

Cheshire East Council

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	6 th December 2016
Report of:	Steph Cordon, Head of Communities
Subject/Title:	Connected Communities
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Paul Bates, Communities and Health

1. Report Summary

- 1.1 The attached document is a framework which sets out the broad outline of how we want to engage with our communities including the voluntary and faith sector and the many active volunteer based partnerships. The five connected themes shown at 1.6 will be developed in much more detail and co-produced with our communities and the voluntary and faith sector for consideration by Cabinet over the next few months.
- 1.2 We want to be a Council that is driven by our FIRST Values and delivers against our key outcomes. This can only be achieved through connecting with people on an equal footing and listening to what our communities, vulnerable residents the voluntary and faith sector need and how they see these needs being met. It will not always be the case that the Council is best placed to deliver these ourselves or fund it. However, this framework sets out how working with others we can truly engage in meaningful partnership working and co-production with our communities and voluntary and faith sector to do the right thing and make a difference.
- 1.3 We want to bring this practical framework to life and so co-producing the themes and the plans with the community and voluntary and faith sector will demonstrate that this isn't just words but action. For example, in the Connected to People theme, Cabinet have already agreed the Crewe Neighbourhood Action approach which demonstrates how working with the community we are tackling really problematic issues. Alongside this, the newly launched South Cheshire Multi-Cultural Forum members will present to Cabinet in March 2017 how they see the future of working with us to ensure that services are developed to meet specific needs and how the forum want to do things for communities themselves. A volunteer programme has been established called Community Connectors whereby, people help others whose first language isn't English to access services. We currently have local schools where 40 different languages are spoken showing how diverse our communities now are. These will connect with these schools and the parents. We also know that people need support to access health services for a range of reasons and so a key aim is to help people register with a Doctor and be able to have someone who can interpret for them.

Working with GPs we are aiming to work around GP surgery clusters working with the integrated social care and health teams.

- 1.4 Our successful volunteer driven Town Partnerships will be presenting their achievements to Cabinet in January 2017 as part of Connected to Neighbourhoods. These are locality based with small amounts of funding from the Council who bring in further investment in grants to deliver projects.
- 1.5 The Council is committed to support our voluntary and faith sector to generate income from other sources and enabling them to prosper without the dependence on limited council funding.
- 1.6 We believe that through our ambitious strategy our energetic, active and passionate communities can narrow the gap between social problems and solutions which can range from social isolation, an ageing population, and pockets of real deprivation. We can work with these communities and partners to create an environment for social change. It can only happen though through connecting with our communities and this paper sets out the strategic framework.
- 1.7 As mentioned above our Connected Communities strategy has five key themes within it:
 - **Connected to People**
 - helping people in communities to become more connected to others.
 - **Connected to Services**
 - delivering services differently, with more community outreach services.
 - **Connected to Neighbourhoods**
 - strengthening networks and partnerships across neighbourhoods, towns and villages.
 - **Connected to Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations**
 - developing the VCF sector infrastructure and our links to thematic communities.
 - **Connected to decision making**
 - local people influencing decision making, policy and the way we commission services.

2. Recommendation

2.1. That Cabinet approve:

- (i) The Connected Communities Strategy
- (ii) The allocation of £307,000 from the existing Partnerships and Communities Budget, which can be met through department reserves, to the delivery of the strategy.
- (iii) Delegate to the Head of Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health, the commissioning of a VCFS Infrastructure Service, including the award of the contract to the successful bidder

3. Other Options Considered

- 3.1 The various elements within the Strategy, have been approved by Cabinet and have their own strategies and action plans approved or under development. The purpose of this strategy is to set out our corporate approach to Community Engagement and bring work together, showing how current initiatives work together.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 To update on progress and agree a corporate approach to Community Engagement, focussed on ensuring people and community organisations are embedded within local networks, providing mutual help and support.

5. Background / Chronology

- 5.1 Cheshire East is a place with great potential and an increasingly diverse community, and this strategy sets out how we can grasp the opportunity to ensure that our communities are supported and integrated to make the most of future opportunities. Cheshire East Council has from its inception, had a strong commitment to developing strong communities, and this strategy focuses on demonstrating that community leadership, how we believe well-connected communities can sustain community activity, drawing on lessons from a successful past .
- 5.2 We don't aspire to just be good at engaging with our communities we want to be exceptional. We can define this by solutions to issues coming from the community as we believe that these will be feasible, culturally appropriate and affordable. If we adopt this approach, we believe that effective engagement of our communities in solution finding will mobilise them to solve other problems and increase their own community support networks. This is coupled with us looking at doing business with the sector in simpler ways especially those that are smaller providers. Our approach to commissioning in adults, children's and public health is being looked at in terms of integration and an evidenced based approach. This will encourage, support and inspire partnerships between the council and communities.
- 5.3 We want to support by providing information, infrastructure, networks and skills to help community and social enterprise grow, and overcome any hurdles our communities identify. Our renewed emphasis on results and outcomes will also enable our communities to be much more engaged in what we do and commission. The recent example of Participatory Budgeting using public health money and asking local people to design activities that they thought would improve people's health in some of our most deprived areas with worst health outcomes has been hailed as national and local best practice. We will harness the great political and community will for innovation that came out of this and take the best ingredients and use them to influence how we and others can use public money and resources to best effect.

- 5.4 The Strategy sets out our shared journey, to ensure we have Connected Communities across Cheshire East, where people and community organisations are embedded within local networks, providing mutual help and support. Connected people and communities strengthen our community assets, reduce social isolation and enable local people to experience greater wellbeing.
- 5.5 Our deal with communities sets out a series of pledges, which in return needs residents and communities to play their part too. The Deal is an informal agreement between the Council and everyone who lives or works here to work together to create a better borough. We have made significant savings over recent years, but still have major challenges ahead, and the purpose of Our Deal with Communities, is to agree with residents and communities how we can work together to balance our books and deliver the services in a sustainable way. We see our role as one that concentrates on producing public value, not on controlling the means of producing it. We will be really energetic in working with communities to develop the deal together and we will set up systems that ensure quality outcomes and much less dominant in accomplishing those outcomes. We want to also promote individual responsibility for themselves and their lives and want to be uplifting and supportive in our approach with a well founded belief in the person and their potential to be independent.
- 5.6 The following provides the detail behind the five areas of the Connected Communities Strategy:
- (i) **Connected to People** includes a range of initiatives including Community Cohesion, Community Connectors, Neighbourhood Action, Community Navigators, Social Isolation and Mentoring. Action Plans for Community Cohesion (including Community Connectors) was approved by Cabinet in September 2016 and plans to tackle Fly Tipping and Neighbourhood Action in Crewe, were approved by Cabinet in October 2016. Reports on the other initiatives will be presented shortly. A key issue to implementing Connected to People is facilitating change behaviour within our communities, and we will be leading a range of change behaviour initiatives and campaigns.
 - (ii) **Connected to Services**, focuses on changing the way services are delivered. This includes supporting communities to deliver more, whilst the Council delivers more early intervention and prevention services through community venues and works with partners encouraging them to do the same. A report reviewing Community Hub pilots and recommending the future Delivering Differently approach will be presented to Cabinet in February 2017. The focus of our approach is to build on existing assets which exist in our communities, developing networks of services where people need them. We are reducing costs, by utilising and improving existing venues rather than building new, and critically these venues are located out in local communities, so are able to deliver outreach services where people will access them. We will be developing our Franchise further and providing funding to Franchisees, which facilitates the development of new services and activities focussed on local need and reducing future demand on services.

- (iii) **Connected to Neighbourhoods** recognises the importance of local networks and partnerships, showing how these work together across neighbourhoods, towns and wider localities. The Community Development Team facilitate or support Neighbourhood Partnerships in disadvantaged areas, support community-led Town Partnerships, and facilitate local Community Networks, which were only recently established and already engage over 500 organisations.
- (iv) **Connected to Voluntary, Community and Faith Organisations** focuses on the infrastructure support required to develop the sectors. We are developing a corporate approach to the commissioning of infrastructure support, which will provide more comprehensive help and support for the sector and also has the potential to save money. All sectors engage well in our community engagement work, but we need to recognise the support they require to be sustainable given the substantial changes taking place, including the move to commissioning more services which has the potential to disadvantage our local groups if we do not provide the advice and support they require to make the most of opportunities.
- (v) **Connected to Decision Making** looks at how we can develop opportunities for local people to influence policy and decision making. We are committed to working with our communities, and the strategy demonstrates a range of ways we do this, and how we wish to develop this area of work going forward so that we are effectively co-producing local services with our communities.

6. Wards Affected and Local Ward Members

6.1 The Strategy applies across the whole borough.

7. Implications of Recommendation

7.1. Policy Implications

7.1.1. The Strategy sets out ways to meet Outcome 1, Our Communities are Strong and Supportive. It underpins the Sustainable Community Strategy, Ambition for All and support the delivery of many other policies.

7.2. Legal Implications

7.2.1. Cabinet is asked to approve a Strategy which involves both engagement with communities and the third sector and proposals to deliver projects (the detail of which may be the subject of separate reports). The Strategy is a statement of the Council's intentions and so the Council's actions can be compared against the Strategy (and potentially challenged). Any engagement and the progression of the scheme specific projects must therefore be carefully framed to reflect the Strategy. The Strategy should be reviewed over time and as

projects are delivered to ensure it continues to reflect the Council's strategic aims.

7.2.2. Any scheme proposals which include the Council procuring goods and services will need to be compliant with the Council's own Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

7.2.3. The proposals within the Strategy to support Community Venues engaged in Delivering Differently, will also need to be compliant with the Council's Finance and Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. and any state aid implications identified and addressed..

7.2.4. When considering adopting the Strategy, the Council must also have due regard to its equality duties. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out at S149 of the Equality Act 2010, states:

“(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it... “

7.2.5. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed to assist Cabinet. Cabinet must have regard to the PSED and to the contents of the EIA in deciding whether approving the Strategy meets its equality duties.

7.2.6. If the Strategy alters existing ways of working and/or delivery of services then this may lead to challenge if those affected have not been consulted (and their views given consideration) as part of the development of the Strategy.

7.3. Financial Implications

7.3.1. Delivery of the Strategy will incur additional costs of £307,000 between now and March 2019, which are highlighted in the report and can be met through existing budgets, via departmental reserves.

7.4. Equality Implications

7.4.1. There are no specific equality implications and regard has been taken to our Equality Duty and an EIA completed.

7.5. Rural Community Implications

7.5.1. Work covers all of Cheshire East and will develop new services and activities in rural communities to meet specific local needs.

7.6. Human Resources Implications

7.6.1. Requires additional human resources as identified.

7.7. Public Health Implications

7.7.1. The actions in the Connected Communities strategy strongly support the delivery of Public Health Outcomes. In particular it supports outcomes related to empowerment and wellbeing.

7.7.2. Empowerment is a priority for all the transformation programmes (Pioneer Programme, Caring Together, Connecting Care). Empowerment of the community, patients and service users has been shown to have a positive impact on A&E attendances, readmissions and length of stay in hospital. Patients who are empowered are more likely to have clinical indicators (blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, Body Mass Index) within the normal range. If empowerment is increased this would lead to lower healthcare costs in the short and medium term.

7.7.3. Wellbeing has been linked to five habits: connect (with others), be active, take notice, keep learning and give (e.g. volunteering). The actions in the Connected Communities strategy will support residents to increase activity in all of these five areas.

7.8. Other Implications (Please Specify)

7.8.1. The Strategy pulls together a number of different initiatives, which this report summarises to show how they all work together.

8. Risk Management

8.1 Risks are identified through the Partnerships and Communities Business Planning process and area logged, reviewed and monitored.

9. Access to Information/Bibliography

9.1. The Draft Strategy is attached to the report and supporting documents are available on request.

10. Contact Information

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