

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 16 December 2020

Communities Principle – Update and Delivery Plan



Cllr Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture said,

“Communities and their residents are at the very heart of what makes Staffordshire a strong and caring county and that was seldom more evident than during the first months of the pandemic.

At the same time residents have been clear in recent years that they want more involvement in influencing the delivery of services in their communities.

There’s no doubt that the effects of Covid-19 have affected some volunteers and charities this year, but we intend to develop and support capacity in the voluntary sector so residents can help improve their communities to make them healthier, more independent and more resilient.”

Report Summary:

This report provides Cabinet with the following update on the Communities principle:

- a. **Context** for the Communities principle, including work undertaken to date and previous discussions with Cabinet.
- b. **Why the Communities principle is important**, what we have achieved so far, and what we want to do moving forward.
- c. **The lessons learned during 2020**, including the response to Covid-19.
- d. **A proposed delivery plan for the Communities principle** (Communities Delivery Plan – appendix 1)

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Considers the ‘lessons learned’ for the Communities principle in 2020.
- b. Considers and approves the proposed plan for the Communities principle (Communities Delivery Plan)
- c. Agrees to a further review of funding for the Communities principle which will be brought back to Cabinet for discussion early 2021.

Local Members Interest
N/A

Cabinet – Wednesday 16 December 2020

Communities Principle – Update and Delivery Plan

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

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Report of the Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities

Introduction

1. How we work and connect with our communities to ensure residents can help themselves and each other is central to everything we do. As such, Communities was identified as a key principle in our refreshed Strategic Plan 2018-22.
2. Staffordshire County Council has a strong record of working alongside its communities to design and deliver locally based, financially sustainable services that are well used and valued. We have been one of a group of Councils that embraced this approach nationally.
3. However, there is still much more to do if we are to continue to re-design public services alongside our communities. Following the Covid-19 pandemic and its ongoing impact, **supporting and empowering our communities is more important than ever before.**
4. **Communities, volunteers and community groups have stepped up.** Without County Council facilitation, residents across the county have worked tirelessly to take further responsibility in supporting each other and the most vulnerable in their local area. Following this significant and crucial effort, Staffordshire County Council have worked flexibly and at pace with our partners in the public and VCSE sectors to connect people to the local support and help they needed.
5. **It is critical that moving forward we have a strong plan for the Communities principle.** This plan must support residents to stay healthy and resilient, as well as encourage everyone to continue getting involved in what matters most to them and the place they live.

6. This report provides Cabinet with the following update on the Communities principle:
 - a. **Context** regarding work undertaken to date and previous Cabinet discussions.
 - b. **Why the Communities principle is important**, what we have achieved so far, and what we want to do moving forward.
 - c. **The lessons learned during 2020**, including the response to Covid-19.
 - d. **A proposed plan for the Communities principle** (Communities Delivery Plan) that includes:
 - i. Ensuring a locally tailored and community-led support offer through a programme with three core workstreams: Place Based Approach, Supportive Communities, and Troubled Individuals.
 - ii. The Corporate activity supporting these workstreams, including promoting social action and building community capacity.
 - iii. Working in a community focused way and co-ordinating with the other three principles in our Strategic Plan.

Context

7. In recent years, Staffordshire County Council has empowered our residents to be resilient and has supported communities to deliver the services that matter most to them and their local area. This includes transforming several of our services to community-based models, including youth services, and key parts of our children centres and library offer.
8. In the 2016 Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan, 'People Helping People' was identified as an enabler, focusing on promoting social action and building capacity in communities. The role of Director for Families and Communities was established to provide senior leadership for the communities agenda.
9. The People Helping People delivery plan was agreed by Cabinet in September 2017 and updated in 2019. As part of this plan, Cabinet agreed to invest an additional £1m, which included monies to continue capacity building by issuing a new Call Off contract for a further three years from the VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership Framework. This was at a reduced annual contract value of £442,000 (based on an additional £250,000 to the base funding of £192,00 per annum). In addition, £2,500 per Member was identified for a People Helping People fund as well as funding for a post to lead on a programme of work to support Members until December 2021.
10. Following the refresh of our Strategic Plan for 2018-22, Communities was identified as one of four key principles that will run through everything we do as an organisation. This report brings to Cabinet a plan for the Communities principle that will build on the work done by the People Helping People programme since 2016.

11. This plan will also reflect the decision taken by Cabinet in March 2020 to bring together the Communities principle and the Place Based Approach. This will further co-ordinate work across the two areas and ensure we make the most of our community assets.

Communities principle – why is it important?

12. The Communities principle is about **encouraging residents and communities to help themselves and each other**. As one of the four key principles in our Strategic Plan 2018-22, it is important that the whole organisation embraces the Communities principle as being fundamental to how we work.
13. In recent years, the public sector has faced significant financial challenges which has meant Staffordshire County Council has not been able to commission or deliver services in the same way.
14. In response to this, **Staffordshire County Council has worked with our partners and residents to redesign local services**. This has focused on empowering our residents to use the strengths and assets in their local area to deliver what matters the most to them.
15. This has included developing the Place Based Approach. Led by the local Families Strategic Partnership, significant progress has been made on improving local partnerships and working arrangements for children and families. This has included district level engagement with communities and partners to understand the unique issues, strengths and priorities in each locality, as well as the development of our earliest help and restorative practice approaches.
16. In addition, our Community Managed Libraries model is considered best practice by Government, professional bodies such as Arts Council England, and the libraries sector nationally. Our Community Managed Libraries have also been positive about how we have worked in partnership with them to do things differently, and we are working to ensure Staffordshire County Council continues to support this cultural approach.
17. We have also worked with our partners to empower communities to get more involved in maintaining their local highways, including working with the Staffordshire Parish Council Association to launch the Highways Your Way website.
18. Staffordshire County Council also worked with the Government in 2016 on the national Enabling Social Action programme, as well as with the New Economics Foundation to develop our People Helping People strategy.
19. Considering the recent impact of Covid-19 and the ongoing financial challenges facing the public sector, **working with our communities to redesign our local services is more important now than ever**.
20. Our residents have told us they want greater independence, more control over their lives, and more say in what happens in the places they live. We have seen this year more than ever before that communities will step up on issues that matter to them.

21. It is critical that we have a strong plan moving forward for the Communities principle. This plan will look to ensure that a locally tailored, **community-led offer of support** is available for residents. It will also **promote social action** and build capacity in the VCSE sector, as well as help Staffordshire County Council to **work in a more community focused way**.

Lessons learned from 2020

22. As part of Staffordshire County Council's approach to recovery from Covid-19, several 'lessons learned' have been identified relating specifically to communities by the Communities Recovery Group (a subgroup of the Planning and Recovery Group).
23. The following have been used to inform our offer for Communities and the plan for the Communities Principle:
- a. There was a **proactive local response** across Staffordshire that was delivered at pace and with little cost. This response was possible thanks to effective relationships with our partners and increased VCSE sector engagement, particularly with smaller groups.
 - b. We saw a **significant increase in social action and volunteering**, both formally and informally, supported by the Council's iCare and iCount campaigns and with communities taking further responsibility to support the most vulnerable people in their local area.
 - c. **The VCSE sector has been vital** during the response, and we have seen a significant number of new groups forming at a hyperlocal level. However, the sustainability of parts of the sector has been affected by the pandemic, and the VCSE will need ongoing support to remain sustainable.
 - d. The **use of digital has increased** during Covid-19 across all sectors, with significant parts of Staffordshire County Council's services moving online. However, despite positive work to improve digital inclusion during lockdown, the impact on those still digitally excluded is likely to be worse following Covid-19.
 - e. We saw improvements in some areas of our **working culture** during lockdown, including greater collaboration across Staffordshire County Council directorates, less bureaucracy, greater pace, and more front-line decision making.
 - f. There will be **lasting negative health and social impacts** of Covid-19, alongside the associated economic challenges for residents and businesses. This will likely result in increased health inequalities and demand for support across the county.
24. **2020 has also brought the inclusion and diversity agenda into sharper focus.** In addition to Covid-19 adversely impacting on some sections of our communities more than others, 2020 has seen one of the most significant equalities movements in recent history, exposing systematic inequalities facing black communities.

25. Both the lessons from Covid-19 and recent developments regarding inclusion and diversity have provided critical context and learning for Staffordshire County Council. This has been used to inform the proposed approach for the Communities principle and how Staffordshire County Council works and connects with Staffordshire's communities.

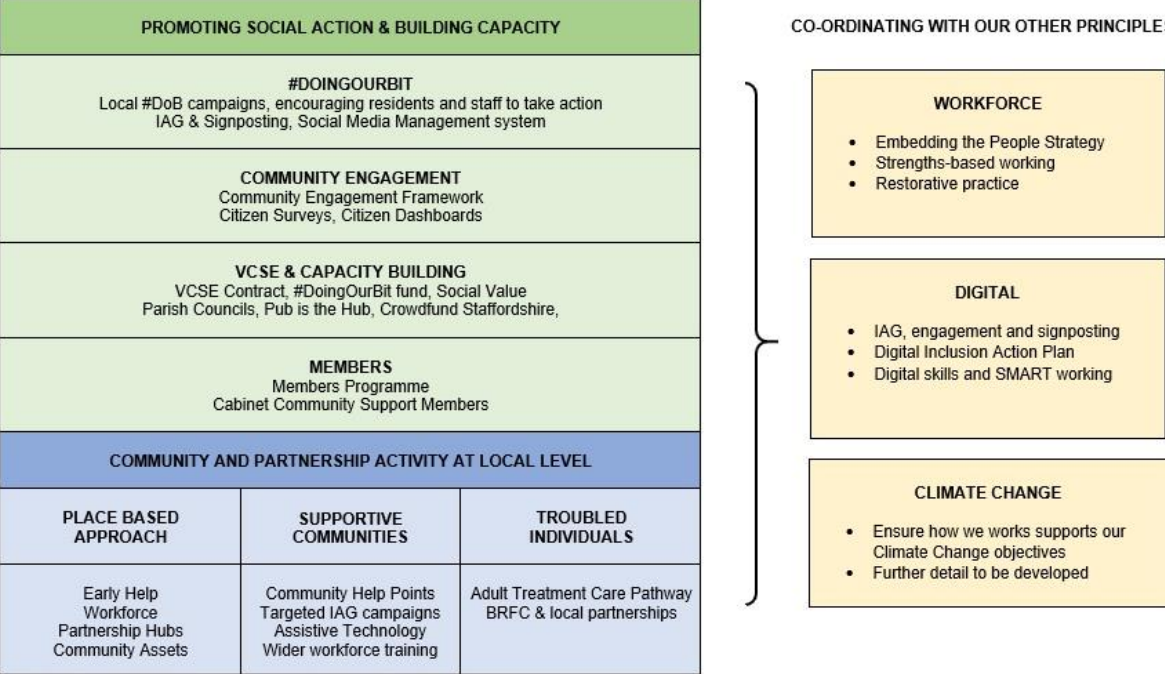
Communities Delivery Plan

26. This report proposes a **Communities Delivery Plan** which can be found at appendix 1 to this report.
27. The Communities Delivery Plan is a programme of change that includes several different elements of work. As outlined in paragraph 19, the plan aims to do the following:
- a. Work with our partners to ensure a locally tailored, **community-led support offer** is available and accessible for our residents.
 - b. **Promote social action** and encourage local communities to help themselves and each other to stay healthy, resilient, and improve the place they live. This includes building capacity in communities and strengthening our VCSE sector.
 - c. Ensure communities are a fundamental part of our culture and **how we work as an organisation**.
28. To do this, the Communities Delivery Plan will focus on a programme of work with the following three core workstreams that form the basis of our **community-led support offer**:
- a. **Place Based Approach (Families and Communities)** – Build on the success to-date of our Place Based Approach model for children and families. This will include further developing our Earliest Help Offer in each district, ensuring our workforce aligns with our communities to meet the needs of families locally, and embedding the lessons from Covid-19 into how we best use our community assets (e.g. children's centres, libraries).
 - b. **Supportive Communities (Health and Care)** – Learning from the success of the Place Based Approach, work is ongoing to establish the Supportive Communities programme as part of the adult social care pathway. This includes embedding the recently launched Community Help Points (using local assets such as libraries), promoting self-help and digital resources (including Do-It Staffordshire and Staffordshire Connects), and supporting the wider workforce with training and development.
 - c. **Troubled Individuals** – Working with adults with complex needs alongside the existing Building Resilient Families and Communities (BRFC) partnerships locally. This will include an initial focus on rough sleepers and a new Adult Treatment Care Pathway contract.

29. **These three workstreams each have their own plans and their own governance.** However, they will be coordinated through the Communities Delivery Plan as a single programme to ensure alignment of priorities, resources and learning in each locality. See paragraphs 35-38 below for more information on governance.
30. In order to **promote social action** in local communities, the Communities Delivery plan also includes a set of Corporate activities led by the Communities Leadership Group.
31. This work will build on the community spirit and hyperlocal activity seen during the response to Covid-19. It will also **build capacity** in the VCSE sector to support the main programmes of work happening locally set out in paragraph 27 above. This work will include:
 - a. Phase 2 of our successful **#DoingOurBit** campaign, encouraging everyone to get involved and do one more thing to help themselves, their family and the place they live.
 - b. Reviewing our approach to **Community Engagement** to understand what matters most to our communities.
 - c. **Supporting the VCSE and building capacity in communities**, including the **#DoingOurBit** fund, promoting volunteering, and delivering years 4, 5 and 6 of our VCSE Strategic Capacity Building partnership with SCVYS and Support Staffordshire.
 - d. Delivering the **Members Programme** to support our Members to continue being champions for their local communities.
32. Finally, to ensure the organisation can **work in a community focused way**, the Communities principle will also be aligned with the other three principles in the Strategic Plan. This includes:
 - a. **Workforce** – Working alongside the People Strategy, promote restorative practice and strengths based working principles amongst our workforce.
 - b. **Digital** – Improving our customer experience and enhancing our digital and IAG offers. This also includes developing our approach to digital skills and implementing a Digital Inclusion Action Plan for Staffordshire.
 - c. **Climate Change** – Work with communities to address climate change and make the most of our green spaces and sustainable transport infrastructure.
33. The Communities Delivery Plan will also have strong links to the work ongoing to review our approach to **inclusion and diversity**. As agreed with Cabinet in October 2020, further work is taking place to develop an action plan which will be brought back to SLT and Informal Cabinet in early 2021.

34. The diagram in Figure 1 below provides a summary overview of the above proposed model for the Communities principle moving forward.

Figure 1 – Overview Communities Delivery Plan



Governance

35. The Communities principle is led by Councillor Victoria Wilson, Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities. The Cabinet Member is supported by eight Community Cabinet Support Members to promote community working and co-ordinate Member briefings in each district.

36. The Communities Leadership Group will have oversight of the Communities principle at an officer level. The group is chaired by the Senior Leadership Team lead for Communities Helen Riley (Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities) and contains the senior officer leads for the activities identified in the plan.

37. The Place Based Approach and Supportive Communities workstreams both have their own existing governance structures that will remain, and the Troubled Individuals workstream will be governed as a strand of the Place Based Approach. The leads for each of these workstreams are also members of the Communities Leadership Group, which will ensure oversight of all workstreams is coordinated via a programme management approach.

38. Each of the other three principles also have their own governance mechanisms. However, as there is significant cross over between Communities and the other three principles, regular meetings will take place with the leads of each principle to ensure coordination.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

39. **It is vital that we continue to invest in communities, especially following the financial impact of Covid-19.** The VCSE sector is fundamental to the Communities principle and has been adversely impacted by the pandemic. Ongoing support will be required if we are to continue to see an effective VCSE sector that supports our community offer.
40. As mentioned in paragraph 9, Cabinet agreed to a £1m investment fund for communities in September 2019 that included:
 - a. An additional £250,000 to the base funding of £192,000 to provide £442,000 per annum for the final three years of the VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract (ending July 2022).
 - b. £2,500 per Member for a People Helping People fund.
 - c. Funding for a post to lead on a programme of work to support Members until December 2021.
41. In addition to this £1m investment fund, Staffordshire County Council has also recently agreed to a new community climate action fund, which will allow each County Councillor to offer grant funding of up to £1,000 to support local projects in their communities.
42. The People Helping People Fund led by Members (item b above) has now been mainstreamed into the MTFs. During 2021 **a further decision will need to be made by Cabinet regarding the future of the other streams of funding relating to the Communities principle moving forward.**
43. This decision will need to include funding for the VCSE following the end of the current VCSE Strategic Capacity Building Partnership contract in July 2022, as well as support for the Members Programme following the end of the fixed term contract for the Member Programme Lead in December 2021.
44. **This paper recommends that a review of the current funding for the Communities principle is undertaken** (including the above £1m investment) to agree future funding and resource requirements for the Communities principle.
45. The results of this review, and recommendations regarding future funding for the Communities principle will be brought back to Cabinet for discussion early 2021.

Legal Implications

46. There are no specific legal implications for the Communities principle as a whole. Any commissioning work or changes to community assets undertaken as part of the Communities principle will follow the standard legal requirements of our commissioning, procurement and property management processes.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Communities Delivery Plan

Appendix 2 – Community Impact Assessment

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