

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: Thursday 6th August 2020

Time: 10:00am – 11:50am

Venue: Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillors: S Criswell (Chairman), L Nieto (Vice-Chairwoman), D Ambrose Smith, B Ashwood, H Batchelor, A Costello, J French, D Jenkins, E Meschini and M Smith.

289. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE & DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor L Every (substituted by Councillor D Ambrose Smith) and Councillor A Taylor (substituted by Councillor D Jenkins).

Councillor French declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in agenda item 6 (Communities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations (August 2020)) as the Fenland Community Champion and local Member for March North and Waldersey (recommendations (ii): Gorefield Parish Council, (xi): Christchurch Community Centre, and (xvi): Fenland District Council).

Councillor Ambrose Smith declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in agenda item 6 (Communities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations (August 2020)) as the local Member for Littlemore (recommendation (xii): Littlemore Parish Council).

Councillor Batchelor declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in agenda item 6 (Communities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations (August 2020)) as the local Member for Linton (recommendation (xiii): St Mary's Church, Bartlow).

Councillor Nieto declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in agenda item 6 (Communities Capital Fund – Endorsement of Recommendations (August 2020)) as the local Member for Hardwick (recommendation (vi): Eversden Parish Council).

Councillor Smith declared a non-statutory disclosable interest in agenda item 7 (7 (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards Shared Service Annual Report) due to her partner being a farmer and keeping livestock.

290. a) MINUTES – 2ND JULY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July 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

Referring to Minute 275 on the Committee's Action Log, the Service Director of Communities and Partnerships noted that a briefing note had been circulated to the Committee since the agenda had been published, thereby completing the action.

The Committee agreed to note the Minutes Action Log.

291. PETITIONS AND PUBLIC QUESTIONS

No petitions or public questions were received.

292. 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 informed Members that most of the libraries across the County had reopened and although they were functioning in a different way, the process was advancing well and had received a positive response from library users. 'Library.live' had been launched to provide an opportunity for residents to ask questions and access a list of responses from the library service staff to previously submitted questions. Drawing attention to the newly-published Cambridgeshire Skills autumn prospectus and noting that the anticipated levels of funding had been secured for the next academic year, he also highlighted that an agreement had been made with the Combined Authority to increase the cap on sub-contracting third party providers from 20% to 40%, due to the pandemic's impacts on the service.

In order to alleviate some of the pressure on couples who had suffered delays to their marriage or civil partnership ceremonies, the Committee was being asked to endorse a proposal to waive various fees, while a further proposal included support for ceremony venues that found themselves with financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic. It was also noted that citizenship ceremonies were now able to resume, in both face-to-face and virtual settings. Informing the Committee that an annual report on the Coroner Service, due to be presented to the Committee on 3rd September 2010, would include a detailed update on the state of the service, the Service Director emphasised the positive impacts and benefits that would result from additional Area Coroner capacity following the ongoing recruitment process.

Acknowledging that the national shielding programme had been paused by the government on 1st August, Members were reassured that the Countywide Covid-19 Coordination and Response Hub had worked intensively to ensure that people who had been shielding would continue to have access to the assistance and support that they required. Around 150 residents had specifically stated that they wanted their support to continue, mainly on issues related to their emotional wellbeing. Some shielding residents had expressed strong concerns about the end of the national programme, and attention was drawn to the fact that the prevailing preference for future lockdowns was that they would occur on a local level rather than a national one. A summary of the local support package was detailed in section 2.8.12 of the report.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Paid tribute to the extensive work carried out by the countywide hub, as well as the support provided to local residents by volunteers and local organisations.
- Welcomed the proposal to waive fees incurred by couples whose marriage or civil partnership ceremonies had been delayed due to the pandemic, arguing that the additional financial cost for the Council was acceptable given the circumstances.
- Requested further information on the nature of the financial problems faced by ceremony venues, along with potential support measures available to the Council, with one Member arguing that money provided by the government to support the recovery process should be used on such initiatives. Noting that there were typically around 75 venues across the area, the Service Director emphasised that if any were to become unable to provide the service, the disruption to couples' plans would be extensive. He informed Members that the matter had been considered for some time by the Assistant Director of Regulatory Services and that a proactive strengthening of the relationships with venues aimed to provide stability. A three-stage approach involved first establishing the status of each venue, then ensuring that they were aware of the national funding that was available to them, and finally establishing whether any bespoke support from the Council would be necessary or possible. Noting the importance for Members to be aware of the situation in relation to those venues inside their individual wards, he agreed to compile the information as it was developed and share it with Members. **Action required**
- Expressed concern that some of the figures in section 2.8.8 of the report suggested that requests for certain types of help were increasing, while the number of people who should be shielding had only dropped minimally. It was argued that financial problems, which in turn created problems accessing food and medicine, would continue for many months and years and reassurances were sort that such support would continue to be provided. The Service Director recognised that demand for support had continued to grow, although he informed Members that the number of shielding residents was a net figure from which people were removed and added continuously. A large number of people had been identified by commissions as needing to shield, including those who were diagnosed with illnesses or conditions during the course of the pandemic, and such additions obscured the fact that the number of those previously registered had begun to decrease. With regard to the more long-term concerns, he noted the ongoing pieces of work being coordinated by the Committee in relation to food poverty and social mobility, as well as the underlying Think Communities approach.
- Clarified that residents who found themselves required to quarantine on their return from a holiday or trip were also able to receive support throughout their period of self-isolation. The Service Director emphasised that anyone who was self-isolating for whatever reason had the same level of support provision at their disposal, and observed that while this support was intended to ensure the wellbeing of residents in self-isolation, it also represented part of the wider strategy to prevent further spreading of Covid-19. While a social media campaign was continuously spreading this message, along with information published on each district and city council's website, he undertook to provide Members with information to share with affected residents in their wards. **Action required**

- Considered the various levels of support available to workers who were required to self-isolate, with one Member noting that some employers required their employees to take unpaid leave in such a situation. Reiterating that everyone in self-isolation had the same level of support available to them, the Service Director highlighted some responses that the Council was providing, such as transport back home for employees who developed systems while at work, while noting particular concern for workers on zero-hours contracts, given the loss of earnings while not working. As a result of the increase in claimants for Universal Credit, work was ongoing with the Department for Work and Pensions to manage advanced payments for those who needed them. He encouraged residents to approach the hub to find out what kind of support was available to them.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the progress made to date in responding to the impact of the Coronavirus;
- b) Note and endorse the support provided to couples whose marriage or civil partnership ceremonies have been impacted by the pandemic; and
- c) Note and endorse the support being provided to marriage and civil partnership venues.

293. REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Committee received a report of the Service Director for Communities and Partnerships, which provided an overview of strategic activity that was largely not related to Covid-19. Observing that the response to the pandemic by local authorities, organisations, volunteers and communities had provided an extensive demonstration of the Think Communities approach, the Service Director paid tribute to the partnership working that had occurred throughout and expressed a desire to develop and maintain the progress that had been achieved. The Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Community Resilience Group, which served as an embodiment of the Think Communities approach, had agreed to continue to meet and work together in the future. Eight initial primary themes had been identified for particular focus, as set out in section 2.2.11 of the report.

One of these themes – tackling food poverty – represented a piece of work recently undertaken by the Committee. While the first stage of this work sought to ensure that residents across the County had sufficient access to food throughout the summer, with funding from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs being distributed to the district and city councils assisting in this, the long-term objective was to help people avoid falling into food poverty in the first place. This would involve creating a single food strategy or system with affordable and healthy food, while aiming to ensure that people were earning enough to be able to buy food. The social mobility working group had updated the Council's 'Commitment to Tackling Poverty and Improving Social Mobility' plan and identified additional areas of focus to go alongside work that was already under way.

Attention was drawn to a 95% reduction in demand for the Cambridgeshire Skills service during the pandemic, which was largely due to the unavailability of the majority of community-based learning venues. The agreement with the Combined Authority to

increase the amount of subcontracted adult skills delivery from 20% to 40% for the next year would allow the Council to continue to meet contractual targets while maintain quality, and ensure that there was not a dip in provision at the time it was most needed. Finally, the Service Director noted the Domestic Abuse Bill, which had passed through the House of Commons and was being considered by the House of Lords, and informed Members that the existing partnership board across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough would be able to fulfil most of the required duties included in the white paper.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Welcomed the report and proposal for similar reports at future Committee meetings. One Member suggested that in order to give emphasis and draw focus to the sections of such future reports that included information on changes to previous iterations, a highlight section at the beginning of the report would prove effective. Another Member expressed concern that given the high level of detail and broad scope of such reports, it would place an excessive burden on officers to produce one for every meeting, especially while a further report specifically on issues related to Covid-19 was being written alongside. While acknowledging the increased demands faced by officers during the pandemic, the Service Director argued that the reports would enable the Committee to be kept abreast of the positive developments across its wide remit.
- Clarified that new Cambridgeshire Skills prospectus including courses that were online, in-person, or a mixture of the two, in order to accommodate the varying requirements and preferences of prospective learners.
- Sought clarification on whether the social mobility working group liaised with other external organisations and bodies that were already tackling the same issues and joining forces to develop a countywide approach. The Service Director assured Members that Council did not want to replicate work that was already being carried out externally and agreed that a joint approach was the best way to resolve issues. Acknowledging that it wasn't necessary or desirable for the Council to lead on the work, he emphasised that work would be undertaken with a wide variety of partners, many of which were more knowledgeable of local issues and more suitably placed to act on a local level, although he noted that the Council had a specific statutory responsibility to develop a child poverty strategy.
- Observed that there were a large number of residents who were unable to access online services, including much of the Cambridgeshire Skills prospectus. It was suggested that the online nature of such programs actually set some people against participation or engagement, due to connectivity or equipment issues. The Service Director acknowledged the concerns, along with the advantages of being online and assured Members that the Council had been working on the issue through Connecting Cambridgeshire. He emphasised the need to provide a mix on all the Council's services and to ensure that each one provided a solution for those residents who were not online. It was also noted that digital connectivity was being looked at as part of the Council's Covid-19 recovery work.
- Sought clarification on the level of interaction with the Combined Authority, as the funding body, with one Member suggesting that it would be of benefit for a representative of the Combined Authority to attend a future Committee meeting that was due to address Cambridgeshire Skills. The Service Director informed Members that the Council had contributed to the writing of the Combined Authority's Skills

Strategy and was firmly embedded in its development. He agreed that a representative could be invited to the next Committee meeting at which a skills report was to be presented. **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) Approve the provision of a similar Service Director report to all future Committee meetings.

294. COMMUNITIES CAPITAL FUND – ENDORSEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS (AUGUST 2020)

The Committee received a report which detailed 16 applications to the Communities Capital Fund that had been recommended for funding by the Member Panel. The Head of Communities and Partnerships Integration presented the selected applications and highlighted the fact that they represented a wide geographical spread across the County and included a range of larger and smaller projects. Noting that a total of 63 applications had been submitted, he confirmed that no further bids were being accepted, while it was anticipated that the remaining funding would be allocated at the next Committee meeting on 3rd September 2020.

While discussing the applications laid out in the report, Members:

- Acknowledged that the bids had already been thoroughly assessed and considered by the cross-party Member Panel, with over half the submitted applications having been rejected. One Member argued that the minutes of the panel meetings should have been made public and included in the Committee papers, including the reasoning behind the recommendation or rejection of projects, so as to provide transparency and ensure due process and objectivity. The Head of Communities and Partnerships Integration noted that the Member Panel scored each application according to a published set of criteria, with an application requiring consensus and at least 60% in the scoring to be recommended for Committee approval. He undertook to provide greater clarity of the scoring process in the subsequent report. **Action required**
- Observed similarities in the application process for the Innovate and Cultivate Fund, with one Member suggesting that the two processes could be more aligned and learn from each other in order to improve their effectiveness and consistency.
- Welcomed the opportunities that had been made available through the funding scheme and expressed disappointment that the funding supply had depleted.
- Expressed regret that so many applications had been unsuccessful and were keen for further funding to be provided in 2021.
- Paid tribute to the officers involved in the scheme who had ensured its successful operation throughout the ongoing pandemic.

It was resolved to:

Approve the following applications for funding:

- (i) Viva - £498,317 for refurbishment of Spencer Mill, Soham;
- (ii) Gorefield Parish Council - £198,00 for extension of the Community Hall;
- (iii) Stretham Parish Council – £500,000 for the Stretham Village Centre;
- (iv) Fenstanton Village Hall Trust - £500,000 for the Fenstanton Community Hub;
- (v) Hilton Village Hall – up to £10,000 for new audio/visual equipment;
- (vi) Eversden Parish Council - £20,000 for new playground equipment;
- (vii) Wisbech Town Council – up to £150,000 for Market Place Enhancements;
- (viii) Hauxton Parish Council - £88,855 for Hauxton Village Hall ;
- (ix) Brampton Parish Council - £50,000 for the Bampton’s Men’s Shed;
- (x) Stapleford and Shelford Youth Initiative - £12,000 for the Youth Centre Refurbishment;
- (xi) Christchurch Community Centre - £15,000 for Outdoor Equipment;
- (xii) Littleport Parish Council – up to £406,000 for a Youth and Community Centre;
- (xiii) St Mary’s Church, Bartlow - £81,000 for a stable block conversion;
- (xiv) Melbourn Parish Council - £65,000 for the Melbourn Village Hub;
- (xv) Girton Parish Council - £275,000 for the extension of the pavilion; and
- (xvi) Fenland District Council – up to £75,000 for improvements to West End Park, March.

295. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH TRADING STANDARDS SHARED SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

The Committee received an annual report on the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards Shared Service, which had been moved into the Committee’s remit earlier in the year. The Head of Service: Trading Standards informed Members that the service had a broad remit based on over 200 pieces of legislation, including, but not limited to, food standards, animal disease, product safety, safety at sports grounds, fair trading, explosives, petroleum, and weights and measures.

Highlighting the work that had been carried out as a response to Covid-19, the Head of Service informed Members that alongside redeployments of some of the team’s staff, product safety officers had been skilled to procure personal protective equipment (PPE) corporately due to their skills and knowledge, which involved researching suppliers’ background, certification and labelling, as well as examining the products once they

were received. Investigations had also been carried out to ensure the effectiveness and compliance of PPE being sold locally. Advice had been given to businesses on reopening, specifically with regard to legislation, social distancing and hygiene. Information had been compiled for the Council's website regarding local and national funding that was available for businesses, as well as general trading standards advice. A frequently asked questions section for businesses on how to deal with compliance issues had proven particularly popular with over 1200 hits.

Members' attention was drawn to the recognition that the service had received over the past year. The National Office for Product Safety and Standards had shortlisted it in the Regulatory Excellence Awards for its work on primary authority advice and listed it as one of the top ten advisors in that area in the UK, which had enhanced the service's reputation nationally and given confidence to local businesses. The service had also been shortlisted for 'Internal Service of the Year: Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Regulatory Service' at the Association for Public Service Excellence Awards, in relation to its work tackling rogue traders and other businesses preying on vulnerable people. Over the previous year, over £100k had been prevented from falling into the hands of criminals through intervention work and victim compensation claimed through court procedures. The team also won 'Team of the Year' at Peterborough City Council last year.

The Head of Service extended an invitation to Members to shadow officers on field work, once it became appropriate according to national guidelines.

While discussing the report, Members:

- Congratulated the team for the various recognitions that it had received over the past year, acknowledging the importance of its work that was often taken for granted by residents and consumers.
- Suggested that the service could participate in the steering group on economic recovery from Covid-19. The Head of Service informed Members that she sat on the Economic Recovery Sub-group that was chaired by the Combined Authority and leading on Countywide recovery. This involved developing high-level strategy and monitoring where business support was needed, including both hard hit sectors, but also new developing sectors which were providing new employment opportunities. It was noted that the Better Business For All agenda had strengthened the relationship with the Chamber of Commerce and other local organisations
- Observed a decrease in a couple of categories in the performance tables and sought clarification on the reasons for this. The Head of Service acknowledged there had been some slippage but informed Members that this was partly due to a change in the database during the year, with previously separate databases in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough being merged and temporarily experiencing some disruption as a result. To address the issues in the long term, a monthly auditing program was being implemented, along with some upcoming training sessions on recording, both of which the Head of Service assured Members would restore the performance figures to previous levels.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Comment on any aspect of the service being delivered by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council.

296. COMMUNITY CHAMPIONS ORAL UPDATES

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

- Councillor Costello (Huntingdonshire), who welcomed the reopening of libraries and informed the Committee that she had attended the first virtual meeting of a dementia, autism and disabilities working group in St Neots which was reaching out to local residents, shops and businesses to encourage support. A written update was provided and attached as **Appendix 1** to the minutes.
- Councillor Every (East Cambridgeshire) was unable to attend the meeting but submitted a written update, attached as **Appendix 2** to the minutes
- Councillor French (Fenland), who paid tribute to Councillor Hoy for obtaining funding to provide laptops to an alternative provision academy in Wisbech.
- Councillor Meschini (Cambridge), who informed the Committee that area committees in Cambridge City would be recommencing from September.

297. COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE AGENDA PLAN

The Committee received a report which included the agenda plan and a request to appoint two Council representatives to the Ramsey Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund Advisory Group.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the Committee's Agenda Plan; and
- b) Appoint Councillor Costello and Councillor Rogers to the Ramsey Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund Advisory Group.

Chairman
3rd September 2020

Community Champion of Community Activity update

Community Champion:	Adela Costello
Place:	Huntingdonshire
Date:	6th August 2020

UPDATE

- There is really nothing new to report since the last meeting in July. Although most of the libraries are now open, they have limited opening hours which hampers access for vulnerable young people to obtain items from the 'Essentials by Sue' project. Hopefully this will resume in September when schools re-open.

NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES

- 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.
- There is a new grant available for Heritage Buildings which is being promoted through the District Council and I am assisting local sites to access this. This grant is to enable them to recover lost income through closure and to help them to prepare for re-opening with the necessary equipment.
- I am still supporting Hamerton Wildlife Park is now open but with a limited capacity.
- Ramsey Community Hub were successful in their application for a grant from the Community Capital Fund and I am supporting Ramsey Neighbourhood Trust in the delivery of this. It was extremely well received by residents. Unfortunately applications from the Great Fen Project and Upwood Cricket Club were unsuccessful. I am still supporting a group from St. Neots for an outdoor swimming area who are at the next level.
- 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.
- I attended the first virtual meeting of a new working party in St. Neots, named D.A.D which stands for Dementia, Autism and Disability Working Group. The objectives are to promote St. Neots to be a Dementia, Autism and Disability Friendly community. The group has arranged for a questionnaire to be accessed by all residents to ascertain need. Links have been made with local businesses/shops/public buildings to look at installing a dementia friendly clock.

COMMUNITY GOOD PRACTICE

- 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

Community Champion:	Lis Every
Place:	East Cambridgeshire
Date:	6th August 2020

NEW CONTACTS, PROJECTS AND PRIORITIES (during Coronavirus period)

Cross Community Champion work being investigated resulting from the Autism and Dementia Friendly Town initiative in St Neots in order to share good practice and increase the number of towns taking this up across the County. Working with Cllrs Adela Charlton and Simone Taylor. Request to help plan the expansion of a local mental health community trust.

Review of the Community Safety Partnership has resulted in a planned training programme for Parish Councils on the work of the Community Safety Partnership and resulting in a more appropriate Delivery Plan and community fund allocation.

Following the research phase of ECDC’s Post Covid-19 cross party working group, now moving to the planning stage.

Increased requests from organisations who are trying to put bids together for funding.

Part of Wendy Lansdowne’s local Parish forum now moving into its post-Covid-19 phase;

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;

UPDATES

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. On hold for the moment.
- Working with Soham on funding for projects.
- Strategic plan for Littleport on social prescribing now in place
- 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.