

Community Alliance Proposal

Public Consultation



What is a Community Alliance?

- Community Alliance is a term to describe networks of active individuals, groups, and organisations at a local community level across Bolton which we are proposing to support as part of a new model of working with and alongside communities.



Why are they being proposed?

- The idea of supporting the growth of Community Alliances is to enable and release the energy of local communities – the many active citizens who put themselves forward to help improve the communities they live in through grass roots action, and the local organisations who work to improve wellbeing and quality of life.
- The time is right to embrace, build on and connect lots of existing activity at community level and not least to help sustain and grow the fantastic response at community level that we have seen throughout the Covid 19 pandemic.
- For the Council, this is an important part of a wider review of Area Working, modernising our engagement approach and getting closer to communities across Bolton.



What will Community Alliances aim to achieve?

- The aim of Community Alliances will be to help connect existing individuals, groups, organisations at a local level so they can achieve more together. The Alliances will also encourage the growth of community level activity and joining up of efforts.
- Ultimately the goal is to value and grow social action - people coming together to help improve their lives and solve the important problems in their communities. This will help achieve better outcomes, improve local environments - all part of our overall vision of an Active, Connected and Prosperous Bolton.



Is a Community Alliance a group or a meeting?

- Community Alliances will be active and dynamic networks of people and organisations – not meetings. There will be one per ward area. It may be that Community Alliances arrange events, community conversations on key issues or other ways to bring local people and organisations together, but this will depend on local needs and issues and ideas. As an example, a Community Alliance might hold a celebratory event to review progress, celebrate successes, and generate ideas for improvement.
- We expect that as the Alliances develop, in each area there will be a small core group of active citizens, councillors, and local partners who are prepared to spend time to coordinate and shape the development of Community Alliances in each ward. Each Community Alliance may need a small steering group for this.



How could Community Conversations work?

- Community Alliances can create relationships and ways to support community conversations to take place, to provide valuable community voice and insights on key issues for communities.
- For example, Community Conversations over time could support:
 - ✓ specific standing focus groups, e.g. development of the successful ‘Youth Vision’ approach at local level, specific engagement with BAME communities.
 - ✓ development of local stories to inform local delivery, strategy, policy, e.g. ethnographic ‘day in the life’ studies.
- In time this approach could chart a path to the development of deeper deliberative democracy methods, for example through citizens panels locally or for key issues.

How will the Community Alliances be developed?

- In a bottom - up way!
- Firstly, we are clear that we want to build on what already exists at local level in terms of active citizens, groups and organisations. In some areas these will already be well connected, informally or formally so that is our starting point. We aim to follow the key principles of Asset Based Community Development by carrying out mapping of the assets (people, groups, organisations) at community level and then providing support and encouragement for them to connect in ways that work for them and their community.
- The Council and, its partners, will work with and alongside and local people and groups to provide enabling support for this (i.e. not doing 'to' or 'for' communities). We expect that Alliances will grow gradually, at the speed that suits local people and in ways that will not be exactly the same everywhere across Bolton.

Is this the Council withdrawing and leaving it to residents?

- No, it is quite the opposite!
- In fostering the development of Community Alliances the Council aims to get closer to Communities so it can work with and alongside them to achieve what is needed.
- The public sector has a key role to play in local areas, and Community Alliances and getting closer to local people, groups and organisations can help change the way the public sector goes about fulfilling its role. For example, making the most of the commitment and expertise of local people involves re-designing services with social action in mind, and helping to shape an environment which encourages and enables residents to take action on issues they care about, removing barriers.

