

'Fantastic' community groups recognised at awards

ORGANISATIONS working in Reading to better the community were honoured at the South East Community Empowerment Awards on Tuesday.

The awards are aimed at projects set up by community groups working alongside the council, police or local health authority.

Jeanette Skeats, lead councillor for the voluntary sector, community and enterprise, gave out the accolades during the Reading 2020 Partnership meeting.

First place was awarded to the Redlands and University Area Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG).

Town centre-based Black and Asian Service in Alcohol and Narcotics (BASIAN) was awarded second place for its project tackling knife crime and serious youth violence.

Third place was given to Bell Tower Community Association. Peter Kayes, the chair of



AWARDS: Shahid Farid and Urfan Azad of BASIAN, Peter Kayes and Ann Westgarth of Redlands NAG, Cllr Jeanette Skeats, Barbara Kendall and Rod Plinston of Bell Tower, and Cllr Andrew Cumpsty Picture: STEVE SMYTH (Ref 102314)

Redlands and University Area NAG, said: "We are delighted to have won this award. However, the prospect of cuts in the budgets of the police and council departments, such as

Streetcare, seriously threaten our ability to continue having the same impact.

"We urge the authorities to protect the services on which we and the local communities

depend so our areas stay safe and pleasant places to live."

Urfan Azad from BASIAN said: "I was not expecting that at all. It is really rewarding to receive it and we are in a strong position to carry out some work now."

Bell Tower's chair Barbara Kendall said: "We were delighted to receive the award and it's evidence that what we are trying to do in the community is in the right direction."

Cllr Skeats said: "Reading has some fantastic community groups working hard on projects to bring improvements to their neighbourhoods.

"These dedicated people deserve to be recognised and I'm very pleased these Empowerment Awards are doing just that and rewarding the really outstanding groups."

The winners scooped the £1,000 and will automatically be entered into the regional final that has a £5,000 top prize.