

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 8th October 2020

Time: 10:00am to 12:00pm

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

308. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Cllr French.

Councillor Taylor declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 (Libraries Open Access Project) as a member of Friends of Rock Road Library.

Councillor Smith declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 (Innovate and Cultivate Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations) as the Local Member for Elsworth and Fen Drayton. Councillor Smith advised that she would participate in the discussion but abstain from voting for this item.

Councillor Every declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 (Innovate and Cultivate Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations) as the Local Member for Ely. Councillor Every advised that she would participate in the discussion but abstain from voting for this item.

309. a) Minutes of the Meeting Held on 3rd September 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

b) Communities and Partnership Committee Action Log

The Service Director for Communities and Partnerships observed that the action of Minute 249 (Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service Review and White Ribbon Campaign) had been paused due to the redeployment of staff and changes to working arrangements as a result of Covid-19, although he informed Members that he would seek to progress the action and provide an update at the Committee workshop in November, as well as a further update in the Service Director report at the December Committee meeting.

In reference to the second action of Minute 292 (Cambridgeshire County Council's Response to Covid-19), the Service Director noted that a briefing note had been circulated to Members outlining the support available to residents from the Council.

Responding to the queries mentioned in the first action of Minute 302 (Cambridgeshire County Council's Response to Covid-19), the Assistant Director of

Regulatory Services informed Members that it had become mandatory for visitors to register when entering a business. While the Council had been involved to a certain extent through processes such as registration and licensing, substantial work had also been carried out by business-supporting bodies, such as the Federation of Small Businesses, the Chamber of Commerce and the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA). He assured Members that all such organisations were providing support wherever they could.

The Service Director noted that Members had been provided with guidance on the role of Councillors during the pandemic, as called for in the second action of Minute 302, while the Director of Public Health was preparing a briefing note regarding the issues raised in the fourth action.

The following statement from the Director of Education was read out to the Committee in response to the third action of Minute 302:

We have provided significant support to staff in schools across the process of closure and since the reopening in September. This has included support via our employee assistance scheme for their welfare (for staff in maintained schools), the provision of PPE (e.g. grab bags to be available in the limited cases where PPE is required, larger quantities in special schools), robust risk assessments (both at school level and for those individuals that need it e.g. for pregnant staff, or staff from a BAME background), and prioritised testing for themselves and their families. We have also provided significant amounts of support materials for dealing with mental health issues including bereavement.

The Committee noted the Action Log and paid tribute to the extensive support that the Director of Education had provided to schools, as well as Members.

310. Petitions and Public Questions

There were no petitions or public questions.

311. Report of the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships

The Committee received a report from the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, which provided an overview of strategic activity relevant to the Committee, relating to both the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and 'business as usual' activity, and which sought to assure Members that the agreed direction of travel for the Committee's business was progressing at pace. The development of the Think Communities programme had been boosted by the approval of £1.686m funding from the Transformation Fund, which would help to ensure that progress that had been achieved in response to the pandemic would continue to be maintained. Consideration was being given to how the impact of the funding could be demonstrated.

Members were informed that programmes focussed on the perpetrators of domestic abuse and sexual violence were being reviewed in order to maximise their effectiveness in terms of prevention and rehabilitation. A cross-agency perpetrator panel analysed cases on a monthly basis in order to understand the causes and consequences of incidents, so that support, response and enforcement can be provided through a more informed approach.

While discussing the report, Members asked to participate in the development of the framework for the Think Communities monitoring system. The Service Director acknowledged the request and informed Members they would have the opportunity to do so at the Committee's workshop in November. Emphasising that there was not a standard procedure for measuring impact that could be applied to the programme, he gave an example of the innovative way of tracking the impact of adult social care investment through the Adults Positive Challenge, which had been developed to continuously track the difference that investment had made on individuals and compared it to the likely effects of a non-intervention approach. He undertook to provide Members with information on other such local and national schemes in advance of the workshop. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note and comment on the progress made to date in relation to the various workstreams described in this report; and
- b) Comment on the information that would be helpful in enabling the Committee to track the impact of the Think Communities approach.

312. Libraries Open Access Project

The Committee received a report on the Libraries Open Access Project, which provided an update on recent progress and sought agreement to advance various aspects of the programme, including the testing of the model in five pilot sites, with a priority and commitment to extend it to other suitable libraries across the network if successful. Technology alone would not be sufficient in some of the libraries and in these cases there would be a revenue implication due to the requirement for staff presence, while a cost efficiency for the monitoring service had been identified through the proposed use of First Reaction, who currently provided the Council with corporate security. Procurement for the technological aspects of the project had commenced the previous week in order to allow for its purchase in early 2021. Members were informed that similar programmes implemented by other local authorities had all proven successful and were continually expanding, with no significant challenges to health, safety or security having arisen.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Established that the pilot sites had been carefully selected to include a broad coverage of the different ages, conditions, locations, sizes, lease terms and shared space features of library buildings across the network. This would allow

for the greatest amount of learning to be gained from the pilot sites when considering extending the programme to other libraries.

- Observed that high street community hubs were central to the place-based approach of CPCA-funded market town strategies across the County and that such hubs should be the local library, if appropriately located. Given the additional benefits that the Open Access Project would present to projects such as the Adult Learning and Skills centre in Ely library, officers were encouraged to coordinate with such schemes. The Head of Libraries and Community Services acknowledged the suggestion and undertook to establish how the project could connect to such programmes and strategies. **Action required**
- Noted that section 2.4 of the report stated that there were four libraries where some details over partnership, leaseholds and ownership of the land raised queries that needed further clarification before the project could be implemented, although only three libraries were listed. The Library Support Manager informed Members that issues related to the expansion of Cambourne Library and Health Centre had been resolved and that it had been removed as a previous fourth library on the list.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to the five pilot sites of Sawston, St Ives, March, Rock Road and Soham, going ahead to test drive the model;
- b) Agree to reactive CCTV monitoring to be carried out by First Reaction; and
- c) Agree the priority and commitment to rollout across suitable other libraries.

313. Cambridgeshire Registration Service Annual Report

The Committee received an annual report on the work of the Registration Service, which highlighted the service's performance and developments over the past year and set out plans and changes on the horizon for the year ahead. Attention was drawn to a pressure faced by the service due to the fact that bookings could not be taken beyond June 2021 until there was confirmation of the site at which the service would be located following its departure from Castle Lodge. A potential £550k pressure had also been identified due to loss of revenue income, as well as the waiving of some fees to support couples and the provision of allowances to support wedding venues.

The Assistant Director of Regulatory Services paid tribute to how the service's staff had responded to the multiple difficulties caused by Covid-19 and informed Members that a recent staff restructuring had proven effective. The temporary prohibition of ceremonies had been a cause of significant distress and financial loss for those involved, which had been exacerbated by the constantly changing situation and lack of reliable information available. The service had therefore played a key role in ensuring businesses and residents were kept abreast of evolving guidance and regulations.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to staff for adapting to the difficult and constantly changing circumstances, while keeping the service running throughout the pandemic.
- Suggested that it would be beneficial for citizenship ceremonies to take place in a wider selection of locations around the County. The Assistant Director informed Members that analysis had been carried out on where people had travelled from in order to attend ceremonies and he recognised the need to expand to additional locations, although he noted that identifying suitable venues during the pandemic was difficult.
- Expressed concern about coerced and forced marriages, especially given the reduced levels of support available during the pandemic, and requested information on current demographic data of marriages, particularly in relation to age, across the County and any shifts that may be occurring in the statistics. The Registration Service Manager informed the Committee that staff worked closely with the Forced Marriage Unit and received annual training on how to identify and respond to possible cases. Both parties to a marriage were interviewed separately, providing an opportunity to reach out and provide contact information. The Registration Service Manager undertook to provide Members with further information and demographic data, both on a local and national level, and agreed to consider collating data specifically on forced and sham marriages in Cambridgeshire. Action required
- Confirmed that if the Committee supported a review of service provision in the Fenland area of the county, as requested in the recommendations, a report on the findings of the review would be presented to the Committee following its conclusion.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Support a review of service provision in the Fenland area of the county to ensure the service delivery arrangements are effectively and efficiently aligned to meet customer demand.

314. Innovate and Cultivate Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had accepted this report as a late report after the agenda had been published due to the recommendation panel meeting shortly before the publication of the agenda. The report contained three recommended applications for funding from the Cultivate funding stream of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, which had been supported by the Recommendation Panel at its meeting on 28th September 2020. The first application, from the Kite Trust, sought to strengthen and extend the support network for LGBTQ+ young people and their families. The second application, from Fenstanton Parish Council,

sought to develop a community warden scheme to assist elderly residents in the Parish of Fenstanton. The third application, from Lighthouse Ely, sought to deliver the national Linking Lives volunteer programme to Ely, to provide further support to the local elderly population.

Members were informed that the following change (addition in bold and removal in strikethrough) had been made to recommendation (b):

Note the amount of funding potentially available for future rounds (section 2.4 of the report) and consider ~~whether the ICF Steering Group should pursue continuing the fund beyond the current financial envelope~~ **the proposal for future application rounds.**

While discussing the report, Members requested feedback on how previously funded projects had fared after receiving funding. The Think Communities Manager noted that the Committee received an annual review of the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, last presented in March 2020, which included case studies of funded projects and how they had become self-sustainable. It was agreed to include further information in the next report to Committee in January 2020. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree to fund the following three applications through the Cultivate funding stream:
 - The Kite Trust - Building Support Networks for LGBTQ+ Young People
 - Fenstanton Parish Council - Community Warden
 - Lighthouse Ely - Linking Lives Ely

- b) Note the amount of funding potentially available for future rounds (section 2.4 of the report) and consider the proposal for future application rounds.

315. Community Champions Annual Review

The Committee received a Community Champions Annual Review, which provided a summary of activities carried out by Community Champions between August 2019 and July 2020. It was proposed that for the following year Community Champions adopt the same eight priorities as Think Communities, which were agreed by the Committee on 3rd September 2020, namely:

1. Supporting the COVID-19 Outbreak Control process
2. Support for carers
3. Support for older people
4. Increasing the take-up of Technology Enabled Care (TEC)
5. Support for Children and Adolescents (including care leavers, young people not in education, employment or training, and young carers)
6. Tackling food and fuel poverty
7. Improving social mobility
8. Implementing place-based commissioning

Councillor Meschini, Community Champion for Cambridge City, paid tribute to the work of her predecessor, Councillor Richards, particularly on the issues of homelessness and community safety. Noting the extensive and successful collaboration between the County Council and Cambridge City Council in responding to the impacts of Covid-19, she indicated that she would like the cooperative working to continue into the future and overcome political differences, suggesting that the Communities and Partnership Committee could lead the way. The Chairman acknowledged the importance of joint working between officers and members of the two councils and expressed willingness to discuss the matter with the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, as well as lead members of the City Council.

Councillor Costello, Community Champion for Huntingdonshire, highlighted an ongoing project to provide assistance during a period of increased unemployment and fuel poverty that she was involved in, which accepted donations of winter clothing to be distributed through schools, homes and other appropriate services.

Councillor Every, Community Champion for East Cambridgeshire, highlighted the work she had carried out in supporting local applications to the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, as well as the Communities Capital Fund. She also welcomed the ever growing movement to embed the Think Communities approach across the County

While discussing the report and updates provided by the Community Champions, Members:

- Praised the work of Community Champions over the previous year, noting their role as an extra resource and point of coordination for each of the districts.
- Suggested that Community Champions' written reports that were submitted for each Committee meeting could indicate how their ongoing work aligned with the Council's corporate policies. It was agreed that the Community Champions would consider the proposal. **Action required**
- Acknowledged the opposition to the principle of Community Champions expressed by the Liberal Democrat group.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Consider the outputs and achievements of the Community Champions from August 2019 – July 2020; and

It was resolved to:

- b) Agree priorities for the Community Champions to focus on for the coming 12 months.

316. Business Planning Proposals for 2021-26: Opening Update and Review

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had accepted late publication of this report to allow for the inclusion of the most up to date financial information possible. The report provided the Committee with an update on the Council's current business and budgetary planning position and estimates for 2021-2026. It also laid out the principal risks, contingencies and implications facing the Committee and the Council's resources, while setting out the process and next steps for the Council in agreeing a business plan and budget for future years.

Acknowledging the challenge of carrying out business planning in the uncertain climate of a pandemic, the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships emphasised the importance of long-term planning, albeit with a greater acceptance of flexibility than usual. Attention was drawn to the three key themes underlying the process: supporting economic recovery across the County, managing an increased demand on services, and strengthening a localised, Think Communities approach. The importance of Think Communities was highlighted by the fact that it was the only, all-encompassing area under the Committee's remit that was being considered for inclusion in the planning process.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Expressed concern about the significant level of savings that the Council would be required to achieve. The Senior Finance Business Partner confirmed that a funding deficit of £33m had been predicted across the Council, although she informed Members that the business planning process would work to reduce the deficit as much as possible by December, when the Committee would be considering the Business Case.
- Clarified that the People & Communities directorate expected to spend £426m in 2021/22, as indicated in Appendix 1 of the report, and noted that funding sources were not fixed to specific committees or service areas.
- Expressed unease about the level of short-term uncertainty being significantly higher than usual and suggested that it would be helpful to include further explanation and guidance on figures in the subsequent report.
- Suggested that the situation was exacerbated by a lack of clarity and delays regarding potential changes to the funding formula, although it was acknowledged that the Leader of the Council, the Chief Finance Officer and the Local Government Association, among others, were lobbying the Government for changes. While discussing the difference between levels of funding and expenditure in the provision of adults and children services, the Service Director informed Members that the Adults Committee, as well as the Children and Young People Committee, had researched the demographic pressures and demands they were facing. He undertook to provide Members with this data prior to the Committee workshop in November. **Action required**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the overview and context provided for the 2021-22 to 2025-26 Business Plan; and

- b) Comment on the draft proposals for Communities and Partnership committee set out in section 5 of the report and endorse their development.

317. Communities and Partnership Committee Agenda Plan

The Committee agreed to convert the meeting scheduled for 12th November 2020 to a Committee workshop, with the reports due to be presented at that meeting being deferred to the subsequent meeting on 3rd December 2020.

Pending this amendment, the Committee noted its Agenda Plan.

Chairman