

Standing



for the
Black Country
as an
Urban Park



Audit of community involvement initiatives in the Black Country which support the aims and objectives of *Black Country as an Urban Park*

FINAL REPORT

Prepared by
The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country

on behalf of
Black Country Consortium Ltd

August 2007

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C O N T E N T S

	Page
1 Introduction	3
2 The context of CI audit	4
3 Community involvement frameworks within the Black Country	
Overview	6
Dudley MBC	7
Sandwell MBC	11
Walsall MBC	14
Wolverhampton CC	17
4 Recommendations	20
Appendices	
1 Original and revised brief for CI audit	21
2 Methodology	23
3 Details of information compiled in the database	25
4 Database fields collected	27
5 Abbreviations	28
6 Summary database layout	29

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (BBCWT) was commissioned in June 2007 to carry out an audit of community involvement (CI) initiatives operating within the Black Country¹ which are congruent with the aims and objectives of *Black Country as an Urban Park* (BCUP).
- 1.2 The aims of the CI audit are as follows:
- 1 Produce a database of groups and initiatives, currently active in the Black Country, which seek to involve communities in ways that are congruent with the aims and objectives of BCUP;
 - 2 Identify existing structures and processes for community engagement and consultation which are active in the four Black Country local authorities. Liaise and where possible, hold face-to-face meetings with local authority neighbourhood management teams, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) contacts and community voluntary sector umbrella groups in each of the four Black Country local authorities;
 - 3 Identify pathways for fostering CI based on knowledge of existing community engagement/ consultation frameworks. Highlight potential approaches for involving communities making use of these frameworks.

(Details of the methodology employed and a discussion of the development of the brief for the CI audit are shown in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2)

Structure of this report

- 1.3 This document provides the following information:
- 1 An outline of the background of BCUP and the context of the CI audit (*Section 2*);
 - 2 A description of the frameworks which exist to facilitate community involvement in each of the four Black Country local authorities (*Section 3*);
 - 3 A set of recommendations for achieving CI in the context of BCUP based on meetings held with various umbrella organisations and council departments actively engaged in community involvement work (*Section 4*);

Contained in the appendices are:

Appendix 1: A description of the original brief for the CI audit and revisions that were made to this;

Appendix 2: A description of the methodology employed to compile the database of community involvement organisations;

Appendix 3: Details of all enquiries made, actions taken and the sources of data obtained during the CI audit;

Appendix 4: Details of the data fields constituted in the database;

¹ The metropolitan borough councils of Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, and Wolverhampton City Council

Appendix 5: A list of abbreviations used in this report.

Appendix 6: A database of 1500+ groups and contacts known to be engaged in community involvement in the Black Country.

2 BACKGROUND

Black Country as an Urban Park

2.1 A review of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the Black Country sub-region (The Black Country Study, 2003) identified four key priorities for reversing negative socio-economic trends in the sub-region:

- 1 Reverse the trend of people leaving the Black Country;
- 2 Raise income levels by ensuring better skills and types of jobs;
- 3 To attract and retain people with higher level skills (change the socio-economic mix);
- 4 Protect and enhance the environment and create a safe, attractive and healthy place to live and work.

2.2 The Black Country Study places a great deal of emphasis on creating a high quality environment (priority 4) as both a platform and a catalyst for achieving broader socio-economic targets within the Black Country (priorities 1-3). Accordingly, the concept of Black Country as an Urban Park (BCUP) was developed as a 30 year vision, integrating the transformation of the physical environmental with the reversal of negative socio-economic trends within the sub-region by 2033.²

2.3 It is anticipated that key outputs of implementing the BCUP model will be to:

- Promote learning and skills development and opportunities for employment especially for young people;
- Facilitate active citizenship, community cohesion & safety;
- Promote healthy living and enjoyment for local people and visitors.

The rationale involving communities in BCUP

2.4 Community involvement (CI) has gained prominence in recent times as a way of ensuring that stakeholder communities not only benefit from the end product of initiatives but can also benefit from the process of achieving the end product. Various definitions of community involvement exist, but broadly it can be defined as a process whereby people are 'actively involved' in identifying needs, exploring solutions, making decisions and planning the way forward for projects, organisations and the wider community. In reality community involvement represents a continuum and can vary from people passively receiving benefits to people actively making decisions about a programme's policies and decisions.

² See 'That Black Country Study' Black Country Consortium (2006)

- 2.5 It is hoped that by seeking to involve communities at all stages of BCUP this will instil a sense of ownership thus furthering the long term sustainability of the regeneration strategy. It is also the case that by involving communities, initiatives will more closely target socio-economic priorities within communities (see 2.2).
- 2.6 In summary, the rationale for involving communities in BCUP brings together the idea of 'environmental transformation' as a platform for socio-economic regeneration (as outlined in 2.2). It also stems from a democratic impetus to directly involve communities in the 'process' of developing initiatives for BCUP rather than the passive receipt of 'benefits' which are presumed by third parties (see 2.4).

Black Country as an Urban Park bid to the BIG Lottery fund

- 2.7 One further development has made it necessary to begin to explore strategies for involving communities around the BCUP concept. In 2006 the BIG Lottery Fund established the *Living Landmarks, People Millions* funding stream. This funding stream was recognised as an ideal opportunity to implement the wider BCUP vision. Ultimately, a proposal was developed and submitted in May 2007 entitled; *A Million People: Black Country as an Urban Park*.³ A central criterion for the allocation of BIG Lottery monies was for any investment to demonstrably contribute to pressing socio-economic issues and in addition, it was desirable that and project proposals had the full 'involvement' of all sectors of the community that the project was to benefit.
- 2.8 The project proposal *A Million People: Black Country as an Urban Park*, includes proposals for a programme of site based capital works on 27 green spaces and nature reserves spanning the Black Country ('environmental transformation'). A second key element of the project is a programme of revenue expenditure on a community involvement programme to ensure the benefits of any capital investment reach all sectors of the community. Thus a need to further understand the concept of 'community involvement' and evaluate how it operates in the Black Country was identified.

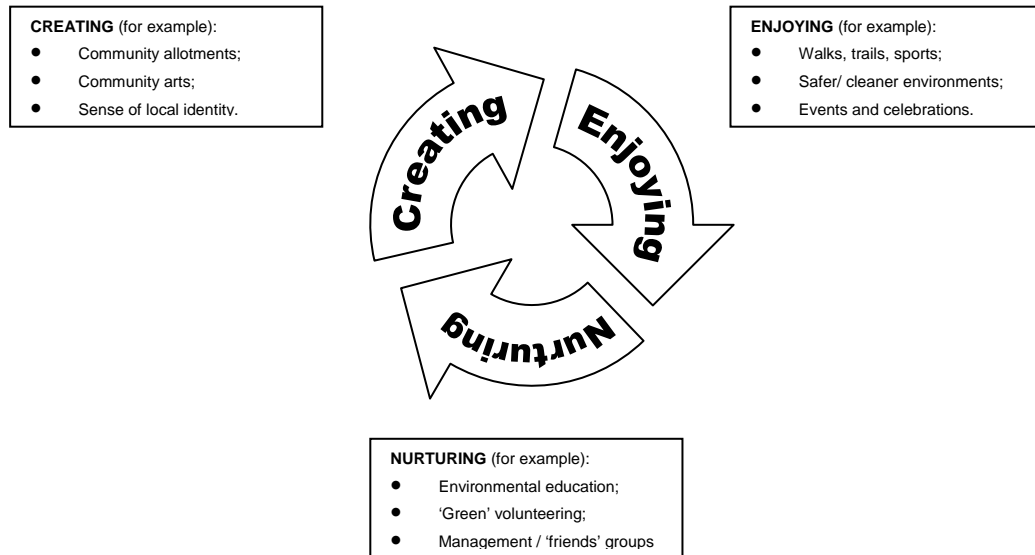
Opportunities for community involvement as part of BCUP

- 2.9 As noted above (see 2.4) the idea of 'community involvement' describes a continuum of interactions between stakeholders who seek to benefit from initiatives (e.g. communities in the Black Country) and those who seek to implement them (e.g. BCC). It was found difficult to conceptualise how CI might take shape as part of BCUP, without first having a clearer impression of the types of projects and initiatives BCUP might bring to fruition and moreover, the specific types of initiative with which 'communities' could expect to be 'involved'.
- 2.10 For the purposes of the audit we divided the types of initiatives BCUP might bring forward for CI into three categories:
- Opportunities for involvement in **creating** a better environment through volunteering, educational activities and training;
 - The provision of ongoing opportunities to participate in **nurturing**, looking after and promoting the environment through active citizenship, education and skills development;

³ An application to the BIG lottery fund was submitted by the Black Country Consortium in partnership with the four Black Country local authorities and the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country (May 2007)

- The development of events and activities that promote the broadest possible opportunities for **enjoying and learning** from the environment, for residents and young people across the Black Country and for visitors.

2.11 The following categories are not mutually exclusive and are thus perhaps best represented as a cycle. Examples of the type of initiatives for CI as part of BCUP are indicated below:



3 FRAMEWORKS FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE BLACK COUNTRY

Overview

3.1 For the main part the framework for community involvement (CI) in each of the Black Country local authorities⁴ is structured around three institutions:

- 1 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs);
- 2 Community and voluntary sector councils/ networks;
- 3 Local authority neighbourhood management services.

3.2 Each of these institutions is developed differently in each of the four local authorities. Brief definitions of each institution are provided below followed by an outline of how they operate in each of the four local authorities.

Local Strategic Partnerships

3.3 Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships, which match local authority boundaries. LSPs bring together at a local level, the different parts of the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. Thereby they permit different initiatives and services to support one another so that they can work together more effectively. They are central to the delivery of the new commitment to neighbourhood renewal through the central government Neighbourhood Renewal

⁴ Dudley MBC, Sandwell MBC, Walsall MBC, Wolverhampton CC

Fund (NRF). From 2007 onwards most LSPs will operate in the context of Local Area Agreements (LAA). They are under obligation to demonstrate how they are narrowing the gap between the most deprived areas and the rest.

Community and voluntary sector networks

- 3.4 The activities of the community and voluntary sector are typically represented as LSP level collectively by one or more organisations. Two models are employed in the Black Country. These are:
- *Community Empowerment Network (CEN)*: CENs are recognised by the councils and other local agencies as networks which seeks to voice the diverse views of the community and voluntary sector. Through CENs voluntary and community organisations have the opportunity to gain representation in the formal LSP decision making structure right up to executive board level.
 - *Council for voluntary sector organisations (CVS)*: CVS' work with voluntary organisations to help them to become more effective and efficient. They do this by profiling the voluntary sector locally, researching their needs and concerns, publicising the economic value of the sector. They also facilitate networking, responding to government consultations and providing a range of support services (e.g. advice on funding, business planning, legal frameworks etc.). Lastly, they seek to promote good practice and foster training in the sector.

Neighbourhood Management services

- 3.5 Neighbourhood management describes a range services usually delivered centrally through a council department. The aim of 'Neighbourhood management' is to tackle quality of life ('liveability') issues in communities through: Better management of the local environment, increasing community safety, improving housing stock, working with young people and encouraging employment opportunities. It is typically implemented in areas of deprivation and priority regeneration zones.

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council (DMBC)

- 3.6 At a strategic level, the local decision making framework in DMBC is structured around the LSP; **Dudley Community Partnership (DCP)**. On the Dudley Community Partnership board, priorities from national government are reconciled with priorities identified as being of local significance. Accordingly funding is allocated to various sub-partnership thematic groupings.
- 3.7 At the neighbourhood level, DMBC operate a neighbourhood management service; **Dudley Neighbourhood Management**. Dudley Neighbourhood Management operates on a geographical basis and operates primarily in the 9 most deprived neighbourhood areas in the borough. Within each neighbourhood area a **Neighbourhood Partnership Board (NPB)** is convened. NPBs are community led and take an executive overview of neighbourhood activities. In addition the NPBs own and are accountable for the **neighbourhood plan** which directs and identifies local neighbourhood management priorities.
- 3.8 Following the standard model a 'Community Empowerment Network' entitled **DOSTI** has been constituted in Dudley. DOSTI can be best described as a network of networks. For example, coalitions of organisations representing a particular issue (e.g. community safety, elderly persons welfare) or a geographical community (e.g. Castle Hill), secure representation through DOSTI on the sub-partnership boards and

main board of Dudley Community Partnership. DOSTI networks transcend neighbourhood area boundaries and operate across Dudley.

Potential mechanisms for involving communities around BCUP

- 3.9 At the strategic level, priority setting and the allocation of funding for environmental issues takes place through two groupings within the DCP sub-partnership board on **Housing and the Environment**. Namely: the **Biodiversity group** and the **Energy, Waste and Pollution group**. Both these groupings carry forward actions which may be of direct relevance to the aims and objectives of BCUP. A first step towards operationalising BCUP would be to present BCUP initiatives at the DCP board level and potentially to each of these groupings.
- 3.10 To ensure identification of suitable projects and initiatives at the neighbourhoods level it would be prescient to develop a process for working closely with both Dudley Neighbourhood Management and DOSTI. An existing mechanism for CI which has been tried and tested around other initiatives would be to seek to establish **Specialist Task Groups (STGs)**. STGs are thematic neighbourhood based delivery groups and are convened as sub-groupings of NPBs. STGs specifically concern themselves with drawing in voluntary/ community groups and local service providers, (e.g. schools, police etc.) around a delivery issue (e.g. estate green spaces/ Saltwells Wood etc). Potentially, STGs could be established in each of the 9 neighbourhood areas specifically tasked with bringing forward and involving communities around BCUP.
- 3.11 Two further avenues for exploring CI activity related to BCUP are:
- Dudley Neighbourhood Management employ member of staff responsible for **environmental engagement** in the 9 neighbourhood areas. A project which is currently being pursued is to inventory greenspaces which are <2ha in size and therefore not recognised in the Dudley MBC greenspace strategy documents.
 - Dudley Cultural and Community Services (through the **Parks Development Team**) currently operate a successful model based on allocating **Liveability funding** to greenspaces which can demonstrate formal community engagement through a ‘friends of’ groups.

3.12 Dudley Key Contacts

Organisation name	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
DOSTI	Lorna Prescott	Senior Development Officer	DOSTI acts to represent voluntary and community sector at strategic level in Dudley
Dudley MBC - Culture and Community Services	Kevin Clements	Countryside Manager	Responsible for community involvement/ management/ funding/ development of countryside sites in Dudley
Dudley MBC - Culture and Community Services	Jennie Hoult	Youth and Community Involvement Officer	Responsible for community involvement/ management/ funding/ development of parks in Dudley ALSO Friends of parks groups
Dudley MBC – Neighbourhood	Sue McGavin	Head of Neighbourhood	Responsible for neighbourhood management/ community engagement

Organisation name	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
Management		Management (Dudley MBC)	etc in priority regeneration areas
Dudley MBC - Neighbourhood Management	Paul Mason	Environment Engagement Officer	Responsible for neighbourhood management/ community engagement etc in priority regeneration areas
Dudley MBC - Policy and Executive Support Team	Alex Webb	Sustainable Development Officer	Sustainability officer for Dudley's LSP

Sandwell MBC

3.14 In Sandwell the LSP is known as the **Sandwell Partnership**. The Sandwell Partnership is set out to deliver 5 goals through 5 partnerships. The 5 goals are on;

- health
- skills,
- environment,
- safety
- children & young people

The partnerships that exist are on the following;

- health
- skills & Economic regeneration
- safer Sandwell
- environment
- children & young people

The partners come from the public, private and voluntary sectors. In each of the 6 towns in the borough Town teams exist. These help the partnership reach all of the goals in each of the six towns. The Town Teams work closely with local people and organisations to make services better for people in each town. They improve Sandwell in areas such as health, education and the environment. They also ask local people what kinds of changes they want to see in their neighbourhoods and towns and work to address them.

Potential mechanisms for involving communities around BCUP

3.15 At the strategic level priority setting and allocation of funding for environmental issues takes place through the **Environment Partnership** of the Sandwell Partnership. BCUP initiatives could be presented to the Environment Partnership. However the other partnerships are also important towards operationalising the BCUP initiatives.

At the local level the **Town Teams** would be very important. Town teams help coordinate public services, resolve problems, promote accountability to local stakeholders and facilitate relationships and communication. The Sandwell Town teams are currently putting together a **community involvement strategy** for the borough and there is opportunity there for the BCUP to influence and benefit from that process.

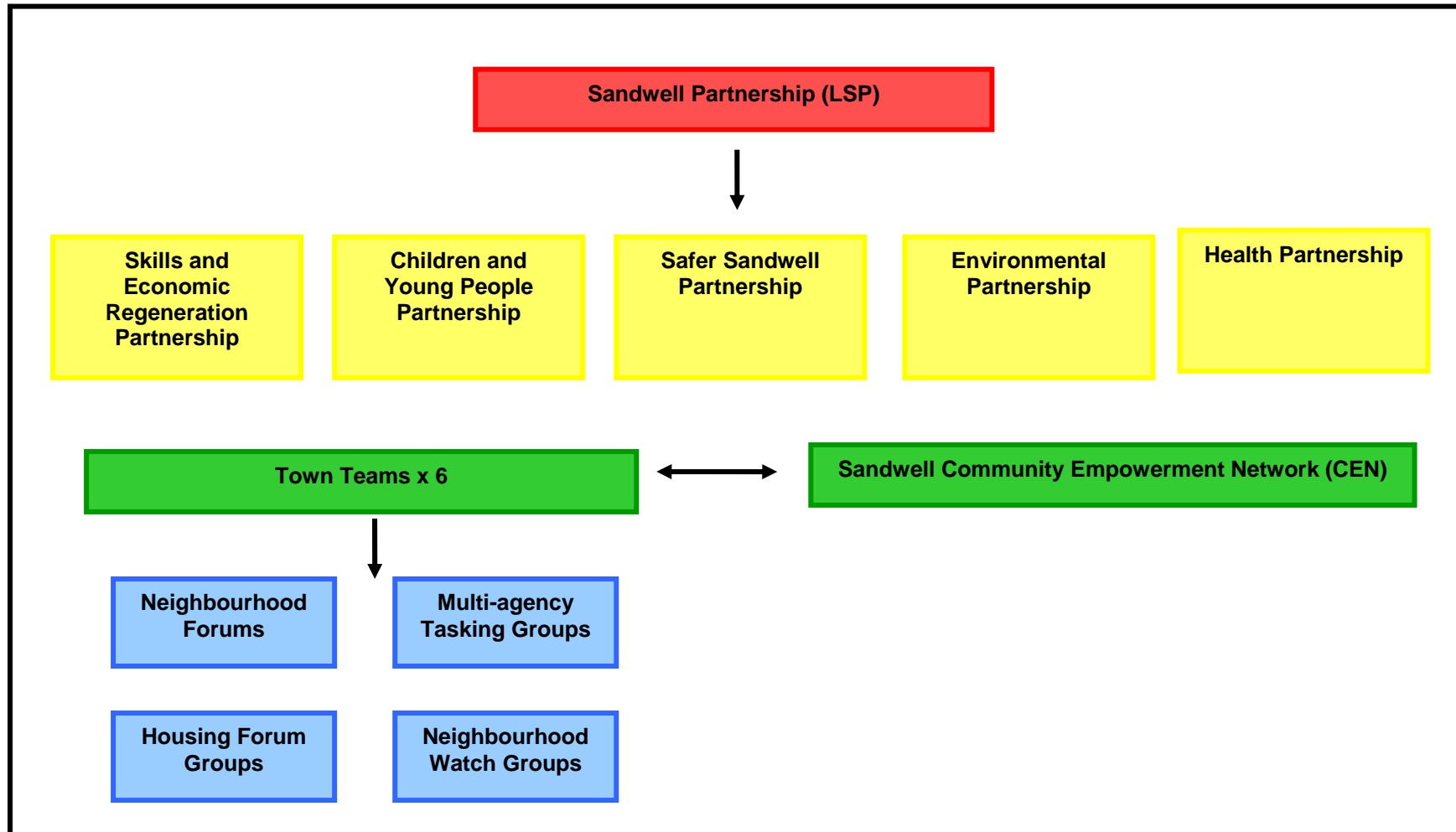
The Town teams also played a crucial role in developing the Fairshare project in Sandwell, which has been a successful model in involving communities in the management and improvement of green spaces and local nature reserves.

3.16 Sandwell key contacts

Organisation name	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations	Stephen Awre	Small Groups Funding Officer	Represent voluntary and community sector organisations in Sandwell. Maintains a detailed database of all CVS organisations in Sandwell.
Sandwell MBC –	Wenda	Wednesbury	Coordination of public services at the town

Organisation name	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
Town teams	Leslie	Town team Coordinator	level
Sandwell MBC – Sandwell Partnership	Liz Mabley	Development Manager	This is the LSP for Sandwell. Strategic level prioritization and allocation of resources in Sandwell.
Sandwell MBC – Town teams	Paul Wright	Head of Town Teams	Responsible for neighbourhood management/ community engagement

3.17 Structure of Sandwell Partnership



Walsall MBC

3.18 In Walsall the LSP is known as the **Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership (WBSP)**. It can be described as the place at which community and economic regeneration come together. The WBSP is made of the usual partners and the partnerships are;

- Community Engagement;
- Regenerating the economy (Walsall Economic Forum);
- Walsall Housing Partnership;
- Walsall Environment Forum;
- Safer Walsall Borough Partnership;
- Lifelong Learning;
- Health and Social Care Partnership Board.

3.19 The partnership delivers through an identified set of 4 pillars or thematic areas, these are:

- Children and young people;
- Healthier communities and older people;
- Safer and stronger communities;
- Economic development and enterprise.

3.20 In order for the WBSP to deliver the outcome of its community plan and LAA it has identified community engagement as a critical factor. This places community involvement at the centre of all that they do. Thus the **Community Empowerment Network** as the organisation charged with community capacity building and encouraging active citizenship, the **Walsall Voluntary Action**, who provide help and support to voluntary sector organisations and the nine **LNPs** in the borough who look to provide an area focus to the community plan, become so essential. Community engagement is therefore delivered through;

- The 9 LNPs which operate through Walsall
- The Community Empowerment Network
- Walsall Voluntary Action

Potential for involving communities around BCUP

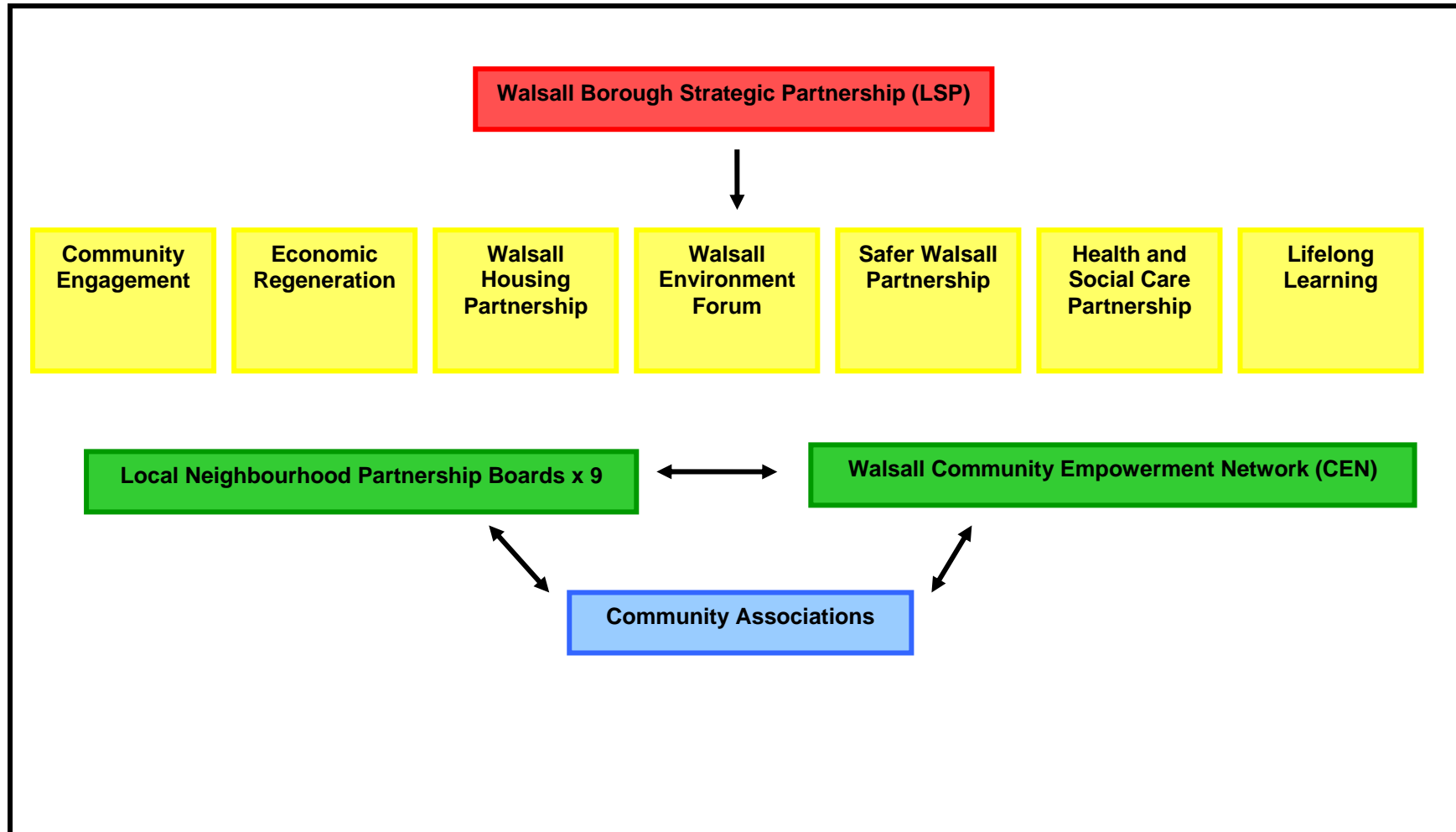
3.21 As in the other local authorities the Walsall Borough Strategic Partnerships acts at the strategic level in terms of priority setting and the allocation of funding for environmental issues through the Walsall Environment Forum. The BCUP can engage directly with **Walsall Environment Forum** to ensure that some elements of BCUP are included the Walsall's action plan.

3.22 At the local level, the **LNP** will play an important role, so will the community associations based in each of the Walsall neighbourhoods. The Walsall Community Empowerment Network is also very important for CI around the BCUP. The Community Empowerment Network is led by Walsall Voluntary Action, which is the CVS for Walsall. Already the NHS has been proactive in engaging the Walsall Voluntary Action, who are good value for money in terms of delivering CI. With adequate financial support and resourcing the Walsall Voluntary Action can be an important partner in the delivery of the BCUP

3.23 Walsall Key contacts

Organisation name	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
Walsall Voluntary Action	Ian Willets	Director Walsall Voluntary Action	Represent voluntary and community sector organisations in Walsall. Maintains a detailed database of all CVS organisations in Walsall.
Walsall Strategic Borough Partnership	Kate Davarza deh	Environment Forum	Responsible for environment issues on the Walsall LSP.
Neighborhood Nature	Julia Morris	Project Officer	Community based environmental and conservation project.
Walsall MBC	Nigel Curnow	Area Countryside Manager	Management of local nature reserves.

3.24 Structure of Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership



Wolverhampton City Council (WCC)

- 3.25 At a strategic level, the local decision making framework in WCC is structured around the LSP (**Wolverhampton Partnerships**). On the Wolverhampton Partnership board, priorities from national government are reconciled with priorities identified as being of local significance. Accordingly funding is allocated to various sub-partnership thematic groupings.
- 3.26 At the neighbourhood level, WCC has been formally divided into 15 geographical 'Neighbourhood Areas' on the basis of both socio-economic criteria and geographical community boundaries. The 15 'Neighbourhood Areas' are administered centrally by Wolverhampton Partnership through **Local Area and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA)**. Each **LANA** or '**Neighbourhood Area**' has a small LANA team assigned to it. Within each neighbourhood area a decision making forum or **Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNP)** is convened. The purpose of each LNP is to bring local service providers together with elected members, community groups and local residents with a view to prioritising and taking action on issues affecting each neighbourhood.
- 3.27 All 15 LNPs are currently in the process of finalising **action plans** which have been consulted upon with the communities in each LANA area. The action plans represent both city wide priorities (e.g. reducing teenage pregnancy, improving education attainment) as well as priorities identified locally (e.g. littering, localised anti-social behaviour). Local priorities identified with the 15 LNP action plans are voiced at the Wolverhampton Partnership board level through the **LANA reference group**. A representative of each LNP also sits on the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Group.
- 3.28 In addition to the neighbourhood management pathway the community and voluntary sector is represented by the work of the community empowerment network in Wolverhampton **Wolverhampton Network Consortium (WNC)** and **Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council (WVSC)**. Both organisations have a formal role to play within the Wolverhampton Partnership structure working both strategically through the LSP and locally to compliment the work of the LANA teams in ensuring broad representation at LNPs. Staff from WVSC sit within the **Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Group** which then influences priority setting at Wolverhampton Partnership board level.

Potential mechanisms for involving communities around BCUP

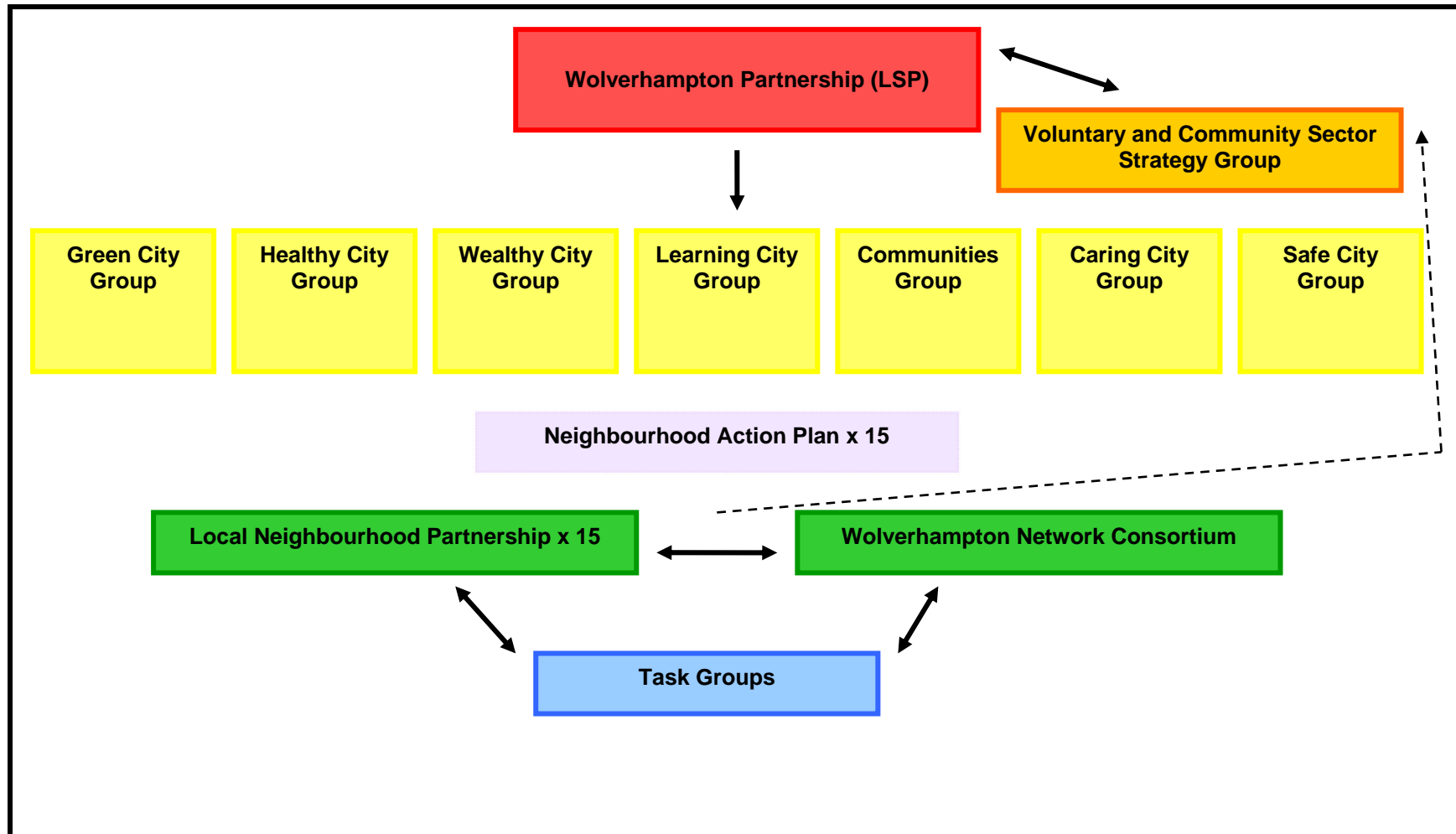
- 3.29 At the strategic level, priority setting and the allocation of funding for environmental issues takes place through the **Green City Group** (a sub-grouping of Wolverhampton Partnerships main board). A first step towards operationalising BCUP would be to present BCUP initiatives to both the Green City Group and also the Wolverhampton Partnership board. In so doing the involvement of WCVS, WNC and LANA would be secured in addition this would be the appropriate forum at which to discuss the congruence between LAA targets and BCUP objectives.
- 3.30 Ensuring identification of suitable projects and initiatives at the grassroots/ community level within local neighbourhoods is perhaps best carried out on a LANA by LANA basis in collaboration with the local LANA teams. An advantage of co-ordinating BCUP initiatives this way is that consultation with communities will have already taken place. A potential mechanism for drawing down BCUP funding to neighbourhood projects would be through the establishment of an environmental '**Task Group**' or other locally appropriate mechanism within each LNP board.

However, given the complexity of initiating this in 15 separate localities it would more efficient to first secure a 'process' for engagement with each of the LNPs at the Wolverhampton Partnership board and sub-board level. In this way BCUP initiatives would be communicated through out the entire voluntary/ community and LANA network.

3.31 Key Contacts Wolverhampton

Organisation	Contact	Position	Type of activities (opportunities)
Local and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA)	Sheila Collett	Head of LANA	Responsible for neighbourhood management in Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton is split into 15 neighbourhood areas (11 Managed Areas (priority), 3 Coordinated areas (less deprived areas). Currently preparing Local Neighbourhood Action Plans for all 15 NA's which draw together service providers across all three sectors
Local and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA)	Jan Hickman	Neighbourhood Management Co-coordinator	Responsible for neighbourhood management in Wolverhampton. Wolverhampton is split into 15 neighbourhood areas (11 Managed Areas (priority), 3 Coordinated areas (less deprived areas). Currently preparing Local Neighbourhood Action Plans for all 15 NA's which draw together service providers across all three sectors
WCC - Parks and Contracts	John Elvins	Environment and Countryside Manager	Responsible for community involvement/ management/ funding/ development of countryside sites in Wolverhampton
WCC - Parks and Contracts	Ian Parsonage	Area Development Manager, East City (Parks and Openspace)	Responsible for community involvement and management of parks and opens spaces sites in Wolverhampton ALSO Friends of parks groups
WCC - Parks and Contracts	Chris Jones	Area Development Manager, West City (Parks and Openspace)	Responsible for community involvement and management of parks and opens spaces sites in Wolverhampton ALSO Friends of parks groups
WCC - Parks and Contracts	Dave Keeley	Funding & Development Manager (Parks and Open Space)	Responsible for community involvement and funding of parks and opens spaces sites in Wolverhampton
Wolverhampton Partnerships	Paul Booth	Executive Director	ED of Wolverhampton Partnerships and chair of Green City sub-grouping
Wolverhampton Partnerships	Charles Jackson-Houlston	Sustainable Development Officer	Sustainability officer for Wolverhampton's LSP
Wolverhampton Network Consortium	Steve Saunders	Network Development Officer	Wolverhampton Network Consortium acts to represent voluntary and community sector at strategic level
Wolverhampton Network Consortium	Geoff Boswell	Network Development Officer	Wolverhampton Network Consortium acts to represent voluntary and community sector at strategic level
All Saints Action Network Environment Forum	Mick Jones	Community Forum Manager	We are a community based charitable company operating as a development trust in All Saints, Wolverhampton. Our ambitions to regenerate All Saints and its neighbouring communities are many.

3.32 Structure of Wolverhampton Partnership



4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Based on an assessment of the CI engagement structures within the four Black Country local authorities and the database which has been assembled, two further courses of action are considered.
- 1 First, by carrying out further research and meeting with different community groups it should be possible to increase the number of database entries thereby extending the coverage of any communications which are issued about BCUP. From experience, however, this would take a considerable amount of time and staff resource bearing in mind data protection regulations (see Appendix 2, A.2.3) and the difficulty of contacting loosely convened organisations.
 - 2 Secondly, during the course of the audit contact was made with a range of organisations which fulfil an umbrella function in terms of CI in the Black Country. Many of these organisations are highlighted as 'Key Contacts' (see each of the borough summaries above) and were found to be very supportive of BCUP. A complementary course of action would be to direct resources at maintaining and building links with existing community delivery/ consultation and involvement frameworks. For example, by seeking to raise awareness and secure buy in at the LSP board level. Further, by presenting BCUP to governance structures at the neighbourhood level (e.g. Local Neighbourhood Partnership boards).
- 4.2 Whilst carrying out the audit it was found that there may be some confusion as to what initiatives and projects BCUP seeks to deliver. In addition whilst the BCUP concept centres on 'environmental transformation' in likelihood what different stakeholders consider to be their 'environment' varies. For example, at the neighbourhood level 'environmental improvements', are an imperative because of a need to improve community safety, or reduce littering. It is possible that the general category 'environment improvements' may deliver exactly these benefits. Care needs to be taken, however, when linking the proposed benefits of BCUP to those actions communities have actually requested and indeed been consulted upon. This applies equally to the language used as it does to the types of projects that are proposed as part of BCUP.
- 4.3 The efficiency of implementing BCUP initiatives could be enhanced by making use of existing structures and frameworks for community consultation and involvement, however, it is important to recognise that these structures vary in each of the four Black Country local authorities. It is therefore necessary to maintain regular and contact with Neighbourhood Management teams, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) groupings and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) networks. The idea of establishing some form of partnership arrangements with these institutions would be one mechanism for achieving this (e.g. a BCC seat on LSP environment forum groupings at both neighbourhood and borough levels).
- 4.4 The audit of CI in the Black Country has directed attention at formal governance structures (e.g. LSP groupings). It is important, however, to recognise the importance of developing a closer working relationship with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) outside of the LSP framework. The VCS will inevitably be an important partner in delivering CI for the BCUP since they already have established infrastructure and information flows set up to deliver and facilitate community involvement. Developing methods for supporting the VCS in terms of funding and resources may be an important avenue for securing CI as part of BCUP.

Original Brief

A1.1 The original aims of the CI audit were to collate information on:

- 1 The geographical remit and scope of different CI initiatives across the region;
- 2 Specific organisation policies, objectives and corporate targets employed by each community involvement project/initiative, and how they complement BCUP's objectives;
- 3 Real & potential sources of funding attached to all community involvement project/ initiatives;
- 4 Timescales for delivery of various community involvement project/ initiatives;
- 5 An indication of the level/ scale of community involvement for each of the identified initiatives.

Revision of Brief

A1.2 Following preliminary enquiries with the CI audit in May 2007 several factors were brought into focus which made it necessary to amend the original brief:

- It was discovered that somewhere in the region of 6,000 community and voluntary sector ('grassroots') organisations are currently active in the Black Country (*Wolverhampton Network Consortium; DOSTI, Pers. Comm.*) the majority of which are informally convened. It would simply have been impractical to contact each and every group;
- Collating information on funding attached to various CI initiatives was found to be extremely difficult given the informal nature of many groups. This was compounded both by the number of different initiatives and the limited quality of internet information sources;
- Given that it would be impractical to contact each group (see above), collating information on the geographical scope of different CI initiatives was complicated by organisations which are based in one area and deliver services in another;
- The release of information on many community groups by third party organisations was prohibited by data protection laws;
- It was found that frameworks for community involvement and consultation are already well developed in each local authority. Seeking to develop routes for CI around BCUP in isolation from these existing frameworks might both add to confusion among grassroots organisations. It also risks duplication of existing structures.
- The majority of CI initiatives belong to one or more 'networks'. These are coordinated by local authority neighbourhood management teams and/or NGOs acting as umbrella bodies in order to represent the community and voluntary sector. It became evident that a more efficient means of seeking to involve grassroots communities with BCUP might well be through such third party organisations. A second advantage of making contact with umbrella organisations is that it is possible to be more strategic as regards identifying from

the outset, those organisations with agendas most closely aligned to those of BCUP.

A1.3 Bearing these factors in mind the original brief was revised as follows:

- Produce a database of groups and initiatives, currently active in the Black Country, which seek to involve communities in ways that are congruent with the aims and objectives of BCUP;
- Identify existing structures and processes for community engagement and consultation which are active in the four Black Country local authorities. Liaise and where possible, hold face-to-face meetings with local authority neighbourhood management teams, Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) contacts and community voluntary sector umbrella groups in each of the four Black Country local authorities;
- Identify pathways for fostering CI based on knowledge of existing community engagement/ consultation frameworks. Highlight potential approaches for involving communities making use of these frameworks.

Methodology

- A2.1 As noted in Appendix 1, it was deemed most efficient to seek to identify community organisations at the ‘grassroots’ level by first making contact with ‘umbrella’ organisations. ‘Umbrella’ organisations can be defined as bodies which act to coordinate or facilitate the operation of numerous geographically or issue specific organisations.
- A2.2 The following method was employed to carry out the audit:

STAGE 1: Scoping of local representation structures

Identify borough local representation frameworks e.g. Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP), Local Neighbourhood Forums (LNF) etc.



STAGE 2: Making contact with umbrella organisations

Make contact with key individuals identified (e.g. Leads on LSP environmental forums, Community and Voluntary Sector Council Co-ordinators, Neighbourhood managers)



STAGE 3: Compilation of database

Entry of raw data in excel spreadsheet.



STAGE 4: Quality control and creation of database in MS Access

Limitations of method

- A2.3 Seeking to make contact with ‘umbrella’ organisations proved to be relatively successful. A significant limitation of this approach, however, was that data protection laws prevented the release of personal contact details by third party organisations in many instances.
- A2.4 Another limitation of the method employed was that access to ‘grassroots’ organisations may have been biased by the priorities of the third party or umbrella groups contacted. It is hoped, however, that by approaching several umbrella organisations, namely, local authority neighbourhood management teams,

community and voluntary sector groupings and networks affiliated to the local strategic partnership (LSP), this source of bias will have been partly ameliorated.

- A2.5 This report focuses heavily on CI structures allied to the LSP. In so doing it perhaps eludes to consider those organisations which address themes and issues not covered by the LSP or deemed to be a priority by formal government structures.

Compilation of Database

A3.1 The following table details the main sources of information and actions taken (meetings held/ contacts made) in the compilation of the database:

Borough	Actions taken	Information obtained
Dudley MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact made and meeting held with Head of Neighbourhood Management, Dudley MBC; • Contact made with co-ordinator of DOSTI (DOSTI = Community Empowerment Network for Dudley); • Contact made with Parks Development team, Dudley MBC; • Contact made with Countryside Manager, Dudley MBC; • Contact made with Dudley Community Partnership (LSP); lead for sustainability and environment. 	List of 1500 voluntary and community groups currently active in Dudley.
Sandwell MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact made and meeting held with Sandwell MBC Town Centre Team manager (Wednesbury); • Contact made and meeting held with Sandwell Council of Voluntary Organisations; • Contact made and meeting held with Sandwell MBC Countryside Services (Sandwell Park Farm) and Countryside Services 'Fair Share' team; • Contact made with Sandwell Partnership & Sandwell Community Empowerment Network. 	<p>List and contact details of community and voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Explaining the structure and function of LSPs in the borough.</p> <p>Contact details for LNP and Town teams.</p>
Walsall MBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact made with Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership; • Contact made with Walsall Voluntary Action & Walsall Community Empowerment Network; • Contact made and meeting held with Walsall MBC Countryside Services; • Contact made with Walsall New Deal for Communities initiative. 	<p>List and contact details of community and voluntary organisations.</p> <p>Explaining the structure and function of LSPs in the borough.</p> <p>Contact details for LNP and Town Teams.</p>

Borough	Actions taken	Information obtained
Wolverhampton CC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact made and meeting held with Countryside and Environment Manager; • Contact made and meeting held with Head of Local and Neighbourhood Arrangements (LANA); • Meeting held with deputy Chief Executive, Wolverhampton Network Consortium; • Contacts made with 15 Neighbourhood Managers; • Contact made with Parks and Open Space Manager east area; • Contact made with Wolverhampton Partnerships (LSP); lead for sustainability and environment; • Contact made with All Saints Action Network (ASAN) environment forum. 	<p>Contact list of Neighbourhood Managers;</p> <p>Local Neighbourhood Forum contact lists;</p> <p>List of local friends groups associated with parks and greenspaces.</p>
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact made with Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT), Health strategy co-ordinator; • Contact made with Black Country Consortium (BCC) 	<p>List of active lifestyle/ action heart groups in the Black Country;</p> <p>Marketing and Communications Urban Park contact database.</p>

Database fields collected

A4.1 Information for the database was collated against the following fields:

Field	Comments
Borough	I.e. Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall or Wolverhampton. NB: facility on database to indicate if operating across more than one borough
Organisation name	
Contact name	
Contact position	
Address1	
Address2	
Address3	
Town/city	
Postcode	Note that the contact address / postcode of the organisation might not be the same as its operational area, e.g. Walsall's neighbourhood teams share the same contact details in the centre of Walsall, but actually operate across the borough. This may have implications for the virtual map?
Telephone	
Email	
Geographical coverage (region/postcode areas)	Most likely to be presented as a text note, e.g. 'Pelsall', although postcodes (to sector level) will be recorded where available.
Category	Each record will be allocated to one of the categories below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business • Education and lifelong learning • Community delivery (non public sector) • LA / public • Faith • Health and active lifestyles • Site user groups • Social networks • Interest groups • Other
Status of group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private / limited • Public sector • NGO / charity • Other voluntary
Umbrella and/or delivery	Is the organization actively delivering a community service or does the organization co-ordinate or facilitate the activities of other organisations?
Turnover/budget	
Number of people involved in CI (PA)	
Type of activities	Narrative to indicate opportunities for CI offered. ***note if community safety is a key output too***
BCUP benefit delivered	UP benefits to be agreed, but need to indicate how group could/is contributing towards UP outputs, i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating (doing something to a site) • Nurturing (learning / facilitating / managing / empowering) • Enjoying (using)
Data source	E.g. 'Cube mailing', RN etc. It is important to note from where the info was derived
Updated	Date of creating record (a prompt for future updating / data cleansing)
Notes	Narrative describing the aims/ objectives of the organisation at hand

Abbreviations

A5.1 The following abbreviations have been used in the report:

BBCWT	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country
BCC	The Black Country Consortium Ltd.
BCUP	Black Country as an Urban Park
CI	Community Involvement
DMBC	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
LA	Local Authority
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LNP	Local Neighbourhood Partnership
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
SMBC	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
WCC	Wolverhampton City Council
WMBC	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Summary database layout

Borough	Organisation	Contact	Status	Umbrella and/or delivery	Category	BCUP benefit delivered
All	Organisation Address Address Address TOWN/CITY Postcode	Contact name Tel: Email:				