Wiltshire Council

Cabinet

11 October 2022

Subject:	**Update on Social Mobility and community conversations**
Cabinet Member:	**Councillor Richard Clewer, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Climate Change, MCI, Economic Development, Heritage, Arts, Tourism and Health & Wellbeing**
Key Decision:	**Non-Key**

Executive Summary

As part of Wiltshire Council's commitment to improving social mobility and tackling inequalities, senior leaders from a range of public sector organisations took part in community visits to Studley Green, Trowbridge and Bemerton Heath, Salisbury earlier this year. This has led to the development of ongoing community conversations for these areas, with the intention of piloting a bold and innovative approach and then adapting and rolling this out elsewhere in Wiltshire in due course.

Proposal(s)

It is recommended that Cabinet note the range of activity underway to support these communities and the ongoing opportunities for community activism and tailored support.

Reason for Proposal(s)

Improving social mobility and tackling inequality is a guiding theme for the council's Business Plan. In everything we do, we consider the impact of the action on social mobility and ask how we can help to tackle the disparities in opportunities that exist within Wiltshire.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive

Wiltshire Council

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Purpose of Report

1. To appraise Cabinet of activity arising from recent community visits and pilots of ongoing community conversations following this.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. Improving social mobility and tackling inequality is a guiding theme for the council's Business Plan. In everything we do, we consider the impact of the action on social mobility and ask how we can help to tackle the disparities in opportunities that exist within Wiltshire.

Background

3. Earlier this year, senior leaders from Wiltshire Council, the NHS, Wiltshire OPCC and others undertook community visits to Studley Green in Trowbridge and Bemerton Heath in Salisbury. The community visits were structured as an initial opportunity for leaders to hear directly from residents and other community representatives.

4. In Studley Green, a range of concerns were highlighted including:
    *   The timing and accessibility of bus services, bus shelters and lack of community transport groups. The need to improve pavements for mobility scooters.
    *   The response to concerns on crime and ASB and making 101 service user friendly
    *   Increasing crisis situations with families and an increase in mental health problems
    *   The need for more activities aimed at teenagers including those with additional needs
    *   The need for a more vibrant VCS and community-led join up between organisations
    *   More trees and CCTV in some areas could be environmental improvements

5. In Bemerton Heath, similar but slightly different themes emerged including:

- Fly tipping and littering
- User friendliness of 101 and responsiveness to concerns on crime and ASB
- The need to improve access to healthcare when coming out of hospital
- Mental health and addiction issues
- Cost of public transport and the need to improve pavements and cycle paths
- The VCS in Bemerton Heath has a range of groups up and running and good input from residents as well as links with PCSOs.

6. Both areas highlighted issues associated with an increase in cost of living.

7. Having listened to the concerns, the senior leaders agreed with communities that investment in preventing issues emerging should be a priority for both areas. Following the visits the organisations involved have been developing business cases for targeted interventions and given consideration to these areas' needs when developing investment strategies and bids for central government funds, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Levelling Up Funds. The intention is to develop a model and flexible toolkit for engaging whole communities over the longer term - taking all of the participants on the journey at a pace they are comfortable with, taking as long as it needs to take - and developing solutions which can be tailored to the strengths and needs of local areas. This approach can then be replicated and tailored as appropriate elsewhere in the county.

8. The model and overall approach is known as Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) – making use of what a community already has (such as existing organisations and resources) and using these things to make the area better for the people who live there. This has also been described as 'using what's strong to deal with what's wrong'. Similar approaches are also known as 'design thinking'

9. There are pre-existing examples of this approach in Wiltshire, including community led action planning using local Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and a Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living ABCD project in Devizes. The community led model for healthier communities in Wiltshire has also been a significant success (recognising that ideas to connect people with sport and physical activity can't be 'done to' communities, they can only ever be 'created with'). Over the last few years this programme has undertaken mapping of existing groups within communities, developed an offer with local communities (with local communities) and promoted the provision of weekly community-based sport and physical activity opportunities, successfully targeting over 470 inactive individuals aged 16-74. This has included engaging non-traditional partners such as Spurgeon's to promote activities such as buggy walks.

10. Authors such as Cormac Russell (Rekindling Democracy) make ABCD central to their proposed approach for rejuvenating community action. This is in response to issues highlighted by others such as Richard Sennet and Ezio Manzini who wrote presciently before the pandemic and cost of living crisis, *"communities that have greater social and civic connectivity and activity respond better to catastrophic events…. social resilience requires the existence of groups of people who interact and collaborate in a physical*

context. Proximity and relationship with a place are what enable these people to self-organize and solve problems in a crisis".

11. Since the leaders' visits, Wiltshire Council officers have been engaging in community conversations with the support of the relevant Strategic Engagement and Partnership Managers in the two pilot areas, to create opportunities for collaborative encounters and to consider how to support environments where these encounters can emerge, thrive, and evolve.

12. This has involved being present in the community, conducting further conversations with a level of persistent curiosity, and supporting a collective reimagining of how the needs and aspirations of the communities can be met. Wiltshire Council recognises that communities know their needs much better than us and that the best approaches are those that enable, equip and empower people to create change for themselves. Core to the overall approach is:
    - **Building relationships:** and establishing trust
    - **Raising aspiration**, **building social capital and increasing social mobility**
    - **Coproduction:** ideas to connect people and services are 'created with' communities
    - **Learning about and understanding communities:** trying different approaches, understand why something is or isn't working
    - **Ongoing evidence and insight:** to help improve project delivery and inform future service delivery
    - **Sustainability:** beyond initial investment period, by engaging local leaders and organisations who can access alternate funding.

13. It is recognised that building trusted relationships takes time and the approach has been developed with the partner organisations who were involved in the first community visits and with community leaders so that we are working with and not 'to' the community. Taking time to develop a coherent community conversation and community movement allows for minimising the duplication of other community offers and provides a more sustainable and long term improvement in outcomes which are community led.

14. Co-production is a particularly important aspect of Wiltshire's approach, emerging out of and alongside the Asset Based Community Development and the community-led model. It should lead to greater innovation and better value for money - examples of this already in place in Wiltshire include Speedwatch and Paths for All. There is an agreement and commitment that we need to work together to effect change by seeing things not as single issues, not as things to be fixed by agencies and not without the communities where these impacts are being felt. A great deal of engagement and intervention has taken place over the years to help address the deep challenges facing individuals and communities, but the level of improvement has not always delivered what we would all have hoped for. Working to principles of co-production is intended to address this.

Traditional principles	Co-productive principles
Fix the problem	Grow the good life (Vision)
Manage need	Develop capability

Transactional culture	Above all relationships
Audit money	Connect multiple forms of resource
Contain risk	Create possibility
Closed/Targeted	Open: Take care of everyone

Source: "Radical Help" by Hilary Cottam

Main Considerations for the Council

15. The community conversations are continuing, drawing on what people like about their area, what can make it better, understanding motivations and how people may like to be involved in change. Partners in a range of community groups are involved in connecting with our communities, including Wiltshire-wide organisations such as the Community Foundation and Wessex Community Action and those involved in the very different local ecosystems of community groups (such as tenant engagement officers, police community support officers, patient participation managers, community venue boards etc). The intention is to generate further interest from the communities, to generate some quick wins but also plan for a bold movement over the long term.

16. The development of a movement for the longer term in the two areas means identifying a shared purpose, values and experiences and identifying meaningful actions, rewards and engagement. These need to be supported by sustainable resource, data, communications activity and organisation over the long term. It involves creating an understanding of what can be done with people power and where help from public service providers is needed to deliver the change required.

17. Examples of what is already being done with 'people power' include a new management committee being formed for the community centre in Studley Green; the activity of Trowbridge Futures; and further work by Rise61 taking place in Bemerton Heath exploring the development of a youth hub (now seeking planning permission).

18. Since the community visits some quick wins have also been supported by public service providers:
    - The council has lifted the 930am restriction on use of concessionary bus passes
    - The Police and Crime Commissioner has consulted further on the experience of reporting to 101
    - New Local Highway and Footway Improvement Groups (LHFIGs) have been created, empowered to invest in improving or repair existing infrastructure such as highways and footways, while still investing in new infrastructure. Consideration is being given to provision for bus shelters on Studley Green.
    - A bid for the Youth Investment Fund to improve facilities in Studley Green has been developed, to complement activity by Trowbridge Future and Wiltshire Youth for Christ
    - Litter picking events have been promoted

19. Looking to the longer term, we are working closely with our partners in the NHS BSW Integrated Care System and have confirmed priorities for the

Wiltshire Integrated Care Alliance that will see the development of 'Neighbourhood Collaboratives' through Primary Care Networks (PCNs).

20. These have developed from a Neighbourhood Focus Site project, and the model supports neighbourhoods (PCN footprints) to establish collaborative groups, working in a population-health management focussed way to make changes aimed at addressing health inequalities. Fully established, 13 collaboratives will be working across Wiltshire with a fully formed model of support, leadership and networking to learn and share. It has been agreed in principle to work with Salisbury, Trowbridge and Devizes neighbourhoods in the first instance, but there is also significant interest from other areas to progress quickly.

21. The idea of these Neighbourhood Collaboratives is that: Wiltshire residents will be able to inform and affect local change to improve services that matter to them; Neighbourhoods are able to work together to identify and reduce health and care gaps by working together without boundaries; and professionals and communities have a way of working together to design and implement solutions to inequality gaps and to work through delivery of key required changes. The Health and Wellbeing Board has warmly welcomed the proposals and further background information is available here.

22. Wiltshire is also currently awaiting feedback from the government on its UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan. Within the plan submitted to government in July, provision was made as follows:

Outcome
Communities have been empowered to act in their local area [for Levelling-Up]

Delivery: Levelling-Up Community Fund
Create delegated funds for neighbourhoods with significant deprivation (or using other proxies), and set-up community panels to make small grants that deliver Levelling-Up objectives for well-being and productivity in neighbourhoods. Designed to increase community participation, working together, local responsibility and activism, improving civic pride, participation and social inclusion.

23. Once government go ahead is received for the plan the intention is to trial the delegated funds in Studley Green and Bemerton Heath first of all and to see how effective they are at encouraging community activism and collective action on measures that improve well-being and/or Productivity.

24. Irrespective of the government decision on UKSPF, the council is committed to resourcing appropriate activity within the two pilot areas.

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

25. Aspects of activity set out within this report have been considered by overview and scrutiny.

Safeguarding Implications

26. Consent is sought as appropriate for participation in community conversations.

Public Health Implications

27. The community conversations and related activity intend to improve social mobility and tackle inequality. This aligns clearly with activity on the social determinants of health.

Procurement Implications

28. Delivery of the delegated funds could be either for the neighbourhood group to determine which measures are to be financially supported and the Council awarding grants and contracts to each delivery organisation; or for the Council to openly select a body to hold delegated funds and award contracts to delivery organisations as determined by neighbourhoods.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

29. Improving social mobility and tackling inequality is a guiding theme for the council's Business Plan. In everything we do, we consider the impact of the action on social mobility and ask how we can help to tackle the disparities in opportunities that exist within Wiltshire. The two pilot areas were selected with an understanding of the persistent inequalities in outcome and their rankings within indices of multiple deprivation, where vulnerable groups and inequalities amongst protected characteristics are usually disproportionately represented.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

30. At this stage there are no environmental considerations

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

31. No decision is required to be made

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

32. No decision is required to be made

Financial Implications

33. At this stage there are no direct financial implications for the council. The activity set out is being undertaken through officer time; and detail on the deployment of UK SPF funds will be provided in further updates to cabinet once government sign-off is received.

Legal Implications

34. There are no legal implications.

Workforce Implications

35.   Ongoing support for the community conversations is being provided through the council's transformation team working in partnership with the relevant Strategic Engagement and Partnership Managers.

Conclusions

36.   Wiltshire Council is committed to improving social mobility and tackling inequalities. Through piloting ongoing community conversations and supporting the related movements and activity in Studley Green and Bemerton Heath we are looking forward to positive change in those areas and expect in due course to adapt and roll this out elsewhere in Wiltshire.

Terence Herbert, Chief Executive

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