

SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 15 NOVEMBER 2017**MINUTE EXTRACT**44. Working Together to Build Great Communities: The Leicestershire Communities Strategy 2017 - 2021.

The Commission considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided 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. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

In his introduction to the report, the Chief Executive advised that the Communities Strategy would support delivering of the 'Great Communities' outcome in the Strategic Plan and would also facilitate communities to contribute towards delivery of the other four outcomes.

It was also reported that the "Communities Summit", which had taken place the previous week, had been well attended and the new Strategy had been positively received. The emphasis had been on Parish and Town Councils and the County Council working collaboratively to support communities. Community groups attending had used the opportunity to share examples of good practice with each other. Some of these community led initiatives would be used as case studies to illustrate the final version of the Strategy.

The Chairman welcomed the Leader of the Council, Mr N J Rushton CC, to the meeting for this item. Mr Rushton advised that he was keen for the Council to help and support Parish and Town Councils to take on additional responsibilities where they felt able to do so.

Arising from discussion the following points were raised:-

- (i) Not all areas of the County had a Parish or Town Council. It was noted that the Council also provided support to community groups and this was especially important in unparished areas. Some members expressed the view that all areas of the County should be parished. However, this process was led by district councils through a Community Governance Review.
- (ii) The Commission welcomed the positive work already undertaken by the Council to support community groups. Hermitage FM and Thurmaston Library were cited as examples of successful community projects which had benefitted from the County Council's input.
- (iii) The importance of removing barriers and simplifying processes to make it easier for Parish and Town Councils or community groups to deliver services was emphasised. It was also felt that advice and expertise from the County Council would be useful for these bodies. The Commission was advised that a limited resource was available from the Communities Team and some support for specific issues such as road closures for Remembrance Sunday

was available from the relevant department. Following feedback from events held for Parish Councils, consideration would be given to establishing simpler and more efficient communications channels.

- (iv) It was noted that support to community groups would also be delivered through Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL). The County Council had a service level agreement with VAL to provide appropriate infrastructure and support to the voluntary sector.
- (v) The Communities Strategy would be supported by an action plan which would contain details of the activity needed to deliver the Strategy. This would apply to the whole Council as each department would have actions for which it was responsible. The action plan was currently being developed.

RESOLVED:

That the comments now made be submitted to the Cabinet for consideration at its meeting in December 2017.