

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 15 February 2023

Empowering our Communities



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

“Our amazing communities across Staffordshire really are at the heart of what makes this county such a fantastic place to live.

“Friends helping friends, neighbours helping neighbours and people stretching out a helping hand to those most in need, is what makes a difference to the quality of so many people’s lives.

“As a county council, we are committed to empowering our communities and in the last year this approach, with the support of our voluntary, community and public sector partners, helped more than 1,200 families improve their lives, supported just under 110,000 people through our community-based public health drives and distributed more than £200,000 worth of grants to help communities recover from the pandemic.

“But we know together we can do even more, and in 2023 we aim to do just that by empowering our wonderful communities here in Staffordshire.”

Report Summary:

What makes Staffordshire great is its people and its communities, and we have seen the amazing things communities can do when they come together. Staffordshire County Council has achieved a significant amount working with our public sector partners and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to empower our communities in recent years. We continue to be ambitious, and we know we can do much more.

This report and the attached Communities Position Statement reviews our progress in 2021/22, provides a clear and detailed delivery plan for 2023, and sets out our intention to develop a long-term, innovative, and aspirational Communities Strategy for Staffordshire.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Consider and approve the attached Communities Position Statement, including a review of the progress made with partners and communities in 2021/22.
- b. Approve the Communities Delivery Plan for 2023.
- c. Approve a proposal to engage with partners and communities to develop a long-term, innovative, and ambitious Communities Strategy for Staffordshire.



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Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Culture

I recommend that Cabinet:

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- b. Approve the Communities Delivery Plan for 2023.
- c. Approve a proposal to engage with partners and communities to develop a long-term, innovative, and ambitious Communities Strategy for Staffordshire.

Local Member Interest: N/A

Report of the Director for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills

Background

1. Our communities and residents are at the very heart of what makes Staffordshire a strong and thriving county. Empowering our communities to help themselves and each other is a core part of our Strategic Plan 2022-25. As one of the four 'How We Work' statements in our Strategic Plan, working with communities needs to be at the heart of everything we do as a Council.
2. Recognising the importance of our work with communities, a **Communities Position Statement** has been developed and attached to this report. The purpose of this document is to **review progress made in 2021/22**, clearly articulate our **plans for the next 12 months**, and set out **our longer-term aspirations**.
3. The Communities Position Statement has been developed by the Communities Leadership Group to communicate to Councillors, staff, and partners about what we have achieved working with communities over the past 18 months and what we plan to do moving forward. Ahead of engaging with our communities in the summer, we also intend to develop a short, public facing document to communicate these messages in an appropriate way for residents.

4. The Council's Communities Leadership Group (CLG) includes senior officers from across the County Council and our VCSE Capacity Building Framework partners Support Staffordshire and the Staffordshire Council of Voluntary Youth Services (SCVYS). The group ensure co-ordination, collaboration, and performance monitoring of our communities-related work.
5. The Communities Position Statement has also been discussed with Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12th December. The feedback of the Committee helped shape the final Communities Position Statement and inform the attached Communities Delivery Plan 2023. This feedback included the need to engage with communities alongside our partners, as well as ensuring that the measures and targets in the delivery plan were SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic / relevant, and time-bound).

Communities Position Statement - Overview

6. The Communities Position Statement provides a **review of 2021/22**. This includes a summary of the work taking place across the entire organisation and alongside our communities, the local VCSE sector, and our public sector partners. Highlights include:
 - a. Working with partners and our VCSE sector to review and agree our new Early Help Strategy 2022-27, supporting families to access the right help, in the right place and at the right time.
 - b. Supporting 1,238 families facing multiple challenges to improve their lives between April 2021 and March 2022 through the Supporting Families Programme, working alongside community groups across the County.
 - c. Supporting just under 110,000 people to find help through Supportive Communities, our community-based public health programme that helps residents be healthier and more independent for longer.
 - d. Distributing £200,000 worth of grants to support VCSE groups to recover post Covid-19 and address rising costs for the VCSE sector.
 - e. Schools, community groups, and parish councils securing £76,000 from the Climate Change Action Fund 2021/22 for local initiatives that help reduce Staffordshire's contribution to climate change.
 - f. Awarding 156 community groups £114,000 of small grants through our Member-Led Community Fund in 2021/22 to deliver a huge range of local activities.

11. We have a proven track-record of working with our public sector partners and vibrant voluntary sector organisations to find creative, community-based solutions to local issues. We want to build on this success to collaborate further in unlocking greater creativity and innovative solutions in the future.
12. An ambitious Communities Strategy that is shaped with our communities and our partners will help provide us with a platform for taking our work with communities even further.
13. To do this well, it is recommended that the Council engages with our communities and partners over the coming months. This activity will focus on what matters to our communities, where we should concentrate our efforts, and how we can work together in new and innovative ways to support the people of Staffordshire to prosper, be healthy and happy.

Timescales

14. Following discussion at Cabinet, work on the Communities Delivery Plan 2023 will continue to build on the success of our work with partners and the local VCSE sector in 2021/22.
15. If Cabinet approves the recommendation to develop a long-term, innovative, and aspirational Communities Strategy, engagement work will take place over the Summer of 2023, with a view to working with partners to develop a strategy by the end of the year.

Legal Implications

16. There are no specific legal implications for the Communities Delivery Plan 2023. Any commissioning work or changes to community assets undertaken as part of the Communities Delivery Plan 2023 will follow the standard legal requirements of our commissioning, procurement, and property management processes.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

17. It is vital that we continue to invest in communities, especially following the financial impact of Covid-19 and the increasing cost of living.
18. Included within the attached Communities Delivery Plan 2023 are details on the costs of delivery, where available and possible to quantify. The estimated total cost of the Communities Delivery Plan 2023 is circa £4m.

Climate Change Implications

19. Staffordshire County Council declared a climate change emergency in July 2019 and committed to also achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Communities have a key role to play in achieving net zero carbon emissions and delivering the Council's Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025.
20. The Communities Delivery Plan 2023 includes several climate change related activities, including the #DoingOurBit to Make Staffordshire Sustainable campaign, supporting community groups through the Climate Change Action Fund, and working with businesses to raise awareness of their carbon footprint.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1 – Draft Communities Position Statement
- Appendix 2 – Draft Communities Delivery Plan 2023
- Appendix 3 – Communities Impact Assessment

Contact Details

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