

Minutes of a meeting of the EAP Prosperous Communities

At 10.00 am on Wednesday 24th January, 2024 in the Council Chamber, The Cube, George Street, Corby NN17 1QG

Present:-

Members

Councillor Matt Binley (Co-Chair)	Councillor Graham Lawman
Councillor Mark Rowley (Co-Chair)	Councillor Andy Mercer
Councillor Tim Allebone	Councillor Malcolm Ward
Councillor Lyn Buckingham	

Officers

Jane Bethea – Director of Public Health
Graeme Kane – Executive Director of Place and Economy
Iain Smith – Assistant Director – Regulatory Services
Russ Howell - Health Services Manager
Kerry Purnell - Assistant Director Communities and Leisure
Ali Gilbert - Director of North Place Development
David Pope – Senior Committee Administrator

23 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Elliot Prentice.

24 Members' Declarations of Interest

Cllr Graham Lawman declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 5.

25 Minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2023

RESOLVED that:- The minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26 Levelling Up in North Northamptonshire Plan 2024 - Progress Report

The Panel received a report from Kerry Purnell, Assistant Director for Communities and Leisure, the purpose of which was to provide a progress update for the Levelling-up Action Plan and to consider and comment on the proposed steps for further consideration of the report.

It was reported that the Scrutiny Commission had reviewed underlying data and an associated report relating to areas highlighted as “left behind” and brought forward a

proposed plan to work towards levelling-up those areas. This work had concluded in July 2022, with the final report subsequently agreed by the Executive at its meeting on 25th August 2022. It was noted that a number of recommendations were being delivered through a series of business-as-usual (BAU) activities, with a separate governance structure around the levelling-up plan in place to ensure delivery. It was noted that where work required fell outside of BAU requirements, that activity would be directly monitored through the Levelling Up Delivery Group

Attention was drawn to the summary table of key achievements for each Levelling-Up recommendation as detailed in the report before members, which provided assurance regarding the level of work being undertaken.

Reference was made to a number of specific recommendations and key achievements, including activities of the Well Northants programme where partnership working with residents had used data and intelligence to develop neighbourhood actions groups and plans, with a number of projects delivered and ongoing. Learning from the processes undertaken to date would be embedded into methodology for future delivery models.

It was recognised that there was still work to be done around some of the original recommendations, with a list of themes detailed as followed:

- Increase engagement of businesses in Local Area Partnerships;
- To include exploration of a crowd funding platform in the new VCSE Infrastructure contract requirements;
- Funding opportunities to be explored to support a co-produced piece of work with the VCSE on what a community hub is, what works currently within North Northants or elsewhere, best practice and how to apply a community hub strategy within the context of place within North Northamptonshire;
- Further development work towards a Youth Offer for North Northamptonshire
- Complete development of a Housing Strategy;
- Embed the principles of the Well Northants programme around asset-based community development into business as usual by aligning it with the LAP work programme.

Members welcomed the report and the progress that had been made to date and asked questions and made comments in relation to the following aspects of the report:

- Significant levels of funding had been put into initiatives aimed at improving the Kingswood estate in Corby, what had worked and why was the area still considered “left behind”? Were there areas now struggling that had not received the levels of investment seen for Kingswood.
- Demographic alterations in left behind areas potentially impacting the work required
- Local Area Partnerships dedicated to specific left behind areas
- Youth work and community funding
- Use of the Members’ Empowerment Fund to fund projects
- Drug issues including county lines activities and possible influx of fentanyl use locally
- Knife crime

In response, the meeting heard that service provision gaps in left behind areas required identification to enable limited resources to be applied to them. It was reported that a systematic approach would be adopted to ensure sustainable outcomes were provided in left behind communities where initiatives were embedded and not implemented only to be withdrawn at a later date.

It was noted that there were existing health inequalities in the areas identified as left behind, with data analysis allowing the development of local area profiles that aided in identifying areas of need.

In regard to crime and violence related issues in left behind areas, it was noted that a Serious Violence Strategy was being drafted, assisted by a pot of funding from the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to bolster work on the ground in tackling serious violence. A further tranche of funding would become available once the strategy had been adopted, with additional information available to share to members regarding the Council's responsibilities in relation to this issue.

27 Communities Strategy and strategic investment into the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector

The Panel received a report from Kerry Purnell, Assistant Director for Communities and Leisure that introduced the Council's Communities Strategy, co-produced with representatives from across the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. It was noted that the report also set out the proposed new VCSE strategic grants framework for period of three years from 1st April 2024, which replaced the previous strategic grant arrangements which the Council had inherited from the legacy authorities. The report also detailed the proposed new VCSE Infrastructure support arrangements which would be tendered and contracted for three-years from 1st September 2024.

It was heard that the report comprised a comprehensive piece of work, aligned with the Council's budget setting process for 2024/25 and being very reliant on understanding of the available funding envelope. It was noted that there had been an ambition to develop a Communities Strategy since vesting day, although there had been significant changes in terms of the strategic context the Council operated, with the strategy now able to be set to align with the Council's Corporate Plan and the Live Your Best Life Strategy.

Details of activities undertaken regarding strategy development and strategic investment considerations were provided to the meeting, that noted a review of all VCSE grants inherited from legacy authorities and continuous engagement with voluntary sector partners. An engagement session held with the VCSE sector in September 2023 was referenced and the meeting heard that there was an ambition to increase the Council's offer of support, allowing the sector to become more financially sustainable, whilst better supported in terms of writing funding bids, bringing funding into the area, leadership, training and capacity building. It was noted that investment would be better purposed through contracted obligations rather than a series of grants with the Council aiming to adopt a more consistent approach to funding.

Details of a further piece of work regarding investment into community centres was detailed, with the meeting noting that the position inherited from legacy authorities was not consistent across the Council area. Existing funding, its purpose and the locations

receiving funding had been reviewed, with staff engaged and feedback received. Whilst the value provided by community centres was acknowledged, the current model did not support all centres equally across the Council area, with a need to align support to be consistent with strategic priorities. A commitment to devolved community centre costs would be kept under review moving forward.

The meeting heard that the strategy introduced eight key themes, six of which would form a significant part of the ask the Council would make of the future providers of the VCSE Infrastructure support contract, which would be tendered for delivery. A formal tender process would take place during 2024, with investment in the sector totalling approximately £1.8m once all funding streams had been taken into account.

The Panel heard that the Council would work with stakeholders including communities and town and parish councils to ensure services were delivered in a way that was meaningful for communities with a mechanism in place regarding transfer of service delivery or asset operation should it be requested, with an identifiable transfer process and support made available.

Members asked questions and made comments in relation to:

- Devolution of service and asset operation
- Disparity of community centre operations across the Council area
- Support for funding writing bids and back-office function support being a positive step forward
- Clarification sought regarding funding sources and use of the Member Empowerment Fund
- The need for clear, consistent communications with the VCSE sector and town and parish councils
- Linking organisational funding with the Corby Lottery

28 North Northamptonshire Place Development

The Panel received a report and presentation from the Director of North Place Development, Ali Gilbert that provided an overview of the development of North Northamptonshire Place through an oversight of the following developments:

- A New Sense of Place – Local Area Partnerships (LAPS)
- North Place Deliver Board Developmental thinking – ‘Looking Back - Looking Forward’.
- Support North Northamptonshire (SNN)- Voluntary Community or Social Enterprise (VCSE) Collaborative approach.

The Panel heard that the above items had been presented to the Place Delivery Board at its meeting in early January. The ownership of place development was being driven by the Council and was an initiative being embraced by the health sector, fire, police and voluntary sector. It was noted that the development was a work in progress involving a significant number of strategies and bid work for national funding was underway.

Details of partnership engagement in relation to Local Area Partnerships (LAPs) was provided to the meeting, including town and parish councils, the Office of the Police,

Fire and Crime Commissioner and health services. The meeting received an overview of emerging priorities following discussions with LAPs, with initial priorities identified in the report.

It was noted that community transport was a key consideration, with each LAP having raised the topic as a priority. Consequently, a North Northamptonshire Community Transport Forum had been convened, connecting with the Place and Economy Directorate, with one area for consideration being the needs of the population and the variation between rural and urban requirements. In addition, LAP priorities relating to engagement with youth, asset mapping of services, and reducing impact on statutory services through a collaborative focus on addressing improvements in community health and wellbeing were outlined to the meeting.

It was reported that a second round of LAP priorities had been identified that included substance misuse, access to affordable housing and rural isolation, with multiagency task and finish groups being established to address these.

It was noted that engagement with the local population and communication with community was an area for improvement, with this forming part of the remit for Community Wellbeing forums. Understanding the experiences and needs of residents and communities was necessary to enable a beneficial culture to be created, allowing internal and external investment to be obtained.

Members asked questions and made comments in relation to the following aspects of the report:

- The RADAR diagram for Place Board being hard to interpret
- The need for audio equipment and hearing accessibility equipment at venues being used for LAP meetings
- Attendees and membership recruitment model for LAPs requiring provision in future iterations
- Invitations to be recirculated for Community Wellbeing Forums

29 Street Trading Licensing Policy

The Panel received a presentation from the Health Services Manager, Russ Howell in relation to the Council's Street Trading Licensing Policy which was being considered for disaggregation and revision. The meeting noted that there were a number of considerations to be made to in advance of a public consultation being undertaken on a new draft policy prior to its submission to the Council's Licensing and Appeals Committee.

It was heard that a council may resolve that Schedule 4 to the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982 shall apply to their district and, if a council so resolves, that Schedule shall come into force in their district on such day as may be specified in the resolution. The process to follow for such a resolution was detailed, with the panel noting that the Council would need to re-resolve that specific piece of legislation in adopting any revised policy.

The meeting was provided with further legislative background to the policy, noting that there were three types of trading streets, those where trading was prohibited, those in which street trading is prohibited without the consent of the Council licence, and those

in which street trading was prohibited without a licence granted by the Council. It was heard that a consent regime was more flexible and less restrictive than a licensing regime and had previously been adopted by three of the four legacy district and borough councils.

The key advantages and disadvantages of both a licensing and consent regime for street trading were outlined, with the meeting noting that there was a requirement to ensure that the policy did not conflict with other areas of legislation, especially in regard to highways. Work was underway in this regard to avoid such conflicts.

The meeting was provided with details of exemptions from street trading legislation and heard that officers would consider applications received and grant those complying with policy requirements. Where applications did not comply with policy requirements they would be determined by a Licensing and Appeals sub-committee with any appeals considered by the Magistrate's Courts.

The meeting was requested to consider the follow questions regarding any new policy:

- Did the Authority wish to continue to control street trading within the area and in what form? It was recommended that street trading continued to be controlled to ensure regulatory compliance and ensure consistency across the council area and maintain incomes streams. Members considered that continuing to control street trading was the way forward in this regard.
- Was there a desire to include the whole district to promote and encourage trade within the area and allow for flexibility, or was there a desire to only allow trading in certain designated areas to reduce impact upon local traders and the surrounding community? It was recommended that Council-wide consent be introduced, since this would allow new pitches to be designated upon demand by legitimate businesses, support new businesses to be set up and allows for ongoing change. This would make enforcement straightforward, as traders not holding consent would be committing an offence. Members considered that Council-wide consent should be adopted.
- Should street trading be prohibited in certain streets? It was recommended that street trading be prohibited on any road with a speed limit above 30mph. Applications meeting this requirement could be considered on a case-by-case basis. Members agreed with this recommendation.
- Was trading to be prohibited for certain items in certain areas e.g. "fast foods" around schools? It was recommended that Public Health colleagues be consulted on this issue to identify what data they could provide to justify any prohibition. Members agreed with the possibility of prohibiting the street trading of fast food in the vicinity of schools.
- Were street trading controls to be used to ensure consistency at events where the event meets the definition of street trading? It was heard that should trading meets the definition of 'street trading' there were no known legal routes to exempt them from application, however event organisers were expected to have control over the event, so risks should be reduced and there was a risk of complaints of over-regulation. It was recommended that events which included stalls offering products for sale, were processed as an 'event organiser consent' to prevent each stallholder having to individually apply. This would

allow the Council to promote events and encourage traders to attend, whilst maintaining some form of regulation. Members agreed with this recommendation, with a suggestion that stalls selling items clearly display the name of the stallholder and contact details.

- Should there be restrictions on times/types of trading subject to location and activity, or should each application be individually assessed on its own merits? It was recommended that applications be considered on their own merits to promote trade. Members considered that there should be time limits on trading, with a standard set of hours implemented as part of the policy.
- Was the policy to include the prohibition of the sale of certain products such as age-related products e.g. weapons, tobacco, alcohol, and prohibiting the use of single use plastics, expanded polystyrene and all products made of oxo-degradable plastic. Should this be more generic or specific? It was recommended that the policy as a minimum should prohibit the sale of products which may create enforcement difficulties such as weapons, tobacco, vapes and alcohol, although sale of alcohol could be permitted at events. Members wished to see prohibition of the sale of weapons, tobacco and vapes, but not alcohol.
- Does the Authority wish to see a clear set of principles that would be included within the street trading policy dealing with public safety, food safety, nuisance, appearance and size of units, location/numbers, environmental sustainability and contributions to the area, which would provide guidance to all as to what is acceptable? It was recommended that the policy as a minimum stipulates food safety, nuisance and appearance requirements, to protect public health and promote consistency. Members agreed with this recommendation and also made comments regarding potential littering by stallholders.

Members also made comments and asked for consideration of rogue traders, pedlars, enforcement for policy non-compliance and the precise definition of “streets” as part of the policy. Additionally, Members called for a clear, consistent policy that was simple to enforce.

30 Executive Forward Plan

The Executive Forward Plan for 1st January 2024 to 30th April 2024 was noted.

A request was made to bring the Asset Acquisition Policy to a future meeting of the EAP, should it be possible to do so before it was considered by the Executive.

31 Forward List of Items for the EAP

The forward list of items for the EAP was considered.

32 Close of Meeting

There being no further business, the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their attendance and closed the meeting.

Chair

Date

The meeting closed at 12.27 pm