

Leicestershire Communities Strategy – Consultation Results

BACKGROUND

The Communities Strategy

The Leicestershire Communities Strategy sets out the way in which the County Council proposes to work with communities in the coming months and years.

The Council proposes to focus its limited resources on three priorities - helping communities to help the individuals and families most in need, enabling community groups to provide services for their communities and effective commissioning of, and support for, the voluntary sector.

In the draft Strategy, we identified eight ‘building blocks’ – things that people told us make communities strong and resilient - to underpin the delivery of the three priorities.

Through the consultation, we asked whether these priorities and building blocks are the right things to focus on, what order of priority people would put the building blocks in and whether we have identified the right actions to support delivery of the priorities and building blocks.

We also asked detailed questions about the priorities and buildings blocks – including who is most in need of support in Leicestershire communities, what support communities would need to help us to deliver these priorities and where support from the voluntary sector should be focussed. In addition, we asked about how people want to engage with the Council, who the ‘community champions’ are within local communities and how to overcome barriers to volunteering.

Consultation Questionnaire

90 responses were received to the on-line consultation questionnaire and a further three submissions were received by e-mail. The form consisted of a total of 41 questions, although the routing of the on-line form took people to alternative questions depending on whether they were completing the form as individuals or on behalf of an organisation. The maximum number of questions completed by any respondent (including the eight demographic questions) was 35 and these were a mixture of closed and open questions. More detail about respondents is provided in the ‘Who Responded...’ section below.

Engagement Workshops

Eight workshops were held during the consultation period – three for LCC staff (including one set at the Senior Managers Conference) and one each for the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group (LECG), LCC Members, Stakeholders/Partners, Parish Councils and the Voluntary and Community Sector. These workshops lasted for between 1 and 3 hours and

therefore the format and questions covered varied depending upon the time available and the target group attending. The Parish Councils workshop was part of the Annual LCC and Local Councils Conference and focussed specifically on Priority One around Vulnerability.

In addition, the Communities Strategy was considered by the Council's Scrutiny Commission, Health and Wellbeing Board, Leicestershire Rural Partnership, a group of CYPS Service Managers and the Public Health and Adults and Communities Departmental Management Teams.

The results from the discussions at these workshops and meetings/events are shown in the relevant section of this report alongside the consultation questionnaire results.

WHO RESPONDED TO THE CONSULTATION?

Q1. What type of organisation do you represent?

48 people (53.5%) completed the on-line survey as Individuals, 16 people (18%) represented Voluntary Sector organisations, 15 (17%) represented Community Groups, 12 (13.5%) Town or Parish Councils/Meetings, 9 (9.5%) Public Sector Organisations, 6 (7%) Faith Based Groups, 1 (1%) a Residents Association and 2 (2%) Other.

This means that 48 people responded as individuals and 42 people responded on behalf of one or more organisations.

More than 200 people in total participated across the eight different workshop sessions.

Q3 How many full time equivalent (FTE) paid staff work for your organisation?

Of the 42 people responding to the on-line consultation on behalf of organisations, only 30 completed the question about number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff. Of these, 12 (or 40%) had no FTE staff, 3 (10%) had between 1 and 5 FTE staff, 1 (3%) had between 6 and 10 FTE staff, 5 (16.5%) had between 11 and 20 FTE staff, 7 (23.5%) had more than 20 FTE staff and 2 said that this question was not applicable.

Q4 Does your organisation work with volunteers?

30 respondents stated that their organisation worked with volunteers and 1 that their organisation did not.

Demographic Questions (34-41)

Less than 50% of respondents completed the demographic questions at the end of the survey. Of these, 21 were Male and 22 Female.

100% of the 39 people who completed the relevant question stated that they do not identify as Transgender, 9 respondents stated that they have a long-standing illness or disability. 34 respondents are White, 3 said that they were from another ethnic group, 2 that they were Asian or Asian British and 1 Mixed.

GENERAL - PRIORITIES AND BUILDING BLOCKS

General Comments

A significant number of those responding to the online survey and participating in the workshops were concerned about the sustainability of services based on volunteers and the impact on the capacity to deliver when volunteers move on “there is a shrinking pool of volunteers as more people work and work longer. People who volunteer for one project won’t necessarily volunteer for another, and most are happy to make a commitment that has a limit on its life rather than for a decade or more”.

Whilst the emphasis on vulnerable people was welcomed by many/most, there was a reminder that strengthening communities generally will build the capacity of the wider community to support their most vulnerable members. It is also felt important to empower vulnerable people themselves to help others in need by giving them the right tools to do so, thus decreasing both their own and others’ vulnerability and reducing demand in the long run. Whilst some consistency is needed, a single approach to supporting vulnerable people may not always be the right one – the solution might require ‘tailored consistency’ which takes into account individual needs.

One of the immediate concerns, expressed through a number of different workshops was the challenge of “*helping communities to recapture their community spirit*”. The LECG questioned whether the community spirit that LCC is relying on to support its new approach exists, what a modern ‘community’ looks like and how can we create this “*new sense of community*”. One participant questioned whether we are trying to “*re-engineer society into what we want it to be, not what it is*”. Another participant suggested that we need to “*build a community first*”. It was felt that increased demographic ‘churn’ – turnover of the population – could have a real impact on the ambitions set out in the Strategy and on both community cohesion and social capital.

The question was raised as to whether the required level of capacity exists, or can be generated, within communities without voluntary organisations, who are experiencing significant challenges as public sector funding is slashed. One respondent also points out “*the whole strategy is highly dependent on the voluntary sector but this is not a coherent group but a collection of individuals and small groups*”. Others felt that existing and future VCS contracts must support delivery of the ambitions set out in this strategy.

A number of respondents emphasised the need for culture change if the Communities Strategy is to be effective – a change of mind set within communities *“we need to look at a culture change in how communities work and who communities are”* and the Council/public sector, accompanied by honest conversations about the challenges that we face collectively. Transparency as to exactly what LCC can and will do, both now and in the future is essential. Linked to this is the need to be clear about both short and long term levels of support for service change *“reassurance for volunteers and communities about what is expected of them”* i.e. what communities can expect from LCC. Developing and maintaining an on-going relationship with communities will be key to the sustainability of any new ways of working.

Several people mentioned the need to break free of the entitlement culture and the associated perception of ‘rights’ to services. It was felt that changes are required, again within both LCC and communities, to move away from the current, top-down, paternalistic ‘parent-child’ relationship. The aim is reduce dependency and move towards a more enabling and capacity building culture which generates community autonomy, self-help and self-sufficiency and it was suggested that LCC and the wider public sector may need support to adapt and change its culture to enable it to do this. Building social capital was also seen as important in supporting this culture change.

Some emphasised the danger that *“those who can do and those who can’t get left behind”* but others took the opposite viewpoint and were concerned that about the concept of ‘rationing’ community support and that *“struggling communities will benefit at the expense of others”*, even suggesting that this would be discriminatory and against the policies of the Council. The point was also made that LCC needs to be clearer what it means when it talks about communities i.e. to acknowledge and respond to the differences between communities of geography and communities of interest and the fact that people are often members of multiple, diverse communities at any one time.

The majority of those who responded recognised the importance of early intervention and prevention but highlighted the need to reduce demand across the whole system, not just LCC. . It was agreed that there are links between the Communities Strategy and a number of other key strategies e.g. the Better Care Plan, with its focus on self-care and community based support.

A number of people emphasised the need for wider involvement in the development and implementation of the strategy – *“partnership working is essential to this strategy”* and a multi-agency approach - *“services, voluntary, community, private and public sectors to work together”*. Specific sectors and organisations identified included businesses/the private sector and District and Borough Councils *“there is mention of delivering the best possible services within the budgets available by working the Leicestershire pound – this would require a clear strategy to work with partners, including District Councils”*. Churches were also identified as a potentially key partner not mentioned in the draft Strategy.

Others felt that the role of social enterprises should be clearer within the strategy and that the social enterprise model offered a potential solution in a number of areas. There were concerns that an emphasis on volunteering would impact on the local economy by reducing opportunities for paid employment and some felt that a better aim may be to support community groups to develop commercial CIC type enterprises.

A final plea was to start with what communities need – *“what is best for my community/what my local community needs”*. The LECG emphasised the importance of information/needs assessment to ensure that service provision meets the needs of all communities (particularly the protected characteristic groups) and others simply felt that all key decisions about the future of services (particularly where these involved services changing, reducing or stopping) must be evidence based.

Finally, it was suggested that the Council should facilitate wider discussions/debates about what communities, including Town and Parish Councils, should and could do as part of the development of the Delivery Plan through simple and clear engagement mechanisms and that on-going contact/dialogue with individual communities is required if the Strategy is to succeed.

Q5 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of using LCC resources to support delivery of the three priorities rather than providing generic support to all communities?

Number	%	Response
23	25.5%	Strongly agree
48	53.5%	Agree
8	9.0%	Neither agree nor disagree
5	5.5%	Disagree
4	4.5%	Strongly disagree
1	1.0%	Don't Know

79% of respondents therefore strongly agree or agree with the principle of using LCC resources to support delivery of the priorities and 10% either disagree or strongly disagree. 9% of respondents neither agree nor disagree and 1% don't know.

Q6 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the three identified priorities are the right priorities for the Council to focus on?

Priority	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Helping communities to support vulnerable people	38 42%	38 42%	6 7%	4 5%	2 2%	2 2%
Helping communities to design and deliver services	18 20%	44 49%	12 13.5%	10 11%	4 4.5%	2 2%
Development and effective commissioning of the VCS	26 29%	37 41.5%	15 16.5%	6 6.5%	4 4.5%	2 2%

84% of respondents therefore strongly agree or agree with Priority 1: Helping communities to support vulnerable people, 7% disagree or strongly disagree, 7% neither agree nor disagree and 2% don't know. The net support (strongly agree plus agree minus disagree plus strongly disagree) for Priority 1 is therefore 77%.

69% of respondents therefore strongly agree or agree with Priority 2: Helping communities to design and deliver services, 15.5% disagree or strongly disagree, 13.5% neither agree nor disagree and 2% don't know. The net support for Priority 2 is therefore 53.5%.

70.5% of respondents therefore strongly agree or agree with Priority 3: Development and effective commissioning of the VCS, 11% disagree or strongly disagree, 16.5% neither agree nor disagree and 2% don't know. The net support for Priority 1 is therefore 59.5%.

Several of those who 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree' were concerned about volunteers replacing paid workers *"communities should rely on professional staff and not the other way round...it is unrealistic to expect volunteers, even trained ones, to carry out the work of paid employees"* and *"you are expecting volunteers to do too much for no reward"*. It was also proposed that *"communities lack the specialist expertise and knowledge and will be unable to fill a void left by cutting essential front line services"*.

Others felt that the Council was taking it for granted that there would be enough volunteers – people with the right skills who are interested in delivering services. Concerns were expressed about problems in terms of equality, legality, inclusion, and particularly sustainability if volunteers take over running services *"people often start new projects with enthusiasm, led by an energetic and committed individual. When that person leaves, many projects start to slide"*. It was suggested that the wording around communities delivering services needs tightening up to ensure that it fits with Public Contract Regulations.

The comments in this section reinforced the general points about the need for a tighter definition of vulnerability, with several people suggesting that the approach proposed should reduce demand on services by supporting increased independence, but warning *“there are many reasons why people might be deemed vulnerable and there are a broad spectrum of impacts of being ‘vulnerable’”*. It was suggested that the Strategy needs to be clearer that certain vulnerable people require specialist care/support that it would not be appropriate for communities to provide. One respondent said *“I would only support vulnerable people if it was in a role that added value to council services - not replace them”*.

Individual respondents were concerned about the impact of the wider changes at the Council on their organisation or community, for example withdrawal of funding for community transport, move to 2-hourly bus services in some areas or about the vulnerability of people with specific (e.g. MSK) conditions. Others were concerned about the reasons behind the reduction in funding for local government from central government, suggesting that the Council should lobby harder against the cuts being imposed upon it *“the need to save £110 million should be challenged with the Government rather than much needed public services being dismantled”*.

Final comments in this section related to the role of the County Council and the need to ensure the right balance between leading and enabling *“communities should be encouraged to use their own initiative”* and the Council *“should enable support not give support”*.

Q8/Q9 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the eight proposed building blocks are important/the right ones if we are to help communities to be strong and resilient

Building Block	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
Understand local priorities	50 56%	33 37%	3 4%	1 1%	0 0%	2 2%
Engage actively with local services	31 35.5%	42 48.5%	8 9%	2 2.5%	0 0%	4 4.5%
Communicate effectively with service providers	40 46%	38 43.5%	4 4.5%	1 1%	0 0%	4 4.5%
Have active local councils and residents groups	36 41%	39 44.5%	7 8%	3 3.5%	1 1%	2 2%
Nurture a network of community champions	17 19.5%	39 45%	20 23%	6 7%	1 1%	4 4.5%
Support formal and informal volunteering	30 34%	44 50%	9 10%	2 2%	1 1%	2 2.5%
Operate a wide range	26	44	13	0	2	2

of activities from at least one hub	30%	50.5%	15%	0%	2.5%	2.5%
Have access to the right funding, support and training	54	29	3	0	0	2
	61.5%	33%	3.5%	0%	0%	2%

In order of the level of net agreement (strongly agree plus agree minus disagree plus strongly disagree), the Building Blocks are therefore as follows:

Have access to the right funding, support and training	94.5%
Understand local priorities	92.0%
Communicate effectively with service providers	88.5%
Engage actively with local services	81.5%
Support formal and informal volunteering	81.0%
Have active local councils and residents groups`	80.0%
Operate a wide range of activities from at least one community hub	78.0%
Nurture a network of community champions	56.6%

The figures above show that there is at least 50% net support for all building blocks and at least 75% net support for seven of the eight. The comments in this section were also supportive about the areas of focus proposed through the Building Blocks *“I think that the proposed building blocks are appropriate for developing integrated communities and building on the strengths of established services and networks.* Specific comments included:

Have access to the right Support, Funding and Training – see responses to Q20 and Q21

Support formal and informal volunteering – see responses to Q29

It was suggested that the objectives around ‘communicating effectively with service providers’ and ‘engaging actively with local services’ could be combined into one objective around improving capability in engaging and communicating with service users.

Operate a wide range of activities from at least one Community Hub – see responses to Q31 and Q32.

Network of community champions – see responses to Q27 and Q28

Active local councils and residents groups – there were some concerns about their effectiveness and whether *“party politics and dogma”* get in the way for local councils. It was suggested that Parish Councils have opportunities to secure additional funding for community projects by increasing their precept (currently increases are uncapped). Two respondents felt that Local Councils and residents groups/associations should not be included in the same building block *“don’t confuse local councils and residents associations – the former is usually party political, the second is seldom party political”*.

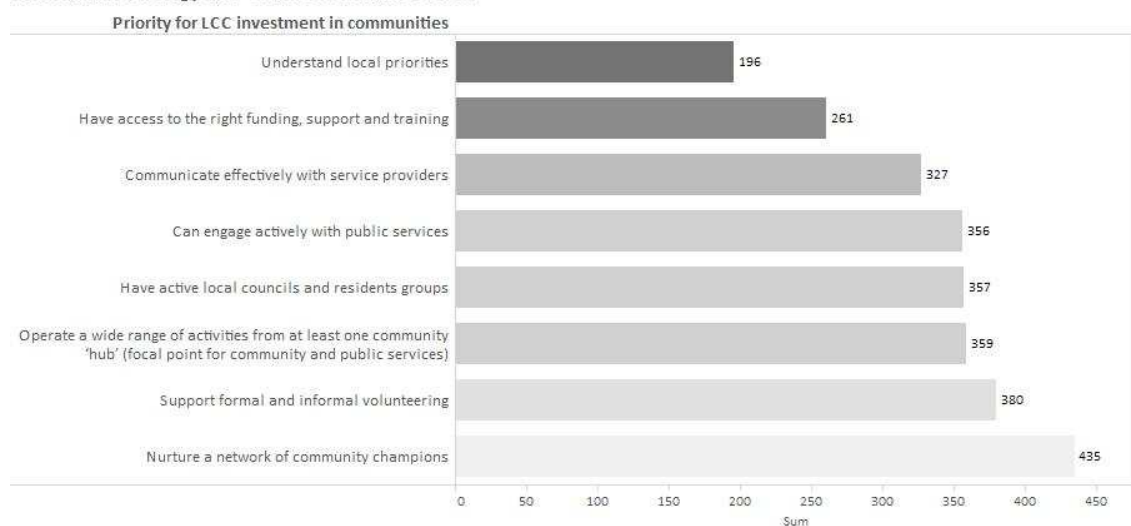
A final comment suggests that communities need to start slowly and build up *“I think each community needs to agree on projects one at a time and gain expertise at setting up and running them...otherwise there could be duplication, inadequate resourcing and eventually things started in good faith and with lots of enthusiasm could become too onerous for the very small proportion of people who actually do the work”*

Q10 What is your order of priority for LCC investment in communities?

The Building Block identified by the largest number of people responding to the on-line consultation as their first, second or third preference was ‘Understand local priorities’, followed by ‘Have access to the right funding, support and training’ and ‘Operate a wide range of activities from at least one community hub’. ‘Understand local priorities’ was the overall highest priority with 46 people identifying this as their first choice, followed by ‘Have access to the right funding, support and training’ which was selected by 21 people as their first choice and ‘Communicate effectively with service providers’, selected by 9 people.

The lowest priority Building Block was ‘Nurture a network of community champions’, which was the lowest priority for 26 people, followed by ‘Operate a wide range of activities from at least one community hub’ (10 people selected as their lowest priority) and ‘Support formal and informal volunteering’ (8 people selected as their lowest priority). 41 people identified ‘Nurture a network of community champions’ in their bottom three, and 30 people each identified ‘Operate a wide range of activities from at least one community hub’ and ‘Support formal and informal volunteering’ in their bottom three.

Communities Strategy Q10 - Rank of Priorities Overall



Sum of Sum for each Priority for LCC investment in communities. Color shows sum of Sum.

At the relevant workshops, participants were asked to choose three Building Blocks for investment from the total of eight. The table below summarises how people used these three votes

	LECG	Staff	Stakeholders	Members	VCS	Total
Understand local priorities	11	7	18	8	15	59
Engage actively with public services	9	0	0	1	4	14
Communicate effectively with service providers	7	3	1	5	4	20
Have active local councils and residents groups	5	4	3	4	1	17
Network of community champions	5	1	1	0	1	8
Formal and informal volunteering	3	6	9	1	3	22
At least one physical or virtual community hub	1	2	3	2	12	20
Access to the right funding, support and training	1	10	3	6	23	43
TOTAL	42	33	38	27	63	203

A total of 121 people across the online consultation and the workshops (where this question was asked) identified 'Understand local priorities' in their top three, 97 people identified 'Access to the right funding, support and training and 55 people identified 'Operate a wide range of activities from at least one community hub'.

Q11/Q12 Do you think that there are additional priorities or building blocks that should be included in the Communities Strategy? Why?

29 respondents (33.5%) to the survey thought that there were additional priorities or building blocks that should be included and more detail is provided about these below. 20 respondents (23.0%) did not think that there were additional priorities or building blocks and 38 or 43.5% did not know.

Additional Priorities and Building Blocks suggested through the consultation responses were:

- Enabling communities and individuals to thrive and develop
- Helping people find innovative solutions to issues in their communities
- Supporting the requirements of each community
- Delivering services efficiently and without waste

- Equal and fair delivery of services to all communities
- Equal and fair access to services for all residents of Leicestershire
- Working with a range of partners to develop sustainable communities
- Local issues matter
- Sustaining the development of effective commissioning
- Employee focussed corporate volunteering opportunities
- Developing effective prevention activities
- Innovation and the use of technology

The stakeholder workshop suggested that BB1 should be renamed “Communities understand their own needs and priorities” and BB2 renamed “Communities take responsibility for meeting their own needs”.

Other comments included a suggestion that larger/stronger communities could help, support or share services with smaller, neighbouring communities.

The point was reiterated in this section about the need for paid professionals to provide training and work with communities to help deliver these priorities *“the idea of this ‘Big Society’ is great but put it in practice and all you’ve got is a bunch of retired people who want to do their bit for their community, not fully qualified staff delivering an effective service”*.

Information management was felt to be an essential set of skills, particularly when working with people with any level of vulnerability. The comments were reiterated about the need to be more specific about the groups of vulnerable people to be targeted and a plea was made not to forget less obvious groups like disaffected youth who *“could be a massive resource if correctly appreciated, respected and motivated”*.

A final comment suggested the need to ‘think outside the box’ specifically by looking for ways to make buildings e.g. libraries and community centres generate more income so that they are self-funding.

Q13/Q14 Do you think that we have identified the right actions against the eight building blocks? Why?

45 respondents or 52.5% said that the County Council had identified the right actions against the eight building blocks, 10 respondents or 11.5% said that the right actions had not been identified and 31 or 36.5% did not know.

It was suggested that more work should be done with communities and their representatives, including Town and Parish Councils to develop the actions *“rather than*

thinking that you have the monopoly on ideas, intelligence and organisational skills". Others suggested that the actions must be more service-user orientated.

Other comments included the need to lobby central government against the funding reductions, concerns about the imbalanced delivery of services under a model that prioritises vulnerable people - and the potential of this approach to create division and conflict, the challenge of ensuring some level of consistency of service, and the need to think about the nature of 'community' and the challenge of sustaining projects in communities made up of diverse people linked only by place (in relation to geographical communities).

COMMUNITIES STRATEGY PRIORITIES

Q15/Q16 Who do you think might be vulnerable/in needs of support in your community/the communities that you work with?

A number of workshop participants and survey respondents highlighted that simply belonging to one or more of these groups or categories does not in itself make people vulnerable. The groups and individuals shown in the table below were all identified by four or more groups. The on-line consultation results are shown in the right hand column of the table and for the purposes of the table are identified as one 'group' of responses with the number of respondents identifying this groups shown in brackets.

Group	Parish Councils Workshop	Staff Workshops	Stakeholder Workshop	Member Workshop	VCS Workshop	On-line Survey
People who abuse drugs and alcohol	X	X	X		X	X (5)
Unemployed - (long term, ESA stopped, JSA not received, sanctions)			X	X	X	X (5)
Elderly People	X	X (living alone with no support)	X	X	X (in care homes, housebound)	X (40)
Frail, old and isolated/ housebound/no transport	X	X (particularly in rural or deprived areas)	X (particularly in rural areas)	X	X	
Children and Young people (including Teenagers)	X	X (living alone, poor, no support)	X (at risk of harm or abuse)		X	X (13)
Carers (including vulnerable and young carers)		X (with mental health issues)	X	X	X	X (5)
Lone parent, particularly on benefits/low income	X	X (no social network or parenting model)	X			X
Young parents, particularly if disabled		X			X	X (5)
Families with issues/problems		X	X	X		X (3)
Victims of domestic	X		X		X	X (2)

abuse/violence						
People in debt	X	X (in rural areas – transport costs)	X	X		X (1)
Low income/working poor	X	X	X		X	X (6)
New to an area	X					X
Socially isolated - without support groups/networks	X	X	X	X	X	X (14)
Isolated in rural areas	X		X	X	X	
People with mental health problems/needs	X	X	X	X	X	X (17)
Learning Disabilities		X	X		X	X (10)
Disabilities	X	X	X	X	X	X (18)
Disabled children/young people		X (with learning disabilities)			X	X
Health issues/declining health	X		X newly diagnosed		X	X (5)
With chronic and/or long term conditions		X	X		X	X
Homeless/in housing need	X	X	X	X	X	X (5)
Poor housing	X		X			X (2)
Victims of abuse/at risk of abuse/hate crime		X	X			X

There were a number of additional suggestions that were mentioned by two or three different 'groups':

People with multiple problems	Refused access to services
Travelling communities	Ex Offenders
Redundancy	Living in Fuel Poverty
Immigrant and refugee communities	LGBT – particularly Transgender
Special Educational Needs	Not in Education, Employment or Training
Lack of qualifications	Young Parents (part.if Disabled)
Older person without family/friends/social network	People with Dementia
Bereaved	Young People in or leaving Care
Difficulty communicating	People dependent on Benefits
Victims of crime/ASB	People without good English

A further set of suggestions were mentioned by one single group/workshop/person:

People released from prison	People going through big life changes
Children of parents with addictions	Older unemployed
Older people who are made redundant unemployed	People who call emergency services in desperation
Frail elderly just below eligibility criteria	Unable to deal with online systems
Young people with nowhere safe to go	
People with autism/their carers and parents	Eastern Europeans, particularly Polish
Divorced	Communities without a voice
Young parents	People without transport
New mothers	Anyone living alone
Living in Food Poverty	Those that we don't know about
People who find it difficult to access services	Those in difficulty for the first time

Individuals with less recognised long term conditions 'Sofa Surfers'	People dependent on impersonal, unresponsive services Underemployed
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Workshop Responses

Several of the workshop discussions around vulnerability emphasised the need to distinguish between short-term/temporary vulnerability and longer-term/permanent vulnerability. Some participants questioned the wisdom of 'putting people into boxes' and challenged whether vulnerability is the right term to use. Others emphasised the importance of using the right evidence and information to identify vulnerable communities and individuals and of using existing groups and networks, where they exist, to speak to/target vulnerable people. The point was also made that LCC may identify people as vulnerable who wouldn't identify as such themselves, for example an older person living alone in a rural area without transport, and the need to clarify this within the Strategy.

Another key point was the need to prioritise even within the target group of 'vulnerability' due to limited resources i.e. to identify the 'most vulnerable'.

Others emphasised the need to support communities to better understand who might need help or support by increasing community knowledge and understanding of vulnerability. A key component of vulnerability is social isolation and it was felt that communities clearly have an important role to play in addressing/reducing this.

Service Devolution

Five workshops (LCC Senior Managers Conference, LCC Staff, LCC Councillors, Stakeholders and VCS) considered the question "Which LCC/Public Sector services could potentially be devolved to/delivered in partnership with communities/the VCS?" The responses are shown in the table below with the number in brackets indicating at how many workshops this service was considered a devolution/service partnership opportunity:

Identified in multiple workshops	Identified in one workshop
Highways – reporting of defects and minor works (5)	School transport
Libraries (4)	Traffic/speed reduction
Recycling/Re-use (4)	Kitchen and food waste
Youth Services/work (4)	Out of school hours support
Grass cutting (4)	Trading standards
Transport – public and community (3)	Youth offending
Leisure facilities (3)	Short breaks
Schools – home education/advice & guidance (3)	Post hospital discharge
Home care – shopping and cleaning (3)	Transition services
Good Neighbours/befriending (3)	Peer to peer support

Meals services (3)	Dementia friendly communities/cafes
Some public health services (3)	Community led advice hubs
Mental health services (2)	Consultation/Community Forums
Country parks/open spaces (2)	Businesses to train communities – link CSR
Museums (2)	Customer service call handling
Flood alerts/wardens (2)	Corporate parenting
Environment/biodiversity (2)	SEN support

A number of workshop participants raised the need for communities, the VCS and Parish Councils to be able to view the complete picture in terms of public sector service change/reduction/cuts to ensure that they commit money and time to the services that are valued most by their community.

During the workshop discussions about service devolution, some warned about the danger of creating greater inequality by devolving services down to a lower level and forming partnerships only with *“willing and able”* communities, and highlighted the challenge of ensuring some level of consistency of services.

It was also suggested that there could be benefits through joining up existing services e.g. local pubs providing meals services, libraries moving to within school sites or CAB services offered from libraries and mobile libraries. Parish and Town Councils were felt to offer *“an effective and efficient route for communities to design and deliver services”*.

Others emphasised the need for responsibility, power and autonomy to be devolved along with services whilst continuing to provide support *“not just walking away and forgetting them”* and the importance of *“trusting the judgement of communities”* was emphasised by several workshop groups.

A key point was the need to identify and clearly communicate which services are statutory and therefore unsuitable to be devolved.

Q17/18 To what extent do you feel that you/your organisation already engage in the supporting vulnerable people and/or delivering services for the community?

54 respondents, or 73% of those who answered this question, said that they or their organisation already engage in **supporting vulnerable people** ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’. 14 or 19% said ‘not very much’ and 5 said ‘not at all’.

50 respondents or 67.5% of those who answered this question, said that they or their organisation engaged in **delivering services for the community** ‘a great deal’ or ‘a fair amount’, 19 or 25.5% ‘not very much’ and 4 or 5.5% ‘not at all’.

Q19 In which ways could you assist in supporting vulnerable people and/or delivering services?

Individual respondents were asked about how they could assist in supporting vulnerable people and delivering services and the format of the question enabled people to tick all responses that applied. The top four responses were ‘provide advice and information to individuals’, ‘help as a volunteer’, ‘provide practical help to individuals’ and ‘help to ensure that individuals can access services’. The full list of responses is as follows:

Action	Number	%
Provide advice and information to individuals	25	58%
Help as a volunteer	19	44.5%
Provide practical help to individuals	19	44.5%
Help to ensure that individuals can access services	19	44.5%
Help manage a community group/voluntary group/charity	14	32.5%
Donate cash	9	21%
Help with fundraising efforts	5	11.5%
Don't want to help	4	9.5%

Q20/Q21 What support do you/do communities need to be able to work with others in your community to support vulnerable people and take on services?

In terms of the support needed to take on roles in relation to supporting vulnerable people and take on services, Funding (15), Training (13) and Support/Advice (8) were all identified by more than 5 respondents. Workshop participants felt that these three elements are key to a successful community project and that benefits could be achieved by joining up support for communities with District Councils.

A similar question was put to the Workshops – “What additional support do communities need to be able to support vulnerable people and/or take on services, a large number of the issues identified by participants were also identified by the respondents to the on-line consultation (those shown in bold italics are common to both workshop and on-line consultation survey responses):

Help to engage and retain volunteers, networks, clear referral pathways into services “*what support exists and who to contact*”, infrastructure support for voluntary organisations and community facilities – ideally shared across a number of organisations, were all identified by between 2 and 5 respondents to the online survey. Other suggestions were:

- ***Good quality information (business intelligence) about needs and issues – needs not service-led***
- *Listen to the needs* – and respond

- **Good information about resources, existing provision and groups in the area**
- Honest conversation about priorities and help/right information to prioritise
- Toolkits for communities – information, ‘how to’ guidance, case studies, templates – simple and easy to access
- A well-developed model so each community doesn’t have to make it up for themselves
- **Examples and templates e.g. annual accounts, constitution etc.**
- Nurture peer support
- **Training to build skills and confidence to deliver and leadership skills**
- **Specific training – working with vulnerable people, money, business planning, legal, managing leases, HR, insurance, DBS checks etc.**
- **Network of expertise to go to – LCC staff to buddy up with communities**
- **Paid professionals to train and co-ordinate “well trained people to lead and coordinate...these people need to be able to react to change positively and flexibly”**
- **Specialist advice e.g. safeguarding, HR, insurance, health and safety, data protection, policies and procedures**
- **Referral systems that facilitate access to services**
- Mentoring
- Collaborative working events where groups can form partnerships
- Time banking
- **Support to recruit, train and support volunteers, and to match volunteer skills to volunteer opportunities**
- **Paid time off for LCC staff to volunteer – lead by example**
- **Incentives and rewards e.g. access to grants, certificates**
- Help to set quality standards, measures and frameworks
- Support in measuring value
- Help to understand, assess and manage risks
- Support to help groups to bid for services and simple routes to access funding “for low level amounts, at sensible periods, without too many hoops to jump through”
- Help with succession planning, sustainability and service continuity
- Involve and engage young people
- **Develop closer links to private sector - Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**
- **Use of buildings – particularly empty ones – and help managing and maintaining**
- Shift in mindset and culture – LCC and communities
- Devolved finance and other resources
- **Support – especially if things get difficult**
- Capacity building and empowerment
- Develop an ethos of trust
- Ask people for help – effective marketing and communication
- Parish and Communities Liaison Officers – single point of contact at the Council
- Invite volunteers/communities to future workshops
- Market to get the message across – time intensive
- LCC has statutory responsibilities – some things can’t be handed over
- Invest to save training and ‘transformational grants’ to offset the start-up costs of devolved or joint services of early intervention activities to support vulnerable people

A number of people made the point that they already volunteer/contribute/are active within their community or that they don't have the time to contribute more that they currently do: *"I don't have time to help as much as I would like to, working full time and with child care commitments, I have very little time for myself at present", "I am a volunteer, I support community groups, I donate cash, help with fundraising, provide information where I can and help others – as well I pay all my taxes personally and as a local business owner".*

Q22 Where do you think support from the voluntary sector is most needed in Leicestershire

The top three areas where people felt that support from the voluntary sector is needed most in Leicestershire are 'supporting older people to live independently', 'supporting people with mental health problems' and 'support for vulnerable families'.

The results are shown in the table below in order of the number of responses:

Area of Support	Number	%
Supporting older people to live independently	45	53.5%
Supporting people with mental health problems	33	39.5%
Support for vulnerable families	25	30%
Supporting youth projects and activities	19	22.5%
Supporting people with disabilities	18	21.5%
Providing community transport	16	19%
Preventing offending and re-offending	15	18%
Supporting children and families	15	18%
Supporting library services	12	14.5%
Supporting people with learning disabilities	11	13%
Supporting young people leaving care	11	13%
Supporting museums and arts services	8	9.5%
Supporting waste reduction and recycling	7	8.5%
Other	8	9.5%

At the workshops, it was felt that a lot of public sector funding goes into the VCS and that there is therefore a need to build the capacity of the sector and enable it to diversify in order to secure different resources. There was also discussion about the non-voluntary nature of parts of the sector and whether 'third sector' is actually a more appropriate name.

The participants at the VCS Workshop and individual survey respondents identified the following areas as those where support from the VCS is most needed in Leicestershire:

Early Help and Preventative/Early Intervention Work to stop escalation (2)
Advice, information and signposting/raising awareness of what help/information/advice is available (2)
Support for Health and Well Being (2)
Identification of Needs – local community groups can identify the isolated and those in need earlier
Integration of Services
Training
Support for Vulnerable Families
Support for Isolated Elderly and Younger Individuals
Identifying and providing a voice for individuals that slip through the gaps
Personal, face to face services/help (less 'officialdom', more trust)
Engaging 'hard to reach' through volunteering
Targeting the most deprived in specific communities
Helping people with complex problems
Specialist work tailored to the locality
Supporting community groups to help themselves Delivering principle authority services through technology and local community hubs
Supporting the implementation of structured ongoing exercise and pain management services
Support in community for people with low level physical health needs e.g. poor diet
Support all people with disabilities, young or old, man or woman, families and individuals
Homeless and vulnerably housed - including those sofa surfing
Supporting people with dementia
None of these - they should all be provided by the local authority to create a cohesive community

COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BUILDING BLOCKS

Q23 Which would be your most preferred methods of receiving information from/finding out more about LCC?

People were asked to select up to three preferred methods of receiving information from/finding out more about LCC – the top three responses were 'By e-mail', 'On the LCC website' and 'In my community newsletter or magazine'.

Method - Preferred	Number	%
On the LCC website – www.leics.gov.uk	45	53%
By e-mail (e.g. an e-mail newsletter)	45	53%
In my community newsletter or magazine	30	35.5%
In the Leicestershire Matters magazine	21	24.5%
Information in community buildings	19	22.5%
Through the Town/Parish Council	15	17.5%
Through social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	15	17.5%

By attending meetings/events	11	13%
Via Leicestershire Villages/Parishes websites	9	10.5%
By Post	4	4.5%
Via the leicestershireforums.org website	1	1%

Q24 Which would be your least preferred methods of receiving information from/finding out more about LCC?

People were also asked to select up to three least preferred methods of receiving information from/finding out more about LCC – the top three responses were ‘By post’, ‘Through social media’ and ‘By attending meetings and events’

Method – Least Preferred	Number	%
By Post	40	47%
Through social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	35	41%
By attending meetings/events	24	28%
Via the leicestershireforums.org website	21	24.5%
Information in community buildings	18	21%
On the LCC website – www.leics.gov.uk	15	17.5%
Via Leicestershire Villages/Parishes websites	15	17.5%
Through the Town/Parish Council	15	17.5%
By e-mail (e.g. an e-mail newsletter)	14	16.5%
In the Leicestershire Matters magazine	11	13%
In my community newsletter or magazine	7	8.2%

Q25/26 To help you/your organisation to play an active role in supporting vulnerable people and/or delivering services, which would be your preferred methods of engaging with decision makers at the County Council?

Method of Engaging	Individuals		Organisations	
	Number	%	Number	%
By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: by e-mail	25	57%	18	60%
By attending specific public meetings /events based on local priorities/issues	14	32%	13	43.5%
By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: via the website	11	25%	4	13.5%
By contacting my County Councillor	11	25%	6	20%
Through regular topic/theme based Forums	N/A	N/A	10	33.5%
Through representative/infrastructure groups	N/A	N/A	10	33.5%
By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: through the contact centre	6	13.5%	9	30%

By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: through social media	6	13.5%	1	3.5%
By raising them with my Town/Parish Council	6	13.5%	4	13.5%
By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: by writing a letter	4	9%	0	0
By contacting managers of the relevant services directly: by text	1	2.5%	0	0
By organising a petition	3	7%	0	0
I don't need to engage with decision makers at the County Council	2	4.5%	0	0
Other	1	2.5%	3	10%

The preferred methods of engaging with decision makers were 'by e-mail' and 'by attending specific public meetings/events or forums based on local priorities/issues' and 'through representative or infrastructure groups'. Several participants/respondents emphasised the need for communities to see the impact of the efforts *"we do engage using different methods yet nothing changes"* and a practical suggestion was the establishment of a Helpline at LCC which could direct people to appropriate place and person – *"Parish Councils find it very difficult to get in touch with Officers and get timely responses"*.

Q27/28 Who would you identify as the community champions in for your/Leicestershire communities?

Who would you identify as the community champions	Number
People who lead on community projects	48
People who support local groups/charities	38
People who organise social events e.g. the village Fair	30
Town/Parish Councillors	31
District/Borough Councillor	23
County Councillor	20
People on the Village Hall/community building committee	13
Publican/shopkeeper	12
People who attend Public Forums	8
Local Activist	6
Think Leicestershire Coaches/TAG Leaders	4
Don't Know	10
Other	8
<i>"I am one of them and know a few others"</i>	

'People who lead on community projects', 'people who support local groups/charities' and Town/Parish Councillors are the people who most people identify as community champions.

The view from several respondents was that it is essential to ensure that they are representative of all of the local community, not just the most vocal few. There were also concerns that the community champions model has not been as successful as expected when tried in the past (through the Think Leicestershire initiative).

Workshop Responses

Participants at several of the workshops were keen to emphasise that Councillors are community champions "*at least those of us who do our job properly – there is a responsibility on all Councillors to be available and accessible*". The LECG saw individual community champions as working alongside Councillors and more formal champions but asked for more clarity about what would be expected of a 'community champion'. The group felt that champions could play a key role in supporting vulnerable people – connecting with them through personal contact – but warned of the importance of identifying the right people to take on the role and the danger of champions acting as gatekeepers "*we don't want the Council to be a 'locked gate' for people – rather the Council and its services should be open to all*". Others suggested that community champions should operate as networks within a community to reduce the onus/reliance on one individual.

It was felt that the Council needs to have a clear approach to empowering people to become community role models (promoting ideas to others and building willingness within communities) and ensuring that champions represent communities of interest as well as communities of place/geography.

When asked who would you identify as the 'champions in the communities that your work with – without a list to choose from – the following list was generated at the Voluntary and Community Sector workshop session:

-
- Anyone who cares about the community and is willing to get involved
 - Schools – Teachers, PTA Members, School governors
 - Youth Club Leaders
 - Guide Leaders
 - Early Years practitioners
 - Children and Young People
 - Parents and Carers
 - Matriarchs
 - Some District and County Councillors
 - Parish Councillors/Chairman
 - Churches – including Church Warden
 - Faith Leaders
 - Pubs/Pub Landlord
 - Post Office
-

-
- Chemist
 - GP
 - Shopkeepers
 - Libraries
 - Large Businesses
 - Retired professionals
 - Social Clubs
 - Front-line staff/volunteers in VCS organisations
 - A number of people also suggested relations or friends
-

Q29 Which barriers to volunteering do you think that we need to tackle as a priority?

Barrier	Number	%
Lack of time	50	57.5%
Fear of liability	34	39%
Family/caring responsibilities	28	32%
Red tape	23	26.5%
Work/training/education	23	26.5%
Can't afford to	23	26.5%
Don't know how to start	14	16%
Don't think it's my role	12	14%
Not sure I have anything to offer	9	10.5%
Finding others to work with	9	10.5%
Lack of transport	8	9%
Other	4	4.5%

- Being aware of volunteer activities that are needed & the type of skills needed for those activities
- A more local point than VAL for local volunteer opportunities

The top three barriers to volunteering are therefore 'lack of time', 'fear of liability' and 'family or caring responsibilities'. Comments were reiterated that volunteers should be used to add value to services, not replace paid staff "*it is very important to have committed, paid workers*" and that trained professional people are needed to support volunteers. Others emphasised that volunteering is transient, time limited/short term "*I would volunteer if I was trained by paid professionals*" and often used as a means to gain skills for employment which means that volunteers can be difficult to retain once trained "we believe that there are some activities and services where a reliance solely on volunteers may not be appropriate due to this risk/impact locally should volunteer levels/commitment drop". Volunteering relies on people's good will, time and ability and "will people care enough unless something affects them personally".

It was suggested that culturally there is a sharp divide between work and volunteering (outside work time) which makes it difficult for a healthy volunteering ethos to develop "LCC

and partners encourage various workplace physical activity and environmental challenges – why not a work-based volunteering challenge?”.

Q30 Ideas about how we should do this...

The ideas put forward to tackle the barriers to volunteering identified above include:

- A volunteering hub – a single, central source of information for volunteers *“something akin to a jobshop where people wishing to volunteer can see what local organisations may need their services”*, raise the profile of individual volunteering opportunities and provide information about the full range of community resources for a particular area
- Make better use of existing resources on the web
- Promotion of volunteering – local events for people who are interested in volunteering, taster sessions, meetings to discuss ideas and concerns, share examples of why people volunteer and what it has done for them, promote through libraries, Parish Councils
- Training, including free workshops and training sessions on specific topics
- Support from a paid professional who can coordinate and advise
- Recognition – a community volunteer credit scheme *“you can award people certain stars or levels when they complete so many hours of voluntary service”* and ‘thank you’ evenings
- Easier to access funds for projects involving community volunteers – seed corn funding because you can’t expect volunteers to also have to raise funding
- Simplify funding contracts with VCS groups
- Volunteering opportunities must be accessible and free of red tape and have lots of options for your skills and time available
- Help to reduce concerns about liability, health and safety
- More employee volunteering opportunities in both the public and private sectors – local to the workplace or to home, audit what volunteering LCC employees are already doing and use as baseline *“this would help to create a powerful message to the local population and attract investment to (re)create ‘Leicestershire – the volunteering county”*
- Work with organisations to develop volunteering policies
- Reduced rate/free rates for use of LCC premises
- Work with established volunteer based organisations and churches
- Effective, real time communication, a more inclusive approach – not ‘we know best’

Workshop Responses

A number of people reiterated the danger of over-reliance on volunteers, either to run services or support vulnerable people – *“you need to be realistic about what can be achieved with volunteers”*. Specific concerns were expressed about the large number of

volunteers within a community required to support a community partnership library and the necessary commitment levels and the need for a different relationship with LCC.

It is felt that volunteers require a good organisational structure to support them and several workshops proposed that a paid member of LCC staff is required to support the recruitment, management and on-going support of volunteers.

Some raised the point that people volunteer for things that they like/have an interest in – which means that some things will get ignored or left behind, others flagged up the danger of formalising volunteering, because people do it informally because they want to.

Q31 What could LCC do to support community buildings to develop as community hubs (focal points for community and public services)?

There was a wide range of responses to this question, some of the key points are summarised below:

- Provide a building or use existing buildings with a community use (e.g. libraries/museums) and spare space/capacity
- Support communities to identify what is already in place in terms of community buildings and what would need to change for it/them to be a designated hub. *“agree a vision e.g. to sustain a library service - is it better to keep it in its current location or could it be moved to another community facility where more activities are taking place and there are opportunities to expand?”*
- *“highlight and publicise existing successful hubs and how they did it”*
- Ensure that all members of the community can use it
- Provide property and infrastructure support and access to expertise (legal, technology, buying power etc.), help with marketing and advertising
- Funding – building running and management costs, small refurbishment funds, reduced costs for community groups using community buildings, paid organiser
- Continue funding for managers, don't threaten to close existing community buildings or reduce staff and services *“I feel your proposals here are counter-intuitive to your proposals for County libraries and museums”*
- Ensure that they are good quality, attractive, well maintained buildings with IT (Wi-Fi access so that people can access advice and support from trained volunteers or staff visiting on a surgery basis), good access, cheaper or free to use
- Training
- Facilitate discussions between different groups to share problems, ideas and solutions - *“highlight and publicise existing successful hubs and how they did it”*
- Serve as a catalyst but let the communities run them
- A clear strategy for recruiting and training volunteers that takes account of their interests and skills
- Engage with Parish Councils, village hall committee, Parish Plan group more
- Work with District Councils, the VCS and Local Councils to develop the hubs

- Don't sell buildings off before the community has a chance to mobilise
- Use your LCC staff and partners to engage, receive feedback and listen
- *"it would be great if all voluntary organisations share in the wider resources...e.g. access the community rooms for meetings, equipment and refreshment making facilities...anything that is a use and use again resource should benefit any community if funds are getting scarce"*

"I'm involved now in the struggle to improve a community building. It is unbelievably time consuming hard work. To add services would be good, but the effort..."

Q32 What could communities do to support community buildings to develop as community hubs (focal points for community and public services)?

In terms of what communities could do to support community buildings to develop as community hubs, additional suggestions (those already made above about the role of the County Council have not been repeated) are:

- Anything they can offer – either practically or financially – should be encouraged
- Use local information to identify priorities and develop a strategy and a delivery plan/plans to combat social isolation and champion inclusion – meeting local priorities is key *"communities will only support the activities and events that are of need/value to them"*
- Run them e.g. support and keep open museums and libraries
- Maintain them – e.g. cleaning, general maintenance
- Staff them - get involved by volunteering to set up, operate, coordinate and deliver services
- Promote them/raise awareness - engage other members of the community through word of mouth, visits etc.
- Be involved in deciding how buildings are used...
- Use them – for local group activities e.g. coffee shops
- Organise events that are wanted and needed, including fundraising events if necessary
- Develop partnerships with private sector organisations, including local business sponsorship in different forms e.g. donated time – legal advice/accountancy etc. - as well as money
- Advertise services on offer via the community/resident's newsletter
- Work/come together and not compete
- Community leaders should consult properly about plans
- LCC should engage, support and work with Town and Parish Councils
- Town and Parish Councils could precept in order to provide such hubs

Q33 Do you have any other general comments on the draft Communities Strategy?

A lot of the points made in this final section reinforce the comments made in relation to specific questions but a summary of additional points is provided below:

Some felt that the Strategy is too long, wordy *“not written in a language which is easily understood by the public”*, complex/complicated and difficult for people to engage with. Others that it is aspirational and needs *“more clearly articulated outcomes and deliverables”* in order to move beyond the theoretical and general *“it needs to take the next great step from theory to the practice...the idea is fine but most people are wrapped up in our own little world fighting to make ends meet”*. It was suggested that the Strategy lacks detail and focus and a couple of respondents felt that the Strategy is too top-down, needs to be more specific about money and set out how the Council and its partners will know whether the Strategy is succeeding or failing.

The danger of depending on volunteers and volunteering capacity that may not be available *“too much of its success depends on active support from a community of aging people”* was emphasised again *“it is unrealistic to expect LCC services to be delivered by volunteers”*, *love the ideas but it is a huge challenge to do so much with volunteers* and *“I have grave doubts about volunteers taking over the roles of qualified, trained professionals...volunteers often lack the skills and commitment needed for meeting the needs of vulnerable people”*. It was suggested that more could be made of the social and health benefits accrued by volunteers who may well be potentially vulnerable and may be helped by early involvement as volunteers. A couple of respondents felt that the sharing economy – collaborative consumption where people can share skills and resources, including through schemes such as skillshare, slivers of time and timebanking – should be highlighted alongside the more traditional model of volunteering as *“the sharing economy may be more relevant for working people with busy lives and families”*. A further suggestion was to explore the potential benefits of community energy schemes.

A couple of respondents has specific views about the motives of the Council in proposing the changes set out in the Strategy *“you are trying to destroy some of the key services that villages and residents wish to have in place...you want the same money for doing less, so paying individuals more for delivering very little”* and *“you are going to break communities that have just started to build back up and in a couple of years time you will completely regret the decisions being made today because of the impact it will have”*. One respondent suggests that *“savings should be sought from the Councillors budget and the cost/waste of budget used for agency staff”*, with the suggestion of using the Council’s reserves to support the delivery of this Strategy.

Some are particularly concerned about the impact of other Council proposals on the communities of Leicestershire *“do not make cuts to voluntary organisations and libraries”*

whilst others propose increasing the Council tax – for those who can afford to pay more – to reduce the funding gap.

Others are more optimistic *“I think it is a sound approach to the problems of falling budgets”* and *“As always from this Council it is well presented and feels like the Council is on the front foot with grasping some really difficult issues and engaging with local people to think differently about future service provision”*.