

Local Council Development Plan Annual Report

To: Communities and Partnership Committee

Meeting Date: 3 December 2020

From: Service Director: Communities and Partnerships, Adrian Chapman

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Outcome: For the Committee to be provided with a summary of the progress made against the five-year Local Council Development Plan during 2019-20, and consider the next phase of delivery.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider progress made in Year 3 against the five-year Local Council Development Plan; and
- b) Consider and comment on the next phase of delivery of the Development Plan.

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1. Background

- 1.1 In November 2017, a five-year Local Council Development Plan was launched at the Countywide Local Council Conference.
- 1.2 Developed alongside Local Councils, District Councils, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CaPALC), and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Society for Local Council Clerks (SLCC), the Plan is co-ordinated by Cambridgeshire ACRE (Cambridgeshire's Rural Community Council) as part of their role as a partner in Support Cambridgeshire (the collective name for the three organisations who come together to provide Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support across Cambridgeshire).
- 1.3 The Local Council Development Plan 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 extending opportunities for networking, shared learning and partnership
 - provide support for Town and Parish Councils so they can improve standards, make the most of current and future opportunities and to increase their capacity, so they can plan their futures and unlock the potential of their communities
- 1.4 On 21 November 2019, the Communities and Partnership Committee considered and recorded appreciation of the progress made during the second year of the Development Plan along with acknowledgement of the growing success of the annual Local Council Conference.

2. Main Issues

2.1 **Progress made:**

- 2.1.1 Much of the delivery of the development plan in 2019/20 has been impacted by the pandemic, although progress can be summarised as follows:
 - Local Councils Strategic Partnership meetings have been held from April involving Cambridgeshire County Council, Peterborough City Council, CaPALC and Cambridgeshire ACRE. Discussions have included the COVID-19 impact, planning for the local councils conference, and future working arrangements and support for the local councils sector.
 - With planned face-to-face peer-networking events cancelled, online meetings have been held during the pandemic to understand work being undertaken by local councils to support community efforts and mutual aid groups.
 - A survey of local councils to assess the impact of COVID-19 was developed, promoted and reported, with a 51% response rate. Findings have been discussed with strategic partners and headlines from the results report have been shared with all those who took part.

- An investigation has been completed into how local councils align to Primary Care Networks.
- Plans were developed to run the annual Local Councils Conference using online technologies. Detailed planning activity was undertaken including aligning speakers, recording presentations, and promoting stallholder opportunities. Online training was provided for online booth holders and in use of collaboration room technology to ensure workshop leads understand how to maximise the benefit from sessions.
- Promotion and advertising of the Local Councils Conference to drive up attendance to the highest ever levels (with 371 registered attendees and 117 different local councils represented).
- Key messages relating to COVID-19 pandemic have been posted on the blog and social media. Articles have also been included in daily/weekly countywide e-newsletters issued by Cambridgeshire County Council.

2.1.2 At just over the mid-point of the Local Council Development Plan's life there are a number of successful key elements that are now in place to move forward to the next stage of the Local Council work in Cambridgeshire including:

- Improved understanding of the Local Council sector in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough through baseline surveying and then regular follow-up surveying and consultations, giving a much better ongoing overview of the Sector's development and needs.
- Improved jointly held data and intelligence available to the partnership to plan services and training needs going forward.
- Improved digital communications across all organisations, opening better messaging and communications with all Local Councils.
- Improved dialogue with all Local Councils with most of the 238 having engaged at some point over the last 4 years.

2.1.3 Delivery of some areas of the action plan have proved difficult due to limited financial resources available to achieve the plan's ambitions and more recently due to the impact of COVID. The process to how the plan will be refreshed will be agreed by the Strategic Partnership at an early stage so that all Partners can be engaged in producing a realistic and jointly owned plan with clear outputs to take the work forward.

2.2 COVID-19

2.2.1 From March 2020 and the start of the pandemic lockdown, Local Councils were no longer able to meet and manage their business in the same way they had previously. CaPALC worked with the National Association of Local Councils to bring about change in the regulations, which has allowed Local Councils to continue with their council business remotely. Advice on this and other pressing concerns were addressed through regular emailed updates to all Local Councils.

2.2.2 The wonderful local community response during the pandemic has been spoken about many times, but even so it is appropriate within this document to recognise the value so many of the Local Councils brought to leading and supporting their communities during this time. Many Local Councils were able to respond quickly by utilising the community assets

already in place, including Parish Council-funded volunteer coordinators working on Time Banks and Good Neighbour Schemes. Others were able to provide support to emerging good citizens keen to help, to enable them to coordinate volunteers quickly and safely within their communities.

2.3 2020 Countywide Local Council Conference

- 2.3.1 A strategic partnership provided the overall leadership for the design of the annual conference, and as part of that group Cambridgeshire ACRE were instrumental in delivering a very successful and definitely different conference, held as an online event on Friday 23 October 2020. Officers would like to acknowledge the talents and efforts of Cambridgeshire ACRE in delivering this event and thank the officers concerned for their excellent support provided.
- 2.3.2 The packed programme followed the successful format of previous years with an opening introduction by Gillian Beasley and a keynote interview by Adrian Chapman. The remainder of the morning session was given over to three pre-recorded inspirational video case studies from different-sized communities (Cottenham, Houghton and Wyton, and Wisbech), showing the approach taken by the Local Council to engaging their community in their COVID-19 response, and a Q&A session with a panel of experts (including Dr Liz Robin) to allow local councils to debate their role in supporting vulnerable residents post the pandemic. The afternoon allowed attendees to choose from six available learning workshops. In addition, there were many opportunities for online networking by way of an informal 'networking lounge' and a marketplace of 20 online booths for County Council teams and external organisations to display their offers to local councils.
- 2.3.3 A detailed evaluation report has been compiled and is available upon request but, in summary, we can say:
- Local councils were not 'put off' by the concept of an online conference, with a higher number registering to attend than in previous years.
 - The pre-recorded morning sessions (keynote address and case studies) were successful in engaging the audience, with a good deal on live text chat taking place and attendees linking up with each other through that means.
 - All six afternoon workshops were highly rated by participants; across the Conference, the workshops received an average score of 8 out of 10.
 - The marketplace of online booths provided a good opportunity for participating organisations to display their services to the local councils attending. The booths allowed organisations to talk to attendees either via text chat or via video chat, which took a little getting used to but attendees were also able to download files, watch videos and follow links to the organisation website and social media. Booths received an average of 34 visitors each.
 - The informal networking lounge provided a focus for attendees outside the programmed sessions and there was evidence of lots of relaxed chat taking place and swapping of information and ideas.
 - A formal request for feedback was sent around to attendees following the event and responses suggest the Conference was very well received with attendees awarding it an average score of 8.5 out of 10. Three quarters of respondents said they had picked up some actionable information that they would take back to their local council to implement and 93% of respondents would encourage others to attend next year's event (whether it is held online or in person).

- A range of positive comments were received from attendees including:
 - “Having the conference online allows more participation. I work for a large town council and normally only one or two officers would attend. The online format has allowed more officers to attend.”
 - “Well done! You highlighted the importance of everybody in making our communities collaborative.”
 - “Well done to all involved with the organisation of this event. This was new for all of us and I'm sure everyone gained from the experience.”
 - “Well done. It worked well; it was a good system. The mix of video and then going into Q&A was very effective - the videos excellent.”
 - “Well done in enabling the conference to take place. It appeared to be well attended and there was plenty of engagement, attendees asking questions and commenting.”
 - “I spoke to a few councillors who said they wouldn't have attended in person due to travel commitments and preferred being online. Excellent feedback for case study films.”
 - “Overall a very well put together event with loads of excellent material that has the added bonus as being captured on video so others can see it.”
 - “So much work went into a great event. Though it was online, it felt like a conference, so for that well done.”
 - “It was a very professionally-run event. Ultimately, in my opinion you cannot beat face to face contact but this event ran it pretty close.”

2.4 Next steps

- 2.4.1 The Local Council Development Plan falls within the remit of the Support Cambridgeshire Infrastructure Support contract, which is due to end on 30 September 2021. The stated outcomes for the final 13 months of that agreement (and Year 4 of the five-year Development Plan), relevant to the priority of Town and Parish Council support, is:
- The successful delivery of a Cambridgeshire Local Council Conference in October 2021
 - The Local Council Development Plan is adapted and updated in 2021 to represent the change in the needs of the communities and services the Parish Councils are now offering.
- 2.4.2 Apart from changing communities, there is also a need to ensure that the Local Council Development Plan aligns to the emerging Cambridgeshire Local programme, such as supporting Local Councils to work in the 22 service delivery areas and to engage in the wider programme of work in terms of their provision of leadership, support for services/ assets and targeting of services to the most vulnerable people.

3. Alignment with corporate priorities

- 3.1 A good quality of life for everyone
- This Local Council Development Plan will result in improvement to the lives of local communities through vibrant, dynamic and effective town and parish councils.
- 3.2 Thriving places for people to live

- A number of Local Councils already have ways in which they help their communities to thrive including through local council-led coordination of volunteer and community activities as well as links to other support schemes that increase skills. This work will support those Local Councils who are keen to do the same.

3.3 The best start for Cambridgeshire's children

- A number of Local Councils already support or deliver local projects that support the children in their community to have the best start. 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.

3.4 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2050

- The work delivered through this development plan, including the annual Local Council Conference, helps Local Councils to understand environmental concerns and how to address those.

4. Significant Implications

4.1 Resource Implications

County Council resources for this work are already identified in the Council's budget for 2020/21.

4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

Support Cambridgeshire's grant agreement was subject to a full tendering process in line with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There is a continuing legal duty on local authorities to ensure that vulnerable people are not exposed to additional or unreasonable levels of risk because of the implementation of these strategic objectives.

4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 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.
- Some of our services will become increasingly more localised, so that we can meet local and individual need within each specific community context.
- This work will help to address issues of rural isolation.

4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

Successful delivery of all aspects of the development plan will only be possible with significant engagement with our partners and Local Councils.

4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

- The work set out in the development plan will help empower Local Councils to harness the energy of local communities.

- The role of Members is crucial to help build relationships with Local Councils.
- The results of surveys and feedback from Councillors and Clerks shapes the content of the Local Council Annual Conference, with support from the Local Council Strategic Partnership, Chaired by the Chair of the Communities and Partnership Committee.

4.7 Public Health Implications

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.

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the LGSS Head of Procurement? Yes

Name of Officer: Gus DeSilva

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or LGSS Law? 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? Yes

Name of Officer: Christine Birchall

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

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents

Local Council Development Plan 2017-2022

5.2 Location

https://cambsparishes.files.wordpress.com/2017/11/01_local_council_development_plan.pdf