



BREAKING NEW GROUND FUNDING REPORT

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

REPORT 20/16

11 APRIL 2016

The purpose of this paper is to provide Members with information about the Breaking New Ground element of the Our Place programme and the additional funding secured for its development.

No. DETAIL

1) BACKGROUND

- a) On 13 October last year participants in the 2014/15 Department for Communities and Local Government's Our Place Programme were invited to apply for Implementation funding of up to £10,000 to progress the Breaking New Ground element of their Operational Plans with a deadline for applications of 27 October.
 - b) Confirmation our application had been accepted was received on 10 December for £10,000 to be used by 31 March 2016.
 - c) Submission of an end of grant report was required by 24 March 2016 and that document is attached to this Report.
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2) THE PROJECT

- a) The Breaking New Ground element of our Operational Plan was centred on the concept of developing the Town Council's IT infrastructure to enable a range of email-based Forums to be established that would draw on the wide-ranging experience and expertise of residents and others to contribute directly to the Town Council's planning processes.
 - b) It was proposed to use this funding for a mixture of the necessary additions to the hardware in Salisbury Gardens' Communications equipment, the purchase of additional software, the technical development to ensure the Forums worked easily and efficiently, legal advice on Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation and staff time.
 - c) In addition to the funding, the work had the benefit of further contributions from our Relationship Manager for the Our Place Programme, local consultant David Newton.
 - d) The attached End of Grant Report provides the detail of how those objectives have been achieved in the time available.
 - e) The Forums will become operational in a programme over the next six weeks.
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Our Place Implementation Grant

End of Grant Report

Package Ref (e.g. OPP-0036)	OPP-0034
Organisation Name	Ventnor Town Council
Main Contact Name	David Bartlett
Relationship Manager	David Newton

Implementation Phase Outputs

You planned to achieve the following outputs by March 2nd.

By 31 March 2016 at least five Forums will have been developed and become operational:

Executive Forum

Public Agencies responsible for services related to the town's issues highlighted in the IMD 2015 and JSNA, enabling contact and collaboration between all participants, including the Town Council, in response to identified needs and issues without the need to attend meetings.

Economic Forum

Private Sector including representatives of hospitality providers, town traders, self-employed trades and professional staff. Based on connections and contact details established by our Economic Development Officer.

Cultural Forum

Organisations and individuals involved in heritage, environment protection and development and the arts.

Residents' Forum

An open to all residents Forum based on an earlier project - VTC+ - engaging 350 residents signed up for monthly updates on Town Council matters.

Community Forum

Representatives of the town's 70+ voluntary and community organisations already engaged through support from our Community Development Officer and twice-yearly consultation meetings.

Environmental Forum

Relating to the Open Spaces objectives of the Ventnor Our Place Programme, considering environmental and biodiversity concerns, community requirements and presentation of Ventnor for tourism.

Youth Opportunities Forum

Relating to the Ventnor Youth Offering, now managed by Ventnor Town Council (formerly the Isle of Wight Council), to extend opportunities, youth activities and sports for the local young people.

Please can you make direct reference to the outputs outlined above and tell us what outputs you have achieved in implementing your Our Place project. *(Please use no more than 800 words.)*

The development of the Ventnor Engagement Forums and their associated outcomes (under the Breaking New Ground umbrella of the Ventnor Our Place Programme), continues to follow the original 'Golden Thread' objectives that were envisioned during both the development and operational phases of Ventnor's Our Place programme. At the same time, to move forward in terms of the co-design, co-development and co-delivery of locally delivered service provision into the community in liaison with our Public Sector partners; and to more fully engage with a diverse range of local people in order to make better local decisions, manage local resources and to successfully take Ventnor forward into the future. The strategic outcomes of each of the defined community forums, and their outputs through community engagement, will help to identify the existing and future social, economic and environmental needs of our community. From that standpoint, the digital community engagement forums linked to the local regeneration work by Ventnor Town Council, community partners and volunteers will continue to help identify solutions and strategies to combat the following local socioeconomic problems:

1. Reducing the impact of deprivation and severe recession that have affected the different communities that make up Ventnor over recent years; and to raise the standard of living and quality of life for all people living and working in Ventnor.
2. Achieve improvements in local community health, wellbeing, economic prosperity and community capacity in partnership with Public Agencies and our local Private Sector Businesses and Voluntary Community Groups and Associations.
3. Bringing public service design, delivery and financial control of centralised public services under the ownership and responsibility of the local community; and to provide a framework for service delivery that meets the current and future needs of local residents.
4. Empowering people in the community and enable them to take on the role of community leadership to shape the future of Ventnor and promote a real sense of community identity and self-efficacy; while aiming for sustainable economic growth and development of the cultural richness and diversity available in the community and our seaside environment.

The concept of providing a simple and flexible digital communications network available through the community to 'talk about things', will provide valuable insight into existing social and economic problems, drawing on the ideas, experiences and consultation from the community. The outcomes from each of the designed forums will allow us, not just to consider Ventnor as 'Our Place' but much more importantly about 'Our People'. Their lives, lifestyles, domestic circumstances, how they feel trapped in social housing, always unemployable, having to face domestic abuse, never a kind word spoken to them, isolated and lonely. Our place is irrelevant if our people in our community are continually having to face such problems, whether a young person or elderly citizen.

Consequently over the next two months, we expect the forums which cover many of the original areas of the Ventnor Our Programme, to highlight opportunities for local and public service intervention. From child care problems through to debt management; from leaving school without employment prospects to full employability; from dirty and untidy surroundings to clean urban social spaces; from fear of crime where people live to secure and safe neighbourhoods. The community engagement forums can bring this about and are fully supported by the communications strategy created during the development phase of the Our Place programme.

Even though Ventnor Town Council at this point in time is the governance lead for the Ventnor Our Place programme, community interaction with the different forums will help to empower the community to make a greater contribution to the Our Place programme by providing community knowledge and social conditions in their neighbourhoods. This important source of information will allow both Council members and community representatives to approach various public, private and third sector organisations with a view to helping the community they live and work in. To bring about more localism at the community level, joining representatives from the community with local service providers. In turn promoting co-operative service design and development that actually satisfies and addresses the needs of local families and individuals in Ventnor.

A single forum may have many audiences through its selected distribution. A contact list for the Executive Forum might involve Public Sector representatives and deal with socially strategic management issues. While the same forum with an alternate contact list might focus on local economic and tourism issues; and therefore involve the local business association, hoteliers, the Chamber of Commerce and potentially local private companies. The scope to network the community is limitless using these forums; and too, the engagement with organisations external to the community, bringing about a more integrated and holistic approach to local socioeconomic problem-solving and decision-making and improved co-operation with public sector organisations. (788 words).

What challenges and difficulties you have faced in implementing the project? (Please use no more than 250 words.)

While the concept of Community Engagement Forums was laid down and fully understood in Ventnor's Our Place Operational Plan, Ventnor Town Council did not have the IT infrastructure to make it a reality. Therefore it has been as much a technological journey as it has been an Our Place process journey. Whereas a Public Sector organisation would have the necessary IT infrastructure, local communities do not have this advantage. This project has now allowed Ventnor to put in place the required infrastructure for the forums; and too, potentially move forward with the other Breaking New Ground projects outlined in its Operational Plan.

The most difficult areas to address have been process and communications. Ensuring the correct network of people to talk too on a particular social, economic or environmental subject. Also being aware that people have limited time to spare. Likewise people who would like to get involved and are supportive of localism, and who work either in the public, private or third sectors, are likely to have conflicts of interest. There are opinions that can be stated or discussed as an individual which benefit the community decision-making process; but equally those opinions may not actually reflect the viewpoint of the organisation they work for. To cover this area, and this is especially important to the Executive Forum, potential members are required to assess their suitability and declare any areas where there may be a conflict of organisational interest. (239 words)

What has worked particularly well/been successful during implementation of the project? (Please use no more than 250 words.)

While the hardware is now in place, the 'social-ware' is still work-in-progress and requires a few more weeks to tune the forums processes and invite the relevant people to join one or more forums. The technology although important is relatively immaterial, but the social engagement and the potential which can be released for serious community decision-making is tremendously exciting and beneficial for the future of Ventnor.

It is also worth noting that it is not just about the Town Council making decisions on behalf of their local community, but the continued engagement and involvement of the local community through the forums that will help our future collective decision-making processes, and thereby support the intended direction of the Our Place programme for Ventnor.

Additionally the co-operation and support by the various Our Place team members – Town Councillors, economic development, community development, youth workers and volunteers, relationship manager and contracted technical support has been a success story in itself during this time. (160 words)

How does the work you have done during this Implementation phase position your partnership and project for 2016 / 17 and beyond? (Please use no more than 250 words.)

It is recognised that public sector data and information only provides a quantitative view of service consumption at the community level, and invariably Public Agency specific. Also any data and information available at the local level might also include data that is not readily available in the public domain. Similarly, Agencies may embed other Agency's data sources that are also not available in the public domain.

However, service data and information used by our local service providers could be extended to include another valuable local asset that of Community Knowledge gleaned through the Forums about the quality, need and response of existing and new service provisions. Essentially gained through people getting to know one another and their personal circumstances – families and individuals living in the community and communicating through one or more forums.

Public Agencies are often limited by only having part of the story of the real needs of local residents; but it requires friends, neighbours and relatives in the community to provide the complete picture. It is an important two-way street. Community engagement meetings in Ventnor have indicated that neighbourhoods have this knowledge and expertise which the forums will reveal over the coming months.

This would provide some interesting leverage in negotiation and service co-design meetings with service providers by both the Town Council and the local community; and potentially place or reposition both resources and services where they are best needed in the community. This positioning of service management power is fundamental to Ventnor's Our Place programme. (250 words)