

# Cheshire East Council

## Cabinet

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<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	7 <sup>th</sup> February 2017
<b>Report of:</b>	Steph Cordon, Head of Communities
<b>Subject/Title:</b>	Connected Communities - Connected to Neighbourhoods
<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Cllr Paul Bates, Communities and Health

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### 1. Report Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to set out in more detail the ambition of our Connected to Neighbourhoods theme which is part of our Connected Communities Strategy agreed by Cabinet on 6 December 2016. Each theme is programmed to come to Cabinet over the next few months and we are keen to demonstrate our commitment to joint working with communities by co-producing them and presenting them together.
- 1.2 One element of our Connected to Neighbourhoods approach is our work with the Town Partnerships. The Chair of the original 5 Towns Partnership will be presenting to Cabinet as part of this item to demonstrate their excellent work in their respective areas and to show how working together with the Council can achieve a shared outcome of strong and supportive communities. Equally, examples are provided through this report which show the vibrant community networks and neighbourhood partnerships that exist in both our urban and rural communities and how we plan to develop more networks in areas where they currently need more support.
- 1.3 What does Connected to Neighbourhoods mean? It's about having really strong diverse networks at a local level, connecting together a wide range of people who are doers. These vibrant networks include people and organisations who range from making their community look clean and safe, to those that provide early intervention and prevention activities working with some of our most vulnerable communities. By having strong equal relationships with these networks we can ensure that we enable local community groups within the networks to get on and do things that we can no longer afford to do, or are we not best placed to deliver. These very local partnerships and networks, provide community insight into what needs doing and by who, which is critical to us in terms of co-production in our integrated commissioning approach.
- 1.4 Cheshire East is a diverse area and so different types of partnerships and networks have developed across the borough, to meet particular local needs.

Each of the networks has their own unique sense of identity and their own way of making a difference.

- 1.5 We facilitate or are active partners in Neighbourhood Partnerships in our most deprived areas, who bring people together to address the needs of local people and work collaboratively to improve their shared offer.
- 1.6 There are now 8 Town Partnerships established which each receive £8,000 per year from the Council as a financial contribution.
- 1.7 Our Community Networks have gone from strength to strength, connecting organisations in local areas together, so they can share resources, apply for funding as part of consortia and not duplicate activities. A good example is two organisations in Crewe were both supporting homeless people, but not aware of the services provided at each others centres. As part of the Crewe Community Network, they are now working closely together and with other local organisations to provide vital services cross the town for homeless and other vulnerable people.
- 1.8 Town and Parish Councils also play a key role in neighbourhoods, representing their local community, delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in their parish. The Council provides an annual grant to Cheshire Association of Local Councils to provide support to local councils across the borough.

## **2 Recommendation**

2.1 That Cabinet approve:

- (i) Our approach to Connecting Neighbourhoods as part of our Connected Communities Strategy.
- (ii) Delegate to the Head of Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health, to award grant funding between the Town Partnerships from a maximum fund of £72,000 per annum with the Town Partnerships for 3 years from April 2017.
- (iii) Delegate to the Head of Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Health, to agree grant funding up to £14,213 with Cheshire Association of Local Councils for 2017/18.

## **3 Other Options Considered**

- 3.1 The Connected Communities Strategy was approved in December 2016, setting out our approach to working with communities. The purpose of this report is to provide more detail regarding the Connected to Neighbourhoods theme.

## **4 Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 To update on progress and agree a corporate approach to Connected to Neighbourhoods, developing our approach to partnership working with local communities at a local level.

## **5 Background/Chronology**

- 5.1 Community work happens at a very local level, in different neighbourhoods, parishes or towns. We are strengthening our local networks and partnerships, ensuring community activity and locally identified needs have clear links into strategic partnerships. The networks and partnerships below are key to our place-based commissioning and provide vital information on local needs, identified through community led plans.

### Neighbourhood Partnerships

- 5.2 Our Connected Communities Strategy recognises the importance of our joint work being led by community need, working together to increase community involvement and to make the best use of our shared resources and community intelligence. Our work in communities includes redefining the role of public services and engaging users in co-production, involving communities in the challenges of reduced public expenditure and increasing customer demand. Neighbourhood Partnerships provide a mechanism to explore new local delivery models at a neighbourhood level, which can provide modern services that are affordable, efficient and meet the needs and expectations of service users.
- 5.3 Neighbourhood Partnerships use Asset Based Community Development to develop strength based community initiatives. They build social capital, recognising the importance of relationships; developing local networks and connections, including targeted interventions to build social relationships amongst isolated groups; and interventions that encourage social connections between people with similar experiences to provide peer support; and helping residents to confront and cope with life's challenges, so that they maintain their wellbeing in the face of adversity.
- 5.4 Neighbourhood Partnerships give support to local community groups, to deliver activities and services in their communities, building community resilience, and promoting health and well-being. We will facilitate or are active partners in Neighbourhood Partnerships, who bring people together to address the needs of local people and work collaboratively to improve their shared offer. They cover our most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which are in the worst 25% nationally (Index of Multiple Deprivation) in terms of overall deprivation and include:
  - Wilmslow - Colshaw Farm and Lacey Green; Spath Lane
  - Knutsford - Longridge
  - Congleton - Bromley Farm
  - Alsager – Radway

- Macclesfield - Hurdsfield Community Group, Moss Rose Partnership, Weston Partnership, FAR UP (Upton Priory)
- Crewe - North and East, West and South, St Barnabas and Central.

5.5 Radway Partnership started as a resident led community group in November 2015. In their first year, they have held a number of family events on the estate, increased police presence and organised regular attendance at drop ins, are working with CEC services to improve the estate, and have the National Careers Service delivering once a month on the estate. They have also set up a community speed watch, carried out clean-ups, set up a group to improve the local park, established a knit, natter and crafting group, regular I-Tea and chat sessions, functional English and Maths classes. The Partnership have established a Facebook page which includes 230 people and recently decided to use crowd-funding to put on a pantomime for residents this Christmas, and quickly raised the funds required through this and sponsorship from local businesses.

5.6 Over the last 12 months, the 4 Macclesfield partnerships have focused on Participatory Budgeting, both in promoting it widely within their communities and also working to create bids from partnership members. All 4 partnerships now use Knowledgehub, as a digital platform, to share documents and information on what is happening locally. An example of how the partnerships develop and make local links is the Weston Partnership. This is now chaired by vicar of one of the churches on the estate, and that church is now open as a community venue and used by a range of groups to deliver early intervention and prevention services. The vicar is also part of the Macclesfield Community Network and sits on the Cheshire East wide Participatory Budgeting Core Group.

### Town and Community Partnerships

5.7 We support and work with Town Partnerships as they are a key part of the Cheshire East Partnership Framework, as they are independent constituted 'can do' groups, which are established and led by the local community. They vary to meet local needs, but their overall purpose is to improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area. Town Partnerships are active in:

- Wilmslow
- Poynton
- Congleton
- Holmes Chapel
- Middlewich
- Sandbach
- Alsager
- Nantwich

5.8 The Town Partnerships are attending Cabinet, to verbally present some of their excellent work in their communities and how we work together to achieve shared outcomes. A recent example is the 2Gs Challenge, led by Holmes

Chapel Partnership, in collaboration with Everybody Sport & Recreation and Active Cheshire, to increase activity levels within families by way of a 12 week challenge across two generations. Each family set their own activity goals and health questionnaires were completed at the start and end of the challenge with record sheets provided to record daily activities. Participants were also given pedometers to encourage increasing daily steps, seen as the easiest activity for everyone to improve. 101 participants signed up to the challenge, with ages ranging from 3 to 80 years. Of these participants, 29 completed 12 weeks of exercise, providing records and feedback. For those individuals who embraced the challenge, it gave them the incentive to increase their physical activity and most have reported both physical and mental benefits as a result of taking part.

### Community Networks

- 5.9 We facilitate community networks in localities/towns, bringing a wide range of community organisations together, which focus on collaborative working and peer networking to share knowledge and skills. They engage with a wide range of partners who deliver community activities and services in their area, clearly focussed on redesigning services, so that together we provide the right services, in the right places and at the right times. Community Networks understand the needs of their communities and are linked into partnership work to ensure it is led by community need, and increases community involvement, to make the best use of our shared resources and community intelligence.
- 5.10 Community Networks play a key role in community commissioning, influencing local public service funding. During 2016, they have led the local delivery of our Participatory Budgeting pilot. They organised their local Decision Days, delivered local 'Drop In Information and Support Sessions', sifted initial applications to ensure they met the criteria, and invited those who did meet the criteria to present their project proposals to the PB Decision Days. They are now carrying out local monitoring and evaluation of the projects funded, and critically providing local mentors for groups, keeping the local links and focussing on continual networking.
- 5.11 Our Community Networks are still new and are establishing themselves, but have already gone from strength to strength and by connecting organisations together, they are sharing resources and applying for funding as part of a consortia and not duplicating activities. A good example is two organisations in Crewe were both supporting homeless people, who weren't aware of the services provided at each other's centres. The Communities Team built up a relationship with both centres and has established good links between the two, so they support each other and between them can maximise the support available.
- 5.12 The Community Networks provide a networking mechanism both for local organisations, and for service providers to work closely with local groups. As an example, in Crewe a local group was looking to establish new work clubs, and

through the network, have established links with DWP who have enabled them to target the support to the areas with most need and now they have established the links with DWP, their officers are aware of the services and can signpost people to them. The December meeting of the Crewe Community Network, includes presentations from 2 local voluntary sector groups and 2 statutory sector organisations, all wishing to make wider links. One of the presenters is from the Skills and Growth Company, who are keen to link with the Community Networks, to promote their events and activities for Digital Champions.

- 5.13 Community Networks exist at different geographical levels, covering both towns and rural areas. In the south of the borough, we engage with our rural parishes through rural cluster meetings and very local networking events.
- 5.14 A recent example of a rural community networking event is the one held in October 2016, in the rural village hall of Marbury. A variety of agencies were in attendance to advise, assist and signpost residents in a variety of matters, such as finance, health and household fuel costs, all things which impact on daily lives in such a rural locality. Being off the 'main grid' for energy supplies, a number of residents were delighted to find they could make considerable savings by signing up to a non-profit-making community fuel-buying scheme. The Communities Team conducted a consultation with local residents to find out more about life in Marbury, what is good, what is not so good and what services and social activities are missing from their village. Work is now underway to address any issues to encourage a strong and resilient community.
- 5.15 Town and Parish Councils play a key role in neighbourhoods, representing their local community, delivering services to meet local needs and striving to improve quality of life in their parish. The Council provides an annual grant to Cheshire Association of Local Councils, as the sole provider of infrastructure support to local councils in the area, to provide support to local councils across the borough.

### Summary

- 5.16 Our Community Networks, Town and Neighbourhood Partnerships are important elements of the Council's approach to place based commissioning and it is important that our services engage effectively with these mechanisms to work with our local communities to co-produce services which meet local needs. Community Networks exist at different geographical levels depending on the local need. We now have successful Town Partnerships established in 8 of our market Towns and neighbourhood partnerships working across those neighbourhoods which feature in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, which are in the worst 25% nationally (IMD) in terms of overall deprivation.

## **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 Connected Communities 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 The report to Cabinet in December 2016, to approve the adoption of the Connected Communities Strategy did not contain proposals to grant fund organisations and consequently grant funding was not specifically addressed in the legal implications contained in that report.
- 7.2.2 The Council has the power to directly award grants using its general power of competence in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011. In exercising this power the Council must satisfy its public law duties. In essence this means that in making the decision the Council must have taken into account only relevant considerations, followed procedural requirements, acted for proper motives and not acted unreasonably.
- 7.2.3 The Council has developed a Grant Funding Protocol which sets out guidance on grant funding, consideration of state aid implications, the process for allocation and the limited conditions that should apply to any grant funding (Constitution Finance Procedure Rules E.26).
- 7.2.4 In deciding whether to directly award a grant Cabinet should consider the facts and circumstances in which a direct grant award is being proposed and be satisfied that in making a direct award the Council is meeting its public law duties.
- 7.2.5 In awarding a grant the Council cannot exhibit the same amount of control over the organisation as is commensurate with a contract. Essentially the terms of the grant should set out what the purpose of the grant is for and only claim claw back provisions in the case of the grant funding being used for other purposes or otherwise improperly. The Council will not be able to assess the quality of the services that are being provided and determine to withdraw grant funding on that basis (except at the end of the period of the grant funding).
- 7.2.6 Consideration must be given to State Aid implications of directly awarding a grant. State Aid rules apply where:
- State resources are involved
  - The beneficiary is involved in economic activity
  - The beneficiary could get an advantage that they cannot normally get from the market

- The services are theoretically tradable across the Member states.

A scheme must meet all four of the above criteria in order to be considered to be State Aid.

- 7.2.7 Payments which are less than the State Aid De Minimis threshold (200,000 euros in any rolling three year period) can be made lawfully in any event. However, all sums received by a recipient in a three year rolling period are taken into account.
- 7.2.8 This report proposes that the Head of Communities be delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make decisions to award grant funding to Town Partnerships and so the ultimate decisions as to who is awarded grant funding, how much and on what basis. A competitive procedure/clear set of criteria for allocation grant funding following a bidding process would enable the Council to resist potential challenges (either from existing organisations who feel that they have been treated fairly depending on the outcome or from any new organisations who may want to be funded and recognised as Town Partnerships) and negate State Aid issues.
- 7.2.9 The Service has determined that ChALC receive grant funding to support local councils. They state that no other organisations operating within the Cheshire East area are able to meet this need. In the event of a challenge the Council would need to provide evidence to support the view that the beneficiaries are not being given an advantage (on the basis there is no market) and that the grant award is not State Aid.

### **7.3 Financial Implications**

- 7.3.1 The paper requests delegation to grant fund Town Partnerships and Cheshire Association of Local Councils, and the funding for this is within the existing Partnerships and Communities Budget. There are currently 8 partnerships with a maximum of 9 possible town partnerships in the Borough. There is an annual revenue budget of £48,000 pa, plus a Community Investment Reserve of £24,000 per annum up to 2019/20. Funding of £14,213 per annum is in the revenue budget for the ChALC grant.

### **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 for the Connected to Communities Strategy.

### **7.5 Rural Community Implications**

- 7.5.1 There is a strong focus around working and developing community networks in our rural communities and a gap has been identified in the



Macclesfield rural localities in particular. This will be an area that will be focussed on engaging with communities in that area. Marbury is given example of how a community network in a rural area can support local people in an area access services and reduce costs. Another example, is community transport initiatives whereby we know that many people may be socially isolated in rural communities and need support to access shops and getting to the doctor. Developing community networks in our more rural communities will support our corporate outcomes of strong communities and people living well and for longer.

7.5.2 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 There are no specific HR implications.

#### **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. Connected to Neighbourhoods provides mechanisms to support the delivery of Public Health outcomes.

#### **7.8 Implications for Children and Young People**

7.8.1 The work in neighbourhoods delivers a range of initiatives which positively support local children and young people.

#### **7.9 Other Implications (Please Specify)**

7.9.1 Connected to Neighbourhoods is part of the Connected to Communities Strategy which 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 are logged, reviewed and monitored.

### **9 Access to Information/Bibliography**

9.1 Connected to Communities Strategy.

## 10 Contact Information

Contact details for this report are as follows:

**Name:** Steph Cordon  
**Designation:** Head of Communities  
**Tel. No:** 01270 686401  
**Email:** [steph.cordon@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:steph.cordon@cheshireeast.gov.uk)