

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 29 September 2022

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Community Hubs vision and next steps

Purpose: To share the initial results of the commission to develop a collaborative vision for a Community Hub model in East Sussex, and the suggested next steps to respond to the recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

1. **Note** the initial report 'Vision for Community Hubs in East Sussex' from Collaborate
 2. **Endorse** the draft high level action plan, and the suggested governance arrangements to take forward the recommendations and subsequent work programme, in line with the cross-cutting nature of the Council's work in relation to communities
-

1. Background

1.1 As part of the original COVID-19 pandemic emergency response five 'community hubs' were established by a new collaborative partnership between East Sussex County Council, District and Borough Councils, VCSE organisations and the NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group. These acted as referral hubs to provide fast access to essential food, medicines and social contact for clinically extremely vulnerable people and others who were socially isolating.

1.2 Working together across organisational boundaries towards a very clear common purpose, at a pace forced by the extraordinary circumstances, gave partners an understanding of what can be achieved through partnership working, and an appetite to embed this learning for the future.

1.3 The pandemic further exposed pre-existing vulnerabilities within the county's communities which are likely to be further exacerbated by pressures from the cost of living crisis and other economic trends. Having moved on from the original COVID-19 hub models, the partners have agreed on the need to develop a longer-term approach to collectively addressing these problems, and believe that building on the ethos and model of the original Hubs provides an opportunity to achieve this.

1.4 As a result, Collaborate, a Community Interest Company (CIC), were commissioned in 2021/22 to undertake engagement with key stakeholders involved in meeting the needs of vulnerable people in East Sussex during the pandemic, to collectively develop and agree a shared vision and scope for community hubs. This is also seen as a key part of the health and social care integration agenda, specifically developing a preventative offer grounded in the VCSE sector and encompassing wider support and wellbeing needs. Once agreed, the shared vision will be used to support a jointly led programme of work across the public and voluntary sector

aimed at developing a robust business case for a sustainable and permanent model for community focussed hubs.

1.5 This report presents the findings from the Collaborate engagement report into the future of community hubs (Appendix 1), together with the proposed response to take forward the recommendations as part of a jointly led programme.

2. Supporting information

Joint leadership

2.1 All partners involved in the original five Community Hubs wanted to explore the learning from the pandemic response and supported this work. The future of the Community Hubs project took place alongside the systems approach to isolation and loneliness project, under the umbrella title of '*Community wellbeing: connected people and places*'. Both projects were overseen by the Partnership Plus Executive Group (our joint county-wide liaison meeting with VCSE representatives).

2.2 The approach to engagement is outlined in the report. A Community Wellbeing Partnership Steering Group was set up to guide specific activity, and opportunities for engagement with VCSE organisations and District and Borough Councils was a key aspect of the project.

2.3 Collaborate CIC have presented the findings from the engagement as a discussion document, with eight suggested recommendations for local partners to consider to help take the vision forward. The report also brings together local and national examples of good practice, and other detail such as approaches to establishing benefits and impacts, representing the ground covered during the engagement process.

2.4 To date the report has been shared with the Partnership Plus Executive Group, where it was received positively as a shared platform and toolkit to mobilise further jointly led work. The high level action plan included in Appendix 2 sets out the proposed next steps recommended by all the partners to accompany the report. A key part of seeking endorsement of the next steps has been sharing the report and action plan formally with District and Borough Councils, to follow up on the initial support for the project at the outset.

Community hub models and outcomes

2.5 During the pandemic the 'hub' model was a referral mechanism to enable fast access to community services and support to meet essential food, medicine and social contact needs. The future hub model should be understood as an upstream or early intervention approach, with the aim of supporting the capacity of communities to help themselves, alongside enabling easy access to specialist support where necessary across a range of social and economic wellbeing needs. By working effectively at a community level the goal is to support wellbeing by preventing situations from getting worse, with the added benefit of reducing demand for more costly downstream services in the future. Appendix 3 summarises the different arrangements for community hubs that exist in East Sussex identified in the Collaborate report, and the key elements of the future vision.

Wider policy context

2.6 In addition to supporting the Council Plan priority of helping people help themselves, the inherent prevention focus of Community Hubs strongly aligns with, and contributes to, the following policy agendas:

- Family Hubs and Start to Life – national programme funding aimed at offering a single access point to a range of services, help and support covering universal and early help services, through co-locating services and professionals.

- The Health and Social Care reform agenda including the recent White Papers ‘People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform’, and ‘Health and Social Care Integration: Joining up care for people, places and populations’ which both emphasise prevention and early intervention, and a stronger focus on improving population health and reducing health inequalities. To support this significant work at the East Sussex (Place) level, in the context of the new statutory Sussex Integrated Care System, is aimed at delivering greater levels of integrated working at the community and neighbourhood level.
- The design of public services from a resident and community-led perspective has also gained increasing traction nationally.

2.7 The full range of potential Hub activity set out in the report requires alignment across a number of current policy and commissioning areas to support effective implementation, including:

- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and the development of ‘health assets’ within communities. The description of Community Hubs and clear drive from most partners is for Hubs to be rooted in ABCD, and the development of Hubs needs to be linked to the local ABCD evaluation programme ‘Making It Happen’.
- Our wider work with the VCSE sector, including the future of the Infrastructure Contracts that currently sit with the three Voluntary Action organisations and the links to the full range of the Council’s work with the VCSE, including the Spaces agenda.
- The wider commissioning approach to information and advice services, financial inclusion and ‘social prescribing’ services.
- The next steps for the systems approach to social isolation and loneliness project.

Next steps and delivery

2.8 Partnership discussions and feedback about the report and the next steps have emphasised a need to reflect that different models will be required to work in a rural and urban context, including those that are not buildings-based. The following principles will be important to enabling easy access to services and support, and greater levels of connection and resilience in local communities:

- Build on the existing strengths of our communities and the leadership of our local voluntary, community and social enterprise sector organisations embedded there through continuing our shared leadership and co-design of this work
- A flexible and mixed model will be critical, spanning and strengthening virtual networks and connections as well as the wider use of existing buildings, to engage as many organisations and groups as possible and acknowledging the urban and rural nature of our county.
- Creating strong referral pathways to enable streamlined access to prevention-based help and support for those who need it, and less ‘hand offs’ between our agencies
- Using digital and other innovations to reach and include more people, make the best use of our collective resources and reduce reliance on travelling to buildings and the associated environmental impacts
- An iterative approach to implementation will be essential and our plans set out below may change as our understanding grows with each step

2.9 The vision and eight recommendations set out a helpful jointly owned platform to move the development of community hubs in East Sussex onto the next phase, and the high level action plan sets out the suggested next steps in relation to the recommendations. Due to the wide span of connections and the work involved across many partners to move the vision into reality, it is proposed that dedicated resource is required to:

- Implement a detailed programme based on the action plan, to enable the first phase of five prototype community hubs to be mobilised, including liaising with leads and partners to maximise relevant external funding opportunities e.g. the Community Ownership Fund.
- Embed this transformation with partners, coordinating the learning and evaluation process and plan subsequent phases
- Ensure strong links are made in particular with the work on Family Hubs and the Health and Social Care integration agenda, the Making it Happen (ABCD) programme and VCSE infrastructure contracts.

2.10 This resource is part of the proposed investment plan utilising the approved Community Hub revenue budget to provide the infrastructure needed to support safe and resilient community partnerships (including support to refugees and migrant groups and financial inclusion).

2.11 The Community Hub budget was approved in the Council's 2021/22 medium term financial plan (MTFP), so this investment plan requires no additional funding:

		2022/23 (HYE)	2023/24 (FYE)
1	Community Hubs implementation	£34,800	£69,600
2	Safe and resilient community partnerships	£96,000	£282,400
3	Potential community infrastructure and support (including the loneliness and isolation project)	£309,200	£528,000
4	Total	£440,000	£880,000

2.12 The Community Hub revenue budget will also be aligned to achieving the Community Hubs High Level Action Plan, with resources being made available to progress Phase 1 VCSE led commitments and activities, and the implementation of Phase 2 commitments and activities when agreed in collaboration with ESCC, and wider public sector partners.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The Vision for Community Hubs in East Sussex report accurately reflects the extent of the wide-ranging engagement and research undertaken during the nine months of the commissioned work, and presents a robust shared platform upon which to progress the next steps for implementing Community Hubs.

3.2 The cost of living crisis, in addition to the ongoing need to respond to other needs in our current context, presents a compelling argument for a sustainable and joined up approach that targets support in communities where it is most needed. This has strong alignment with health and care reform agendas for children and adults of all ages, and the Council's priority of helping people help themselves.

3.3 There is also considerable expectation from the Council's partners about the response to Collaborate's report, and a clear focus for this work making use of existing revenue budget is recommended. This will ensure that hubs are implemented effectively and connections can be made across the shared priorities that community hubs will help deliver, so that relationships continue to strengthen at the local level for the benefit of our residents.

Mark Stainton

Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Contact Officers: Vicky Smith and Paul Hussey

Email: Vicky.smith@eastsussex.gov.uk / Paul.hussey@eastsussex.gov.uk

LOCAL MEMBERS

All Members