Executive Summary:

The Council Plan approved by Cabinet in January 2014 sets out the Council’s ambition to change the conversation with residents, communities and partners, encouraging them to do more for themselves by encouraging residents to become active citizens; engaging with communities to involve them; and working with partner agencies in the voluntary, public and private sectors. This will be increasingly important as funding across the public sector declines and as services are removed or reduced.

This report proposes the development of a strategy to provide a clear strategic vision and framework for asset based working across the city. It is proposed that it will focus on four key areas: continued development of the City Council and voluntary sector’s capacity to grow asset based working in local communities, co-designing services with local people, supporting local communities to co-design and co-deliver local services or do more to manage local amenities, training and development of staff and working with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to access external funding to support this work.

Recommendations:

(1) That the Cabinet Member (Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise) endorses the development of a programme of work to roll-out asset based working in the city by the development of a joint strategy and action plan.

(2) Agree that a further report comes to a Joint Cabinet Member (Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise) and (Health and Adult Services) meeting on 26th November 2014 to receive a Joint Strategy and Action Plan.
List of Appendices included:
None.

Other useful background papers:
None.

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?
No, but the issue was considered by the Community and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 17th September 2014

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?
No

Will this report go to Council?
No
1. **Context (or background)**

1.1 The Council wants Coventry to be ambitious for itself and its citizens. It is committed, through the Council Plan, to making the city a globally connected city that is attractive to businesses and investors – but also locally committed to improving the quality of life for all. It is also committed to making sure that economic growth and investment in the city benefits local people. The Council recognises that the best way for this to happen is to enable and empower residents, communities and groups to use and develop their own skills and potential to take control over their own lives. This is especially true at a time when the Council’s resources are being significantly reduced.

1.2 The Council Plan approved by Cabinet in January 2014 sets out the Council’s ambition to change the conversation with residents, communities and partners, encouraging them to do more for themselves by encouraging residents to become active citizens; engaging with communities to involve them; and working with partner agencies in the voluntary, public and private sectors.

1.3 As part of this, the Council is committed to working with communities in uncovering and using their own skills, talents and resources to achieve their ambitions; shaping and improving local services and designing and implementing solutions that meet local need. This is an opportunity to have fresh conversations with residents, communities and partners to explore different ways of getting things done.

1.4 ‘Asset based working’ is an approach which is being used across the country to enable local people to do more for themselves. Asset based working sees people as citizens and co-producers with something to offer rather than clients and service users. It helps people take control of their lives rather than treating people as passive receivers of services. It supports people to develop their potential rather than creating dependency on public services. This is increasingly important as funding across the public sector declines. Asset based working also involves acting earlier, finding solutions with local people before they reach crisis and require support from a number of services.

1.5 In April 2014 the Council Telephone Survey, a survey conducted under the Local Government Association’s ‘Are you being served’ guidance on benchmarking residents’ satisfaction, asked 1,000 randomly selected local people if they would like to get more involved in their local community. Two in three people agreed that the Council should ask local people to do more for themselves. One in four gave the Council their contact details to find out more about how they could get more involved. When asked about how residents might help get involved in their local communities, around 25% said residents could do more to help older or vulnerable people and 20% suggested that residents could help keep streets clean and safe. This suggests that there is an appetite locally for people living in Coventry to do more for themselves.

**The economic benefits of asset based working**

1.6 National research shows that asset based working can achieve significant cost-savings. Basildon’s Connected Care scheme, funded by Essex County Council and the local NHS, worked with local people to identify improvements to local health and social care services. This has claimed impacts of over £1,000 per client, and a total of over £500,000 in savings across the town. In another case, peer-led support schemes for people with mental health problems were £80 cheaper per day than the traditional care services. However, making these savings requires organisations to radically change the way they provide services.
Working with partners across the City

1.7 Asset based working is not something that the City Council can or should deliver on its own. Much of the innovative work that is happening is led by the voluntary sector. Coventry University has also been leading a number of projects to empower local communities through its City Initiative. This includes its Neighbourhood University scheme which is being piloted in Hillfields to work with local people to identify what skills and training they would like to be able to get jobs or higher-level training.

Asset based working in practice

1.8 Asset based working is not new in Coventry and there are a number of programmes and services which use this approach:

1.8.1 The Council’s Community Development Service, which was operational from April 2014 works with local communities to improve their capability to do more for themselves through a range of approaches. This has included working with two GP surgeries in Coventry to link older people with complex health and social care needs into community activities as part of a local pilot to integrate health and social care services for older people.

1.8.2 The Council has also been working closely with NHS partners to support the development of asset based working. This has included the RIPPLE project at University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire which supports patients with long-term respiratory conditions to develop social networks and reduce social isolation.

1.8.3 A number of Council services have been developed through co-creation with service users. Two examples of this are the POD, which takes an innovative approach to supporting adults with severe and enduring mental ill health. It enables them to identify the best pathway to recovery for them. In addition, the Acting Early 0-5 programme, which is being piloted in Tile Hill and Hillfields, brings together teams of staff from across the city who support parents in the early years. The service has been co-designed with parents and the voluntary sector from the outset.

1.8.4 A training programme is also running which will skill up 30 staff from the council, NHS, Police and voluntary and community groups in the techniques and skills which will help them to embed asset based working in what they do. The programme consists of two groups: one which is based in Willenhall and one which brings together people in the council, NHS and voluntary sector who provide services to support older people and early years care.

1.8.5 Two small grant schemes have been run in 2013/14 to build community capacity. The Community Well-being Scheme is run by Valley House to develop small projects which build community capacity and improve mental well-being. The Innovation and Development Fund, run by Voluntary Action Coventry with funding from Coventry City Council and Coventry and Rugby Clinical Commissioning Group, supports schemes to encourage community groups to develop their own health programmes. The aim with both these schemes is to encourage programmes which are self-sustaining and there are a number of examples of programmes, such as the Coventry Men’s Shed, which have gone on to generate further income from other funding bodies. The community development service also runs a small grant scheme to support sustainable, asset-based working projects locally.

1.9 The council is also working closely with Grapevine and the Law Centre to support the development of a bid to lever in funding from the Early Action Neighbourhood Fund which
aims to increase the personal resilience of local residents and reduce over-reliance on public services (see Report on Early Action Neighbourhood Fund Bid Development).

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

2.1 In order to ensure that there is a clear strategic vision and framework for asset based working a strategy will be produced. It is proposed that it will focus on four key areas:

2.1.1 Continued development of the City Council’s capacity and that of voluntary sector partners to grow asset based working in local communities, including developing a local centre of excellence.

2.1.2 Co-designing services with local people: this will consider how local communities could be supported to co-design and co-deliver local services or do more to manage local amenities.

2.1.3 Expansion of training and development of staff, linking to the Council’s Kickstart programme: this will look at what skills staff need to recognise and work with local assets as part of their routine work.

2.1.4 Working with local statutory and voluntary sector partners to access external funding to develop asset based working

2.2 The strategy will also identify specific areas for action which may include around public spaces and community centres.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 A workshop was hosted by Coventry Law Centre on the 10th September 2014 which included representatives from across the City Council, voluntary sector partners and Coventry University. This group will support the development and roll-out of asset based working, including identifying opportunities to support new ways of working, service redesign and changes to local services as a result of significant reductions in funding.

3.2 A workshop was held with members of Scrutiny Board 4 on the 17/9/2014. This discussed the pivotal role that Members have in working with local communities and community groups and supporting residents to do more for themselves, both individually and collectively. Feedback from this workshop has been collated and will inform the strategy. Key themes raised at this workshop included creating a local directory of community groups, promoting better use of community facilities to support older people, capitalising on local groups such as Friends of Parks, exploring how social media can support this work, and encouraging people to support new neighbours.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision

4.1 Following more detailed consultation and engagement with partners, a joint strategy and action plan will be presented to Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise, jointly with the Cabinet Member Health and Adult Services in November 2014.

5 Comments from Executive Director, Resources

5.1 Financial implications

Asset based working aims to increase self-reliance and resilience of local people and to develop their capability to do more for themselves. Working in this way will support the
different conversations Coventry needs to have with residents, minimise the impact of reduced service delivery by reducing demand and ultimately contribute to communities being more active, healthy and ready to benefit from new opportunities that may arise from economic investment.

5.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal implications arising out of this report. Asset based working will not interfere with the Council’s fulfilment of its normal statutory obligations towards residents which will continue to be met.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to achievement of the Council’s key objectives / corporate priorities (corporate plan/scorecard) / organisational blueprint / Local Area Agreement (or Coventry Sustainable Community Strategy)?

Asset based working will support the Council in changing the conversations with residents, communities and partners, enabling them to do more for themselves by encouraging residents to become more active citizens.

6.2 Equalities / ECA

The aims of this approach programme are consistent with promoting equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people.

The strategy, once developed will be accompanied by an ECA identifying impacts.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

A range of partner organisations are being involved in developing the work programme. The asset based working strategy will also be presented to the Local Public Service Board and the Health and Well-being Board.
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