

## BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>TO:</b> Cabinet	<b>REPORT NUMBER:</b> <b>BCa/18/57</b>
<b>FROM:</b> Cabinet Member for Communities	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b> 10 January 2019
<b>OFFICER:</b> Tom Barker- Assistant Director Planning and Communities	<b>KEY DECISION REF NO.</b> CAB38

### JOINT COMMUNITIES STRATEGY

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To support the process of developing a Joint Communities Strategy, this report is to inform Cabinet of the proposed timetable for consulting stakeholders on the emerging Communities Strategy.
- 1.2 This report requests that Cabinet Members agree the final consultation version of the Communities Strategy, prior to the consultation process beginning, and that the Assistant Director for Planning and Communities be given delegated authority to finalise the consultation version of the strategy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities.

#### 2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 To create a Joint Communities Strategy and publish it for consultation.
- 2.2 To create a Joint Communities Strategy and not publish it for consultation.
- 2.3 Not to create a Joint Communities Strategy.
- 2.4 The Council has prioritised the creation of its Joint Communities Strategy and therefore the question is whether to consult with stakeholders or not. Given the nature of the Strategy it is considered vital that there is appropriate consultation prior to its formal adoption by Full Council.

#### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the consultation approach and timetable for the Joint Communities Strategy described in paragraphs 10.5 and 10.6 be agreed.
- 3.2 That the Assistant Director for Planning and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities, be given delegated authority to make any minor changes as necessary to the consultation version of the draft Communities Strategy prior to the Strategy going out for consultation.

#### 4. REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 4.1 To ensure that Babergh District Council have an up to date Joint Communities Strategy which provides:

- Strategic leadership on the key community issues facing the districts;
- Coherent and joined up approaches to the way we work with our communities and with partners;
- Greater local accountability for decision making; and
- A more focused approach to community development which has the greatest impact.

## **5. KEY INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The creation of a Joint Communities Strategy has been articulated as one of the Organisational Priorities for 2018/19.
- 5.2 The strategy will be the Council's collective response to some of the big community-related changes we have experienced in the districts and the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. The consultation version of the strategy is more discursive than the final strategy will be. It articulates the Council's vision for the kind of future we would like to see for our communities not only in the present but twenty years from now. At this stage of development it deliberately adopts a conversational tone so that it provides discussion on both the strategy and the reasoning behind some of the suggestions. This will be refined as the document goes through consultation.
- 5.3 The Council's ambition is for communities that work; stronger and healthier places, built on a balanced and targeted range of services and support, equally accessible to all our residents and to future generations. We need to see new development delivered in an inclusive way, so that more local people feel the benefits. We need to be responsive to changes in the population and make-up of the districts, particularly looking at how we give young people the best start in life and how we support older residents to stay active, healthy and connected to community life. We know there is already a strong sense of community and of collaboration, with residents and businesses keen to share their time, knowledge and skills. We will seek to build upon this so there is greater willingness to take part in more open community dialogue about the issues we face as well as more inclusive decision making.
- 5.4 Delivering effective services which our communities expect or require is important but there are times we have not always questioned how we can step aside and let others do what they think is best. There are many examples of communities who have taken on responsibilities from other public bodies. These range from parks and play areas, to the development of new affordable housing, community library services and recycling centres. These services are well run, they work because they are valued, and they are proof that service delivery does not always have to follow traditional lines. The Council does not always know best and we need to be more willing to explore different ways of working with our communities.
- 5.5 The Strategy needs to find the right balance between creating a sense of expectation that the Councils can live up to and empowering those who want to do more and can make a real difference. We need to be much more mindful of how we behave and communicate with our communities and we need to ensure the whole organisation understands and applies these values.

- 5.6 The Councils can't do this by ourselves. We need community leaders and statutory and voluntary sector partners to play their part. This does mean changes to the way we work, we must focus on making the best use of our resources and targeting interventions which provide the most impact.
- 5.7 We have developed what are currently described as "ambitions", our commitments which help to define our plans and provide a concerted focus on community development now and in the future. They are designed to support decision making and community engagement in the districts as well as helping frame and direct the Council's other strategies and work plans and influencing the strategies and the work carried out by partners and other local organisations. This strategy will also help focus the work we need to do to influence other decision makers, for example when we need to take action on key issues of local importance where we don't have the resources or the influences we need if we act alone.
- 5.8 This consultation version of the strategy does not currently identify a clear set of well-defined priorities. Early engagement through focused conversations has identified that partners within both the statutory and voluntary sector would like more time and space to be part of developing the precise actions that will inevitably flow from the strategy itself. We are clear that the focus of our high-level activities will make a real difference in the priority areas agreed and we will now use the consultation period to seek further clarification and set out more detail as to how these priorities will be achieved.
- 5.9 The Consultation will seek to clarify some of the outstanding issues through asking a range of questions along the following lines:
- Have we considered all the key data sources and topic areas as part of this strategy? If not please could you suggest what else we should include?
  - Have we captured all the challenges we and our partners face? If not, what have we missed?
  - In what ways can we best provide advice and support to our communities and help them to help themselves?
  - Some of our communities are in particular need, some places are struggling and some needs are hidden within more affluent areas. Our public sector partners are taking targeted approaches to addressing need, taking preventative action and reducing cost on the public purse, should we be collaborating with them to meet these needs?
  - Do you agree that we should reduce or stop our staffing commitments to projects or activities if we think that they do not provide enough evidence of impact, value for money or meaningful community engagement?
  - If we are to get out of the way and build the skills within the community itself, are there services that communities feel they would like to deliver for themselves?
  - Do we currently provide enough clarity about how we engage with our communities on our everyday business, for example when dealing with planning applications, should the strategy say more about this?

- Are there any 'big ideas' you think are missing or should be taken out?

## 6. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 6.1 The Community Strategy is heavily linked with the main priority area of Strong and Healthy Communities and in particular the key strategic outcome of Community capacity building and engagement to enable all communities to be thriving, growing, healthy, active and self-sufficient.

## 7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are minimal financial implications from this report essentially relating to print costs. The actions associated with delivery of the final community strategy may have implications but those would be for consideration at a later date.

Revenue/Capital/ Expenditure/Income Item	Total	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Printing and postage		0	0	£500
Net Effect				

## 8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no legal implications to this report.

## 9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Corporate / Significant Business Risk No. 3a – a lack of effective engagement with communities to understand their future needs would mean that we may not be able to help communities become more sustainable. Key risks associated with this report are set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Moving too quickly could mean that staff, external stakeholders and community representatives do not feel sufficiently 'engaged' in the development of the Strategy	2	2	The use of focused conversations has allowed for in-depth discussion with key individuals and there will be a period of more formal consultation early in 2019.
The vision we have developed is not accessible or is perceived to be not authentic enough by communities, and as a result people do not fully engage with what we want to do next to deliver it	2	2	The consultation process will provide an opportunity to test the language that we are using and we will work with Community leaders to find practical ways of delivering the Strategy.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Without a commitment from partners to collaborate, it is unlikely that we will be able to achieve our aims	2	2	Our relationships with the voluntary sector and statutory partners are well developed and effective.

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 There has been some soft engagement on the emerging policy through the Town and Parish Liaison Meetings in October 2018. Scrutiny Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018 also helped shape the way in which the process of further engagement should take place.
- 10.2 We have also held qualitative focused discussions with our Extended Leadership Team, internal staff through the Employee Forum, external statutory and voluntary sector partners and a cross-party group of Councillors.
- 10.3 Other activities and strategies have also been important barometers, providing vital evidence about the way in which some of our communities feel about the way we engage them in important issues. Most notably our Growth Engagement campaign in the summer of 2016, our regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan in 2017 and in developing our Housing, Economic and Leisure, Sport and Physical Activity Strategies.
- 10.4 We do recognise the strong feelings that other parts of our business, particularly planning, engenders and that this has had a considerable bearing on how some communities perceive our relationships. The learning from these conversations and our continued work with communities who are experiencing development, creating neighbourhood plans or assuming more responsibility for addressing local issues have been captured within the draft strategy.
- 10.5 It is proposed that Babergh Cabinet agree the consultation version of the Strategy and authorise a consultation beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019 until 1<sup>st</sup> March 2019.
- 10.6 During the consultation period copies of the consultation version of the Strategy will be sent to key stakeholders including Town and Parish Councils, recipients of the Council's revenue grants, Statutory partners (including the Police, Clinical Commissioning Groups and targeted services within Suffolk County Council), voluntary sector partners (including Community Action Suffolk and the Suffolk Community Foundation), all Councillors, all staff and residents through social media promotion, with a request to give comments on the Strategy and respond to questions posed so we can capture their views. The final Strategy will be presented to Full Council in March 2019.

## 11. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

- 11.1 See screening Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix B) for the Joint Communities Strategy. No further action required at this time.

## 12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no environmental implications as a result of the Joint Communities Strategy.

## 13. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Consultation version of Joint Communities Strategy	Attached
(b) EQIA	Attached

## 14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS *(Papers relied on to write the report but which are not published and do not contain exempt information)*

- 14.1 The Government's Civil Society Strategy: building a future that works for everyone - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-society-strategy-building-a-future-that-works-for-everyone>
- 14.2 A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-connected-society-a-strategy-for-tackling-loneliness>
- 14.3 New Local Government Network (NLGN) insight report: Transforming the relationship between Councils and Communities - [http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/Transforming-the-Relationship-Between-Councils-and-Communities\\_Insights-Report\\_-OCT-2018.pdf](http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/Transforming-the-Relationship-Between-Councils-and-Communities_Insights-Report_-OCT-2018.pdf)
- 14.4 Hidden Needs in Suffolk (Suffolk Community Foundation): <https://www.suffolkcf.org.uk/suffolks-hidden-needs/>
- 14.5 The district council contribution to public health: a time of challenge and opportunity (The Kings Fund): [https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field\\_publication\\_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/district-council-contribution-to-public-health-nov15.pdf)
- 14.6 Stronger Charities for a Stronger Society Report (Authority of the House of Lords): <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldchar/133/133.pdf>