
Cabinet Member

28 January 2016

Name of Cabinet Member:

Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise - Cllr Faye Abbott

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director of Public Health

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Empowered Citizens: Networked Communities

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive Summary:

The Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy was endorsed at a joint cabinet member meeting on 26 November 2014.

The overall aims of the strategy are: *We want to encourage, enable and empower residents to be active citizens, building strong, involved communities and to be partners in reducing demand and improving services. We will work with local communities and local people to intervene before problems reach a crisis and to find solutions that reflect and build on local people's skills, experience and capability.*

As this is a developmental strategy, it was agreed that an initial progress update should be provided by December 2015, which should include further recommendations for actions to support implementation. A report was taken to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise in November 2015, which proposed that the learning from work undertaken during the last year be used to develop proposals for future implementation.

This report proposes development of a future engagement approach called 'Empowered Citizens, Networked Communities', which will build a more collaborative and participatory way of working alongside Coventry citizens. It will provide new routes for citizen participation and create networks across the city to connect communities, the Council and partner organisations.

A diagram illustrating the approach is provided at Appendix One.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise is recommended to:

- (1) Adopt the engagement approach and use it to support the delivery of transformation programmes
- (2) Agree to work in partnership to create sustainable engagement networks (building upon what is already there), which supports a collaborative relationship between the public, elected members and services
- (3) Agree a programme of partnership work to achieve this, including:
 - a. Work in neighbourhoods with partner organisations and citizens to establish collaborative relationships and local community networks throughout the city
 - b. Bring local networks together to build a city-wide network of citizens who are interested in participation and collaboration to explore important issues, using techniques such as citizens panels
 - c. Develop a web-based network as 'The Partnership for Coventry', which connects together local organisations and citizens to provide opportunities for collaboration and a repository for collating and sharing all strands of conversations going on across the city
 - d. Organisational development, including a Networked Councillor programme, to build on existing skills and expertise that elected members and employees have to work collaboratively with citizens
- (4) Request a report back on initial progress by July 2016

List of Appendices included:

Appendix 1: Approach to building a more collaborative and participatory way of working with Coventry residents

Background Papers

None

Other Useful Documents:

Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=667&MId=10573>

Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Progress Update and Priorities

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=655&MId=10946&Ver=4>

Community Development Service - impact and priorities – the report was discussed at:

Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) on 4th November, 2015

Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise on 20th November 2015

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=655&MId=10946&Ver=4>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

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

Report title: Empowered Citizens: Networked Communities

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 All public sector partners are in the same difficult financial situation and need to reframe relationships with citizens to encourage resilience in communities and to reduce expectations that public services can continue to be demanded and delivered in the same way. Community and voluntary sector groups are also impacted by the public sector's financial position.
- 1.2 In the same vein, public sector organisations, including the Council, need to develop a greater awareness and appreciation of the aspirations and capabilities in communities; and, be more prepared to hand over responsibility for delivering services that are needed by communities or support the development of new approaches to delivering support in communities.
- 1.3 Ward Councillors enjoy a unique position in the city, which makes them ideally placed to lead and motivate citizens to become more active and employees to work in more empowering ways; they have democratic legitimacy, deep insights into what is going on in wards and communities and excellent understanding about who the key players are.
- 1.4 At the same time the Coventry Partnership is re-shaping itself and setting out to develop more effective ways of working, which can be achieved with fewer resources. A number of partners, including the Police, Clinical Commissioning Group and Whitefriars have resolved to work collaboratively with the Council to develop more effective relationships with citizens who are active in their communities.
- 1.5 This report proposes development of a future engagement strategy, which will build a more collaborative and participatory way of working alongside Coventry citizens. It will provide new routes for citizen participation and create networks across the city to connect communities, the Council and partner organisations.
- 1.6 This proposal replaces the initial Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy and incorporates the recommendations contained within the recent 'Active Citizens, Strong Communities Strategy: Progress Update and Priorities' report agreed with the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise in November 2015. The Active Citizens Strategy included support for the Ignite Programme and this will continue. One of the aims of the Ignite Programme is to engage communities more effectively around a specific service aim which improves outcomes for vulnerable people supported by that service.

2. Proposed Approach to Increasing Participation and Collaboration

- 2.1 The Democratic Society was commissioned by the Chief Executive to make recommendations about future engagement, which could build a more participatory and collaborative way of working with city residents. In developing recommendations they spoke to a range of people in the City Council and partner organisations.
- 2.2 They also sought views from participants at a citizens panel (held to discuss the identity of Coventry and the proposed combined authority). This identified that a key challenge is to ensure people across the city have the information they need to understand how they can

get involved in conversations with other people and organisations about **things that interest them**.

- 2.3 The recommendation from the Democratic Society is to work alongside local people to co-design networks and build collaborative relationships. The aim is to achieve **a connected, networked conversation across all Coventry** that works at a local level as the foundation, but can bring in citywide strategic issues.
- 2.4 This will only succeed if trust and different relationships are built. The following principles should be used to guide how the Council and partner organisations work with communities:
- **Be asset based:** use what is there such as skills, knowledge and existing community organisations and networks
 - **Be consistently open:** building trust is a slow process and needs openness
 - **Build incrementally:** no single 'Big Initiative', but a big vision delivered through multiple routes and phases of experimental design
 - **Go where people are:** creating new locations for engagement should be a last resort
 - **Shared ownership:** public participation in the design and ideas, regular updates and meetings of the big network interested in the work
- 2.5 The proposal is to work alongside communities and with partner organisations to deliver a programme of work to achieve a networked city. This will involve work across **four layers** at the same time:
- 2.6 **The Communities Layer:** Trialling different ways of engaging local communities to find which best suit different areas of the city and city-wide communities of interest. The choice of engagement tools could include participatory techniques already successfully trialled in the city such as asset mapping, participatory budgeting, appreciative inquiry along with digital engagement tools. The aim is to build local networks of active citizens and forge collaborative relationships with elected members and officers / partners.
- 2.7 A key focus will be on ensuring that vulnerable groups and those who do not use conventional channels of engagement are encouraged and able to get involved. Ward councillors will play a crucial central role in building new kinds of community networks; identifying key individuals, bringing together new and existing networks, leading through example of empowering others to take on more responsibility, whilst stepping into an enabling and facilitating role.
- 2.8 The ambition is to develop tangible examples of collaborative working that can be used to spread interest and enthusiasm for rolling out the network and collaboration approach across the city.
- 2.9 It is suggested that this approach is tested through the Connecting Communities programme in three neighbourhoods:
- Earlsdon
 - Foleshill
 - Moat House/ Bell Green
- 2.10 The pilots will involve bringing together ward councillors, active citizens and partner organisations to build local community networks and seek opportunities for collaboration on issues that are important to local citizens. Different engagement tools will be tested, with the aim of connecting citizens and organisations together to build relationships based on trust and working towards shared outcomes. Through this opportunities to co-design and co-deliver local services will be sought.

- 2.11 **The City Layer:** This will involve building and making use of the existing network of contacts held by the Council. Further citizen's panels will deeply and meaningfully explore issues of high importance to Coventry. This layer will be particularly important where the council want to receive feedback on an issue they have proposed, whereas networks at local neighbourhood level may be more relevant where the council wish to proactively listen to identify issues that residents themselves identify. As local community networks are established the pool of contacts available for city level participation will grow.
- 2.12 **The Digital Layer:** This will develop the digital infrastructure that will support the organisational, local community and citywide elements. It will require making better use of more inviting and discursive digital tools to widen the demographic pool of citizens the council and partner organisations engage with. It will include redeveloping the Coventry Partnership website as 'The Partnership for Coventry' - a place to go to find out about opportunities to participate and collaborate.
- 2.13 These tools will support specific engagement strategies (e.g. in local areas) and will also build an online place where the results of each discussion can be stored and made public. The digital component will ensure that council and partner organisations' decisions and thinking are executed in public and that the public have a digital channel to engage with the council and partner organisations. The online space will become a repository and an archive for collating all the different strands of conversation.
- 2.14 **The Organisational Layer:** This help Coventry City Council and partners to become organisations that can support collaborative working with citizens. It includes supporting elected members and employees to develop the skills and outlook needed e.g. greater use of digital engagement tools, community engagement techniques, managing two-way flow of information and, critically to work in transparent ways that build trust.

3. Potential Benefits of this Approach

- 3.1 The potential benefits of working in this way include:
- The Council and partner organisations will continually understand the issues that are important for local citizens and citizens are able to involve themselves in strategic city issues
 - Contributions from 'quieter' voices will be encouraged so that policy and practice are based on the needs and desires of all (not mainly the vocal few)
 - Shifting the relationship between officers, ward councillors and citizens towards co-production where collaboration is the norm, as opposed to the council 'doing to' or 'doing things for' people
 - Balancing online and offline engagement tools so that the broadest possible network of residents is reached: each individual person can participate in local discussions if they wish to
 - Achieving a greater use of digital engagement tools by ward councillors, including those that support on-line collaboration or crowd-sourcing of ideas
 - Achieving a more varied, better tested approach to neighbourhood participation, testing different ways of reaching people and closing down those that are not working

4. Results of consultation undertaken

- 4.1 The proposed approach has been designed in discussion with key stakeholders and partner agencies, including the Ignite Programme, WM Police, Whitefriars, Community

Links and VAC. This approach will develop naturally and be informed by engagement with communities and partner organisations as it progresses.

4.2 A Coventry Partnership conference was held on 19th November 2015 at which representatives from partner organisations took part in workshop discussions about the proposed engagement approach.

4.3 This approach was adopted by the Local Public Services Board on 14th January 2016.

5. Timetable for implementing this decision

5.1 Initial work will begin in January 2016 and include:

- Understand partners' current engagement work and plans / priorities for participation, the networks they use and scale of ambition for co-production.
- Understand what resources (e.g. engagement and co-production expertise, digital tools) are held across the Council and partners
- Work with ward councillors and partners to plan work in the first three community engagement areas.
- Undertaking social network analysis

5.2 A joint programme of work to deliver each of the four layers above will be produced. Implementation will be iterative, learning as we go and continuously developing ideas in response to public feedback. A high-level approach for implementing this decision is attached at Appendix Two.

6. Comments from Executive Director, Resources

6.1 Financial implications

Funds of up to £100,000 have been identified from existing budgets for developing and delivering the programme of work, but we will seek to minimise this through contributions from partner organisations and seeking opportunities for bidding for external funding.

6.2 Legal implications

The proposed approach to engagement is consistent with the principles of decision-making set out within the Council's Constitution. Adopting such an approach will assist the Council in discharging its duty to act fairly in the exercise of its functions. Future proposals and decisions may require further legal processes to be followed and further legal advice should be sought as proposals develop.

7. Other implications

7.1 **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)?**

This work will strengthen the ability of the Council to work collaboratively with partner organisations and residents to achieve the Council's key objectives, specifically to *Deliver our priorities with fewer resources; Making the most of our assets; Active citizens, strong involved communities.*

It also support the Council's KickStart principles; enhancing access to information for local residents; will potentially lead to reducing demand on services; increases the potential for self-service and contributes to some statutory duties for access to information.

7.2 **How is risk being managed?**

There are no risks identified at this stage. Risks will be identified and managed through regular reports to the Cabinet Member for Community Development, Co-operatives and Social Enterprise

7.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

This proposal will seek to move away from a culture of 'doing to' local people and move towards a more collaborative approach, where services will work with local people to find solutions to local issues. There will be implications in terms of ensuring that elected members and employees have the skills and training to enable them to work in this manner.

7.4 Equalities / EIA

This proposal will have a positive impact on equalities within the city, as it will aim to ensure that those groups of people with protected characteristics or who live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are actively encouraged to get involved and equalities will be strongly incorporated in any approach taken.

7.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

None

7.6 Implications for partner organisations?

This proposal has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders and builds upon developments happening through the Coventry Partnership and the Ignite Programme. This will further strengthen partnership working in the city.

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This report is published on the council's website:

www.coventry.gov.uk/councilmeetings

Appendices

Appendix One: Empowered Citizens: Networked Communities



Appendix Two: Approach to building a more collaborative and participatory way of working with Coventry residents

The following table outlines the outcomes that we are seeking to achieve and the key activities that we will undertake to build a more collaborative way of working with Coventry residents.

No	Outcome	Activity	Lead	Timescales
1	Collaborative relationships and local community networks are established throughout the city with citizens and partner organisations	Understand partners priorities for engagement and opportunities for collaboration	Insight Team	Jan – Mar 2016
		Develop this approach within 3 neighbourhoods within the city and roll out to the rest of the city		Jan - Sept 2016
		Social network mapping to identify 'community connectors'		Jan-Mar 2016
2	Local networks are brought together to build a city-wide network of citizens who are interested in participation and collaboration and this is used to explore important issues, using techniques such as citizens panels	Conduct a citizen's panel to involve citizens in influencing development of key initiatives/programmes	Insight Team	Jan – Sept 2016
3	Essential personal services are co-produced and delivered in an asset based and collaborative way with vulnerable people	Ignite works alongside Housing and children's services in Bell Green and Willenhall to reveal the skills the workforce needs to engage people earlier and more effectively improving their outcomes and reducing the need for costly crisis services	Ignite Programme Board/ Children's Services/Housing	2015-2020
		Ignite co-produces with statutory services and communities to understand the best way of improving outcomes for people – which in turn reduces spend of big problems.		
		Developing the idea that people are experts in their own lives- services that work with this have a greater impact earlier- reducing the need for costly interventions		
4	Local organisations and citizens are connected together via a web-based network, which provides opportunities for collaboration and a repository for collating and sharing all strands of conversations going on across the city	Develop a web-based network as 'The Partnership for Coventry'	Insight Team	Summer 2016

No	Outcome	Activity	Lead	Timescales
5	Elected members and employees have the skills needed to work collaboratively with citizens	Develop and deliver a Networked Councillor programme	TBC	TBC
		Work with Transforming Communities With Communities 'champions' to promote asset based working and earlier intervention, and encourage sharing of learning	Ongoing	Ongoing
6	Coventry to become a Social Enterprise City – with the aim growing the size and scale of existing social enterprises, creating new social enterprises and overall growing the size of the social economy in Coventry	Hold a networking event to engage with the wider sector	Coventry University	Dec 2015
		Creation of a steering group to oversee the development of the Social Enterprise City programme.		
7	Evaluation	Share the learning, methodology and best practice learned via trialling the Ignite methodology and that of other programmes around how to support the most vulnerable to engage and participate to reduce the need for crisis intervention through the Early Action Resilience Centre (EARC) on a regular basis	Ignite/ CCC	2015-2020
		Ensure continuous feedback from public through the neighbourhood pilots is used to influence the programme	CCC	Ongoing