

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Thursday 18th June 2020

Time: 3:30pm – 4:55pm

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillors: S Criswell (Chairman), L Nieto (Vice-Chairwoman), H Batchelor, A Costello, K Cuffley, J French, E Meschini, M Smith and A Taylor.

272. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Every (substituted by Councillor Cuffley) and Councillor Ashwood.

Councillor Criswell declared an interest in agenda item 5 (Communities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations (June 2020)) as the local Member for Somersham and Earith (recommendation (iv): Woodhurst Village Hall).

273. a) MINUTES – 20TH MAY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th May 2020 were approved as a correct record and it was agreed that they would be signed by the Chairman when the Council returned to its offices.

b) COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES ACTION LOG

The Service Director of Communities and Partnerships noted that the outstanding items on the Action Log would be resolved when the Council returned to normal business.

The Committee agreed to note the Minutes Action Log.

274. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

275. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The Chairman reminded the Committee that officers had been asked to bring a report on the Covid-19 response to date for those services for which the Committee was responsible. Due to the rapidly changing situation and the need to provide the committee and the public with the most up to date information possible, the Chairman reported that he had accepted this as a late report.

The Service Director of Communities and Partnerships praised the Council's Registration Service for being one of the first five in the country to reopen following its forced closure due to Covid-19 and informed Members that staff levels were being increased in order to resolve the backlog of 1600 birth registrations. He also confirmed that the registration of marriage and civil partnership notices had now resumed, although no further update could be provide on when actual ceremonies, including citizenship ceremonies, would be able to recommence.

Noting that the government had announced changes to the national shielding programme, the Service Director emphasised that the Council would continue to provide support to those who had been shielding, until such time as they could revert to their own arrangements. Members were also informed that it was currently the first week of 'Scams Awareness Fortnight 2020' and the Service Director welcomed their assistance in the dissemination of scam prevention material.

Members' attention was drawn to sections 2.7.15 and 2.7.16 of the report, which outlined how the national Test and Trace programme would work across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The Service Director observed that the People and Communities directorate, supported by the Communities and Partnership Committee, held a significant role in ensuring it was robust and provided the necessary support to communities, identifying three main roles:

- Ensuring those who were contact traced received the necessary levels of support;
 - Ensuring communities were aware of local outbreaks when they occurred, and that the necessary support was provided to prevent further escalation; and
 - Ensuring people abided by the government's guidance, including social distancing.
- He proposed that the Director of Customer and Digital Services, who was leading on the recovery process, attend the next Committee meeting to provide greater detail on the governance arrangements, management and support that would be available.

The Tackling Poverty working group would be reconvened to work on inequalities and disadvantages faced by certain sectors of society, especially the black, Asian and ethnic minority communities, which had been identified as disproportionately affected by Covid-19.

It was noted that the annual Cambridgeshire Local Councils Conference would be held as a virtual event on 23rd October 2020.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Requested further information on how Covid-19 was affecting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The Service Director informed Members that the district and city councils had established arrangements to provide assistance to those living on permanent sites across the County, as well as those passing through. The Vulnerable Persons Working Group, which involved partner organisations such as other local authorities, the police service and public health, had identified around twelve groups of community members that they were particularly keen to ensure contact was made with to support the response to the pandemic, one of which was the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community. While noting that services such as water provision and waste facilities were being provided on temporary sites, he emphasised that the Council was also ensuring that they were aware of test and trace procedures.

- Acknowledged that the reduced income from Cambridgeshire Libraries was understandable, given that people were not able to use the services in the same way, but queried whether such impacts were reflected nationally and whether government funding was available or being sought to address this particular financial pressure. The Service Director informed Members that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government was being formally updated on the Council's additional costs and financial pressures on a weekly basis, as was the case with all councils. It was hoped that further funding to the two previous instalments would be forthcoming, although he noted that contingencies were also being prepared in case no additional payments were received. He clarified that such funding was not being sought or provided on a specific service-based level.
- Observed that the city of Cambridge did not have parish councillors, while area committees had been suspended due to difficulties in hosting meetings during the lockdown period, arguing that this put the city at a disadvantage compared to other parts of the County that had an extra level of local government providing support. The Service Director highlighted the strong working relationship with Cambridge City Council on the support operation that was based on a ward boundary local response model. This was identified as one of the bonds that had strengthened as a result of the pandemic and which it was hoped would be maintained as part of the Think Communities approach.
- Sought clarification on how the Council was looking to protect people from scams linked to the Track and Trace programme. The Service Director acknowledged the concerns and assured Members that the Council was raising awareness and providing advice to residents. He undertook to ensure that more overt information was provided as part of the Council's communications. **Action required**
- Welcomed the initial success of Open New Doors and asked whether the number of enrolments was above or below expectations. The Service Director also praised the scheme, noting that it accommodated people who did not have access to a computer at home. The project was now expanding beyond the shielding population as a result of its success and popularity.
- Expressed concern over the future prospects for furloughed staff and residents who had been made redundant, and sought clarification on what was being done to support these people, such as through the provision of adult learning opportunities. One Member suggested that staff furloughed from one local authority could be encouraged to apply to work with another. The Service Director noted that such issues would be considered by the Tackling Poverty working group, as well as a sub-group of the Vulnerable Persons Recovery Group that focussed specifically on the domestic economic consequences of Covid-19, such as the increase in people approaching services and applying for benefits. One Member observed that payment holidays were not practical for people on low incomes that could not afford to meet costs, as they would not be able to meet them in the future either.
- Observed that work on inequalities and disadvantages faced by black, Asian and ethnic minority communities should involve external organisations and the communities themselves. The Service Director agreed with the observation and informed Members that the Community Reference Group was already considering many of the complex issues that formed part of the overall discussion, although he

recognised that the Council needed to proactively reach out to smaller sectors of the community with which it did not habitually engage.

- Expressed concern about a predicted peak in reporting of domestic abuse and sexual violence, and sought clarification on what was being done to prepare for the increase and what level of support was currently available to victims. One Member argued that victims could be too frightened to come forward given the limited options to report in a safe and confidential environment. The Assistant Director of Community Safety and Youth Services expressed caution over the fact that there had not been a spike in reports of domestic abuse, suggesting that victims may have been unable to report incidents or were unaware that it was still possible to do so. He highlighted efforts to increase awareness of safe reporting locations, such as chemists and hairdressers, while emphasising that front line services providing support to victims had been kept at full capacity whenever possible throughout the lockdown, as had also been the case with partner organisations such as the police. He informed Members that in anticipation of an increase to reporting, the risk assessment process had been bolstered, in order to enhance the ability to assess cases and assign front line staff appropriately, and also noted that government funding had been extended for an extra year, providing welcome resources and stability to the service. In response to a Member's query as to why other areas had experienced a spike in reported cases, the Assistant Director undertook to investigate and provide a response that included a comparison of regional and national data, as well as a breakdown of urban and rural statistics. **Action required**
- Suggested that greater consideration should be given to a potential increase in hate crimes, given the issues related to race that had arisen during the pandemic, and clarification was sought on the level of preparations for an increase once the lockdown was eased. The Assistant Director acknowledged the concerns and suggested that lower reporting numbers were likely to be a result of the lockdown, as opposed to any change in overall behaviour and he undertook to request an update on behalf of the Committee from the County hate crime group. **Action required**
- Welcomed the digital offer that had been established by the Libraries service, but expressed concern that those who could not afford broadband were unable to share its benefits. The Service Director acknowledged the concern, noting that some people in urban areas were finding themselves as isolated as those in rural areas, and that residents without internet access were also unable to access a wide range of benefits, such as improved utility tariffs. He informed Members that the issue was being looked at throughout the Cambs 2020 work, as well as the general libraries and Think Communities work, so that locally based services could ensure a local presence for communities and citizens to access services and digital connectivity. Recommendations from task and finish groups looking at the issue, along with other concerns, would be presented to the Committee at a later date.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus.

276. COMMUNITIES CAPITAL FUND – ENDORSEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS (JUNE 2020)

The Committee received a report which detailed the applications to the Communities Capital Fund that had been recommended for funding by the Member Panel. It was noted that while four of the applications were for projects requesting less than £50k, the fifth was of a larger scale and had been considered by a separate Member Panel. The Head of Communities and Partnerships Integration confirmed that approval of the Cambourne Town Council application would be subject to the successful completion of due diligence checks that were still being carried out.

While discussing the recommended applications, Members:

- Confirmed that all Committee Members, including substitutes, formed a pool from which cross-party Member Panels could be selected, based on political proportionality, to consider applications and whether to recommend them to the Committee. It was emphasised that the process ensured Members would not be involved in scoring projects within their own division.
- Welcomed that funding was being recommended for community-based projects, such as the improvement of village halls and playground equipment.
- Observed that the level of funding available had depleted to the extent that bids were no longer being accepted, although it was also noted that the majority of the grant was still to be allocated. It was suggested that the Committee review the grant, with one Member suggesting that levels of funding were either too generous or that £5m had proven insufficient, given the speed at which it had been depleted. It was noted that the Council had agreed to allocate £5m for the Communities Capital Fund and that it was not possible to increase the size of the grant, while bids were considered in the order in which they had been submitted. The Head of Communities and Partnerships Integration acknowledged that bids currently being prepared for consideration and potential recommendation represented significantly higher requests for funding.
- Queried whether it would be possible to provide assistance in finding capital funding from alternative sources to those projects that had submitted applications but which might not get funding due to the grant running out. Noting that around 60 applications had been received, requesting a total of approximately £9.5m, the Head of Communities and Partnerships Integration informed Members that all bids that had been received would be scored, so that help could be given where possible with regard to finding alternative sources of funding. It was observed that many alternative funding opportunities, such as the National Lottery Community Fund, were currently not accepting bids due to Covid-19.
- Clarified that some of the projects had obtained Section 106 funding and had been able to use it as matched funding, although it was highlighted that smaller towns or villages that were not undergoing development were unable to access such funding.
- Welcomed the streamlined application process, which enabled projects that had been held up for many years to finally progress.

It was resolved to:

Approve the following applications for funding:

- (i) Caresco – £41,500 for repairs and upgrade to Sawtry Mancave;
- (ii) Stilton Parish Council - £37,500 for new playground equipment;

- (iii) Winwick Village Hall – £20,000 for upgrades to the village hall;
- (iv) Woodhurst Village Hall - £12,954 for upgrades to the village hall; and
- (v) Cambourne Town Council - £237,000 (subject to the completion of due diligence checks) for the Cambourne Youth Building.

277. COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS ORAL UPDATES

The Committee noted brief oral updates provided by the following Community Champions:

- Councillor Costello (Huntingdonshire), who noted that she had assisted bids for funding from the Communities Capital Fund as well as through other local authorities' funding opportunities, expressed eagerness for libraries and other public buildings to reopen in order to allow Essentials by Sue to operate again, and welcomed the reopening of Hamerton Wildlife Park. A written update was provided and attached as **Appendix 1** to the minutes.
- Councillor French (Fenland), who noted interest in establishing a Timebank and a Man Cave in Fenland, while also expressing concern over increasing reports of rats in the area.
- Councillor Meschini (Cambridge), who praised the work being carried out by communities around Cambridge providing mutual aid and support and highlighted efforts to expand internet access.

Councillor Every (East Cambridgeshire) also submitted a written update in her absence, which is attached at **Appendix 2**.

278. COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The Service Director of Communities and Partnerships informed Members that experience gained from the effects of Covid-19 had led to a reconsideration of the specifications in the tendering of the new Voluntary and Community Sector contract, in order to align it to the Think Communities approach by making it more of an outcome focussed way of working with communities and residents. As a result, the report would be deferred from July to September 2020, although an extension to the current contract would be requested before this. Members were also informed that the Cambridgeshire Libraries report that was due to be presented in July would be deferred until October 2020.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the Committee's agenda plan.

Chairman
2nd July 2020

Community Champion of Community Activity update.

Community Champion:	Adela Costello
Place:	Huntingdonshire
Date:	18 June 2020

UPDATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The situation since the last meeting has not really changed, however, anticipating the opening of the libraries at the beginning of July will mean that we can re-start the project 'Essentials by Sue' as most of items are donated and collected from libraries throughout the area.
NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The continuing priority is to support local communities and organisations who are helping vulnerable people shielding during this crisis. I am still involved with the Ramsey Covid-19 Hub which supplies food parcels and contact for those isolated and continue to give support and advice. I persevere in my endeavour to help local village halls and groups who have lost vital income, to access the Business Grants provided by Huntingdonshire District Council. Ramsey Community Hall, Ramsey Rural Museum and the Gauntlet Project are just a few of the groups I have encouraged and have received the grant. I am still supporting Hamerton Wildlife Park which has now fortunately re-opened, however, there was a lot of confusion around during the previous weeks as to when it would happen, however, initial projections on visitors looks good. They opened on Monday to members only so that they could judge if their precautions were working and as from Thursday will be open to the general public but only through on-line booking. The initial two projects I have sponsored for the Community Capital Grant, Ramsey Community Hub and the Great Fen Project have been approved to continue to level 2 which requires further detail and a business plan. I continue to assist them in this. Also involved with a project from Upwood Cricket Club for a renewal of their premises plus supported a group from St. Neots in their expression of interest for an outdoor swimming area. I have not heard anything from two groups who contacted me earlier on when the funding stream became available and although I have continued to email them, there has been no response. I am working with VoiceAbility, an organisation for adults with learning disabilities who recently undertook a transport survey for those with High Special Needs which showed the need for much improvement in this area due to the lack of availability of suitable vehicles and even access to trains. This is again in abeyance due to Covid-19 although I have been in contact with the local member of Melpreth where there is an issue with wheelchair access at the train station and hopefully we will be able to work together on this. Keeping in contact with officers from CCC and HDC who have worked on my projects. Forwarding as much information as possible to local social media websites, HDC councillors and officers plus the parishes including the need for foster carers, contacts for Domestic Abuse sufferers in fact all the latest news regarding what is happening in our area.
COMMUNITY GOOD PRACTICE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working between Officers and Members of HDC and CCC plus local parishes and organisations during this difficult time. Ensuring that members of the public have access to all necessary and vital information.

Community Champion of Community Activity update

Area Champion:	Lis Every
Place:	East Cambridgeshire
Date:	18 June 2020

NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES (during Coronavirus period)

No real change from the last report. Social distancing for health reasons still inevitably curtails physical support during this time. However, I am working from my office at home and work at the moment covering:

Social media - circulating all information received from County and ECDC to Parishes and local organisations;

Emphasis on planning for post Covid-19 across the District

Appointed as part of ECDC’s Post Covid-19 cross party working group on forward planning.

Final project support for the Community Capital Scheme sponsoring and submitting local project submissions – now closed. Substitute for the Awarding Panel.

Part of Wendy Lansdowne’s local Parish forum;

Elected Chair of the Community Safety Partnership at ECDC; Forward Planning for post-Covid-19

Working with Cambs Youth Panel on their distribution of computer devices to young people without them but required for home schooling;

Networking and signposting activities linking local neighbourhood volunteering groups, the Ely community covid-19 mutual aid group, the City of Ely Council and the ECDC Community hub;

Working with all the business organisations, Federation of Small Businesses, Chamber of Commerce and Ely Cathedral Business Group helping with access to funds;

Undertaking research and will be writing bids for a number of charities who are seeking funding to support sustainability, including the Volunteers Centre, Ely, Pos+ability, and others.

UPDATE

- All work on-going but on hold.**
- Monitoring local provision for Adult Skills in East Cambs. Now a member of the Combined Authority on their Skills Committee. Working with the organisations dealing with NEETs in East Cambs to upskill young people who need Maths and English qualifications. Concerns about quality of provision and duplication.
 - Introduction of Youth Advisory Board which will work alongside the East Cambs Youth Strategy scheduled for April
 - Training for Youth Ambassadors for the Eyes and Ears project.
 - Better communications through a bi-monthly newsletter – supporting awareness of the Think communities approach. Edition 2 in 2 months. Working on next edition before Purdah!
 - Working with Soham on funding for projects.
 - Strategic plan for Littleport on social prescribing now in place
 - Re-grouping and planning for a different approach to support the group of young people in Ely and area on building a skate park.

- Launch of the collaboration between CCC and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Chamber of Commerce visiting networking opportunities to recruit business mentors for the pilot for a Local offer plan for our care leavers in Cambridge City.
- Part of the multi-agency Mental Health Task Group for children in care researching the level of support provided by local universities.
- Working on widening Eyes and Ears project to include local schools
- Identifying business mentors for post-16 students and post-18 students leaving care.
- Discussions with VCAEC to extend car share scheme and attract volunteers outside Ely. Completely revamping provision and marketing strategy. Funding being sought.
- Continuing to work with City College, Peterborough to grow numbers on their Health and Social Care courses in East Cambridgeshire

COMMUNITY GOOD PRACTICE

- Initial research has been undertaken to identify the organisations in existence, what they currently offer; how these services could overlap and determining a network strategy;
- Working with parish and district councillors to create capacity and information base supporting their work in their Parishes/Wards as required;
- Building network of community providers and champions across the District.
- Improve communication with County, District and Parish Councillors, particularly embracing social media.