

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Wednesday 22nd April 2020

Time: 10:00am – 11:30am

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillors: S Criswell (Chairman), M Goldsack (Vice-Chairman), B Ashwood, H Batchelor, A Costello, L Every, J French, E Meschini, L Nieto and A Taylor.

The Chairman welcomed the public to the first virtual public meeting of the Communities and Partnership Committee since emergency legislation had been passed by Parliament due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, which for the first time allowed such meetings for the conduct of formal Local Government business.

He also thanked Councillor Simone Taylor for her contribution to the Committee's work and welcomed Councillor Batchelor as a new Member.

256. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received from Councillor Richards (substituted by Councillor Meschini).

There were no declarations of interest.

257. MINUTES – 12TH MARCH 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 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.

258. COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE MINUTES ACTION LOG

The Service Director of Communities and Partnerships acknowledged that there were a number of outstanding actions in the Committee's Minutes Action Log, noting that a significant redeployment of officers from across the People and Communities directorate as a result of COVID-19 had required efforts to be temporarily focused on other areas.

The Committee agreed to note the Minutes Action Log.

259. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

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

The Chairman explained that since the agenda had been published, Officers had been asked to bring a report to each Policy and Service Committee on the Covid-19 response to date for those services for which it was responsible. A similar report would also be presented at each future Committee meeting until further notice. Given the rapidly changing situation and the need to provide the Committee and public with the most up to date information possible, the Chairman had accepted this late report which was not listed on the original agenda through the discretionary powers granted to chairmen/women under the Local Government Act 1972.

The Chairman paid tribute to the hard work carried out by the Service Director of Communities and Partnerships during the crisis, as well as the efforts of officers across the Council, volunteers in the communities and partnership working with other local authorities in supporting isolated and vulnerable people.

The report detailed the national response, the joint Cambridgeshire system response and the Council's response, with a specific focus on the services within the remit of the Committee and Think Communities. Noting that Care Act easements had relaxed rules around compliance of the Care Act, the Service Director informed Members that the Council had decided not to change how it operated and would continue to fully comply with all previous requirements. He drew attention to the Strategic Coordinating Group's role in organising the over-arching response across the County, as set out in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of the report, as well as the support provided by the Council's Gold Joint Management Team.

The Communities and Partnership service directorate had led the development and delivery of the countywide coordination and response hub which was responsible for overseeing support for the most vulnerable residents. The Service Director informed Members that 13,000 people had registered to date as needing to be shielded from the virus in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough but suggested that there could be as many as 20,000 across the County. He emphasised the importance of maintaining contact with all registered people, observing that although two thirds had indicated they already had a strong support network established, such networks may break down and urgent assistance would then be required. Praising the work of colleagues at the hub, he noted that there were around 120 call handlers making outbound calls, with a further 15 handling incoming calls on a rota basis, while 2200 volunteers had come forward across the County, of whom about 800 had already been deployed or had their details shared with our district and city council partners. It was also noted that the hub held responsibility for redeploying Council staff who were not in critical front-line roles to cover areas where capacity was short either through illness or increased demand.

Identifying the Community Reference Group, detailed in sections 5.11 and 5.12 of the report, as fundamentally operating under the Think Communities approach, the Service Director emphasised a desire to sustain the relationships and practices that had been developed as a result of multi-agency and County-wide co-operation in response to Covid-19, and to ensure that they continued once the crisis had been overcome. He also suggested that rather than consider the process of moving forward after the crisis as one of recovery, the Committee should consider it as one of transition and evolution.

While discussing the contents of the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the Council's staff in its response to the crisis, as well as to the volunteers across the County.
- Voiced concerns raised by volunteers over potential recriminations for providing help which was deemed inappropriate or which would not be provided under normal circumstances, with an example given of buying cigarettes for a resident who was self-isolating. The Service Director acknowledged the concerns and emphasised that the Council wanted to support volunteers and organisations, which included sharing risks. He emphasised that as long as any assistance was carried out on a pragmatic basis, with protecting and saving lives being the first consideration, the Council, and the whole system in general, would not look to make such recriminations.
- Expressed concern that there were vulnerable residents that had not been identified and were therefore not receiving the assistance that they needed. The Service Director informed Members that the Council received data on people who needed to be shielded on a daily basis from the Government, noting that this would begin to be shared with local Members so that they were aware of the situation in their divisions, while being able to suggest more people that should be added to the list based on their local knowledge and involvement. He also detailed how the public sector Vulnerable People Protocol had been invoked, allowing a streamlined process for data sharing across the system which still adhered to traditional rules on data protection. This helped the Council identify people who did not necessarily meet the relatively strict criteria for shielding but who still required assistance, such as someone who had suddenly lost their job and found themselves in difficulty.
- Praised the work being carried out by partner local authorities, who were assisting a larger number of people due to having a wider criteria than the Council's responsibility for providing assistance to shielded people. It was observed that local hubs provided vital support to communities, including shopping, food collection, dog-walking and telephone calls.
- Suggested that Covid-19 bulletins circulated by the Council could be more succinct and include information such as the numbers of cases and deaths across the County in order to make them more accessible and practical for people that they were shared with. The Service Director acknowledged the request and agreed to discuss it with the Head of Communications and Information. He also informed Members that the Council's hub was developing a weekly e-newsletter that would provide practical information and case studies. **Action required**
- Suggested that the Community Reference Group should involve representatives of the County's large farming community, such as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), or the National Farmers' Union (NFU), given the difficulties that they were facing, including the lack of seasonal workers from other countries. The Service Director acknowledged that rural communities were affected differently economically and socially, and informed Members that discussions had been held with Cambridgeshire Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) in order to develop the necessary tailored response from the hub. Nonetheless, he agreed that representation of the NFU or DEFRA in the Community Reference Group would be beneficial. **Action required**

- Sought clarification on whether residents should call the police if they suspected that they had received a scam call. The Strengthening Communities Service Manager acknowledged that obvious cases, such as people asking for money, should be reported to the police as they constituted criminal acts, although she cautioned against overloading the police with reports of less obvious cases, noting that a significant amount of telephone calls were being made to residents from both formal and informal support networks, which was liable to cause confusion and suspicion. She informed Members that the Council had already been proactively communicating with communities about scams and a large support network of over 70 organisations had been established across the County, and she suggested that high levels of denunciations of scams were indicative of increased awareness.
- Observed that there had been confusion regarding the telephone number for the National Shielding Helpline, with claims that people had received scam calls from the same number. The Strengthening Communities Service Manager informed Members that she was aware of the issue and that the Council would be publishing clear information on the matter. **Action required**
- Expressed concern over an increase in fly-tipping due to recycling centres being closed and questioned when they would reopen, noting that there was a high level of rubbish building up in people's gardens and on the street. The Service Director observed that recycling centres were part of the Place and Economy directorate and undertook to seek a written response from the Executive Director for Place and Economy. It was suggested that recycling centres could not open until the guidance from the Government was amended to include visiting the sites as a designated reason for leaving home. The reopening of recycling centres would also have to be co-ordinated with surrounding local authorities to ensure that large amounts of waste did not descend on any particular area. **Action required**
- Considered how coordination and communication between the Council and volunteers across the County could be improved. The Service Director paid tribute to the overwhelming level of support provided by volunteers and assured Members that the Council was working to avoid duplication of efforts or affect ongoing projects adversely. He noted that new groups and organisations were constantly forming and it was challenging to keep track of these as they emerged, although the hub was populating a database of County-wide voluntary organisations that had been set up specifically in response to Covid-19, with a focus on obtaining contact details. A coordinator from the Council had been assigned to each district and city area, to act as a link between the local action and the Council, ensuring they received the necessary support as soon as possible. One Member observed that most Councillors were in touch with coordinators in the towns and villages across their divisions and each of those coordinators held the details of all the volunteers and action groups in their area. It was proposed that connecting those individual coordinators to the hub, through the local Member, would provide reassurance and an opportunity for engagement. **Action required**
- Welcomed the letter that had been sent out by the Director of Education informing residents of the continuation of free school meals, although one Member expressed concern that some supermarkets did not accept the vouchers for online purchases, which made it difficult to use them for people who were self-isolating or shielding. The Service Director informed Members that the program had involved a lot of work setting up but was proving successful and was expanding to include a wider range of supermarkets, although he recognised the concern and undertook to request a

briefing note from the Director of Education and to see whether the Council could intervene. **Action required**

- Emphasised that assistance was available and being provided for young people who were currently not in school due to closures. It was acknowledged that the younger generation was also suffering significantly as a result of the crisis.
- Highlighted those leaving care as particularly vulnerable people, as they suddenly found themselves on their own, without a family to support them.

It was resolved unanimously to:

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

261. INNOVATE & CULTIVATE FUND – ENDORSEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS (APRIL 2020)

The Committee received a report on the outcomes of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund (ICF) Recommendation Panel in April 2020. The Strengthening Communities Service Manager praised officers for ensuring that the ICF process continued to function despite the difficulties created by Covid-19, and she informed Members that two Cultivate applications had been recommended for the Committee's approval, while noting that the unsuccessful applications had all scored lowest on the two criteria relating to return on investment.

The first, from Cambridgeshire Early Years Training Alliance (CEYTA), proposed to extend STEP training to nursery schools in St Ives, focusing on helping children manage their emotions and feelings while developing their key skills, such as empathy, communication and problem solving. CEYTA had previously received ICF funding for a project in St Neots which was demonstrating positive results, and given that the initiative was expected to reduce the need for costly Special Educational Needs interventions in primary care settings, the panel recommended full funding for the project.

The second application, from Disability Huntingdonshire, had requested £18,345 towards enabling an increase in case worker hours to support more adults with disabilities. While funding for the full project proposal had not been recommended due to insufficient evidence of savings for the Council, the panel had agreed to recommend £6,000 of funding for an IT upgrade that would improve efficiency.

While discussing the recommended applications, Members:

- Acknowledged the hard work of officers to ensure that the application process had continued despite the circumstances caused by Covid-19.
- Clarified that the fund's annual cycle did not coincide with the standard financial year and the Strengthening Communities Service Manager noted that an annual review had been presented at a recent Committee meeting, which would be circulated to Members who requested it. **Action required**
- Observed the vital role of communities in managing the needs of residents, which had been magnified and exemplified during the Covid-19 crisis.

- Identified the newly established Cambridgeshire Coronavirus Community Fund as an alternative funding stream for projects specifically targeting effects of the crisis.
- Noted that the deadline for the following round of ICF applications was 1st August 2020. Members were informed that attempts were being made to organise a pre-application session prior to that date.
- Queried whether current applicants or those that had already received funding had found themselves affected by the current social-distancing practice or other issues related to Covid-19. The Strengthening Community Services Manager reported that regular communication was maintained with all funded projects and that monitoring updates were provided. Some funded projects were having to adjust their outcomes slightly while some potential applicants were being redirected towards more appropriate funding streams.
- Requested information regarding previously-funded projects that had proved successful in order to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the fund. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

Consider the recommendations of the panel and confirm agreement to fund the following two applications through the Cultivate funding stream:

- Cambridgeshire Early Years Teaching Alliance (CEYTA)
- Disability Huntingdonshire (DISH)

262. **COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS ORAL UPDATES AND FEEDBACK ON COMMUNITY ACTIVITY ACROSS THE COUNTY**

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

- Councillor Costello (Huntingdonshire), who expressed frustration that many community initiatives were in abeyance due to the closure of public buildings. She informed the Committee that she was involved in three applications to the Cambridgeshire County Council Communities Capital Fund and drew attention to the financial difficulties of Hamerton Zoo Park as a result of its forced closure. A written update was provided and attached as **Appendix 1** to the minutes.
- Councillor Every (East Cambridgeshire), who observed that the role of community champions during lockdown had changed to one of networking and signposting, and she welcomed how small businesses, local communities and organisations were increasingly working together. Noting that she was also involved in three applications to the Council's Communities Capital Fund, she drew attention to smaller charities that were unable to obtain the funding that was available to them due to a lack of capacity or time, especially as many of their volunteers were now either shielding or in self-isolation. A written update was provided and is attached as **Appendix 2** to the minutes.

- Councillor French (Fenland), who informed the Committee that there were currently twelve applications to the Communities Capital Fund from Fenland.

263. COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

While noting the Agenda Plan, it was observed that the first batch of applications for the Communities Capital Fund would be considered at the Committee's next meeting on 20th May 2020 and Members were informed that there would be monthly meetings in order to receive updates on the Council's response to Covid-19.

Chairman
20th May 2020

Community Champion Written Update

Community Champion:	Councillor Adela Costello
Place:	Huntingdonshire
Date:	Communities and Partnership Committee Meeting - 22 April 2020

UPDATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within four days of the last Community and Partnership meeting in March, we entered into an unprecedented time when lock down took place. I think we were all totally taken by surprise as to how quickly things changed. Unfortunately it means that many of the projects that I supported are suspended due to the closure of public buildings. They are only in abeyance and will re-commence when it is possible.
NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new priority is to support local communities and organisations who are helping vulnerable people shielding during this crisis. I have been involved in setting up the Ramsey Covid-19 Hub which supplies food parcels and contact for those isolated and have delivered leaflets locally advertising this. • I am supporting local village halls in accessing necessary funding to cover loss of income as they will be a vital source of community resilience when they are able to open again. • An interesting one is that I got involved with Hamerton Wildlife Park which is in desperate need of finance having lost all the income from visitors. As this is not a charity, there is difficulty in applying for funding but I linked them in with Hunts Forum who hopefully can help. We need to keep these places open for the future. Many of our zoos are struggling and France and Germany have committed nearly E19,000,000 and E100,000,000 respectively to support their wildlife centres. • I have put in an application of interest to the Community Capital Fund for a grant for the re-development of Ramsey Cricket Club as a community hub. This is such a worthwhile project that will provide a centre for many local organisations who support young people, adults with mental health difficulties amongst others plus enhance a local sporting venue. I am also supporting the Great Fen Project who are looking for funding for a Visitor Centre which will increase interest and footfall in the area and provide an extra income through sales of products, souvenirs and light meals. I have also received an expression of interest from Sustrans, the national walking and cycling charity who are looking into developing a 'Low Traffic Neighbourhood Project' in Huntingdon which would be led by the local community. Their problem is that as a charity they may not be able to raise match funding so I am approaching Huntingdon Town Council to see if they have any CIL money available and HDC for section 106 funding. • 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, etc.
COMMUNITY GOOD PRACTICE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Joint working between Officers and Members of HDC and CCC plus local parishes and organisations during this difficult time.</i> • <i>Ensuring that members of the public have access to all necessary and vital information.</i>

Community Champion Written Update

Community Champion:	Councillor Lis Every
Place:	East Cambridgeshire
Date:	Communities and Partnership Committee Meeting - 22 April 2020

NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES (during Coronavirus period)

Social distancing for health reasons has inevitably curtailed physical support during this time. However, I am working from my office at home and work at the moment am covering:

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

Part of Wendy Lansdowne’s local Parish forum;

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;

Working on the Community Grant Scheme sponsoring and submitting local project submissions – coming in quite quickly now;

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.