

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**Report**

Committee:	Policy & Resources Select Committee
Date:	10 April 2014
Title:	Joint Working With Communities
Reference:	5759
Report From:	Director of Policy and Governance – Corporate Services

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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The Council's understanding of, relationship with and response to local communities is central to achieving positive outcomes for residents in Hampshire and reducing public sector spend. In the context of a significantly reduced funding envelope, it is increasingly important to work collaboratively and coherently with key partners in order to be able to act early, prevent complex problems, make services easier to access and improve the way the Council works with voluntary and community groups.
- 1.2. This report outlines some of the progress that has been made in relation to the Council's approach to communities and on-going work to take this further by adopting a more formal, co-ordinated approach which brings focussed resource and direction from the corporate transformation programme and wider learning and support from additional sources.

2. Contextual Information

- 2.1. In recent years, various approaches have been developed with the aim of enhancing the way the Council works in and with communities, responding to the key aim in Shaping Hampshire of 'working with communities to enhance local services'. In particular this has focused on the need for the Council to:
- better engage with and understand communities;
 - improve the ways in which residents access public services;
 - foster a strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector (VCS);
 - develop the capacity of communities so that they are more resilient and can solve problems and issues with minimal intervention from the Council.
 - Working more collaboratively with partners to better co-ordinate and join up services;

- consider the role of the Council and whether it is always best to deliver solutions itself; and
 - improve commissioning processes to incorporate earlier and better engagement of stakeholders.
- 2.2. Departments have already recognised and started to address and test these themes in a range of settings, working locally with key partners. This has largely been driven by reductions in spending, feedback and suggestions from the VCS, changes in Government grants and policy and political leadership from elected Members.
- 2.3. Whilst it is clear that good progress has been made, there is an imperative and opportunity to take this work to the next level. The rewards of doing so are potentially numerous, ranging from better outcomes for residents who receive help at the right time, in the best way and feel better about public services, to the development of a more flexible, responsive and targeted public sector that works in partnership to make sense of complex arrangements for delivering public services. All of this should ultimately deliver benefits through significant financial savings across the public sector.
- 2.4. Some of the work that has been undertaken so far in support of this direction of travel includes:
- Empowering local communities to take control of their local library.
 - Improving the co-ordination of research and customer intelligence to support services to understand needs. Work is also progressing to share information and joint working opportunities across a range of community development functions.
 - Working collaboratively through Local Children's Partnerships to respond to local community need in the commissioning of community youth services.
 - Establishing a Supporting Troubled Families Programme which is now in its operational stage. The approach is challenging how solutions are delivered for families to improve outcomes as well as bringing both common sense and academic rigour to identify system transformation opportunities;
 - Introducing Community Response Teams which aim to keep older people living in their own homes independently for as long as possible.
 - Re-introducing the role of the Parish Lengthsman to give local communities more say in the upkeep of their surroundings and to play an active role in improving their village environments.
 - Improving access to grants and introducing additional Member and community grant programmes.
 - Establishing stronger links with armed forces organisations to better understand and respond to the needs of service families and veterans.
 - Completing initial joint work with all districts to assess the development needs of front line voluntary sector organisations. There is strong commitment to explore better use of joint resources in doing this. The

County Council has also reviewed its volunteering policy and improved the way it promotes opportunities.

- Working with the Voluntary Sector to improve the information and engagement opportunities on service developments and reviews and to improve the understanding of tendering processes for voluntary organisations and small businesses.

3. Joint working objectives

3.1. A number of internal corporate initiatives, approaches and improvement themes, aiming to improve the way the Council works internally in its relationship with communities have been brought together, including:

- improving the relationship between the County Council and local voluntary and community infrastructure bodies including the joint aim for a vibrant, flexible, responsive and accessible VCS
- evaluating the way the Council finds solutions to community needs and wants through its engagement, consultation and commissioning processes.
- revisiting the Council's approach to early intervention and prevention.
- understanding how easy it is for residents to access services, exploring how co-location and collaboration can improve accessibility.
- focussing on working better with the wider public sector and partners.
- looking to build resilience in communities and develop their capacity to deal with issues with minimal or no public sector intervention.

3.2. Making sense of the issues locally and agreeing a set of joint and shared objectives with key partners will be the driver for developing locality arrangements and sharing resources including people and funding, buildings and information and data.

3.3. Ultimately, the aim is to ensure that when the Council is working with communities, it works collaboratively and coherently with partners in order to manage and reduce demand for all public services, put in place tailored and common sense solutions which are easy and straightforward for people to access and make the most of the expertise and experience of voluntary and community groups.

4. Joint Working with Havant

4.1. The County Council has a particularly strong track record of working with Havant Borough Council in recent years. The flagship of this relationship has been the Havant Public Service Village or the 'Plaza'. This has allowed several public service organisations, including both Councils, to be co-located and offer seamless services to customers and communities, avoiding unnecessary trips and contacts with different organisations. In addition, IT services have successfully secured a 'shared services' arrangement with Havant Borough Council and East Hampshire District Council, for integrated and shared IT.

4.2. Recent work has taken this shared working further by examining how both councils work in partnership in the community, with other key partners, to help

identify opportunities for closer co-operation and collaboration in order to improve access and signposting to services, reduce reliance on public sector funding and improve outcomes.

- 4.3. The work has focussed on the Leigh Park area, which has consistently high levels of relative deprivation and compares poorly both nationally and with other areas of the County in socio-economic indicators such as employment, educational attainment and health outcomes. There is strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that the area has a high level of resilience and community spirit. Channelling this, with support from the public sector working in partnership, and raising people's aspirations in the area is key to taking the work forward.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The Council's early work in relation to communities has demonstrated clear evidence of the need and imperative to work collaboratively in order to intervene early and better prevent problems before they occur, improve the access to public services and harness the vital role of the voluntary and community sector.
- 5.2. The County Council is making good progress as it transforms the way it works with and serves its communities. Up to now, this work has evolved and developed incrementally across the Council, but given the future financial picture, the need to reduce demand and still continue to improve public services, there is an excellent opportunity to take this work further by working locally with key partners.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

Hampshire safer and more secure for all:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Maximising well-being:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
Enhancing our quality of place:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	
OR	
This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because: n/a	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out in relation to the work described in this report.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. Community safety is a key element of the work in communities and the joint working approach will seek to enhance current services and improve outcomes.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

This work includes consideration of the Council's buildings and other community assets with a view to rationalising where appropriate.