

CUSPE: HOW TO DESIGN THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT TODAY

To: Communities & Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: 23 January 2020

From: Amanda Askham, Executive Director: Business Improvement & Development

Electoral division(s): All

Forward Plan ref: Not applicable **Key decision:** No

Purpose: To consider the outcome and recommendations that result from the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange's (CUSPE) Policy Challenge research into the question of how to design the future of local government today in relation to the Council's Think Communities approach.

Recommendation: The Committee is being asked to:

- a) Note and comment on the findings of the research undertaken by CUSPE into the question of how to design the future of local government today; and
- b) Consider the recommendations made by CUSPE for Think Communities, as detailed in paragraph 2.6.

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In October 2016, Cambridgeshire County Council initiated an annual collaboration with the Cambridge University Science and Policy Exchange (CUSPE). The partnership, known as the CUSPE Policy Challenges, brings teams of researchers from the University of Cambridge together to explore challenges the Council faces.
- 1.2 In March 2019, the questions offered to researchers in the 2019 CUSPE Policy Challenges included '*How do we design the future of local government today?*'. This question formed the basis of the present report.
- 1.3 In July 2019, it was decided that this question and the researchers' approach to it are most relevant and beneficial to work being done within Think Communities, and therefore that the Communities & Partnerships Committee would be the most suitable committee to receive the researchers' report, which is attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. MAIN ISSUES

- 2.1 The question to which this report responds is motivated by concerns about the capacity for local government to respond to stresses and uncertainties that are anticipated in light of certain social, political and environmental developments in the near future. Accordingly, the report tackles the question by focusing on the notion of *resilience* for local government. Section 1 of the report outlines a 'resilience framework for sustainable governance' to guide the Council's response to these future challenges. Section 2 draws on this framework to make recommendations for the Think Communities approach.
- 2.2 In Section 1, the proposed resilience framework focuses on problem-solving and change implementation by coalitions of stakeholders that represent different facets of the affected communities. The multiple stakeholders that make up the coalition help to ensure diversity of viewpoints and that the proposed solutions and changes have maximal legitimacy and positive impact within the affected communities.
- 2.3 The framework is adapted from the Wayfinder Guide, a freely available 'resilience guide for navigating towards sustainable futures' developed by an international group of resilience experts from the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Resilience Alliance, and the Australian Resilience Centre. The Wayfinder Guide consists of five phases for designing and implementing positive systemic change, each of which are detailed in the report:
 1. Building the coalition
 2. Creating a shared understanding of the system
 3. Exploring the dynamics of the system
 4. Developing innovative strategies for change
 5. Implementation, learning from the process, and iteration
- 2.4 In Section 2, the current state of work in Think Communities is summarised and recommendations are proposed for future work in this area. The report explains how

the Wayfinder Guide is particularly suited to the multi-scalar nature and place-based focus of Think Communities, wherein the distinctive strengths and needs of communities are identified and harnessed to enable them to co-design and co-deliver their required services with partners at a local level.

- 2.5 As further evidence of this fit, it is noted that Think Communities – prior to acquaintance with the proposed framework – have already initiated work on the first two phases of the Wayfinder Guide above, insofar as combined authority-level coalitions have been assembled with place-based coalitions planned to be formed (Phase 1), and combined authority coalitions are currently engaging with stakeholders to create a shared understanding of the relevant systems (Phase 2). The report's recommendations therefore focus on the successful completion of these two phases of work while suggesting Think Communities continue through the remaining three phases on its own subsequently.
- 2.6 The recommendations, whose rationales are explained further in Section 2 of the report, are:
1. Structure Think Communities place-based teams in light of the coalition model of the Wayfinder framework: focusing on recommended skills, representativity, and agency of its members.
 2. Ensure a shared vision and multi-scale agency within the Think Communities approach by defining a *Principles for good practice* charter, signed by combined authority and place-based teams.
 3. Define mechanisms for funding of place-based teams. Explore options around increasing flexibility of funding.
 4. Set out place-based teams to establish local *Change narratives* through interactions with combined authority and place-based stakeholders, to build support for the Think Communities approach and define a shared understanding of system strengths and needs.
- 2.7 (Section 1 of the report explains the coalition model, principles for good practice charter, and change narrative mentioned in the recommendations.)

The report concludes by summarising the benefits of implementing change and maintaining resilience through a coalition-based model, such as communities having agency and relevance in the changes that affect them and the Council having the advantages of community buy-in, community expertise, and a more responsive and less bureaucratic public image.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 A good quality of life for everyone

The report above sets out the implications for this priority in 2.2 and 2.7

3.2 Thriving places for people to live

See 3.1 above

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children

There are no significant implications within this category.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The implementation of the recommendation for forming place-based coalitions in 2.6 above would involve the work of the Communications and Community Engagement workstreams within Think Communities to recruit place-based coalition members, which could include county, district, city, and parish councillors as well as various members of the community.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The entire report and its recommendations are in support of increased localism and community empowerment to reform the relationship between the Council and the communities it serves through the Think Communities approach. More specifically, the coalition-based model mentioned in 2.2-2.6 above is explicitly formed and recommended for the purpose of maximising local agency, knowledge, and legitimacy in the co-design and co-implementation of changes that affect communities.

4.7 Public Health Implications

There is evidence that engaging with and strengthening the resilience of communities supports community action in addressing their health and wellbeing needs.

Implications	Officer Clearance
Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?	Yes Name of Financial Officer: Stephen Howarth
Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?	Yes Name of Officer: Gus de Silva
Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Monitoring Officer?	Yes Name of Legal Officer: Fiona McMillan
Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?	No Name of Officer: Matthew Hall
Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?	Yes Name of Officer: Adrian Chapman
Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health	Yes Name of Officer: Val Thomas

Source Documents	Location
None	N/A