

SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 22 APRIL 2015

COMMUNITIES STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the results from six theme based Communities Strategy Delivery Planning workshops held in January and February 2015, and to seek the comments of the Commission on the Council's draft Communities Strategy Action Plan (attached as Appendix A to this report).
2. The draft Action Plan sets out how the Council and partners will deliver against the three Communities Strategy priorities agreed by the Cabinet in October 2014 and listed below:
 - **Priority 1:** Building the resilience and capacity of communities to support themselves and vulnerable individuals and families - thus reducing demand on public services
 - **Priority 2:** Supporting community groups to take over relevant services, including those currently delivered by the County Council, and to work more closely alongside us to design and deliver services
 - **Priority 3:** Developing voluntary and community sector organisations in Leicestershire as effective providers in a mixed, diverse market which supports delivery of our service devolution and support for vulnerable people priorities, and effective commissioning of the sector
3. These priorities are supported by eight 'building blocks'. These are assets that need to be available within/to communities to enable delivery of the three priorities set out above.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

4. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2014/15 – 2017/18, including the 2014/15 revenue budget and capital programme, was approved by the County Council on 19 February 2014. The MTFS sets out a new vision for the County Council and a new Target Operating Model (TOM) which reflects the imperative to adopt a much more integrated approach to prevention and early intervention so that fewer people are reliant on costly public services.
5. The Cabinet agreed in March 2014 to consult on the allocation of £590,000 savings against the Chief Executive's Department's budget line 'Funding and Support to Agencies' (S72) and to approve the proposed approach to delivering savings of £430,000 against the budget line 'Provision and refocusing of grants to individuals and community groups' (S71) in the MTFS. Both of these budget lines contribute to the delivery of the Communities Strategy. The consultation on the former ended on 2 June 2014 and the final savings proposals were agreed by the Cabinet in September 2014, including new contracts around 'community capacity building' and 'engagement, consultation and equalities challenge'.
6. The County Council's Strategic Plan was approved by the Council on 21 May 2014. It sets out priorities, supporting actions and targets for the Authority over the next four years. The Transformation Programme, approved by the Cabinet on 6 May 2014, sets out how the Council will transform both services and the ways it operates to deliver its priorities and meet financial challenges. As a detailed plan for supporting Leicestershire communities and enabling them to take on a wider role in terms of delaying or stopping people from needing to access services and supporting service delivery/devolution, the Communities Strategy aligns closely both to the Transformation Programme and Strategic Plan.
7. The Cabinet approved the draft Communities Strategy for a 10 week consultation period at its meeting in June 2014 and the final Communities Strategy, updated to reflect key comments made during the consultation period, in October 2014. At this meeting approval was granted for the development of a detailed Delivery Plan, and for partners, communities and their representatives to be engaged in the development of this Plan.

Background

8. The Council has a long standing track record of working in partnership with its communities and 'helping them to help themselves', including through its previous Big Society and Communities in Charge initiatives. In 2010, the Council worked with partners, local community groups and voluntary sector organisations to develop and agree four Leicestershire aspirations:

- Everyone can be involved in their community
 - Everyone has opportunities to influence decisions that affect them
 - Local people are able to shape and deliver public services
 - Local people and organisations grow the Big Society together
9. However, there is now less money, increasing demand for services and major changes to both public services and the welfare system. Fewer services will be available to fewer people and there are likely to be more vulnerable people at risk.
10. In response to the challenging financial climate, the Council has developed its Communities Strategy. This focusses on working with communities to reduce demand for services (particularly from vulnerable people) through community-based prevention and early intervention initiatives, supporting communities to work alongside the Council to deliver services/take on devolved service delivery and repositioning the voluntary sector as part of an effective market that supports the Council in delivering its ambitions. This Strategy builds on the Council's previous approaches (and learning), but is closely aligned to the Council's new Transformation Programme and priorities.

Communities Strategy Delivery Planning Workshops

11. It was agreed by the Cabinet at its meeting in October 2014 that additional work would be undertaken to involve partners, communities and their representatives in the further development of the Action Plan. Six workshops were held around the County in January and February 2015 in order to engage as wide a range of participants as possible in discussing the role of communities in supporting specific target/priority groups or tackling specific issues. The workshops were as follows:

W1: How can I help people in my community to be more physically healthy and mentally active?

W2: How can I help and support older people in my community?

W3: How can I help and support families with young children in my community?

W4: How can I help young people in my community?

W5: How can communities improve their environment (including housing, community buildings and green spaces)?

W6: How can I help people in my community to get from A to B in order to access the services that they need?

W7: How can communities generate income for community projects?

12. Five of the workshops focussed on the following questions:

- 1) WHO within Leicestershire communities most needs help and support?
- 2) WHAT could communities possibly do...?
- 3) HOW can we 'Unlock Community Capacity' to tackle this issue?

13. The sixth workshop focussed on income generation for community projects and therefore the format was different. This included presentations from local community groups on their experience and from VCS organisations on social businesses, support for social enterprises, crowd-funding, renewable energy and the support available from Voluntary Action Leicestershire for VCS groups.

14. Each workshop was attended by between 20 and 50 people – a mixture of community representatives, town and parish councils, partner organisations and County Council Officers. Workshop 3 was postponed due to travel difficulties caused by snow but only seven people signed up for the rescheduled workshop on March 13 and therefore this was postponed again.

15. The report attached as Appendix B summarises the results from the workshops. For the first and third questions outlined above in paragraph 12, the results are aggregated across all five of the theme based workshops but the report includes a separate page that is specific to each workshop for the second question 'What could communities possibly do...?'

16. The output from the workshops therefore provides a good overview of those who might be vulnerable within communities, either on a temporary or permanent basis, explores what communities could possibly do to support these people (or in the case of Workshops 5 and 6 what communities could do to tackle this issue) and what the County Council could commission/put in place to support communities to take on a new prevention and/or service devolution based role, across four specific areas:

- i. Willingness to do things
- ii. Understanding what works
- iii. Support to get started
- iv. Support to keep going

17. Some of these ideas, particularly in the latter section, have been incorporated into the draft Communities Strategy Action Plan attached as Appendix A.

Communities Strategy: Summary of Progress and Key Actions

18. The full Action Plan, attached as Appendix A, provides greater detail but the paragraphs below provide a brief overview of progress between November 2014 and March 2015 in terms of the delivery of the three Communities Strategy priorities.

Priority One: A longer term 'demand management' role - building the capacity and resilience of local communities to support themselves and vulnerable individuals and families

Key Progress to Date:

- Community Capacity Building Contract awarded - commenced on 1 January 2015.
- A locality and community devolved emergency welfare provision and prevention offer (to replace Leicestershire Welfare Provision) has been designed and implemented as of 1 April 2015.
- Local Area Co-ordination¹ (LAC) Manager appointed and in post from February and Local Area Co-ordinators recruited to work in 8 'learning sites' across four districts in Leicestershire from May 2015.
- Six delivery planning workshops held in January and February 2014 have enhanced the network of community champions and helped to refine the County Council support offer.
- A new engagement approach and forum with parish councils is being piloted.

Examples of Future Measures of Success:

- LAC - for individuals: improved health and well-being, reduced isolation.
- LAC - for communities: increased levels of service support ownership and volunteering.
- LAC - for organisations: fewer hospital admissions and visits to GPs

Priority Two: Supporting community groups to take over relevant services,

¹ LAC is a key dimension of the unified prevention approach at the heart of the Better Care Plan and will be tested in eight learning sites from autumn 2014. Local Area Coordinators (LACs) will be based within the community, have close links to the local GP practice(s), work with between 50-65 individuals and their families at any time and provide a vital interface between vulnerable individuals/families, services and communities.

including those currently delivered by the County Council, and to work more closely alongside us to design and deliver services

Key Progress to Date:

- Libraries – 19 proposals for a community managed library out of 27 communities that expressed an interest have progressed; there will be further engagement in 12 communities.
- Community Bus Partnerships – four potential routes will be designed and partly managed by communities in partnership with contracted providers.
- The new representation and challenge contract has been awarded to Age UK. This will ensure that easy to ignore communities have a say in key policy and service developments.

Examples of Future Measures of Success:

- The number of community groups, working with County Council services - and with invest to save transformation funding - that play a role in the management and delivery of services.
- Contributions to key County Council consultations relating to policy and service changes, particularly from easy to ignore groups.

Priority Three: Developing voluntary and community sector organisations in Leicestershire as effective providers in a mixed, diverse market

Key Progress to Date:

- Increased attendance at Voluntary Action Leicestershire's District Forums and increased access to policy briefings.
- To period 11 in 2014/15, 847 groups were supported through the Support for Voluntary Sector Organisations contract and over £450,000 has been secured for VCS projects supporting vulnerable people.
- Greater coordination provided in relation to VCS responses to County Council consultations.
- £320,000 of Shire Grants committed in 2014-2015.
- Initial planning in terms of growth of the 'communities market'

Examples of Future Measure of Success:

- A well informed VCS able to influence public sector policy and service developments.
- The number of VCS groups that receive support to enable them to lead/support prevention and service delivery activity.
- An increase in volunteering in priority themes/areas

Consultations

19. The consultation on the draft Communities Strategy ran for a ten week period between 23 June and 1 September 2014. A final version of the Strategy was agreed by the Cabinet on 13 October 2014.
20. Six workshops were held in January and February 2015 as part of the process of developing the Communities Strategy Action Plan. The results of these workshops are included as Appendix B to this report.

Resource Implications

21. Detailed funding proposals around 'Funding and Support to Agencies' and 'Grants to Individuals and Community Groups' were agreed by the Cabinet on

September 2014. The Shire Community Solutions and Your Shire grants and the contracts included in the 'Funding and Support to Agencies' consultation all support delivery of the three priorities in the Communities Strategy.

22. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Timetable for Decisions (Including Scrutiny)

23. A report, summarising the consultation findings and seeking approval of the draft Action Plan, will be presented to the Cabinet on 11 May 2015.

Conclusions

24. Participants in the six Communities Strategy Delivery Planning workshops have helped to develop the Council's thinking about the potential role of, and support required by, communities if they are to play a role in delivering the ambitions set out in the Communities Strategy.

25. Comments are sought from the Scrutiny Commission on the draft Communities Strategy Action Plan in light of the results of the Delivery Planning Workshops.

Background Papers

Cabinet Report – October 13 2014 – Communities Strategy

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00004268/AI00039244/\\$8CommunitiesStrategy.docxA.ps.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00004268/AI00039244/$8CommunitiesStrategy.docxA.ps.pdf)

Communities Strategy document

[http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00004268/AI00039244/\\$CommunitiesStrategyConsultationDocumentAppendixB.pdfA.ps.pdf](http://politics.leics.gov.uk/Published/C00000135/M00004268/AI00039244/$CommunitiesStrategyConsultationDocumentAppendixB.pdfA.ps.pdf)

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Draft Communities Strategy Action Plan

Appendix B – Communities Strategy Delivery Planning Workshops – Summary of Results

Relevant Impact Assessments

Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Implications

The Strategy aims to ensure the ongoing successful delivery of services to all communities, having particular regard to the most vulnerable. Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments will be undertaken, where relevant, for specific projects within the Action Plan.

Partnership Working and Associated Issues

It is anticipated that the County Council will work with partners to deliver specific aspects of the Communities Strategy.