



CABINET 10TH MARCH 2017

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

WORKING TOGETHER TO BUILD GREAT COMMUNITIES IN LEICESTERSHIRE: DRAFT COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2017-21

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the draft refreshed Communities Strategy and seek approval to carry out a consultation exercise with communities and stakeholders on the Strategy and the development of an Action Plan for its delivery. The draft Strategy is attached as Appendix B to this report.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a. The draft refreshed Communities Strategy 2017-21 is approved for consultation and engagement with stakeholders;
 - b. The process for developing a Communities Strategy Action Plan as set out in the report is approved;
 - c. A further report be submitted to the Cabinet in the autumn setting out the outcome of the consultation and submitting the final Communities Strategy for approval.

Reasons for Recommendations

3. To provide the opportunity for stakeholders to comment on the draft Communities Strategy.
4. To provide the opportunity for stakeholders to contribute to the draft Strategy and on the development of an Action Plan which will support its delivery.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The Scrutiny Commission will consider this report at its meeting on 8th March and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.

6. Approval for the final Communities Strategy and the supporting Action Plan will be sought from the Cabinet in Autumn 2017.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

7. The Cabinet approved the Leicestershire Communities Strategy on 13th October 2014 with the Action Plan being approved by the Cabinet on the 11th May 2015. The Strategy is highlighted in the current Strategic Plan as a key element of the Leadership and Transformation role of the Council.
8. A strategy for Early Help and Prevention Services was approved by the Cabinet on 17th June 2016. This strategy identifies the Council's Target Operating Model for early help and prevention, which is supported by the approach described in the Communities Strategy.

Resource Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications in relation to the draft Communities Strategy. Delivery of the Strategy will be supported from within existing staffing resources and through the commissioning of community capacity building contracts and grants.
10. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the contents of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. None. A copy of this report has been sent to all Members of the Council under the Members News in Brief service.

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PART B

Background

12. The existing Communities Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to develop inclusive and resilient communities that are more self-sufficient, that look out for each other and work with the Council to make a positive difference for the benefit of the people of Leicestershire.
13. The Strategy cannot be delivered by the Council alone but depends on co-operation with partners including communities to deliver better outcomes and consider different ways of delivering services and activities.
14. Several significant achievements have resulted from delivery of the existing Communities Strategy and Action Plan including Community Managed Libraries, and the introduction of Local Area Co-ordination. Local Area Co-ordination is an internationally recognised model of providing early help and support to prevent people reaching a crisis point and requiring higher cost services. The pilot scheme in Leicestershire has been in place since mid-2015, and currently operates in 10 locations with 8 Local Area Co-ordinators. It remains to integrate the objectives and aspirations of the Communities Strategy further within the everyday work of the Council and in its work with its partners.
15. The Council's Communities Board comprising officers from each Council Department has been established to provide a focus for refreshing and implementing the Strategy.

Review of Progress and Lessons Learned

16. As part of the refresh process, a review of progress to date in delivering the Communities Strategy took place. Appendix A provides a detailed summary of the progress made and lessons learned in delivering in delivering the Communities Strategy and Action Plan.
17. A number of key issues were highlighted for consideration in refreshing the Communities Strategy including:
 - The benefits, exemplified by the Community Managed Libraries initiative, of appropriate investment of officer time and/or funding in the preparation of Community Strategy initiatives and the transfer of services to communities.
 - The need to raise understanding across the Council of the benefits of an 'asset based approach', aiming to build on the personal skills, social networks and physical assets within communities for the achievement of mutual aims.
 - The need to support Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) (and other partners) to develop sustainable models and alternative approaches to income generation.

- The need to continue to support VCS Infrastructure organisations and other partner organisations if the Council's ambitions are to be achieved, including support for volunteering and for parish and town councils.

Working Together to Build Great Communities In Leicestershire: Draft Communities Strategy 2017-21

18. The refreshed draft Communities Strategy 2017-21 is attached as Appendix B. The key changes, reflected in the refreshed Strategy, include the addition of case studies to illustrate successes, and four updated priorities -

- Priority 1: Communities able to support themselves, individuals and families;
- Priority 2: Communities, in collaboration with public services, are supported to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire;
- Priority 3: The voluntary and community sector in Leicestershire is an effective provider in a diverse market,
- Priority 4: The Council continues to be outward focussed, transparent and open to new ways of working.

The refreshed Strategy also includes a commitment to support social action and to take an asset-based approach in the Council's commissioning decisions.

19. It is proposed that the views of stakeholders on the refreshed Strategy be sought as part of the engagement process on the development of the Action Plan, as outlined in paragraph 21 below. The final Strategy will be submitted to the Cabinet for approval in October 2017.

Communities Strategy Action Plan

20. A draft Action Plan will be developed to support delivery of the four priorities outlined above. It will focus on practical, deliverable action that will make a tangible difference. Action will include, for example; providing training and support for volunteers, building the capacity of Parish and Town Councils and delivering community based broadband initiatives.

Consultation and Engagement

21. A series of engagement events and activities will take place over the summer culminating in a Communities Summit in September 2017. The aim of the consultation is to encourage wider participation and involvement in the delivery of the Communities Strategy. Engagement and consultation will include conversations with key stakeholders and a social media campaign to encourage communities to get involved.

The consultation and engagement plan will include:-

- Dissemination of the Strategy and the launch of a consultation and engagement process: June 2017
- Engagement events and Stakeholder Conversations: June–July 2017
- A Communities Summit: September 2017
- Final Strategy and Action Plan approved: October 2017.

Background Papers

The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2014

<https://www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk/uploads/community-strategy-oct14.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet on 17 June 2016 ‘Early Help and Prevention Review’

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603>

The Council’s Strategic Plan 2014 - 2018

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4601>

Appendices

Appendix A - Communities Strategy: Review of Progress and Lessons Learned

Appendix B – Draft Communities Strategy 2017-21

Appendix C - Equalities and Human Rights Scoping Assessment

Equality and Human Rights Implications

22. An Equalities and Human Rights Scoping Assessment of the service review has been carried out and is attached as Appendix C. The assessment concluded that implementation of the Communities Strategy is likely to have a positive equalities and human rights impact. Through a focus on early intervention and prevention, developing inclusive and supportive community connections and community solutions it will promote community cohesion and have a positive impact on individuals or groups that identify with protected characteristics.

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