

Community Regeneration Strategy

Targeting communities in Wrexham that are
among the 30% most deprived in Wales

2008-2012

Wrexham County Borough Council
Economic Development Department

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1. Introduction

This is the Council's first Community Regeneration Strategy. It sets out the Council's intentions to continue supporting the regeneration of existing target communities in Wrexham and to expand community development and regeneration activity into a wider range of communities over the next 3 years. This document summarises the key points of the strategy and includes its first year's actions.

Community Regeneration is not a new concept to the Council: The Council has been committed to prioritising its resources to reduce deprivation, social exclusion and inequalities within Wrexham since its inception. Since 1996 the Council has built upon the existing regeneration work within Caia Park, and has steadily extended activities into other communities since then – to Cefn Mawr and its neighbouring communities during 1996, to Brynteg and Southsea in 1998, and to the wider communities of west Wrexham and Wrexham's rural communities in 2001. That year also saw the Council support the introduction of the Communities First programme, and this expanded in 2007 to include the community of Hightown.

Much of this activity has been initiated through optimising the external funding opportunities available either through European or domestic funding. Such developments have largely been reactive, with limited focus on how community regeneration work could be rolled-out across the County Borough beyond the life of the particular funding stream concerned. The Council's Community Regeneration Strategy responds by setting out a proactive approach to the consolidation of existing work and the expansion of community regeneration practices within the County Borough: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of regeneration effort is central to the strategy.

The priorities and actions within this strategy refer to two distinct definitions: the first – *regeneration* - refers to the outcome, whilst the second – *development* - refers to the key process involved in achieving regeneration. Both are necessary elements in achieving a long-term impact in reducing deprivation and inequalities.

Community Regeneration - the successful **OUTCOME** of many processes which seek to redress the unequal balance of opportunities and life-chances experienced by people living in communities with high rates of multiple deprivation

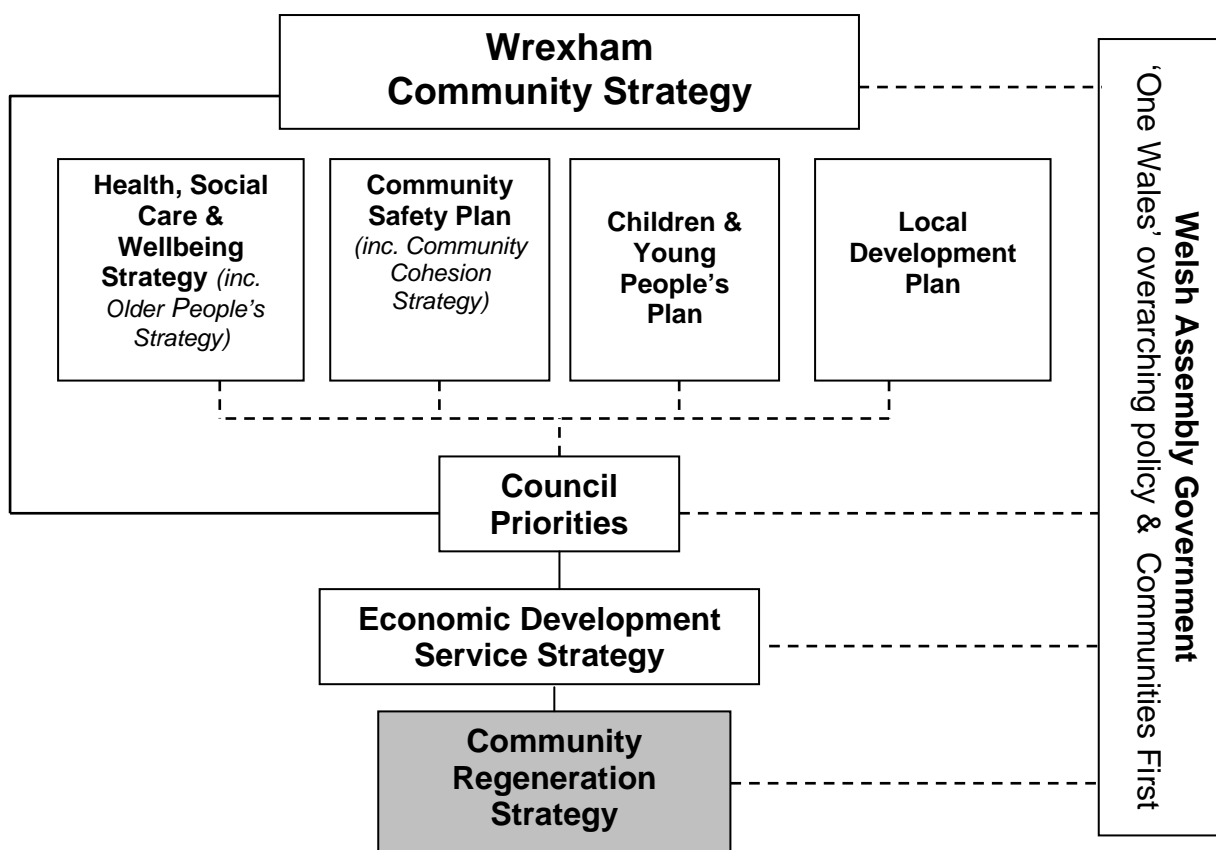
Community Development - the facilitated **PROCESS** of local people working jointly with key agencies to identify and tackle the issues that give rise to the inequalities that result from multiple deprivation

The strategy uses these terms to describe the way the Council seeks to engage with local communities to identify and respond to opportunities to improve peoples' economic, social and environmental outlook. In this context 'community' refers to a geographical community – a village, a neighbourhood, etc – and the strategy initially identifies its 'target' areas by 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs), areas of approximately 1500 people used across the UK for statistical purposes. Beyond or within this administrative boundary the target

community will be defined by its members, helping to focus on more natural community boundaries.

The communities identified for targeted community regeneration support within this strategy have been prioritised due to their ranking within the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD 2008). It uses the lower super output areas referred to above, and Wrexham's Community Regeneration Strategy will direct support to those communities in Wrexham that are ranked within the most deprived 30% in Wales.

The Council and its partners have plans and strategies to reduce inequalities across specific themes such as the Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategy and the Children and Young People Plan, and these are complemented by strategies which aim to reduce social exclusion amongst excluded and minority groups such as the Older People Strategy and the Community Cohesion Strategy. The Community Regeneration Strategy seeks to bring a geographical dimension to this work by focussing on those areas where these key issues are most prevalent. The diagram below shows the relationship between these approaches and sets them within the context of Wrexham's Community Strategy:



2. Strategic Context

Reducing social exclusion and deprivation are key priorities nationally, regionally and locally, and the extent to which such issues affect children – as part of the concept of ‘child poverty’ - has brought even greater focus to the need for the public sector in Wales to target its efforts both geographically and thematically, since it follows that limited life chances for adults tend to result in limiting life chances for their children.

The Local Government Act 2000 gave Local Authorities new duties to promote economic, social and environmental well being of their local communities. The main document describing how this would be achieved is the Community Strategy, an overarching vision and plan that each Council is required to develop in partnership with other public sector organisations such as Police, health, businesses and voluntary and community groups. Wrexham’s recently revised Community Strategy provides a strategic framework and action plan for taking forward a joined-up approach to achieving this vision and identifies 6 key priority areas of action in order for Wrexham to be:

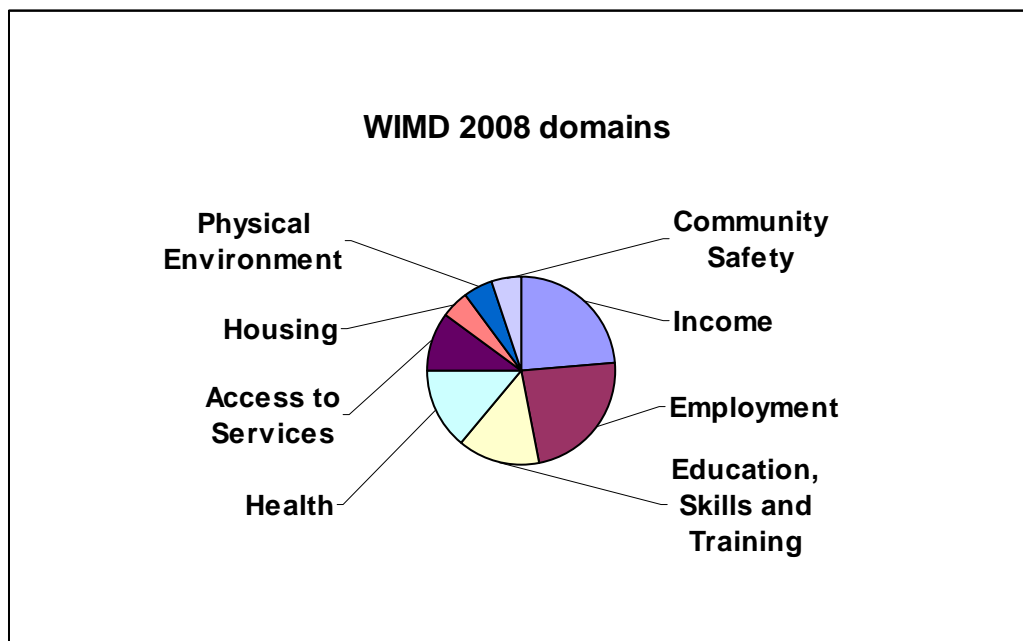
1. A place that cares for people’s health;
2. A place that enables people to reach their full potential;
3. A place that values citizenship, community spirit and social responsibility;
4. A place that looks after its built and natural surroundings;
5. A place that is safe; and
6. A place that is economically prosperous.

Action to reduce social exclusion and deprivation within Wrexham’s most deprived communities is integral to all six of these priorities. Specifically, action to reduce deprivation and help people out of poverty is a key focus for developing a place that is economically prosperous, and action to promote active communities is a key element of developing a place that values citizenship, community spirit and social responsibility.

In support of Wrexham’s Community Strategy the Council has prioritised the regeneration of Wrexham’s most deprived communities as a core area of work, aiming to increase physical and economic regeneration of communities throughout Wrexham and reducing the number of communities amongst the 30% most deprived in Wales as defined by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD).

Since 2001 Wrexham’s commitment to reducing deprivation has been complemented by that of the Welsh Assembly Government through its flagship community regeneration programme ‘Communities First’. Communities First has sought to target resources to address the fundamental causes of deprivation within the 10% most deprived communities in Wales as defined by the WIMD.

The WIMD is central to the concept of multiple deprivation. It is a statistical tool used to measure relative levels of deprivation across Wales. It was first used in 2001, and was revised in 2005 and again in 2008. The WIMD gives an overall deprivation score for the 1896 small Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wales, and ranks these with the most deprived being numbered ‘1’. These LSOAs are ward or sub-ward geographical areas made up of approximately 1500 people, and there are 85 LSOAs in Wrexham. The latest WIMD - 2008 – indicates relative levels of deprivation across eight factors (‘domains’), and it weights these according to their impact on people’s quality of life:



Two factors account for nearly half of the index - Income and employment. Material poverty therefore remains a key element of multiple deprivation, and hence the origins of much community regeneration work can be traced to efforts to improve people's job and earning prospects. Community regeneration is wider than economic inclusion alone, though - it is concerned with a broader picture of social exclusion.

The Role of the Council

The Council has a wide and varied role in initiating and contributing to community regeneration as it touches on so many aspects of the Council's work:

- Through Councillors who represent the interests of their communities;
- By investing in activities which increase quality of life and access to services;
- As a provider of key public sector services, education, social care, housing etc.;
- By providing financial support to third sector partners to co-ordinate local community regeneration activities;
- Through the provision of direct support to communities in taking forward regeneration projects and activities; and
- Through its role as a key public sector organisation it can influence the way partner agencies plan and deliver their services

Within the Council the Economic Development department takes the lead role in facilitating Community Regeneration. The Economic Development Service Strategy identifies Community Regeneration as a key activity within its Social Inclusion Service Objective.

The Social Inclusion Objective is to:

'engage local people, public, private and voluntary sector organisations in developing active, safe and cohesive communities in which people want to live work and invest and where all residents have equal access to services

and opportunities that will lead to improved quality of life and opportunities to participate in the local economy’.

The Service Strategy sees this being achieved through providing targeted community regeneration support to deprived and peripheral areas in order to develop local capacity to drive forward community based regeneration activity that will help to remove barriers to education, training and employment opportunities as well as enhance their environment and economic, social and cultural vitality. Current community regeneration activity facilitated by the Economic Development department includes:

- Co-ordination and implementation of the Rural Development Plan through Northern Marches Cymru
- Facilitation of the Council’s support to Communities First Partnerships
- Host organisation for the Broughton and Hightown Communities First Teams
- Leading community regeneration in west Wrexham
- Provision of financial support to Caia Park Partnership and the Dee Valley Community Partnership in order to develop sustainable regeneration in Caia Park and Cefn Mawr respectively
- Expanding community regeneration into new communities through the rollout of this Community Regeneration Strategy





Of the 85 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Wrexham 25 are within the top 30% most deprived in Wales and will be targeted for support through this strategy. These are shown as the dark areas on the map below. 10 of these are Communities First areas.

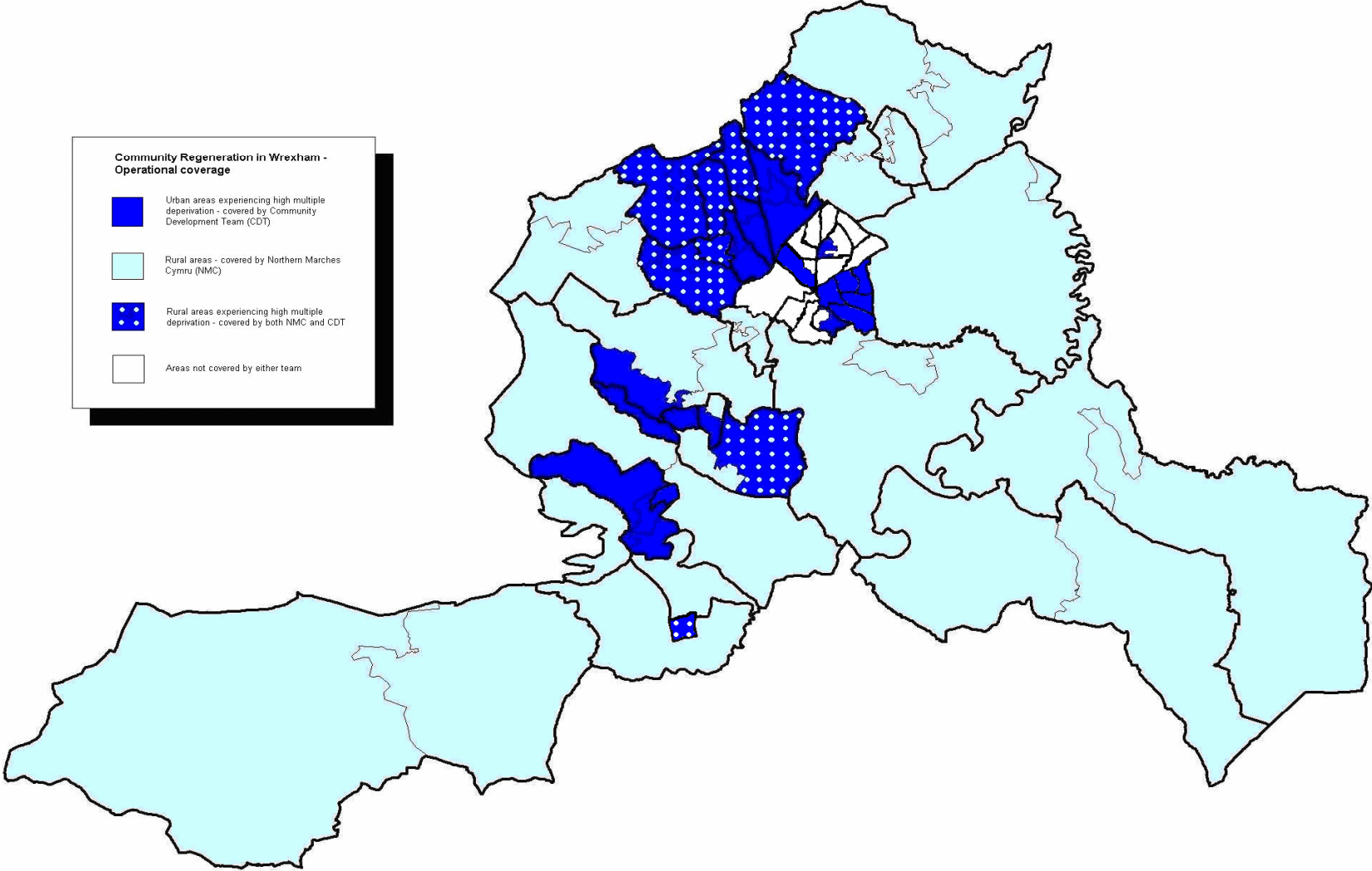
In addition 42 LSOAs receive support through the Rural Development Plan, of which 7 are within the 30% most deprived in Wales. These 7 are shown as dark areas with spots, whilst the remaining 35 areas covered by the RDP are the pale shaded areas.

In total there is community regeneration activity in 60 of the 85 LSOAs in Wrexham. This equates to 36 of Wrexham’s 47 electoral Wards, meaning that more than three-quarters of the county borough’s population is benefitting from some form of geographically-targeted support. The map below shows the extent of this coverage:

MAP HIGHLIGHTING LSOA's IDENTIFYING AREAS BY PROGRAMME OF INTERVENTION AND NEW AND EXISTING AREAS OF ACTIVITY.

Community Regeneration in Wrexham - Operational coverage

-  Urban areas experiencing high multiple deprivation - covered by Community Development Team (CDT)
-  Rural areas - covered by Northern Marches Cymru (NMC)
-  Rural areas experiencing high multiple deprivation - covered by both NMC and CDT
-  Areas not covered by either team



3. Existing Community Regeneration in Wrexham

Community regeneration in Wrexham has been ongoing since Local Government reorganisation in 1996. Starting with work in the Caia Park area, the geographical scope of interventions has increased over time – largely by responding to specific external funding opportunities. By 2006 more than half of the county borough's wards were covered by community regeneration activity.

Community regeneration in Caia Park began in the early 1990's, initiated by Clwyd County Council. By the time of Local Government reorganisation in 1996 funding had been secured through the Welsh Office to build a multi-use community facility in the heart of the community as a venue to provide a range of services aimed at reducing inequalities and deprivation. That year also saw Wrexham County Borough Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with the newly formed Caia Park Partnership Ltd to provide funding to deliver and co-ordinate a range of services – including running the new centre - to progress regeneration work in Caia Park.

In 2001 with the launch of the Welsh Assembly Government Communities First programme, Caia Park received additional support and resources to expand community regeneration activity within the community, and this saw the development of Caia Park Communities First Ltd, a community led organisation established to co-ordinate the work of the Communities First programme within the community. Caia Park Partnership and Caia Park Communities First Ltd continue to work closely together to maximise regeneration work in Caia Park.

In 1996 the Council initiated community regeneration activity in Cefn Mawr and Plas Madoc, and the surrounding communities of Acrefair, Newbridge and Rhosymedre. This work was originally funded through the Welsh Office Strategic Development Scheme and was later absorbed into the Council's mainstream funding. Activities identified within the original Plas Madoc and Cefn Community Strategy launched in 1997 have largely been delivered, with the creation of the Cefn Enterprise Centre, the physical regeneration works in Cefn's commercial centre, the refurbishment of the Ebenezer Chapel and the development of an independent community led regeneration organisation - Dee Valley Community Partnership Ltd (DVCP).

Whilst the Council initiated and led the regeneration work in Cefn and Plas Madoc between 1996 and 2004, the Council now has a contractual arrangement in place to support the DVCP in taking this work forward. A key element of this arrangement is the development of DVCP's long term sustainability and the active reduction of their financial dependency on the Council. In 2001 the community of Plas Madoc gained Communities First status and created an independent organisation to lead this work, Plas Madoc Communities First Ltd (PMCFL). DVCP and PMCFL continue to work collaboratively to further the regeneration of the area.

In 1998 the Council secured funding from the Welsh Office through the 'People in Communities' programme to initiate community regeneration in the communities of Southsea and Brynteg. This programme served as a test-bed for the principles of the subsequent Communities First programme, and the ward of Gwenfro (covering Southsea and Brynteg) was included in Communities First when the programme launched in 2001. The programme is delivered through the Broughton Partnership Board with support from a staff team employed by the Council's Economic Development department.

A similar model has been adopted in Hightown, where Communities First status was conferred in 2007. A team of 3 staff is employed by the department to support the work of the Hightown Communities First Board. Work is currently underway to develop the area's first Community Action Plan, the main tool for prioritising developments within the Communities First programme.

Since 2001 the regeneration of the county borough's rural areas has been progressed by Northern Marches Cymru, a partnership board and team hosted by the Council established to respond to the Welsh Assembly Government's rural regeneration programmes. These have included the Rural Community Action, Article 33, and Leader/Leader + programmes, all of which have recently been consolidated and are covered in the borough's Rural Development Plan (RDP). Operating in two 3-year business plan phases 2008-10 and 2011-13, NMC is currently delivering 28 projects worth more than £5m as part of the first phase.

2001 also saw the start of the West Wrexham URBAN II programme. This £14m community regeneration programme has supported business development and small community groups as well as the establishment of a network of 5 major community resource and enterprise centres across the former steel and coal areas of Brymbo, Broughton, Gwersyllt, Llay and Coedpoeth. This programme has been community-led from the outset, and whilst the programme itself has now ended the focus on sustainable community-led regeneration remains.

4. Developing the Strategy and Key Objectives

The Community Regeneration Strategy has been developed in conjunction with elected Members, the Council's Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee, officers from departments across the Council and external partner organisations including the Police, the North Wales NHS Trust, the Local Health Board and AVOW. The process has seen a clear link between vision, strategic requirements and objectives that is informing the actions we intend to take.

Vision

In line with the Council's aim of regenerating communities in Wrexham and the Economic Development department's Service Strategy the Vision for Community Regeneration in Wrexham is for Wrexham's communities to be:

- *Inclusive - where everyone has an opportunity to access services and opportunities to become an active citizen of Wrexham.*
- *Active – where residents are able to participate in community activities, training and employment.*
- *Attractive – where people want to live, work, volunteer and invest.*

Requirements of the strategy

When considering this vision and the priorities for reducing multiple deprivation in Wrexham through community regeneration a number of requirements have been explored:

- The need to be clear how the Council will achieve 'Regenerated Communities'
- The need to consider how and why we are targeting support for community regeneration
- The need to identify a long term approach to community regeneration
- The need to support Communities First Partnerships' moves into the next phase of the programme
- The need to take account of the funding available
- The need to build on the principle of Programme Bending¹
- The need to embed the processes and practices of community development across the Council

Objectives

To fulfil these requirements three sets of objectives have emerged that provide the framework for taking community regeneration forward:

- A. Co-ordination and Evaluation
- B. Delivering a Community Development Service
- C. Mainstreaming and Sustainability

¹ *Programme Bending is the term used to describe the process of changing the way that key services are delivered in order to reduce inequalities*

http://www.internal.wrexham.gov.uk/intranet/departments/economic_dev/comm_development.htm

The remainder of this document summarises these objectives, the initial actions to be taken within each, and the resources being deployed to undertake them.

A. Co-ordination and Evaluation

Objective A: *Provide clarity and co-ordination for both the Council and its partners in understanding and providing their contribution to community regeneration in Wrexham.*

Whilst Wrexham's overarching Community Strategy states the objectives for reducing deprivation and regeneration, and the Council's Economic Development Strategy provides the context, neither document is able to provide the detail necessary to understand what this means and how it will be achieved. It is therefore necessary to agree a further level of detail and provide this through the Community Regeneration Strategy.

Successful community regeneration requires input from a range of partners, groups and organisations. Communities and their needs are complex - no single agency or organisation alone can succeed in reducing multiple deprivation. It is important therefore that the vision, principles and priorities for reducing multiple deprivation in Wrexham are clearly understood by all stakeholders. It is also important that efforts to reduce deprivation are shared and co-ordinated both to utilise the resources available to best effect and to ensure maximum benefit to the community.

Monitoring community regeneration is a core element of the regeneration process, and we already monitor the **outputs** (numbers of learners, value of external funding secured, etc) that we achieve through our efforts. However we are keen as both funders and service providers to identify the overall impact that regeneration activity has on communities by looking at the **outcomes** (the changes that result from the outputs) as well as the outputs, and so we intend to identify appropriate methods of evaluating the impact of this work.

The development of key indicators and common understandings which are shared amongst those who can effect change is therefore central to the Community Regeneration Strategy. This objective sets the foundation for the achievement of the strategy's remaining objectives, and for the long term success of our work.

Our principal outcomes in this first area of the strategy are:

Outcome 1: *Key terms and roles relating to community regeneration are defined and understood*

Outcome 2: *Community regeneration efforts are guided by one multi agency co-ordination group*

Outcome 3: *The impacts of community development interventions are understood*

B. Delivering a Community Development Service

Objective B: *Continue to support community regeneration in existing target communities within the County Borough and expand provision into all target communities.*

Community regeneration is not new in Wrexham – section 3 above touched on the many examples of positive change in the county borough’s most deprived areas over the last 15 years. The reliance on external funding has changed to reflect changing circumstances - the process of community development has evolved more towards a business-centred model which brings due focus to ensuring the long-term sustainability of efforts through income generation and sound financial planning. This evolution needs to be continued to ensure that future work in Wrexham continues to shift its focus away from ongoing grant reliance and towards a sustainable income driven approach in line with the emerging work around strengthening the social economy.

Nevertheless, Wrexham’s relative success in securing external funding has been welcomed, and wherever possible further opportunities will be pursued. However, external funding is limited. It is also limiting, often bringing constraints in terms of which communities can be covered. For example, the Communities First programme continues to target resources at the communities that feature within the top 10% most deprived communities in Wales; the URBAN II programme required evidence of certain characteristics that limited the opportunities for which communities could be included; and the Rural Development Plan defines clearly those communities that can and can’t be included.

Consequently there have been gaps in provision where communities that are clearly displaying evidence of multiple deprivation have not been accommodated by external programmes. It is clear that community development and regeneration activity could assist these areas, and so using Council resources to expand this work to ensure that all communities experiencing similarly high levels of multiple deprivation across the County Borough can be served by a similar approach will provide a greater degree of parity. Further, the practical lessons learned via the prescribed programmes are helping us to formulate common models to ensure the effectiveness of the community development process regardless of funding source.

Although the concepts of multiple deprivation and community regeneration consider the wider impacts on quality of life and life chances, the priorities of the Economic Development department are largely focused on skills for employment and access to economic opportunities. Registered unemployment alone is not significantly high in Wrexham (At 4.5%, this is slightly lower than the rates for Wales (5.3%) and Great Britain (5.5%)). Even when considered together with wider indicators of economic inactivity this remains a relatively minor concern for the county borough as a whole. However, these headline figures disguise the high concentrations of economically inactive people within our most deprived communities, and these should be identified and targeted for effective support.

http://www.internal.wrexham.gov.uk/intranet/departments/economic_dev/comm_development.htm

Adult community learning has a key part to play in this field, both by facilitating economic progression – into work or into “better” work – and by promoting social inclusion. This strategy seeks to recognise the role this second function plays in promoting active and vibrant communities.

Our principal outcomes for the second area of the strategy are:

Outcome 4: *Community regeneration work is expanded into new communities within the County Borough*

Outcome 5: *Third Sector regeneration organisations are sustained and developed*

Outcome 6: *Community development practices are developed and consistent in all target communities within the County Borough*

Outcome 7: *There is a comprehensive and consistent approach to adult community learning, supporting the development of the social economy, and programmes to reduce economic inactivity*

C. Mainstreaming and Sustainability

Objective C: *Embedding community development principles into the day to day practices and policies of the Council and seeking to integrate activities into mainstream service delivery and aid sustainability.*

The engagement of residents in the planning, decision making and delivery processes that affect them is widely understood to be the most effective way of providing responsive public services. It is also widely recognised as being invaluable in achieving sustainable community regeneration, and the Council is already changing the way services are provided so that they are responsive to the needs of different communities, benefitting residents across the County Borough. Ensuring that residents and service providers have the capacity to work together is key in developing this approach further.

Nevertheless, there remains a need for additional resources which the Council alone cannot meet, and hence the pursuit of external financial support will remain a priority. The Council will aim to support the enhancement of services to tackle the causes of multiple deprivation by maximising the support available through the Communities First Outcomes Fund, the second round of projects eligible for support under the Rural Development Plan, the range of Lottery funds, and the European Regional Competitiveness Fund, amongst others.

Such additional resources offer unique opportunities to trial alternative and dynamic approaches to service delivery: Pilot funding is typically short term intending to identify good practice and find alternative methods of targeting resources that 'make a difference'. It is important that we are able to sustain these new ways of working beyond such initial pilot phases, and there is a danger that mainstream services can become reliant on such funding: Efforts must be made to ensure that new ways of delivering services to address multiple deprivation are sustainable in the long-term.

Our principal outcomes for the final area of the strategy are therefore:

Outcome 8:	<i>Activities funded through Community Regeneration programmes have clear plans for sustainability</i>
Outcome 9:	<i>The Council's policy development and decision making processes demonstrate a consideration of the impact on social exclusion and deprivation</i>
Outcome 10:	<i>Good practice is identified and used to inform the Council's delivery of services</i>
Outcome 11:	<i>External funding opportunities to enhance mainstream services are maximised</i>

5. Co-ordination and Monitoring

Co-ordination

The Council's support to the Communities First areas in Wrexham has previously been co-ordinated through the 'Communities First Officer Working Group'. This Group comprises membership from key Council departments, key partner agencies and representation from each of the Communities First Partnership Boards. The Group has met on a quarterly basis and has proved to be successful in maintaining communication and in working together to respond effectively to the provision of support to the Communities First Programme.

The group will continue as the overall monitoring and co-ordination body with an expanded remit and membership to cover the new communities targeted within this strategy: Consequently it will be renamed the 'Community Regeneration Officer Working Group'. The agreement of its terms of reference (to include consideration of its membership and its methods of working) appears in the action plan that accompanies this strategy document.

Monitoring

Key actions and targets will be monitored through the action plan that accompanies this strategy document. Key actions and targets for subsequent years will be established annually to ensure a flexible and responsive approach to achieving the strategic outcomes of this Strategy. Progress against each of the individual actions will be recorded within the Council's Performance Management system 'Fynnon' each year; the performance target will be to achieve 80% of the forecast actions and targets for that year.

Measuring the impact of this strategy in terms of the outcomes it produces and on the relative levels of deprivation in Wrexham requires further consideration. This is identified in Section 4 as a key action within the first objective of this strategy.

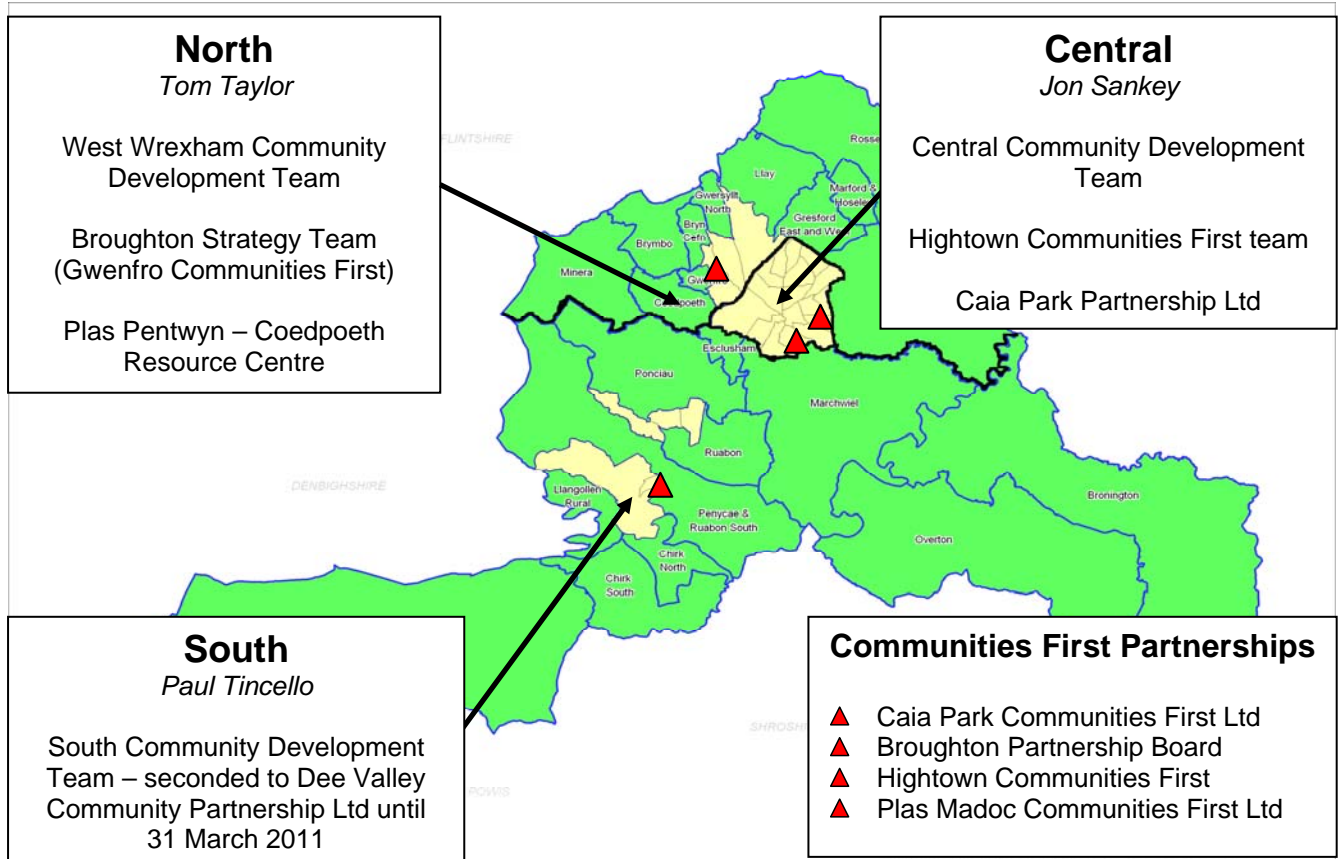
6. Resourcing

The Economic Development department uses a mix of directly employed and contracted-out arrangements to support the achievement of this Strategy. The directly employed officers – working from five office locations - collectively form the Community Development Team.

The team is organised by geography, being split into the three areas of the County Borough used by many of our partners – North, South, and Central. Each team also leads on specific functions across the county borough, allowing effective specialisation in themes such as adult community learning and community transport (North), social enterprise and asset transfer (South), and programme bending and financial inclusion (Central). The North and Central teams also include the Welsh Assembly Government funded staff who deliver the Communities First programme in two of Wrexham's five Communities First areas (Gwenfro and Hightown).

The work is led by the team's three Community Regeneration Area Managers, one for each of North, South and Central. These officers are tasked with coordinating the work of the department's community development practitioners, the activities of the contracted-out services, supporting the progression towards sustainability of community organisations, and influencing the mainstreaming of projects and services that contribute to community regeneration. They play a key role in linking operationally with Wrexham's four Communities First Partnerships.

The map below shows the three areas, their respective area managers and the resources they coordinate. The green areas are those covered by the Rural Development Plan for Wrexham delivered by Northern Marches Cymru, itself hosted by the Council's Economic Development department. The arrows point to the teams' main office locations:



Lower Super Output Areas/Wards covered by the Community Regeneration Strategy:

Central	North	South
Acton 2	Brymbo 2	Cefn 2
Cartrefle1	Coedpoeth 1	Cefn 3
Cartrefle 2	Coedpoeth 1	Chirk North 2
Grosvenor 2	Gwenfro	Johnstown 2
Hermitage 2	Gwersyllt North 2	Pant
Queensway 1	Gwersyllt West 1	Penycae
Queensway 2	Llay 3	Plas Madoc
Smithfield		Pociau 2
Whitegate 1		Ruabon 1
Wynnstay		

7. Further information and comments

For further information about the strategy please contact either of the following Economic Development department officers:

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