

**SUPPORT CAMBRIDGESHIRE: LOCAL COUNCIL DEVELOPMENT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

**To:** Communities and Partnership Committee

**Meeting Date:** 21 November 2019

**From:** Adrian Chapman, Service Director

**Electoral division(s):** All

**Forward Plan ref:** N/a                      **Key decision:** No

**Purpose:** To consider progress against the five year Local Council Development Plan, an integral part of the Support Cambridgeshire contract, and its next phase of delivery

**Recommendation:** The Communities and Partnership Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider progress made in year two of the five year 'Support Cambridgeshire' Local Council Development Plan
- b) Consider the next phase of delivery for the Development Plan

<b><i>Officer contact:</i></b>	<b><i>Member contacts:</i></b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
<b>1.1</b>	In November 2017, a five year Local Council Development Plan was launched at the Countywide Local Council Conference.
<b>1.2</b>	Part of the Support Cambridgeshire contract, it was developed alongside Local Councils, District Councils, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC), and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC), and co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire ACRE (Cambridgeshire's Rural Community Council).
<b>1.3</b>	<p>It sets out our collective aspirations for Cambridgeshire's Local Council sector and recognises the need to increase the potential of Town and Parish Councils through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• extending opportunities for networking, shared learning and partnership</li> <li>• improving standards of Town and Parish Councils so they can make the most of current and future opportunities</li> <li>• increase their capacity, so they can plan their futures and unlock the potential of their communities</li> </ul>
<b>1.4</b>	On 8 November 2018, Communities and Partnership Committee considered and recorded appreciation of the progress made in the first 12 months of the Development plan.
<b>2.</b>	<b>MAIN ISSUES</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<p><b>Progress made</b></p> <p>Over the last 12 months good progress has continued to be made against the action plan. Highlights include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Websites maintained by CAPALC (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils) and Cambridgeshire Parishes with useful content for local councils, including calendars detailing training and events:  <a href="http://www.capalc.org.uk">http://www.capalc.org.uk</a> and <a href="https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/">https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/</a></li> <li>ii. Biennial surveys of town and parish councillors and clerks undertaken. Further details shared in 2.2 and 2.3, and full results at:  <a href="https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/">https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/</a></li> <li>iii. Services Directory available to help local councils find the right support for particular queries. Latest version at:  <a href="https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/">https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/</a></li> <li>iv. Twitter and Facebook feeds used to share information with local councils and promote peer support, with a growing number of followers. Twitter:  <a href="https://twitter.com/cambsparishes">https://twitter.com/cambsparishes</a> and <a href="https://twitter.com/cambsp_capalc">https://twitter.com/cambsp_capalc</a>  Facebook: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/cambsparishes/">https://www.facebook.com/cambsparishes/</a></li> <li>v. Third Cambridgeshire Local Councils Annual Conference was held in November 2018 attended by 227 delegates (an increase on 2017 attendance) with an 85% approval rating; the fourth annual conference was held on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019,</li> </ul>

	<p>and more details are provided at section 2.4. A fuller verbal update on that event will be given at Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>vi. Seventeen training courses (some comprising multiple sessions) provided by CAPALC for 238 local council clerks and councillors (new to role, refresher courses and specialist topics such as finance, chairmanship and the Certificate in Local Council Administration). To find out more visit: <a href="http://www.capalc.org.uk/Training_and_Events_19202.aspx">http://www.capalc.org.uk/Training_and_Events_19202.aspx</a></li> <li>vii. Five further editions of Cambridgeshire Matters published, the County's Council's e-newsletter aimed at local councils. Good feedback received from Local Councils, e.g. <i>"...having looked through the Community Matters May newsletter, we have been able to direct the local youth group to the Community Reach Fund, the local church ministers to the Cinnamon Network and our Community Safety Group towards Cambridge Women's Aid recruiting of Community Ambassadors tackling domestic abuse. Very useful!"</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <a href="https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/briefings/">https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/council/briefings/</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>viii. The Local Highways Improvement (LHI) Scheme continues with a feasibility phase where local project officers work with local councils to develop their proposal before going to the panel. Those applying in August 2019 are currently in feasibility assessment and discussions with the highways team to refine the applications throughout August to December. Final updated applications submitted for assessment by the LHI Member Advisory Panel for their area are held in December/January each year. Successful schemes in the current application round will be delivered in 2020/21</li> <li>ix. Further informal networking has taken place at CAPALC Pop-Up Cafes and Clerks' Annual Catch Up Day, SLCC Cambridgeshire Branch Meetings and the CAPALC annual conference.</li> <li>x. A further peer learning and networking event held on "busting the myths" around rural affordable housing. A total of 28 councillors joined this year</li> <li>xi. Under the Local Council Award Scheme, six Cambridgeshire Local Councils have reached Foundation level; four Local Councils are accredited at Quality level and three at Quality Gold level (with many more working towards the various levels across the County) <a href="http://www.capalc.org.uk/Local_Council_Award_Scheme_Information_19187.aspx">http://www.capalc.org.uk/Local_Council_Award_Scheme_Information_19187.aspx</a></li> </ul>
2.2	<p>In April 2019 Cambridgeshire ACRE, as part of the Support Cambridgeshire work, carried out the biennial survey with Parish Councillors and Clerks, which enables us to evaluate the impact of our overall collaborative approach against the social impact measurements set out in the Development Plan under 'How will we know we have been successful?'. This survey also helps us understand any emerging priorities from the Local Council Sector and allows for a comparison to the earlier survey carried out in 2017.</p>
2.3	<p>Response rates in 2019 were slightly down on 2017:</p>

- In 2017, 55% of clerks responded, whereas in 2019, just 30% responded
- In 2017, at least one councillor response was received from 55% of councils, whereas in 2019, 48% of councils produced one or more response
- Both clerks and councillors report being stretched for time and as this survey was essentially a repeat of that carried out in 2017, it is possible respondents may have felt participation was not a good use of their time

### **What's changed over the last two years?**

- There's been some turnover in councillors, with the percentage of councillors in post less than a year having increased since 2017 (2019: 22% vs 2017: 15%)
- There's been a small fall in the percentage of councillors who feel there are gaps in their knowledge and that they are sometimes challenged by the decisions they are asked to make (2019: 44% vs 2017: 49%)
- There's been a small increase in the percentage of councillors who say they are willing to attend training (2019: 88% vs 2017: 86%). There is still some resistance to the idea of training, with the main reasons for not attending training being:
  - Longevity as a councillor (feeling they have nothing to learn)
  - Confidence in their own abilities (feeling training is unnecessary)
  - Lack of time
- A growing number of local councils are using social media to connect with their communities. In 2017, the number of councils with social media accounts was negligible, whereas now some 10 – 15% have either a Twitter feed, a Facebook page or both

### **What hasn't changed over the past two years?**

- The percentage of clerks who say their contracted working hours are insufficient to carry out the workload expected of them and who are having to work additional unpaid hours to keep up (54% in both years)
- The percentage of clerks who feel that their councillors don't particularly understand the role they are employed to carry out (2019: 50% vs 2017: 47%)
- The percentage of councillors who believe the support offered by organisations whose role it is to support local councils is 'good' or 'very good', which has remained more or less the same (2019: 55% vs 2017: 56%), suggesting there is still more that we, collectively, can do to improve the support we give
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough councils still have relatively poor levels of engagement in the Local Council Award Scheme. Just 2% of local councils have reached any level of the scheme (as a comparison, in Essex, the figure is 18%)
- The biggest challenges that local councils say they are facing haven't changed:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Supporting those who are most vulnerable in their community</li> <li>○ Managing data protection issues</li> <li>○ Dealing with the effect of increased development on parish infrastructure</li> <li>○ Engaging and mobilising the whole community</li> <li>○ Dealing with traffic and road safety issues</li> <li>○ Finding funding for projects</li> <li>○ Thinking about the community role in mitigating the climate change emergency.</li> </ul>
2.4	<p>A priority for those addressing and delivering support to the Local Councils has been the fourth Cambridgeshire Local Council Conference which took place on Friday 8 November 2019.</p> <p>This full day event continued the conversation about how all levels of local government can work together to improve local communities. Leaders from across the public sector introduced the 'Think Communities' approach to putting communities first, talked about their commitment to the new approach and the real difference it will make. A series of workshops in the afternoon, which picked up priorities identified by the Local Councils in their 2019 survey responses, helped delegates see how they can make good use of the support on offer to deliver what matters in their area.</p> <p>Workshop topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting older people in your community</li> <li>• Too much to do and not enough people? Simple ways to mobilise your community</li> <li>• Data protection and Parish Councils</li> <li>• Towards zero - developing a new road safety strategy</li> <li>• Funding for your community projects</li> <li>• Understanding your carbon footprint and developing a climate change strategy</li> <li>• How to gain valuable insights into your local area</li> <li>• Getting your Neighbourhood Plan started: engaging your community and recruiting volunteers.</li> </ul>
2.5	<p><b>Next Steps</b></p> <p>Cambridgeshire ACRE will continue to support the development of local councils across Cambridgeshire as part of the continuing Support Cambridgeshire contract. This will include delivery of peer learning and networking events in line with those issues local councils have the biggest concerns over.</p> <p>As the survey to Parish Councillors and Clerks is biennial, some thought will be given to collecting further data and intelligence from local councils to shape future support services, including their possible engagement through more detailed focus group activity. This will build on the annual conference theme of Think Communities and the commitment made to working more collaboratively with our parish and town council partners.</p>
2.6	<p>As part of the development of a Cambridgeshire and Peterborough voluntary and community sector infrastructure support arrangement for post March 2021, as described</p>

	in the paper presented to Communities and Partnership Committee on 10 October 2019, careful consideration will be given to the continued development of the local council sector and the way in which we do this, including broadening the scope of the support provided through a Think Communities shared approach.
<b>3.</b>	<b>ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>A good quality of life for everyone</b>
	A number of Local Councils already deliver work that supports people to have a good quality of life, and to lead healthy and independent lives. This work will support those Local Councils who are keen to do the same including sharing learning and good practice, with workshops on relevant and related topics including supporting older people in communities.
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Thriving places for people to live</b>
	A number of Local Councils already have ways in which they help their communities to thrive including through links with local businesses and support schemes that help people develop their skills. This work will support those Local Councils who are keen to do the same. We are especially keen to establish strong links between the town and parish council network and the Cambridgeshire Skills service.
<b>3.3</b>	<b>The best start for Cambridgeshire's Children</b>
	A number of Local Councils already support or deliver local projects which support the children in their community to have the best start in life. The work delivered through this development plan, including the workshops focusing on how to fund community projects, understanding environmental concerns and how to address those, and engaging with communities and increasing volunteers, will all support those Local Councils keen to do the same or more.
<b>4.</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Resource Implications</b>
	County Council resources for this work are already identified in the Council's budget.
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications</b>
	Support Cambridgeshire's grant agreement was subject to a full tendering process in 2016 in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications</b>
	There is a continuing legal duty on local authorities to ensure that vulnerable people are not exposed to additional or unreasonable levels of risk as a result of the implementation of these strategic objectives

<b>4.4</b>	<b>Equality and Diversity Implications</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence indicates that some services delivered within local communities can be more successful than statutory services at reaching people who may need support. Building capacity within local communities to help people help each other should therefore support more equal and diverse accessible provision locally</li> <li>• Through Think Communities, and especially the Cambs 2020 Community Hubs workstream of Think Communities, many of our services will become increasingly more localised, so that we can meet local and individual need within each specific community context</li> <li>• This work will help to address issues of rural isolation</li> </ul>
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Engagement and Communications Implications</b>
	Successful delivery of all aspects of the development plan will only be possible with significant engagement with our partners and Local Councils.
<b>4.6</b>	<b>Localism and Local Member Involvement</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The work set out in the development plan will help empower Local Councils to harness the energy of local communities</li> <li>• The role of Members is crucial to help build relationships with Local Councils</li> <li>• The results of the Parish Council Survey of Councillors and Clerks shapes the content of the Local Council Annual Conference, with support from the Local Council Strategic Partnership, chaired by the Chairman of the Communities and Partnership Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>4.7</b>	<b>Public Health Implications</b>
	A number of Local Councils already deliver work that supports the adoption of a healthy lifestyle and builds engagement in health improving initiatives. This work will support those Local Councils who are keen to do the same.

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Officer Clearance</b>
<b>Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Financial Officer:</b> Martin Wade
<b>Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Officer:</b> Gus De Silva
<b>Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by LGSS Law?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Legal Officer:</b> Fiona McMillan
<b>Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Officer:</b> Adrian Chapman

<b>Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Officer:</b> Matthew Hall
<b>Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact?</b>	Yes <b>Name of Officer:</b> Adrian Chapman
<b>Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health</b>	Yes <b>Name of Officer:</b> Iain Green

<b>Source Documents</b>	<b>Location</b>
Local Council Development Plan 2017-2022	<a href="https://cambsparishes.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/01_local_council_development_plan.pdf">https://cambsparishes.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/01_local_council_development_plan.pdf</a>
Survey of Town and Parish Councillors and Clerks, 2019.	<a href="https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/">https://cambsparishes.wordpress.com/resources/</a>