

Improving Engagement and Participation - Placed Based Approach

Report of the Head of Strategy and Innovation

Recommended:

That the Committee notes the progress of the work undertaken so far and provides feedback to inform its ongoing development.

Summary:

- In April 2023 the Council approved its new Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our communities to thrive**. The new corporate plan reinforces our long-term commitment to working with the communities of Test Valley, at “place level”.
- Over recent months Borough Councillors have been engaging with local organisations and local communities to bring this to life. The presentation at the Committee will update on the work so far and be an opportunity to share practice and ideas for the onward progression of this work.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set the context for a presentation to the Committee on the work undertaken so far, to engage and involve local people as part of the council’s commitment to work with communities at a place level.

2 Background

- 2.1 The new Corporate Plan, **A Place for Everyone – Supporting our communities to thrive**, is about making the wider opportunities for our communities a reality, progressing long-term strategic projects such as the regeneration of town centres and the Council’s approach to climate change, and being able to influence partners so that together we can deliver the best outcomes and quality of life across the borough.
- 2.2 The strategic priorities of the new plan are as follows:
- **Sustainability**, delivering lasting benefits for our communities.
 - **Connection**, building upon the identity, strengths and ambitions of our communities.
 - **Inclusion**, working together to create opportunities for our communities.
 - **Prosperity**, economic growth that impacts positively on our communities.
 - **Environment**, a greener borough for our communities.

- 2.3 As part of the ongoing approach to work in a place-based way that recognises the varying needs of our borough's communities, the plan sets out how the Council will deliver its strategic priorities through a community focus so that they can be tailored to make sure they are relevant and appropriate to local circumstances. The framework used to describe this in the plan is through a number of broad community areas: Villages and rural areas, the towns of Romsey and Andover and the communities of Nursling, Rownhams, Chilworth and Valley Park.
- 2.4 The new corporate plan reinforces our long-term commitment to working with the communities of Test Valley, at "place level". Working at place level, or more simply at local level, enables us to recognise the unique nature of all our communities. This means that the organisations that work across Test Valley need to give different types of support to different places to help them be successful.
- 2.5 Borough councillors have, over recent months, been engaging with local organisations, such as parish councils and voluntary organisations to bring this ambition to life. The purpose is to tap into local networks to help identify what the priorities for funding are, across our communities. This is included a series of bespoke workshops through both Andover Vision and Romsey Future, and across four other wider areas leading to more locally focused conversations within parishes.
- 2.6 The priorities that emerge from these discussions will be tested with communities as were the priorities that emerged in the new plan itself. This is an evidence-based exercise that gives everyone a voice, not just those who shout the loudest.
- 2.7 Communities will, as a result, be able to unlock resource and support for a range of initiatives that are important to them including access to the council's community grants schemes such as the Community Asset Fund.
- 2.8 Officers will make a presentation to the Committee to provide an update on the work undertaken so far, the emerging themes and issues, and lessons learned from the approach. This will also be an opportunity for members of the Committee to share their experiences and offer feedback regarding the onward development of this work.

3 Consultations/Communications

- 3.1 Community engagement has been at the heart of the development of the new Corporate Plan with the views of around 1,600 local people being gathered and the innovative use of deliberative engagement to help shape the new priorities of the plan.
- 3.2 This builds upon the longstanding track record the council has of empowering and working with local communities through its community councillor model. This has led to the Council's approach being recognised at a national level as good practice through its work with organisations such as the Involve Foundation, New Local and through the highly successful community resilience work which was recently subject to a Local Government Association Case Study.

- 3.3 The current programme of work is focused on we support engagement at the most local of levels. This ensures an inclusive approach that strengthens local communities to be able to identify the priorities that matter most in an evidence-based way that ensures not just those who shout the loudest are heard.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 This report sets the context for a presentation at the Committee that will update councillors on the work being undertaken as part of the commitment to strengthen our approach to place-based working as set out in the new Corporate Plan.

<u>Background Papers (Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D)</u>			
N/A			
<u>Confidentiality</u>			
It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.			
No of Annexes:	None		
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