



CABINET - 12 DECEMBER 2017

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

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

PART A

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present the outcome of engagement on the Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-2021 'Working Together to Build Great Communities in Leicestershire' (hereafter referred to as the Communities Strategy) and to seek approval of the refreshed Strategy which is attached to this report as Appendix B.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that:
 - a) The outcome of the engagement on the Communities Strategy 2017-21 is noted;
 - b) The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21 is approved.

Reason for Recommendations

3. To enable implementation of the Communities Strategy which will support the Council's Strategic Plan.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The results of the engagement process and the refreshed Communities Strategy were considered by the Scrutiny Commission on 15th November 2017 (Appendix A and paragraphs 29-30 below refer).
5. Subject to the Cabinet's approval, the necessary work to implement the Communities Strategy will progress immediately.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The current Communities Strategy was approved by the Cabinet on 13th October 2014. The draft refreshed Communities Strategy was approved for engagement with stakeholders by the Cabinet on 10th March 2017.
7. The refresh of the Council's Strategic Plan 2018-22 – the Single Outcomes Framework was considered by the Cabinet on 24th November 2017 and will be submitted to the County Council on 6th December for approval. The Communities Strategy provides a framework for achieving Strategic Plan outcomes in collaboration with Leicestershire communities.
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 set out in the Communities Strategy.

Resource Implications

9. There are no direct financial implications in relation to the refreshed 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 content of this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. None.

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PART B

Background

12. The current Communities Strategy (approved in 2014) 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.
13. 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.
14. Lessons have been learnt from these achievements and in refreshing the Strategy this learning and other key issues have been taken into account. These 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 in Leicestershire: Draft Communities Strategy 2017-21

15. The draft refreshed Communities Strategy, considered by Cabinet on 10th March, addressed the lessons learnt referred to above, incorporated case studies to illustrate good practice and included four updated priorities.
16. The draft Strategy also included a commitment to support social action and take an 'asset based' approach in the Council's commissioning decisions.
17. The Cabinet, on 10 March 2017, approved engagement with stakeholders on the draft Communities Strategy to take place during the summer of 2017. This was aimed at encouraging wider participation and involvement in the design and delivery of the Communities Strategy, including conversations with key

stakeholders (see paragraph 20) and a social media campaign to encourage communities to get involved.

Engagement

18. Between June and September 2017 feedback was sought 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, in their view, comprised a good community.
19. A range of methods were used to engage audiences, including workshops, networking events, partner conferences, meetings, twitter and Facebook. An on-line questionnaire using 'Stickyworld' technology was placed on the Leicestershire Communities website (www.leicestershirecommunities.org.uk). 'Stickyworld' is a simple engagement tool and was used to collate information and views from respondents using virtual sticky notes.
20. The following individuals, representatives and organisations were involved:
 - Parish and Town Councils - Annual Liaison Event 10th July and three 'Big Conversations' held on 28th September (Broughton Astley) 2nd October (Asfordby) and 5th October (County Hall, Glenfield) in partnership with the Leicestershire and Rutland Association of Local Councils.
 - Voluntary and Community Sector Groups and Organisations - Direct mail and 'Future Focus' Event on 7th September 2017.
 - Individuals and Families supported by Youth Offending Service.
 - Leicestershire Equalities Forum.
 - Neighbourhood Planning Network.
 - Volunteers - through various events and activities such as volunteering fairs in Coalville and Oadby during Volunteering Week 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 on 23rd June.
 - District Councils (via the Community Inclusion Partnership).
 - Leicestershire Rural Partnership.
 - CYCLE (County Youth Council).
 - Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group.

21. The consultation was publicised in libraries and GP surgeries and there was collaboration with Leicestershire Partnership Trust as its 'Healthier in Mind' consultation coincided with this engagement and supported the Communities Strategy priorities.

22. Within the Council, Members, managers and staff were 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.

Communities Summit

23. A Communities Summit was held on Thursday 9th November to provide feedback on the consultation and engagement activities and hear from people who are making a difference in their local communities. It included a number of workshops designed to respond to the feedback received during the engagement activities.

24. 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.

Engagement Questions

25. Three questions were posed to prompt discussion at each event/ engagement opportunity:

- 1) What is a good community?
- 2) What can you do to help other people in your community?
- 3) How can the Council help you to be happy in your community?

Responses and Key Themes

26. There were 48 individual responses via the Leicestershire Communities website, in addition to comments made at the events and workshops over the summer period. Headline responses from each of the three questions can be summarised as follows:

- 1) 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;
- 2) A sense of neighbourliness, consideration and caring for each other is something we should all strive to do;
- 3) Easier access to information, advice, guidance and support is essential.

27. The key themes arising from the collective responses included:

- The need for greater awareness and improved access to Information, Advice and Guidance at a community level;
- The need to build on the success of Community Managed Libraries and the community spirit they have evoked;
- A view that it should be made easier for people to volunteer by promoting more local opportunities and simplifying the process to allow more people to volunteer;
- A stronger focus on celebrating success and sharing best practice; and,
- More co-ordination of activity within the County Council and prioritisation of support and opportunities for community-led services.

28. With regard to the draft Strategy itself, there was a positive response to the tone, approach and overarching aims. There were also some areas that respondents felt could be strengthened including more explicit reference to the role of Town and Parish Councils, to corporate social responsibility, and to the Council's Strategic Plan and Single Outcomes Framework. This feedback is reflected in the revised Strategy, via:

- The inclusion of reference to 'Parish & Town Councils' in Priority 3 (page 18);
- The addition of a new section outlining the role and opportunities for Parish and Town Councils (page 5); and,
- Strengthening the proposed response to Corporate Social Responsibility within Priority 4, outlining how the Council will work collaboratively with the private sector and VCS (page 19).

Comments of the Scrutiny Commission

29. Detailed comments of the Scrutiny Commission are attached at Appendix A to this report. The Commission highlighted the important role of Parish and Town Councils and community groups in delivery of the Strategy, the value of continued support for and clear communication with these groups and organisations, and the role of the Strategy's Action Plan in driving forward delivery of the priorities. The Commission's views have been taken into account in the amendments made to the draft Strategy and will inform the Action Plan.

30. In addition to the above, the following changes have been made to take account of specific suggestions;

- Page 5 - Amendment to the wording in Parish & Town Council paragraph to read "Within Leicestershire there are more than 230 town and parish councils or meetings covering the great majority of the county"
- Page 13 – Inclusion of a community-led case study – Share & Care, Lutterworth
- Page 17 – Inclusion of an Adult Social Care co-production case study
- Page 19 – Inclusion of more relevant case study to support Priority 4 – Thringstone Community Centre.

Communities Strategy Priorities

31. The Communities Strategy Four Priorities now read:

1. Communities Support themselves, individuals and families.
2. Communities, in collaboration with public services, are supported to design and deliver better outcomes for the people of Leicestershire.
3. Voluntary and Community sector organisations, social enterprises and parish councils are supported and empowered to provide a range of effective services and activities for individuals and communities.
4. The Council continues to be outward focussed, transparent, and open to new ways of working.

Action Plan

32. The feedback, information, links and opportunities identified through the engagement exercise are informing the preparation of a Communities Strategy Action Plan. This will be managed and overseen by the Council's Communities Board, chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive and comprised of Assistant Directors/ Heads of Service from each Council department. 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.
33. 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.

Background Papers

Report to the Cabinet on 10th March 2017, Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21
<http://ow.ly/3LSD30gVt2q>

Report to the Scrutiny Commission on 15th November 2017, Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21
<http://ow.ly/3QIH30gVta3>

The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2014
<http://ow.ly/uRfi30gVt5Q>

Report to Cabinet on 16th April 2016, Review of the County Council's Strategic Plan; Embedding a New Approach to Transformation and Commissioning
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4601>

Report to the Cabinet on 17th June 2016, Early Help and Prevention Review
<http://politics.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=4603>

Appendices

- Appendix A - Minute of the meeting of the Scrutiny Commission on 15th November 2017
- Appendix B - Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017-21
- Appendix C - Equalities and Human Rights Scoping Assessment

Equality and Human Rights Implications

34. An Equalities and Human Rights Scoping Assessment of the Strategy review 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.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

Risk Assessment

35. 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 vulnerable people then demand on Council services could increase; and
- If Third Party and voluntary sector organisations have insufficient resources then they will be unable to form effective partnerships with the County Council around shared agendas.

36. These risks are mitigated through the production of this refreshed Communities Strategy, the development of the Communities Strategy Action Plan, support for 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.