



SCRUTINY COMMISSION: 15TH NOVEMBER 2017

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

REPORT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Commission on the preparation of 'Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21', to provide the Commission with an opportunity to comment on the Communities Strategy before its consideration by the Cabinet and to report on progress in developing a Communities Strategy Action Plan.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Cabinet approved the current Leicestershire Communities Strategy on 13th October 2014 with an Action Plan approved by Cabinet on the 11th May 2015. A draft revised Communities Strategy, covering the period 2017-21, was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on the 10th March 2017 for engagement with stakeholders.
3. The 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 set out in the Communities Strategy
4. The refresh of the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22 – the single outcomes framework (to be considered at this meeting of the Scrutiny Commission.) Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21 provides a framework for achieving all of the outcomes in collaboration with our communities.

Background

5. The 2014 Communities Strategy set 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 in collaboration with partners and communities to make a positive difference for the benefit of the people of Leicestershire.
6. Several significant achievements have resulted from the delivery of the existing Communities Strategy and Action Plan, including Community Managed Libraries and the introduction of Local Area Co-ordinators.

7. Lessons have been learnt from these achievements and in refreshing the Strategy this learning and other key issues have been taken into account. These key issues include:
- a. The benefits, exemplified by the Community Managed Libraries initiative, of appropriate investment of officer time and/or funding in supporting the delivery of the Communities Strategy and the transfer of services to communities;
 - b. The need to raise understanding across the Council of the benefits of an 'asset based approach' aimed at building on the personal skills, social networks and physical assets within communities for the achievement of mutual aims;
 - c. The need to support the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and other partners to develop sustainable models and alternative approaches to income generation; and
 - d. The need to continue to support the VCS 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: Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21.

8. The draft Communities Strategy 2017-21, considered by the Commission on the 8th March and Cabinet on 10th March, addressed the key issues and incorporated case studies to illustrate good practice, and comprised four updated priorities:
- Priority 1: Communities 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 of services in a diverse market;
 - Priority 4: The Council continues to be outward focused, transparent and open to new ways of working.

The draft Strategy included a commitment to support social action and take an 'asset based' approach in the Council's commissioning decisions.

9. The Cabinet, at its meeting on 10 March 2017 approved that engagement with stakeholders on the draft Communities Strategy 2017-21 take place during the summer of 2017. The aims of the engagement exercise were to encourage wider participation and involvement in the delivery of the Communities Strategy and would include conversations with key stakeholders and a social media campaign to encourage communities to get involved.

Engagement

10. Between June and September 2017, engagement took place which sought feedback from residents, organisations, partners and stakeholders on the vision, priorities and

new approaches included in the refreshed Strategy. Importantly participants were asked to consider how they could work together with the Council in the future to make the Strategy a reality, and what makes a good community for them.

11. A range of methods were used to engage audiences, including workshops, networking events, partner conferences, meetings and a social media platform. The on-line questionnaire using 'Sticky-world' technology was placed on the Leicestershire Communities website (www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk). Sticky world is a simple engagement tool and was used to collate information and views from respondents using virtual sticky notes.

The following individuals, representatives and organisations were involved:

Town and Parish Councils. Annual Liaison Event 10 th July and three Big Conversations held throughout the county (28 th Sept, 2 nd Oct and 5 th Oct) in partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC)	Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations. Direct mail and Future Focus Event 7 th Sept'
Individuals and Families supported by YOS	Leicestershire Equalities Forum
Neighbourhood Planning Network	Volunteers (through various events and activities)
Young Carers Event at Leicester Space Centre	Carers. Events during Carers Week and close liaison and cross-referencing through the Carers Strategy consultation
Older Persons Engagement Network	People with Learning Disabilities. Celebration Event 23 rd June
District Councils (via the Community Inclusion Partnership)	Leicestershire Rural Partnership
CYCLE (County Youth Council)	Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group

12. Information was distributed for display in libraries and GP surgeries to encourage people to respond. Collaboration with Leicestershire Partnership Trust colleagues took place as the 'Healthier in Mind' consultation coincided with this engagement period and supported the Priorities of the Communities Strategy.
13. Within the Council, Members, managers and staff have been engaged through the following mechanisms:
- Departmental Management Team meetings;
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender + Conference

- Members' Induction Programme
- Senior Managers Conference
- Yammer
- Banners displayed throughout County Hall.

Engagement Questions

14. Three questions were posed to prompt discussion at each event/ engagement opportunity:
- What is a good community?
 - What can you do to help other people in your community?
 - How can the Council help you to be happy in your community?

Responses and Key Themes

15. There were 48 individual responses via the Leicestershire Communities website, in addition to comments made at the events and workshops over the summer period.
16. Headline responses from each of the three questions can be summarised as:
- There was a general feeling that 'community spirit', where people look out for and support each other, is the key to having a good community;
 - A sense of neighbourliness, consideration and caring for each other is something we should all strive to do;
 - Easier access to information, advice, guidance and support is essential.
17. The key themes arising from the collective responses include:
- The need for greater awareness and improved access to Information, Advice and Guidance at a community level;
 - To build on the success of Community Managed Libraries and the community spirit they have evoked;
 - Make it easier for people to volunteer by promoting more local opportunities and simplifying the process to allow more people to volunteer;
 - Celebrate success and share best practice;
 - Co-ordinate activity internally and prioritise support and opportunities for community led services.
18. On the Strategy itself, there was a positive response to the tone, approach and overarching aims however there were some areas that respondents felt could be strengthened. These included a more explicit reference to the role of Town and Parish Councils, a reference to corporate social responsibility and to the Council's Strategic Plan and Single Outcomes Framework.

19. The proposed Working Together to Build Great Communities: Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21 is attached as Appendix A.

Action Plan

20. The feedback, information, links and opportunities identified through the engagement period have been considered and are informing the preparation of a Communities Strategy Action Plan. This Action Plan will be managed and overseen by the Council's corporate Communities Board. The Action Plan, structured around the four priorities of the Communities Strategy, will be supported by a number of work streams, projects, programmes and initiatives which will evolve as the Strategy is implemented.
21. Central to the Action Plan is the development of appropriate, relevant and robust methods of recording and reporting both the impacts and difference made from the activities, interventions and approaches listed. Work is underway with the Council's Business Intelligence Service to develop a research framework that will complement existing quantitative and qualitative research that can be utilised and applied appropriately.

Communities Summit

22. A Communities Summit was held on Thursday 9th November 6.15-8pm. The Summit was planned to provide feedback on the engagement activities and to provide an opportunity to hear from people who are making a difference in their local communities. The evening also included a number of workshops designed to respond to the feedback received during the engagement activities.
23. The Summit was attended by a range of invited stakeholders including community representatives, town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sector, colleagues and partners.

Resource Implications

24. There are no direct financial implications. Delivery of the Strategy will be supported from within existing staffing resources and through the commissioning of community capacity activities and grants.
25. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the contents of this report.

Conclusion

26. This report has been presented to the Commission to provide an opportunity to comment on the Communities Strategy before its consideration by the Cabinet, and to report on progress in developing a Communities Strategy Action Plan.

Timetable for Decisions

27. Working Together to Build Great Communities: Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21 will be considered by Cabinet on Tuesday 12th December.

Background papers

The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2014

https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/field/pdf/2017/1/31/Communities_Strategy.pdf

Report to the Cabinet on 17th June 2016 'Early Help and Prevention Review'

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s119782/FINAL%20Early%20Help%20and%20Prevention.pdf>

The Council's Strategic Plan 2014-

18<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s92688/Appendix%20B%20-%20County%20Council%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet 10th March 2017 (and reported to Scrutiny 8th March) Working Together to Build Great Communities in Leicestershire: Draft Communities Strategy 2017-21

<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/documents/s126998/FINAL%20Cabinet%20Report%20Communities%20Strategy.pdf>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

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Appendices

Appendix A Working Together to Build Great Communities –Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21

Equality and Human Rights Implications

28. An Equalities and Human Rights Scoping Assessment of the review of the Strategy took place and was presented to the Commission on March 8th 2017.
29. The assessment concluded that the 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.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

Risk Assessment

30. Risks identified in connection with achieving the vision and delivering the priorities of the Communities Strategy are:
- If the Communities Strategy does not lead to the successful transfer of services to communities or effective support to the vulnerable then demand on Council services could increase.
 - If Third Party and voluntary sector organisations have insufficient resources then they will be unable to effectively partner with the County Council around shared agendas.
31. These risks are mitigated through the production of this refreshed Communities Strategy, the development of the Communities Board Action Plan, the provision of a Countywide Infrastructure Service, contracts to support social enterprise and the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils and through community grants.

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