ensure South Somerset has healthy and self-reliant communities where people are willing to help each other.

Carbon Emissions & Climate Change Implications

Not applicable

Equality and Diversity Implications

A variety of methods are used to ensure that the views of as many people as possible are gained from the residents of Crewkerne. The evidence gathered will be used by a number of voluntary and public sector organisations to develop their projects and services which will benefit a wide range of people from all sectors of the community.

Background Papers

- Update report on A Better Crewkerne and District – January 2015
 - Update report on the work of ABCD – December 2013.
 - AWC report on the progress of the Crewkerne Community Plan – September 2010.
 - Progress Report on the priority projects of 'A Better Crewkerne & District' Community Plan - Area West Committee January 2008
 - Progress Report on A Better Crewkerne & District 17th October 2007.
 - Progress Report on the Community Projects of A Better Crewkerne & District 18th July 2007.
 - Progress Report on 'A Better Crewkerne & District' and the Community Plan Projects 17th January 2007
 - Progress of the Crewkerne & District Community Plan and associated projects 18th October 2006
 - The launch of Crewkerne & District Community Plan 19th July 2006
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